WHY BE GOOD? THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST IN MORAL PERSONALITY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

September 2011

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Abstract

What motivates people to devote their lives to promoting the greater good? This dissertation advances the reconciliation model, which explains moral motivation within a developmental framework by positing that, for the mature, the relationship between self-promoting (agentic) and other-promoting (communal) motives transforms from one of mutual competition to one of synergy. That is, the model proposes that moral exemplars, in particular, integrate agency and communion in their psychological functioning. Most people, on the other hand, do not become highly virtuous partly because they developmentally stagnate, failing to integrate these motives. The majority of leaders and other successful people also fail to integrate the two, and instead continue to develop agentic motives while attenuating communal motives, resulting in unmitigated agency. Three studies test claims concerning the endpoints of development. Relying on a young-adult sample of student club leaders, Study 1 pinpoints the specific values that usually compete within the moral domain. Study 2 finds evidence of integrated agency and communion in the personalities of recipients of a national award for decades of contribution to the greater good (in contrast to a demographically matched comparison group). Study 3 explores the motives of a “moral dream team” compared to those of a similarly influential set of heroes, icons, leaders, and revolutionaries. The findings are that exemplars treat agency as a means to an end of communion while, for most influential people, agency merely begets more agency. Agency, communion, and the relationship between them hold considerable promise in explaining moral motivation, its development, and the processes that support lives of extraordinary moral commitment.
Preface

All three research chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) of this dissertation have been published or are under review at scientific, peer-review journals. I am the senior author on all three articles and held the primary role in formulating hypotheses, designing the studies, analyzing the data, and writing the manuscripts. I was responsible for the majority of the work done in each study. All three studies were performed under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence J. Walker. Collaborators Amanda Riches, Brenda Lee, and William Dunlop made minor contributions to the studies reported in Chapters 3 and 4 by helping with data coding, and by making minor contributions in the authorship process. All three studies were approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) of UBC, with certificate numbers listed below.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Larry Walker, Mark Schaller, and Karl Aquino for insightful challenges, suggestions, and encouragement. I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Larry Walker, for rescuing me from Wyoming, and investing in me.

Funding from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as both fellowship and grant support, made much of this research possible. Thank you to Zephyr Café and Boulevard Roasting Company for the tasty, physiological stimulation and pleasant working ambiance. Finally, I thank Sarah for being behind me when I needed it most.
Dedication

To my dad
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

One of modern society’s defining goals is development. Intellectual, industrial, and economic progress, modern thinkers assumed, would uniformly improve the rights and welfare of the individual while increasing prosperity and advancing social order. But then came World War II. Nazism—one of the most vicious regimes on human record—was not a product of feudalism or anarchy but instead was born of a Western, industrialized, and educated nation. Rather than acting as a prophylaxis against doing harm to others, technological, political, and educational developments seemed to have expedited monstrosities such as the Holocaust. In reaction, Western thinkers recognized that our simplistic understanding and investment in development had been askew.

Unable to explain how centuries of modern progress could crescendo into the Third Reich, Auschwitz, and Hiroshima, some thinkers simply jettisoned the concepts of good, bad, development, and regression. The problem with this nihilistic move was its pitching the “baby with the bathwater,” rejecting the contribution of centuries of achievement (e.g., in medicine, science, and the arts) along with our technologies of destruction. Moral psychology emerged as a field of study to defend the notion of development as a cornerstone of civil society. Part of what made the West prone to Nazism, I argue, was an incomplete understanding of how persons develop.

Esteeming mastery and industry, society had efficient tools for fostering mathematics, reading, and writing aptitudes; but these morally neutral tools probably served Oskar Schindler just as they did Adolf Hitler. What was missing in socialization and education was a complementary toolset for compassion, moral judgment, and conscience.
Moral Development

Before we can nurture moral development in children, we need to understand the psychology of morality—how it works and how it develops. Half a century ago, behaviorism was the dominant psychological tradition. Behaviorism focused on the environmental contingencies (viz., the external rewards and punishments) that a living being experienced, and how these shaped behavior. In this tradition, the mind was akin to a “black box” into which psychologists need not peer. All the meaningful action was to be found outside the person. Morality, in this framework, amounted to behavioral conformity to societal norms. Implicitly, behaviorism espoused an ethical relativist view, wherein morality is defined only relative to a culture. Within the boundaries of civil societies, this premise seemed defensible and remained unchallenged; but the horrors of World War II—a conflict perpetuated by conformity to fascism—showcased the divergence of conformity from any kind of palatable morality. Untenable became any morality defined as passive obedience to cultural norms.

Kohlberg (1958, 1969) launched the study of moral development with a premise that morality can and should go beyond conformity to cultural norms, particularly when those norms fail to protect human dignity. Only by reasoning through moral problems in accord with moral principles, he held, can individuals grasp this disjunction and move beyond (even against) the dominant culture or authority when appropriate. Kohlberg’s theory thus shifted the prime focus of moral development away from behavior, recentering it on thought processes (for a review, see Walker, 2004a). The key, paradigm-defining premise of his model held that individuals’ reasoning is fundamental to the moral experience, determines the quality of a moral position, and is nonreducible to behavioral outcomes. Consequentially, Kohlberg argued that psychologists must peer into the “black box” after all.
Kohlberg argued that moral reasons emerge from three different psychological orientations: (a) to personal expedience, (b) to social conformity and adherence to cultural norms, and (c) to principled, inclusive respect for persons. The latter forms are better at solving moral problems and more philosophically defensible. Moreover, research (Walker, 1988) demonstrated that, cross-culturally, individuals develop from personal to conventional and sometimes to principled reasoning. Thus, Kohlberg’s theory articulates an end-point goal for moral development (viz., principled reasoning), has cross-cultural applicability, represents a framework for evaluating the reasoning of individuals in a different culture, and thus allows one to distinguish the Hitlers and Eichmanns from the Schindlers of the world.

Kohlberg’s model received much attention and validating research in the 1980s and 1990s. As the dominant model of moral psychology, the model also received several challenges, leaving the legacy and take-home message of his model in question. In this dissertation, I address and build on a critique of the Kohlbergian model. By and large, however, I am sympathetic to most of his strong claims. In three empirical studies, I address the question, “Why be good?”, building upon a sympathetic expansion of Kohlberg’s model (viz., Blasi’s, 1984, and Damon’s, 1984, Self Model), and introducing and validating a new model of moral motivation.

Why be Good?

An important challenge to Kohlberg’s theory concerns the question, “Why be good?” What does a person have at stake in acting morally? Does sophisticated moral reasoning always, usually, or ever provide sufficient motivation to overcome self-interest? Kohlberg assumed that truly understanding a morally charged situation would necessarily compel a person to make good on a moral judgment. Blasi’s (1980) pivotal review, however, revealed
a weak association between stage of moral reasoning and associated moral behaviors—a problem known as the “judgment–action gap” (Walker, 2004b). People often understand what is right but then act discordantly. Moral reasoning thus seems to not be motivation enough to do the good. In other words, principled moral reasoning is a necessary but not sufficient psychological function for being virtuous.

Many scholars soon recognized that Kohlberg’s exclusive focus on moral rationality failed to describe all the important psychological functions of the moral agent; included in the missing functions was moral motivation. How might other morally charged aspects of the person (e.g., motivation, emotions, values) motivate individuals to live the good life? How might these functions answer the question, “Why be good?”

Bakan’s (1966) “Duality of Human Existence”—agency and communion—offers a promising framework of human motivation and entry point. I define communion as motives that promote the interests of others. Perhaps people act prosocially when they feel communally motivated. While sympathetic to this intuition, I argue that individual and situational difference in communal motives is only (almost) half of the motivational story; the other half concerns agency. I define agency as motives that promote the interests of the self (viz., self-interest). On the face of it, agency would appear to undermine or interfere with communion. As Bakan put it, “The villain is unmitigated agency. The moral imperative is to try to mitigate agency with communion” (p. 14). A first intuition is that the virtuous are strongly communal and weakly agentic.

This intuition is concordant with assumptions implicit in Kohlberg’s model, wherein moral sensibilities are modeled as being at loggerheads with the self’s basic desires and passions: The moral agent is a principled thinker whose moral convictions were sufficiently
forceful to trump the self’s desires. But if one’s moral concerns inherently conflict with the
self’s interests, an important problem arises: Why would anyone bother with morality?
What interest does the actor have in following a moral conviction? Might agency provide the
impetus?

In the heyday of Kohlberg’s theory, Blasi (1984) and Damon (1984) began arguing
that doing the right thing manifests in mature people not in spite of but because of their
agentic ambitions and drives. Agency (as I define it) concerns furthering one’s self-interests,
which seem to out-compete communal aims in contemporary society (Bauer & Wayment,
2008; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985). But Damon’s developmental
scheme transcends this schism: For the fully developed, moral actions are motivated by
“enlightened self-interest.” Enlightened self-interest is the personality state in which the
self’s desires (agency) and moral convictions (communion) become one. Thus, the
relationship between agency and communion may be synergistic or antagonistic (or
somewhere in between); I argue that this relationship is an important personality variable
that differs between people and, in fact, follows a developmental pattern.

Morality is motivated by an enlightened self-interest when a person promotes their
own interests by promoting the interests of others. In a holistic sense, the self and the moral
become united. Offering early evidence of this phenomenon, Colby and Damon’s (1992)
qualitative analysis of moral exemplars prompted the conclusion that “these men and women
have vigorously pursued their individual and moral goals simultaneously, viewing them in
fact as one and the same. Rather than denying the self, they define it with a moral center…. They seamlessly integrate their commitments with their personal concerns, so that the
fulfillment of the one implies the fulfillment of the other” (p. 300). But does this describe
most people in most situations or is this a rare phenomenon?

More generally, what is the nature of the relationship between agency and communion? Are they (a) mutually oppositional (as Kohlberg and others imply); (b) independent, orthogonal, and modular; or (c) synergistic and united? Or does their relationship within individuals’ motivational functioning vary with development? A primary objective of the present set of studies is to identify some of the divergent ways that researchers have conceptualized agency and communion; and then propose a conciliatory perspective. The new perspective—the reconciliation model—integrates insights from diametrically opposed perspectives, arranging them within a developmental scheme. In brief, the argument is that agency and communion are antagonistic motives early in development, ones which grow independently; however, some individuals integrate the two as they approach maturity. Many people remain dualistic in their motivational functioning, stagnate prior to the developmental endpoint, or attenuate one motive to make room for the other to continue to grow.

The prediction that maturity entails the integration of agency and communion amounts to a paradox. When agency promotes the interests of the self and communion promotes the interests of others, agency and communion entail a mutually oppositional forces. How can one advance one’s own situation and the plight of others simultaneously? How do moral exemplars integrate these dialectical themes?

The reconciliation model explains this paradox within a developmental framework. For all young persons (future moral exemplars included) development involves the strengthening and elaboration of these motives in a mutually segregated fashion. Research with a “normal” sample showed that, typically, one or the other motive (but rarely both) is
active at a given time (Fournier, Moskowitz, & Zuroff, 2009). However segregated these motives are, they are not independent; throughout this initial developmental phase, they remain in mutual tension. This tension poses little trouble for either pursuit until the modalities become highly elaborated and begin to vie for the motivational, attentional, and temporal resources of the person. At this point, an Eriksonian (1968) crisis of conviction emerges, manifest as a dualistic choice between agentic and communal ends: “Should I get ahead in my job or be there for my kid’s soccer game?”, “Do I play to win or play fair?”, “Will I make a lot of money or do something for my community?”.

The reconciliation model holds this period of conflict, likely arising in adolescence or later, to be a critical period of personality development. This crisis is particularly important because multiple resolutions are available. Stagnation or regression to earlier forms presents one possibility; attenuating one motive to provide growing room for the other is a second common resolution. When communion gives way to agency, unmitigated agency—rampant greed, materialism, and lust for power—results. The most adaptive resolution, however, is the creative reconciliation of the tension between agency and communion, and their mutual integration. This reconciliatory move entails the insight that, with some reconfiguration, the modalities can be most effectively achieved in tandem; that when self-interest is understood not purely in material or interpersonal terms (as financial gain or social dominance) but perhaps in more psychological terms (e.g., as moral elevation; Haidt, 2003), then promoting the interests of others may be the most adaptive way to better one’s own condition.

The notion of enlightened self-interest seems to be somewhat compatible with evolutionary approaches to prosocial motivation (e.g., Dawkins, 1976). To some extent, enlightened self-interest as a causal mechanism for good behavior relieves of duty the motive
(or concept) of altruism. In comparison to more dualistic models of moral functioning (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Schwartz, 1992), this approach provides a clearer, more parsimonious mechanistic link between moral thought and moral behavior.

The empirical goal of the three studies in this dissertation is to present and substantiate some of the key tenets of the reconciliation model. Relying on a reverse engineering approach, this developmental program of research begins at the end and then works developmentally backwards. Before exploring developmental trajectories, continuity, change, and process, an empirical test that real people can attain these professed personality end states is critical.

The focus of Studies 1-3 is thus on the various end states of personality development. In Studies 1, I explore whether the integration of agency and communion in responses to a self-understanding interview predict self-reported prosocial behavior in a sample of university student club executives. This involves introducing a first step in developing a measurement tool and analytic strategy. In this rendition, we content analyze narrative segments for implicit agency and communion. Integration is then operationalized as the co-occurrence of the two themes in thought segments.

In Study 2, I test whether recipients of a national award for decades of contribution to the “greater good” (relative to an ordinary comparison group) have integrated their agency and communion in their goals and life stories. Methodologically, I introduce an advancement to the measurement/analytic toolkit by coding the frequency of the modalities (agency and communion) in a first coding step, then coding the frequency of their compatible, semantic interaction within open narrative.

And in Study 3, I test whether a “moral dream team” of historical figures (including
Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., etc.) hierarchically integrated motives of agency and communion in extant speeches and interviews, whereas other, less virtuous, but equally influential figures evidence unmitigated agency. Methodologically, this involves coding not only the modalities and the relationship between them but also the directionality of the relationship—whether exemplars evidence agency as a means to an end of communion or vice versa—in the moral personality.

Together, these studies will validate some of the end state claims of the reconciliation model. Future research will then explore some of the developmental claims concerning trajectories and process of change.

Summary

Kohlberg’s model of moral reasoning has done much to further our understanding of how morality works and develops. In this dissertation, I address a shortcoming of the model: the judgment–action gap. I advance the reconciliation model as an independent model of moral motivation development, positing that development of agentic and communal motives entails a transformation of the relationship between these modalities, shifting from one of competition to a more coordinated, integrated state. Studies 1-3 explore how we can observe these phenomena, test key assertions of the reconciliation model, and explore the boundary conditions of the model. The overarching goal of this research enterprise is to mount a credible account of the psychological functioning of the virtuous, how these people come to be the kinds of persons they are, and to extract from their developmental paths insights for socialization and educational settings—to make their trajectories more common.
CHAPTER 2: STUDY 1—ESTABLISHING A METHOD

The theoretical purpose of this paper is to introduce the reconciliation model. This involves laying out the basic problem: that agency and communion may function dualistically and synergistically in different situations. I begin by reviewing two competing perspectives on the relationship between agency and communion, and then proposing a theoretical unification within a developmental framework. Methodologically, the primary goal of the present paper is to introduce a method—Values Embedded in Narrative coding—for observing and testing the reconciliation model, and thus set the stage for future research. Analyses are focused on (a) demonstrating the predictive validity of this approach; (b) establishing a basis for selecting agency and communion as pertinent values for the study of moral functioning; and (c) demonstrating the predictive validity (behavioral correlates) of the integration of agency and communion.

The sample for this project was 97 student club leaders who were interviewed for my masters thesis project. However, the data presented here are based on an entirely novel coding system and thus offer different data that speak to independent questions.

Introduction

Western society champions two conflicting ideals: our self-interest leads us to competition whereas our morality draws us to the aid of the less fortunate. These competing motivational systems—self-interested agency versus communally-focused morality—present a confusing tension, hindering a clear understanding and directive regarding how to live our lives, raise our children, and build a civil society. Historically, moral development scholars have similarly regarded moral sensibilities as being at loggerheads with the self’s basic desires and passions. Kohlberg’s (1981, 1984) account of what it means to be a moral person
was devotedly rationalistic to the point that it modeled the moral agent as a principled thinker whose moral convictions were sufficiently forceful to trump “the passions.” But if one’s moral concerns inherently conflict with the self’s interests, an important problem arises: Why would anyone bother with morality? Wherein lies the motivation?

In the heyday of Kohlberg’s theory, Blasi (1984) and Damon (1984) began arguing that doing the right thing manifests in mature people not in spite of but because of who they are as persons—because of their identity. Individuals act the way they do because of the nature of their most fundamental identifications. Identifications most often concern furthering one’s self-interests, which seem to out-compete other motives (such as concern for the plight of others) in contemporary society (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985). But Damon’s developmental scheme transcends this schism: For the fully developed, moral actions are motivated by a kind of “enlightened” self-interest. This paradox-busting point renders a false dichotomy the distinction between self-interest and morality.

Before screening a motion picture of how identity develops as a source of moral motivation, we first require a clearer snapshot of identity at any given instant. What is identity? Taylor (1989) argues that identity is best understood not primarily as a response to the “Who am I?” question; but rather as an orientation—that which the individual sees as being “good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value” (p. 27) and thus identifies with. Flanagan (1991) similarly notes that “human life as a whole is oriented toward things and activities of value” (pp. 18-19). The undetermined nature and plasticity of identifications allow for interplay with the individual’s moral sensibilities—we can choose that with which we identify. Thus, thinking of identity as an orientation yields a framework for meaningfully

Morality is thought to be motivated by an enlightened self-interest when morality becomes central to an individual’s identity—that is, when moral centrality is well-developed. An end-point goal for moral centrality development thus becomes an integrated identity (Blasi, 1995), which entails two achievements: (a) the descriptive form of infusing one’s sense of self with one’s moral convictions, and (b) the normative form of assimilating agentic and communal motivations. Offering early evidence of this phenomenon, Colby and Damon’s (1992) qualitative analysis of moral exemplars prompted the conclusion that “these men and women have vigorously pursued their individual and moral goals simultaneously, viewing them in fact as one and the same. Rather than denying the self, they define it with a moral center…. They seamlessly integrate their commitments with their personal concerns, so that the fulfillment of the one implies the fulfillment of the other” (p. 300).

Two problems immediately arise for the enterprise of moral centrality development. First, Colby and Damon’s (1992) assertion turns out to take sides on the long-standing, unresolved source of disagreement regarding the functional relationship between agency and communion in the personality literature. And second, many years now after its publishing, their qualitative observation lacks a reliable empirical embodiment. The goals of the present study are (a) to propose a solution to the disagreement by building upon Damon’s (1984) theoretical model; and (b) to address the second problem by advancing an empirical method for testing the latter form of identity integration—the reconciling of agency with communion.
Synergy Versus Interference

Agency and communion entail a fundamental motivational duality; their individual natures and interrelationship pervade the study of personality development (e.g., Bakan, 1966; McAdams, 1988; McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield, & Day, 1996; Wiggins, 1995) and have recently become a topic of interest to moral psychology (Matsuba & Walker, 2004; Walker & Frimer, 2007). Two competing accounts hold currency in the field. The first one may be hostile to Damon’s position (1984; Colby & Damon, 1992). The “interference hypothesis” (as we call it) is represented in Horney’s (1937) classic theorizing, Bellah et al.’s (1985) social commentary, Schwartz’s (1992) values paradigm, and the materialism literature (e.g., Richins & Dawson, 1992). It posits that moral functioning is inherently other-advancing or communal in nature and that self-advancing agency distracts from or even interferes with achieving moral excellence.

On the other side of the debate—what we call the “synergy hypothesis”—is an idea advanced by Blasi (2004, 2005) and others (Hermans, 1988; Wiggins, 1995). The synergy hypothesis also construes morality as communally motivated, but differs with the interference hypothesis on its construal of agency. Agency is understood as being inherently amoral but as amplifying motives, be they moral or immoral. When applied to communal goals, the synergy hypothesis predicts that agency will produce exceptionally moral behavior.

These theories diverge on two points, the first of which concerns main effects. Although both theories predict that communal motivation induces elevated moral functioning, they diverge in their understanding of agency. The interference hypothesis argues that agency and communion are inherently competitive with one another; a highly
agentic individual would be too preoccupied for communal concerns. The interference hypothesis thus predicts a negative relationship between agency and moral functioning. On the other hand, holding agency as inherently morally neutral, the synergy hypothesis is agnostic regarding the relationship between agency and moral functioning.

However, where the two models most cleanly diverge is on the second point of contention: the interactions between agentic and communal values. Both theories reference an interaction, but in opposing directions—a positive one for the synergy hypothesis and a negative one for the interference hypothesis. The synergy hypothesis sees the integration of agency and communion as being an adaptive goal for adolescent and adult development; their co-occurrence would be indicative of elevated moral functioning. In contrast, the interference hypothesis assumes that agency and communion are fundamentally irreconcilable motives; their interaction would entail an incoherent, mutually destructive juxtaposition of motives within an individual and thus would be associated with maladaptive outcomes and impoverished moral functioning.

The Reconciliation Model of Agency and Communion

A primary objective of the present study is to move towards a resolution of the synergy versus interference debate by advancing (and validating) a third perspective—the reconciliation model (see Figure 2.1). The resolution comes by integrating insights from each of the synergy and interference hypotheses diachronically. Building on Damon’s (1984; Colby & Damon, 1992) developmental scheme, the reconciliation model we posit yields a full and compelling account of moral centrality development. Essential to the reconciliation model is the end-point goal for development provided by the synergy hypothesis—the adaptive integration of agency and communion. But the synergy hypothesis’s deficiency is
its failure to account for what instigates the reconciliation. An insight from the interference hypothesis, manifest developmentally, fills out the scheme. The inherent tension between agency and communion (as established by the interference hypothesis) requires that their intraindividual development proceeds in segregation. “The organizing principles of the two conceptual systems are constructed in such a way that makes coordination between the two impossible in many instances” (Damon, 1984, p. 109). But as each motive becomes more elaborated and increasingly central to the individual, the two conflicting motivational systems come into strife; their segregated coexistence produces an unsustainable crisis, leaving one of three resolutions possible.
Figure 2.1. Reconciliation model of moral centrality development.

Note. White circles represent agency; black circles represent communion.

In the reconciliation model, competition between agency and communion within an individual’s growing motivational system becomes the source of disequilibrium. The disequilibrium can be reduced in three ways, the first two of which entail yielding to the tension between the two motives, essentially abandoning one motive or the other, and thus stagnating in development. Deserting motives of communion yields the more sinister of the
developmental stagnations—unmitigated agency; whereas, a near-categorical distrust of agency gives rise to its abandonment—unmitigated communion. But the disequilibrium resulting from elaborated agency and communion is most adaptively reduced by integrating agency and communion. Such a consolidation “puts meat on the bones” of communion, producing the highly adaptive state of integrated identity. Positing a more complex relationship between agency and communion than either the synergy or the interference hypothesis, the reconciliation model heralds a developmental transformation of the relationship between these two fundamental motives. The reconciliation is from an earlier phase of independence to a later phase of evolving interdependence. In between is a signature feature of the reconciliation model, a kind of Eriksonian (1968) crisis that becomes a critical developmental crossroad; its resolution gives rise to a variety of developmental outcomes in personality functioning.

The empirical goal of the present study is to build some of the key tenets of the reconciliation model by demonstrating the contributions (but incompleteness) of each of the Inference and synergy hypotheses. To do so will require introducing and validating a new measure of moral centrality—Values Embedded in Narrative.

