

The Self as a Moral Basis: Do Our Own Patterns of
Behavior Affect our Moral Attributions?

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Approval

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Abstract

To determine which actions are morally acceptable, psychologists typically focus on decision making within existing moral paradigms. However, this fails to comment upon individual and social processes, such as attribution, that determine morality. To address these processes, this study had participants respond to morally-charged scenarios by rating the immorality of an actor who did not tip a waiter ($n = 125$), was partial to infidelity ($n = 128$), and texted while driving ($n = 128$). Participants also completed an empathy measure, and provided their own frequency of engaging in certain behaviors, including those featured in the scenarios. Immorality ratings were compared to the participants' own frequency of the scenario action (hypothesized to lower ratings), as well as empathy and outcome severity (both hypothesized to increase ratings). Findings were assessed in three regressions, one per scenario. Behavioral similarity predicted immorality ratings in each ($p \leq .03$), empathy predicted ratings only for not tipping a waiter ($p = .04$), while outcome severity was un-predictive in each scenario. Theoretical implications, directions for future research, and limitations of the study are discussed.

Acknowledgements

The path of life is a journey we rarely travel alone. So often are we connected— influenced, inspired, and inspirited—by even the most fleeting encounters. The full mark of an individual is found in the connections they have made. If any man can be an island, it is only because he is surrounded by water: a powerful external force which shapes him, brushes away his loose sand, and remakes the land into something lasting and unique. Yet oceans are a vast entity—tides come, and go, constantly, and it is no small feat to record them all, let alone identify the most forceful currents. Nevertheless, I must attempt this—to dabble in the oceanographic process, and assess the meaningful encounters of life.

In the past few years, I have certainly grown for the better, and I cannot begin to express my satisfaction at having engaged in an uphill climb towards new heights. This is, in large part, due to the environment of Grenfell Campus. Not for the scenery, of course, the serenely muddy landscape and near constant snow, but for the attitude it contains, and for the chance to engage so closely with others. Attending this institution was a wondrous decision—a chance to surrender to being positively shaped by the waves of those nearby. In particular, I would first like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Carla Krachun, for all of her assistance with this study, even as it quickly departed from her comfort area; Dr. Stephen Blackwood, for creating a learning environment better than could possibly be requested, and allowing me to pursue my ideas to their fullest extent; and Dr. Sonya Corbin-Dwyer, for opening my eyes towards positive psychology—an end to which the optimism I have so carefully fostered over the last few years might be meaningfully ascribed. Yet above all else, I must, of course, thank my family for all of their support; without this, I hasten to wonder if my goals could have been conceivable.

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Introduction

As a relatively new field, psychology continues to cover many of the same topics as philosophy, its father discipline, to which it remained connected until 1879 (Goodwin, 2015, p. 90). This is particularly evident in the topic of morality, which has been studied at length by psychologists and philosophers alike. Although these two disciplines are now independent from one another, both have studied morality in a comparable manner for the majority of their history. The psychological theory of Lawrence Kohlberg (1963) and the philosophical work of Aristotle (1995/350 BCE), for instance, are quite similar in nature. Each theory considers morality to be internally created, arising from rationality, and an atomistic trait (i.e., unaffected by circumstances). Likewise, Kohlberg's (1963) work has significant overlap with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1785), since both consider decision-making to be the central focus on morality. It was perhaps from this notion that Kohlberg (1963) established the use of moral dilemmas (thought experiments requiring participants to respond to morally ambiguous scenarios) as the standard methodology for empirical studies of morality today. For these reasons, moral psychology is best viewed as an interdisciplinary approach, which blends psychological and philosophical thought.

However, in recent years it has become apparent that atomistic views of morality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1963), considered alone, are incapable of explaining the complete extent of human morality. Thus, writers such as John Doris (2002) have argued in favor of a situational approach to morality. This stance can be referred to as 'situationalism,' which claims that when making moral decisions, humans are more influenced by circumstances

(environmental factors) than earlier theories have acknowledged (Doris, 2002). To show the importance of the environment, supporters of situationalism often refer to prominent studies within social psychology, such as Stanley Milgram's (1963) study on obedience, and the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, 2007). In each of these experiments, it was found that moral values became quite malleable depending on the circumstances—that individuals acted in unpredictably unethical ways, simply due to social influences. While these results were quickly recognized and accommodated by social psychologists, moral theorists have, until quite recently, proven reluctant to consider them. Considering how essential these studies have proven to modern social psychology, it is clear that now, more than ever, moral psychologists ought to examine situationalist ideas.

Thus, this study has been inspired by several aspects of situationalism. However, unlike previous situationalist theories, which only examine external influences, this study will consider non-rational intrinsic factors. Therefore, it will adopt a mediatory position between moral atomism's focus on reason, and situationalism's focus on environmental factors. Humans will be viewed as the appraisers of their environment—neither rationally detached from it, nor obligated to act because of it. Specifically, this study will consider individuals' behavioral history as a situational influence which may influence their moral outlook. This will be done through moral attribution: a process by which individuals will judge the actions of another party, and consider them as moral or immoral. Participants will first be asked to report their engagement in several morally questionable behaviors, and then asked to make moral attributions about others engaging in these same behaviors. This will determine the extent to which engaging in a specific behavior influences how morally permissible (deserving of moral status) another person who engages in the same

behavior is viewed. Morality is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon; thus, any attempt to ascribe it purely to atomistic processes is misguided. Just like the remainder of the psychological disciplines, morality researchers should adopt an eclectic approach to achieve more accurate results. In this, the study of moral attribution will certainly assist.

Philosophical Precursors to Moral Psychology

Since moral psychology is best viewed as an interdisciplinary approach, it is first necessary to provide an overview of some relevant philosophical thought so that it can be properly understood. Within philosophy, morality has been considered an intrinsic (and atomistic) attribute for approximately 2500 years, beginning at least with Plato (1992/380 BCE) and Socrates. However, the idea of moral atomism is better represented through the virtue ethics of Aristotle (1995/350 BCE), which constitutes a detailed theory of moral character. Virtue ethics denotes the development of an individuals' moral sense, and acknowledges the influence of both biological and environmental factors. Aristotle proposed that humans can be predisposed towards a number of traits, of which several (e.g., charitability) have moral implications. These traits are also developed through a variety of educational processes, such as formal schooling and informal elements (e.g., parenting and socialization). Aristotle claimed that this process first involves learning habits, from which our personality develops and gradually becomes stable in adulthood. Personality, of course, is inclusive of an individual's virtue: how morally sound they are. Classical virtue ethics (i.e., of Aristotle, 1995/350 BCE) also involves an assumption of moral atomism, and believes that once personality becomes stable, all individuals will cease to be affected by their environment when making decisions. Rationality is said to

allow humans to remain objective, and respond to environmental demands without being influenced by them; thus, individuals can align with moral virtues regardless of context.

Similarly, a major historical focus of philosophy has been upon moral decision-making, and the rules which ought to guide this process. Much like the notion of moral atomism, action-based theories of morality have provided a significant framework for psychological thought. One prominent example of an action-based moral theory is the work of Kant (1785), who popularized deontology (or deontological ethics). This theory concerns the intention that underlie an individual's actions, and claims that there are certain moral rules that humans ought to follow (e.g., lying is always immoral). Like Aristotle, Kant (1785) also argued that morality is derived from human rationality; as such, he believed that morally sound actions are those that can occur without a logical contradiction in intent. For example, Kant would agree with the Christian argument that sloth (the sin) is immoral, precisely because it involves a logical contradiction. If every human were to abandon their work then no food would be produced and everyone would starve. Thus, the principles of laziness cannot be generalized to the entire population without becoming an impossible condition, which thereby classifies it as immoral.

