Varieties of Moral Personality: Beyond the Banality of Heroism

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ABSTRACT   Four perspectives dominate thinking about moral heroism: One contends that moral action is primarily instigated by situational pressures, another holds that moral excellence entails the full complement of virtues, the third asserts a single superintending principle, and the fourth posits different varieties of moral personality. This research addresses these competing perspectives by examining the personalities of moral heroes. Participants were 50 national awardees for moral action and 50 comparison individuals. They responded to personality inventories and a life-review interview that provided a broadband assessment of personality. Cluster analysis of the moral exemplars yielded three types: a ''communal'' cluster was strongly relational and generative, a ''deliberative'' cluster had sophisticated epistemic and moral reasoning as well as heightened self-development motivation, and an ''ordinary'' cluster had a more commonplace personality. These contrasting profiles imply that exemplary moral functioning can take multifarious forms and arises from different sources, reflecting divergent person × situation interactions.

In retrospect, many moral heroes deflect praise for their actions, holding that anyone would have done as they did under similar circumstances. Are these heroes correct? Is their heroism fundamentally banal? More generally, is exemplary moral behavior primarily a

product of situational factors or do personal dispositions somehow factor in? The situationalist perspective advances the former, denying the possibility of a dispositional moral personality underlying moral behavior and instead locating the source for heroism in extracting contextual pressures. In contrast, an interactionalist perspective is more sanguine about the viability of the notion of characterological moral excellence. Such an interactionalist perspective understands exemplary action to be the product of a reciprocal interaction wherein persons equipped with certain virtues respond to opportunities evoking moral heroism, and situations eliciting virtuous action leave a mark on personality. The first goal of the present study is to put to empirical test these competing claims by examining the personality functioning of moral heroes. The resolution of these competing claims will inform both our conceptions of the moral domain and our understanding of the processes that foster moral functioning.

Assuming that the interactionalist perspective does garner some empirical warrant—that evidence of moral personality is manifest—further questions concern its number and nature. Some philosophical orientations posit a single ideal type of moral personality—taking either the form of possession of the full complement of virtues or the form of reliance on a single overarching virtue. Other philosophical orientations advance the notion of a variety of moral personalities. The second goal of this study is to empirically inform these competing claims: Is the moral personality embodied by a single form or might there be different varieties? If moral excellence is of a singular type, is it better characterized by the full range of virtues or by a single encompassing one? On the other hand, if moral excellence comes in different varieties, what might these diverse forms be?

Competing Claims About Moral Heroism

The *situationalist perspective* in social psychology disparages the significance of personological factors in moral action. Notable among the advocates of such a perspective is Zimbardo (2004, 2007a, 2007b; Franco & Zimbardo, 2006), who contended that situational factors are primarily responsible for both profound evils and moral heroism. ''The banality of evil is matched by the banality of heroism. Neither is the consequence of dispositional tendencies. . . . Both emerge in particular situations at particular times, when situational forces play a compelling role in moving individuals across the line from inaction

to action" (Zimbardo, 2007a, p. 275). Some moral philosophers (Doris, 2002; Harman, 2003) who are sympathetic to the situationalist perspective contended that character is, at best, "fragmented" (Doris, 2002, p. 64) and that the notion of moral personality should be abandoned. Such situationalists occasionally acknowledge the potential role of personal characteristics in moral action but strongly contend that such personological factors get trumped by instigating situational forces. Thus, the defining empirical claim of situationalism is the denial of the causal functionality of moral personality.

In contrast, interactionalist approaches arise from ethical theories that embrace *some* causal contribution (or agency) of the morally excellent character. One venerable tradition in moral philosophy characterizes the virtuous person as possessing the full array of virtues (Aristotle, 1962, pp. 1144b30–1145a2), a position that we henceforth call the *full-complement perspective*. This Aristotelian doctrine holds that the primary virtues belong together and form a unity (for contemporary philosophical endorsement of this perspective, see McDowell, 1979; Watson, 1984). In some formulations, this unity describes a functional, psychological interdependence, implying that one cannot really possess any cardinal virtue without also embodying the others. Each virtue thus depends on other virtues for its true realization. In other formulations, this unity is held to be merely prescriptive, defining the morally good person as one who succeeds in instantiating the full complement of (relatively independent) virtues.

A related, but competing interactionalist tradition in moral philosophy characterizes the morally excellent person as guided by a single overarching virtue or principle (Kant, 1785/2002), a position that we refer to as the *single-algorithm perspective*. According to MacIntyre (1981), the search to discern the right general-purpose principle or algorithm for moral life was very much *the* project of the Enlightenment. As it turned out, this project resulted in the abandonment of a characterological basis for morality and the adoption of a rationalistic one, as exemplified by the utilitarian rule and the categorical imperative. The optimistic premise of this approach argued that some supreme moral principle, driven by the injunction of reason, would be both necessary and sufficient for solving moral problems, dictating the morally good life, and compelling moral action. Contemporary moral theory has focused disproportionately on justice as that moral principle (Rawls, 1971), a position unflinchingly advanced within moral psychology by Kohlberg (1981), who held that "virtue is ultimately

one, not many, and it is always the same form regardless of climate or culture. . . . The name of this ideal form is justice" (p. 30).

Even a casual reading of the philosophical record, however, reveals considerable plurality in moral personality—good people are argued to be of many sorts, or, as Blum (1988) noted, moral exemplars "are of irreducibly different types" (p. 197). Gilligan's (1982) proposal of a "different voice" on morality (albeit mistakenly aligned with gender; Walker, 2006) challenged the notion that moral functioning can and should be represented by a single ideal type (either the full complement of virtues or a single algorithm). Conceptual and empirical work on modularity in the cognitive domain (Fodor's, 1983, *Modularity of Mind* and Gardner's, 1983, *Frames of Mind*) suggests, by extrapolation, the possibility of modularity in the moral domain—that moral personality may also be variegated and specialized—a position that we henceforth refer to as the *varieties perspective*. Perhaps the most vocal and explicit steward of the varieties perspective is Flanagan (1991), who advanced the

> utterly liberating thought that we abandon the idea of a single ideal type of moral personality. As fictions go, this is an especially constraining and damaging one. It keeps us from appreciating the rich diversity of persons that everywhere abounds, and it seeds the ground for intolerance, disrespect, and overconfidence in one's own life form. (pp. 335–336)

In summary, the nature and agency of the moral personality represents a fundamental and contentious issue for the field, with four competing schools of thought receiving contemporary currency: the situationalist, full-complement, single-algorithm, and varieties perspectives.

Empirical Approach

So what are the available psychological data regarding the possibility of varieties of moral personality? One particularly relevant empirical approach (and the one that forms the focus of the present study) involves studying moral exemplars, people who have been adjudged, in some way, as leading lives of moral excellence. Research with moral exemplars can be particularly informative because critical features of personality relevant to moral functioning are amplified and thus can be discerned more easily than might be typical among

ordinary people, and because the study of whole lives (in contrast to the study of single variables) can more readily address the issue of types of moral personalities.

Empirical research with moral exemplars is relatively sparse because such samples are, by definition, uncommon. Early findings from qualitative analyses of moral exemplars (Colby & Damon, 1992; Monroe, 2002; Oliner, 2003; Oliner & Oliner, 1988) provided some conceptual insights, but the methodological limitations of such studies (lack of objective measures and appropriate comparison groups) constrain any definitive interpretation.

