Reconciling the Self and Morality:
An Empirical Model of Moral Centrality Development

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Self-interest and moral sensibilities generally compete with one another, but for moral exemplars, this tension appears to not be in play. This study advances the *reconciliation model*, which explains this anomaly within a developmental framework by positing that the relationship between the self's interests and moral concerns ideally transforms from one of mutual competition to one of synergy. The degree to which morality is central to an individual's identity—or moral centrality—was operationalized in terms of values advanced implicitly in self-understanding narratives; a measure was developed and then validated. Participants were 97 university students who responded to a self-understanding interview and to several measures of morally relevant behaviors. Results indicated that communal values (centered on concerns for others) positively predicted and agentic (self-interested) values negatively predicted moral behavior. At the same time, the tendency to coordinate both agentic and communal values within narrative thought segments positively predicted moral behavior, indicating that the 2 motives can be adaptively reconciled. Moral centrality holds considerable promise in explaining moral motivation and its development.

Keywords: moral centrality, moral identity, values, agency, communion

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, then an important problem arises: Why would anyone bother with morality? Wherein lies the motivation?

At the zenith 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 the distinction between self-interest and morality a false dichotomy.

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 integrating identity and morality (Hart, 2005; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004; Noam & Wren, 1993). Mature moral functioning manifests as the "moral career," reflected in lifestyle and even career decisions.

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,

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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 (1984; Colby & Damon, 1992) position. 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 toward a resolution of the synergy versus interference debate by advancing (and validating) a third perspective—the *reconciliation model* (see Figure 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 is intended to provide a more complete 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). As
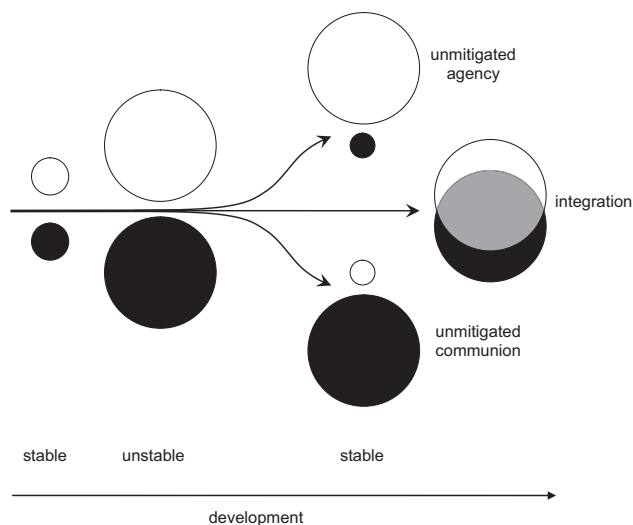

Figure 1. Reconciliation model of moral centrality development. White circles represent agency; black circles represent communion.

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.

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. Alternatively, 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.[1] 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 (VEINs).

VEINs

Our starting point for this methodology was to elicit life stories from individuals through a structured interview. Hermans (1988) and McAdams (1993) have advocated 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 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 detect 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 (1992) 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 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). Schwartz labels these quadrants self-enhancement and self-transcendence. Our preferred terminology is agency and communion, respectively.

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. (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.) 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. Although Suedfeld and de Best's rubric established 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 identity. So we created our own coding rubric to draw out the VEINs.

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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.

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 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 tests 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 interaction prediction of the synergy hypothesis). 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 will 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 focuses 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 e-mail contact information, and a recruitment message was sent to each contact individually. Of the 316 recruitment e-mails sent, 111 individuals responded with intent to participate; 14 of them 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 because of 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 postsecondary 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; the remainder had lived in Canada for an average of 6.9 years ($SD = 6.0$).

In the initial contact letter, prospective participants were informed that they were being contacted as representatives of their clubs and that the research project was studying the life stories of people who have significant impact on others, with the aim 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 (1/2 hr), (b) participating in an individual interview (1 hr), and (c) unwittingly undergoing a behavioral test of honesty. After making a second mention of the $20 honorarium, the online survey gave a brief description of the study, and asked participants to provide demographic information and to complete several questionnaires tapping morally relevant behavior. Upon completing the online questionnaires, participants were contacted to arrange an individual interview, which took place approximately 1–2 weeks ($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 icebreaker, respondents were first prompted to share a brief overview of their life story (McAdams, 1995). Next, the interviewer asked 14 target questions (see Table 1).