Another rule-based (and action-based) moral theory which finding its foundation in rationality is utilitarianism. However, utilitarianism entirely concerns the consequences of actions, rather than the motivation behind them (Mill, 1863). In this approach, morality is determined by engaging in utilitarian calculus, a process in which an action's predicted outcome is logically weighed, and the positive and negative consequences are compared. In this process, a variety of individuals are considered, including the self, those directly involved in the action, and anyone that may be affected in the future. However, utilitarian

calculus does not allow any individual to be favored (i.e., the importance of the self and one's family is equal to a stranger's). From each of these points, Mill (1863) argues that morally sound actions are those that result in a positive net outcome, even while some negativity may occur. It also is important to note that utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and deontology, are all atomistic moral theories—person-first approaches, which emphasize the individual's personal moral code as independent from the external world, in that we are not influenced by circumstances. Having overviewed the philosophical background to moral thought, these same atomistic views will be discussed from the psychological perspective. Following this, situationalism will be discussed as an alternate outlook.

Moral Atomism: Internal Influences on Morality

In empirical studies of morality, the work of Kohlberg is particularly important, as through his theory the philosophical principles of atomism have expanded to psychology. While Kohlberg's (1963) work deals with moral development, rather than character, it is still a person-first theory, arguing that morality is an internal construct which develops over time. Thus, it expands upon the earlier theories of Jean Piaget, who popularized the cognitive-developmental approach within psychology. Central to this stance is the belief that as humans develop they naturally engage in increasingly complex forms of thought (Piaget, 1962). This occurs following various developmental milestones, and results in several distinct and systematic cognitive categories (Piaget, 1962). Specific to morality, Piaget (1932) argued that children's development can be divided into two distinct stages: the moral realism stage (5-9 years old), and the moral relativism stage (9-10+ years old). The former stage involves a belief in objective morality which is naturally derived from reality, in addition to a strict adherence to rules; the latter stage represents a focus on the

intent behind actions, which is reflective of a child's understanding that rules are created and subjective. When framing these stages as developmentally distinct, Piaget (1932) implies that utilitarianism is cognitively beneath deontology (i.e., reliant upon less complex aspects of cognition), as motive is more important than the outcome.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg (1963) proposed that individuals would progress through moral stages in a systematic, linear fashion. His theory can be divided into three distinct levels of moral thought, in which each level contains two sub-stages that reflect similar approaches. The first level is preconventional, and is focused on principles of punishment and reward, which follow egoistic (self-centered) principles. The second is conventional, involving adherence to rules (authority) and social norms. In this level, morality consists in prosocial behaviors. The final level is postconventional, which is characterized by the internalization of abstract concepts of fairness (e.g., deontology). Interestingly, the early levels involve influences which are considered by situationalism to be fairly important to morality (e.g., authority caused the results of the Milgram Obedience Study). However, since Kohlberg (1963) argues that these levels are eventually eclipsed by a more rational outlook, his theory certainly aligns with the philosophical theories noted previously.

However, Kohlberg's (1963) greatest contribution to moral psychology extends beyond his theory, as it was his methodology that redefined empirical studies of morality. In addition to being a theory of moral development, Kohlberg's work is an action-based approach, much like that of Kant (1785). To study moral decision-making in an empirical fashion, Kohlberg (1963) was the first to use moral dilemmas as a means to determine an individual's moral values. A moral dilemma is a hypothetical thought experiment which requires participants to choose between two (or more) possible choices. For example, the

‘Heinz Dilemma’ asks if it is acceptable for a man to steal unaffordable medicine to save his sick and dying wife (Kohlberg, 1963). In the simplest sense, individuals can respond to this scenario in two ways: stealing the medicine is either morally permissible, or it is not. However, Kohlberg (1963) also required participants to justify their decision (i.e., to provide an explanation as to why their choice was made), and through this process each response was classified into the stages of his theory. Since Kohlberg (1963) worked with individuals of varying ages, the justifications most common to a specific age group are those that presently compose his theory.

While Kohlberg’s specific dilemmas are rarely used today, this aspect of his methodology has remained popular within moral psychology. Comparably, the cognitive-developmental model has remained quite prevalent, and many recent theories have been labelled ‘neo-Kohlbergian’ due to their relation to Kohlberg’s (1963) work. For instance, a recent neo-Kohlbergian theory comes from Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau (1999), which expands upon the cognitive element of morality in terms of schemata (organized patterns of thought or behavior). This theory has been constructed around the Defining Issues Test (DIT) which contains five moral dilemmas, one of which is similar to the Heinz Dilemma described above. However, the DIT only asks participants to rate each dilemma in terms of moral significance, rather than verbally justifying why a specific decision was made (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma, 1999). Even so, the theory of Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, et al. (1999) is still reminiscent of Kohlberg’s (1963), as moral thought is divided into three stages of increasing complexity. In order, these stages reflect personal interest, social maintenance (aligning with social norms), and postconventional thought (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, et al., 1999). The only pronounced difference between

this theory and Kohlberg's (1963) is that the final stage reflects any number of rational justifications, rather than just deontological thought.

In addition, the Footbridge Dilemma (Thomson, 1985), asking participants if they would push an overweight person off a bridge to stop a runaway trolley about to kill five individuals, has become commonly used in moral research today (even if never used by Kohlberg). A recent example comes from Szekely, Opre, and Miu (2015), who used the Footbridge Dilemma to determine the influence of religiosity and emotionality on moral judgements. Since this scenario is known to elicit emotional responses (humans respond negatively to killing others), it was one of 12 moral dilemmas used to control for emotion (Szekely et al., 2015). The methodology of Szekely et al. (2015) closely aligned with that of Kohlberg (1963), as participants were presented with a scenario and asked to imagine themselves within it, then make a moral decision. Additionally, participants were given questionnaires to determine religiosity and emotional arousal during the decision-making process. Szekely et al. (2015) found that emotional arousal did not predict responses to the moral dilemmas, while religiosity involved higher rates of deontological responses (i.e., not killing the overweight individual during the Footbridge Dilemma). This supports Kohlberg's (1963) view since deontology was the most popular choice (made 62.3% of the time), and these decisions were made rationally, rather than emotionally. However, it must be noted that Szekely et al. (2015) only studied the influence of general emotional arousal on decision-making, rather than specific emotions. Some emotions (e.g., disgust) are known to significantly affect moral decisions (Olatunji & Puncochar, 2014). Since the Footbridge Dilemma involves death, which could certainly elicit feelings of disgust, this may be an aspect left untouched by Szekely et al. (2015).