Furthermore, extant systematic research with moral exemplars is largely ill suited for addressing the present issues because a single type of moral exemplar was targeted in each study: Holocaust rescuers (Midlarsky, Jones, & Corley, 2005), generative teachers and community volunteers (McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997), altruistic adolescents (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Reimer & Wade-Stein, 2004), or social service volunteers (Matsuba & Walker, 2004, 2005). Aiming to contrast moral exemplars with a comparison group on some set of personality variables, these studies addressed the issue of which aspects of personality functioning are morally relevant, but none of these studies attempted to discriminate different types of moral personality. Exemplars, in these studies, were assumed to be homogeneous.

The notable exception to this targeting of single types of exemplars was a study by Walker and Frimer (2007), which included two different types of moral exemplars: brave exemplars (who had engaged in an heroic rescue in an attempt to save another's life) and caring exemplars (who had engaged in significant long-term volunteer service). The personalities of these brave and caring exemplars were contrasted with each other as well as with matched comparison groups. Three relevant findings emerged from this study: (a) Personality variables significantly augmented the prediction of moral action (i.e., moral exemplar status) beyond that provided by moral judgment alone, indicating the potent role of personality in any depiction of moral excellence. (b) Caring and brave exemplars were found to differ on several aspects of personality, with caring exemplars invariably displaying more adequate personality functioning than the brave ones. (c) The moral exemplars (collectively) differed from the demographically matched comparison groups on a number of personality variables, pointing to the "signature" moral personality variables.

Although Walker and Frimer's (2007) study included participants who had engaged in somewhat different types of moral action, the focus was on group comparisons conducted exclusively at the variable level, with the assumption that the brave and caring groups each were homogeneous. Although the findings are indicative of the personality variables associated with exemplary moral action, they do not so readily inform the question of whether there are varieties of moral personality. That issue is more appropriately addressed by analyses conducted at the person level than at the variable level, which is the approach taken here. Thus, the present study involves a person-level analysis of some of the data previously reported by Walker and Frimer. A person-level analysis can provide a holistic assessment of individuals' personalities across a comprehensive battery of variables and, hence, has the potential to more clearly identify different characterological types of people.

Landscape of Personality

Whether or not one finds different varieties of moral personality depends on the scope and adequacy of the variables that enter into the analyses. If the personality variables are limited or skewed in some way, then fallacious conclusions may follow. Blasi (2004, 2005) and McAdams (2009), in particular, provided important conceptual work regarding the viability of the construct of moral personality and regarding the particular personality variables that hold relevance for this enterprise.

Although numerous approaches to personality description have been advanced, the present study relies on McAdams's (1995b, 2009; McAdams & Pals, 2006) integrative framework—a particularly useful template that has received widespread acceptance. McAdams proposed that personality can optimally be described on three broad levels (representing major traditions within personality research), each having its particular strengths and weaknesses but collectively yielding a comprehensive profile.

The first level is that of *dispositional traits*—personality dimensions that are relatively broad, decontextualized, noncontingent, stable, generally linear, and implicitly comparative (as tapped by the Five-Factor Model, for example). Many dispositional traits are particularly relevant to moral functioning, especially those subsumed by Agreeableness and Conscientiousness ("the classic dimen-

sions of character''; McCrae & John, 1992, p. 197), as well as by Openness to Experience. The second level is that of *characteristic adaptations*—the motivational, strategic, and cognitive- and social-developmental aspects of personality that are more particular to situational, temporal, and role contexts. Such goals, personal strivings, coping strategies, and developmental concerns are clearly value laden and reflect personal ideologies. The third level is that of *integrative life narratives*—the aspects of personality involving the psychosocial construction of a framework for deriving a sense of coherence, identity, and meaning in life. Moral themes pervade life narratives as individuals impute meaning to their life and evaluate their own identity in moral terms. Life-story themes of agency, communion, and redemption are particularly germane to any understanding of the moral personality.

To provide a comprehensive assessment of personality functioning, multiple measures tapping each of the three levels of personality description were employed. The personality variables selected for analyses were ones implicated by previous research with moral exemplars (especially Matsuba & Walker, 2004, 2005, and Walker & Frimer, 2007) as being relevant to the moral personality and thus prime candidates for delineating different types. (The specific personality variables assessed here are outlined in the Procedure section.) The number of variables included in such a multivariate analysis is constrained, of course, by the sample size as well as practical limits to data collection. Our intent was, nonetheless, to have a representative set of core personality variables.

Hypotheses and Summary

The primary objective of the present study was to test competing claims about the source of moral heroism. We now "unpack" each of the four positions outlined above to advance its respective claim about the personality functioning of moral exemplars. (a) The situationalist perspective predicts that moral heroes will be ordinary people and thus have commonplace personalities. (b) Implicating the complete array of virtues, the full-complement perspective predicts that moral heroes will uniformly exhibit extraordinarily adaptive personalities across the spectrum of personality variables. (c) The single-algorithm perspective also predicts homogeneity among exemplars; however, it anticipates a considerably narrower focus on some superintending aspect of personality.

(d) Finally, the varieties perspective predicts the emergence of multifarious moral personalities, each exuding a different and partial set of virtues.

The analytic strategy adopted to accomplish the objectives of this study was to conduct a cluster analysis of moral exemplars, based on a broadband assessment of their personality, in order to attempt to discriminate different types and then to compare these different varieties of moral personality with matched comparison groups to assess the extent of their exemplarity. At stake is our conceptualization of moral functioning and our understanding of the sources of moral heroism.

METHOD

Participants

Moral Exemplars

The 50 participants who were identified here as moral exemplars were recent recipients of a national award through the Canadian honors system. Half of the exemplars received the Medal of Bravery, which recognizes civilians who, in the face of considerable danger, have risked their lives to save others. The other exemplars received the Caring Canadian Award, which recognizes volunteers who have demonstrated extraordinary and long-term commitment in providing care to others or in supporting community service or humanitarian causes. The Medal of Bravery and the Caring Canadian Award are regarded as parallel awards within the Canadian honors system, and comparable numbers are recognized annually.[1]

Both bravery and care are well represented in moral philosophy as indicative of moral excellence (Miller, 2000; Noddings, 1984), although other types can readily be proffered as well. However, the actions of our exemplars were fairly unambiguous and noncontroversial in terms of their moral quality. Furthermore, they were identified in the same way: Nominations for awards came from members of the general public and were then adjudicated by an independent advisory committee. Although these two awards recognize different types of moral action—a single heroic rescue versus long-term volunteer service—the contrast between them should not be overdrawn. The brave exemplars are evidently altruistic toward others in selflessly undertaking a rescue whereas the caring exemplars are frequently courageous in their actions given the

1. Criteria for these awards and citations for award recipients are accessible on the Governor-General's Web site (http://www.gg.ca).

difficult contexts in which they confront social injustice, advocate for the disadvantaged, and support humanitarian causes.

Prospective participants were initially contacted by letter and informed that the research was examining positive human characteristics, that they were of interest because of their award, and that a $50 honorarium was offered for their participation. Participants were drawn from all 10 Canadian provinces.