**Values Embedded in Narrative**

Our starting point for this methodology was to elicit life stories from individuals through a structured interview. Hermans (1988) and McAdams (1993) advocate for studying identity by eliciting idiographic narrative, then interpreting the text for nomothetic themes after the fact. To their arguments, we add that life stories are sufficiently contextualized and

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1 Damon (1984) argues that “the split [between morality and the self] is resolved during adolescence” (p. 109) but allows that “other parallel shifts [occur] later in life” (p. 111). We understand moral reconciliation to be a process that begins, at earliest, in adolescence but may occur at any later point in the lifespan. Once established, we believe integrated identity remains stable.
rich to allow an individual to interlace (ostensibly competing) themes, an approach that taps
the moral self without the contamination of social desirability biases that plague more
explicit approaches. As will be argued later, the weaving together of themes of agency and
communion into the same thought is an empirical projection of the latent moral centrality
construct. An interview was designed to tap the individual’s “everyday” stories, and a
coding rubric was developed to comb out the full array of motivational value themes
(including agency and communion). The anticipation is that mature moral centrality will
manifest as frequently advanced themes of communion, often interwoven with themes of
agency.

The various interview questions were constructed to ensure that the extent of “self-
understanding space” is tapped. James’s (1890) classic taxonomy of the self involves seven
schemes: material possessions, activities and capabilities, social characteristics,
psychological traits, agency, distinctness, and continuity (see Damon & Hart, 1988, for
further explication). Inspired by Damon and Hart’s (1988) measure, the new structured
interview—the Self-Understanding Interview, Transmogrified—elicits a self-narrative
without asking questions that would cue the respondent to our interest in moral values.

McAdams’s (2001) existing coding system allows for tapping nomothetic themes of
agency and communion from idiographic life narrative. However, agency and communion
are understood in a broader sense than that of the present conceptualization (e.g., McAdams’s
agency includes self-mastery and empowerment, both of which reflect different aspects of
self-advancement). Schwartz’s (1992) Value Survey is more consistent with the present
conceptualizations of agency and communion, and locates the two within the grander scheme
of value orientations. The Schwartz Values Survey captures the culturally universal set of 10
value types: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

Schwartz’s template is particularly useful because of its conceptualization of the relationship between values; values are placed around a circumplex, with values on opposite sides in conceptual tension. Of particular relevance here are the agentic values\(^2\) of achievement (personal success and competence) and power (dominance and wealth), and situated opposite on the circumplex are the communal values of benevolence (concerns for known others) and universalism (concerns for generalized others and the environment).

Conceptually, these themes are in conflict: “acceptance of others as equals and concern for their welfare interferes with the pursuit of one’s own relative success and dominance over others” (Schwartz, 1992, p. 15). To understand this conflict requires thinking of the self in reference to its social surroundings. Power and achievement motives insinuate the hoisting of the self relative to social environs, whereas benevolence and universalism entail the opposite.\(^3\) These quadrants are also in empirical tension: Individuals who tend to be high on power and achievement tend to be low on benevolence and universalism (and vice versa; Schwartz, 1992). Suedfeld and de Best (2008) developed a coding system for combing out the Schwartz values from narrative text and found that the writings of Holocaust rescuers evidenced a greater frequency of universalism and benevolence, and less security than those of resistance fighters. While Suedfeld and de Best’s rubric establishes the precedent of coding values from narrative, it was not tuned to capture the way the narrator understands the relationship between values. We believe this relationship to be the signature of integrated

\(^2\) Schwartz labels this quadrant Self-Enhancement, and the one opposite, Self-Transcendence. Our preferred terminology is agency and communion, respectively.

\(^3\) This generalized contrast breaks down when an individual recognizes that advancing the plight of others can, in fact, benefit the self on a deeper plane.
identity. So we created our own coding rubric to draw out the Values Embedded in Narrative (VEiNs).

Overview of the Present Study and Predictions

In the present study, we assessed moral centrality in the young adulthood period of the lifespan because of the expectation that some identity integration would be evident at that point. En masse, our predictions will serve to validate the VEiN method; specific hypotheses will test two facets of the reconciliation model (viz., those concerning inherent tension and possible integration). The first set of predictions test whether or not an inherent tension between agency and communion is evident. To start, whether or not implicit values predict moral attitudes and behaviors is not a given. Thus, our first hypothesis is that VEiNs will predict an aggregated measure of morally relevant behaviors. Our second hypothesis pertains to the specific nature of the relationship between these 10 values and moral functioning. Thinking of the circumplex as a “moral compass,” we predict a sinusoidal relationship between VEiNs and morally relevant behaviors, with an apex (“moral north”) near universalism and benevolence and a valley (“moral south”) near power and achievement.

The next hypothesis aims to test whether or not the reconciliation of agency and communion is an adaptive personality organization. We predict that the co-occurrence of agency and communion (operationalized as the tendency to weave together the two themes in the same segment of narrative) will be positively associated with morally relevant behaviors (supporting the synergy hypothesis’s interaction prediction). We further argue that this disposition is an independent personality variable; thus, the hypothesis is that it will augment the predictive power of the 10 individual VEiNs.
Finally, to synthesize the corpus of relevant information derived from VEiNs into a single metric of moral centrality development, we empirically derive the Moral Centrality Index (MCI). We predict that high scores on the MCI would be reflected by narratives that are rich in themes of communion and have agentic and communal themes interwoven into the same thought. The final hypothesis examines the validity of the MCI by testing its efficacy in predicting subsequent observed moral behavior (honesty). Thus, the overarching goal of this study is to introduce an empirical methodology to test the reconciliation model of moral centrality development, which was accomplished by assessing value themes produced in self-understanding narratives.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample was drawn from various student clubs of a large Canadian university. From the publicly posted list of 295 clubs, 61 were targeted with the intent of sampling a variety of worldviews and interests. Some of the activities or foci of the clubs include mentoring children, international political justice, fraternities, religious groups, music, athletics, and specific program of studies (e.g., engineering, business).

The website of each club was searched for all email contact information and a recruitment message was sent to each contact individually. Of the 316 recruitment emails sent, 111 individuals responded with intent to participate, of whom 14 were eliminated because they dropped out prior to the interview or were truant for the interview ($n = 9$), the respondent was previously known to the interviewer ($n = 1$), or due to experimenter error or equipment malfunction ($n = 4$). Thus, a total $N$ of 97 remained for analyses.

The sample was young adult in age ($M = 21.9$ years, $SD = 2.2$), 64% female, and
averaged 3.5 years ($SD = 1.4$) of post-secondary education (14% were graduate students). In terms of ethnicity, participants identified themselves as European in origin (49%), East and Southeast Asian (29%), South Asian (5%), Latin, Central, and South American (3%), West Asian (3%), Aboriginal (1%), and other (10%). Of the participants, 64% reported having been born in Canada, with the remainder having lived in Canada for an average 6.9 years ($SD = 6.0$).

In the initial contact letter, prospective participants were informed that they were being contacted as representatives of their club and that the research project was studying the lives of people behind social impact with aims of better understanding positive human characteristics such as character, dedication, optimism, skill, and personal control. A $20 honorarium was offered with payment to be made on completion of all parts of participation.

**Procedure**

Participation entailed (a) filling out a survey online (½ hour), (b) participating in an individual interview (1 hour), and (c) unwittingly undergoing a behavioral test of honesty. After making a second mention of the $20 honorarium, the online survey gave a brief description of the study, asked participants to provide demographic information, and to complete several questionnaires tapping morally relevant behavior. Upon completing the online questionnaires, participants were contacted to arrange an individual interview, which took place approximately 1–2 weeks ($M = 10.0$ days, $SD = 5.9$) later. This interview session consisted of signing a consent form (which included a third mention of the $20 honorarium) and then responding verbally to the Self-Understanding Interview, Transmogrified—a structured, audio-recorded interview. As an “ice-breaker,” respondents were first prompted to share a brief overview of their life story (McAdams, 1995a). Next, the interviewer asked
14 target questions (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1  
*Self-Understanding Interview, Transmogrified*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe yourself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you have a job and/or go to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Which of your activities are most important to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you have any habits or unique ways of doing certain things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Who are the most significant people and/or groups in your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are the favorite things you have or own?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What’s important to you in terms of your physical characteristics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What are your major roles and responsibilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What are the most important psychological aspects of who you are?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Given that you change from year to year, how do you know it’s still always you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How did you get to be the kind of person you are now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How do you know that you’re unique or different from everybody else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Is there anything else that defines you or is important to who you are?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What do you like most about yourself?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each question typically elicits several conceptually distinct responses from a respondent. For each question, the interviewer jotted down a list of “stems” or phrases that captured the essence of each of the responses uttered by the participant. Before proceeding to the next question, the interviewer queried the respondent to explicate the significance of each stem (e.g., “Why is ___ important to you?”). On average, participants produced 24.6
response stems ($SD = 5.7$). An abbreviated example of response stems for one participant is as follows: part-time student, marketing job, ridiculously organized, family, close friends, photo albums, want to be thin, helping out around the house, being understanding, career goals, and belief in karma. At the end of the interview, a behavioral measure of honesty was administered (see below) before participants were dismissed.

Coding of Moral Centrality

Implicit values were captured from the newly developed interview. From the interview audio-recording, the 10 value themes were coded. A new coding paradigm—the Values Embedded in Narrative (VEiN) Coding Manual—was developed, based on the Schwartz Values Survey (Schwartz, 1992) but adapted to a narrative context. The coding manual provides a general statement of the meaning of each value, specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and critical distinctions. Coding was performed simultaneously but independently in the sense that each response stem was considered for each and every VEiN. The average number of VEiNs coded in the narrative associated with each stem was 2.3 ($SD = 1.5$, range $= 0–8$), so multiple values are typically implicated in the explication of each response. (This will be of paramount importance when examining the interaction of agentic and communal values.) The unit of analysis is called a “chunk,” which entails a response stem and its associated explication, that is, any discourse offered spontaneously or in response to the follow-up “Why is ___ important to you?” question. An example of a chunk is as follows (stem: looking presentable):

What’s important to you in terms of your physical characteristics?
Physically, there’s not much that I look out for. When I go to an interview, I make

---

4 Participants then provided importance/salience ratings for each stem using a computer spreadsheet; however, subsequent analyses revealed that the weighting scores did not alter the predictive nature or power of the produced values. Thus further discussion of the weighting paradigm is omitted here.

5 The VEiN coding manual is available from the first author.
sure my hair is combed and I look presentable. When I’m doing departmental affairs, I try to look my best. But I’m not one to get decked out every day. Like today, I’m just wearing this plain sweater. If I went to a real interview, I would have been decked out in a suit [respondent and interviewer laugh]. I think the whole clothing thing, the appearance thing, it’s pretty overrated. Sure, I know it’s part of professional development etiquette. But at this stage in my life, in terms of practicality, why wear a thin suit when it’s freezing out there?

A chunk was coded as a hit on a particular VEiN if a concept uttered anywhere within the chunk matched a specific criterion for that particular value in the VEiN coding manual. The above-cited chunk was coded as a hit on power, hedonism, conformity, and security.

**Reliability.** Interrater reliability was assessed in two sequential steps: (a) stem identification and (b) value coding. First, recall that the stems were identified by the interviewer in real time. To assess reliability of stem identification, a second independent rater later listened to the audio recordings of 25 randomly selected interviews and generated a list of stems for each interview. These, in turn, were compared with the stems generated in real time. Agreement in stem identification was found to be excellent, with a reliability coefficient of .90.

Second, value coding reliability was assessed. A subset of 25 randomly selected interviews was coded by a second independent rater. Reliability was assessed in terms of agreement at the chunk level—a much more demanding level of coding agreement than if merely comparing participant summary scores. Across the 10 VEiNs, reliability was substantial with 89% agreement overall, and with $\kappa = .70$. On 9 of the 10 individual VEiNs, there was substantial reliability (83% to 95% agreement; $\kappa = .60$ to .79), whereas one VEiN (viz., tradition) had moderate reliability (90% agreement; $\kappa = .57$). Data from the primary rater were used in all further analyses.
### Table 2.2
**Abbreviated Example of Response Stems, VEiN Coding, and Overlap Calculation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Data matrix from VEiN coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response stem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe yourself?</td>
<td>friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job/school?</td>
<td>masters student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities?</td>
<td>swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time with boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talking with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significant people?</td>
<td>certain close friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>swim coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessions?</td>
<td>apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary score**: 0.42 0.50 0.08 0.42 0.50 0.33 0.42 0.08 0.08 0.50 0.25

*Note.* PO = Power, AC = Achievement, HE = Hedonism, ST = Stimulation, SD = Self-Direction, UN = Universalism, BE = Benevolence, TR = Tradition, CO = Conformity, SE = Security, and PO&BE = overlap between Power and Benevolence. Transcribed narrative explication for each stem (which was subject to coding) is omitted for the sake of concision.
Metrics for Moral Centrality Coding. Each participant’s value profile formed a data matrix, with stems in rows, VEiNs in columns, and hits (1s) or misses (0s) filling each cell (see Table 2.2 for an abbreviated example). Participant matrices were condensed into summary scores of 10 VEiNs, reflecting the frequency with which a participant produced each VEiN in his/her self-narrative. This was calculated by dividing the tally of coded “hits” on a particular VEiN by the total number of stems for that individual. Frequency scores for the respective VEiNs are taken as metrics of the degree to which each value is central to individual; the relationship between individual differences on each of these scores and an outcome measure of morally relevant behaviors will allow for the distinguishing of values that facilitate moral action from those that play interference.

Turning to the interplay between agency and communion, one empirical approach to detecting identity integration would be by the conventional way of detecting a statistical interaction between two predictor variables: asking whether one predictor variable relates differently to an outcome measure depending on the level of the second predictor variable. In the present study, the interaction could determine whether agency positively predicts morally relevant behaviors when communion is high, with the converse being the case when communion is low. But the assumption here—one that turns out to be specious—is that agency and communion interact just the same, whether or not the individual understands them as being mutually related.

A subtle but important observation illustrates the distinction. Two different personality types are distinguishable with the newly advanced method (whereas the two “look” the same with existing self-report measures of moral identity; e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002). The first personality type embodies incoherence between agency and communion.
For such an individual, agentic and communal themes are both present in the self-understanding narrative but are uttered in unrelated, conceptually distinct parts (viz., different chunks) of the self-narrative. Such a “divided identity” tugs itself into tatters, resulting in ambivalence and generally poor moral functioning. By contrast, a second personality type embodies a coherent reconciliation of agency and communion. This personality type utters the same amount of each of the two modal themes, but more often weaves them together into the same chunk (perhaps by understanding agency as being instrumental to the realization of communion). Such a personality profile, with overlapping agency and communion, is held to be highly adaptive. Both the incoherent (maladaptive) and coherent (adaptive) forms are combined in a conventional interaction analysis; for this reason, we do not expect it to augment the prediction of morally relevant behaviors.

Our preferred operationalization of identity integration reflects the relative coherence versus incoherence of the interaction of agency and communion: the tendency of the individual to weave both agentic and communal themes into the same chunk (rather than leaving the two separate and unreconciled). Agency is reflected by two VEiNs (power and achievement) and communion is reflected by the two VEiNs (universalism and benevolence) in the opposite quadrant. Agency was scored a hit when either power or achievement (or both) were present in a chunk, with communion scored an analogous way for benevolence and universalism. Individual differences in moral identity integration were operationalized as the conditional overlap of the two themes—calculated as the frequency with which the two themes co-occurred in chunks that had at least one of the themes present. (See Table 2.2, rightmost column, for an illustration of the calculation of the overlap between power and benevolence.) Overlap was only partial in this sample (\(M = 20.3\%, SD = 12.3\%, range = 0–\)

28
50%), indicating that people were more incoherent than they were coherent in their agency–
communion profiles.

**Outcome Measures of Morally Relevant Behaviors**

The interview portion of the procedure tapped the predictor measures (VEiNs), which were then validated using a metric of moral functioning from the self-report questionnaires. Like the construct of SES, we see moral functioning as being an emergent property. Moral functioning manifests as multitudinous behaviors, hinging upon how individuals understand the moral domain and thus what “counts” as moral behavior to that person. To capture this broader moral functioning construct, we tapped a range of normative moral behaviors and then derived an index (M3) by summing the z-scores of the three measures: prosocial behavior, ecological behavior, and materialism.

**Prosocial Behavior.** Prosocial behavior was operationalized as the Self-Reported Altruism scale (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981). The questionnaire asks respondents to report the frequency with which they have engaged in 20 altruistic acts on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The scale was found to have good internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .83$).

**Ecological Behavior.** Whereas moral psychology has historically focused primarily on interpersonal contexts, Kahn (2006) argues for including ecological interactions in the moral domain. Kaiser and Wilson (2000) created a robust, cross-culturally applicable measure of ecological behavior, the General Ecological Behavior scale. In the present study, 17 items were adapted from this scale to be applicable to an urban Western Canadian population and were augmented by four novel items which were particularly relevant to the

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6 One item (“I have pointed out a clerk’s error (in a bank, at the supermarket, etc.) in undercharging me for an item.”) was omitted in the present study to avoid any possibility of priming participants for the behavioral measure of honesty.
population of interest in this study. The modified scale used in this study reworded items from the original measure to reflect actual frequency of behaviors rather than yes/no or rating endorsements. The measure asks respondents to rate the frequency with which they engage in 21 ecological actions using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The measure was found to have acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .76$).

**Materialism.** While prioritizing material possessions may appear to fall outside the moral domain, Richins and Dawson (1992) disagree: “An overriding concern with possessions and acquisition for oneself is inherently incompatible with sharing and giving to others” (p. 308). Materialism was operationalized as the Materialism Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The measure asks respondents to report the extent of their agreement with 18 statements concerning the importance that material goods play in their life, using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measure had good internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .90$).

**Overall Index of Morally Relevant Behaviors (M3).** As previously mentioned, to capture the construct of moral functioning we administered a battery of measures surveying its multifarious expressions in the present socio-cultural context. The relationships among these measures were not of primary interest in this study and there was no expectation that these divergent measures would be strongly related. Instead, the objective was simply to derive a single outcome measure of moral behaviors (to be used in subsequent analyses) that would provide an assessment and be generally reflective of the construct. The $Z$-scores of the three outcome measures were aggregated into an overall measure of morally relevant
behaviors (M3), with acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .59$).\footnote{Given that coefficient alpha is a function of both interitem relationships and the number of items in a scale, such a reliability coefficient is acceptable for a three-item index (Nunnally, 1978). If anything, the level of internal consistency would only serve to increase the error variance and thus make detecting trends less likely.}

Honesty

To validate the Moral Centrality Index, a measure of honest behavior was implemented following the interview. The procedure involved the (seemingly accidental) overpayment of the honorarium to the participant (a measure developed by Bersoff, 1999). In concluding the interview session, the interviewer informed the participant that he had to prepare for the next session and asked the participant to collect his/her honorarium from a research assistant in a nearby office. Subsequently, the research assistant appeared to mistakenly pay the participant $30, rather than the promised $20. We assumed that the three previous mentions of the $20 honorarium would make the dollar amount sufficiently unambiguous. The participant’s accepting (0) or refusing (1) the overpayment constituted the dichotomous measure of honesty.

If participants accepted the $30 and signed a receipt for that amount, they were thanked for their participation. On the other hand, if participants corrected the research assistant, the assistant acted confused about the appropriate amount and thanked them for correcting the error. Hence, these participants received $20 for their participation, signed a receipt for that amount, and were thanked. Ethical considerations\footnote{The present study was approved by an Institutional Review Board.} (see Bersoff, 1999) required that no participant received a debriefing unless specifically requested (none was). There was considerable variability in participants’ responses to this assessment of honesty (58% refused overpayment).
Socially Desirable Responding

With the inherent difficulty in measuring a socially desirable construct such as moral behavior, a control for response bias was included. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991) asks respondents to rate, on a 7-point Likert scale, the truthfulness of 40 self-statements relating to socially desirable acts that are difficult to perform consistently: 1 (not true) to 7 (very true). Scoring instructions specify that responses should be converted to a dichotomous scale, with rescoring as follows: socially desirable responses (6 or 7) or honest responses (1 to 5). The BIDR had good internal consistency (with Cronbach $\alpha = .81$).

Results

Overview

The validity of the VEiN approach will be assessed in terms of its strength and pattern of predicting the aggregate measure of morally relevant behaviors. To test the claim (consistent with the interference hypothesis and the reconciliation model) that agency and communion are in inherent tension, “moral north” within the circumplex “value compass” will be ascertained. The predicted direction is in the vicinity of universalism and benevolence and away from power and achievement. Next, the synergy and interference hypotheses’ competing claims about the overlap of agency and communion will be tested. We hypothesize that overlap effects will not simply be redundant with the basal VEiN profile information already deciphered in that reconciliation represents a further developmental achievement. Finally, a unitary metric of moral centrality development—the Moral Centrality Index—will be empirically derived and validated using the behavioral measure of honesty.

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9 In the present study, one item (“I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.”) was omitted so as to avoid priming participants directly for the behavioral measure of honesty.
honesty.

Predictive Validity of Moral Centrality

The core issue is whether the newly developed measure of moral centrality, which yields an implicit value profile, has predictive validity. This issue was addressed by entering the frequency of each of the 10 VEiNs simultaneously in a multiple regression analysis, predicting the composite M3 index of moral behaviors. This analysis revealed, as hypothesized, that the measure of moral centrality has strong predictive validity with the VEiNs capturing a sizable 32.9% of the variability in M3 ($p < .001$).

To examine the potential role of demographic variables and socially desirable responding in this relationship, this regression analysis was repeated, but with age, gender, acculturation status (native-born vs. immigrant), and scores on the measure of socially desirable responding (BIDR) entered as control variables in the first step and then, in the second step, the 10 VEiN variables. While these control variables predicted some variance ($R^2 = 14.1\%, \ p = .007$), the variability explained by the second step (the VEiN variables) remained virtually unchanged, $\Delta R^2 = 28.3\%, \ p < .001$; thus, demographics and social desirability will not be considered further.

Next we consider the pattern of relationships between each VEiN and M3. Schwartz (1992) situates the 10 values around a circumplex and makes the case (reflecting the interference hypothesis) that values sitting across from one another are in tension; thus, the interference hypothesis predicts a sinusoidal relationship between VEiNs and M3, with an apex (“moral north”) near universalism and benevolence and a valley (“moral south”) near power and achievement. Recall that the synergy hypothesis conceptualizes agency as being morally neutral and thus only predicts a positive association between communion and M3.
Figure 2.2. Zero-order correlations between the frequency of each Value Embedded in Narrative (VEiN) and the composite index of morally relevant behaviors (M3).

Note. PO = Power, AC = Achievement, HE = Hedonism, ST = Stimulation, SD = Self-Direction, UN = Universalism, BE = Benevolence, TR-CO = average of Tradition and Conformity, and SE = Security.

Figure 2.2 presents the zero-order correlations between M3 and each of the 10 VEiNs. M3 related significantly to universalism, self-direction, and conformity (.03 ≥ ρs > .001) and marginally to benevolence and power (.09 ≥ ρs ≥ .07). In observing the pattern as a whole, the 10 VEiNs situated around the circumplex do produce the striking sinusoidal pattern predicted by the interference hypothesis. To test how well the pattern conforms to the interference hypothesis, the pattern of correlations were regressed to a sinusoidal curve with
fixed periodicity nine VEiNs\textsuperscript{10} in length (a constraint implicated by the Schwartz circumplex). The least sum of squares solution (shown below) predicted a sizeable 83.0\% of the variance ($p < .001$), supporting the interference hypothesis (see Figure 2.2).

$$r = 1.20 + 0.30 \sin \frac{2}{9}(x + 5.55)$$

Here, $r$ is the correlation between a VEiN at position $x$ ($x$ for power = 1, $x$ for achievement = 2, etc.), the value $\frac{2}{9}$ sets the period to be nine stops in length, and the three remaining constants were determined empirically.