In a comparable manner, Fetterman and Robinson (2013) assessed the difference between rational and emotional influences on moral decision-making. The methodology used is somewhat reminiscent of Kohlberg's (1963) framework, since it continues to use moral dilemmas. Fetterman and Robinson (2013) completed eight studies, of which two concerned moral decision-making. In one of these studies, participants were asked if they identified with their head or heart, aligning with a common metaphor for making rational or emotional decisions, respectively. Participants then responded to five moral dilemmas, each of which had a rational and emotional option that could be selected. Fetterman and Robinson (2013) found that individuals identifying with their heart tended to respond to moral dilemmas in an emotional manner, while those identifying with their head tended to make rational choices. In another study, Fetterman and Robinson (2013) showed that individuals tended to make emotional decisions when asked to point towards their heart, while those pointing towards their head made more rational decisions. Here, it must be noted that slight deception was used to have participants point towards a specific area, and that Fetterman and Robinson (2013) did not make any direct suggestions about the head-heart metaphor. At this time, it remains to be said that the commonalities between Kohlberg's (1963) work and that of Fetterman and Robinson (2013) ends here, since the latter did not require participants to justify their decisions. When considering the studies discussed so far (i.e., Fetterman & Robinson, 2013; Szekely et al., 2015), it is apparent that the use of moral dilemmas dominates psychological studies of morality (to further illustrate this point, see Christensen & Gomila (2012) for a meta-analysis on cognitive neuroscience). Connected to this usage of moral dilemmas, it is also clear that reason-based and atomistic theories do continue to guide theoretical discussions of morality.

However, moral psychology is a science and, like all empirical approaches, it must continue to evolve over time, in accordance with new evidence. Therefore, it is paramount that new approaches continue to be developed for the study of morality, especially those like Fetterman and Robinson (2013) that consider non-rational (e.g., emotional) factors alongside logic. This is particularly important when considering recent meta-analyses (e.g., Olatunji & Puncochar, 2014), which have connected various emotions (e.g., disgust) to morality.

Situationalism: External Influences on Morality

Directly contrasting with the ideas highlighted above is situationalism: a situation-first (rather than atomistic, or person-first) theory of morality that focuses on the contexts which surround our actions. Situationalism is particularly important to the psychological study of morality, since it explains several findings more accurately than abstract, reason-based theories; for example, the discrepancy between moral outlook and immoral actions commonly studied with respect to psychopathy (e.g., Tassy, Deruell, Mancini, Leistedt, & Wicker, 2013). The general premise behind this notion that situational factors account for moral behaviors better than character effectively describes situationalism as a whole, and has been discussed at length by Doris (2002). In doing so, his general claim is that moral psychologists ought to change their theoretical outlook to reflect the support which has been found for situationalism. For instance, the work of Sobesky (1983) showed that individuals within the postconventional stage (i.e., the most advanced moral stage, as per Kohlberg, 1963) continue to use earlier forms of moral reasoning such as punishment avoidance. Sobesky's (1983) study used the majority of the Heinz Dilemma, varying only the consequences the husband faced for theft. By doing so, Sobesky found that responses

would vary relative to the punishment (i.e., if the punishment was harsher, individuals were less willing to agree to theft). When considering that the methodology used by Sobesky (1983) is highly similar to Kohlberg's (1963), this criticism is valid. In effect, these findings show that Kohlberg's theory cannot fully explain moral decision-making, even within his own framework. Thus, it is vital to develop more alternative approaches to fill this explanatory gap. Since Sobesky's (1983) work can be viewed as a situationalist approach, it is logical to claim that new approaches should offer a similar expansion upon situationalism.

To further illustrate this point, it can be noted that various situationalist principles have been connected to the moral dilemma model for years, yet their importance has yet to be fully recognized. The Footbridge Dilemma (Thomson, 1985), for instance, is a situationalist expansion of the Trolley Problem (Foot, 1967), which asks participants if they would flip a switch to let a runaway trolley kill one person instead of five. Both of these scenarios involves the same possible outcomes: the utilitarian decision (to let one die) and the deontological decision (to let five die). The only difference between these scenarios is how actively the participant must contribute to an individual's death, yet the Trolley Problem usually invokes the utilitarian option, while the Footbridge Dilemma tends to invoke the deontological option (Thomson, 1985). To explain why each scenario involve different outcomes, many focus on abstract moral principles. This is often framed with respect to negative versus positive duties (what we are morally obligated to avoid, or do, respectively). In this case, the negative duty (i.e., not killing a human) is believed to override the positive one (i.e., maximizing utility for all humans), causing individuals to make the deontological choice. However, as Thomson (1985) notes, this explanation is

quite complex, and relies upon several assumptions such as moral character, rational objectivity (atomism), and a variety of internal processes (which surprisingly excludes emotions). In contrast, a situationalist explanation relies on just one assumption: that the context causes an emotional response (i.e., disgust or empathy concerning the thought of killing someone). Thus, the situationalist account is the simplest explanation, and best, as per Occam's razor.

However, the most prominent concepts within situationalism are those developed from studies which deviate entirely from the framework of moral dilemmas. Even when these studies directly concern moral principles, their methodologies typically align best with the field of social psychology. Since social psychologists often develop creative and rewarding methodologies, capable of producing significant results, it is vital to consider common approaches in this field to potentially apply to moral studies. Note that this is the general notion behind focusing on moral attribution, a principle of social psychology, to develop a non-traditional means to empirically study morality.

To support the claim that moral researchers ought to adopt methodological styles from social psychologists, consider the significant findings from the Milgram Obedience Study (1963). This experiment was motivated by a desire to better understand the events of World War II, where German soldiers, bureaucrats, and civilians were complicit in the Holocaust, and, thus, millions of deaths. This event offered a clear affront to the atomistic moral thought popular at the time, which would assume that German citizens would not ignore their moral values due to the context of war. Additionally, the relative similarity between German, European, and American morality (note both Germany and America

were predominately Protestant at this time) posed a general threat towards Western life, which would necessarily have to be ameliorated.

To study the influence that obedience to authority had on moral decision-making, Milgram (1963) devised a study in which researchers instructed participants to administer shocks to a confederate, located in another room, whenever the confederate answered a question incorrectly. With each incorrect answer, the intensity of the administered shock would increase, eventually becoming “lethal” (the voltage displayed would kill a human, if it were actually being received). To best replicate the authoritarian context of WWII, Milgram (1963) made sure to present the researchers in a formal and responsible manner (e.g., white lab coat to gain respect), so as to exert as much control possible. To establish the hypothesis for this study Milgram surveyed a class of university students, and asked them how many participants (out of 100) would actually complete the proposed study (i.e., obey the experimenter when asked to administer a “lethal” shock). The majority of students believed that nobody would complete the experiment; however, a single student believed that three participants would complete the experiment, which led Milgram to note a classroom mean of 1.2%. Due to the nature of this hypothesis, Milgram’s (1963) study can be considered as an attempt to reassert the validity of moral atomism.

During the study, Milgram (1963) noted that participants experienced significant anxiety and tension, increasing alongside the confederate’s own reactions which became more frantic as the study progressed (i.e., complaining about his heart; not responding following the “lethal” shock). This anxiety was believed to be caused by the participants violating their moral values. However, by simply requesting that participants continue, the experimenter convinced the majority (65%) to finish the study and administer “lethal”

shocks; this completion rate was significantly higher than the 1.2% hypothesized by Milgram (1963).