In terms of demographic characteristics, the exemplars included 31 men and 19 women, their ethnic background was predominantly Euro-Canadian (92%), ages ranged across the adult life span ($M = 55.4$ years, $SD = 18.4$, range = 23–91), and level of education averaged 14.0 years ($SD = 2.5$, range = 8–21). Preliminary analyses indicated that the two groups of exemplars (brave and caring) did not differ in the distribution of gender or ethnicity, nor in level of education. However, the caring exemplars were older than the brave exemplars, an age disparity that was unsurprising given that the caring awardees were recognized for long-term volunteer service whereas the brave awardees were recognized for heroism in dangerous contexts that would more typically involve younger adults. This confound between age and type of award turned out to be of little concern, as preliminary analyses indicated that age was unrelated to any of the personality variables assessed here.

Comparison Participants

One of the notable design strengths of our study was the inclusion of carefully matched comparison participants, drawn from the general community, whose data were relevant for some analyses. Initially, several hundred people were recruited (primarily at community and seniors centers, clubs, and continuing education classes for adults), ostensibly for a research project that was examining positive human characteristics and that was offering a $50 honorarium (the same description provided to exemplar participants except without mention of awards). These prospective participants provided demographic and contact information. This recruitment procedure allowed 50 comparison participants to be drawn from the database who closely matched the exemplars, on a case-by-case basis, in terms of four demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, and level of education).

Procedure

Participants who consented to being involved were first mailed a set of personality questionnaires to complete and return. These questionnaires included demographic information, Wiggins's (1995) Revised Interpersonal Adjective Scales, and Emmons's (1999) Personal Strivings List.

Subsequently, an individual audiorecorded interview was arranged, typically conducted in the participant's home, and taking approximately 2 hr. This semistructured interview was organized into three main parts: In the first part (which was adapted from the life-review protocol developed by McAdams, 1995a), participants were prompted, in an open-ended manner, to construct the story of their life, in particular by describing the main chapters of their life story in some detail. For coding, these chapters were later grouped into childhood, adolescent, and adulthood sections. Participants were then prompted to recall and discuss seven critical life events, sharing not only the concrete details of each event but also its significance and what it conveyed about who they are as persons. Specifically, they were asked for a high-point event, a low-point event, a turning-point event, their earliest memory, an important childhood memory, an important adolescent memory, and an important adulthood memory.

In the second part of the interview (adapted from Walker, Pitts, Hennig, & Matsuba, 1995), participants were asked to recall a difficult moral dilemma from their own experience and then their moral reasoning in handling this problem was elicited by a series of standard probes.

The third part of the interview (adapted from Moseley, Jarvis, & Fowler, 1993) entailed a series of interview questions tapping aspects of epistemic development. Although Fowler (1981) described his model as pertaining to stages of faith development, he also contended that is it conceptually unrelated to religiosity and that the processes involved in development fundamentally reflect individuals' epistemic understandings and their attempts at meaning making. We contend that "epistemic development" is a more veridical and less confusing label for this variable than is "faith development."

Measures and Coding

From the two questionnaires and the three parts of the interview, a total of 13 personality variables were derived for analyses. These measures and personality variables are outlined in Table 1. Our intention was that diversity and breadth in the range of personality variables assessed would facilitate a comprehensive examination of moral personality.

Revised Interpersonal Adjective Scales–Big Five (IASR-B5)

This well-validated and theoretically substantiated inventory was developed by Wiggins (1995) to tap the circumplex dimensions of dominance and nurturance. According to Wiggins, dominance and nurturance closely map onto the extraversion and agreeableness factors, respectively, of the Five-Factor Model. The IASR-B5 also taps the remaining three factors of the Five-Factor Model (conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience). Participants were asked to rate the self-descriptive accuracy of

Table 1
Measures and Personality Variables

Level of Personality Description	Measures	Personality Variable
Dispositional traits	Revised Interpersonal Adjective Scales–Big Five	dominance nurturance conscientiousness emotional stability openness to experience
Characteristic adaptations	Personal Strivings List	relational generativity self-development
	Moral Reasoning Interview	moral reasoning stage
	Epistemic Development Interview	epistemic stage
Integrative life narratives	Life-Review Interview	agency communion redemption

124 trait terms, using an 8-point Likert scale. Dimension scores were calculated for dominance and nurturance through the use of circular statistics, and T scores were calculated for the conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience factors. Cronbach αs ranged between .75 and .94, comparing favorably with the psychometric properties of the measure reported by Wiggins. Thus, the IASR-B5 produces scores for five personality variables, assessed at the level of dispositional traits: *dominance*, *nurturance*, *conscientiousness*, *emotional stability*, and *openness to experience*.

Personal Strivings List (PSL)

The PSL (Emmons, 1999) assesses the goal motivational aspects of personality (or what McAdams, 1995b, would regard as reflecting the characteristic adaptations level of personality description). Participants were asked to reflect on and then to write down a list of 10–15 of their personal strivings or goals—the things they are "typically trying to do." Participants' handwritten lists of personal strivings were transcribed so that the

entire corpus could be randomized for blind coding. For each motivational category, each striving was independently classified for the presence or absence of the relevant theme. Thus, a striving could reflect more than one category or none at all.

Thematic coding of the strivings was conducted for three motivational categories that were believed to be particularly relevant to moral functioning: (a) The *relational* category of strivings entails concerns with maintaining relationships, social acceptance, close interactions, and commitment to another (reflecting the definitional criteria for both affiliation and intimacy motivation provided by Emmons, 1999). (b) The *generativity* category entails concerns with providing for the next generation, giving of oneself to others, and having an enduring influence (relying on Emmons', 1999, criteria for generativity). (c) The *self-development* category entails concerns for greater self-understanding, personal development, and psychological well-being (reflecting the criteria for identity and personal growth motivation provided by Emmons, 1999, and Sheldon & Kasser, 2001, although excluding concern with physical health).

Because participants provided lists with slightly varying numbers of personal strivings, frequency scores for each category were converted to percentages for analyses. For the PSL and all other subjectively coded measures in this study, interrater reliability was determined by the independent coding of the data of a random subsample of 25 participants. Interrater reliabilities for the PSL were substantial, with intraclass correlations (ICC) = .88, .80, and .76 for the relational, generativity, and self-development categories, respectively.

Moral Reasoning Interview

McAdams (1995b) also regarded cognitive- and social-developmental variables (such as moral reasoning and epistemic development) as reflecting the characteristic adaptations level of personality description. Participants' reasoning regarding their real-life moral conflict was coded for stage of *moral reasoning development*, following well-established procedures (Walker et al., 1995). Moral judgments were first identified and then matched to criterion judgments in the moral stage coding manual (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). These moral judgment scores were averaged to yield an overall stage score for moral reasoning development. Interrater reliability was substantial, with ICC = .83.

Epistemic Development Interview

A series of questions tapped four aspects of *epistemic development*: (a) social perspective taking, (b) bounds of social awareness, (c) locus of

authority, and (d) form of world coherence.[2] Participants' responses for each aspect were matched to coding criteria in the scoring manual (Moseley et al., 1993). These scored responses were averaged to provide a score for each aspect, and then an overall stage score for epistemic development was derived by averaging the four aspect scores (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). Interrater reliability was substantial, with $ICC = .93$.