What is the “moral north” direction on the value circumplex compass? The M3 variable is replete with communal themes—universalism (as tapped by ecological behavior and by some of the prosocial behaviors) and benevolence (as tapped by some of the prosocial behaviors), and also emphasizing a scarcity of power themes (as tapped by materialism values). Thus, the prediction was that the apex of the sinusoid would coincide with universalism and benevolence, with the valley sitting atop power and achievement. By observation of the fitted curve in Figure 2.2, the peak is near universalism and the valley sits between power and achievement. Thus, “moral north” points to concerns for the wellbeing of all humanity and the environment.

**Agency–Communion Overlap: Synergy or Interference?**

The present study aims to move towards reconciling two seemingly competing accounts of how agentic and communal themes interact within the moral personality. To recap, the synergy hypothesis posits that agentic and communal themes interplay synergistically to enhance moral action, whereas the interference hypothesis sees agentic

\textsuperscript{10} Since the Schwartz (1992) circumplex has both tradition and conformity in the same angular space, the two were superimposed for the present analysis. The correlations between M3 and each of Tradition and Conformity were averaged to form a Tradition–Conformity VEiN.
themes in a uniformly contaminating light. The present method allows for a novel examination of this issue. Before doing so, we examine whether conventional interactions seem to be capturing this phenomenon. A two-step regression analysis (predicting M3) was performed with agency and communion entered in the first block and their product in the second. The change in variance explained in the second step indicates the predictive power of the interaction. However, the agency × communion interaction term did not significantly augment the model, $\Delta R^2 = 0.7\%, p = .37$. Similarly, none of the four elemental interactions (power × universalism, achievement × universalism, power × benevolence, or achievement × benevolence) approached significance, $\Delta R^2 \leq 1.0\%, ps \geq .32$.

In contrast with the conventional interaction, we operationalize the integration of agency and communion as the weaving in of both compound themes into the same chunk of narrative. This overlap metric is the probability that both themes are scored as hits, conditional on one or the other being scored as a hit; it taps the degree to which the two motivational themes are psychologically coherent with one another. To test the predictive validity of this assertion, we examined the correlation between the amount of overlap (between agency and communion) and M3, and found it to be significant and positive ($r = +.27$, one-tailed $p = .004$). Three of the elemental overlaps (power–universalism, achievement–universalism, and power–benevolence) also significantly predicted M3 ($rs = .27, .21, and .27$; one-tailed $ps = .004, .02, and .004$, respectively). Only the overlap between achievement–benevolence failed to attain significance ($r = -.04, p = .36$).

To test whether the relationship between overlap and M3 is, to any significant degree, independent from the personality functioning captured by the elemental VEiNs, a two-step regression analysis on M3 was conducted. In the first step, the frequencies of the 10 VEiNs
were force entered \((R^2 = 32.9\%, \ p < .001)\); in the second step, the four elemental overlap frequencies were entered in a stepwise manner. If overlap reduces to information already known through VEiN frequencies, then the second block would have none of the four candidate overlaps enter. However, one of the four overlap candidates—namely, the power–benevolence overlap—significantly augmented the prediction of M3 (second step \(\Delta R^2 = 5.3\%, \ p = .008\); see Table 2.3). The power–benevolence term was, in fact, the strongest unique predictor \((\beta = .32)\) of M3. None of the remaining elemental overlaps entered after the significant power–benevolence overlap.

Table 2.3  
**Summary of Predictors in Regression Analysis for Creation of the Moral Centrality Index (MCI)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(B)</th>
<th>(SE\ B)</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(B_{MCI})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>45.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>-3.65</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-26.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-25.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>11.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Direction</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>32.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>48.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>-1.64</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>-11.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>-3.36</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-24.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power–Benevolence Overlap</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>43.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Model \(R^2 = 38.2\%, \ p < .001\).
Moral Centrality Index

The present methodology not only provides information about the relevance of certain themes (VEiNs) to morally relevant behaviors, but also how the themes may combine to give a summary statement of an individual’s state of moral centrality development—the MCI. To form a single indicator of moral centrality, we multiplied the appropriate $B$ weights to each of the 11 variables in the above regression analysis (10 VEiNs and the power–benevolence overlap) and then summed. (For ease of interpretation of the MCI, we used $B_{MCI}$ weights, which were derived by applying a linear transformation to the $B$ weights such that the present sample would conform to T-scores with $M = 50$ and $SD = 10$; see Table 2.3.)

To illustrate the MCI calculation using the abbreviated coding example in Table 2.2, this participant’s summary scores for the 10 VEiNs and the power–benevolence overlap would be multiplied by the corresponding $B$ weights (from Table 2.3) and then summed (along with the constant), yielding an MCI in this case = 68.7.

MCI scores ranged from 29.5 to 80.2, and correlated strongly with M3 ($r = +.62$, one-tailed $p < .001$). Each of the measures that formed M3 (prosocial behavior, ecological behavior, and materialism) similarly related strongly to MCI scores ($r_s = .37, .59,$ and $.41$, respectively, one-tailed $p_s < .001$). To validate the MCI using an independent assessment of moral functioning (and one perhaps less prone to social desirable responding), we tested the MCI’s efficacy in predicting a behavioral measure of honesty, the refusal of an overpayment for participating in the study. Indeed, those who refused overpayment had higher MCI scores ($M = 51.6$) than those who accepted the extra $10 ($M = 47.8$), $t(95) = 1.88$, one-tailed $p = .03$, $d = .39$.

---

11 Indeed, the measure of honest behavior did not relate to either M3 or to any of the three measures that comprised it ($r_s \leq .07, p_s \geq .49$). The finding that self-report measures do not relate to behavioral measures of a similar constructs accords with previous findings (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002).
Discussion

The primary goals of this study were to advance the reconciliation model of moral centrality development and to validate a buttressing empirical methodology. Integrating two dominant but competing perspectives in the personality literature (viz., the interference and synergy hypotheses), the reconciliation model accounts for how the self and morality can synergistically unite, how this developmental process unfolds, and why it does not necessarily happen for everyone (i.e., why it is such a noteworthy achievement). The interference hypothesis contributes the insight that agency and communion develop as two distinct, segregated, and mutually competitive systems. As the two become elaborated and central to the individual, their mutual tension destabilizes the individual’s motivational system, giving way to a developmental crux or crisis.

The Eriksonian (1968) crisis is most adaptively—but most difficultly—resolved by reconciling agency and communion, and thus integrating the two. When this happens, agency “breathes life” into communion and communion gives agency a greater purpose. As predicted by the synergy hypothesis, a state of moral identity integration results. Colby and Damon (1992) observed this adaptive phenomenon in their qualitative analysis of moral exemplars, who “come to see morality and self as inextrically intertwined, so that concerns of the self become defined by their moral sensibilities. The exemplars’ moral identities become tightly integrated, almost fused, with their self-identities” (p. 304). Most individuals, however, stagnate by ceding to the tension, abandoning their agentic drives (producing unmitigated communion) or by “selling out” their communal concerns (producing unmitigated agency).

To test the reconciliation model, the VEiN methodology was advanced, an approach
which taps Schwartz’s (1992) value themes produced in self-understanding narrative.

Agency was operationalized as achievement and power motivations; communion was
benevolence or a more universalized concern for psychologically distant others. Of critical
importance is how VEiN profiles for each individual not only give an indication of the
relative salience of each value, but also how the values combine within an individual’s life
story. Moral identity integration was manifest as the tendency for individuals to weave
motives of both agency and communion into the same thought. Thus, the VEiN method
provides an empirical interface that opens the door to testing key tenets of the reconciliation
model and to exploring the developmental mechanisms that govern its transitions.

The present study aimed to validate the VEiN methodology by demonstrating two
foundational tenets of the reconciliation model. VEiN content strongly predicted a
composite measure of morally relevant behaviors (M3) in a pattern that was consistent with
Schwartz’s (1992) situating values on a circumplex. The peak of the sinusoidal regression
curve was at universalism (communion), with the valley near power (agency). This pattern is
indicative of the inherent tension between these motivational systems, the very tension that
stokes the crisis. But simultaneously, we found that the tendency to weave both agentic and
communal themes into single thoughts was positively associated with M3, meaning that
those who had reconciled the dual motivations demonstrated elevated moral functioning. We
believe this to be the first empirical evidence of the identity integration phenomenon.
Finally, we amalgamated extant VEiN information to derive a single metric of moral
centrality (the MCI) and validated it by demonstrating its efficacy in predicting a behavioral
measure of honesty.
The Empirical Interface

The present methodology allows for a new type of psychological observation reflective of the interplay between motivations of agency and communion. Without reliable “empirical legs,” Colby and Damon’s (1992) observations remained tentative and precarious. “Theory is constrained by the quality and versatility of measurement tools” (Nosek & Banaji, 2001, p. 625). Rather than imposing a priori assumptions about what the individual values, the VEiN methodology asks for a narration of the important aspects of the individual’s life, thus providing a neutral screen onto which respondents project their values. The mode of collection and richness of the data make them more likely to be phenomenologically “true” to the individual’s own sense of his or her identifications. Coding for nomothetic themes then permitted analyses that captured the intricate ways that individuals interwove values, as well as the relative salience of each value.

The VEiN that most strongly and positively predicted M3 was universalism, a concern for the wellbeing of persons beyond one’s primary reference group and for the ecological state of the planet. Whereas other values (viz., power, achievement, self-direction, and security) were voiced in over 30% of all chunks in this sample, universalism was relatively rare (averaging 10% of chunks). In fact, 19% of the sample advanced nary a single codeable instantiation of the universalism value. Those who scored highest on M3 were by no means “dripping” with universalism; rather, they advanced such themes only on occasion. Similarly, the tendency to weave both agency and communion into a single thought was strongly predictive of M3; but the occurrence was likewise rare. No one in our sample evidenced more than 50% overlap, meaning that even the most morally mature had significant amounts of unmitigated agentic wants. Is more integration always “better”?
Neither an unremitting advancing of universal concerns into the everyday aspects of one’s life nor a total integration of agentic and communal themes was found in this sample; rather, the most morally mature intimated _some degree_, rather than _a totality_ of these personality features. The reconciliation model is constrained by Flanagan’s (1991) principle of psychological realism, meaning that its depiction of moral maturity must remain within the limits of that which is achievable by “creatures like us” (p. 32), unlike the vaulted Stage 6 moral reasoner posited by Kohlberg (1981). For normative calls—past, present, or future—of (near) total integration of self and morality to now be credible, the viability of these prescriptions must be empirically demonstrated.

In the present study, agency and communion did not interact in the conventional statistical sense. This finding replicates that of Walker and Frimer (2007) who found that the interaction of themes of agency and communion in the life narratives of moral exemplars did not significantly augment their distinctness from a matched comparison group beyond the individual themes alone. We advance the explanation that statistical interaction procedures do not distinguish between two diverging personality states, and thus cancel out the effect of one another. Agency and communion being equal, the two personality states may either be (a) coherent, and tend to weave the two into the same thoughts; or (b) incoherent, and thus vacillate from one theme to the other. To be clear, we claim that the space between these states is developmental in nature; and the former state is more developed than the latter one. This claim was inspired by Colby and Damon’s (1992) observation that exemplars evidence the former state as they “seamlessly integrate their commitments with their personal concerns, so that the fulfillment of the one implies the fulfillment of the other” (p. 300).

A statement by Participant #12716 illustrates the well-developed overlap of agency
and communion in the present study:

**DO YOU HAVE ANY HABITS OR UNIQUE WAYS OF DOING CERTAIN THINGS?** Good habits have to do with the way we live our lives.... In any action we take, in any choice we make, we can have a positive or negative impact on the world.... In terms of good habits, treating all people with dignity and respect regardless of their situation in life or how similar or different they may be.... It's the little things that I think of as habits. I'm always willing to help out my neighbor, or help someone carry groceries, or give someone an ear if they need someone to talk to (even if I don't know them), or give some extra food or change to someone in need. Those little habits, I think make a big difference.

For this individual, social influence and material possessions (power VEiNs) are construed as means of making the world a more compassionate place, both in terms of assisting familiar and unfamiliar others (benevolence and universalism). Thus, the two fundamental modalities appear to have been reconciled, yielding a coherent and pragmatic snapshot of everyday moral action. This individual had high overlap scores (50% in term of agency and communion) and a corresponding high score on M3 (2.5 SDs above the mean).

Similarly, Participant #86265 advanced themes of agency and communion in her interview. But she did so in a different way—she advanced them in different responses and thus in segregation. An example of communion in the absence of agency was as follows:

I'm loyal. **WHAT DOES BEING LOYAL SAY ABOUT YOU?** I wouldn't back-stab anybody. Maybe that's because I've been backstabbed before and so I have a strong urge not to because of how it felt.

In this example, loyalty (benevolence VEiN) entails avoiding harming, but hardly has the agentic “legs” to motivate the individual along the proactive path of the moral career. In contrast, this individual’s agentic motives were strikingly bereft of ultimate purpose:

**WHAT DOES BEING A STUDENT MEAN TO YOU?** Being a student means trying to get as good grades as possible and trying to get a higher average (like a GPA) so you can register your classes earlier then other people and find classes that you want to go to and try to come up with the good grades to get a job, I guess. **AND WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?** That’s important because [pause] that’s why I’m here: for school. **SO WHY ARE YOU HERE FOR SCHOOL THEN?** To go out with a job or to go on for further education. If you want to be a masters or be anything higher than a BA,
then you need good grades. *Why do you want that, then?* Because getting a job is hard these days and everyone’s coming out with a BA; and why is your BA more special than other people’s? You want a higher education so that you have a special edge over your competitors.

Despite the repeated prompting from the interviewer to discuss some higher purpose underlying the agentic strivings, this individual seemed to see achievement and status as being ends in themselves. Taken together, unreconciled communal themes (such as those in the former example) and agentic themes (such as those in the latter) partially conflict within this individual’s incoherent VEiN profile. This example also illustrates how demands of agency are sufficiently daunting for this developing individual, such that reconciling agency with communion has yet to become a salient or realistic goal. Relatively low in terms of agency–communion overlap (13%), this individual scored 2.0 $SD$s below the mean on M3.

Our operationalization of relative overlap of the two themes thus captures the difference between these two identity types, with lower overlap scores reflecting relative incoherence and higher scores reflecting relative coherence. Overlap was positively associated with M3, indicating that coherence is more adaptive than incoherence. While this finding resonates with the synergy hypothesis, the interference hypothesis could predict this finding in a qualified way. That is, when agency and communion do not overlap, their relationship could entail one of mutual interference. The mechanism driving this effect remains unexplored. In sum, the psychological expression of moral identity integration entails not only the relative agentic and communal identifications of the individual, but also how the two relate to one another.

In the present study, the agency–communion overlap significantly predicted M3, as did three of the four elemental overlaps. Only the achievement–benevolence overlap did not relate significantly to M3. This was not our prediction, but we nonetheless table the possible
explanation that agency and communion interact in different ways depending on the context and developmental phase. Various forms of moral action (e.g., justice, bravery, or care) may be supported by different reconciliations; and earlier and later forms may be key developmental achievements. In the present, emerging adulthood sample, the power–benevolence overlap was the strongest unique predictor of M3, raising the possibility that reconciling these two motives is the task that is most relevant to emerging adulthood. The question of what reconciliations support different aspects of the moral development remains an important area of future research.

The Reconciliation Model

Built from the foundation provided by Damon (1984; Colby & Damon, 1992), the reconciliation model holds the uniting of morality and the self as a distinguishing achievement for moral development. A key point of divergence between the reconciliation model and Damon’s perspective concerns the preceding trajectory. Colby and Damon (1992) do not foresee quite the same tension between agency and communion for moral exemplars: “the two [individuation and commitment] have supported each other’s growth in the course of the exemplars’ personal development” (p. 298). Yet Colby and Damon acknowledge that commitments and individual interests usually compete for most people in contemporary Western society (pp. 297, 304, 305).

Our perspective is that all developing children and adolescents (future exemplars included) experience the growing tension between self-interests and the dictates of conscience—this is a tension that is inherent to these motivational systems. Developing each orientation is a significant challenge in itself, one that is prerequisite to the reconciliation process. The reconciliation model offers a more coherent account of how exemplars may be
mature instantiations of ordinary persons, rather than ordinary instantiations of innately exceptional persons. Only reconciling the two, a creative move toward increased complexity, allows for their retention and resultant synergy. In this scheme, the reconciliation model is better suited to explain common developmental stagnations, manifest as unmitigated forms of agency and communion.

One of the strong claims of the reconciliation model concerns the necessary segregation between agency and communion early in development. A weaker version of this process could advance that the two are sometimes or usually in tension, but for some well-developing children, the two share a mutually beneficial relationship. In childhood and adolescence, did moral exemplars experience the same tension as other normally developing children? This remains an important direction for future work.

Dominant economic models pit persons as self-interested maximizers of personal wealth, focused predominantly on their own “bottom line.” Justin Dart, an advisor to Ronald Reagan, unabashedly defended unmitigated agency: “I never looked for a business that’s going to render a service to mankind…. Greed is involved in everything we do. I find no fault with that” (as cited in Bellah et al., 1985, p. 264). Explicit in the reconciliation model is the argument that such a mentality constitutes a dangerous developmental stagnation; or as Bakan (1966, p. 14) stated starkly, “The villain is unmitigated agency. The moral imperative is to try to mitigate agency with communion.” Unmitigated agency is a common developmental outcome in contemporary Western societies; the reconciliation model not only accounts for why it is so common, but also why so many well-meaning individuals fall into the trap. Developing one’s agency is a significant challenge in itself and, for this reason, must occur prior to mitigation; this process “raises the stakes” in that a dangerous personality
type is a necessary prerequisite for the most adaptive outcome. The other developmental stagnation (unmitigated communion) entails a benign but enervated personality orientation, one that may be rare in a Western context. What differentiates the three developmental outcomes is that which occurs if and when agency and communion become well elaborated.

The reconciliation model has implications for moral functioning beyond the expression of morally relevant behaviors. Considering other morally charged behaviors would entail “recalibrating” the north arrow on the moral compass. For example, in collectivist cultures, filial piety is a prominent virtue. In such a context, one might expect “moral north” to point somewhere between benevolence and tradition/conformity; and thus away from achievement. If the reconciliation model does apply cross-culturally, the prediction becomes that integrating benevolence and tradition with achievement represents integration for filial piety. More broadly, the notion of reconciling values on opposite sides of the circumplex could be a phenomenon more general to identity development. For example, a teenager forms an independent identity (self-direction) by creating distance with his/her parents but struggles with the uncertainty that comes with being on his/her own (security). Perhaps the developmental goal becomes finding security in independence. Such speculation is tentative, but meant to inspire future research in other developmental domains.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study does directly address developmental issues, a limitation of the present study is the lack of longitudinal data. We did not employ a convenience sample of psychology subject-pool participants, rather recruiting participants more broadly from student clubs; but the present sample is only somewhat representative of the greater population. We assessed moral centrality in emerging adulthood because we expected that
some reconciliation of moral and personal concerns would be evident at that point. Future research should explore developmental trends and mechanisms in the attainment of moral centrality, other aspects of moral identity, and the developing interaction between agency and communion.

The present study lacks a direct comparison between the VEiN methodology and existing measures that tap the moral self including that of Aquino and Reed’s (2002) and the Schwartz Values Survey (1992). Some argue that self-report and projective measures of the (ostensibly) same/similar construct are incommensurate—they tend to correlate only weakly with one another and predict different classes of behavior (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989). A direct comparison between these three measures represents a profitable direction for future research. To make the VEiN methodology more parsimonious and thus more competitive on the “moral-self market,” future research should explore which interview questions elicited the most revealing VEiN information and which questions may be expendable to the enterprise.

The present method does not distinguish between instances where agency and communion simply co-occur, on the one hand, and where the two are functionally interrelated, on the other. Present theorizing suggests that the relationship between them would most adaptively be hierarchical, where agency serves as an instrumental means to a communal end. Future research should investigate the specific relationships between these themes when they coexist, and replication of the present finding is necessary.

Conclusion

Most people understand morality as concerns that are quite distinct from personal matters; as much is well-established (Nucci, 2001). But to extend this observation to contend
the individuals *should* understand the two to be fundamentally different is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. When maturity is achieved, morality can and should become a sensitized concern for the way one’s choices impact upon one’s social and ecological environments. But when development is understood as a “moral career,” personal or prudential choices become subtly but almost ubiquitously informed by moral convictions, and the satisfaction of one is contingent on the satisfaction of the other. The benefit of approaching morality as the uniting of self and morality is realized as we move closer to an understanding of the motivation behind exemplary moral behavior.
CHAPTER 3: STUDY 2—ENDPOINT GOAL

Study 1 presented the basic logic of the reconciliation model, articulated some of its core tenet (concerning the virtue of integrating agency and communion), and provided empirical backing with a diverse sample of student club leaders. The club leaders were emerging adults, averaging 22 years in age. Those who scored high on measures of moral behavior presumably were at an entry point of a moral career. The integration of their agentic and communal motives had, presumably, yet to be fully crystallized. Study 2 explores the personalities of individuals who are near the apex of their moral career, individuals who had spent decades contributing to the greater good, in contrast to a demographically matched comparison group. Differences between these groups are indicative of the unique developmental achievements crystallized over the moral career.

For most people, self-interest leads to pure, unmitigated agency. I argue that the integration of agency and communion is an empirical manifestation of enlightened self-interest, wherein a person’s morality becomes united with their personal drives. Study 2 tests this proposition. First, do exemplars have integrated motives of agency and communion? Second, does their integration apply across different conceptualizations of agency and communion or is the integration specific to the motives comprising enlightened self-interest: agency as motives that promote the interests of the self and communion as motives that promote the interests of others? Third, do exemplars integrate more motives in general (and thus are simply more motivationally complex) or is integration specific to agency and communion? Fourth, our preferred method for assessing integration is the person approach to personality, which explores within-person dynamics between constructs. Does integration generalize to the variable approach, wherein a set of scores on independent variables
constitute the person. This final issue speaks to the more general question of what does it mean to know a person. Together, the issues explored in Study 2 will hopefully serve to build a fuller, more robust, and more compelling empirical case for the reconciliation model.

Introduction

Omar Bradley, an American World War II field commander and later chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, lamented in a 1948 Armistice Day speech: “The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants” (1967, p. 589). Rather than holding the Axis powers solely responsible for the atrocities of the war, Bradley disparaged a more pervasive imbalance in the fabric of the world’s dominant nations. His commentary begs the question of a corrective.

The current research explores the functioning of ethical giants or “moral exemplars,” individuals who have achieved brilliance with wisdom, power with conscience in their extraordinary commitments promoting benevolence, justice, or basic human welfare. The primary objective of this study is to identify the personality functions that distinguish exemplars from “ordinary” persons. Doing so will provide the basis for subsequent exploration of the developmental progressions and typical stagnations in those functions.

Altruism or Enlightened Self-Interest?

Moral exemplars, when labeled “altruists” (Oliner & Oliner, 1988) or “saints” (Wolf, 1982), are implicitly regarded as subjugating their personal interests for the sake of the moral cause at hand (reflecting the philosophical legacy of the Enlightenment Era; Kant, 1785/2002). Congruent with this notion, certain extant theories of personality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Schwartz, 1992) model personal interests and moral sensibilities dualistically, with the self’s basic interests being fundamentally at odds with the person’s
moral compassions. Within this modus operandi, elevated moral functioning is manifest when individuals follow the dictates of principled reason or higher values over their personal inclinations.