Similar results were discovered through Philip Zimbardo's (1973) Stanford Prison Experiment, in which situational influences overrode individuals' moral character. In this experiment, university students (from Stanford) were recruited to engage in a long-term study of prison environments, with the intention of researching the psychological effects of imprisonment. Zimbardo (1973) randomly divided students into two groups: prisoners or guards. Great care was made to ensure that prisoners were stripped of their identity, such that their real self was replaced by the role of an inmate. Once the experiment had begun, all participants displayed a significant and rapid change in behavior, of which the amount of dehumanization and prisoner abuse committed by the guards is of particular importance (Zimbardo, 1973). Zimbardo (2007) noted that none of these actions could be predicted through the personality batteries (i.e., a screening measure for psychopathy, Machiavellianism, etc.) given to prospective recruits. Therefore, completely normal and morally sound individuals acted in unethical ways, precisely due to the circumstances of the experiment (Zimbardo, 1973). However, Zimbardo (1973) believed that, within the context of the experiment, all participants acted correctly; each made decisions that were appropriate for the situation, even if such behaviors would be inappropriate (and harmful) in daily life. In essence, this is an expression of situationalist principles, which have been affirmed by Zimbardo in later writings, such as *The Lucifer Effect* (2007). In this book, he makes several claims surrounding human morality, and how easily our behaviors can be determined by situational factors. For instance, he criticizes the good-evil dichotomy (i.e., we are good while the other is evil) which is common to individualistic cultures. He also

claims that humans are more easily manipulated by external factors precisely *because* of such beliefs, as they become coupled with the false notion of moral atomism—that we are always in perfect control over our own actions, and thus incapable of evil (Zimbardo, 1974; 2007). Instead, Zimbardo (2007) argues that humans can, and will, respond much like the guards within the Stanford Prison Experiment—we are extremely susceptible to situational factors such as peer pressure and authority.

Another key opposition to moral atomism comes from Relationship Regulation Theory, which argues that morality is determined by the circumstances created by social relationships (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Within this theory, any actions conducive to the well-being of one's family (or close friends) are considered innately moral; in contrast, actions that harm one's family and friends are immoral. Here, the belief is that moral codes have historically been based on family values. While these values can certainly be rationalized post-hoc, Rai and Fiske (2011) argue that emphasis on family was a natural precursor to modern morality. This is best illustrated through the justification of harm: the belief that harm is morally justified when done to protect the self or family, which has been affirmed by various cultures. Classical Greek morality, for example, which provides the basis for much of Western thought, can be summarized as “help your friends, harm your enemies.” In essence, this outlook is a national acceptance of the justification of harm. Comparable notions can also be seen in modern societies (e.g., American), which affirm deadly force when an individual or their family is under immediate threat, in which any fatalities are considered justifiable homicides. When considering these points, Relationship Regulation Theory clearly connects to evolutionary thought, which explains why we often prioritize our family over others (i.e., we have a genetic and emotional obligation to ensure their

safety). Thus, it can be concluded that family relationships have an instinctual influence upon moral decision-making (Rai & Fiske, 2011). This supports the theories of Zimbardo (2007), who claims that social relationships, in general, comparably shape the morality of our behaviors. Additionally, Relationship Regulation Theory is well-supported by studies focusing on moral dilemmas. For instance, when the individual to be sacrificed during the Trolley Problem is a family member (genetic and spousal) or young person, participants are less likely to allow them to die (Bleske-Rechek, Nelson, Baker, Remiker, & Brandt, 2010). Since the Trolley Problem most often involves the utilitarian choice (i.e., let one die to save five), this displays a pronounced influence of instinct upon moral decision-making, as suggested by Rai and Fiske (2011).

Egoism and Self-Esteem: Selfish Influences on Morality

As mentioned previously, the present study will follow neither situationalism nor moral atomism perfectly; instead, it will focus on intrinsic and non-rational influences on morality. Specifically, the study will focus on the notion of ethical egoism as it relates to self-esteem, essentially looking at internal, unconscious biases that may influence moral judgement. Ethical egoism is, in short, a moral principle which claims that it is acceptable to do whatever is best for you, and that a fear of consequences is all that actually limits our actions (Plato, 1992/380 BCE). This stance carries the pronounced assumption that humans always act in their own self-interest, and thus it has been denounced by a variety of sources (e.g., Plato, 1992/380 BCE). However, this view of human nature (that we are naturally selfish) has remained quite prominent throughout history, and a multitude of moral theories have been constructed around it. For instance, contractarianism, or social contract theory (i.e., Hobbes, 1651), is an egoistic moral theory. This theory argues that

humans only create societies, and behave morally within them, because doing so is in their own self-interest. A comparable stance has been illustrated by Friedrich Nietzsche (2004), who believed that morality is simply based on the utility associated with a given action; actions that are useful are good, while those that are harmful are bad, and moral codes are constructed around what the lawmakers believe to be good. To support these ideas, consider the following: social contract theory provides the foundation for modern legal systems, which typically overlap with the moral values of the populace. In effect, this serves as a broad situational influence upon every human's moral outlook, and has been considered by atomistic moral theories (e.g., Kohlberg, 1963; Aristotle, 1995/350 BCE), just as a lesser influence upon morality than reason. However, considering the previous research discussed (i.e., Milgram, 1963; Zimbardo, 1973), the importance of situational factors such as legality and egoism may be downplayed by moral atomism.

To relate ethical egoism to self-esteem, we need only consider a basic assumption of social psychology: humans need to feel good about themselves. This idea is intuitive, and is supported by a variety of sources (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988), and is even found within Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Generally, this need is directed towards the reduction of anxiety, in which self-esteem is viewed as a shield against negative thoughts (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Self-esteem maintenance can be considered a clear instance of egoism, since it implies a level of personal interest in all actions. For example, obtaining positive regard through acts of kindness (e.g., holding open a door) may be used for self-esteem maintenance, which can (debatably) classify the action as selfish. Comparably, the fundamental attribution error, in which we attribute our own mistakes to external forces, but others' mistakes to internal factors (Ross, 1977) can also be considered an

egoistic principle. Since self-esteem is a predominately social need (i.e., we often require social support, in which others remind us of positive features), attributions will provide a solid framework to compare social and intrinsic factors with respect to morality. An attribution is a process by which individuals ascribe value (or lack thereof) to another; effectively, it is a process of judgement in which we determine if another party is deserving of positive regard. When considering this with respect to self-esteem and the fundamental attribution error, it is clear that humans have a clear bias towards the self, their outlook, and their own self-esteem. Logically, these biases should extend to the domain of morality.

Additionally, attribution can be related to dehumanization (viewing someone as below human), which is commonly used to explain immoral actions. For instance, while not directly mentioned within Milgram's (1963) work, his experiment reveals how easily authority figures can promote dehumanization. Continuing in terms of decision-making, dehumanization has been theoretically framed as a deliberate act of moral exclusion, in which individuals placed outside the moral community are not considered when dealing with ideas of fairness or harm-avoidance (Opatow, 1990). For example, if the overweight person during the Footbridge Dilemma was dehumanized, participants would not avoid harming them to save the five individuals about to be struck; thus, dehumanization may encourage participants to adopt the utilitarian perspective, which is uncommon for the Footbridge Dilemma.