Life-Review Interview

The first part of the interview elicited integrative narratives of the self, the third level in McAdams's (1995b) typology of personality assessment, by prompting participants to describe their life story and to discuss some critical life events. Such life narratives are amenable to coding for many personality variables. Among these personality variables, agency and communion are regarded as two fundamental modalities in interpersonal functioning (Bakan, 1966; McAdams, 1993). Following McAdams's (2001) manual, agency and communion were coded in the sections of the life-review interview where they were most likely to be salient (the childhood, adolescent, and adulthood life chapters, and the high-, low-, and turning-point events). Each of these six sections was coded for the presence or absence of four agentic themes (self-mastery, status/victory, achievement/responsibility, and empowerment) and four communal themes (love/friendship, dialogue, caring/help, and unity/togetherness). Overall scores for *agency* and for *communion* were calculated by summing over the four themes for each category and then over the six sections. Interrater reliability was determined at the level of coding of the four themes for each category within sections and was found to be substantial for both agency and communion, with exact agreement = 93% and 95% and with Cohen's $\kappa = .79$ and .78, respectively.

   The construal of critical events, particularly those that involve some significant transformation, are revelatory aspects of personality functioning because they reflect how people impute meaning in life. In McAdams's (2006; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001) conceptualization, the adaptive stance is a dispositional tendency to construe events redemptively, such that a demonstrably negative state leads to a demonstrably positive one—the negative state is redeemed or salvaged in

2. Fowler (1981) described three other aspects of epistemic development (viz., form of logic, symbolic function, and form of moral judgment), but they were not included in our coding because logical and symbolic processes were of minimal relevance to the issues of interest here and because there was a separate assessment of moral judgment. The coding manual (Moseley et al., 1993) does allow for the use of an abbreviated interview.

some way that reveals a positive benefit. Following McAdams's (1999) manual, redemption sequences were coded in the sections of the interview where they were most likely to be evident (the childhood, adolescent, and adulthood life chapters, and the high-, low-, and turning-point events). Each of these sections was coded for the presence or absence of *redemption*, and an overall score was derived by summing over the six sections. Interrater reliability was calculated at the level of coding within sections and was found to be substantial, with exact agreement = 91% and $\kappa = .71$.

RESULTS

The plan for the analyses was first to derive the appropriate number of clusters of moral exemplars—to discriminate and describe the varieties of moral personality (or the lack thereof). Once these clusters were identified, the second step was to compare each exemplar cluster with its comparison participants to determine the extent and the ways that each personality type might be exemplary. Note that, in the cluster analyses, both brave and caring exemplars were included, rather than analyzing them separately. This was done to ensure an adequate sample size for analyses and also to determine whether the previous assumption of homogeneity within each group was unfounded.

Cluster Analyses of Moral Exemplars

Hierarchical cluster analysis generates discrete clusters or groups of cases (exemplar participants in the present study) on the basis of the pattern of association within a set of variables. The analysis identifies clusters that tend to minimize within-group variability and maximize between-group variability. A cluster analysis (specifically, Ward's method with squared Euclidean distances) was conducted for the sample of 50 moral exemplars, using the data of the 13 personality variables (these variables were first standardized so that each contributed equally in the analysis).

The intercorrelations among these variables are reported in Table 2. In general, these personality variables are weakly to moderately related, both within and across levels of personality description (e.g., the correlation between dominance as tapped by the IASR-B5 and agency themes in the life-review interview was +.33). There is no indication of multicollinearity (given that all pairwise $|r|s \leq .63$),

Table 2
Intercorrelations Among the Personality Variables

Personality Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Dominance	—												
2. Nurturance	− .08	—											
3. Conscientiousness	.35	.43	—										
4. Emotional stability	.18	.63	.44	—									
5. Openness to experience	.22	− .01	− .27	.08	—								
6. Relational	− .03	.32	.11	− .07	− .04	—							
7. Generativity	.16	.25	.30	.22	.14	.45	—						
8. Self-development	− .23	− .28	− .43	− .05	.26	− .48	− .34	—					
9. Moral reasoning stage	.18	− .01	− .06	− .09	.21	− .16	− .17	.25	—				
10. Epistemic stage	.15	.18	.12	.15	.22	− .12	.06	.22	.44	—			
11. Agency	.33	− .03	.00	− .08	.05	− .07	.00	.06	.49	.45	—		
12. Communion	.06	.21	.11	− .09	.04	.45	.17	− .04	.36	.20	.37	—	
13. Redemption	.16	.23	.02	.00	.06	.11	.11	.05	.35	.21	.41	.31	—

suggesting that a broadband assessment is important for capturing the various aspects of the moral personality.

No definitive, internal statistical criterion exists for determining the appropriate number of clusters to retain from the iterative clustering procedure; however, a widely accepted "stopping rule" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 499) is based on the percent change in the agglomeration coefficients from one stage to the next. In the present cluster analysis, the successive changes in agglomeration coefficients from the 10-cluster stage down to the single-cluster stage were 6.7%, 7.1%, 7.4%, 8.7%, 8.3%, 8.3%, 8.2%, 9.9%, 12.8%, and 17.1%. The first relatively large increase (12.8%) indicates that heterogeneous clusters are merging at that point and that the agglomerative process should be stopped at the previous stage. Thus, when we used this criterion, a three-cluster solution was found to best suit the data.

The analysis generated clusters that did discriminate the two types of awardees who participated in this study on the basis of their personality, $\chi^2(2, N = 50) = 13.02, p = .001$, Cramér's $V = .51$. Cluster 1 (an identifying number will be used for each cluster until later analyses suggest an appropriate summary label) consisted predominantly of caring exemplars ($n = 15$ caring and 4 brave), Cluster 2 was somewhat smaller and balanced in its composition ($n = 5$ caring and 4 brave), whereas Cluster 3 consisted predominantly of brave exemplars ($n = 5$ caring and 17 brave). Note, however, that the cluster analysis did not simply bifurcate the sample in terms of the type of award: Three—not two—clusters were found, and both brave and caring exemplars populated each of these clusters. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the 13 personality variables (in the format of the original scores before standardization) across the three clusters of exemplars. A subsequent analysis indicated that there were no differences in the gender distribution across the three clusters, $\chi^2(2, N = 50) = 1.68, p = .43$, Cramér's $V = .18$.

Table 3 provides descriptive data that help identify the personality variables that characterize each cluster of moral exemplars; however, discriminant function analysis offers a more objective approach in showing which variables contribute most to the definition of each cluster. That said, the purpose of discriminant analysis here is merely descriptive: to indicate an appropriate definitional label for each of the three clusters. This is best accomplished by deriving a discriminant function separately for each cluster.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for the Clusters of Moral Exemplars

Personality Variable	Cluster 1 (Communal)		Cluster 2 (Deliberative)		Cluster 3 (Ordinary)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Dominance[a]	5.4	6.8	3.5	7.7	− 0.9	9.7
Nurturance[a]	13.5	10.6	6.0	11.1	3.8	10.9
Conscientiousness[b]	61.6	6.8	54.1	14.5	53.7	12.5
Emotional stability[b]	66.0	13.7	57.8	14.8	58.7	14.9
Openness to experience[b]	51.4	11.1	57.8	6.4	49.4	9.1
Relational[c]	43.7	13.2	19.3	12.0	30.0	14.9
Generativity[c]	33.2	14.3	20.0	14.3	19.4	15.4
Self-development[c]	18.6	15.5	39.9	13.7	22.8	15.7
Moral reasoning stage[d]	3.6	0.3	3.9	0.3	3.1	0.4
Epistemic stage[d]	3.4	0.4	3.8	0.4	3.1	0.2
Agency[e]	6.7	3.2	6.7	2.5	3.7	1.9
Communion[e]	5.2	1.5	2.7	1.5	2.1	1.3
Redemption[e]	3.4	0.8	3.4	0.5	2.4	0.9

[a]Dimension scores. [b]Factor *T* scores. [c]Percentages. [d]Stage scores. [e]Frequencies.

Thus, three standard discriminant analyses were conducted, one for each cluster, entering the 13 personality variables together as predictors and using membership (vs. nonmembership) in each cluster as the criterion variable. The squared canonical correlation (R_c^2) indicates the proportion of the variation in the criterion variable discriminated by the predictor variables whereas the hit ratio is the percentage of "grouped" cases correctly classified and is often considered an index of the effectiveness of the discriminant function. As will be reported in the following paragraphs, all three analyses indicated that each cluster was strongly discriminated by the predictor personality variables (with substantial proportions of the variability explained, with perfect or almost perfect hit ratios, and with widely spaced group centroids), providing considerable support for the notion that there are, indeed, distinct varieties of moral personality.

The discriminant analysis for Cluster 1 indicated that this cluster was strongly differentiated, with an $R_c^2 = .78$ and a hit ratio of 96%. Confirming clear divergence, the group centroids on the discriminant function were 2.32 ($SD = 1.10$) for cluster membership and -1.42 ($SD = 0.93$) for nonmembership. An examination of the discriminant loadings and the standardized discriminant coefficients (see Table 4) facilitates interpretation of the cluster. Discriminant loadings indicate the simple correlations between the predictor variables and scores on the discriminant function and allow the researcher to infer a suitable descriptive label for the cluster. Standardized discriminant coefficients, on the other hand, are partial coefficients and indicate the unique contribution of each predictor variable, controlling for the other variables in the discriminant function, much like beta weights in regression. The discriminant analysis for Cluster 1 revealed high loadings on themes of communion in life stories, on relational and generativity strivings, and on the dispositional-trait factor of nurturance. The standardized discriminant coefficients similarly indicated not only that communion is a particularly strong defining variable for this cluster but also that emotional stability makes a notable unique contribution. Given the overall pattern yielded by the discriminant analysis (which converges with the descriptive data presented in Table 3), the label *communal* seemed appropriate for this cluster. Recall that this cluster was comprised predominantly of caring exemplars.

Turning to Cluster 2 (which was balanced in terms of the two types of moral exemplars), the discriminant analysis indicated that

Table 4
Discriminant Analyses for the Clusters of Moral Exemplars

Personality Variable	Cluster 1 (Communal)		Cluster 2 (Deliberative)		Cluster 3 (Ordinary)	
	dl	sdc	dl	sdc	dl	sdc
Dominance	.16	.27	.04	.15	.17	.40
Nurturance	.22	− .03	− .05	.56	.17	.44
Conscientiousness	.19	.03	− .07	.25	.13	.26
Emotional stability	.14	.73	− .08	− .92	.08	− .06
Openness to experience	− .01	− .24	.21	.21	.11	− .04
Relational	.32	.43	− .30	− .28	.09	.22
Generativity	.25	.41	− .10	.23	.16	.63
Self-development	− .15	− .06	.33	.61	.04	.54
Moral reasoning stage	.14	.38	.40	.70	.43	.86
Epistemic stage	.04	− .48	.42	.63	.28	.15
Agency	.20	.33	.14	− .20	.30	.15
Communion	.54	.86	− .12	− .91	.34	.34
Redemption	.21	.19	.16	.24	.33	.36

Note. dl = discriminant loadings. sdc = standardized discriminant coefficients.

this cluster was also strongly differentiated, with an $R_c^2 = .69$ and a perfect hit ratio of 100%. The group centroids on the discriminant function also confirmed this clear divergence, with a mean of 3.11 ($SD = 1.05$) for membership in this cluster and $− 0.68$ ($SD = 0.99$) for nonmembership. High discriminant loadings (see Table 4) were revealed for the two structural-developmental variables of epistemic development and moral reasoning, for self-development strivings, and, at the level of dispositional traits, openness to experience. The standardized discriminant coefficients similarly indicated the strong unique contributions of epistemic development, moral reasoning, and self-development (consistent with the descriptive data presented in Table 3). Thus, the discriminant function for this cluster empha-sizes variables reflecting sophisticated, reflective judgment and con-cerns with self-understanding. Reflecting this emphasis, the label *deliberative* seemed appropriate for this cluster. Note that the anal-ysis for this cluster also indicated negative discriminant coefficients for communion, relational strivings, and emotional stability, which simply indicates that this cluster is relatively low on these personality

variables (and which, of course, are positively discriminating of the communal cluster).

The discriminant analysis for Cluster 3 (which was comprised primarily of brave exemplars), indicated that this cluster was also strongly discriminated, with an $R_c^2 = .80$ and a perfect hit ratio of 100%. Confirming this clear differentiation, the group centroids on the discriminant function were -2.18 ($SD = 0.87$) for membership in this cluster and 1.72 ($SD = 1.09$) for nonmembership. This negative group centroid for membership in this cluster indicates relatively low scores on the discriminant function, that is, low scores on many personality variables relative to the other clusters. The descriptive statistics (Table 3) reveal that this cluster, of the three, has the lowest scores on 10 of the 13 personality variables and has the highest on none. Similarly, the standardized discriminant coefficients (Table 4) indicate that the personality variables defining the cluster are the ones on which it scored at a relatively low level. Across this broadband assessment of personality, this cluster is consistently unremarkable relative to other exemplars; hence, the label *ordinary* seemed appropriate for this cluster.

Moral Exemplars Versus Comparison Participants

Once the different varieties of moral personality had been identified and compared, the next step in the analyses was to contrast each exemplar cluster with its associated comparison participants. This analysis indicates the extent and the ways in which each type is exemplary. Figure 1 presents the mean standardized scores on the 13 personality variables for exemplar versus comparison participants in the three cluster groups (communal, deliberative, and ordinary).

To first determine if each exemplar cluster differed from its individually matched group of comparison participants, a standard direct-entry discriminant analysis was performed, using the 13 personality variables as predictors of group membership (exemplar vs. comparison). Unlike the descriptive use of discriminant analysis in the previous section (to derive cluster labels), the purpose here was inferential (to test group differences on a criterion variable). For the communal cluster, the analysis indicated that these exemplars were markedly distinguished from their comparison participants, $\chi^2(13, N = 38) = 33.94$, $p < .001$, with the discriminant function accounting
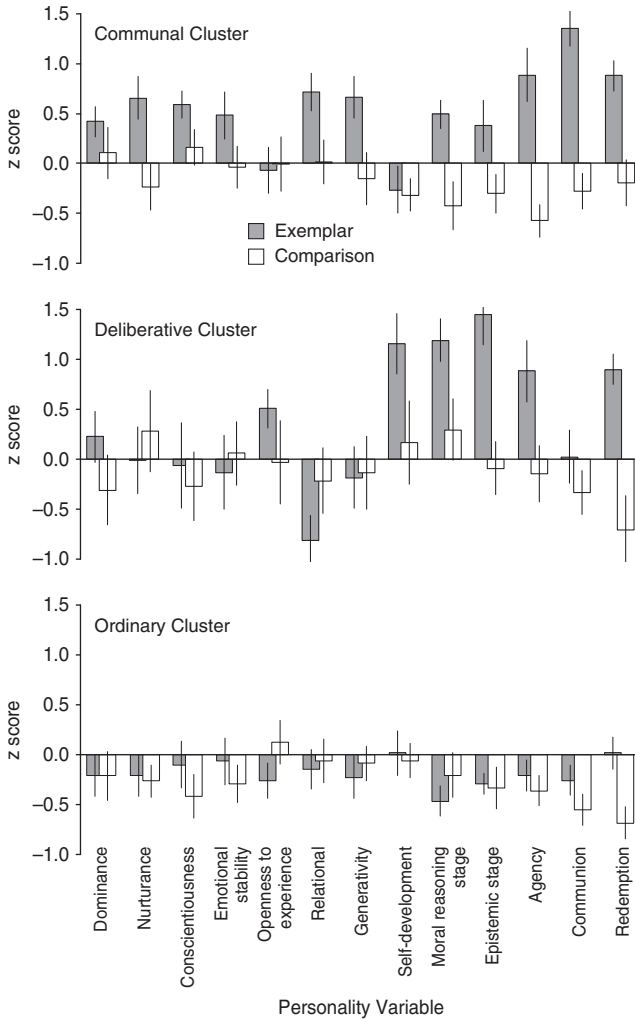
Figure 1
Mean *z* scores (±*SE*) on the personality variables for exemplar and comparison participants in the communal, deliberative, and ordinary cluster groups.

for a substantial proportion of the between-group variability ($R_c^2 = .68$).

The particular personality variables that discriminated this communal cluster from its comparison group were identified by a series of paired-samples *t* tests. To balance concerns about an inflated

experiment-wise error rate (given the number of statistical tests) with the constraint of relatively low power (reflecting the small sample sizes yielded by the clustering procedure), it was decided to only note differences that were *both* significant (at $p < .05$) and entailed an effect size of medium or larger (defined as $d > .5$; Cohen, 1988). Descriptive statistics are displayed in Figure 1, and inferential statistics and effect sizes for these comparisons are presented in Table 5.

As might be expected by a cluster that was largely defined by a set of communal personality variables, these exemplars scored considerably higher than comparison participants on themes of communion in their life stores, relational and generativity strivings, and on dispositional traits of nurturance. Interestingly, they also scored higher on several other personality variables that were not particularly defining of the cluster, notably, dispositional traits of conscientiousness, level of moral reasoning, and themes of agency and of redemption in life narratives. Thus, this cluster is exemplary on a broad subset of personality variables. The adaptive personality functioning of this cluster relative to its comparison group is noteworthy given the close matching on demographic variables.

Turning to the deliberative cluster, a discriminant analysis indicated that these exemplars were also clearly distinguished from their comparison participants by the set of 13 personality variables, $\chi^2(13, N = 18) = 29.90$, $p = .005$, with the discriminant function almost completely accounting for the between-group variability ($R_c^2 = .96$). The particular personality variables that discriminated this deliberative cluster from its comparison group were identified by a series of t tests (see Table 5 and Figure 1). These analyses indicated that the exemplars were considerably more advanced in both epistemic development and moral reasoning than their comparison group, as well as with more pronounced self-development strivings, consistent with the earlier definition of the cluster. In a manner similar to that of the communal cluster, the deliberative cluster also scored higher than its comparison group on two other personality variables that were not particularly germane to its definition—themes of agency and of redemption in life stories.

The third cluster of exemplars was characterized by relatively low scores on most personality variables in relation to the other clusters. This suggests the possibility that this ordinary cluster might also compare unfavorably with its group of comparison participants. However, the discriminant analysis indicated that, collectively, the

Table 5
Inferential Statistics and Effect Sizes for Exemplar Clusters Versus Their Comparison Groups

Personality Variable	Cluster 1 (Communal)			Cluster 2 (Deliberative)			Cluster 3 (Ordinary)		
	$t(18)$	p	d	$t(8)$	p	d	$t(21)$	p	d
Dominance	1.10	.28	0.34	1.06	.32	0.58	0.02	.99	0.01
Nurturance	2.61	.02	0.84	− 0.75	.47	− 0.27	0.22	.83	0.07
Conscientiousness	2.12	.05	0.59	0.44	.67	0.18	0.97	.34	0.29
Emotional stability	2.04	.06	0.53	− 0.31	.77	− 0.19	0.78	.44	0.23
Openness to experience	− 0.22	.83	− 0.06	1.14	.29	0.55	− 1.26	.22	− 0.41
Relational	2.34	.03	0.73	− 1.72	.12	− 0.66	− 0.26	.80	− 0.08
Generativity	2.55	.02	0.74	− 0.11	.91	− 0.05	− 0.45	.66	− 0.16
Self-development	0.20	.84	0.06	3.32	.01	0.84	0.30	.76	0.08
Moral reasoning stage	3.21	.005	0.94	3.10	.02	0.99	− 0.99	.33	− 0.29
Epistemic stage	1.93	.07	0.66	4.63	.002	1.34	0.26	.80	0.06
Agency	4.39	<.001	1.22	3.75	.006	1.02	1.14	.27	0.22
Communion	6.44	<.001	1.43	1.51	.17	0.49	1.45	.16	0.39
Redemption	4.15	<.001	1.08	4.15	.003	1.41	3.25	.004	0.83

13 personality variables did not significantly discriminate this cluster of "ordinary" exemplars from their comparison participants at all, $\chi^2(13, N = 44) = 13.58$, $p = .41$, with a relatively modest $R_c^2 = .32$. Not surprisingly, then, the comparison of group means on the personality variables (see Table 5 and Figure 1) indicated no significant differences between the ordinary cluster and their comparison group except for one variable—redemption—for which the exemplars evidenced more such themes in their life stories (despite being low on this variable relative to other exemplar clusters).

DISCUSSION

The overarching goal of this study was to evaluate four competing perspectives on moral heroism by examining the personality functioning of moral exemplars. The viability of these philosophical perspectives should be judged in the light of relevant empirical evidence. Ethical ideals that cannot be substantiated in actual psychological functioning by "creatures like us" fail what it known as the meta-ethical "principle of minimal psychological realism" (Flanagan, 1991, p. 32) and ought to be eschewed. Analyses revealed three different types of moral personality—communal, deliberative, and ordinary. Interestingly, the previous variable-level analysis of these data (Walker & Frimer, 2007), although clearly indicating the moral relevance of several personality variables, stopped short of revealing different varieties of moral personality and left no intimation of the "ordinary" variety. These different varieties only became apparent with a person-level approach.

As will be argued in the next section, the present findings were cleanly predicted by none of the competing perspectives; rather a synthesis of contributions from three of the four perspectives seems to best account for the data. That said, each perspective does not contribute equally to the synthesized description, and one account (namely, the full-complement perspective) fails to make any meaningful contribution.

Analysis of Competing Claims

The cluster analysis of our sample of moral exemplars, based on a broadband assessment of personality, strongly discriminated three types with substantial proportions of the between-group variability explained. Providing evidence for moral modularity, these results

clearly substantiate the varieties perspective explicit in Flanagan's (1991) philosophical analysis of multiple moral ideals. Finding different varieties of moral personality serves to pluralize our conception of the moral domain and to instigate a multifaceted search for the processes in moral functioning and development. In contradistinction, the present findings undermine the hegemonic claim that moral excellence should be characterized by a single moral ideal—an assertion advanced by both the full-complement and single-algorithm perspectives.

One cluster of moral personality identified in the analyses was characterized as "communal" because the variables most strongly discriminating these exemplars included four personality themes oriented toward social interdependence: communion in life stories, relational and generative strivings in goal motivation, and nurturance in dispositional traits. These communal aspects of personality similarly distinguished exemplars from comparison participants. But perhaps less expected was the finding that these exemplars were also distinguished from comparison participants on four other personality variables (which were not particularly defining of this cluster): conscientiousness, level of moral reasoning, and themes of agency and redemption in life stories. Although the communal cluster evidenced adaptive functioning for the majority of the personality variables (8 of 13), this falls well short of the claim of the unity of the virtues advanced by the full-complement perspective. It might be argued, of course, that those other five nondiscriminating personality variables are not really virtues, but that argument flies in the face of abundant evidence regarding their adaptive qualities.

Recalling that analyses were conducted at the person level, a qualitative sketch of the sort of individual who belonged to this communal cluster may be illustrative of the archetype. Deidre (a pseudonym) is an example of one of these moral heroes whose personality was pervasively communal. Her life stories were replete with themes of communion, as is evident in the following excerpt:

> If somebody died in [the] emergency [room], I went. I was always the person that the [nurses] would say, "You go. You go and talk to the family." And I was always able to do that. And I very often cried with the family, put my arms around them, and cried with them. And that was hard on me, but the other [nurses] couldn't do it, and I could.

At the dispositional-traits level of personality description, Deidre scored high on the nurturance dimension ($z = +1.74$). Similarly, among her personal strivings, relational and generative themes were common (e.g., I typically try to "do at least one good deed daily, often anonymously," "draw others into a conversation," and "be an excellent role model for my children").

A second cluster identified in the analyses was characterized as "deliberative" because the four variables most strongly discriminating these exemplars centered around themes of independent, thoughtful personal growth: sophisticated epistemic and moral reasoning, goal motivation for self-development, and openness to experience at the level of dispositional traits. The motivational framing of moral action for these exemplars seems to be based on a reflective and perhaps principled approach to meaning making, enhanced social awareness, an openness to divergent perspectives, and a concern for self-understanding and personal growth. Like the communal cluster, this one differed from its comparison group not only on the variables that were particularly defining of the cluster but also on other aspects of personality (namely, themes of agency and redemption in life narratives). Like the communal cluster, the deliberative cluster does not evidence the complete array of virtues posited by the full-complement perspective. Although the claim of a single but narrower moral personality advanced by the single-algorithm perspective fails to predict the existence of both clusters simultaneously, the particular personality types advanced by some single-algorithm theorists (notably Kohlberg's principled reasoner and Gilligan's caring type) do help flesh out the nature of each cluster.

Samuel (a pseudonym) is characteristic of the type of individual who was categorized as belonging to the deliberative variety of moral personality. For example, his epistemology evidenced a mediated approach to authority, manifest through perspective-taking and pluralism:

> When it comes to the bigger issues in life, and religion and so on, one human being cannot see all the sides. So it's probably inevitable that some people see one side of a mountain, the other see another side of the mountain, and so on. And that one should be much more tolerant about. So there probably is no opinion that anybody ever held, unless they have bad intentions, is probably entirely without validity.

Similarly, Samuel's approach to moral issues shows the sophisticated nature of his moral reasoning. Here he was grappling with his personal dilemma of whether or not to obey a direct order that involved unjustifiably firing an employee:

> I had to have a set of principles. I have no idea whether my principles are better than yours, or comparable to them, or whatever. What I do know is that I can live with those principles and that they, more often than not, give me an answer that, when I look at it much later, I still like. That is to say, they are robust enough so that I can rely on them. [What do you mean by being principled?] I probably should say driven by principles rather than principled. That says it actually better. Because principled sometimes can mean rigid, it can mean hiding behind principles where principles need to be broken.

His personal strivings were replete with themes of self-development (e.g., I typically try to "live a life that has some meaning" and "worry less about things beyond my control"). And, finally, Samuel scored high on the dispositional trait of openness to experience ($z = +0.86$).

The third cluster identified in the analyses was characterized as "ordinary" because members of this cluster were almost uniformly commonplace in their personality, unremarkable relative both to other exemplars and to comparison participants (with the single exception being redemption themes). In the absence of evidence of much of anything exemplary about the personalities of the individuals in this group, dispositional personality seems to be an unlikely explanation of the source of their moral action. This particular finding accords with the situationalist perspective (Doris, 2002; Zimbardo, 2007a), which emphasizes the overwhelming power of instigating situational factors and contends that moral heroism is fundamentally banal.

This ordinary cluster is illustrated by Carl (a pseudonym), who was uniformly commonplace across all of the various personality variables. His banal personality notwithstanding, he exposed himself to considerable danger to rescue someone from a house fire. In fact, Carl relayed his belief about the ordinariness of his actions, that they were attributable to situational pull rather than to dispositional tendency:

> It wasn't a matter of expecting to be thanked by [the victim] or anything like that because I knew he was an alcoholic and he

probably wouldn't remember the next morning. ... But he was another human being and if there was a chance of helping him, then, you know, what the heck, why not? That was really it, nothing, not a lot of premeditation; when something like that happens, you run and grab things as quick as you can.

Before drawing an overly dismissive conclusion, one finding provides some solace to advocates of the single-algorithm perspective: The personality variable of redemption, although not particularly defining of any of the three clusters, nevertheless distinguished each of the exemplar clusters from its comparison group. In other words, a common theme among individuals who engaged in moral heroism of one kind or another was a tendency to frame transformative life events positively. This suggests that the ability or perhaps the intentional choice to construe some benefit or positive outcome from seemingly negative circumstances is an adaptive form of coping that undergirds moral action (McAdams, 2006). The single-algorithm perspective would predict that, were redemption that superintending virtue, it should occur in a variety of different contexts. The findings, at best, suggest that redemption may be a necessary but not sufficient virtue in the construction of the moral personality.

Taken together, the data from the present study seem to accord best with the varieties perspective with two important qualifiers. Whereas the varieties perspective predicts the diversity of moral personalities, the anticipation of one such personality type being the empty set (namely, ordinary) would be a considerable stretch. The situationalist perspective adds the important caveat that *some* heroic action can be elicited from ordinary people under the "right" circumstances. Before more fully reconciling the situationalist and varieties perspectives, we dispense with the no-longer-tenable claims of the full-complement and single-algorithm perspectives.

Moral Personality Pluralized

Why is the notion of a "one size fits all" ideal type of moral excellence simply not viable? Regardless of the exact formulation, numerous difficulties arise for the full-complement perspective, which holds the embodiment of the full set of virtues as a possible (or even imperative) achievement. One challenge concerns the formulation of the unity. Even after millennia of reflection, no consensus has

emerged regarding the particular virtues that should comprise this mandatory array, especially given the multitudinous virtues that have now been catalogued (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Further undermining the historical search for the full complement of virtues is the observation of "fad-like" tendencies in the exact definition of the set, manifest in suspicious and frequent variability over time and place (MacIntyre, 1981). Another challenge to the full-complement perspective charges the account with downright incoherence (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Walker & Pitts, 1998). Some virtues are in obvious tension with one another to the point of being pragmatically incompatible (e.g., forthrightness vs. loyalty, justice vs. benevolence).

Indeed, no moral hero on record exudes the full array of virtues; persons, exemplars included, have notable character flaws (consider even the well-known examples of Oskar Schindler, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi). Blum (1988) contended that "not all virtues can be combined within one person in all situations, and that moral excellence does not require possession of every virtue" (p. 201). Flanagan (1991) further argued that the notion of the full complement of virtues represents an unattainable ideal.

The single-algorithm perspective has similarly proved controversial. One notable point of contention concerns which principle or virtue will reign supreme. The present data proffer the possibility that the tendency to construe life events redemptively might be a contender for the superintending virtue or algorithm (McAdams, 2006). However, the difficulties in identifying the single governing virtue is illustrated by Gilligan's (1982) challenge to the dominion of the justice principle with her advocacy of an ethic of care. Similarly, Shweder's (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997) postulation of the culturally variable ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity renders the locus of the governing virtue ambiguous.

A second difficulty for the single-algorithm perspective lies in the observation that a single central virtue or algorithm does not seemingly provide a sufficiently encompassing depiction of moral excellence. Theories that advance a single virtue or principle engender a moral ideal that is far too thin and disembodied to describe the exemplary moral life (Wolf, 1982). For example, variants of moral rationality (the most widely purported single-algorithmic virtue) lack sufficient motivational compulsion (contrary to the Platonic dictum that to know the good is to do the good), having been found to be

inadequate in explaining moral action (Frimer & Walker, 2008). Despite the seeming appeal of the idea that people can possess the full array of moral virtues and despite the parsimony of the idea that a superintending principle or virtue can encompass the moral domain, such conceptions are at variance with the present philosophical analyses and empirical evidence.

Beyond the Banality of Heroism

Before allowing the "banality of heroism" to be relegated to the role of a "special case" of the varieties perspective, the situationalist perspective could advance the following attempt at rescue. Noting the correlational nature of the present data, the situationalist perspective could challenge the evidence supporting the causal claim of the varieties perspective. Do the present data support the notion of an *operative* moral personality, one that is causally implicated in moral action? The situationalist would argue that they do not. The challenge is made even more plausible by one feature of this study's methodology, namely, that the personality functioning of moral exemplars was assessed subsequent to their extraordinary action and the public recognition that such action garnered them.

The situationalist perspective could contend that it was contextual factors (not dispositional ones) that caused the heroic actions of the communal- and deliberative-cluster individuals and that the subsequent operation of self-perception processes (Bem, 1972) instigated a retrospective reformulation of aspects of attitudes and personality to bring them into alignment with behavior.[3] In this view, then, personality amounts to a kind of *documentary*, observing behavior and then scripting a corresponding disposition ex post facto. In contrast, all of the interactionalist perspectives maintain a dispositional conception that is more akin to an *operator's manual* that has personality, to a considerable extent, functionally guiding behavior.

What do the present data imply with reference to the documentary versus operator's manual distinction? Self-perception theory contends that individuals construe their personality to reflect behav-

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3. Such an explanation does not follow from Bem's own view of self-perception processes. Bem (1972) proffered the caveat that self-perception processes are most likely to operate when relatively unimportant questions about the self remain unanswered and when internal cues are minimal or ambiguous. Fundamental aspects of moral character hardly qualify as relatively inconsequential.

ioral manifestations. Following this argument, then, differences between exemplars and comparison participants should be more evident in the relatively transparent, self-report measures (such as the personality inventories) and less evident in more subtle assessments of personality (as tapped here by structural-developmental and life-narrative measures). However, individuals in the ordinary cluster evidenced no such differences on the self-descriptive labels, and for individuals in the communal and deliberative clusters, the opposite pattern was found, with typically stronger effects being evidenced on the epistemic, moral reasoning, and life-review interview measures than on the personality inventories (see Table 5). This suggests that the operative aspects of personality for moral functioning lie less in decontextualized personality traits and more in the complex patterns of self-continuity, meaning making, and identity that individuals actively formulate over time in the context of various psychosocial challenges. In sum, the "last stand" of the hegemonic idea of the banality of heroism fails to explain the present data.

Toward the Sources of Moral Excellence

An increasingly vocal chorus (Blasi, 2004; Frimer & Walker, 2008; Hardy & Carlo, 2005; McAdams, 2009; Walker & Frimer, 2009) recognizes that the construct of moral personality is integral to a complete understanding of moral motivation, and thus of moral action. The present analyses implicate the heterogeneity and contextually located (but not determined) nature of the moral life. Sometimes, relatively ordinary people engage in extraordinary action; other types of moral actions may only be achieved by persons of considerable virtue. Delineating the specific contextual features that support and elicit moral action remains important future work.

Although the present study was not geared to address this issue specifically, the data do provide one important insight regarding the sources of heroism. Recall that unlike the other two clusters of moral exemplars, the ordinary cluster was mostly comprised of brave awardees who were recognized for a single heroic rescue. In such emergency situations, situational factors often are particularly compelling; an exemplary moral personality may not be required for action. It should be recalled, however, that not all brave heroes have commonplace personalities: One third of the awardees for bravery

were found in the two other clusters (with distinctive personalities), and Walker and Frimer's (2007) variable-level analysis indicated that brave awardees, as a group, evidenced adaptive functioning on several personality variables.

Meanwhile, most of the exemplars in the other two clusters were caring awardees; their action may have been more dependent upon the development of a moral disposition. The ordinary person may be equipped for the singular moral act but underequipped for the "moral career." Certainly, it is not particularly surprising that a long-term pattern of behavior is more readily predicted by personality variables than is a single behavior in a context with strong situational cues (Epstein, 1983). Future research should consider the personality of people who evidence a long-term behavioral disposition for bravery in contrast to that of one-off heroes.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study serve to validate the notion of moral personality and, more particularly, to demonstrate its strikingly different varieties. Any such success was contingent on a comprehensive assessment of personality functioning, the inclusion of carefully matched comparison groups, and the use of a person-level analytic strategy. Nevertheless, some methodological limitations deserve acknowledgment. The scope and adequacy of the personality variables that went into the mix, as well as the composition of the sample, have some impact on the varieties of moral personality that were eventually derived. It is possible that our personality assessment failed to include some morally relevant variables that might have been especially informative on this issue. Likewise, brave and caring award recipients do not exhaust the domain of moral exemplarity. Other types of moral heroes include those focused on justice or environmental issues, those from other sociocultural contexts, and those who have not received public recognition. A different sampling of exemplars might have yielded additional or otherwise nuanced varieties of moral personality.

Asserting that moral personality is essential for some forms of moral action has an elitist bent, but in no way do we contend that such a moral personality is innate. Moral personality, in our view, is fundamentally a developmental achievement, and fostering its formation should be a primary concern for a civil society. Research

with child and adolescent samples might reveal qualitatively different or nascent clusters of moral personality. Thus, future work should consider the ontogenesis and processes implicated in the development of a moral personality. Such processes, for example, include the various aspects of early advantage that perhaps predispose individuals to moral action (McAdams et al., 1997), the fusion of self-understanding with moral concerns (Colby & Damon, 1992; Damon, 1984), and the adaptive integration of agentic and communal motivation (Walker & Frimer, 2007).

This study provided compelling evidence of different varieties of moral personality. Such findings serve to pluralize and thus broaden our conception of the moral domain beyond that engendered by a singular moral ideal. Furthermore, the present study reinforces the notion of a transactional interplay between contextual and dispositional factors in the moral life.

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