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Perceptions of Social Responsibilities in India and in the United States: Moral Imperatives or Personal Decisions?

Joan G. Miller, David M. Bersoff, and Robin L. Harwood
Yale University

Indian and American adults' and children's (N = 400) moral reasoning about hypothetical situations in which an agent failed to help someone experiencing either life-threatening, moderately serious, or minor need was compared. For ⅓ of Ss, the agent's relationship to the needy other was portrayed as that of parent; for another ⅓, as that of best friend; for the rest, as that of stranger. Indians tended to regard the failure to aid another in moral terms in all conditions. In contrast, Americans tended to view it in moral terms only in life-threatening cases or in cases of parents responding to the moderately serious needs of their children. The results imply that Indian culture forwards a broader and more stringent view of social responsibilities than does American culture. Discussion centers on theoretical implications of the various cultural, need, role, and developmental effects observed.

Moral development theorists have adopted similar formal definitions of morality (Gewirth, 1978; Kohlberg, 1971; Shweder, 1982; Turiel, 1983). In particular, moral concerns are regarded (a) as based on objective obligations, independent of social consensus or personal preference and (b) as legitimately subject to social regulation, rather than as the agent's own business. Moral rules may be seen to differ both from social conventions, which are viewed as legitimately regulated but not as based on objective obligations, and from matters of personal choice, which are viewed as neither based on objective obligations nor legitimately regulated.

In recent years, research on moral reasoning has focused increased attention on issues involving social responsiveness to the needs of others (e.g., Eisenberg, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Higgins, Power, & Kohlberg, 1984; Miller & Luthar, 1989). Questions remain, however, regarding whether social responsibilities[1] (a) are imbued with the formal characteristics of moral concerns noted earlier, (b) are based on the magnitude of the recipient's need or on their role relationship with the donor, or on both, and (c) are interpreted similarly across cultural, subcultural, and age groups. In assessing the impact of need and role on reasoning about social responsibilities, the present cross-cultural investigation of American and Indian children and adults addresses these questions.

In the view of Kohlberg and his colleagues (Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983), social responsibilities obtain full moral force only when they are linked to the preservation of justice or of individual rights. For example, it is argued, in the case of the Heinz dilemma (1981), that Heinz is morally obligated to save his dying wife in order to preserve her right to life. Like other moral duties, this requirement is seen as applying even to strangers, not merely to those who are known to or who are liked by the agent. In contrast, in situations that do not involve justice or rights-based concerns, responding to another's needs is regarded as a supererogatory rather than a fully moral obligation (Higgins et al., 1984; Kohlberg, 1971).

Various social-psychology theorists present an alternative stance in their claims that individuals are guided by norms of helping or of social responsibility (e.g., Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; Leeds, 1963; Schwartz, 1975). Mandating that individuals should help others who are needy or dependent, such norms are seen as applying even in cases in which the other's right to life is not at stake and cases in which the other is unknown to the agent. However, whereas research has suggested that these norms influence helping behavior (Macaulay & Berkowitz, 1970; Schwartz, 1975), their status as moral requirements is unclear. No effort has been made by theorists in this tradition to assess whether individuals imbue such norms with the formal properties characteristic of moral rules, such as those of being based on objective obligations and of representing legitimate regulations.

Forwarding a third view, Gilligan and her colleagues (Gilligan, 1977, 1982; Murphy & Gilligan, 1980) have maintained that interpersonal responsiveness and care constitute a distinct moral code. In contrast to the morality of justice and the norms of helping and of social responsibility, this morality is seen as relationship based. Thus, for example, a wife's obligation to be sensitive to her husband's welfare is viewed as deriving, in part, from their relationship. The distribution of such a moral code is assumed to be subgroup specific, with girls and women more prone than boys and men to hold the orientation. However,

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Joan G. Miller, Department of Psychology, Yale University, P.O. Box 11A Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-7447.

[1] The term *social responsibilities* is used in this article to refer to an individual's obligations to assist a needy other who is dependent on him or her, regardless of whether the individual has received prior assistance from the other.

some recent research among American adults has challenged the claim that interpersonal responsiveness and care are conceptualized in fully moral terms (Higgins et al., 1984; Kohlberg et al., 1983; Nunner-Winkler, 1984). This evidence suggests that although people judge that interpersonal responsiveness and care involve feelings of obligation, they also tend to regard the decision to perform behaviors of this type as personal in nature.

A recent cross-cultural study of Indian and American adult subjects (Miller & Luthar, 1989) provided a cultural perspective on these issues. Comparison was undertaken of American and Hindu Indian adults' reactions to hypothetical incidents in which an agent fails to meet the needs of a dependent other with whom they have an ongoing role relationship, such as a friend. It was demonstrated that whereas Indian subjects tend to categorize such behaviors in moral terms, American subjects tend to regard them as matters of personal choice. Evidence was presented to suggest that these differences arise from the contrasting moral codes emphasized in the two cultures, with Indians' judgments reflecting a moral code that tends to give priority to social duties and Americans' judgments reflecting a moral code that tends to give priority to individual rights (see also Shweder, Mahapahtra, & Miller, 1987).

Although it provided some indication that cultural differences exist in attitudes toward helping dependent others in need, the research left several issues unresolved. It was not clear, for example, whether subjects' interpretations of such issues were based on consideration of the dependent other's need or of the dependent other's role relationship to the agent, or of both. Also, in not sampling a wide range of need and role situations, the research gave little indication of the boundaries of the observed cross-cultural differences. Finally, in discriminating between moral and personal-choice orientations solely on the basis of whether it was legitimate to regulate the behaviors in question, the research may have failed to capture the complexity of Americans' conceptions of social responsibilities. As suggested by Kohlberg et al. (1983), although Americans' views of social responsibilities emphasize individual freedom of choice, they also appear to contain certain moral aspects, such as a notion of obligation.

The present study was designed to investigate these unresolved issues regarding the scope, universality, and moral status of social responsibilities, as well as to examine the development of views regarding social responsibilities among children. To address such concerns, a sample of American and Hindu Indian children and adults were questioned regarding their attitudes toward helping situations. These two groups were selected for comparison because their cultural beliefs and values differ in ways anticipated to affect their attitudes in this domain. Specifically, whereas American culture tends to emphasize individual autonomy and freedom of choice, Hindu Indian culture tends to place greater stress on interpersonal interdependence and social obligations (Dumont, 1970; Kakar, 1978; Lukes, 1973; O'Flaherty & Derrett, 1978).[2]

Attitudes toward social responsibilities were assessed by asking subjects to evaluate hypothetical scenarios, which varied both in magnitude of need and nature of the role relationships portrayed. Specifically, subjects were presented with a set of incidents in which an agent refused to help a dependent other who was experiencing either life-threatening, moderate, or minor need. Control incidents were also included to examine subjects' reactions to noncompliance with another's request in situations not involving need. The control incidents involved agents' refusals to engage in arbitrary unjust behavior or to override their own personal preferences. Role effects were analyzed by means of a between-subjects manipulation that portrayed the relationship between the agent and potential recipient as either (a) parent to a young son or daughter, (b) best friend, or (c) stranger. The roles of parent and best friend were selected as relationships that, in both cultures, entail strong affective bonds as well as ongoing patterns of social interchange (Argyle & Henderson, 1985; Kakar, 1978). In contrast, the relationship of stranger was sampled as one that entails no preexisting affective bonds or patterns of social interchange.

Finally, to provide a sensitive index of subjects' conceptions of social responsibilities, questions were included to assess whether subjects felt that each behavior was (a) governed by objective obligations above rule or law or (b) legitimately regulated, or both. These questions not only made it possible to differentiate among moral, conventional, and personal-choice orientations (Nucci, 1981; Turiel, 1983) but distinguished a fourth category. Referred to here as a *personal–moral* orientation, this category includes behaviors that are seen as governed by objective obligations but not as legitimately regulated.

We hypothesized that Indian subjects would more frequently categorize responsiveness to another's needs as an objective obligation and as legitimately regulated than would American subjects in the cases both of the moderate-need friend and stranger incidents and of all the minor-need incidents. In contrast, no cross-cultural differences on these dimensions were anticipated to occur in categorization either of the extreme-need incidents or of the moderate-need parental incidents. We also hypothesized that whereas Indian subjects' categorizations of the behaviors would remain constant across the various need and role conditions, American subjects' categorizations would vary with the magnitude of need and type of role relationship involved.