However, dehumanization does not solely concern moral decision-making, and it can easily be extended into social psychology. Schwartz, Struch, and Bilsky (1990), for instance, consider dehumanization as the result of social segregation, where individuals

are classified as ingroup or outgroup members based on similarity (i.e., ingroup members are comparable to the individual, while outgroup members are different). Members of the outgroup are also infrahumanized, which means that they are viewed as less than human, but only in relation to the ingroup, which is implicitly viewed as fully human (Haslam & Loughan, 2014). For instance, Koval, Laham, Haslam, Bastian, and Whelan (2012) found that individuals rate negative traits of their ingroup more favorably, even while viewing outgroup members with the same trait more harshly. In essence, this suggests a group-wide application of the fundamental attribution error (i.e., Ross, 1977). Since attributions require individuals to assess the actions (or character) of another, and Koval et al. (2012) have revealed that ingroup members garner more favorable attributions, this suggests that infrahumanization may affect moral attributions. When considering the methodology of the present study, as discussed previously, if participants engage in behaviors similar to the actor within a scenario (i.e., the target for moral attribution), they may come to view the actor as an ingroup member. If this occurs, the actor will be viewed as human, while the victim may be infrahumanized; thus, the moral offences of the actor should be rated less harshly. This will likely reflect an overall process of self-esteem management, and, thus, some degree of egoistic principles.

Empathy: A Mediating Influence on Morality

While there is certainly a great deal of support for ethical egoism, as highlighted above, it is unwise to consider morality without empathy, as this appears in a multitude of moral theories. Empathy is often framed as an other-centered quality, directly contrasting with the idea of egoism, which is self-centered. However, these ideas are reconcilable, to some degree, since egoism does not actually deny that empathy occurs, but merely argues

that it is motivated by self-interest. Thus, the true opposition to egoism is altruism which, by definition, claims that humans can act against their own self-interest (i.e., purely in the interest of another). However, there are several issues with the idea of ‘genuine altruism,’ which requires a complete absence of personal gain to exist. It has been previously shown that by acting “altruistically,” humans are actually making decisions to reduce anxiety or promote positive affect (Sarlo et al., 2014). Other approaches (e.g., Nietzsche, 2004) have simply explained altruism in terms of utility; empathic cooperation has proved useful to building communities, vital for our protection and survival, thus humans are predisposed towards acting in this manner. This theory also aligns with reciprocal altruism, claiming that gift-giving encourages the receiver to assist the giver at a later time, thus presenting an implicit degree of self-interest (Trivers, 1971). Similarly, evolutionary thought often explains altruistic actions directed towards the family (e.g., the justification of harm, as per Rai & Fiske, 2011) as having some degree of self-interest in terms of genetic survival (Hamilton, 1963; 1964). When considering these issues associated with genuine altruism, it is clear that the present study’s theoretical background does remain valid.

Regardless of whether or not altruism is truly genuine, however, the fact remains that this, and empathy, are still factors which will influence morality. It is for this reason that an empathy measure has been included within this study, as this will serve as a fail-safe in case the primary hypothesis is not supported; empathy will best explain the null-hypothesis (i.e., that egoism will not influence moral attributions). Empathy describes a complex form of perspective-taking, in which an individual identifies with the mental and emotional states of another human. Since empathy has been often connected to morality (e.g., the Golden Rule is an empathetic notion), a significant degree of research has been

done on this topic. While there are too many associations to provide a complete list, there are several that warrant mention: empathy is linked to deontological thought (Conway & Gawronski, 2013); empathy increases motivation towards justice (Hoffman, 1990; 1993); prosocial inclinations are connected to empathy (Paciello et al., 2013); and high empathy relates to harm avoidance (an unwillingness to cause harm) (Miller, Hannikainen, & Cushman, 2014).

However, it is difficult to predict the influence that empathy will have within this study. In moral psychology (i.e., the above studies), empathy is typically considered with respect to moral dilemmas. In these cases, the participant is asked to empathize with the individuals involved in the scenario, and most commonly with the decision-maker. Thus, empathy often becomes a direct aspect of moral psychologists' experimental framework, and even the later justifications used for assessment. This is quite unlike the approach of the current study, which, in focusing upon attribution, will leave the empathetic process completely open. Since participants will not be asked, nor required, to empathize with an individual within the scenarios, they are free to identify with the actor, victim, both, or neither. Similarly, the target for participants' empathy will not be recorded, so this will not become an element of the study's framework. Thus, the empathetic process is much less predictable within this study; however, it is still beneficial to look towards the prior studies to inform any possible hypotheses that concern empathy, as they provide the best notion of how this will theoretically interact with moral attribution.

Present Study

As detailed previously, this study does not concern moral dilemmas, nor does it deal with moral decision-making. Instead, it takes a novel approach based on principles

of situationalism and ethical egoism, considering intrinsic, non-rational influences upon morality. This will be done through a framework of moral attribution. While traditional theorists such as Kant (1785) and Kohlberg (1963) have provided significant insight into our understanding of morality, a great disservice has been done by ignoring the possible contributions of Milgram (1963) and Zimbardo (1973). In effect, moral psychology has simply not adequately integrated itself with the field of social psychology, and this issue ought to be resolved. To accomplish this, it is necessary to develop new methodologies to assess morality, and this is precisely what the present study hopes to achieve. By focusing on moral attributions, the concept of self-interest (i.e., Nietzsche, 2004) will be taken to levels of (relative) extremity—to what extent can selfish influences be found? In modern life, especially with young adults, ethical egoism has become a frequent observation, perhaps more than genuine moral concern and empathetic principles. Thus, it is certainly beneficial to explore just how much humans are influenced by self-interest.

Therefore, the present study will require participants to complete a behavioral survey, in which they will note how frequently they have engaged in a variety of ‘morally questionable’ actions. These behaviors will be problematic in nature, yet common enough that many might not consider them as unethical (e.g., texting while driving). Participants will then respond to three scenarios, in which an actor will engage in one of the actions contained within the behavioral survey. Each scenario will involve one of two outcomes: a negative consequence for another individual (the victim), or a neutral conclusion. In highlighting the similarities between the participant and actor (i.e., behavioral similarity), it is proposed that an ingroup distinction will be created. To some degree, the participant may be encouraged to empathize with the actor, or even transfer their own self onto them.

From the data, it will be determined whether or not the severity of moral attributions (i.e., the participants' willingness to deny the actor moral status) relate to the participant's past behaviors. Additionally, any effects of empathy will be determined through the use of an empathy measure, and any differences between moral attributions depending upon the severity of the outcome will be assessed. Thus, three hypotheses will be tested:

1. Individuals who have a higher frequency of engaging in behaviors similar to the actor will provide less-severe moral attributions (i.e., view them as more morally permissible) for that scenario than individuals who have not engaged in these behaviors infrequently.
2. Individuals higher in empathy will provide harsher moral attributions in each scenario than those low in empathy.
3. Individuals responding to a scenario with a negative outcome will provide harsher moral attributions than those responding to the same scenario with a neutral outcome.

Methods

Participants

For this study, participants were obtained through one of three processes: a link for the study was circulated through Facebook, several links for the study were left in a public area, and one classroom was directly asked to participate. In total, 131 individuals completed the online survey. Respondents were predominately female ($n = 107$), with a small number of male respondents ($n = 15$) and individuals who did not disclose their gender ($n = 5$). Ages ranged from 17 to 78 ($M = 24.94$). The exact number of participants varied depending on the test run (n values ranged from 79 to 128), which depended upon the questions that were answered or the nature of the test. Since few questions were used for assessment, failing to answer one immediately excluded participants' data from being

assessed. Some participants' data was removed to run ANOVAs, as these values had to be dichotomized.

Materials

The questionnaire (The Attributions Survey) for this study was located online, and was distributed through Survey Monkey. It was divided into several sections, which can be found throughout the Appendices (A-D).