Table 1
Self-Understanding Interview, Transmogrified

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

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 ($SD = 5.7$).[2] 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 VEIN coding manual[3]—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"):

> *Interviewer:* What's important to you in terms of your physical characteristics?
> *Participant:* Physically, there's not much that I look out for. When I go to an interview, I make 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 merely comparing participant summary scores. Across the 10 VEINs, reliability was substantial, with 89% agreement overall and with $\kappa = .70$. On nine of the 10 individual VEINs, there was substantial reliability (83% to 95% agreement; $\kappa = .60$ to .79), whereas one VEIN (tradition) had moderate reliability (90% agreement; $\kappa = .57$). Data from the primary rater were used in all further analyses.

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 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 or 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 the individual; the relationship between individual differences on each of these scores and an outcome measure of morally relevant behaviors allows 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 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 (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

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[2] Participants then provided importance 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.

[3] The VEIN coding manual is available from Jeremy A. Frimer.

Table 2
Abbreviated Example of Response Stems, VEIN Coding, and Overlap Calculation

Interview question	Response stem	Data matrix from VEIN coding										Overlap
		Main effect										
		PO	AC	HE	ST	SD	UN	BE	TR	CO	SE	PO&BE
Describe yourself	friendly	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
	independent	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	—
	intelligent	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Job/school	master's student	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Activities	swimming	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	—
	time with boyfriend	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	—
	talking with family	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Significant people	certain close friends	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
	swim coaches	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
	professors	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Possessions	apartment	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
	bike	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
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; 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.

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; communion was 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, 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%–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 socioeconomic status, we see moral functioning as 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-Report Altruism scale (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981). The questionnaire asks respondents to report the frequency with which they have engaged in 20 altruistic acts[4] on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). The scale was found to have good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$).

Ecological behavior. Whereas moral psychology has historically focused primarily on interpersonal contexts, Kahn (2006) argued 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; they were augmented by four novel items that were particularly relevant to the 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's $\alpha = .76$).

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[4] 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.

Materialism. Although 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's α = .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 sociocultural 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's α = .59).[5]

Honesty

To validate the MCI, we implemented a measure of honest behavior 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 the 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 acceptance (0) or refusal (1) of 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 (see Bersoff, 1999) required that participants not receive a debriefing unless they specifically requested it (none did). There was considerable variability in participants' responses to this assessment of honesty (58% refused overpayment).

Socially Desirable Responding

Because of 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 (1 = *not true* to 7 = *very true*) the truthfulness of 40 self-statements[6] relating to socially desirable acts that are difficult to perform consistently. 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 (Cronbach's α = .81).

Results

Overview

The validity of the VEIN approach is 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 competing claims of the synergy and interference hypotheses about the overlap of agency and communion are 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 MCI—is empirically derived and validated using the behavioral measure of 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, we repeated this regression analysis 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. Although 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 are not considered further.

Next we consider the pattern of relationships between each VEIN and M3. Schwartz (1992) situates the 10 values around a

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[5] 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.

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

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 presents the zero-order correlations between M3 and each of the 10 VEINs. M3 related significantly to universalism, self-direction, and conformity ($.03 \geq p$s $> .001$) and marginally to benevolence and power ($.09 \geq p$s $\geq .07$). 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, we regressed the pattern of correlations to a sinusoidal curve with fixed periodicity nine VEINs[7] 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).

$$ r = 1.20 + 0.30 \sin\left[\frac{2\pi}{9}(x + 5.55) \right] $$

Here, r is the correlation between a VEIN at position x (x for power $= 1$, x for achievement $= 2$, etc.), the value $\frac{2\pi}{9}$ 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 underscores 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 reflects a relative scarcity of power
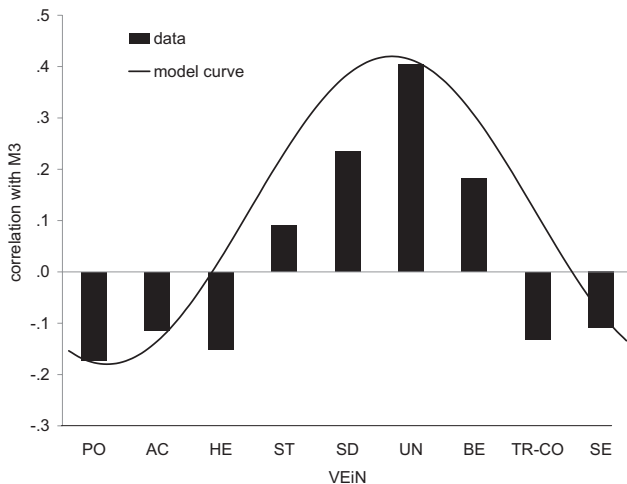

Figure 2. Zero-order correlations between the frequency of each value embedded in narrative (VEIN) and the composite index of morally relevant behaviors (M3). PO = power; AC = achievement; HE = hedonism; ST = stimulation; SD = self-direction; UN = universalism; BE = benevolence; TR-CO = average of tradition and conformity; and SE = security.