Specifically, Indian subjects were expected to view all of the incidents involving responsiveness to another's needs in moral terms (i.e., both as an objective obligation and as legitimately regulated). This effect among Indians was anticipated to reflect the general Hindu cultural emphasis on interdependence and mutual aid. In contrast, it was anticipated that American subjects more frequently would view the incidents in moral terms as the magnitude of the need involved increased and in situations involving parent–child, rather than friend or stranger, role relationships. In particular, it was expected that American subjects would view responsiveness to another's needs in fully moral terms only in cases involving extreme need or in moderate-need parental situations. These trends among Americans were anticipated to reflect the American cultural emphases on both beneficence and maximization of individual liberties.

[2] Throughout this article, references are made to global differences in beliefs and values between American and Hindu Indian cultural meaning systems. No attempt is made to characterize the subcultural variation in beliefs and values existing within each society, such as the differences between Hindu Indian and Moslem Indian subcultural orientations.

Within such a cultural framework, the desirability of meeting another's needs tends to be weighted against the undesirability of restricting individual freedom of choice.

No cross-cultural differences were hypothesized to occur in reasoning about the control incidents involving agents' refusals (a) to engage in arbitrary unjust behavior or (b) to override their own personal preferences in nonneed situations. In the former cases the agents' behaviors were expected to be categorized both as objective obligations and as legitimately regulated (i.e., in moral terms), whereas in the latter cases the agents' behaviors were expected to be categorized neither as objective obligations nor as legitimately regulated (i.e., as matters of personal choice).

Study 1

Method

Subjects

Data were collected from American subjects in New Haven, Connecticut, and from Indian subjects in Mysore, a city in Southern India. The sample (N = 360) included 60 American subjects at each of three age levels (college, sixth grade, and second grade) and 60 Hindu Indian subjects at each of the same three age levels. In the United States, college students were recruited from Yale University, and children were recruited from public schools in the New Haven area. In India, college students were recruited from major local colleges (i.e., the University of Mysore and the Regional College of Education), and children were recruited from Mysore schools, conducted in the local language of Kannada. In both cultures, interviews were held in empty classrooms at the educational institutions. An equal number of boys and men, and girls and women were interviewed in all subgroups.

As calculated, using a prestige scale developed by Nam, Powers, and their colleagues (Nam & Terrie, 1982; Powers, 1982), no significant differences were observed in the occupational status of heads of household in the American and Indian samples (M = 65.9). Most of the heads of household were employed in professional occupations, such as medicine, law, academics, or business management. Also, no significant age differences occurred between the American and Indian samples (college M = 20.1 years; sixth-grade M = 10.9 years; second-grade M = 7.0 years). The American sample tended to be of Christian or Jewish background and to maintain liberal social and religious orientations. Although less orthodox than most rural Hindu Indian populations, the Indian sample tended to maintain relatively traditional Hindu beliefs, values, and customs.

Procedures

Interviews with Americans were conducted in English by Yale graduate students. Interviews with Indians were conducted in the local language of Kannada by researchers from the Mysore area, who were native Kannada speakers. Recruited from the University of Mysore and the Regional College of Education, the Indian researchers were fluent in English, held master's degrees either in psychology or education, and had previous experience in psychological interviewing.

Several steps were taken to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the research materials in the Indian context. The protocols were examined for cultural suitability by local Indian scholars and were revised, as necessary, on the basis of their comments. The protocols were also modified, as necessary, on the basis of feedback obtained in pilot work with middle-class and lower-class child and adult populations in Mysore. Finally, two culture-specific versions of the experimental stimuli were prepared for use with the American and Indian samples, respectively. These versions differed only in minor details, such as in substituting Indian for American proper names (e.g., *Rekha* for *Rhonda*) or in referring to culturally appropriate items (e.g., *sari* for *dress*).

The Indian version of the research protocols was translated into Kannada by native Kannada speakers who were fluent in English. The translators were thoroughly instructed regarding the desired connotations of the terms to be used and were directed to use familiar words that would be readily comprehended by subjects. All translated materials were pilot-tested to ensure that they were easily understood. The materials were also subjected to back translation to guarantee that the meaning of the original English version of the forms was preserved.

Stimulus materials. The impact of need on subjects' perceptions of helping behavior was examined in a within-subjects manipulation. Nine stimulus items were prepared: Three concerned an agent refusing to help another person who was experiencing life-threatening need (e.g., the need for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation), three concerned an agent refusing to help another person who was experiencing moderate need (e.g., the need for psychological support before surgery), and three concerned an agent refusing to help another person who was experiencing minor need (e.g., the need for directions to a store). In each case (a) the other was portrayed as dependent on the agent for having his or her needs met in a satisfactory manner, (b) the other was described as explicitly requesting aid from the agent,[3] (c) the cost to the agent of fulfilling the other's request was portrayed as minimal, (d) the agent's motive for refusing the other's request was presented as uncompelling and selfish, and (e) the consequences to the other of the agent's refusal to help were described. Four control incidents were also constructed involving nonneed situations: Two control incidents portrayed agents refusing a person's request to commit an arbitrary unjust act (e.g., to destroy someone else's garden), whereas the remaining two portrayed agents refusing a person's request to override their own personal preferences (e.g., to read a book about sports when they preferred to read a book about current events). An outline of all of the incidents appears in the Appendix.[4]

As a between-subjects manipulation, three versions of each incident were created by varying the role relationship of the hypothetical individuals portrayed in the scenarios: (a) One version portrayed parents refusing the requests of their 8–12-year-old children; (b) one version portrayed adults refusing the requests of their same-sex best friends; and (c) one version portrayed adults refusing the requests of strangers, who were of the same age and sex as themselves. In this latter condition, subjects were told to assume that the stranger was nonthreatening and posed no danger to the agent. This information was included in order to prevent suspicion or fear of strangers from influencing subjects' judgments.

Each of the three versions of an incident was presented to one third of the subjects in every age/cultural subgroup. An example of the type of incident used in the study is the following:

(*Low Need Incident—Friend Condition*):

> Amy is a 30 year old woman who likes to draw. One day, she found out that an art store, which was going out of business, was having a big sale. Amy wanted to go to the sale to see if she could get any good bargains there. The art store was on Banyon Street—a street on the other side of town. Amy did not know where Banyon Street was.
>
> So Amy asked her best friend Lisa for directions to Banyon Street. Amy told Lisa that she wanted to get to the sale early, while

[3] Two exceptions to this rule occurred in cases in which the needy other was unconscious. (a) In the incident involving someone's requiring blood during emergency surgery, a nurse made the explicit request for aid. (b) In the incident involving not administering mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, no explicit request for aid was made because no other persons were present.

[4] Explanations of the concepts *mouth-to-mouth resuscitation* and *migraine headache* were included in the incidents read to child subjects.

there were still lots of art supplies left to buy. But Lisa was busy reading an exciting book and did not want to be interrupted. So Lisa refused to give her friend directions to Banyon Street. Because of this, by the time Amy was finally able to get to the art store, there were few art supplies left.

Assessment of rule understandings. A series of probes was devised to assess subjects' understandings of the incidents under consideration. These probes were similar in form to ones developed by Turiel and his colleagues (Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987) to be easily comprehensible by young children. The questions tapped subjects' evaluations of the acceptability and desirability of the behaviors portrayed, as well as subjects' judgments concerning whether the behaviors were (a) governed by objective obligations or (b) legitimately regulated, or both. To provide a check on the experimental division of incidents into the contrasting need categories, assessment was also undertaken of subjects' perceptions of the magnitude of the unmet need experienced by the dependent other in each scenario. The various measures are described next, in order of their administration.

In the initial part of the session, each incident was read to subjects, followed by three interview questions. The first two questions tapped subjects' evaluations of the behavior. Specifically, the first question requested that subjects indicate and explain whether, in their opinion, the agent's behavior was all right or not all right. The second question requested that subjects evaluate the desirability of the agent's action on a 9-point scale, ranging from *extremely undesirable* (1) to *extremely desirable* (9), with a neutral midpoint (5). To promote comprehension, children were requested to give their ratings on a visual form of this scale, consisting of a series of progressively frowning or smiling faces.

The third question tapped subjects' judgments concerning whether the behaviors under consideration are governed by objective obligations. Two versions of this question were prepared. For the control incidents involving an agent's refusal to engage in arbitrary unjust behavior, subjects were asked whether agents are obligated to refuse to undertake the action requested even if they want to undertake it (e.g., "If people want to tear down other people's gardens in situations like this, do you think they still have an obligation to refuse to tear them down anyway?"). In contrast, for the remaining incidents subjects were asked whether agents are obligated to undertake the action requested even if they do not want to undertake it (e.g., "If people do not want to give other people directions in situations like this, do you think they still have an obligation to give them directions anyway?"). In all cases, subjects were told that the question referred to an objective obligation (i.e., "more than an obligation that exists just because of a rule or law").

Although the concept of objectivity is abstract, past research has shown that this concept (i.e., nonrule contingency) is readily understood by children as young as preschool age (Smetana, 1981) and by at least some non-Western cultural populations (Song, Smetana, & Kim, 1987). For example (Nucci, 1981), it has been demonstrated that elementary-school-age children can discriminate between behaviors on the basis of whether they are "wrong, regardless of the presence or absence of a governing rule."

The final portion of the interview consisted of two sorting tasks. These were undertaken using 3-in. × 5-in. (7.5 cm × 12.5 cm) index cards that contained descriptive summaries of each incident. The following summary, for instance, was presented on the card for the low-need friend incident mentioned previously:

> "A 30 year old woman wants directions to an art store. Her best friend is busy reading an exciting book and so SHE REFUSES TO GIVE THE WOMAN DIRECTIONS TO THE STORE".

The first sorting task assessed subjects' perceptions of whether each behavior (underlined) is legitimately regulated. In this procedure, subjects were asked to group each card under one of the following two descriptions: (a) "It is alright to try to stop or punish, in some way, a person who acts like this" or (b) "This is the person's own business. It is not alright to try to stop or punish, in some way, a person who acts like this."[5] It was explained to subjects that "stop or punish" included not only legal punishment but also nonlegal sanctions, such as shunning or snubbing. Sorting a card under the first category indicated that the subject regarded the action under consideration as legitimately regulated. In contrast, sorting a card under the second category indicated that the subject viewed the action under consideration in personal terms.

The second sorting task and final procedure of the study provided a check on the experimental manipulation of need. The cards were reshuffled, and subjects were requested to group them according to the level of need experienced by the dependent other in each scenario. The sorting was done in terms of the following four need categories: "no need (0)," "minor need (1)," "moderate need (2)," and "extreme need (3)."

Data coding. Responses were coded into the various conceptual categories on the basis of subjects' replies to the probes regarding whether the behavior under consideration is governed by an obligation above rule or law, is legitimately regulated, or is both: (a) Behaviors regarded both as governed by an objective obligation and as legitimately regulated were considered moral issues, (b) behaviors regarded as not governed by an objective obligation yet legitimately regulated were considered social conventions, (c) behaviors regarded as governed by an objective obligation but not legitimately regulated were considered personal–moral concerns, and (d) behaviors regarded as neither governed by an objective obligation nor legitimately regulated were considered matters of personal choice.

A five-category coding scheme was constructed to code subjects' open-ended explanations for why they regarded particular behaviors as either all right or not all right. The first category, *welfare considerations,* included references (a) to the needs of the other person (e.g., "Her daughter was very frightened about the operation"), (b) to the fact that the agent did not use resources that he or she had to render help (e.g., "She had plenty of aspirin so she could have given some"), and (c) to the selfishness or unkindness of the agent's failure to help (e.g., "It's a selfish thing to do"). The second category, *personal-choice considerations,* encompassed references (a) to the personal discretion of the agent (e.g., "It's up to her to decide"), (b) to minimal need on the part of the person requesting help (e.g., "It wasn't very important to go sightseeing"), (c) to the other's responsibility for his or her own problems (e.g., "He should bring enough money if he wants to see a movie"), and (d) to the absence of an obligation to render help (e.g., "You don't have to give someone directions, if you don't want to"). The third category, *unjust/harmful,* contained references to the unfairness of the agent's action ("It's unfair to take something without paying for it") and to damages resulting from the agent's action (e.g., "It ruined his garden"). The fourth category, *role duty,* comprised references to obligations deriving from the agent's role status (e.g., "It was part of her obligation as a mother to help"). Finally, the fifth category, *other,* included references to any other factors not accounted for earlier.

Reliability in applying the coding scheme was obtained between an American researcher from New Haven and a Hindu Indian researcher from Mysore on a total of 90 responses, sampled from each cultural/age/role/incident-type condition. Assessed in terms of Cohen's kappa,

[5] The legitimate regulation measure was adapted specifically from a probe developed by Nucci (1981) to assess reasoning about personal issues. The Nucci procedure entailed presenting subjects with a set of behaviors and requiring them to sort into a pile those behaviors "which should be considered the agent's own business or should not have a rule governing them." In the present study, the measure was modified by providing a label for the nonselected alternative (i.e., by providing a definition of what it means for a behavior not to be the agent's own business).

reliability reached .92, with a range of from .89 for the category of role duty to .96 for the category of personal-choice considerations.

Results

The data were analyzed by means of repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs), with an arcsine transformation applied to proportion scores. The dependent variables in the ANOVAs were calculated using mean scores for each of the five types of incidents contrasted (i.e., extreme need, moderate need, minor need, avoidance of injustice, and personal preference). The Scheffé procedure was used to obtain post hoc comparisons of individual means. Preliminary examination revealed no significant effects of sex on subjects' responses; therefore, sex was not included as a variable in subsequent analyses.

Perceptions of Need Portrayed in Stimuli

To determine whether subjects' perceptions of the stimuli were in accordance with the experimentally constructed need divisions, a 2 × 3 × 3 × 5 (Culture × Age × Role × Incident Type) ANOVA was performed on subjects' need sortings of the incidents. This analysis revealed significant main effects of culture, $F(1, 340) = 14.58$, $p < .01$, age, $F(2, 340) = 8.71$, $p < .01$, and incident type, $F(4, 1{,}360) = 6{,}909.67$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of incident type and culture, $F(4, 1{,}360) = 16.11$, $p < .01$, incident type and age, $F(8, 1{,}360) = 2.49$, $p < .01$, and incident type and role, $F(8, 1{,}360) = 2.32$, $p < .05$.

Post hoc analyses revealed that at all ages in both cultures, subjects discriminated between the various levels of need in the expected ways. In particular, the extreme-need incidents tended to be sorted into the extreme-need category ($M = 2.98$) and were judged to be significantly higher in need than were the moderate-need incidents ($p < .01$). These latter incidents, in turn, tended to be sorted into the moderate-need category ($M = 2.07$) and were judged significantly higher in need than were the minor-need incidents ($p < .01$). Also, in accord with the experimental manipulation, the minor-need incidents tended to be grouped in the minor-need category ($M = 1.16$) and were viewed as significantly higher in need than were the two sets of control incidents involving either avoidance of injustice ($M = .04$) or personal-preference considerations ($M = .09$, $p < .01$). These control incidents, as designed, were appraised as non-need situations.

Various cultural, age, and role effects, however, were also observed. Specifically, Indians perceived both the moderate-need incidents and the minor-need incidents (moderate $M = 2.16$; minor $M = 1.26$) as significantly higher in need than did Americans (moderate $M = 1.98$; minor $M = 1.05$; $p < .01$). Also, in both cultures second graders ($M = 2.14$) and sixth graders ($M = 2.10$) viewed the moderate-need incidents as significantly higher in need than did college students ($M = 1.97$; $p < .01$), and second graders ($M = 1.25$) viewed the minor-need incidents as significantly higher in need than did college students ($M = 1.06$; $p < .01$). Finally, all of the subjects in both cultures viewed the personal-preference incidents as significantly higher in need in the case of parent–child relationships ($M = .17$) than in the case of friendship relationships ($M = .06$) or stranger relationships ($M = .07$; $p < .05$).

In summary, the results indicate that the experimental stimuli were perceived in the intended ways, in that all subgroups judged them to embody four distinct degrees of need: extreme need, moderate need, minor need, and no need. The only unanticipated results occurred in the interactions of perceived need with culture, age, and role. To control for these interactions, the variable of perceived need was included as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.

Evaluations of Incidents

To compare subjects' evaluations of the incidents, a 2 × 3 × 3 × 5 (Culture × Age × Role × Incident Type) ANOVA was performed on subjects' ratings of incident desirability. (As noted in the previous paragraph, in this and all subsequent analyses, perceived need was included as a covariate.) The analysis revealed significant main effects of role, $F(2, 338) = 67.85$, $p < .01$, and of incident type, $F(4, 1{,}355) = 791.63$, $p < .01$, as well as a significant interaction of incident type and role, $F(8, 1{,}355) = 7.13$, $p < .01$.

Post hoc comparisons indicated that desirability ratings differed significantly among each type of incident ($p < .01$). The extreme-need incidents were rated as most undesirable ($M = 1.36$), followed in turn by the moderate-need incidents ($M = 2.44$) and finally by the minor-need incidents ($M = 3.41$). In contrast, the personal-preference incidents were viewed as somewhat desirable ($M = 6.45$), and the avoidance of injustice incidents were viewed as extremely desirable ($M = 8.27$). In each case, the incidents were rated as more undesirable in the parent and friend conditions ($M = 4.22$) than in the stranger condition ($M = 4.72$).

The results demonstrate striking commonalities in subjects' evaluations of incident desirability. No significant cultural or age differences occurred in subjects' evaluations of the incidents.

Categorization of Behaviors

Preliminary frequency analyses revealed that subjects rarely used the social convention category (with an average usage of only 2% in any culture/age/role/incident-type condition). The personal–moral category was also found to be content and culture specific. In particular, the category tended to be used only in relation to the incidents involving nonresponsiveness to another's needs and only by Americans.[6]

On the basis of these findings, a decision was made to analyze subjects' categorizations of the incidents in two ways: (a) To assess the specific locus of any cross-cultural differences in moral reasoning, analyses were performed separately on the two criteria examined (i.e., whether the given behavior is governed by an objective obligation and the legitimacy of regulating the

[6] In regard to the control incidents involving avoidance of injustice, the personal–moral category was used, on average, by 4% of the Americans in each age/role condition and by no Indians. In regard to the control incidents involving personal preference considerations, the personal–moral category was used, on average, by 2% of the Americans and by 1% of the Indians in each age/role condition. No Indian used the personal–moral category in relation to the need incidents.

Table 1
Percentage of Subjects Categorizing Behaviors as Objective Obligations

Incident type	Parent (to young child)			Friend			Stranger		
	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College
				India					
Extreme need	98	100	98	98	98	100	100	100	100
Moderate need	100	98	97	100	100	100	100	97	100
Minor need	97	98	92	98	100	93	95	97	73
Avoidance of injustice	100	98	100	100	98	100	100	100	100
Personal preference	15	5	10	0	8	8	0	3	0
				United States					
Extreme need	100	100	100	98	100	97	97	95	97
Moderate need	95	94	95	78	92	65	65	53	47
Minor need	75	63	44	58	85	33	53	47	23
Avoidance of injustice	100	95	100	98	100	98	98	100	100
Personal preference	3	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	0

given behavior); and (b) to provide descriptive information regarding American subjects' usage of the personal–moral category, comparison was undertaken of Americans' categorizations of the need incidents in personal–moral, as contrasted with moral or personal-choice, terms.

Perceptions of objective obligations. To examine subjects' views of objective obligation, a 2 × 3 × 3 × 5 (Culture × Age × Role × Incident Type) ANOVA was performed on subjects' judgments concerning whether the behaviors under consideration are governed by obligations above rule or law. Results revealed significant main effects of culture, $F(1, 339) = 67.76$, $p < .01$; age $F(2, 339) = 7.74$, $p < .01$; role, $F(2, 339) = 20.46$, $p < .01$, and incident type, $F(4, 1{,}359) = 1{,}592.15$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of culture and age, $F(2, 339) = 4.35$, $p < .05$, culture and role, $F(2, 339) = 9.18$, $p < .01$, age and role, $F(4, 339) = 3.04$, $p < .05$, incident type and culture, $F(4, 1{,}359) = 81.13$, $p < .01$, incident type and age, $F(8, 1{,}359) = 9.85$, $p < .01$, incident type and role, $F(8, 1{,}359) = 9.74$, $p < .01$, incident type, culture, and role, $F(8, 1{,}359) = 8.91$, $p < .01$, and of incident type, culture, age, and role $F(16, 1{,}359) = 1.88$, $p < .05$. The percentage of subjects categorizing the behaviors as objective obligations appears in Table 1.

The results, it may be seen, are in accord with the hypothesized tendency of the Indian subjects to categorize responsiveness to another's needs as objective obligations more frequently than do the American subjects in the cases of the moderate-need friend and stranger incidents and of all the minor-need incidents. No cross-cultural differences occurred in categorization either of the extreme-need incidents or of the moderate-need parental incidents. In contrast, Indians, more frequently than Americans ($p < .01$), categorized all the other need incidents as objective obligations.

As hypothesized, need and role had marked impact only on Americans' judgments. In terms of need effects, Americans more frequently classified behaviors as objective obligations as the need portrayed increased: (a) In the friend and stranger conditions, extreme-need behaviors were most frequently classified as objective obligations, followed in turn by moderate-need behaviors and finally by minor-need behaviors ($p < .01$); and (b) in the parent condition, both extreme-need and moderate-need behaviors were more frequently classified as objective obligations than were minor-need behaviors ($p < .01$). In terms of role effects, under the moderate- and minor-need conditions American second graders and college students classified parental behaviors most frequently as objective obligations, followed in turn by friend behaviors and finally by stranger behaviors ($p < .01$). By comparison, American sixth graders showed a contrasting pattern of role effects, with friend behaviors considered objective obligations as frequently as parental behaviors in the moderate-need condition and more frequently than parental behaviors in the minor-need condition ($p < .01$). Like second graders and college students, however, sixth graders less frequently categorized stranger behaviors as objective obligations than either parental or friend behaviors in the moderate- and minor-need conditions ($p < .01$). Only one localized effect of need and role occurred among Indians: Indian college students classified the minor-need stranger incidents as objective obligations less frequently than they did the other need incidents ($p < .01$).

Results observed in the control conditions conformed to the predicted patterns: Virtually all of the subjects classified the avoidance of injustice incidents as objective obligations, whereas virtually no subjects categorized the personal-preference incidents as objective obligations.

In terms of developmental effects, the responses of American children tended to differ from those of American college students in the same direction as the responses of Indians differed from those of Americans. Whereas no developmental differences occurred in evaluation either of the extreme-need behaviors or of the moderate-need parental behaviors, American children tended to categorize all the other need behaviors as objective obligations more frequently than did American college students. This age trend followed a linear pattern in the parental (minor-need) and stranger (moderate- and minor-need) conditions; second graders classified the breaches as objective obligations most frequently, followed in turn by sixth graders and fi-

Table 2
Percentage of Subjects Categorizing Behaviors as Legitimately Regulated

Incident type	Parent (to young child)			Friend			Stranger		
	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College
				India					
Extreme need	98	100	98	98	98	100	100	100	100
Moderate need	100	98	97	100	100	100	100	97	100
Minor need	97	98	92	98	100	93	95	97	73
Avoidance of injustice	100	98	100	100	98	100	100	100	100
Personal preference	15	5	8	0	5	8	0	0	0
				United States					
Extreme need	100	100	97	87	93	92	87	87	92
Moderate need	79	67	70	42	37	42	32	30	40
Minor need	47	30	18	22	22	18	32	12	22
Avoidance of injustice	100	85	95	93	90	92	100	95	95
Personal preference	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

nally by college students ($p < .01$). In contrast, in the friend (moderate- and minor-need) condition, a curvilinear age trend was observed; sixth graders classified the behaviors as objective obligations most frequently, followed in turn by second graders and finally by college students ($p < .01$). Among Indians, the only significant age effect occurred in the minor-need stranger condition; children classified these behaviors as objective obligations more frequently than did college students ($p < .01$).

In summary, subjects' perceptions of the behaviors as objective obligations (one aspect of a moral orientation) conformed to the predicted patterns. Specifically Indians more frequently viewed responsiveness to another's needs as an objective obligation than did Americans in all cases involving minor need and under the stranger and friend role conditions in cases involving moderate need. By comparison, no cross-cultural differences occurred in reasoning about extreme-need situations or about moderate-need situations involving parent–child role relationships. Also, as expected, whereas Americans' judgments varied markedly with need and role, Indians' judgments tended to remain constant across the various need and role conditions.

Perceptions of legitimate regulation. To examine subjects' views of legitimate regulation, a 2 × 3 × 3 × 5 (Culture × Age × Role × Incident Type) ANOVA was undertaken on subjects' judgments concerning whether the behaviors under consideration are legitimately regulated. Results revealed significant main effects of culture, $F(1, 339) = 456.33$, $p < .01$; role, $F(2, 339) = 11.72$, $p < .01$, and incident type, $F(4, 1359) = 1{,}147.46$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of culture and role, $F(2, 339) = 8.62$, $p < .01$, incident type and culture, $F(4, 1359) = 199.20$, $p < .01$, incident type and age, $F(8, 1359) = 2.71$, $p < .01$, incident type and role $F(8, 1359) = 5.18$, $p < .01$, and of incident type, culture, and role, $F(8, 1359) = 8.49$, $p < .01$. The percentage of subjects categorizing the behaviors as legitimately regulated appears in Table 2.

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 reveals that a higher percentage of Americans regarded the need behaviors as objective obligations than viewed them as legitimately regulated. In contrast, all of the Indians who categorized the need behaviors as objective obligations also categorized them as legitimately regulated. These contrasting patterns reflect the phenomenon, revealed in the earlier frequency analysis, that only Americans categorized the need incidents in personal–moral terms (i.e., as objective obligations but not as legitimately regulated).

Cross-cultural differences in perceptions of legitimate regulation were more extensive than those observed in perceptions of objective obligation. With the exception of extreme-need parental situations, Indians, more frequently than Americans ($p < .01$), regarded all of the need situations as legitimately regulated. Results also revealed that need and role again had greater impact on Americans' than on Indians' judgments. Americans most frequently regarded extreme-need incidents as legitimately regulated, followed in turn by moderate-need incidents and finally by low-need incidents ($p < .01$). Also, Americans more frequently classified parental-need incidents as legitimately regulated than they did either friend- or stranger-need incidents ($p < .01$). In contrast, need and role again had only one effect on Indians' judgments, that is, college students less frequently viewed stranger minor-need incidents as legitimately regulated than all other need incidents ($p < .01$).

Judgments regarding the control incidents conformed to the study predictions. Virtually all of the subjects viewed the avoidance of injustice incidents, but not the personal-preference incidents, as legitimately regulated. Together with the results observed in perceptions of objective obligation, these findings indicate that as hypothesized, the avoidance of injustice incidents were viewed in moral terms, whereas the personal preference incidents were categorized as matters of personal choice.

Finally, only one age effect occurred in perceptions of legitimate regulation. In both cultures, children, more frequently than college students ($p < .01$), viewed minor-need incidents as legitimately regulated.

In summary, the results indicate that extensive cross-cultural differences occurred in perceptions of legitimate regulation. With the exception of extreme-need parental incidents, Indians, more frequently than Americans, viewed all of the need

incidents as legitimately regulated. Also, Americans' judgments again varied more by need and role than did those of Indians.

In conjunction with the findings on perceptions of objective obligation, the findings on perceptions of legitimate regulation clarify the locus of cross-cultural commonalities and differences in moral reasoning. In particular, the results indicate that cross-cultural differences were more extensive in judgments of legitimate regulation than in judgments of objective obligation. They also indicate that it was only in the case of extreme-need parental breaches that Indians and Americans fully agreed in viewing the need incidents in moral terms (i.e., as both objective obligations and as legitimately regulated). In contrast, in the case of friend and stranger extreme-need breaches and of parental moderate-need breaches, Indians and Americans agreed in their perceptions of the behaviors as objective obligations but differed in their perceptions of whether the behaviors are legitimately regulated. In the remaining need and role conditions, Indians' and Americans' categorizations differed along both the dimensions of objective obligation and legitimate regulation.

Americans' usage of the personal–moral category. To compare Americans' usage of the personal–moral category with their usage of the moral and personal choice categories, a 3 × 3 × 3 × 3 (Age × Role × Incident Type × Rule Category) ANOVA was undertaken on the proportion of Americans categorizing the need incidents in moral, personal–moral, or personal-choice terms.[7] Results revealed a significant main effect of rule category, $F(2, 340) = 93.56$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of rule category and age, $F(4, 340) = 5.30$, $p < .01$; rule category and incident type, $F(4, 680) = 189.19$, $p < .01$; rule category and role, $F(4, 340) = 12.70$, $p < .01$; rule category, incident type, and age, $F(8, 680) = 4.67$, $p < .01$; and rule category, incident type, and role, $F(8, 680) = 6.36$, $p < .01$.

Table 3 contrasts Americans' usage of the moral, personal–moral, and personal-choice categories. In terms of role effects, in the moderate-need condition the moral category tended to be used most frequently in relation to parental breaches, and the personal-choice category tended to be used most frequently in relation to stranger breaches, whereas the personal–moral category tended to be used most frequently in relation to friend breaches ($p < .01$). Similar role effects were observed in the minor-need condition; the personal-choice category was used most frequently in relation to stranger breaches, and the personal–moral category was used most frequently in relation to friend breaches ($p < .01$). In terms of need effects, the moral category tended to be used most frequently in relation to extreme-need breaches, and the personal-choice category tended to be used most frequently in regard to minor-need breaches ($p < .01$). In contrast, the personal–moral category was used as frequently in relation to moderate-need breaches as in relation to minor-need breaches. Finally, results revealed that the personal–moral category tended to be used more by children than by college students, whereas the reverse developmental trend was observed in usage of the personal-choice category ($p < .01$).

In summary, the personal–moral category tended to be used most frequently in relation to breaches falling in an intermediate range between those categorized as moral issues and those categorized as matters of personal choice. Americans used the category most frequently in relation to friend behaviors and to behaviors in an intermediate range of need extremity.

Justification Responses

Finally, to compare the factors mentioned by subjects in explaining why they evaluated the incidents as all right or not all right, a 2 × 3 × 3 × 5 × 5 (Culture × Age × Role × Incident Type × Justification) ANOVA was undertaken on subjects' justification responses, which had previously been scored in terms of the five coding categories (i.e., welfare, personal-choice considerations, harmful, role duty, and other). This analysis revealed significant main effects of incident type, $F(4, 1291) = 34.92$, $p < .01$, and of justification, $F(4, 1292) = 2{,}945.36$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of incident type and culture, $F(4, 1291) = 3.54$, $p < .01$; justification and culture, $F(4, 1292) = 100.63$, $p < .01$; justification and age, $F(8, 1292) = 17.23$, $p < .01$; justification and role, $F(8, 1292) = 15.30$, $p < .01$; justification, culture, and role, $F(8, 1292) = 5.78$, $p < .01$; justification, age, and role, $F(16, 1292) = 3.95$, $p < .01$; justification and incident type, $F(16, 5168) = 2{,}880.90$, $p < .01$; justification, incident type, and culture, $F(16, 5168) = 57.27$, $p < .01$; justification, incident type, and age, $F(32, 5168) = 8.66$, $p < .01$; justification, incident type, and role, $F(32, 5168) = 9.89$, $p < .01$; justification, incident type, culture, and role, $F(32, 5168) = 5.40$, $p < .01$; justification, incident type, age, and role, $F(64, 5168) = 2.41$, $p < .01$; and of justification, incident type, culture, age, and role, $F(64, 5168) = 1.94$, ($p < .01$).

Post hoc comparisons[8] revealed that cultural differences in references to welfare tended to be in the same direction as those observed in perceptions of objective obligation. Specifically, with the exception of the parent moderate-need condition among college students, Indians made greater reference to welfare considerations than did Americans in the cases of all the moderate- and all the minor-need breaches ($p < .01$). The reverse pattern of cross-cultural differences was observed among college students in the extreme-need parent and friend conditions ($p < .01$), an effect that arose from approximately one fifth of Indian college students' justifications in these conditions referring to role duty.[9] Subjects' references to welfare considerations are presented in Table 4.

As may be seen in Table 5, effects observed in reference to

[7] The social convention category was omitted from this analysis because of its extremely low frequency of usage. Also, as noted earlier, because the personal–moral category was never used by Indians in regard to the need incidents and rarely used by either cultural group in relation to the control incidents, this analysis was undertaken only on Americans' categorizations of the need incidents.

[8] Because of its relatively low frequency of usage, no post hoc analyses were conducted on the "other" justification category. The "other" category was used on average by only 2% of the subjects in any culture/age/role/incident-type condition, with a frequency of usage no greater than 4% in any culture/age/role/incident-type condition.

[9] Cross-cultural differences in references to role duty occurred only among adults. Specifically, Indian adults made significantly greater reference to role duty than did American adults in the extreme-need parent (India $M = 22\%$; U.S. $M = 11\%$) and friend (India $M = 21\%$; U.S. $M = 9\%$) conditions, as well as in the minor-need parent condition (India $M = 26\%$; U.S. $M = 8\%$; $p < .01$).

Table 3
Percentage of Moral, Personal–Moral, and Personal-Choice Responses Used by Americans in Relation to Need Incidents

Need incident type	Parent (to young child)			Friend			Stranger		
	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College
Extreme need									
Moral	100	100	97	87	93	92	87	87	92
Personal–moral	0	0	3	11	7	5	10	8	5
Personal choice	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
Moderate need									
Moral	79	67	68	41	37	42	32	30	37
Personal–moral	16	27	27	37	55	23	33	23	10
Personal choice	5	6	3	21	8	35	30	45	50
Minor need									
Moral	47	30	18	18	22	18	31	12	18
Personal–moral	28	33	26	40	63	15	22	35	5
Personal choice	23	33	55	38	12	67	46	50	72

personal-choice considerations tended to be the inverse of those occurring in reference to welfare considerations. Specifically, with the exception of the parent moderate-need condition among sixth graders and college students, Americans made greater reference to personal-choice considerations than did Indians in the cases of all moderate- and all minor-need breaches ($p < .01$). Also, as expected, all of the subjects justified their reactions to the personal-preference control incidents almost exclusively by reference to personal-choice considerations.

No significant group differences occurred in reference to the category of unjust/harmful. All of the subjects used this category almost exclusively in relation to the avoidance of injustice control incidents (overall $M = 93\%$).

Discussion

Support was obtained for the study hypotheses regarding cross-cultural differences in the conceptualization of social responsibilities. Indians more frequently viewed responsiveness to another's needs as an objective obligation than did Americans in all cases that involved minor needs or the moderately serious needs of friends or strangers. Cross-cultural differences in perceptions of legitimate regulation were observed to be even more pervasive—with Indians more frequently viewing behaviors as legitimately regulated than did Americans also in cases involving the moderately serious needs of children or the extreme needs of friends or strangers.

Results call into question an interpretation of such cross-cultural differences on the basis of variation in subjects' evaluations of the behaviors under consideration. The cross-cultural effects were found to occur even when controlling for differences in subjects' perceptions of the need portrayed in the stimuli. Also, the finding that Indians and Americans agreed in their ratings of the desirability of the behaviors indicates that the behaviors were equally salient to both cultural groups.

Table 4
Percentage of Subjects' Justifications Referring to Welfare Considerations

Incident type	Parent (to young child)			Friend			Stranger		
	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College
				India					
Extreme need	97	96	78	95	95	79	98	98	96
Moderate need	99	99	73	95	84	88	99	94	94
Minor need	96	99	69	96	91	73	95	92	75
Avoidance of injustice	3	9	7	3	6	4	8	4	20
Personal preference	12	5	4	0	3	3	0	0	0
				United States					
Extreme need	93	96	89	93	91	88	100	97	94
Moderate need	88	93	72	79	73	73	70	69	55
Minor need	68	49	48	58	73	65	54	46	28
Avoidance of injustice	1	8	1	1	5	13	4	14	14
Personal preference	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5
Percentage of Subjects' Justifications Referring to Personal-Choice Considerations

Incident type	Parent (to young child)			Friend			Stranger		
	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College	Second grade	Sixth grade	College
				India					
Extreme need	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moderate need	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Minor need	0	0	5	0	0	6	5	3	22
Avoidance of injustice	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Personal preference	88	95	93	100	97	95	100	100	99
				United States					
Extreme need	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	2
Moderate need	7	3	2	13	12	7	26	29	42
Minor need	24	45	42	32	17	18	43	54	69
Avoidance of injustice	3	0	7	1	1	3	1	7	4
Personal preference	95	99	93	97	98	100	100	100	95

Indian subjects' reasoning about the control incidents provides evidence that the results also cannot be explained in terms of a general inclination on the part of Indians to be compliant to others' requests or in terms of cultural differences in comprehension of the probes. Indians' tendencies to judge that it is morally obligatory to refuse unjust requests demonstrate that they regard conforming indiscriminantly to any demand made by another as undesirable. Equally, the absence of cross-cultural differences in response to the personal-preference control incidents provides evidence that the objective obligation and legitimate regulation probes were understood in similar ways in both cultures. In particular, no age or cultural differences occurred in the tendencies to categorize the personal-preference incidents as matters of personal choice (i.e., as neither governed by objective obligations nor legitimately regulated) and to refer to personal-choice considerations in evaluating these incidents. Such findings indicate that Indians possess a concept of personal choice, which they were able to express through their responses to the probes.

Study 2

Although the results of the first study conformed to the patterns predicted on the basis of the contrasting cultural beliefs and values emphasized in the United States and India, it also appears possible that they may reflect socioeconomic effects. Living in a more technologically developed society, Americans generally have greater access to economic resources than do Indians. They thus may experience less functional need for a social system that promotes mutual interdependence than do Indians and, thereby, may be less prone to regard social responsibilities in moral terms (Muir & Weinstein, 1962).

To evaluate this alternative explanation of the results, the research was repeated among Hindu Indian adults from different socioeconomic groups. Subjects were sampled from a middle-aged, rather than a college-aged population, in order to obtain subjects whose life-styles tend to vary more with their socioeconomic status than is the case among students attending college.

Method

Subjects

Data was obtained from a sample of 20 middle-class and 20 lower-class adults. The middle-class sample was recruited from among the academic staff of the University of Mysore and from among residents of the middle-class community surrounding the university. The lower-class sample was recruited from among persons employed as sweepers in the university dormitories or as laborers in a nearby factory. Interviews were conducted either in subjects' homes or places of work.

Comparisons revealed that the occupational prestige scores of household heads in the middle-class sample (M = 68.2) were significantly higher than those of household heads in the lower-class sample (M = 33.1). There was no significant age difference between subjects in the two socioeconomic groups (M = 43.4 years).

Procedures

The same measures used in the first study were administered to the middle- and lower-class Indian adult samples. In contrast to the first study, however, subjects were only assessed in the stranger role condition. This condition was selected as the one in which the greatest cross-cultural differences in social domain categorization had been observed in Study 1. It was reasoned that if socioeconomic factors affected the cross-cultural results, their influence would be most apparent in the stranger role condition.

Results

Perceptions of Need Portrayed in Stimuli and Evaluations of Incidents

When 2 × 5 (Socioeconomic Group × Incident Type) ANOVAs were undertaken on subjects' need ratings of the experimental stimuli and on subjects' ratings of the desirability of the behaviors portrayed, respectively, they revealed only main effects of incident type, $F(4, 152) = 2{,}654.74$, $p < .01$, and $F(4, 152) = 1{,}257.81$, $p < .01$. Subjects distinguished levels of need and evaluated the incidents in the same manner as in Study 1.

Socioeconomic status was observed to have no effect on subjects' perceptions.

Categorization of Incidents

Preliminary frequency analyses revealed that, as in the first study, Indians made no use of either the personal–moral or social convention categories in appraising the incidents involving nonresponsiveness to another's needs. Rather, all behaviors regarded as objective obligations were also regarded as legitimately regulated. Given such results, a decision was made not to analyze the dimensions of objective obligation and legitimate regulation separately. Instead, an analysis was performed on the category of moral obligation (i.e., on the view that a behavior is both governed by an objective obligation and legitimately regulated).

To assess subjects' classifications of the incidents in moral terms, a 2 × 5 (Socioeconomic Group × Incident Type) ANOVA was undertaken. This analysis revealed significant main effects of socioeconomic group, $F(1, 38) = 6.20$, $p < .05$, and of incident type, $F(4, 152) = 395.58$, $p < .01$, as well as a significant interaction of socioeconomic group and incident type, $F(4, 152) = 3.18$, $p < .05$.

Post hoc analyses indicated that socioeconomic status affected only subjects' categorizations of the minor-need incidents. Specifically, lower-class subjects ($M = 83\%$) more frequently categorized minor-need incidents in moral terms than did middle-class subjects ($M = 65\%$; $p < .05$).

Justification Responses

To compare subjects' justification responses, a 2 × 5 × 5 ANOVA (Socioeconomic Group × Incident Type × Justification) was performed on the proportion of references made by subjects to the various justification categories. This analysis showed significant main effects of incident type, $F(4, 144) = 5.49$, $p < .01$, and of justification, $F(4, 144) = 785.61$, $p < .01$, as well as significant interactions of justification and socioeconomic group, $F(4, 144) = 6.44$, $p < .01$; incident type and justification, $F(16, 576) = 602.13$, $p < .01$; and of incident type, justification, and socioeconomic group, $F(16, 576) = 2.79$, $p < .01$.

Subgroup differences occurred only in justifying reactions to the minor-need incidents. Consonant with their greater tendency to categorize the minor-need incidents in moral, as contrasted with personal-choice, terms, lower-class subjects made significantly greater reference to welfare considerations (lower-class $M = 84\%$; middle-class $M = 68\%$) and significantly less reference to personal-choice considerations than did middle-class subjects (lower-class $M = 14\%$; middle-class $M = 29\%$; $p < .01$).

In summary, socioeconomic status affected only subjects' categorizations and justifications of the minor-need incidents. As compared with middle-class adults, lower-class adults more frequently categorized minor-need incidents as moral matters, rather than as matters of personal choice, and justified their reactions in terms of welfare rather than personal-choice considerations. No socioeconomic effects occurred in the categorization of the extreme- or moderate-need incidents.

Discussion

The results provide evidence that socioeconomic status may have contributed, in part, to the differences in moral reasoning observed among Indian and American subjects in the first study. It was demonstrated that in the stranger condition, middle-class Hindu Indian adults categorized the low-need issues in moral terms significantly less frequently than did lower-class Hindu Indian adults. Such trends imply that higher socioeconomic status may be associated with a change in orientation toward social responsibilities, from a moral to a personal-choice perspective.

Note, however, that whereas the cross-cultural differences observed in Study 1 may have been enhanced to some degree by the differential socioeconomic status of the American and Indian samples, socioeconomic effects do not appear substantial enough to be the basis of these differences. In particular, no socioeconomic effects were observed either in the extreme- or moderate-need stranger conditions—conditions on which significant cross-cultural variation occurred in the first study. Also, the number of middle-class Indian adult subjects who categorized the minor-need stranger incidents in moral terms was observed to be more than 3 times as great as the number of American adult subjects who did so.

General Discussion

Cultural Influences on Moral Reasoning About Social Responsibilities

The results demonstrate that Americans and Indians hold a common view of social responsibilities in regard to certain types of helping situations. It is documented that in both the Indian and the American samples, the vast majority of subjects viewed social responsibilities involving life-threatening need in moral terms (i.e., as both governed by an objective obligation and legitimately regulated). Also, in both samples subjects referred primarily to nonjustice concerns (i.e., welfare considerations) in justifying their reactions to social responsibilities that they considered to be moral issues.

The evidence also reveals, however, that marked cross-cultural variation exists in the scope of social responsibilities considered as moral and in the criteria applied in judging that such issues constitute moral obligations. Specifically, Indian subjects were found to maintain an extremely broad view of interpersonal moral duties. The primary criterion for categorizing social responsibilities in moral terms was the existence of some unmet need; the magnitude of this need and the nature of the role relationships involved had virtually no effect on Indian subjects' judgments. In contrast, we observed that American subjects considered a smaller domain of social responsibilities as moral obligations, and their judgments were affected both by need and role considerations. With the exception of moderately serious parental breaches, the majority of American subjects viewed non-life-threatening breaches of social responsibilities in personal–moral or personal-choice, rather than in moral, terms.

The findings may be seen to support the view that cultural meaning systems influence the development of moral codes. The wide scope of interpersonal moral obligations observed

among the Hindu Indian sample, for example, appears to reflect the sociocentric emphasis of Hindu Indian cultural conceptions and practices (Dumont, 1970; Kakar, 1978; O'Flaherty & Derrett, 1978). In such a cultural framework, the starting point of morality is the social whole, of which the individual forms an interdependent part. Obligations to serve the social whole through responsiveness to the needs of dependent others, then, tend to be regarded as fundamental moral commitments. In contrast, the more narrow scope of interpersonal moral obligations observed among American subjects may be seen to reflect the cultural premise that the autonomous individual constitutes the fundamental social unit (Dumont, 1965). Such a perspective is evidenced, for example, in the high cultural value placed on independence and privacy and in the Western philosophical assumption that individuals exist prior to social institutions (Locke, 1966; Rawls, 1971). Within this cultural system, individual freedom of choice tends to be weighed against the highly desirable, but competing, value of beneficence.

One implication of the present results would be to challenge assertions that the content of moral codes is universal (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981). Contrary to Kohlberg's claim that social responsibilities are supererogatory, our results demonstrate that Indians accord such responsibilities full moral status. Such trends imply that the content of moral codes is not limited to questions of justice but may extend as well to issues of social responsibility.

A further implication of the findings would be to highlight the need to pay greater attention to cultural factors in explaining the distribution and origins of prosocial moral reasoning. No evidence was found to support Gilligan's (1977, 1982) claims that the moral status of interpersonal responsiveness and care is gender based. Rather, the tendency to categorize social responsibilities in moral terms was found to be related to cultural background; Hindu Indians maintained a more fully moral view of social responsibilities than did Americans of either sex. Such results suggest that attitudes toward helping needy others may be most fully explained by reference to culturally variable social beliefs and practices, rather than by reference to universal processes of gender differentiation.

Need and Role Effects on Perceptions of Social Responsibilities

The observed effects of need on American subjects' moral judgments may be seen to derive, at least in part, from Americans' weighing of their contrasting commitments to personal liberties and to beneficence. Americans' moral judgments showed a linear relationship to need; extreme-need situations were most frequently categorized in moral terms, followed in turn by moderate-need situations and finally by minor-need situations. This pattern of judgment does not appear fully explicable in terms of a tendency to differentiate between scenarios on the basis of whether they involve rights-based concerns (Kohlberg, 1971). Rather, the linear relation found between need magnitude and moral judgment suggests that Americans weighed welfare concerns against personal-choice considerations—the two factors given most emphasis in their justifications. In particular, it appears that in non-life-threatening need situations Americans appraised helping others in moral terms only in cases in which they judged that the negative welfare consequences ensuing from an agent's nonresponsiveness were serious enough to warrant curtailing the agent's freedom of choice.

Contrasting factors may underlie the role effects observed among Americans. As predicted, Americans categorized moderate-need breaches in moral terms more frequently in cases involving parent–child relationships than in cases involving friend or stranger relationships. It appears possible that such trends reflect the somewhat unique status of the parent–young-child role relationship in American culture. Specifically, anthropological evidence indicates that compared to other role obligations in the culture, parental obligations to ensure their young children's welfare are seen as based, at least in part, on natural law, rather than solely on contract and consent (Schneider, 1968). It may follow then that lesser degrees of need are required for Americans to regard parental obligations as moral than are required for Americans to make such an assessment of other role obligations. In particular, in the case of parental obligations, personal-choice considerations appear to be weighed not merely against the negative welfare consequences of nonresponsiveness but also against the perceived natural order of things.

It also appears possible that such role effects reflect, at least in part, individual interest considerations related to social group membership (Tajfel, 1978). Americans may judge that there is a stronger moral obligation to help offspring than to help friends or strangers because offspring are members of the family ingroup. The welfare of one's offspring then has more self-relevance than does the welfare of persons such as friends or strangers, who are more remotely related. Further evidence in support of this interpretation may be seen in the tendency of American subjects to categorize social responsibilities to known others (i.e., to one's own children and friends) as objective obligations more frequently than social responsibilities to unknown others (i.e., to strangers).

These results imply that Americans' judgments of objective obligation reflect, in part, the personal salience that they accord a needy other. Note, however, that whereas perceptions of objective obligations may thus be linked to affective factors such as self-relevance, the obligations themselves are regarded in impersonal terms. In all cases subjects maintained that agents were obligated to undertake the actions under consideration, even if undertaking such actions violated the agents' personal preferences.

The results also indicate that social group membership effects among Hindu Indians are weaker than those observed among Americans in regard to the types of issues under consideration. Only one significant role effect occurred among Indian subjects: Adults categorized minor-need stranger obligations in moral terms less frequently than all other obligations. Unlike in the American case, no role-related variation in moral judgment was observed either in relation to the extreme- or moderate-need incidents or among children. These results contradict what might be expected to be the general trend for Hindu Indians, their emphasis being on hierarchically structured social obligations, to maintain a more role-based moral perspective than do Americans, their emphasis being on individual rights (see also Triandis, 1989). It may be argued, however, that this contradiction arises from the somewhat distinctive ways Hindu Indi-

ans and Americans conceptualize social responsibilities in relation to other moral obligations or rights. In particular, Hindu Indians appear to consider social responsibilities as fundamental obligations inherent in all interpersonal relationships. Although regarding many other moral duties as role based (Shweder et al., 1987), Hindu Indians then tend to treat social responsibilities as absolute. Also, Americans appear to hold a more conflicting attitude toward social responsibilities than they do toward many other types of personal issues. Reflecting this ambivalence, Americans treat the freedom to decide whether to help someone in non-life-threatening need as a role-dependent rather than an absolute right.

Future research is needed that will examine judgments regarding a wider range of role relationships and helping situations to more completely understand the present patterns of role-related differences. Whatever their specific sources, however, the effects support claims that moral obligations are not invariably considered as generalizable across all agents (Gilligan, 1982). Rather, the trends indicate that in non-life-threatening cases, obligations to be responsive to another's needs may be seen as generalizable only across agents in particular types of role relationships.

Personal–Moral: A Culture-Specific Category

The results also document the need to expand current views of possible social domain conceptualizations to include the personal–moral category. This orientation merges the notion of an objective obligation, characteristic of the moral domain, with the notion of individual freedom of choice, characteristic of the personal domain.

The findings indicate that the personal–moral category is culture- and content-specific. The category was used only by Americans and only in relation to social responsibilities that fell in an intermediate range between those viewed in moral terms and those viewed as matters of personal choice.

The tendency for the personal–moral category to be applied exclusively by Americans appears to reflect Americans' ambivalent attitudes toward social responsibilities. Although maintaining that it is highly desirable to fulfill social responsibilities, Americans, as noted, also tend to experience such responsibilities as in conflict with individual freedom of choice. The personal–moral category may be seen to express this ambivalence. In particular, in using such a category, Americans simultaneously express (a) a commitment to meet the needs of dependent others through claims that social responsibilities are objective and (b) a commitment to personal liberties through assertions that it is the agent's own business whether to fulfill social responsibilities.

Although this investigation demonstrated use of the personal–moral category only in relation to social responsibilities, it appears likely that such a category is used in relation to other content domains as well. For example, findings that Americans categorize issues such as abortion or certain sex role practices as the agent's own business, yet regard these issues as highly serious, suggest that such culturally salient matters may also be categorized in personal–moral terms (Smetana, 1982; Stoddart & Turiel, 1985). Further study is required to better understand the range of application of the personal–moral category as well as to examine whether other types of hybrid rule conceptualizations exist (see Shweder, Mahapahtra, & Miller, 1987).

Developmental Trends in Views of Interpersonal Responsibilities

The developmental trends observed in perceptions of objective obligation highlight the need to recognize that both self-construction and social communication processes occur in the ontogenesis of moral reasoning (Dunn, 1987; Edwards, 1987; Miller, 1986). Although marked cross-cultural differences in moral reasoning were present at all ages, somewhat greater cross-cultural commonality was observed among children than among college students. Specifically, American children more frequently classified the minor-need breaches and the friend and stranger moderate-need breaches as objective obligations than did American adults. In this respect, then, American children's responses were more similar to those of Indians than were the responses of American adults.

It appears likely that American and Indian children's similar tendencies to categorize social responsibilities as objective obligations reflect certain common cognitive and affective experiences of human infancy. In all cultures, infants' earliest relationships are with caregivers, on whom they are dependent to fulfill their needs. Such a universal experience of dependency and need fulfillment may result in very young children's forming an impression that mandatory obligations exist to help others in need. This process may account for the finding that commonalities occurred in American and Indian children's views, despite marked cross-cultural differences in Indian and American socialization practices and conceptions of the child (Kakar, 1978).

The results also imply, however, that over development, as children gain increased exposure to the beliefs and values of their culture, these initial self-constructions may be modified (Miller, 1984, 1987). Specifically, in India such initial constructions appear to be supported as children acquire cultural conceptions that treat paternalistic familial relationships as the prototype for many other relationships (Shweder et al., 1987). In contrast, in the United States such initial constructions appear to be narrowed in scope as children acquire cultural conceptions that stress the voluntary aspects of interpersonal commitments.

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Appendix

Outline of Incidents Used

Failure to Respond to Extreme Need

1. NOT DONATING BLOOD to someone who requires it during emergency surgery, because you have plans to go to a movie and do not want to get tired.
2. NOT ADMINISTERING MOUTH-TO-MOUTH RESUSCITATION to someone who has stopped breathing, because you might get dirty administering the procedure.
3. NOT DRIVING SOMEONE TO THE HOSPITAL who is bleeding uncontrollably, because you are concerned that some blood might get on your car.

Failure to Respond to Moderate Need

1. NOT GIVING ASPIRIN to someone who is suffering from a painful migraine headache on a bus ride, because you do not want to bother looking for the bottle of aspirin you are carrying.
2. NOT PROVIDING COMFORT to someone who is about to undergo knee surgery, because you do not want to get up early in the morning when the surgery begins.
3. NOT PROVIDING A RIDE to someone who needs to get to a ceremony in which he or she is one of the main speakers, because you feel that providing the ride would be uninteresting.

Failure to Respond to Minor Need

1. NOT LOANING MONEY to someone so that they can attend a movie, because you feel like keeping the extra money you have brought yourself.
2. NOT GIVING SOMEONE DIRECTIONS concerning how to get to an art supply shop, because you are busy reading an exciting book and do not want to be interrupted.
3. NOT PROVIDING A RIDE TO THE TRAIN STATION to someone going sightseeing, because you feel that giving the ride might be boring.

Control Incidents: Failure to Engage in Unjust Act

1. NOT STEALING A SHIRT for someone who does not want to pay for it.
2. NOT DESTROYING A FLOWER GARDEN for someone who is jealous of the garden owners and wants to hurt them.

Control Incidents: Failure to Override One's Own Personal Preferences

1. NOT BUYING YOURSELF A DRESS OF A DISLIKED COLOR, even though someone suggests buying a dress of that color.
2. NOT CHOOSING TO READ FOR PLEASURE A BOOK ON AN UNINTERESTING TOPIC, even though someone suggests that you read a book on that topic.

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