The first section of the questionnaire was a welcome page, which contained both the informed consent form and an inviting cat picture (see Appendix A). This was done to make the experiment a more enjoyable experience for the participants.

The second section was the Behavioral Survey, which was created for this study. This asked participants to disclose how frequently they have engaged in sixteen morally questionable behaviors (e.g., running a red light). Each question followed a 5-point Likert scale, in which responses could range from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*Frequently*). See Appendix B for the Behavioral Survey.

The third section, located in Appendix C, was a collection of three scenarios that were constructed for this study. Each scenario described an actor engaging in one of the activities within the Behavioral Survey: sleeping with someone in a relationship, texting while driving, and not tipping a waiter. Scenarios had two possible outcomes, a negative or neutral consequence, which made use of the same introductory premise. Participants were asked to rate how immorally the scenario's actor had behaved on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*Not at all Immorally*) to 4 (*Extremely Immorally*).

The final section of this study was the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ): a 16-question survey of empathetic tendencies made freely available for academic use

(Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009). All questions on the TEQ reflect either the presence or absence of an empathetic quality (with questions involving the absence of empathy being reverse-scored). Responses can range from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*Always*). These responses are summed to provide an overall measure of participants' empathy, which can then be analyzed as a continuous variable. After this section, some basic demographics questions (i.e., age and gender) were included.

Procedure

The entirety of this data was collected online through Survey Monkey. To begin the survey, participants had to follow a link to the website, which was advertised in the manners highlighted above under 'Participants'. Once the page was opened, participants were required to progress through each section in order, beginning with the informed consent form. Here, it was noted that participants' responses were not recorded by the experimenter, and were thus anonymous and confidential for the purposes of the study (however, as Survey Monkey is an American website, these responses could be collected by the American government in accordance with the Patriot Act). During the informed consent section, and prior to completing the Behavioral Survey, participants were reminded that they were free to not answer any question they felt uncomfortable with, and that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Following these reminders, participants completed the Behavioral Survey, which provided an overview of their past actions. Then, they were presented with the three scenarios described above. Scenarios appeared in a randomized order, and the conclusion for each scenario (either negative or neutral) was randomly assigned to participants. In each case, participants were required to rate how immorally the actor had behaved. After this, participants completed the TEQ to

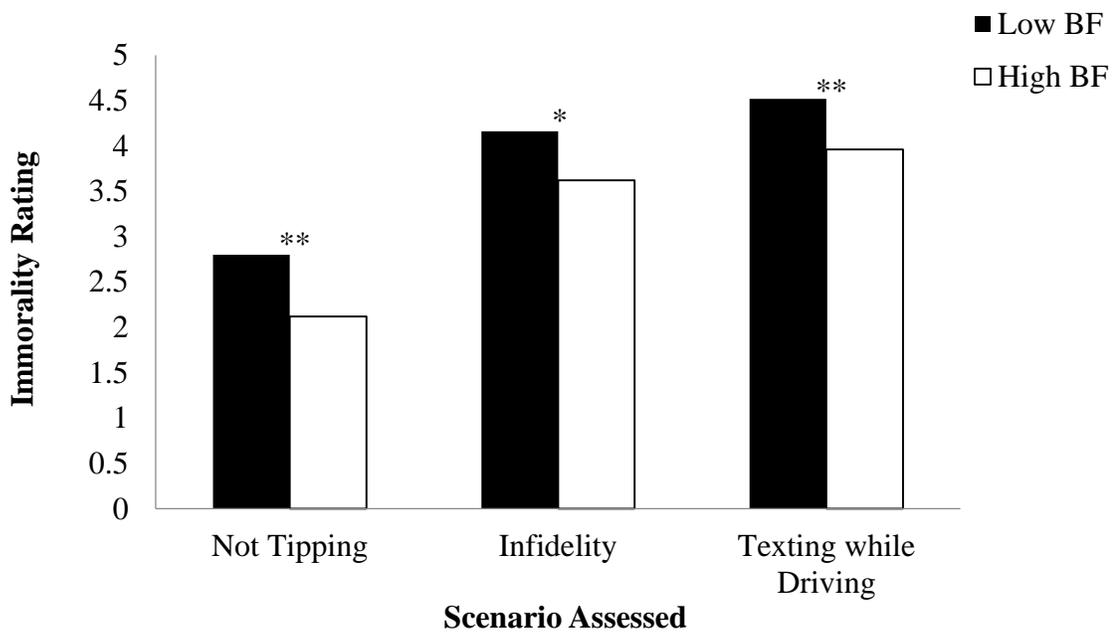
determine their level of empathy. For assessment, responses on the TEQ were summed, as per the instructions of Spreng et al. (2009). Finally, participants were asked to provide their age and gender, and were then thanked for their involvement with the study. The contact information for the researchers in the study was provided again at this time.

Results

For this study, several tests were run. Please note that for each test, all responses were recoded for analysis with SPSS. Thus, responses of 0 became scores of 1, responses of 1 became scores of 2, and so on. Overall, scores used could range from 1 to 5.

Initially, a three-factor between-subjects ANOVA was run for each scenario, in which the participants' immorality ratings served as the dependent variable, while their 'behavioral frequency' (response on the Behavioral Survey question featured within the scenario), TEQ score (empathy), and severity of the outcome given were the independent variables. This test was run to determine if significant interactions existed between the variables, given the documented relationship between empathy and harm-avoidance (i.e., Miller et al., 2014). Each independent variable was dichotomized based on the nature of the scenario. For all three, empathy was considered 'high' when above the median score of 65, and 'low' when below this score. In each case, median responses were not included within the analysis. In the Not Tipping and Texting while Driving scenarios, behavioral frequency was classified as 'high' when above the median score of 2, and 'low' when below this score. Again, median responses were not analyzed. However, since the median behavioral frequency score for the Infidelity scenario was 1 (*Never*), this score could not be removed from the analysis. Thus, 'high' scores were those above this median score, and 'low' scores were those at the median.

For each scenario, individuals with high behavioral frequency viewed the actors as behaving significantly less immorally (Not Tipping, $F(1, 71) = 10.14, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .13$; Infidelity, $F(1, 113) = 5.28, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = .05$; Texting while Driving, $F(1, 88) = 8.47, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .09$). These results are illustrated in Figure 1. However, empathy and outcome severity did not significant impact immorality ratings in any scenario, and there was no significant interaction among any variables.



Note. * = $p < .05$, and ** = $p < .01$.

Figure 1. The differences in immorality ratings, based on individuals' behavioral frequency (BF).

Since no significant interactions were present in the ANOVA, three regressions were run to assess the entirety of the data, since dichotomizing removed as many as 46 participants from the Not Tipping scenario. For each regression, the criterion used was the participants' immorality ratings of the actor. Behavioral frequency, empathy, and outcome severity were used as the predictor variables.

The overall regression run for the Not Tipping Scenario was significant, $F(3, 124) = 6.32, p = .001, R^2 = .14$. The regression run for the Infidelity scenario reached marginal significance, $F(3, 124) = 2.32, p = .079, R^2 = .05$. However, each predictor variable was still assessed, as these were planned comparisons. The overall regression for the Texting while Driving scenario was found to be significant, $F(3, 124) = 3.73, p = .013, R^2 = .08$. Specific information for each regression can be found in Table 1. Note that behavioral frequency was routinely found to be the only significant predictor of immorality ratings.