Our primary contention is that this dualistic rendition (self vs. morality)\textsuperscript{12} may capture some aspects of moral reasoning but fails to adequately explain optimal moral identity and motivation (Stocker, 1976). This dualism between self-interest and the dictates of one’s moral code may be typical for most persons; however, our claim is that exemplars are an exception to this rule. We posit that they defy this dualism by integrating their personal ambitions with their moral convictions, yielding a state of “enlightened self-interest” in which their own interests become aligned with the interests of others; therein lays the motivation to lead the virtuous life.

The present study explores the personality functioning of moral exemplars for evidence of the adaptive integration of agency and communion.

Conceptualization of Agency and Communion

To test whether exemplars have integrated personal and moral motives, precise conceptual and operational definitions of the self-interested motives of agency (hereafter referenced as “A”) and the moral motives of communion (hereafter, “C”) are required. As will become evident, personality theories diverge in defining each construct (see Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008, for a review).

The definitions of A and C that we endorse (and will test empirically) are derived solely from what we will denote as the promoting interests scheme. This choice is inspired by our claim that enlightened self-interest underlies virtuous behavior, wherein the best way

\textsuperscript{12} Whether the dualism between self and morality applies primarily in Western cultural contexts or is a more universal characterization of human functioning remains an open question.
to promote one’s own interests is by advancing the interests of others, and vice versa. Instantiated by Schwartz’s (1992) concept of “self-enhancement,” A entails motives to advance the self within a social hierarchy: achievement, social power, or material wealth. Instantiated by Schwartz’s concept of “self-transcendence,” C is expressed as benevolence to familiar others, or a more universalized concern for the wellbeing of disadvantaged, distant others or the ecological wellbeing of the planet.

These specific definitions set up the typical A versus C dualism in that A requires advancing the self relative to others, whereas C requires advancing others relative to the self—logically, the two are mutually opposing movements. These characterizations of A and C are not ubiquitously endorsed, however.

Across various disciplines, A- and C-like constructs have been used to account for the psychology of culture, language, religion, and gender (see Wiggins, 1991, for a review). Bakan (1966) first introduced A and C into psychology’s lexicon, defining them loosely as “getting ahead” and “getting along,” respectively (Hogan, 1982). Bakan explicitly portrayed A as a deleterious motive, viewing it as being in opposition to C, and prescribing A’s nullification with the more positive force of C. “The villain is unmitigated agency. The moral imperative is to try to mitigate agency with communion” (p. 14). Bakan never operationalized the constructs, however. Other researchers have taken up this task in proposing various conceptual and operational definitions of A and C (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008; Trapnell & Paulhus, in press). We classify these definitions as generally falling within two schemes: promoting interests and psychological distance. We now turn to an examination of each of these schemes.

Promoting Interests Scheme. Within the promoting interests scheme, A is the
motive to promote the interests of the self, manifest as themes of social power, dominance, material wealth, and achievement; C, by contrast, is the motive to promote the interests of others, instantiated in themes of benevolence, interpersonal concern, social justice, and ecological preservation (see the columns of Table 3.1 relating to the promoting interests scheme).
Table 3.1
*Extant Definitions of Agency and Communion and the Schemes (Promoting Interests vs. Psychological Distance) They Embody*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Author</th>
<th>Promoting Interests Scheme</th>
<th>Psychological Distance Scheme</th>
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<td></td>
<td>of self (Æ agency)</td>
<td>of others (Æ communion)</td>
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<td>Schwartz (1992)</td>
<td>self-enhancement (power &amp; achievement)</td>
<td>self-transcendence (benevolence &amp; universalism)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increased (Æ agency)</td>
<td>decreased (Æ communion)</td>
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<td>Wiggins (1991)</td>
<td>dominance</td>
<td>nurturance</td>
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<td>Grotevant &amp; Cooper (1998)</td>
<td>individuality</td>
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<td>Blatt &amp; Luyten (2009)</td>
<td>separation</td>
<td>relatedness</td>
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<td>McAdams (1993, 2001)</td>
<td>status/victory achievement/responsibility</td>
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Schwartz’s (1992) typology of universal values exemplifies the dualism within this scheme (Sverdlik, Roccas, & Sagiv, in press). His theory claims that 10 categories of values exist cross-culturally and can be situated around a circumplex. Values situated on opposite sides of this circumplex are in conceptual and empirical tension—individuals who score high on one tend to score low on the other. Schwartz’s self-enhancement values (power and achievement) comprise A within this scheme because they are motives that advance or enhance the self; opposite on the circumplex are self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence) which comprise C because they are values that promote the interests of others. To Schwartz, A and C are in tension: “Acceptance of others as equals and concern for their welfare interferes with the pursuit of one’s own relative success and dominance over others” (Schwartz, 1992, p. 15, emphasis added). Thus, this approach sets up both the logical and empirical basis for a dualistic relationship between A and C (so defined). The moral imperative implied in Schwartz’s theory exists within this mutual exclusivity—promoting C and attenuating A.

Wiggins’s (1991, 1995) interpersonal circumplex also aligns with the promoting interests scheme (see Table 3.1). The interpersonal circumplex models individual differences in personality along two dimensions: A as dominance (vs. submissiveness) and C as nurturance (vs. cold-heartedness). Within the interpersonal circumplex, A and C are modeled as orthogonal dimensions. Although both Schwartz and Wiggins conceptualize A and C within the promoting interests scheme, they characterize the optimal A-C relationship differently: Schwartz views the attenuation of A and the promotion of C as the optimal personality state, whereas Wiggins prescribes one that blends dominance with nurturance.

As we will discuss in greater depth later, the present research endorses defining A and
C within the promoting interests scheme. Our theorizing paradoxically endorses both Schwartz’s dualism and Wiggins’s notion of integration, relying on the former to explain the typical functioning of most people, and the latter to account for that of moral exemplars.

**Psychological Distance Scheme.** The second conceptual scheme for A and C concerns psychological distance from others: A is the motive to increase psychological distance from others, defined in terms of individuation and separation; C, by contrast, is the motive to decrease psychological distance from others, defined in terms of belonging and intimacy (see the columns of Table 3.1 outlining the psychological distance scheme). This scheme is exemplified by Grotevant and Cooper’s (1998) framework which views separateness as a key element of A and mutuality as a key element of C (labeled “individuality” and “connectedness,” respectively), and by Blatt and Luyten’s (2009) two-polarities model of separation versus relatedness. Schwartz’s (1992) value circumplex too captures this psychological distance scheme, but placing it in the orthogonal axis to the promoting interests scheme. A is captured in values of self-direction and stimulation; C is manifest as security, conformity, and tradition (Schwartz labels these themes “openness to change” and “conservation,” respectively).

**Mixed Schemes.** Some researchers adopt definitions of A and C that mix themes from both the promoting interests and psychological distance schemes (e.g., Eagly, 2009; McAdams, 1993). Within McAdams’s (1993, 2001) framework, for example, A (explicitly labeled “agency”) is operationalized fourfold, as themes of status/victory, achievement/responsibility, self-mastery, and empowerment (see Table 3.1). Given the focus on advancing the self, we interpret the former two themes as falling within the promoting interests scheme; and given the focus on individuation, the latter two themes fall within the
psychological distance scheme. McAdams defines C (also explicitly labeled as “communion”) fourfold, as themes of caring/help, love/friendship, dialog, and unity/togetherness. In our reading, only the caring/help theme exemplifies promoting interests (given the motivational focus on providing for others); whereas the latter three fall within the psychological distance scheme (given their focus on connectedness).

Trapnell and Paulhus (in press) similarly arrive at a mixed-schemes definition of A and C. In factor analyzing data from (self-report) personality inventories, they uniformly found two factors which they argue represent A and C. In one analysis, Schwartz’s 10 values were captured by a two-factor solution: A entailed themes from both schemes (power, achievement, self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism), as did C (tradition, conformity, security, universalism, and benevolence).

In sum, the field has importantly different conceptions of A and C which is a source of contention, one that hinges on both theoretical premises and analytical approaches.

Integration of Agency and Communion

As highlighted above, within both the promoting interests and psychological distance schemes, A and C are often framed as oppositional. Recent theorizing (Blatt & Luyten, 2009; Fournier et al., 2009; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; McAdams, 1993), however, has pointed to the virtue of integrating A and C in forming a more coherent personality. If one interprets A and C from the promoting interests scheme, as we advocate, then integrating the motivation to promote one’s own interests with promoting the interests of others brings moral purpose to an individual’s ambition, thereby providing the motivation to “do the good.”

Two noteworthy case-study analyses have explored the possibility of A-C integration.
Colby and Damon (1992) interviewed a small sample of moral exemplars and drew qualitative impressions about their functioning. One of their primary conclusions was that exemplars did not subjugate their personal desires (A) for the sake of their moral causes (C); rather, the two seemed to have become united over the course of their lives.

The question of A-C integration also came to the fore in Nasby and Reed’s (1997) case study of Dodge Morgan, a self-made millionaire who (lacking anything more prosocial to do with his time and money) attempted to break the speed record for sailing solo around the globe. Nasby and Reed’s analysis essentially was an exposé of the shortcomings of unfettered ambition and individuality (A) in the absence of social embeddedness and prosocial purpose (C), and prompted speculation about how Morgan could have, but ultimately failed to, integrate his A with C (see Wiggins’s, 1997, helpful commentary on the virtue of reconciling A and C).

These rich case studies provide optimism that a synthesis of motives of A and C is attainable. However, these analyses leave unclear what aspects of A and C need integration and how this takes place; moreover, these speculative analyses have yet to be buttressed with empirical validation. In fact, empirical inquiry has failed to produce convincing supportive evidence.

McAdams (1993) argued that generativity—the desire to create a legacy for the self by providing something of value to future generations—draws on both agentic and communal motivation, and illustrated this blending with imagoes such as teacher, healer, counselor, arbiter, and humanist. Early empirical evidence of the integration of A and C in the moral or generative personality of midlife adults was reported by McAdams, Ruetzel, and Foley (1986). Generativity was coded from the Life Review Interview; A (as power) and C
(as intimacy) were coded from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). McAdams et al. found that the sum of A and C was a stronger predictor of generativity motives than was either A or C alone.

McAdams et al. interpret this finding as support for the claim that generativity entails the blending of A and C. Two problems arise in this interpretation. First, the summing of A and C does not necessarily imply their integration. This result could be a product of some generative adults scoring high on A while other such individuals scored high on C. Alternatively, generative adults may have expressed A in response to one TAT image and C in response to another. In both of these scenarios, A and C are not integrated. Second, base rates of A and C need to be controlled before conclusions about integration can legitimately be reached.

When more stringent controls of baseline are used, null findings have thus far been the norm. Walker and Frimer (2007) interviewed a sample of moral exemplars and comparison persons, demographically matched on a case-by-case basis. The life narratives of exemplars were found to be richer in themes of both A and C, but a regression analysis did not reveal an interactive effect between A and C (which would be indicative of integration) when controlling for base levels of each variable.

These results could mean that moral (or generative) exemplars are simply strongly motivated or goal-oriented (as indicated by elevated levels of both A and C), rendering the notion of enlightened self-interest an epiphenomenon. The empirical investigation of A-C integration faces the gauntlet of Occam’s razor, charged with ruling out more parsimonious explanations.
Analytic Approach to Integrative Interactions

Returning to this theoretical and empirical issue, Frimer and Walker (2009) reconsidered the psychological, and thus analytic, meaning of the integration of A and C. Instead of conceptualizing interactions within the traditional variable approach, they relied on modern interactionism from the person approach, wherein “the person is conceptualized as an integrated, hierarchically organized totality, rather than as a summation of variables” (Magnusson, 1999, p. 236). A-C integration within this person approach is observed in the ways that individuals actively organize their A and C in real-life accounts, be they grouped together in narrative segments (integrated) or kept apart (segregated). In Frimer and Walker’s study, participants responded to an interview about their lives, which was later coded for A and C. Results indicated that A-C integration predicted self-reported moral behaviors; more importantly, this effect held even when controlling for the predictive effects of individual values.

In the present study we aim to extend Frimer and Walker’s (2009) findings and advance the science of A-C integration using various methodologies. A-C integration is manifest when individuals weave themes of A and C together in the construction of their life story or expression of their goals. Examples of A-C integration in personal strivings (responses to the stem “I typically try to …”) include: “be positive role model to young students,” “help others achieve their goals,” “make people feel good about themselves,” and “make time to advocate for women who are from ‘low-income’ bracket.” A surfaces as themes of achievement and social power (being a role model, influencing the feelings of others, and advocacy). A relates directly to C (concerns for the wellbeing of students, disadvantaged women, or unspecified others) in the construction of these personal strivings.
In contrast to goals with integrated A and C, other goals have C but lack the
activating force of A. Examples of such “pure” C strivings are: “respect the opinions of
others,” “be kind to other people,” “always be honest,” and “be sensitive to the feelings and
needs of my wife.” Such strivings entail concern for the interests of others but lack power or
achievement motivation, leaving the self’s interests unaffected or even subjugated.

Alternatively, personal strivings can embody A without C, as illustrated in the
following examples: “hunt the biggest buck and catch big fish,” “be attractive to others
(appearance and neatness),” “get my golf handicap to a single digit!” and “be persuasive
when I am correct.” In these strivings, desire for achievement, social influence, or wealth is
implicit; and any hint of prosocial purpose is uniformly absent.

The Present Study

This research examines the functioning of moral exemplars. Do moral exemplars
reliably evidence integrated A and C (relative to comparison participants)? How robust is
this phenomenon? Can these differences between exemplars and comparisons be detected
both in open narrative and with paper-and-pencil measures of goal motivation? Can these
differences be detected using different coding procedures? Moreover, the present research
advances the operationalization of A-C integration from the mere co-occurrence within
narrative segments (wherein the functional interplay, or lack thereof, remains ambiguous) to
the functional, compatible interaction within the flow of an individual’s life story.

The present study also contributes to the broader field of “motiveology” by
introducing a new set of conceptual and methodological ground-rules for defining the
constructs of A and C—a bootstrapping approach. The present investigation defines the
boundaries of A and C beginning with the person (as opposed to the variable) as the unit of

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analysis. By focusing on how the individual treats A and C, this approach relies on observations of how motives work within the individual’s thought structure, as opposed to a structure imposed by the researcher. After eliciting idiographic data—explicit statements of goals and stories that have personal meaning to the teller—raters then code nomothetic themes from the text. Moreover, raters also code interactions between A and C directly, increasing the likelihood that the data capture the “dynamic organization within the individual” (Allport, 1937, p. 48). Our contention is that this approach retains the scientific rigor of the variable approach, producing highly differentiated, reliable, and valid assessments of personality, but also moves personality science one step closer to the original goal of observing the “whole person” (see McAdams, 1995b, for a discussion). Our claim is that moral exemplars will evidence integration solely within the promoting interests conceptualization of A and C and only within the idiographic, personal approach to analyses.

This paper presents an in-depth study of 25 extraordinary persons—moral exemplars—and 25 comparison participants, each a demographic match to an exemplar. This design, then, effectively isolates the distance from normalcy to exemplarity. The study revisits Walker and Frimer’s (2007) moral exemplars to examine why these researchers failed to detect the adaptive integration of A and C and to demonstrate that, when properly conceived and analyzed, it becomes evident that exemplars’ A and C had been integrated all along.

Our premise is that Walker and Frimer (2007) failed to detect an interaction for two reasons. First, the definition of A and C on which they relied was too broad, thus diluting the effect. Walker and Frimer relied on McAdams’s (2001) mixed-scheme definition of (and macro-analytic coding procedures for) A and C. Our contention is that the interaction of A
and C in moral exemplars is limited to the promoting interests scheme. This implies that changing McAdams’s more general definitions of A and C to these more specific sorts will be one necessary step in detecting group differences in the interactive effects of these modalities.

The second reason for failing to detect A-C interactive effects concerns the analytic strategy for assessing interactions. As described above, previous research has assessed interactions purely at a variable level. Our contention is that the interaction of A and C occurs primarily at the person level, manifest when individuals actively congregate their A and C in the context of storytelling or goal generation. This approach operationalizes the integration phenomenon as the co-occurrence of themes of A and C within the same thought unit. We predict that, by adjusting these two aspects of the operationalization of A and C, we will pinpoint the phenomenon of A-C integration, thus producing a positive finding from the same data that previously produced nulls. To test these predictions, the present study begins with a re-analysis of Walker and Frimer’s (2007) data with consideration for these two issues (viz., definition and analytic strategy).

To test for integration with a more sensitive narrative analysis (and thus provide a conceptual replication), the present study also introduces a new micro-analytic coding procedure, entailing the identification of each mention of A-laden and C-laden concepts. McAdams’s (2001) macro-analytic coding procedures entail reading a lengthy narrative passage and judging whether or not each of four themes of A and four themes of C is present. This new, micro-analytic coding system, in a sense, taps the level of activation of A and C schemas within a narrative.

We operationalized integration as the co-activation of themes and code it in a second
step. Each instance of dyadic themes (A with A, A with C, or C with C) that are expressed as being semantically compatible or mutually supportive is coded as an integrated unit. Base levels of A and C are then used to assess whether general motivation can account for any group differences in integration.

Next, we explore the robustness and boundary conditions of this integration phenomenon using the coding of statements of goal motivation (i.e., personal strivings). Finally, the present research introduces methodologies for ruling out more parsimonious explanations for findings suggestive of A-C integration. Generalized cognitive complexity, the tendency to differentiate but also integrate seemingly disparate concepts, could account for findings of A-C integration. Complexity, in the present study, is manifest as integration across different pairings of motives, regardless of scheme or whether or not the motives are dualistic opposites (e.g., self-direction with benevolence, security with conformity, power with stimulation, or any other elements integrated with any other elements of Table 3.1). To show that A-C integration is, in some sense, a unique personality achievement and non-reducible to some more generalized mechanism, cognitive complexity needs to be ruled out.

In sum, our prediction is that exemplars will have a pervasive tendency to tell life stories and set personal goals rich in themes of both A and C within the promoting interests scheme. Beyond these effects, we also predict that exemplars will evidence the functional integration of A with C, reflecting their enlightened kind of self-interest.

Method

Participants

Exemplar Group. Moral exemplar participants were 25 recent recipients of the Caring Canadian Award. They received this national award for engaging in years or decades
of extraordinary voluntary service by providing help to individuals in their community or advancing a humanitarian cause. Recipients of the award are initially nominated by members of the general public, adjudicated by an independent committee, and then decorated by the Governor-General, the vice-regal head of state. Information about the award and its recipients is available on the Governor General’s website (http://gg.ca).

Subsequent to receiving the award, exemplars received a letter of initial contact about the present study. The letter explained that the research project was exploring the positive aspects of human functioning, that they were being recruited because of their award, and offered a $50 honorarium for participation. The sample of exemplars was evenly balanced for gender (48% female), was primarily Euro-Canadian in ethnicity (96%), averaged 70.1 years of age ($SD = 13.1$, $range = 43–91$), and 14.2 years of education ($SD = 3.0$).

Comparison Group. Comparison participants were recruited from a large pool of interested volunteers from the general community. Each comparison participant was selected to be a demographic match to a single exemplar participant (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and level of education). Thus, the entire sample consisted of 25 moral exemplars and 25 individually matched comparison participants. As with the exemplars, the letter of initial contact for comparison participants explained that the research project was exploring the positive aspects of human functioning and offered a $50 honorarium; the comparison participants were not, however, informed of their group status. More information on the selection and recruitment of these exemplar and comparison participants is available in Walker and Frimer (2007).

Procedure

Participants who agreed to be involved received (by postal mail) a packet of paper-
and-pencil measures, which they completed and returned. Among other measures, the packet included Emmons’ (1999) personal strivings list. Later (46 days on average, $SD = 33$), each participant responded to a life review interview (McAdams, 1995a), which was typically conducted in the participant’s home.

**Measures and Coding**

Procedurally, the personal strivings list was completed before the life review interview; but to highlight advancements from previous research, the presentation of measures and analyses proceeds in the reverse order.

**Life Review Interview.** This in-person, semi-structured, audio-recorded interview of approximately 2 hours prompts participants to construct a life story by responding to a lengthy series of questions (adapted from a protocol developed by McAdams, 1995a). All interviews were conducted by Lawrence J. Walker who was unavoidably aware of participants’ group identity. This raises the possibility of inadvertent interviewer bias compromising the fidelity of the interview. Previously reported post hoc analyses (Walker & Frimer, 2007, p. 851) of the quantity and quality of the interviewer’s prompts and of his interpersonal warmth and interest revealed no indications of interviewer bias. Despite the equivalence of the interviewer’s prompts between groups, exemplars’ transcribed interviews were somewhat lengthier than those of comparison participants ($M$s = 16,650 and 12,433 words, respectively; $SD$s = 3,896 and 2,545; 95% CIs = [15123, 18177] and [11435, 13430]), $t(48) = 4.53$, $p < .001$, $d = +1.28$.

In the present study, we explored six sections of the interview for themes of A and C. The first three sections were life chapters—participants related the main chapters of their life story. For coding purposes, these were later regrouped into childhood, adolescent, and adult
sections. Next, participants provided accounts of three critical life events: a high point, a low point, and a turning point. For each account, participants recalled a specific event or time, explaining the story that led up to and resulted from it, and reflected on how the episode says something about who they are as a person and how the event might may have changed them. We later transcribed these interviews for coding.

**Macro-Analytic Coding.** A trained undergraduate research assistant who was blind to both the study’s hypotheses and the group status of participants coded A and C using McAdams’s (2001) coding manual. In this (mixed) scheme, agency is operationalized in terms of four themes: (a) self-mastery, (b) status/victory, (c) achievement/responsibility, and (d) empowerment. Communion is similarly operationalized fourfold: (a) love/friendship, (b) dialog, (c) caring/help, and (d) unity/togetherness. Coding entails reading each section of the interview and then independently determining the presence/absence of each of the eight themes (four A and four C) within each of the six sections. This macro-analytic approach detected 1.2 themes, on average, in each section of the interview ($SD = 1.4$, $range = 0–6$); and had substantial interrater reliability (with 94% exact agreement and $\kappa = .79$), based on the independent coding of a random subsample of 13 interviews (26%).

**Micro-Analytic Coding.** To elicit finer-grained observations of A and C and to allow for the coding of their mutual relationships, another rater independently coded interviews micro-analytically for A- and C-laden implicit values. The rater (the first author), although aware of the theoretical underpinnings of the study, was blind to specific hypotheses (which had not yet been specifically formulated at the time of coding) as well as to the group status of participants. Frimer, Walker, and Dunlop’s (2009) Values Embedded in Narrative (VEiN) coding procedure was derived from the conceptual and empirical foundation of the Schwartz
universal set of 10 values (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security) and associated measures (e.g., the Portrait Values Questionnaire; Schwartz et al., 2001), and has been shown to be both reliable and valid (Frimer & Walker, 2009). The highly intensive nature of the coding procedure necessitated coding only the high- and low-point events of the interview for VEiNs. The training of raters involved reading the coding manual, coding practice transcripts, discussing agreements and disagreements, and repeating several times until they attained suitable reliability.

Coding was broken into two sequential steps. In the first step, we assessed the prevalence of A and C by coding the two VEiNs capturing A as advancing the self—power and achievement—and the two VEiNs capturing C as advancing others—universalism and benevolence. Coding entailed conceptually matching each uttered concept in the narrative story to items in the VEiN Coding Manual (Frimer et al., 2009). Figure 3.1 presents an abbreviated example of the micro-analytic coding. In this example, A—in boldface—is manifest as VEiNs of power (public recognition, money, being in a position of influence, a competition, and influence over others) and of achievement (working diligently, organizing, performing to a standard of excellence, and succeeding). C—in italics—is instantiated as VEiNs of universalism (reference to a public service organization, helping a fatherless boy) and of benevolence (help, assistance, and guidance).