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. As can be seen by observation of the fitted curve in Figure 2, the peak is near universalism and the valley sits between power and achievement. Thus, moral north points to concern for the well-being of all humanity and the environment.

Agency–Communion Overlap: Synergy or Interference?

The present study aims to move toward 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 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, $\Delta R^2 \leq 1.0\%$, $p \geq .32$.

In contrast with the conventional interaction, we operationalized 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, we conducted a two-step regression analysis on M3. 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 reduced to information already known through VEIN frequencies, then none of the four candidate overlaps would enter in the second block. However, one of the four overlap candidates—namely, the power–benevolence overlap—

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[7] Because 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.

significantly augmented the prediction of M3 (second step ΔR^2 = 5.3%, p = .008; see Table 3). The power–benevolence term was, in fact, the strongest unique predictor (β = .32) of M3. None of the remaining elemental overlaps entered after the significant power–benevolence overlap.

Moral Centrality Index

The present methodology provides information about not only 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 by 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 3.) To illustrate the MCI calculation using the abbreviated coding example in Table 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 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 (rs = .37, .59, and .41, respectively, one-tailed ps < .001). To validate the MCI using an independent[8] assessment of moral functioning (and one perhaps less prone to socially 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 = 0.39.

Discussion

The primary goals of this study were to advance the reconciliation model of moral centrality development and to validate a

Table 3

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

Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β	p	B_{MCI}
(constant)	−0.63	0.88			45.41
Power	−3.65	1.90	−.21	.06	−26.54
Achievement	−3.47	1.48	−.24	.02	−25.17
Hedonism	−0.56	2.07	−.03	.79	−4.05
Stimulation	1.63	1.76	.09	.36	11.87
Self-direction	4.52	1.56	.28	.005	32.81
Universalism	6.68	2.36	.26	.006	48.51
Benevolence	0.78	2.03	.04	.70	5.66
Tradition	−1.64	2.10	−.08	.43	−11.98
Conformity	−3.36	1.94	−.18	.09	−24.39
Security	−0.11	1.47	−.01	.94	−0.78
Power–Benevolence overlap	5.96	2.21	.32	.008	43.30

Note. Model R^2 = 38.2%, p < .001.

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 inextricably 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, we advanced the VEIN methodology, an approach that taps Schwartz's (1992) value themes produced in self-understanding narrative. Agency was operationalized as achievement and power motivations; communion was operationalized as 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 show 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. 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 ele-

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[8] Indeed, the measure of honest behavior did not relate either to M3 or to any of the three measures that it comprised ($|r|$s ≤ .07, ps ≥ .49). The finding that self-report measures do not relate to behavioral measures of a similar construct accords with previous findings (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002).

vated 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 (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 codable 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 be credible now, 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 they cancel out the effect of one another. Agency and com-

munion 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:

> *Interviewer:* Do you have any habits or unique ways of doing certain things?
> *Participant:* 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, in terms of assisting both 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 *SD*s 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.

> *Participant:* I'm loyal.
> *Interviewer:* What does being loyal say about you?
> *Participant:* 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:

> *Interviewer:* What does being a student mean to you?
> *Participant:* 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 than 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.
> *Interviewer:* And why is that important to you?
> *Participant:* That's important because [pause] that's why I'm here: for school.

Interviewer: So why are you here for school then?
Participant: To go out with a job or to go on for further education. If you want to be a master's or be anything higher than a BA, then you need good grades.
Interviewer: Why do you want that, then?
Participant: 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 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 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. Although 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 moral development remains an important area of future research.

The Reconciliation Model

Built on 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-interest 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 President 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 what occurs if 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 or conformity, and thus away from achievement. If the reconciliation model does apply cross-culturally, the prediction is 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 develop-

ment. For example, teenagers form an independent identity (self-direction) by creating distance with their parents but struggle with the uncertainty that comes with being on their 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. Although we did not employ a convenience sample of psychology subject-pool participants, rather recruiting participants more broadly from student clubs, 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 (2002) and the Schwartz Values Survey (Schwartz, 1992). Some argue that self-report and projective measures of the (ostensibly) same or 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; this much is well established (Nucci, 2001). But to extend this observation to contend that 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. 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.

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