Table 1

General Information for the Predictor Variables in each Scenario.

	<i>M</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Not Tipping					
Severity	1.54	.04	0.44	.660	.07
Empathy	64.59	.18	2.10	.040	.24 *
BF	2.45	-.29	-3.23	.001	-.31 *
Infidelity					
Severity	1.48	-.13	-1.46	.150	-.10
Empathy	64.62	.10	1.17	.250	.08
BF	1.33	-.19	-2.18	.030	-.17 *
Texting					
Severity	1.45	.13	1.52	.131	.16
Empathy	64.62	-.03	-0.32	.750	-.01
BF	2.30	-.24	-2.80	.006	-.25 *

Note. The means (*M*) simply refer to the average score for each category; * = $p < .05$.

Discussion

The present study sought to determine the influence that an individual's history of behavior has upon their moral attributions of other parties, particularly those engaging in similar behaviors. This aligned with various principles of situationalism since the focus was placed upon non-rational factors, yet still addressed intrinsic properties as do theories of moral atomism. Participants rated how frequently they engaged in various morally questionable actions, completed an empathy measure (the TEQ), and rated how morally acceptable an actor was within a given scenario, in which the consequences were varied. The first hypothesis of this study was that individuals high in behavioral similarity to the actor would provide lower immorality ratings for the scenario's actor (i.e., consider them to be more morally permissible). This hypothesis was supported for each scenario. Since behavioral similarity is non-rational in nature, this suggests morality is more malleable, and involves more unconscious processes, than atomistic theories have suggested. Thus, this finding aligns more closely with the view of situationalism. Specifically, it shows the situational influence of the self, in which each individual interprets a scenario based on their own behavioral history. Although the scenario itself is the immediate situational influence, this is best viewed with respect to reciprocal determinism, in which individuals influence their environment, just as the environment influences them (Bandura, 1978). In effect, the scenario can only provide a situational influence inasmuch as the individual interprets its content. Thus, the influence of the scenario is mediated by the individual's own perspective, in which past behavior plays a key role.

Since this study is framed with respect to attribution, these points suggest a crucial means by which moral systems can develop over time, on an individual basis.

Seeing as individuals will be more accepting of people who engage in behaviors similar to them, they will likely refrain from criticizing the moral outlooks (or actions) of these people. When a certain behavior is condemned less frequently, it will naturally be viewed as more morally acceptable; therefore, it will become more common, which furthers its morally accepted status. Through this process, moral codes can certainly be developed over time. For an example, consider the recent acceptance of same-sex marriage, even by many Christians. Overall, this implies a basic avoidance of hypocrisy. Additionally, it involves behaviors that can be connected to the fundamental attribution error (i.e., Ross, 1977), since this focuses on self-esteem maintenance, which is often extended to group membership. Individuals with high behavioral similarity (to the actor) may identify with the actor during the scenarios; thus, these individuals may view the actor as morally permissible as a means to justify their own lifestyle, by merit of connection to the actor. This suggests a striking theoretical implication of the present study: egoism has a basis in moral outlook, despite being actively denied by various moral theories (e.g., Mill, 1863, which relies on altruism). This can be slightly connected to Piagetian (1932; 1962) theories, which do note egoism as influencing moral outlooks during pre-conventional levels. However, the findings of this study suggest that these factors have a more pronounced impact in later life than previously acknowledged.

Interestingly, these processes by which the fundamental attribution bias can be extended to group membership can explain the (general) lack of support for the second hypothesis: that individuals high in empathy would display higher immorality ratings. When considering groups, moral attribution is frequently determined by dehumanization and inhumanization (Haslam & Loughan, 2014). Since moral standing is primarily

granted to humans, the attribution of moral status depends upon the level of humanity allotted to a given party. Thus, when ingroup members are considered as more human than outgroup members, those within the ingroup come to have greater moral standing than outgroup members (Haslam & Loughan, 2014). Naturally, the ingroup-outgroup distinction promotes empathizing with ingroup members, since they are considered more human. Thus, while individuals are often encouraged to empathize with people subjected to harm, aligning with consequentialist theories (e.g., Mill, 1863), it is impossible to force an individual to empathize with a certain party. Participants could have easily empathized with the actor, rather than the victim, which becomes more likely if the actor is viewed as an ingroup member due to behavioral similarity. Thus, the role of empathy within moral attribution remains quite ambiguous. However, empathy significantly predicted ratings of immorality (regardless of outcome) for the Not Tipping scenario. Thus, it is clear that this scenario is, in some way, distinct from the other two. This could be explained in terms of deontology (e.g., Kant, 1785), in which participants primarily consider the intent behind the featured actions. Due to the nature of service careers, in which waiters rely on tips to make a living (often not earning the minimum hourly wage), the action within the Not Tipping scenario can be viewed as actively denying someone what they justly deserve. Therefore, the intent behind acting is comparatively cruel, and more actively harmful, than the other scenarios, which are insensitive and motivated by selfishness.

Similarly, the third hypothesis (greater outcome severity would involve higher immorality ratings) was not supported within any scenario. Theoretically, this supports Piaget's (1932) theory of moral development, which considers consequentialism to align with moral realism (found from ages 5-9), while deontology is a more advanced outlook

(found from ages 9-10+). This stance is also shared by Kohlberg (1963), who considered deontology as the most advanced moral stage. Since all participants are clearly within the moral relativism stage (all are above age 10), the motivation behind the actors' decisions should naturally be considered above the outcome. Additionally, it can be noted that this hypothesis was based on previous moral studies concerning decision-making, which link outcome severity to action refusal (i.e., the Footbridge Dilemma and the Trolley Problem involve the same possible outcome for the victims, but the former involves a more active role in causing harm which involves more severe emotional consequences for the actor). However, attribution is not equivalent to judgement (highlighted by hypothesis one), and, therefore, the two moral procedures may involve significantly different processes of justification and consideration.

However, this may also reflect a limitation of the study, in that the scenario's outcomes may not be distinct enough to warrant disparate moral attributions. While each outcome was kept relatively tame to avoid exposing participants to high-stress situations (e.g., death was not used as a consequence for the Texting While Driving scenario), such extreme consequences may be required to find significant differences. Thus, the scenarios may be considered a key limitation of this study, as none were proven to involve distinct moral attributions prior to the study. However, this showcases a perfect aspect of this study to be improved for future research, as these scenarios can be empirically refined, such that any effects that outcome severity has upon moral attribution can be discovered. If the improved scenarios still fail to produce significant results, then the explanation offered previously (i.e., consequentialism does not matter when compared to deontology) will be supported instead.

Additional limitations of this study include the population itself, which was 82% female. However, while some have theorized that men and women have different moral outlooks (e.g., Gilligan, 1977), other studies have found that no significant gender differences exist (e.g., Jaffee & Hyde, 2000; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000). As Gilligan's (1977) ethics of care explicitly relates to empathy (not found to significantly affect moral attributions), and is widely considered empirically unsound, the gender disparity within this study is likely not a pronounced limitation. It can also be noted that each scenario used gender-neutral names, which would allow participants to identify with any party regardless of gender (i.e., by promoting similarity for both male and female participants). Another limitation of this study is cultural in nature, since all scenarios were created from a Western perspective. Since other nations have different moral outlooks (Shweder, 1990), the findings of this study cannot be generalized to different cultures. Finally, the survey itself was introduced with a photograph of a cat, which, if successful, may have altered participants' mood for the better. While this is a noble aim, this influx of positivity may have caused ratings to be more lenient on all accounts, and can be considered a minor extraneous variable.