13 Selecting only the high- and low-point events for this coding could have constituted “cherry-picking” the richest sections of the interview to demonstrate the merit of the micro-analytic coding system over the macro-analytic one. This turns out not to be the case as the richest section (as defined by the density of agency and communion in the macro-analytic coding) was the adulthood section, followed in turn by the high point, turning point, low point, adolescent, and childhood sections. That is, the high- and low-point events were relatively average sections in terms of the richness of their motivational themes. Moreover, when considering the presence or absence of co-occurring A and C, the groups differed significantly only in the adulthood and turning-point sections. In other words, those two sections were driving the group difference, not the high- and low-point events. Thus, coding the high- and low-point events for VEiNs turned out to constitute a rather conservative test of our hypotheses.
**Figure 3.1.** An abridged example of a life review interview, and the coding thereof, of a participant from the exemplar group. Coded embedded values of agency (power or achievement) are in boldface; communion values (universalism or benevolence) are in italics. Bars indicate compatible relationships between embedded values. For clarity purposes, some codings are omitted.

Looking back over your life, is there some event that represents for you a high point?

... the first time I received some **public acknowledgement** was a high point. We were **working diligently** to **raise funds** for the *Big Brother association* in [the city]. Drew and I were the two... I guess we'd call ourselves the **cofounders** of it... We were **frantically working** away at organizing a **boxing match** in [the city]. We had **fighters lined up**; we had **a lot of different things** going on, a lot of **promotion** and **advertisement**... And Drew, that night... just before the last **fight** was on, he said, "Now I have a special **recognition**." And he said, "The motto of *Big Brothers*: No man **stands so straight** as when he **stoops to help a fatherless boy**." And Drew said, "The man who **stands straightest** with me right now is Sam, who's **helped us put on**..."—and he mentioned all the different **events**...

What did that mean to you?

Well, it meant that we'd **done something** that has **helped other people**. We've **provided** for **young people** to **receive help** and **assistance** and **guidance** through their growing years. It... was an emotional time... It lasted a minute or two minutes, but that stayed with me...
To facilitate the latter step of this coding process, raters used color-coded highlighter pens in this first step to indicate which words matched a criterion. This sensitive, micro-analytic coding provided over 50 times as many coded themes/VEiNs in each section of the interview ($M = 46$, $SD = 41$, $range = 3–290$) as the macro-analytic coding.

In the second step of this coding, we assessed the relationships between A and C (again see Figure 3.1) by coding the highlighted transcript produced by the primary coder in the first step. Coding entailed reading the transcript and identifying compatible relationships between highlighted values. Compatible relationships are defined in the VEiN Relationship Coding Manual (Frimer & Walker, 2010) as being any one of five types: (a) instrumentality ($\chi$ is treated a means to an end or cause of $\gamma$); (b) compensation ($\chi$ and $\gamma$ are treated as equal components in a reciprocal swap or replacement); (c) illustration ($\chi$ is an instance, explication, or a definition of $\gamma$); (d) superimposition ($\chi$ and $\gamma$ combine to form a single concept); and (e) logical coordination ($\chi$ combines, in sequence, with $\gamma$ to form a coherent thought). An example of instrumentality is, “It meant that we’d done something [organized a fundraising event] that helped other people.” In this example, having done something (A) is treated as being instrumental to the project of helping others (C). The expression of A and C in semantically unrelated parts of the story would not constitute a compatible relationship.

Three primary metrics were derived from the relationship coding (i.e., Step 2), each a tally of the number of A-C, A-A, and C-C compatible relationships within each section of the interview. Each section of the interview produced 10 compatible relationships on average ($SD = 14$, $range = 0–103$). We also derived a secondary metric of relationships at the

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14 The VEiN Relationship Coding Manual is available upon request from the first author.
15 Incompatible relationships such as conflicts were explored in the present study but were found to suffer from a floor effect. Participants rarely reported conflicts spontaneously. Future research should prompt participants more directly for conflicts.
specific VEiN level (as opposed to the A- or C-levels) for all possible A-C combinations (e.g., achievement–benevolence).

A second rater determined interrater reliability for the prevalence coding (i.e., Step 1) by coding a random subset of 20 interviews (40%). Reliability was assessed at the level of the interview segment by comparing the number of “hits” each rater had on a particular VEiN, and was calculated in terms of an intraclass correlation ($ICC$). The two raters agreed substantially on the frequency of each of the four VEiNs ($ICC$s ≥ .94). Interrater reliability for the relationship coding (i.e., Step 2) was assessed for tallies of the three compatible relationship types (viz., A-A, A-C, and C-C). The two raters agreed substantially (with $ICC$s ≥ .77). The reliability of A-C relationships was also assessed at the VEiN-level (e.g., achievement–universalism) and was similarly found to be substantial (with $ICC$s ≥ .77).

Correlations between comparable metrics produced by the macro-analytic coding and those produced by the micro-coding\textsuperscript{16} tended to be of moderate size ($r$s = .40, .39, and .32 for A, C, and A-C integration, respectively). Generally speaking, the different approaches detected somewhat similar signals. For deviation scores, the different coding procedures yielded unrelated data ($r$ = .05).

**Personal Strivings List.** By prompting participants for what they are typically trying to do, Emmons’ (1999) personal strivings list provides an open-ended template onto which people project their characteristic motives. Participants are prompted to reflect upon, and then write down a list of strivings, by responding to the sentence stem, “I typically try to …”. Examples of strivings include “… keep a healthy diet,” “… be more affectionate towards my family,” “… decorate interior of my home,” and “… not look like a sour-puss.” We later

\textsuperscript{16} All data in this analysis were uniformly from only the high- and low-point events and only for themes consistent with the promoting interests scheme.
coded each idiographic striving for nomothetic themes—in this case, VEiNs. Participants were instructed to write down at least 10 strivings, with space provided for 15. They produced 12.8 strivings on average ($SD = 2.6$); with production rates not differing between exemplar and comparison groups, $t(48) = 1.52, p = .14, d = +0.40$.

Strivings were entered into a spreadsheet and reordered randomly, thereby allowing for blind coding. Two raters independently coded the presence/absence of a particular VEiN by matching the concepts in a striving to criteria in the VEiN Coding Manual (Frimer et al., 2009). The primary rater (the third author) was aware of the general theoretical perspectives underpinning the present study but was blind to specific hypotheses. Raters were trained by reading the coding manual, coding approximately 100 strivings, discussing agreements and disagreements, and repeating several times until suitable reliability was achieved. The coding was performed independently for each of the 10 VEiNs (not just the four VEiNs reflecting A and C), meaning that each striving could be coded for multiple themes. On average, 1.7 VEiNs ($SD = 1.2$) were coded for each striving. Across the 10 VEiNs, reliability was substantial with 93% agreement (ranging from 91–99% for individual VEiNs) and $\kappa = .72$ ($range = .67–.82$).

Analytical Strategy and Results

Analyses collectively test the claim that moral exemplars have especially integrated motives of A and C relative to comparison individuals. First, we revisit the null results of Walker and Frimer’s (2007) narrative analysis using macro-analytic coding of A and C to explore under which conditions group differences manifest. Our claim is that clarifying both the definition of A and C and the analytical approach (person, not variable) are necessary steps to observing group differences. Second, the phenomenon of integration is observed
with the more sensitive micro-analytic method to explore the psychology of A-C integration at a more direct level of analysis. Analyses also serve to demonstrate the robustness of the phenomenon within narratives. Third, analyses turn to the personal strivings data to provide a conceptual replication of the phenomenon using a vastly different methodology, elicited at a different time and context. Fourth, boundary conditions of the phenomenon are also explored with the strivings data, and competing explanations (viz., general complexity) are tested.

**Narrative**

Analyses begin where Walker and Frimer (2007) left off: at the failure to detect an interactive effect between A and C in the life narratives of moral exemplars.

**Macro-Analytic Coding of A and C.** Recall that Walker and Frimer (2007) tested for an interactive effect between A and C, coded using McAdams’s (2001) macro-analytic procedure, and relying on a variable approach using a logistic regression analysis. In the first block, they controlled for baseline by entering the prevalence of each of A and C. The second block constituted the test of the interaction, wherein the product of A and C was entered. This analysis failed to detect an interactive effect (see the top-left cell of Table 3.2). To test our claim that changing both the definition of A and C and the conceptualization of interaction are necessary to detect group differences, we performed three analyses. Our baseline is McAdams’s (2001) mixed scheme of A and C and the variable-centered analytic approach presented by Walker and Frimer (2007); for shorthand, we refer to this as the “mixed scheme/variable” approach.
First, we change only the definition of A and C according to that specified by the promoting interests scheme. A and C are thus defined more specifically as themes of advancing the self (i.e., status/victory and achievement/responsibility) and advancing others (i.e., caring/help), respectively. This approach—the “promoting interests/variable” approach—was tested by re-running the logistic regression, using the data based on the more specific definitions of A and C. The second step did not augment the prediction of group differences (see the bottom-left cell of Table 3.2), meaning that changing only the definition of A and C was not sufficient for detecting the interactive effect of A and C.

Next, we return to the baseline “mixed scheme/variable” approach and change only the analytical approach to test a “mixed scheme/person” approach, with the unit of observation becoming the co-occurrence of motives within sections of the interview. But to make this a fair test, the effect of chance co-occurrence needs to be removed. To accomplish
this, deviation beyond expected frequency is examined. We derived an expected frequency of co-occurrence based on individuals’ overall levels of A and C, and the number of sections. Deviation scores (calculated as actual frequency minus expected frequency), then, tap integration with levels of A and C controlled, and reflect the characteristic way that individuals organize their A and C, with positive deviation scores reflecting congregation and negative deviation scores reflecting segregation. A comparison of group differences on deviation scores (with a \( t \)-test) constitutes the test of the interaction effect. Our contention is that changing the analytical approach (from a variable- to a person-centered approach) is a second necessary (but perhaps not sufficient) step in detecting group differences in the interaction.

The interactive effect of this approach was tested by comparing group means on deviation scores, which failed to reach significance (see the top-right cell of Table 3.2). Similar to the previous analysis, this result implies that changing only the analytical approach is not sufficient for detecting the interactive effect of these modalities. Changing one or the other strategy (definitional or analytical) did not alter the prevailing null result.

Finally, we change both the definition of A and C and the analytical approach—the “promoting interests/person” approach. Here, we tested the interactive effect by again examining group means on deviation scores, based on the more specific A and C promoting-interests themes. As predicted, exemplars evidenced significantly higher deviation scores (\( M = +0.31, SD = 0.45, 95\% CI = [0.14, 0.49] \)) than comparison participants (\( M = +0.09, SD = 0.26, 95\% CI = [-0.01, 0.20] \)); see the bottom-right cell of Table 3.2. Thus, only when simultaneously changing the definition of A and C and the analytical approach does a

\[ E_{A\cap C} = P(A\cap C) = P(A)P(C) = \frac{\#A}{6} \times \frac{\#C}{6} \]  

(when considering six sections of the interview).
significant effect emerge. This set of analyses supports our contention that both a more
specific definition of A and C and a person-centered analytical approach are necessary to
detect the adaptive integration of A and C.

One shortcoming of the macro-analytic coding of A and C interaction, however, is
ingsensitivity. Coding procedures permit only a crass measurement (present or absent) of each
theme in oftentimes lengthy and rich narrative passages. Out of six sections of the life
review interview, exemplars averaged only 1.3 ($SD = 1.0$) A-C integrated sections (using the
promoting interests definition), compared to the comparison group’s average of 0.3 ($SD =
0.5$) integrated sections. In spite of a possible floor effect, the previous set of analyses
established group differences (albeit just significant at the $p < .05$ level) in the degree of
congregation of these modalities. To explore the interaction of A and C in the life narratives
of exemplars in greater depth and to establish the robustness of this finding, we now tap this
phenomenon using a subset of the same narrative transcripts but with a substantially different
(and more sensitive) coding procedure.

**Micro-Analytic Coding of A and C.** This set of analyses differs from the previous
in three ways. First, A is measured not by McAdams’s (2001) themes of
achievement/responsibility and status/victory but by VEiNs (Frimer et al., 2009) of power
and achievement; similarly, C is measured not by McAdams’s theme of caring/help but by
VEiNs of universalism and benevolence. These conceptualizations of A and C are similar
but non-identical, with the VEiN scheme more precisely operationalizing the concepts of
promoting interests of the self and others.

Second, to keep the coding task manageable, coding was restricted to two sections of
the life narrative—the high-point event and low-point event—as compared to the six used in
previous analyses. These two sections were selected as they (like the adulthood and turning-point sections) tend to elicit more elaborated, revealing stories than the early-life childhood and adolescent sections; and they are, in a sense, of parallel construction.

Third, we altered the coding procedure considerably, allowing for observations of the dynamic interplay of A and C within a person’s life narrative. In the previous analysis, the data representing A-C integration was the mere co-occurrence of these motives in a narrative passage (where they need not be functionally and phenomenologically related at all); in the present coding, the unit is a functionally compatible relationship between these two themes, embedded within the flow of a life story.

Previous analyses employing macro-analytic coding evidenced higher levels of A and of C in exemplars over comparisons (e.g., Walker & Frimer, 2007). To test for replication, this analysis was repeated using the VEiN coding procedure. The prevalence of A and C in exemplar and comparison participants’ narratives was explored (see left panel in Figure 3.2) with a 2 (group: exemplar, comparison) × 2 (mode: A, C) mixed-model ANOVA. This analysis yielded the predicted main effect for group, $F(1,48) = 11.14, p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$; not qualified by a group × mode interaction. Replicating previous trends, exemplars had higher levels of both A and C relative to comparison participants.

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18 The omnibus test also yielded a main effect for mode, which is not of theoretical interest.
Next, the frequency of A-C compatible relationships was compared between groups (see right panel in Figure 3.2). Exemplars evidenced substantially more A-C compatible relationships than did comparisons, $t(48) = 4.12, d = +1.18, p < .001$. However, this result needs to be interpreted carefully: having more A and more C (as the exemplars do) could explain the A-C compatible relationship differences between groups in that the latter were coded from the former. If values “naturally” combine at some rate, then elevated levels of A

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19 The effect of word count was also considered and ruled out. Across the high-point and low-point events, exemplars told longer stories than comparison participants ($M_s = 1,805$ and 1,264 words, respectively). Group differences persisted, however, when correcting for length of transcript. Re-running the reported analyses using VEiN density (i.e., number of codes per 1,000 words) in lieu of VEiN frequency produced similar findings. Exemplars had a higher density of A ($p = .06, d = +0.54$), C ($p < .001, d = +1.07$), and A-C compatible relationships ($p = .003, d = +0.90$).
and C producing a greater number of A-C compatible relationships would be expected. To perform a fair test of integration and to rule out generalized motivation (reflected in high scores on all motive variables) as an explanatory mechanism, group differences on A and C need to be controlled. Our next analytical goal was to test whether exemplars exceed expectable amounts of A-C compatible relationships given base levels of A and C.

Testing whether the group difference in A-C compatible relationships can be explained by “chance” combination of A and C poses an analytical problem. What would constitute chance combination of compatible relationships of value-laden statements in open narrative? We address this question by introducing an assumption: that the rates at which A VEiNs combine into A-A compatible relationships and C VEiNs combine into C-C compatible relationships together reflect a fair baseline rate of relationship formation for A and C into A-C relationships.

The first step in this test is to empirically estimate the rate at which instances of a modality (e.g., C) tend to form the respective intramodal compatible relationships (e.g., C-C). This was accomplished by linearly regressing the number of relationships (e.g., A-A) on the number of modalities (e.g., A) in each section of the interview (with the y-intercept set to 0). This allows for the estimation of the rate (slope of the best-fit line; not the correlation coefficient) at which modalities combine into compatible relationships using A → A-A and C → C-C, and thus determines a baseline. Modality and relationship rates were found to have a clear linear relationship, explaining a substantial 91% of the variance. The least-sum-of-squares analysis yielded a combination rate of 44.4%, meaning that for every two modalities

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20 For the present study, this is a conservative estimate because within-kind relationship formation (e.g., A into A-A compatible relationships) likely occurs more readily than for between-kind relationships (viz., A-C relationships), especially when the two motives are in some tension with one another, as A and C frequently are. Thus, this approach makes it less likely that an effect for A-C relationships will be detected.
Next, we assume that the intramodal combination rate (just derived) provides an expectable rate of formation for intermodal (viz., A-C) relationships. Multiplying this factor by the average number of A and C hits in a section of the interview, expected A-C relationship levels were calculated. As suspected, exemplars had more expected A-C compatible relationships than did comparisons, $t(48) = 3.35, p = .002, d = +0.94$, meaning that group differences in total motivation anticipate group differences in integration.

Does this group difference in expectable relationships explain the finding of elevated levels of compatible relationships? Or do exemplars exceed expected levels, congregating the A and C that they have at a higher rate? Deviation scores permit a test of these mechanisms and were derived by subtracting expected values from actual scores. We predicted that exemplars’ deviation scores would both exceed chance levels (i.e., be greater than 0) and exceed the comparison group’s deviation scores, demonstrating that exemplars functionally congregate their A and C at a higher rate.

As Figure 3.3 illustrates, exemplars exceeded chance levels, with $M = +4.8$ A-C compatible relationships ($SD = 9.0; t(24) = 2.67, p = .01, d = +0.53$), whereas comparisons’ deviation scores did not differ from 0 ($M = -1.0, SD = 4.8; t(24) = -1.02, p = .32, d = -0.21$). Next, comparing the groups directly, exemplars congregated A and C into A-C compatible relationships at rates that substantially exceeded those of the comparison group, $t(48) = 2.83, p = .007, d = +0.80$. These results replicate and extend the finding that exemplars integrate A with C in their life narratives by providing depth of observation and stringent controls on competing explanations (such as general motivation and chance combinations).
Figure 3.3. The actual number of A-C compatible relationships plotted against the number of (averaged) modalities within a section of the life review interview. Expected scores of A-C compatible relationships are represented by the line. Deviation scores are calculated as the vertical distance from an actual point to the expected A-C compatible relationship line.

Extent of Compatible Relationships. To explore the more specific loci of A-C compatible relationships, VEiN dyads were compared across groups. For all four VEiN dyads spanning the A-C relationship (e.g., power–universalism), the exemplars had more compatible relationships than comparisons, $t(48) \geq 2.89$, $p \leq .004$, $d \geq +0.59$. Exemplars show a consistent pattern of A-C integration when integration is observed within the person (in terms of functional relationships between values within an individual’s life story), and when A and C are defined by the promoting interests scheme.
Strivings

To replicate and extend the findings from the narrative data, the same basic phenomena were explored in participants’ goal motivations. Compared to the life review interview, the personal strivings list is simpler to administer and quicker to code. Coding was restricted to VEiN identification without directly coding compatible relationships; integration is thus manifest as co-occurrences within the same statement. These analyses thus serve a pragmatic function: to test whether a more efficient methodology has sufficient sensitivity to detect the basic phenomenon of integration and thus pave the way for maximal efficiency in future research. The analytic strategy adopted was to first test whether the findings in the previous section would replicate, and to then explore competing definitional boundaries and explanatory mechanisms of A and C.

Prevalence of A and C. Strivings analyses began by testing whether exemplars had more A and C in their strivings than did comparisons (see the left panel in Figure 3.4). The prevalence of A and C was examined with a 2 (group: exemplar, comparison) × 2 (mode: A, C) mixed-model ANOVA. The analysis yielded the predicted main effect for group, \( F(1,48) = 9.10, \rho = .004, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .16 \); and no other significant effects. This omnibus test indicated that exemplars had more A and more C than comparison participants. Next, the frequency of co-occurrences of A and C in strivings (see rightmost set of bars in Figure 3.4) was examined. As predicted, exemplars evidenced more A-C co-occurrences than comparisons, \( t(48) = 2.90, \rho = .006, d = +0.87 \); thus, replicating the analogous findings from the narrative data.
As was discussed in the previous section, caution is needed in interpreting the latter result (given that the higher prevalence of A and C implies a higher likelihood of chance A-C co-occurrences). We calculated expected levels of A-C co-occurrences in strivings as the product of the number of A and C hits divided by the number of strivings. We then derived deviation scores by subtracting these expected values from observed A-C strivings. Exemplars had positive deviation scores (i.e., greater than 0), $t(24) = 3.93$, $p = .001$, $d = +0.79$, meaning that they tended to congregate their A and C motives. Exemplars also congregated their A and C marginally more so than did comparison participants, $t(48) = 1.76$, $p = .09$, $d = +0.52$, with a moderate effect size. These findings provide a conceptual
replication of those from the narrative data, using a different measure elicited in a different time and context.

**Test of Alternative Explanations.** We claim that the co-activation of A and C (as defined within the promoting interests scheme) is driving the elevated co-occurrence of A and C in the strivings of exemplars. The findings thus far presented could be consistent with two related theories. First, the definitional boundaries of A and C have yet to be empirically demonstrated. The findings from the macro-analytic coding of narratives support the definitional focus on the promoting interests scheme; the data do not support (broader) mixed definitions (such as those of McAdams, 2001). Still, a more direct test of the definitional boundary of this phenomenon is needed. The second alternative explanation partially overlaps with the previous: generalized complexity could explain the results reported thus far. Each of these objections is addressed in turn below.

**Definitional Boundaries of A-C Integration.** At the narrative level, we found that when A-C integration was limited to McAdams’s (2001) themes of A as status/victory and achievement/responsibility, and with C defined as caring/help, group differences were manifest. We replicated this finding with VEiNs of power and achievement as A and universalism and benevolence as C. Altogether, these findings are consistent with the conceptual focus on the promoting interests scheme. To test the boundaries of A-C integration more thoroughly, at a different level of personality description, we explored whether the exemplars’ integration is specific to value combinations predicted by the promoting interests scheme versus those predicted by the psychological distance scheme.

Theories advancing the alternate definitional boundaries of A and C (see Table 3.1), focusing on the psychological distance scheme, might predict a broader set of A-C
integration findings. We unpack the broader-definition theory to predict that exemplars will also evidence greater integration across the orthogonal axis of the Schwartz (1992) values circumplex, which captures themes of independence (self-direction and/or stimulation) and group belonging (security, conformity, and/or tradition)—the psychological distance conceptualization of A and C. In contrast, our prediction is that exemplars will evidence A-C integration only for the promoting interests conceptualization of advancing self (power and achievement) and advancing others (universalism and benevolence).

These competing hypotheses were tested with a 2 (group: exemplar, comparison) × 2 (definition: promoting interests, psychological distance) mixed-model ANOVA, using the VEiN coding of the strivings data. Our prediction was a group × definition interaction. Indeed, significant main effects for definition and for group were qualified by the predicted interaction (see Figure 3.5), $F(1,48) = 10.41, p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$. Simple main effects were examined to determine for which definitions exemplars differed from comparisons.

Exemplars differed from comparisons on the promoting interests form of integration, $F(1,48) = 8.66, p = .005$, $d = +0.83$; however, they did not differ on the psychological distance form of integration, $F(1,48) = 1.42, p = .24$, $d = -0.34$. In sum, the A-C integration evidenced by exemplars supports the specific boundary of A and C as defined by the promoting interests scheme.
The number of integrated strivings for two definitions of agency and communion, promoting interests and psychological distance. Error bars indicate 95% CIs.

**Generalized Integration Mechanism.** A related, more parsimonious, explanation for the present finding of elevated A-C integration among exemplars is that they are simply more integrative in general (integrating more values into their strivings), and that a broader mechanism such as cognitive complexity (e.g., Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards, & Krause, 1998; Suedfeld, 2009) can account for the present effect. We unpack this general complexity theory to the prediction that exemplars’ strivings will evidence greater integration across many or all other combinations of values outside of the promoting interests A-C axis.

We tested this hypothesis by comparing two classes of differences between exemplars and comparisons in integrated strivings. The first class (“on-axis”) is comprised of the four permutations of the four elemental VEiNs that lie within the promoting interests A-C axis.
(viz., power–universalism, power–benevolence, achievement–universalism, and achievement–benevolence), and the second class (“off-axis”) is comprised of the 41 remaining permutations of VEiNs that lie outside of the A-C axis (e.g., self-direction–conformity, security–tradition, universalism–hedonism). The frequency of co-occurrence of each VEiN dyad was derived and then standardized (z-scores). For each participant, these z-scores were then averaged for each class, producing a metric of integration for the “on-axis” promoting-interests dyads and for the remaining “off-axis” dyads. If generalized complexity is driving the A-C integration finding, then exemplars will also differ from comparisons on the “off-axis” integrations (indicated by an unqualified main effect). On the other hand, if exemplar integration is specific to the A-C axis, an omnibus test will yield an interaction, with integration evident more so “on-axis.”

These competing mechanisms were tested with a 2 (group: exemplar, comparison) × 2 (axis: on, off) mixed-model ANOVA. Our prediction was a group × axis interaction. A significant main effect for group was qualified by the predicted interaction (see Figure 3.6), $F(1,48) = 9.18, \rho = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$. (As a result of the standardization, the main effect for axis could not approach significance.) Simple main effects were examined to determine for which of the axes exemplars differed from comparisons. Exemplars and comparisons did not differ for off-axis integration, $F(1,48) = 0.23, \rho = .64, d = +0.13$; but exemplars did differ from comparisons in terms of on-axis integration, $F(1,48) = 7.35, \rho = .009, d = +0.77$. This result rules out a generalized integration mechanism for explaining elevated levels of A-C integration.
Discussion

Relative to a demographically matched comparison group, moral exemplars consistently evidenced more themes of A and C in the personal goals they shared and in the life stories they told, implying that exemplars are strongly motivated. Moreover, exemplars tended to congregate their A and C themes within the semantic flow of narrative passages and within personal strivings, thus evidencing the integration of A and C. To our knowledge, this is the first reliable empirical evidence of this personological feature in moral exemplars. While reliable and robust, this effect was not evident under all conditions. Analyses began by showing that previous research (Walker & Frimer, 2007) failed to detect the integration of A and C for two reasons. Only when A and C are defined in terms of promoting interests (of
the self and others) and when the interaction is observed within the person did the exemplar and comparison groups differ on the measure of integration. These results are consistent with the claim that moral exemplars have achieved enlightened self-interest, whereby they best advance their own interests by advancing the interests of others. After demonstrating the robustness of this phenomenon by providing a conceptual replication of these results using different measures elicited in different contexts and relying on different coding procedures, various alternative explanations—including chance co-occurrence and generalized complexity—were addressed and dismissed.

**Integrated Agency and Communion**

Integrated A and C of exemplars were found both in a life narrative interview and in a measure of personal strivings. Among many other questions, the interview prompted participants to recall critical life events, including a high-point event. Each participant’s responses were both rich and idiographic, entailing specific persons, happenings, and personal significance to the individual. Moreover, each story had its own signature set of motivational themes and interwoven, implicit value endorsements.

Figure 3.1 (presented earlier) is an example of the narrative of one participant, Sam (a pseudonym), from the exemplar group, and the coding thereof. Themes of implicit A and C surface frequently in this passage. A emerges often in Sam’s delight in receiving social recognition and in the hard work necessary to organize a boxing match; C is manifest both in the direct caring action toward the younger generation and in an indirect, organizational form, in his fondness of the Big Brothers organization. Indeed, Sam had high scores on these modalities: His high-point event had 38 instances of A and 18 of C (for reference, the comparison group averaged 30.3 As, $SD = 30.0$, and 5.5 Cs, $SD = 4.2$).
Beyond the base amounts, important personological information is observable in the relationship between the A and C that Sam presents. Sam does not treat A and C in a demarcated fashion but, rather, weaves A and C together within the narrative flow: The purpose of Sam’s hard work and organizational acumen (A) is explicitly for the higher purpose of assisting disadvantaged children (C). Buttressing this qualitative observation are the quantitative data that Sam’s high point had 36 A-C compatible relationships, 12.4 of which were expectable based on Sam’s overall levels of A and C. The deviation score, +23.6 A-C compatible relationships above expected, quantifies the integration of A and C in Sam’s moral personality.

Narrative analyses tended to produce large effect sizes between exemplars and comparison participants; analyses of personal strivings generally produced respectable effects (in the medium range) but require considerably less resources to administer and code. In the latter measure, integration was manifest in strivings that had both A and C present, such as “I typically try to …”: “help my mother financially,” “get involved in the problems of others—to help them out,” “educate my peers about important social issues,” and “live giving my utmost in service daily to the people of my country.” In each of these examples, A manifests as social influence (e.g., educating peers), affluence (e.g., money), and effort (e.g., giving one’s utmost). C emerges in concerns for close others (e.g., helping a mother or a peer) or in a more generalized concern for a social system (e.g., social issue). Consistently, A and C are coordinated; A, in a sense, mobilizes ideals of C into action.

The Predicted Paradox and the Developmental Solution

A and C are two fundamental human motives. This much is in common among personality researchers. Their respective definitions and how they interact, on the other
hand, is a source of considerable debate. In our reading, definitions of A and C can be
categorized into two schemes—promoting interests and psychological distance. Certain
theories emerge from one scheme, other theories from the other, and yet others draw from
both simultaneously. Independent of this definitional concern, theories diverge on their
characterization of the relationship between the modalities, be they compatible with,
independent of, or in conflict with one another. The present study posits that optimal moral
motivation entails enlightened self-interest, wherein mature psychological functioning (e.g.,
that of moral exemplars) involves the compatible integration of A and C, as defined by the
promoting interests scheme. The data of the present study clearly support this contention.

This prediction of the adaptive integration of A and C, however, entails a paradox.
When A is operationalized as motives of power and achievement—promoting the interests of
the self—and C as motives of universalism and benevolence—promoting the interests of
others—A and C entail a mutually oppositional dualism. How can one advance one’s own
situation and the plight of others simultaneously? How do moral exemplars integrate these
dialectical themes?

The reconciliation model (Frimer & Walker, 2009) explains this paradox within a
developmental framework. For all young persons, future moral exemplars included,
development involves the strengthening and elaboration of these motives in a mutually
segregated fashion. Research with a “normal” sample showed that, typically, one or the
other motive (but rarely both) is active at a given time (Fournier et al., 2009). However
segregated these motives are, they are not independent; throughout this initial developmental
phase, they remain in mutual tension. This tension poses little trouble for either pursuit until
the modalities become highly elaborated and begin to vie for the motivational, attentional,
and temporal resources of the person. At this point, an Eriksonian (1968) crisis of conviction emerges, manifest as a dualistic choice between excellence (A) and compassion (C): “Should I get ahead in my job or be there for my kid’s soccer game?”, “Do I play to win or play fair?”, “Will I make a lot of money or do something for my community?”.

The reconciliation model holds this period of conflict, likely arising in adolescence or emerging adulthood, to be a critical period of personality development. This crisis is particularly important because multiple resolutions are available. Stagnation or regression to earlier forms presents one possibility; attenuating one motive (C) to provide growing room for the other (A) is a second common, however nefarious, resolution. The latter is manifest as the champion of capitalism, unmitigated agency—rampant greed, materialism, and lust for power—what Bakan (1966, p. 14) unambiguously defamed as “the villain.” The most adaptive resolution, however, is the creative reconciliation of the tension between A and C, and their mutual integration. This reconciliatory move entails the insight that, with some reconfiguration, A and C can be most efficiently and effectively achieved in tandem; that when self-interest is understood not purely in material or interpersonal terms (as financial gain or social dominance) but perhaps in more psychological terms (e.g., as moral elevation; Haidt, 2003), then promoting the interests of others may be the most adaptive way to better one’s own condition.

The notion of enlightened self-interest seems to be somewhat compatible with evolutionary approaches to prosocial motivation (e.g., Dawkins, 1976). To some extent, enlightened self-interest as a causal mechanism for good behavior relieves of duty the motive (or concept) of altruism. In comparison to more dualistic models of moral functioning (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Schwartz, 1992), this approach provides a clearer, more parsimonious
mechanistic link between moral thought and moral behavior.

**Persons or Variables?**

How, exactly, is this phenomenon of integrated A and C manifest? What precisely does it mean, psychologically? Traditional approaches to the study of personality have relied on the self-reporting of personality traits, wherein variables (such as the Big 5 factors) are measured and conceived as independent entities. Within this variable approach (Magnusson, 1985, 1999), the person is modeled as a set of scores on different modalities. This measurement approach effectively limits the ways that integration across modalities can be observed; in the present and past studies (e.g., Frimer & Walker, 2009; Walker & Frimer, 2007), this theoretical approach was unpacked to predict that, controlling for base levels of A and C, the interactive effect (that is, their product) will predict some adaptive criterion variable (e.g., moral exemplarity). This approach has repeatedly failed to detect significant differences, perhaps because this variable approach fails to make observations about the dynamics of these modalities at their locus of interaction—phenomenologically, within the person.

Magnusson (1985, 1999) identifies a qualitatively different approach to the study of persons, which he calls the person approach; conceptualizing the person in terms of the organization of, and dynamic interactions between, personality constructs. Within this metatheoretical frame, both the strength of modalities and the relationships between them constitute important psychological data. The present study advanced a new method for measuring both of these constructs and found that moral exemplars score high on both strength of modality and frequency of compatible relationships; moreover, the latter could not entirely be explained by the former, meaning that the integration of A and C is (only)
manifest at the person level of analysis. This set of findings provides rigorous empirical support for deeper exploration of the within-person dynamics of personality functioning.

In many ways, Nasby and Reed’s (1997) pivotal case study of Dodge Morgan was a commentary on the field of personality psychology as much as it was on Mr. Morgan himself. Nasby and Reed expressed ambivalence toward the life story, or narrative, approach:

The LSM [McAdams’s life story model], with its interdisciplinary breadth, multiple levels of analysis, and appreciation of metaphor, is suited for rising to the panoptic perspective denied us by the FFM [five-factor model], but the scope and complexity of the model have not yet been well-mapped. In this analysis one can indeed take to the air, but must do so rather anxiously, fearful of losing the way. The LSM has no factor scores, no trait markers, no appropriate comparison groups that can reassure us that we are indeed on course. (p. 900)

The present study provides a method and a map for keeping one’s way in navigating the rich wilderness of life narrative, linking qualitative observation and empirically reliable and valid measurement.

Limitations and Future Directions

While still an advancement from previous research, one limitation of the present study was the lack of differentiation of the directionality of instrumentality between A and C themes. For example, a compatible relationship could be manifest as A instrumental to C (e.g., using money to assist the poor) or as C instrumental to A (e.g., using concern for the poor to make money). Future research should develop more sophisticated coding techniques to differentiate these importantly distinct phenomena.

The present study did succeed in leveling the empirical playing field between qualitative and quantitative approaches to personality in the production of highly sensitive measurements of holistic phenomena. However, the coding procedure (especially for the life narratives) is laborious, which presents a pragmatic limitation to future research in the field.

A third limitation in this study was the failure to demonstrate segregation of A and C
in the comparison group. Across several measures, comparison participants’ deviation scores tended to not differ from zero, implying that they were neither segregated nor integrated, but neutral. The reconciliation model holds this segregation as the stored energy that launches personality development. Participants in the comparison group may not have been ubiquitously “ordinary” insofar as they were willing to volunteer for a research project. Future research should aim to overcome the problem of recruitment bias of drawing into the study highly functioning individuals as a comparison group.

In the present study, moral exemplars were individuals who had engaged in decades of service to their community or some broader humanitarian cause. This caring type of moral exemplar is, of course, not the only type. Other types may exemplify justice or bravery (Walker & Hennig, 2004) or may simply be less publicly visible, as is the case for a scientist who strives to develop a vaccine that could save countless lives (see Holland, 1985). This example may be another instance of A in service to C, and thus integration. Future research should explore whether the integration of A and C is ubiquitous across different types of moral exemplars.

Relying on a “reverse-engineering” approach, this research enterprise has now established the developmental endpoint (maturity). Future research should work backwards to explore the ontogenesis of those psychological functions that compel or sustain exemplars in their good work. Moreover, future research should delineate and explain phases of progressions and stagnations in the developmental process.

**Conclusion**

Returning to Omar Bradley’s disparaging words about the state of the more dominant nations of the world, this research contributes to the broader enterprise of understanding how
to make this a world of ethical giants. Ethical giants integrate their brilliance with their wisdom, their power with their conscience; what is now needed is a deeper understanding of how they come to do so.
CHAPTER 4: STUDY 3—ALTERNATE ENDPOINT

Studies 1 and 2 empirically defended the claim that moral exemplars have enlightened self-interest. Study 3 tests an alternative end-state of agency–communion motivation. The claim is that most highly motivated people will endpoint at a state of unmitigated agency because agency is the prime motive of action, success, and prestige. Like Study 2, Study 3 relies on a group design, comprised of exemplars and comparisons. In Study 2, the comparison participants were less extraordinary than the comparisons both in terms of public recognition and status and in terms of virtue. In Study 3, all subjects are drawn from TIME magazine’s lists of influential people. A panel of social scientists helps differentiate exemplars from comparisons. Trained raters then content-analyze existing speech and interview transcripts of these influential people for motives of agency and communion. The prime prediction is that exemplars will evidence integration of these motives, with agency being treated as a means to an end of communion, whereas comparisons will evidence unmitigated agency, with agency in service to more agency.

Introduction

Social influence entails both privilege and responsibility. Those in positions of leadership and power are granted the privilege of making decisions on behalf of others. Presumably, all who wield such influence couple this prerogative with a sense of responsibility to act in the best interests of those who fall under their purview. However, history has demonstrated that not all influential figures are like this. Even in modern times, when education has become more readily accessible, irresponsible leadership has remained widespread. Attaining positions of influence have often been individuals who were so concerned with gaining or maintaining power that they showed little concern for the welfare
of the vulnerable persons around them. The likes of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, Slobodan Milošević, Saddam Hussein, Omar Al Bashir, and Muammar Gaddafi thus are among the leaders of recent history and today.

What induces some people to be so consumed with power that, in pursuing or defending it, they resort to violent and oppressive means against innocents? In contradistinction, what induces others to use their influence to promote the wellbeing of others? In this paper, we address these questions by examining the roles of self-promoting and other-promoting motivations (namely, agency and communion, respectively) in the psychological functioning of some of recent history’s most influential figures. We hypothesize that the agentic and communal motives of most leaders are modular and independent, with agency being predominant; and we hypothesize that the agentic and communal motives of moral leaders are equally strong and hierarchically integrated.

The Source of Moral Behavior

Social psychological research on the banality of evil (Milgram, 1974; Zimbardo, 2004) implies that malevolent social influence is merely the result of the vagaries of circumstance. The assumption is that anyone would have performed in a self-interested manner had they been subject to the same situational presses as the formerly ordinary malevolent leader-to-be.

In contrast to this situational account, a personological/developmental enterprise (Kohlberg, 1984) explains immoral behaviors by widespread developmental stagnation. To Kohlberg, people develop through an invariant stage sequence of moral reasoning, with a self-interested (power) orientation marking the developmental entry-point, and principled (e.g., human rights) reasoning at the mature end. Within this scheme, situations draw out
tyrannical behavior from individuals lacking a certain degree of moral maturity. Attaining the endpoint of moral development—an understanding of the hierarchical importance of human rights—then, acts as a prophylaxis against temptation, greed, and other vices. The implication of a developmental approach to explaining socially significant behavior is that an absence of something good (namely, principled reasoning)—not necessarily the presence of something bad—underlies malevolent behavior.

Is principled reasoning sufficient to yield benevolent influence? Increasingly, scholars (e.g., Blasi, 2005; Colby & Damon, 1992; Frimer & Walker, 2008; McAdams, 2009) contend that other aspects of personality functioning are also needed. Recent theorizing has highlighted the importance of moral motivation. Our core claim is that benevolent, influential people (or moral exemplars) have achieved an adaptive form of motivation that is qualitatively different than that of other kinds of influential figures. More specifically, we claim that ordinary self-interest motivates most influential (and most ordinary) people; this self-interest manifests as a thirst for power and greatness, which comes into conflict with the interests of others. Moral exemplars too are held to be self-interested, but in a different sense. Their self-interest is of a qualitatively different, “enlightened” form in that their own interests are integrated with the interests of others. Given their personality functioning, the best way for moral exemplars to promote their own interests is by promoting those of others.

In this paper, we explore these claims by examining patterns of self-promoting and other-promoting motivations (namely, agency and communion, respectively) in the psychological functioning of morally exemplary leaders in contrast to equally influential leaders who are considerably less virtuous. We claim that the personality profiles of moral
exemplars will evidence enlightened self-interest, whereas comparison figures will function in an ordinarily self-interested fashion, resulting in agency unmitigated.

Definitions of Agency and Communion

The present study explores the roles of agency and communion (McAdams et al., 1996), the basic motivational dualism introduced by Bakan (1966). Agency is about getting ahead, dispositions that individuate and advance the self; communion is about getting along, dispositions that contribute to a social collective. Agency and communion, as thematic concepts, have filtered into the study of culture, gender, personality, social judgment, and motives/values. Various definitions of these constructs are extant (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008). Here, we rely on definitions of agency and communion that tap the promotion of interests as previous research (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, & Riches, 2011) has shown this definitional scheme to capture differences between moral exemplars and ordinary persons.

Agency is defined as desires for power and achievement, motives that promote the interests of the self. Complementarily, communion is defined as motives of benevolence (toward proximal others; e.g., generosity, kindness, dependability, and support) and universalism (toward all; e.g., justice, tolerance, care for the disadvantaged, and ecological preservation), motives that promote the interest of others. In this conceptualization, agency and communion are mutually opposing forces, with agency promoting self (over others) and communion promoting others (over the self; Cislak & Wojciszke, 2008). When agentic motives triumph over communal motives within a person, the self’s interests trump one’s concern for the wellbeing of others, resulting in commonplace self-interest.

Schwartz (1992) conceptualizes these definitional forms of agency and communion as an antagonistic pair (self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence); promoting one comes at the
expense of the other. “Acceptance of others as equals and concern for their welfare *interferes* with the pursuit of one’s own relative success and dominance over others” (Schwartz, 1992, p. 15, emphasis added). Supporting the duality of agency and communion has been the robust, cross-cultural finding that individual differences in agentic values are negatively correlated with individual differences in communal values (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2001).

The present research explores within-person dynamics of agency and communion, for which the relationship between agency and communion tends to be antagonistic—people typically are either agentic or communal (but rarely both) in any given situation (Fournier et al., 2009). We contend that this modularity may explain why the agency of most individuals is often divorced from their communion. However, the modularity of agency and communion is not ubiquitous—the two *can* be integrated. When introducing agency and communion into psychology’s lexicon, Bakan (1966) minced few words in explicating their import: “The villain is unmitigated agency. The moral imperative is to try to mitigate agency with communion” (p. 14). We contend that moral exemplars overcome the modularity, integrating their agency and communion.

**Integration of Agency and Communion**

In contrast to a dualistic and modular rendition of agency and communion, we propose that, at moral maturity, agency and communion belong together. When the promotion of the interests of both the self and others occurs simultaneously, a state of enlightened self-interest ensues. The present research explores the relationship of agency and communion in the personality profiles of historically influential moral figures to test whether these exemplars have hierarchically integrated these motives in a way that
comparably influential but markedly less virtuous figures have not.

Walker and Frimer (2007) interviewed a sample of moral exemplars and found that their life stories and personal goals were richer in both agentic and communal motivation relative to those of a comparison group. However, these researchers failed to detect an interactive effect between agency and communion. Revisiting basic assumptions about how agency and communion could be integrated within the moral personality, Frimer et al. (2011) re-analyzed the same data set and found positive evidence of integration in the moral personality. Not only did the moral exemplars evidence more agency and more communion, but they had also integrated these agentic and communal motives. A deeper understanding of “motiveology”—within-person motivational dynamics—was needed to understand how.

The most common way that researchers measure personality is using what Magnusson (1999) calls the variable approach. In this methodology, a researcher measures each of a set of personality variables (e.g., the Big Five) independently (e.g., through self-reports, conceptual coding of spontaneously produced text, etc.). The resulting description of the person is a set of scores on independent variables. Given the nature of this approach, integration can only be measured as the product of two variables while controlling for each of the baseline variables, say, in a regression equation. This approach has uniformly failed to detect the integration of agency and communion in morally mature individuals (e.g., Frimer & Walker, 2009; Frimer et al., 2011; Walker & Frimer, 2007). This is because the approach is incapable of measuring how the individual understands and constructs meaning between agentic and communal themes—that is, how agency and communion are phenomenologically related within the person.

Recognizing the limitations of the variable approach, Frimer et al. (2011) adopted
Magnusson’s (1999) person approach, wherein “the person is conceptualized as an integrated, hierarchically organized totality” (p. 236). In the person approach, relationships between variables within the person’s psychological functioning become meaningful data as well. Frimer et al. defined the integration of agency and communion as the co-ordination/co-activation of these themes in the life stories that people tell and the goals they hold. The integration of agency and communion was operationalized as either the frequency of co-occurrence of these themes within one’s goals or as the frequency with which individuals tell stories in which agency and communion comprise semantically compatible thoughts. Even when exerting stringent controls for baselines (viz., chance co-occurrence), exemplars were consistently found to preferentially integrate agency and communion. The implication is that, for moral exemplars, the tension between agency and communion is non-existent; instead, agency and communion belong to the same schema.

The present research advances the empirical science of personality dynamics by introducing a new, more sophisticated method for measuring the relationship between agency and communion. Existing research methods (Frimer et al., 2011) measure the co-activation of themes, but do not measure directionality between themes. To illustrate the problem inherent in such an approach, consider the co-activation of earning money (agency) and helping the poor (communion). When an individual tells a story relating these two themes to one another, the existing method detects a compatible relationship. But the two may be related in one of two ways, with agency in service to communion (“I'm trying to earn money to help the poor.”) or, alternatively, communion in service to agency (“I'm helping the poor so that I can earn more money.”). Thus, agency and communion may be hierarchically related within a means–end or instrumental–terminal relationship (Rokeach, 1973). We
present a new method that measures the strength of each of agency and communion treated at instrumental (viz., a means to an end) and terminal (viz., as an end in itself) levels. This method will allow us to test whether the virtuous use agency to achieve communion, communion to achieve agency, or a mixture of both arrangements.

Comparison Groups

Colby and Damon’s (1992) qualitative case studies of 23 moral exemplars inspired the current field of research. Since then, studies of moral exemplars (e.g., Hart & Fegley, 1995; Matsuba & Walker, 2004; Walker & Frimer, 2007) have assessed the personality functioning of moral exemplars using reliable measurement tools. Moreover, these studies have included a matched comparison group, which allowed the researchers to isolate the moral personality. For example, moral exemplars in Frimer et al.’s (2011) study were recipients of the Caring Canadian Award, bestowed by the national government in recognition of decades of prosocial volunteerism. Comparison participants in this study were individuals matched on a case-by-case basis in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and education, but who had not received the award. In this study, exemplars were found to be more agentic, more communal, and more integrated.

This kind of comparison group sets up an interpretive problem. The life outcomes of exemplars and comparison participants differed in two ways: exemplars were not only more prosocial, but they also had been accorded national recognition and status for their action, and perhaps were more efficacious in general. Had the comparison group been recipients of a comparable award for general exemplarity (e.g., the Order of Canada), moral exemplarity would have been better isolated. How agency, communion, and integration differ between moral exemplars and equally influential comparisons is an open question.
In the present research, the comparison group is more closely matched for their general level of influence and status, allowing for a more direct assessment of the unique features of the moral personality. Whereas the personalities of Frimer et al. (2011) exemplars were *more* agentic than ordinary comparisons, we predict that exemplars will be *less* agentic than influential comparisons in their terminal values. The appearance is that moral exemplars have thwarted their own interests for the sake of promoting others. However, when considering the instrumental–terminal within-person dynamics of agency and communion, we predict that exemplars and influential comparisons will be equally agentic at the instrumental level, implying that the self-interested motives of each are equally activated (see Figure 4.1). Further, we predict that group differences in agency and communion will be restricted to the terminal level, with exemplars construing communion as an end in itself, and comparisons treating agency as the ultimate. Put another way, we predict that exemplars have hierarchically integrated agency and communion, whereas influential comparisons have agency unmitigated.
**Figure 4.1.** Theoretical predictions of the strength and structure of agency and communion in the personalities of ordinary people, moral exemplars, and influential people who do not exude moral excellence. Black circles denote agency; white circles denote communion. The size of the circles represents the strength of each motive. Overlap represents hierarchical (instrumental–terminal) integration with circles in the background being instrumental to circles in the foreground.

The present research comprises two studies. In the first study, experts rate the moral character of highly influential persons from the past century. In the second study, the 15 highest scoring targets from Study 1 comprise a moral exemplar group; the 15 lowest scoring targets comprise a similarly influential but morally lacking comparison group. We assessed the personality of each target by content-analyzing existing speeches and interviews for themes of agency and communion, treated as instrumental and terminal. Our prediction is that exemplars frame agency as a means to the end of communion, reflecting their
enlightened self-interest, and that influential comparisons treat agency as a means to the end of more agency, indicative of the modularity of these motives and the primacy of agency.

Study 1

The purpose of this study is to personify moral excellence by identifying eminent public individuals who exuded such qualities. Studies of moral exemplars (e.g., Colby & Damon, 1992; Walker & Frimer, 2007) often introduce the topic with ad hoc reference to paragons of moral excellence—Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa—but then study the functioning of more accessible, less prominent persons living extraordinarily prosocial lives (e.g., Holocaust rescuers, Carnegie Medalists). Idiosyncrasies of the specific group of exemplars make any general inferences about moral excellence tenuous. The present research explores the functioning of the paragons themselves. Rather than relying on an ad hoc identification procedure, we introduce a new, systematic nominating procedure in which a sample of university professors in the social sciences rate the moral character of prominent public figures from the past century.

What characteristics should constitute moral exemplarity? To formulate criteria for moral exemplarity, Colby and Damon (1992) formed a panel of 22 ethical experts, comprised of a demographically diverse set of theologians, historians, philosophers, and scholars of morality and ethics, and who also represented a broad range of ideological perspectives (including political ideologies, religious beliefs, and ethical philosophies). The diversity of this panel helped the authors avoid biasing the criteria to favor a particular political, socioeconomic, or philosophical worldview. With the help of these experts, Colby and Damon proposed the following criteria:

1. **principled/virtuous**: “a sustained commitment to moral ideals or principles that include a

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21 See their Chapter 2 and Appendix A for an extensive discussion of these criteria and their derivation.
generalized respect for humanity; or a sustained evidence of moral virtue”

2. **consistent**: “a disposition to act in accord with one’s moral ideals or principles, implying also a consistency between one’s actions and intentions and between the means and the ends of one’s actions”

3. **brave**: “a willingness to risk one’s self-interest for the sake of one’s moral values”

4. **inspiring**: “a tendency to be inspiring to others and thereby to move them to moral action”

5. **humble**: “a sense of realistic humility about one’s own importance relative to the world at large, implying a relative lack of concern for one’s own ego.” (p. 29)

   Each criterion taps a different personality construct; to typify moral exemplarity, an individual must meet all five criteria. That is, each criterion is necessary but not sufficient for a person to be a moral exemplar; together, the set of five are both necessary and sufficient. Interestingly, these criteria formulated by ethical experts are largely concordant with lay conceptions of morality (Walker & Pitts, 1998).

   Moral exemplarity is an emergent property of the five criteria, just as SES is an emergent property of income, education, and social position. The present study adapts these criteria into five separate quantitative dimensions (not a single scale with five items). A sample of social scientists rated historical targets along each of the five dimensions to identify moral exemplars and comparison subjects roughly matched for general level of social influence.

**Method**

**Participants.** Participants were faculty experts sampled from all graduate-level Canadian universities. Contact information was gleaned from university websites for
professors in disciplines that should be knowledgeable about prominent historical figures (political science, law, history, and journalism). Of the 740 professors who were invited to participate via email, 102 (14%) completed the anonymous web-based questionnaire.

**Targets.** TIME magazine publishes annual lists of the world’s most influential people—of both positive and negative impact, of both renown and notoriety. These lists reflect five categories, two of which were tapped for the present study: leaders/revolutionaries and heroes/icons (“TIME 100,” 1998, 1999). The names of all 119 figures in these two categories were gathered from the first three of TIME’s lists (covering the 20th century, 2004, and 2005). Entries entailing multiple persons were split into individuals. Targets referencing an archetype (e.g., the “unknown rebel” of Tiananmen Square) were eliminated, as were those with insufficient information, leaving a total of 105 targets.

**Procedure.** Professors received an email invitation to complete a web-based questionnaire, wherein they would rate the moral character of a random subset of 40 targets. (Subsets of the 105 targets were created so as to not overtax participants. Approximately 40 participants (range = 39 to 42) had the opportunity to rate each target.) Each target was displayed on its own web-page which provided the target’s name, a brief description, a portrait image, and a rating interface for the five dimensions. Descriptions and portrait images were provided to help disambiguate the targets. These descriptions were neutrally worded by-lines taken from Wikipedia. For example, the description of George W. Bush was “the 43rd President of the United States from 2001 to 2009.” Images were 200 × 200 pixel portraits taken from the target’s Wikipedia profile or the first Google image search that produced a clear portrait image.

Professors rated targets on each of the five dimensions, presented verbatim (as in the
above list), on 5-point scales ranging from -2 (very uncharacteristic) to 0 (neutral) to +2 (very characteristic). Participants were instructed to skip targets with whom they were unfamiliar. The questionnaire required approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Results and Discussion

To assess reliability in the expert ratings, we estimated the variance components of their ratings using five separate multilevel model analyses (one for each dimension). All 102 participants and 105 targets were entered as random effects, predicting each of the dimension scores. The proportion of variance attributable to targets indicates level of consensus among raters, and ranged from .30 to .44 for the five dimensions (see Table 4.1). These figures are comparable to ratings of Big-5 personality factors (e.g., .39 for extraversion; Kenny, 1994). Thus, experts in the present study showed considerable agreement in the rating of influential figures.

Table 4.1

Variance Components of Multilevel Modeling Analysis of Historical Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Variance Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principled/Virtuous</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brave</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>.41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Target variance measures the degree to which experts agreed.
Expert variance, measuring the (rather uninteresting) degree to which some experts used the upper end of the scale and others the lower end, was small (ranging from .08–.12). Residual variance encompasses three effects—relationships (interaction effects), inconsistencies, and error—and accounted for approximately half (.48–.58) of the total variance.

Scores from the five dimensions (possible range -2 to +2) were summed to form an overall index of moral exemplarity (possible range -10 to +10; see Table 4.2). Mean ratings of targets ranged from -7.3 to +9.0 (excluding a few relatively unknown individuals), spanning most of the scale. Individuals on the TIME lists were all influential in some way, but diverge considerably in the degree to which they typify moral exemplarity.

Table 4.2
*Moral Exemplarity Ratings and Familiarity of Influential People*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Figure</th>
<th>Moral Exemplarity</th>
<th>Familiarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa Parks</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirin Ebadi</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohandas Gandhi</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aung San Suu Kyi</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dalai Lama</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrei Sakharov</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmeline Pankhurst</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Roosevelt</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Figure</td>
<td>Moral Exemplarity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Teresa</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Milk</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<td>Helen Keller</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Wilson</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Sanger</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Frank</td>
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<td>Lech Walesa</td>
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<td>Ayaan Hirsi Ali</td>
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<td>BKS Iyengar</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Stephen Lewis</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pope John Paul II</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
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<td>Robert Kennedy</td>
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<td>Che Guevara</td>
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<td>Bernard Kouchner</td>
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<td>Pelé</td>
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<td>Queen Rania of Jordan</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Figure</td>
<td>Moral Exemplarity</td>
<td>Familiarity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viktor Yushchenko</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston Churchill</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh</td>
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<td>Ellen MacArthur</td>
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<td>Pope Benedict XVI</td>
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<td>V. I. Lenin</td>
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<td>Billy Graham</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao Ming</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manmohan Singh</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kerry</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Sistani</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Gates</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah Winfrey</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Kennedy</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Lee</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javier Solana</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Thatcher</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Abbas</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana, Princess of Wales</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina Astita</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Malloch Brown</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Figure</td>
<td>Moral Exemplarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Yi</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lubna Olayan</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Chavez</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LeBron James</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Brown</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osama bin Laden</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recep Tayyip Erdogan</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Schumacher</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayatullah Khomeini</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Reagan</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thabo Mbeki</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance Armstrong</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Clinton</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Lindbergh</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Frist</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu al-Zarqawi</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Howard</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger Woods</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel Sharon</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condoleezza Rice</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao Zedong</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Monroe</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold Schwarzenegger</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atal Behari Vajpayee</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Abizaid</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Figure</td>
<td>Moral Exemplarity</td>
<td>Familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Shui-bian</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Belichick</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Beckham</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolf Hitler</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George W. Bush</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel Gibson</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Agatston</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Radcliffe</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Rumsfeld</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>-5.3</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot Spitzer</td>
<td>-6.3</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Jong Il</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa Diogo</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Bogle</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Moral exemplars and comparison subjects in Study 2 are indicated by boldface.

Familiar exemplars (e.g., Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa) populate the top of the list, with Rosa Parks, untarnished by controversy, garnering the premier rating. The bottom of the list is seemingly more mixed. Alongside tyrants like Adolf Hitler and Kim Jong Il are celebrity stars like David Beckham and Marilyn Monroe.

What, then, does it mean to be at the bottom end of the list? The criteria used here were derived to identify prototypic moral exemplars. Low scores necessarily imply that an individual is unprototypic of moral exemplarity; not necessarily that the individual exudes a
particular quality such as villainy. The positive framing of the measurement tool yields heterogeneity at the low end of the scale, just as a negative framing (e.g., within clinical psychology) leads to heterogeneity in those who score low (e.g., on psychopathy).

To illustrate this heterogeneity at the low end, an efficacious tyrant might score high on certain dimensions. Hitler, perhaps the personification of evil, is a prime example: Although at the very bottom of the scale on the principled/virtuous and humble dimensions (-2.0 and -1.8, respectively), he was rated around the neutral point on the consistency, inspiring, and brave dimensions (0.4, -0.4, and -0.1, respectively). Experts in this study did not judge Hitler to be inconsistent, uninspiring, and lacking in bravery. In aggregate, his overall score of moral exemplarity was -3.9, driven low by his ratings on the principled/virtuous and humble dimensions.

In contrast, the iconic star, Marilyn Monroe, scored slightly below neutral (-0.2 to -0.5) on all five dimensions to receive a similarly low score (-2.0) on the aggregate measure of moral exemplarity. Just as there are many ways to miss the bull’s-eye in a game of darts, there are many ways to be unlike a moral exemplar. Different personality profiles populate the bottom of the moral exemplarity list. But they do belong together; they represent a group of influential people all of whom are unprototypic of moral exemplarity.

Exemplars at the top of the list reflect cultural, temporal, and gender diversity. Regardless, a shortcoming of the present study concerns bias in TIME’s lists, reflecting a contemporary American journalistic perspective, along with a possible liberal bias in the expert ratings. Future research should explore whether and how political orientation moderates the attribution of moral excellence. Our contention is that the list nevertheless represents a good sampling of history’s moral heroes.
Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 is to explore the motivational functioning of influential figures who were rated high in moral exemplarity relative to those figures who were comparable in influence and status yet much lower in moral exemplarity. For expediency and clarity, our approach is to select the targets with the highest and lowest scores on moral exemplarity, and then to assess agentic and communal aspects of their personalities. Insofar as the subjects in this study are either deceased or not available for participating in research, pragmatism requires that we study their personalities “at a distance” (Suedfeld, Guttieri, & Tetlock, 2003), by content-analyzing existing speeches and interviews.

Does content-analyzing these sources provide valid assessments of our subjects’ personalities? Although this method offers the benefit of being unobtrusive, noninvasive, and ecologically valid (Suedfeld, 2010), the public nature of these speeches and interviews could have pulled for self-presentation biases. Moreover, ghostwriters may have penned many of the speeches. In spite of these possibilities, we argue that neither of these concerns invalidates the method and data.

The problem of self-presentation biases influencing the implied values spoken in public would only *counteract* the possibility of the present study detecting our hypothesized group differences. Insofar as agency in service to communion is more socially desirable than unmitigated agency, self-presentation bias would press the comparison subjects to concoct a communal purpose for their agentic pursuits (e.g., “greenwashing”).

Why do we predict that the comparison group will not concoct a prosocial “moral of the story” in each script? The current coding procedure taps “deep” motivational structures. Akin to a lens through which we see the world, these structures are less susceptible to social
Suedfeld (2010; Suedfeld et al., 2003) presents considerable evidence of consistency in psychological structure between prepared and spontaneous speeches, between public and private texts, and between documents unambiguously produced by public figures and speeches produced by their ghostwriters. In sum, we argue that speeches and interviews constitute a fair and valid personality assessment.

Our interest here is to explore two fundamental human motives—agency and communion. Our prediction (arising from a person-analytical approach to personality) is that moral exemplars will have strong motives of both agency and communion in their speeches and interviews, but with agency being expressed as instrumental to communion. In contrast, comparison subjects are predicted to have agency in service to more agency, the unmitigated agency personality profile.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 15 moral exemplars and 15 comparison figures (total $N = 30$). Exemplars were the 15 top-ranking targets from Study 1 who met two criteria: (a) familiar to at least 25% of the experts (see Table 4.2) and (b) with at least one publicly available speech or interview. Each criterion eliminated one potential exemplar. This moral “dream team,” more than half of whom were Nobel Peace Prize laureates, was comprised of Rosa Parks, Shirin Ebadi, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas Gandhi, Aung San Suu Kyi, The Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrei Sakharov, Emmeline Pankhurst, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mother Teresa, Harvey Milk, Helen Keller, Margaret Sanger, and Lech Walesa. The moral exemplars scored high not only on the aggregate measure of moral exemplarity ($M = +7.8$, $SD = 0.9$) but also on all five individual dimensions ($M_s = 1.1–1.8$, $SD_s = 0.2–0.3$).
The comparison subjects were the 15 bottom-ranking targets who met both criteria. In this case, the first criterion eliminated seven unfamiliar targets (see Table 4.2); the second criterion eliminated none. This group was comprised of prominent figures who had uniformly been judged to be uncharacteristic of moral excellence: Ariel Sharon, Condoleezza Rice, Mao Zedong, Marilyn Monroe, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Hu Jintao, Bill Belichick, David Beckham, Adolf Hitler, George W. Bush, Mel Gibson, Donald Rumsfeld, Vladimir Putin, Eliot Spitzer, and Kim Jong Il. These comparison subjects were adjudged, from TIME’s journalistic perspective, to be highly influential people, but whether they were exactly comparable in general influence to the exemplars is difficult to quantify. However, a proxy measure for influence would be the familiarity ratings of the experts (Table 4.2), which did not differ between the two groups, \( t(28) = 0.37, p = .91, d = 0.14 \). Comparison subjects scored low on the aggregate measure of moral exemplarity (\( M = -3.7, SD = 1.7 \)) and on all five individual dimensions (\( Ms = -0.4–1.2, SDs = 0.4–0.6 \)).

Materials. We aggregated multiple observations of personality functioning by gathering, for each subject, their four most recent interviews and speeches (two each) that were available. Toward this end, we searched the internet, printed book databases, and archival databases including LexisNexis, Canadian Newsstand, Reader’s Guide Abstracts, Proquest Historical Newspapers, Times Digital Archive, and the Globe & Mail newspaper. To equate the length of each transcript and because speeches and interviews often end with the “moral” of the story, we retained only the final 300 words of each source for coding. When fewer than four interviews and speeches were available, extant scripts were split into two scripts of 300 words, with the second excerpt entailing the middle 300 words of the speech/interview. Scripts were assigned a random code for identification.
blind to the identity of the subjects (as much as possible under the circumstances), wherever
the name of the subject appeared in the text, the reference was replaced with “TARGET” for
coding. The coder was largely oblivious to the identity of the targets for two reasons: (a) the
most recent speeches and interviews (which are rarely the most renown) were obtained for
coding, rather than “cherry picking” familiar ones on an ad hoc basis, and (b) only the final
300 words were utilized in each, rather than the entire script.

Coding. Each transcript was coded using a new conceptual coding protocol that
allows a rater to determine which concepts a subject treats as being instrumental (a means to
an end) and as terminal (an end in itself) in an open narrative passage. Table 4.3 presents
simplified illustrations of the distinctions between agency and communion at the
instrumental and terminal levels.

Table 4.3

*Hypothetical Illustrations of Agency and Communion Combining at the Instrumental and
Terminal Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminal Level</th>
<th>Instrumental Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>“… work hard in order to gain respect and power …”</td>
<td>“… protect the innocent in order to gain respect and power …”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>“… work hard in order to protect the innocent …”</td>
<td>“… help one another in order to protect the innocent …”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coding of scripts involves three steps, for each of the terminal and instrumental
levels. First, the rater identifies the number of terminal concepts—concepts that are
expressed as ends unto themselves—in each script. A disjointed script, wherein the subject changes topics frequently, would have a larger number of terminal concepts than a more coherent script. On average, the scripts in this study were judged to have an average of 2.4 ($SD = 1.2$) terminal concepts.

Second, the rater identified a stem—a few words from the script that captured the essence of each terminal concept.

Third, the rater coded the text for the single most strongly implied value using the Values Embedded in Narrative (VEiN; Frimer et al., 2009) coding procedure. The VEiN coding procedure allows reliable coding of the Schwartz (1992) values from open narrative. The rater determines whether a value is present by matching concepts to those in the coding manual. Scripts were coded for any of the 10 universal values in Schwartz’s typology: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, or security. Agency comprises the self-promoting values of power or achievement; communion comprises the other-promoting values of universalism or benevolence.

A second iteration of this procedure was then applied to determine which concepts were instrumental (or in service) to each terminal concept. That is, the rater re-read the passage and identified the number of instrumental concepts associated with each terminal goal, isolated the portion of text that best characterized each of these instrumental concepts, and coded these concepts for their primary value. On average, the terminal concepts were judged to have 1.7 ($SD = 1.4$) instrumental concepts. If any instrumental concepts were coded for agency, instrumental agency was recoded as being present; the same applied for instrumental communion.
A second rater determined interrater reliability by coding a random subset (25%) of the scripts. For the three steps in coding, agreement was found to be substantial ($r = .77$; 80% agreement, and $\kappa = .81$ with 83% agreement, respectively).

Four metrics were derived for the current analyses. At the terminal level, measuring the composition of agency and communion were proportion scores of each subject’s terminal concepts that were (a) agentic or (b) communal. At the instrumental level, measuring the composition of agency and communion were proportion scores of each subject’s terminal concepts that entailed an (c) agentic or (d) communal instrumental concept. For each target, scores across the four scripts were aggregated (averaged).

**Analytic Strategy.** Analyses explore the personality profiles of each group. Our prediction is the exemplars will have instrumental agency in service to terminal communion, whereas the comparison group will have agency in service to more agency. We explore this question analytically with a group (exemplars, comparisons) $\times$ mode (agency, communion) $\times$ level (instrumental, terminal) ANOVA. The predicted effects would be manifest in a three-way interaction, with group moderating the mode $\times$ level interaction. In decomposing such a three-way interaction, we hypothesize a strong mode $\times$ level interaction for the exemplars, but an unqualified main effect for mode for the comparisons. Finally, we use cluster analytic techniques to test for the presence and relevance of heterogeneity in the comparison group.

**Results**

**Exemplar and Comparison Groups.** A group $\times$ mode $\times$ level mixed-model ANOVA yielded a powerful three-way interaction, $F(1,28) = 51.24, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .65$. The locus of this three-way interaction was determined by assessing the simple

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$^{22}$ A third coder determined the reliability in the second step by judging whether the two raters had identified the same stem.
interaction effect of mode $\times$ level for each group separately.

Figure 4.2. The proportion of instrumental and terminal agency and communion in the scripts of comparisons (left panel) and exemplars (right panel). Error bars indicate 95% CIs.

The left panel of Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of instrumental and terminal agency and communion for the comparison group. For this group, the mode $\times$ level ANOVA yielded a main effect for mode, $F(1,14) = 72.64$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .84$;\(^{23}\) which was not qualified by an interaction, $p = .39$. Comparison subjects had considerably more agency than communion at the both the terminal and instrumental levels, $ps < .001$; $d$s = 3.11 and 2.07, respectively.

The right panel of Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of instrumental and terminal concepts for the exemplar group. The omnibus analysis also produced an uninteresting main effect for level, $F(1,14) = 13.51$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .49$; indicating that the comparison group had more concepts (both agency and communion) at the instrumental level than the terminal level.
agency and communion for the exemplar group. For this group, the mode × level ANOVA yielded an interaction, $F(1, 14) = 66.61, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .83$. Exemplars had more communion than agency at the terminal level, $F(1, 14) = 26.33, p < .001, d = -2.55$, but more agency than communion at the instrumental level, $F(1, 14) = 67.69, p < .001, d = +2.60$.

In sum, exemplars evidenced their agency as hierarchically integrated with communion, whereas comparison figures showed a pattern of unmitigated agency. Both groups had similarly high levels of instrumental agency, but in support of dramatically different purposes.

**Heterogeneity in the Comparison Group.** In discussing the findings of Study 1, we noted apparent heterogeneity at the bottom end of the list of influential figures (recall the contrasting examples of Adolf Hitler vs. Marilyn Monroe). Next, we empirically examine the heterogeneity in the comparison group, and explore the role such variance might play in the expression of agentic and communal motivation.

To determine how many naturally occurring groups existed in the sample, we conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis, using Ward’s method, with the 30 subjects in Study 2, based on their scores on the five dimensions of moral exemplarity. Using a marked jump in successive agglomeration coefficients as the stopping rule (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998), a four-cluster solution best fit the data. From the 10th down to the 3rd cluster stage, the percent changes in agglomeration coefficients were 20%, 24%, 23%, 21%, 22%, 19%, 20%, and then 35%, indicating that the agglomeration procedure should be stopped at the stage with four clusters.
Figure 4.3. Expert ratings on the five dimensions of moral exemplarity for the four cluster groups. Error bars indicate 95% CIs. Note. P/V = principled/virtuous, C = consistent, B = brave, I = inspiring, and H = humble.
Figure 4.3 illustrates the four clusters. Distinctly different personality profiles are evident. All 15 moral exemplars populate Cluster #1 (“exemplars”); they form a homogenous group with uniformly high ratings on all five dimensions. The remaining clusters constitute three different groups of comparison subjects. Monroe, Belichick, Beckham, Rice, Hu, Schwarzenegger, and Sharon populate Cluster #2. These “achievers” score close to the neutral point on all dimensions. Cluster #3 has particularly low ratings on the principled/virtuous and humble dimensions, but neutral ratings on the remainder. Only Mao and Hitler populate this inspiring but morally inside-out “tyrant” cluster. Putin, Kim, Bush, Spitzer, Rumsfeld, and Gibson populate Cluster #4. These “sectarians” have relatively low scores across all five moral dimensions. In summary, the comparison group in Study 2 actually comprised three different sorts of people.

Does this heterogeneity undermine (or moderate) our claim that most influential people are unmitigated agents? Did creating the comparison group amount to lumping apples with oranges? Next, we test whether the achieving, tyrannical, and sectarian comparison clusters showed different patterns of instrumental and terminal agency and communion. A cluster × mode × level mixed-model ANOVA revealed a strong main effect for mode, $F(1,12) = 87.50, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .88$; not qualified by any other effects. Of critical importance, no interactions involving the cluster factor approached significance, $p_s \geq .46$, meaning that the heterogeneity in the comparison group did not moderate the key finding regarding motivational profiles in this study. Comparison subjects in all three clusters evidenced the same unmitigated agency profile.

Discussion

Illustrative of agency in service to communion is a speech, delivered by the moral
exemplar Emmeline Pankhurst, a British suffragette, on 21 October 1913 in New York City.

And so we are glad we have had the fighting experience, and we are glad to do all the fighting for all the women all over the world. All that we ask of you is to back us up. We ask you to show that although, perhaps, you may not mean to fight as we do, yet you understand the meaning of our fight; that you realize we are women fighting for a great idea; that we wish the betterment of the human race, and that we believe this betterment is coming through the emancipation and uplifting of women.

This script was conceptually coded as having a single terminal concept (stem: “betterment of the human race/emancipation of women”), which was coded as communion (universalism value). An agentic instrumental concept was coded in the quoted text24 (stem: “fighting for rights;” coded as power). Thus, this speech exemplifies the hierarchical integration of agency and communion, with instrumental agency (fighting for rights) in service to terminal communion (betterment of the human race). Agency is understood as a tool for achieving a final communal objective.

In contrast, an illustration of unmitigated agency is an excerpt from the inaugural address, delivered on 1 January 2007, of the comparison subject Eliot Spitzer. Spitzer is the now-former Governor of New York, having resigned 14 months after the speech amidst a prostitution scandal.

But throughout the history of New York, what has always united us as a people is the recognition that we are all on this journey together, and if we’re willing to catch each other during our stumbles and look out for one another during the tough times, we have it in our power to remove any obstacles in our path and walk toward that brighter day.... Lend your sweat, your toil and your passion to the effort of building One New York of which we can all be proud. My fellow New Yorkers, our moment is here. Day One is now. Together, let’s build that One New York. Let’s walk toward that better day.

This script was coded as having a single terminal concept (stem: “brighter day”), which was coded as agency (achievement value). An agentic instrumental concept was coded in the quoted text (stem: “work ethic, sweat, toil, and passion;” coded as

24 A second instrumental concept—“back us up” (coded as benevolence)—was also identified in this excerpt.
Thus, this speech exemplifies instrumental agency in service to terminal agency, our operationalization of unmitigated agency.

Noteworthy is the absence of any clear prosociality in Spitzer’s terminal project, which simply calls for measured improvement and greatness in some morally unspecified way. In scripts of other comparison subjects, terminal agency was expressed starkly as desires for power, money, control over others, or status. If social presentation biasing were the driving mechanism behind the values communicated in speeches and interviews, the comparison group would have made the prosocial implications of their mandates clearer and more pronounced (e.g., “greenwashing”). Social presentation, as an explanatory mechanism, would have made the comparison group’s speeches and interviews sound more integrated, making the likelihood of detecting group differences all the less likely. Yet strong group differences emerged in this study. Self-presentation and socially desirable responding thus fail to explain these data.

Rather than being situationally transient, we claim that core values comprise the lens through which a person sees the world and a core aspect of a person’s identity. A person’s core values (measurable using the VEiN method) are much like the veins in the human body—they comprise the fabric of our being. Social presentation would only amplify the strength of values within this structure; not alter the structure itself.

Conceptual Implications

Agency can be antisocial but more often is simply morally ambiguous. What the moral exemplars had that the comparisons lacked was a clear, prosocial purpose for agency. For the comparison subjects, agency simply begot more agency, and concerns for the

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25 A second instrumental concept—“catch each other during our stumbles” (coded as benevolence) was also identified in this excerpt.
wellbeing of others fell by the wayside. Why the comparison subjects failed to integrate agency with communion is perhaps the most intriguing finding. Our contention is that agency and communion are, for most people, modular—one is active at any given time; their integration is the exception.

The second criterion of moral exemplarity is a deontological feature—a consistency between the means and ends of one’s action, illustrated succinctly by the moral exemplar, Martin Luther King, Jr., “We must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal” (1967, p. 42). Paradoxically, the exemplars were selected, in part, for their consistency between means and ends of actions but were found to be highly inconsistent, largely using agentic means for communal ends. Future research should explore this paradox.

Hierarchically integrating agency with communion implicitly endorses a consequentialist ethic, wherein the end (communion) justifies the means (agency). This point is apt in the case of Pankhurst, who defended and was criticized for militant tactics. The integration of agency and communion does not require any sort of deontological virtue; other aspects of moral functioning (e.g., principled reasoning; Kohlberg, 1984) are also needed to fully understand what makes some of these moral exemplars so virtuous.

**General Discussion**

In Study 1, we derived a list of influential figures of the past century, rated by social science experts in terms of their moral qualities. Then, in Study 2, we assessed the personality functioning of the top- and bottom-ranking targets (moral exemplars and comparison subjects, respectively). Manifest in speech and interview transcripts, implicit motives of agency and communion were coded into a hierarchical (means–ends) structure.
At the instrumental and terminal levels, comparison subjects were found to ubiquitously advance motives of agency. This group embodied unmitigated agency, what Bakan (1966) called “the villain.” In contrast, the scripts of moral exemplars embodied a more balanced set of motives, with both agency and communion strongly featured. Each motive was situated differently, however, with agency being instrumental and communion, terminal.

In essence, the groups had the same toolset (agency), but were pursuing vastly different projects (agency vs. communion). These results challenge the claim that agency and communion operate dualistically for everyone; comparison subjects do function dualistically, but moral exemplars hierarchically integrate these motives. In other words, the relationship between agency and communion constitutes an important individual difference in itself. The implied injunction is to conceive of agency as a means to an end of communion, not as an end in itself. A person-centered approach to the study of personality, wherein within-person structures become meaningful data, was required to make this observation and thus reach this important conclusion.

In Study 2, we detected individual differences in the motivational functioning of exemplars and comparisons. Are the individuals comprising these groups merely different sorts of people? Or are these individual differences also developmental? Might these individuals represent different waypoints within a developmental framework? Claiming the latter, Frimer and Walker’s (2009) reconciliation model posits that typical child and adolescent development entails the segregated growth of both agency and communion, as dualistic motives. As these motives become highly salient, the tension between agency and communion starts to cause problems for the individual: “Will I make a fortune or take care of my family?”, “I would love to help out more in my community but my job and hobbies
take up too much of my time.” This tension stagnates the development of most people, resulting in a state of moderately developed but mutually segregated motives of agency and communion (see Figure 4.1).

For some people, however, development continues. Agency and communion continue to grow despite their mutual antagonism. At some point, the individual’s motivational space cannot maintain the dueling motives at their current strengths. A crisis of convictions arises, which can be resolved in multiple ways. One resolution is to remain functioning dualistically and to create motivational space by attenuating one or the other motive. This scenario more likely involves attenuating communion and redoubling agency, resulting in unmitigated agency—the state of the comparison subjects. The implication of this claim is that, some time in their past, the comparison group in the present study had a similar motivational profile as the more everyday comparison group in the Frimer et al. (2011) study.

An alternate resolution to the crisis is to reconcile the dualistic tension between agency and communion, integrating them into a synergistic means–ends arrangement. Thus, we claim that the moral exemplars in this study too, at some earlier developmental point, had the same motivational profile as the ordinary comparison people in Frimer et al.’s (2011) study.

Explicit in the reconciliation model is the claim that normal development sets the stage for both morally exemplary and non-exemplary leadership trajectories. Ordinary people and moral exemplars are held to have diverged at a later phase of development, perhaps in emerging adulthood. What is now needed is a better understanding of the developmental processes that engender these vastly different life outcomes.
CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

This dissertation presents three studies that address the question, “Why be good?” Introducing and presenting supportive evidence for the reconciliation model, these studies support the claim that enlightened self-interest is the motivational driver behind virtuous behavior. Study 1 presents initial empirical support for this phenomenon, and lays out a developmental story, one which describes enlightened self-interest as a developed relationship between agentic and communal motivations (Study 1). That is, enlightened self-interest is a product of maturation in which individuals integrate their strong motives of agency and communion (Studies 2 and 3). Ordinary people stagnate at a point in development wherein agentic and communal motives are of moderate strength and not integrated (Study 2). Most successful people (e.g., celebrities, presidents, sports stars) also function within a dualism between agency and communion, with agency predominating over communion, that is, unmitigated agency (Study 3). The present discussion takes a forward look at the future of the reconciliation model, speculatively unpacking the model into a series of predictions in hopes of inspiring further research.

The Reconciliation Model, Unpacked

In this part of the discussion, I unpack the reconciliation model into nine empirical propositions about personality functioning across development.

Value Conflicts. The reconciliation model amounts to several claims about the nature of motivations and human development. A first claim concerns the nature of the conflicts a person might experience between and within agentic and communal interests. Many theories of moral judgment (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Haidt, 2001) elicit moral judgments in reaction to standard moral dilemma vignettes, assuming that all people indeed experience
these vignettes as dilemmas representative of their own experience. For example, most of Kohlberg’s vignettes pitted one communal interest against another (e.g., stealing a drug to save a wife’s life pits the law and property rights against human life). This may be a “true” dilemma in the philosophical sense because two valid interests are in conflict; but these may be less apropos to developing persons. Whereas many theories of personality, motivation, and moral judgment assume a single type of relationship between agency and communion, the reconciliation model predicts that the relationship is, itself, an important individual-difference variable. The main point is that what persons experience as a dilemma may vary systematically as a function of development.

For most people in most situations, agency and communion are separate, modular, or even conflictual; for the morally mature, the two are integrated and synergistic. This claim could be tested by asking participants to produce moral dilemmas that they face (or rate the realism of hypothetical dilemmas); dilemmas would be coded (or systematically altered) to vary in the motives that conflict: agency versus agency (A/A), communion versus communion (C/C), and agency versus communion (A/C), leading to the first proposition.

**Proposition 1:** The morally mature spontaneously report fewer (or endorse as personally relevant to a lesser degree) A/C conflicts than do ordinary people. Moreover, exemplars resonate more with C/C conflicts, stemming from their multiple commitments to prosocial causes coming into conflict (Colby & Damon, 1992). Unmitigated agents have heightened A/A conflicts.

According to the reconciliation model, early in development, individuals may find most meaning in dilemmas pitting agency (or self-interest) against communion (e.g., whether
or not to steal money from a sibling, which pits agentic desires for possessions against communal concerns for the victim).

Proposition 2: The tendency to resonate with dilemmas pitting agency against communion increases with age, peaking in late adolescence or early adulthood, wherein agency conflicts with communion.

Developmental Trajectories. Have moral exemplars always had the same motivational profile throughout their lives or is the integration of agency and communion a product of development? The reconciliation model argues for the latter. If changes in their motivations did occur, do these changes follow some systematic pattern or are they entirely idiosyncratic to the individual’s case? The following five propositions concern these broad developmental issues.

According to the reconciliation model, the personalities of exemplars undergo both continuous changes and discontinuous transformations. Moreover, exemplars are held to follow a developmental pattern in common with most individuals, only diverging with normal populations later in adolescence or into adulthood.

Proposition 3: For all (basically normal and healthy) young persons, agency and communion develop (viz., become stronger) in mutual segregation. This would be manifest as (a) segregating agentic and communal themes in goals or personal strivings; (b) focusing on agency in one passage and communion in another (but seldomly interweaving the two) in telling of life narratives; and (c) the experiencing conflicts between agency and communion more commonly than conflicts within modalities.
Do A and C always and entirely develop in segregation? How can the reconciliation model explain children speaking of giving money (A) to charity (C)? This is an example of integrated utterance. Clearly A and C do not entirely develop in segregation. But this was never a claim of the reconciliation model. Producing an integrated utterance does not qualify one to be an integrated person. For a person to be integrated, they need to usually integrate A and C, not just do it in the rare instance. In other words, the reconciliation model is not a model of cognitive competence—it is a model of tendency or personality.

Whether or not children actually do preferentially segregate A and C is an open empirical question. Presupposing that they do segregate the two motives, we might ask why. The argument here is that an individual needs to build each modality before integrating it with the other. For example, for a child who is struggling to make a sports team (A), contemplating the ways in which sports can serve the greater good (C; e.g., by making citizens healthy, a healthcare system would have less demands and thus save valuable resources for other needy persons) is both unrealistic and unhelpful for the achievement of either A or C. First, persons need to develop competency before they can apply this competency toward prosocial ends. This proposition is in line with Werner’s (1957) orthogenetic principle that states that development necessarily proceeds through phases of differentiation/elaboration, then integration.

This developmental sequence may capture an intriguing feature of some of the lives of the moral “dream team.” For example, Gandhi was an ambitious lawyer prior to him becoming the leader of a non-violent movement toward Indian independence. (Analyses of earlier writings of these figures could test this tentative observation.) Integrating agency with
communion too early may stagnate the development of both. An unexpected prediction emerges.

*Proposition 4:* Children whose parents scaffold (viz. provide supportive instruction toward) the *segregated* growth of A and C will evidence *quicker* motivational growth than children whose parents scaffold the integrated growth of A and C. In other words, in childhood, segregated growth of the modalities is “better.”

Only after childhood are (future) exemplars thought to diverge from normal populations. The implication is that exemplars are essentially “cut from the same cloth” (motivated by similar interests) as most other persons; differences between exemplars and most people merely concern the strength and configuration of these interests. Rather than labeling exemplars in a way that suggests that they are different kinds of person (e.g., saints, heroes, altruists), the reconciliation model encourages us to consider how the ordinary motivations that we all have can grow and reconfigure to produce an extraordinary outcome, namely enlightened self-interest.

Enlightened self-interest is not the only possible conclusion of motivational development, however. An alternative endpoint entails the attenuation of one motive or another, producing unmitigated agency or unmitigated communion. In these end-states, individuals continue to function dualistically, with agency and communion in segregation. Given this mode of functioning, the individual’s motivational resources are taxed to the point that the minor of the two gives way to the major of the two. Unmitigated agency produces greed, power-hunger, and/or materialism. Unmitigated communion manifests in sympathetic emoters, who have insufficient agency to translate their emotions into helpful action.
**Proposition 5:** Individuals with unmitigated agentic and unmitigated communal personalities, at some earlier period of their life, had a more balanced motivational profile.

**Developmental Processes.** Assuming these the three end-states are indeed emergent from banal personality states, the next natural question asks why some people become integrated and others become unmitigated. And why do most people become neither integrated or unmitigated? The reconciliation model suggests that the answer to these questions can be found at a point of divergence—a crisis of conviction—happening some time at the end of adolescence or later. In this state, an individual feels overwhelmed by the demands of agency and of communion, and experiences the tug between them. This could be manifest in the desire to make the world “a better place” (C) or get a job that pays (A). According the reconciliation model, as an individual’s time and motivation become overtaxed, most developing individuals pull back (regress) in response to this psychological crux. As an example, a young professional, feeling overwhelmed from work demands (A) and from taking care of children (C) may set lower ambitions at work and become a less involved parent (diminishing both A and C).

**Proposition 6:** For most people, agentic and communal motivations increase through childhood and adolescence, but then diminish slightly before remaining relatively constant through the rest of the lifespan.

In the absence of reconciliation, for one motive to continue to develop, the other motive would need to be attenuated. An open question concerns why some people become unmitigated agents while most people regress from the branch-point. Perhaps the move
toward unmitigated agency is driven by a commitment to agentic projects coupled by a willingness to sacrifice communal interests in the process.

In the case of reconciliation, and movement toward integration, individuals are predicted to show segregated growth of agency and communion, followed by the ubiquitous crisis, followed by a transformation of the relationship of the two motives and their eventual integration. By what mechanism does this transformation take place? Speculatively, the movement to integrated agency and communion is preceded by (a) developmental readiness and (b) an instigator.

Developmental readiness entails the filling of a person’s “motivational space” with segregated agency and communion. What constitutes a full motivational space? What objective features of a person’s goals and life stories are indicative of a maxed-out profile? One such possibility would be every personal striving having either agentic, communal, or integrated themes. A challenge for suggesting such an objective criterion is that it would need to accommodate the possibility that motivational capacity varies between individuals. A more conservative (but possibly tautological) approach to defining a full motivational space could be approached through subjective appraisals that one has little more time and energy for more projects or demands. Clarifying what constitutes a full motivational space is left to future conceptual work.

What might instigate a transformation from a full motivational profile to the integration of agency and communion? Three factors that may be relevant are opportunity and choice, role models/mentors, and exposure to suffering. Insofar as agency and communion are naturally competing motives, a creative reconciliation of the dualism is necessary. This takes place not only in the mind of the developing individual (as a changed
understanding of the purpose of agency, for example), but also in behavior/lifestyle. The integration of agency and communion is not only something that happens in the private thoughts and spoken words, but is also consistent with, and supported by, an individual’s actions. To integrate agency and communion, individuals need to not only change the construal of their motivations, but also change the way they act. Integration-supporting behavior is likely not generalized to all aspects and activities but, rather, is specific to certain lifestyle arrangements (e.g., a job or project). Doing so requires an opportunity and choice to make changes to one’s lifestyle, projects, work, or other relevant behavior (e.g., finding a job with a prosocial purpose) that support the integration of agency and communion. The upshot of this suggestion is that exemplars are not thoroughly integrated; rather their integration is circumscribed to certain parts of their life. This is consistent with the observation that many historic moral exemplars had shadow sides to their psychological functioning. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., committed adultery.

Proposition 7: Integrated individuals do not evidence integration across novel situations; testing their integration with lab situations or standardized hypothetical dilemmas is thus not appropriate. Instead, integration is specific to the lives people live and thus needs to be studied in context.

This is consistent with the methods used in Studies 1-3, which rely on contextualized levels of personality (viz., characteristic adaptations and life narratives). Might integration be evident in decontextualized traits? The suggestion here is that, even if a trait measure that captures integration could be developed, such a measure would miss measuring the phenomenon of interest.
In line with the proposition that opportunity is needed for agency to integrate with communion, role models or mentors may also stimulate the transformational process. Walker and Frimer (2007) found that moral exemplars spontaneously mentioned more “helpers” in their early life experiences than did comparison participants. Inspirational people provide a living example of how one can seek, select, or create opportunities in which to apply agency toward a communal end. These mentors disequilibrate the developing individual by showing them how to live an integrated lifestyle, prompting them to consider the social consequences of their personal decisions, and asking the sorts of questions that draw connections between agency and communion in the telling and retelling of the life narrative.

Proposition 8: Interactions with integrated mentors increases the likelihood that the developmentally ready (adolescents or adults) will reconcile and integrate their agency and communion.

Finally, exposure to the suffering of others may be a third factor that stimulates the developmentally ready to reconcile agency and communion. In a serendipitous finding, Walker and Frimer (2007) reported that Caring Canadian Award recipients were more likely to have experienced the death of a child (and more likely to spontaneously report being exposed to the suffering of others in early life). Losing a child is an untimely and tragic event, one that leaves the bereaved in despair and sadness. One might expect that the bereaved would become withdrawn and despondent following what is undoubtedly a contaminating life event. But the Caring Canadians seemed to have met the tragedy with prosocial action.
**Proposition 9.** Among bereaving parents (or others who experience tragedy, trauma, or conflict), the developmental ready are especially likely to become integrated.

Why would exposure to suffering lead to prosociality for the developmentally ready? Terror Management Theory (TMT; e.g., Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1997) offers an intriguing perspective on this question. According to TMT, encountering thoughts about one’s own mortality causes an unbearable existential angst. To mitigate these uncomfortable feelings, people subconsciously search for a way to transcend the finite nature of life, and thus compensate for the psychological pain. One such form of fluid compensation is to connect with, bolster, or defend one’s culture. The logic is that one’s culture will outlive oneself; by connecting with it, one experiences transcendence of death. This can manifest the sharpening of castigation of someone whose life violates the virtues of the culture (e.g., a prostitute). Form of fluid compensation, however, would likely be moderated by a person’s values—the individual’s worldview determines the object of bolstering or defense.

When a person with well-developed motives of agency and communion feels the conflict between them, then encounters the suffering of others (and thus is reminded of their own mortality), what might take place? The proposal is that, in response to existential angst, these individuals receive the necessary “kick in the pants” to bolster that which they value. In that both agency and communion are independent and strong motives, the individual moves to bolster both, as they have for some time. But this fails due to the conflict between them and incoherence of pursuing both simultaneously. With the added impetus to bolster worldview, the individual then creatively seeks some context in which both are satisfied, thus reconciling the tension and moving toward integration.
Falsifying the Reconciliation Model

Having told a “just-so” story, articulating some of the core claims and predictions from the reconciliation model, we might now consider what evidence would falsify the model. A first problem for the model would be stability in personality. Personality traits are relatively stable (McCrae & Costa, 1996). Falsifying the developmental claims of the reconciliation model would be reliable evidence that motives are similarly unchanging. Presupposing that motives do change, the reconciliation model posits that how motives change is not entirely idiosyncratic to the individual but, rather, follows certain trajectories—elaboration and differentiation followed by either stagnation, unmitigation, or reconciliation and integration. Evidence that motive changes follow idiosyncratic patterns would pose problems for the model.

A third possible problem for the reconciliation model would be evidence of transitions not included in the model. “Allowed” transitions include: (a) segregated elaboration, (b) regression/stagnation, (b) unmitigation from segregation, and (c) integration from segregation. One of the “disallowed” transitions is unmitigation to integration. Consider the possible transition from unmitigated agency to integration, which may describe the case of Oskar Schindler. Schindler was an ambitious businessman, industrialist, and womanizer during the rise of the Third Reich. Capitalizing on the opportunity of the Holocaust, Schindler enslaved Jews in his armament factory. Through direct contact with and exposure to the suffering of his enslaved Jews, Schindler underwent a radical transformation in which he sacrificed his fortune, factory, and personal security to save approximately 1,200 Jews from the death camps. On the face of it, Schindler was an unmitigated agent who became integrated. If this appearance is, in fact, accurate, Schindler
would have undergone a “disallowed” transition, which would require that the reconciliation model be revised.

However, whether or not Schindler was indeed an unmitigated agent prior to his transformation is of critical importance. Evidently, he had strong agentic motives; did he also have strong communal motives which were segregated to non-work parts of his life (and thus have a divided agency–communion identity) or was he only weakly communal and thus a true unmitigated agent? A retrospective study of his writings may address this question for his particular case.

Conclusion: The Developing Moral Agent

Ours is a changing world. The challenges of yesterday (e.g., world war) bear little semblance the challenges of today (e.g., global warming). How can we raise the next generation in a way that prepares them for difficulties that we cannot predict? Educating them about the current troubles alone will leave them underprepared for the problems. Accompanying this education must be character or personality development. These more generic, basic personological characteristics will equip the next generation to understand the complex nature of novel situations and arrive at just, compassionate resolutions (moral reasoning); to bring these judgments to action, the next generation will need to have a personal stake in the greater good—of both the present and future, near and far. While the world has learned much since World War II, a world of fairness, compassion, and peace remains a distal, almost clichéd vision. Perhaps, we can redeem some of our generation’s failures by raising the next a generation of ethical giants.
References