To conclude, the present study has provided more evidence for situationalism, and has done so with respect to intrinsic values and how they relate to society at large. This outlook, along with situationalism in general, ought to be considered for future research. This study also presents an alternate methodology for psychologists to study morality, which, if used, may provide additional understanding of the mechanisms that create moral outlooks. Moreover, these same processes are implicitly contained within notable theories, such as Piaget's (1932), which reflect a vital element of moral theories in

general: instructing others in how to act. Ultimately, it is clear that psychology must expand how it presently approaches morality, develop and refine new methodologies to determine individual and social underpinnings of moral stances, and focus on qualitative differences rather than quantitative analyses. By expanding upon moral psychology in these ways, we will reach a fuller understanding of morality, inclusive of rationality, emotion, and various non-rational individual factors.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of this Informed Consent Form is to ensure that you understand the nature of this study and your involvement in it. This form will provide information about the study, and give you the opportunity to decide if you want to participate.

Researchers: This study is being conducted by Niall Stewart as part of the course requirements for PSYC 4951 and 4959 – Honours Project in Psychology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Carla Krachun.

Purpose: This study is designed to investigate attribution—how we perceive others. The results will be used to complete a dissertation to meet the requirements for an undergraduate degree. The study may be used in a larger research project, and may be published in the future.

Task Requirements: You will be asked to respond to two questionnaires about yourself, as well as respond to a scenario. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and we are only interested in your opinions. Any question that you do not wish to answer may be omitted.

Duration: The study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits: This survey deals with personal questions involving potentially immoral or illegal acts. There are no other obvious risk or benefits to your participation.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The responses to this survey are anonymous and entirely confidential. IP addresses will not be collected, thus individual responses cannot be identified. All information will be analyzed and reported on a group basis. Although I am not collecting any identifying information, the on-line survey company that is hosting this survey (SurveyMonkey) is located in the United States and, as such, is subject to US laws. The US Patriot Act allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If you choose to participate in this survey, you understand that your responses to the survey questions will be stored and may be accessed in the USA. The security and privacy policy for the web survey company can be found at the following link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may end your participation at any time. However, once the survey has been completed your data cannot be removed, as I am not collecting any identifying information and individuals cannot be linked to their own responses.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this study, feel free to contact me at nstewart@grenfell.mun.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Carla Krachun, at

ckrachun@grenfell.mun.ca. If you are interested in knowing the results of this study, please contact me after April 30, 2015; alternatively, the results will also be presented at the Grenfell Psychology Undergraduate Students' Conference on March 30, 2016. If any personal concerns arise during this study, contact the toll free, 24 hour Adult Mental Health Crisis Line at (709)777-3200, or 1-800-737-4668.

This study has been approved by an ethics review process in the psychology program at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland and has been found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy.

By proceeding to the next page, consent is implied.

(Introductory Cat Picture)



Appendix B

How often have you engaged in the following behaviours?

	0 (Never)	1 (Rarely)	2 (Sometimes)	3 (Often)	4 (Frequently)
Using a fake ID					
Driving while tired					
Having unprotected sex					
Not tipping a waiter					
Cheating on exams or assignments					
Not returning a lost item					
Lying to get something					
Running a red light					
Sleeping with someone in a relationship					
Leaving a restaurant without paying					
Speaking loudly in a library					
Texting while driving					
Ignoring the homeless					
Bullying					
Jaywalking					
Slacking off at work					

Appendix C

Taylor (Texting While Driving) – Neutral Outcome

Taylor is driving home, and receives a text message from a friend. Taylor immediately begins to reply with another text, while still moving down the road. At the end of the street, another driver has stopped for a red light. Taylor is too preoccupied with the phone to notice them. Taylor sends the text message, finally looks up, and notices the stopped car. Taylor stops just in time and avoids hitting the other vehicle, and is quite surprised due to the near-collision.

To what extent would you consider Taylor to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Taylor (Texting While Driving) – Negative Outcome

Taylor is driving home, and receives a text message from a friend. Taylor immediately begins to reply with another text, while still moving down the road. At the end of the street, another driver has stopped for a red light. Taylor is too preoccupied with the phone to notice them. Taylor sends the text message, finally looks up, and notices the stopped car. However, Taylor is unable to stop in time and crashes into the other vehicle. Taylor is left unharmed, but the other driver is taken to the hospital to be treated for whiplash.

To what extent would you consider Taylor to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Alex (Not Tipping a Waiter) – Neutral Outcome

Alex has decided to eat at a local diner this evening, but has become frustrated with the service. Sydney, the waiter, has made several mistakes, and appears to be fairly inattentive. Thus, Alex has decided not to tip the waiter at all. Sydney has been working large amounts of overtime to pay for rent, made unaffordable by the abrupt departure of a roommate. Due to fatigue, Sydney's quality of work has dramatically decreased. Luckily, Sydney's base pay is high enough to pay for rent without tips.

To what extent would you consider Alex to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Alex (Not Tipping a Waiter) – Negative Outcome

Alex has decided to eat at a local diner this evening, but has become frustrated with the service. Sydney, the waiter, has made several mistakes, and appears to be fairly inattentive. Thus, Alex has decided not to tip the waiter at all. Sydney has been working large amounts of overtime to pay for rent, made unaffordable by the abrupt departure of a roommate. Due to fatigue, Sydney’s quality of work has dramatically decreased. Because of poor work quality (and the resultant lack of tips), Sydney is unable to pay for rent and is shortly evicted.

To what extent would you consider Alex to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Jesse (Infidelity) – Neutral Outcome

Jesse is at a party this weekend and has volunteered to be a designated driver. Halfway through the evening Jesse is approached by Casey, who wants to sleep with them. Jesse knows that Casey is in a relationship, but agrees anyways. Afterwards, Jesse and Casey both agree that it would be best to stop their involvement, and to never speak of this incident again. Since the rest of the guests were too busy with the party to notice them, nobody ever finds out about what happened.

To what extent would you consider Jesse to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Jesse (Infidelity) – Negative Outcome

Jesse is at a party this weekend and has volunteered to be a designated driver. Halfway through the evening Jesse is approached by Casey, who wants to sleep with them. Jesse knows that Casey is in a relationship, but agrees anyways. Sometime after the weekend has ended, Casey's partner finds out about what happened during the party and immediately breaks up with Casey. Since Casey was currently living with their partner, Casey has suddenly become homeless.

To what extent would you consider Jesse to have acted immorally?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all Immorally	Barely Immorally	Somewhat Immorally	Fairly Immorally	Extremely Immorally
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Appendix D

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

1. When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too
2. Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal
3. It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully
4. I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy
5. I enjoy making other people feel better
6. I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me
7. When a friend starts to talk about his\her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else
8. I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything
9. I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods
10. I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses
11. I become irritated when someone cries
12. I am not really interested in how other people feel
13. I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset
14. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them
15. I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness
16. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him\her

Scoring Item responses are scored according to the following scale for positively worded items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16. Never = 0; Rarely = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Always = 4. The following negatively worded items are reverse scored: 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15. Scores are summed to derive total for the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire.