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Doing the Right Thing in the Face of Social Pressure: Moral Rebels and Their Role Models Have Heightened Levels of Moral Trait Integration

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The present study investigated the self-appraisals and moral trait integration of "moral rebels" who follow their own moral convictions despite considerable social pressure to comply. Participants' moral rebel behavior was measured through a self-report inventory and a behavioral task. Results revealed that moral rebels reported: (1) less positive opinions of their own personality qualities; (2) significantly higher levels of moral trait integration; and (3) had role models who are more morally integrated compared to compliant individuals. This research suggests that while moral rebel behavior may be adaptive for society, this behavior may take a toll on the individual. Moreover, it appears that moral rebels have higher quality role models compared to compliant individuals.

Keywords: Moral behavior; Moral identity; Moral rebels; Role models.

What makes an individual treat others with compassion and respect despite opposing situational pressures? The "formula" for treating others with kindness in spite of situational pressures seems to be elusive. In contrast, the psychological literature is full of examples demonstrating how individuals fail to behave in a decent or ethical manner towards others because of situational pressures. In one of the most well known of these studies, Milgram (1974) revealed that only a small minority of participants refused to administer painful and dangerous electric shock to an innocent peer. These results are not dependent on historical context because a recent replication of these results has been published nearly four decades after the original study (see Burger, 2009). If these two studies are any indication of individuals' tendencies to rebel against unjust situational pressures, the ability to withstand situational pressures to comply seems to be a rare characteristic. With a vast majority of the previous psychological literature focusing on explaining conformity, compliance, and/or obedience, the rare individuals who morally rebel against situational pressures have been overlooked and understudied.

Notable contributions in the area of character development education, however, aim to foster moral rebellion/disobedience. Specifically, the program *Facing History and Ourselves* trains educators to teach a 10-week course which, in part, discusses the

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choices that perpetrators, bystanders, victims, and resisters made during the Holocaust. Reflecting on history, the program aims to foster critical thinking about the moral choices students make in their own lives and to increase the levels of moral obligation felt towards helping others (Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001; Selman & Kwok, 2010). This program recognizes that all people, young and old, encounter morally problematic situations that require courage, compassion, and social action. When these situations arise, program participants should be better prepared to take a principled stand on behalf of themselves and others (i.e., morally rebel). Consequently, the ability to foster the rare behavior of moral rebellion in an educational setting seems promising.

Beyond character development education programs, moral rebellion has only been the focus of a handful of research studies. For instance, Bocchiaro and Zimbardo (2010) ordered participants to give each of 15 increasingly hostile comments to a victim whenever the victim failed at a problem-solving task. Results revealed that nine of 30 participants obeyed in giving all 15 levels of hostile feedback to a victim, with 21 participants refusing between the 11th and 14th level. One reason that disobedient participants offered in explanation of their decision to stop was based on moral-ethical considerations. Disobedient participants reported that they would not have a ''clear conscience'' if they continued. Thus, disobedience to an unjust authority was demonstrated.

Beyond disobedience to an unjust authority, one of the most comprehensive series of studies to date on perceptions of moral rebellion was conducted by Monin, Sawyer, and Marquez (2008). Monin and colleagues termed a ''moral rebel'' an ''individual who takes a principled stand against the status quo, who refuses to comply, stay silent, or simply go along when this would require he/she compromise his/her values'' (pp. 76–77). Monin et al. (2008) described the exemplary behavior of Joseph Darby, the military policeman who turned in the Abu Ghraib picture CD, as typifying moral rebel behavior. Although most people do not find themselves in situations as morally grave as Abu Ghraib, many people do periodically find themselves in social situations that directly exude pressure on their willingness to ''do the right thing.'' An everyday example of moral rebel behavior could be the Arkansas boy who refused to say the Pledge of Allegiance with his classmates because he believes that ''liberty and justice for all'' have yet to be achieved (CNN Interactive, 2010). Across the series of studies conducted by Monin et al. (2008), results revealed that compliant individuals, those in similar situations to that of moral rebels, disliked and resented moral rebels for taking a principled stand when they themselves failed to do so. However, moral rebels were liked and idealized from a distance when participants had no involvement with the situational pressures facing the moral rebel. Thus, even though moral rebels are viewed as positive figures, they may also experience some degree of rejection in their social relationships. These interesting and groundbreaking findings by Monin and colleagues inspired the present project on moral rebels.

Given the general paucity of research on moral rebels, the present project draws from conceptually similar research areas to that of moral rebels. For example, some researchers argue that behaviors similar to moral rebels represent the apex of human moral behavior (or everyday heroism). Individuals like the moral rebel are said to comprise one type of heroism, broadly classified as social heroism (see Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). Social heroism involves the preservation of a value or standard that is perceived to be under threat (see Franco et al., 2011). Because moral rebels voluntarily and purposefully act in defense of their internalized beliefs and values, their behavior is

considered by some as heroic. Further, conceptually similar ideas to that of moral rebels are found in the discussions of courageous resistance (Shepela et al., 1999), moral courage (Staub, 2011), practical heroism (Smith, 2003), and brave and caring exemplars (Matsuba & Walker, 2004; Walker & Frimer, 2007). Despite some theoretical similarities to the previously mentioned concepts, moral rebels' principled stance against unjust social pressures remains a needed area of research inquiry.

In order to empirically examine moral rebel behavior, researchers need a way to "capture" this exceptional behavior. Although researchers have used a wide range of methods to examine moral behaviors, one particularly suitable method for examining moral rebel behavior includes a variation of a persuasive writing task used by Monin et al. (2008). For example, researchers could request that participants write an essay that violates a universal moral value, such as doing no harm to others (see Graham, Haidt, & Nosek's, 2009, moral foundations; Thomas, 1997). Asking individuals to write an essay that violates their moral values may be one way to create a situation where moral rebel behavior could be elicited in the laboratory, as some individuals may refuse to comply with the request based on their internalized moral beliefs. The present authors utilized this writing task methodology, which requests participants to violate a universal moral value in the hopes of eliciting moral rebel behavior (see method section for complete details). It was expected that some individuals (i.e., moral rebels) would refuse to write the essay as instructed and describe why writing such an essay would violate their internalized beliefs about proper moral conduct. By not complying based on one's internalized moral values, the few participants who take "a principled stand against the status quo" may be defined as moral rebels (see Monin et al., 2008, pp. 76–77). However, in contrast, it was expected that a majority of participants would acquiesce to the experimenter's request because the "status quo" in our society "permits" individuals to comply with an authority's request. Further, individuals who morally rebelled in the writing task were expected to score significantly higher on Sonnentag and Barnett's (in press) self-report measure of moral rebellion than compliant individuals (see method section for complete details on this self-report measure).

Self-appraisals

Although the empirical research on exemplary moral behavior, like that of the moral rebel, is relatively sparse, the existing research has been successful in contrasting moral exemplars with comparison, or "average," groups on self-ascribed personality traits (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Matsuba & Walker, 2004; Walker & Frimer, 2007). For example, Walker and Pitts (1998) found that naturalistic conceptions of moral exemplarity were organized according to self–other dimensions, which references notions of agency (i.e., self) and communion (i.e., others) characteristics. When assessing agency and communion characteristics in brave and caring moral exemplars (and ordinary individuals), Walker and Frimer (2007) found that moral exemplars had stronger themes of both agency and communion embodied in their life narratives compared to a demographically matched comparison group. Researchers investigating the characteristics of agency and communion assert that they are important in generative action, which suggests that these characteristics may contribute to the actions of those who engage in morally-grounded behavior (Walker & Frimer, 2007). In fact, previous literature examining perceptions of moral rebels has utilized adjectives capturing these dimensions (see Monin et al., 2008). In the four-part study mentioned above by Monin and colleagues (2008), participants who

complied with a problematic task rated a moral rebel as less agentic and less nice than individuals who were uninvolved with the task. Monin et al. (2008) attributed this devaluing of the moral rebel to the participants' perception that rebels would reject them, presumably because they failed to behave morally. Given that some individuals may resent and reject the moral rebel, the current authors were curious as to the quality of moral rebels' self-appraisals. Even though moral rebels engage in positive behaviors, they may perceive that others, the majority of whom are engaging in status quo behavior, may not value their principled action, and this perception may translate into critical self-appraisals. Because information about the self-appraisals of moral rebels is lacking, the present study examined moral rebels' self-evaluations using the trait adjectives employed by Monin et al. (2008).

In addition to examining participant's self-appraisals, the present study also measured interpersonal social aggression in order to help distinguish moral rebellion from general rebellion based on confrontational motives. As noted earlier, a moral rebel is an individual who refuses to behave in a way that compromises his/her values despite the behavior of others (Monin et al., 2008). Given this definition, an individual who rebels to cause trouble, conflict, or confrontation would not represent moral rebel behavior. Further, the term "*moral*" in moral rebel applies to a wide range of behaviors that are consistent with accepted norms of appropriate conduct (Trevifio, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006) and universal moral actions (Thomas, 1997). However, it could be the case that some accepted norms of appropriate conduct, and even societal laws, violate universal moral actions. A moral rebel would behave in a way consistent with the universal moral action (e.g., historical example includes the abolishment of slavery laws). Thus, the present study collected participants' responses to an interpersonal social aggression measure in order to distinguish rebellion from moral rebellion. Rebellion to cause trouble, conflict, and/or confrontation should be associated with higher levels of interpersonal social aggression, whereas moral rebellion should not be strongly associated with high levels of interpersonal social aggression due to moral intentions.

Moral Trait Integration

In addition to examining moral exemplars' self-appraisals, researchers are beginning to explore moral exemplars' moral identity. Erikson (1964) proposed that identity is the core of one's being and involves being true to oneself in action. Erikson's (1964) idea of identity is shared by several scholars who have emphasized the importance of moral identity in motivating moral action (Blasi, 1993; Colby & Damon, 1992). These authors are unified in suggesting that when morality is important and central to one's identity, it heightens one's sense of obligation and responsibility to behave in accordance with one's moral beliefs. For example, Damon and Hart (1992) asserted that "there are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that the centrality of morality in identity may be the single most powerful determiner of conduct ... People whose identity is organized around their moral beliefs are highly likely to translate those beliefs into actions ..." (p. 455). In other words, when a person's identity is centered on moral concerns, the desire to live in a manner consistent with one's sense of self may serve as a key motivator for behavior. Congruent with this idea, Colby and Damon (1992) argued that highly moral individuals differ from "less moral" others by the degree to which their identity is focused on moral goals. This research on the importance of identity in motivating moral exemplars' actions provides the impetus for examining the moral identity of moral rebels in the current

study. A brief review of the theories and research contributing to the operationalization of moral identity integration, or the degree to which one's moral ideals have become incorporated into the self, follows.

Early social-cognitive research (see Bandura's, 1991, social learning theory) suggests that individuals learn moral ideals through observing the behaviors of role models. Once moral ideals are internalized, they serve as a compass for one's actual moral self. In other words, moral characteristics of role models can foster the development of ideal standards which, in turn, impact moral identity integration and behavior. Hart and Fegley's (1995) study of highly altruistic adolescents is consistent with this theory. Hart and Fegley revealed that moral exemplars, compared to a matched comparison group, had, to a greater extent, moral concerns that were central to their sense of self (and their ideal self). Further, moral exemplars' self that related to their parents' values were more incorporated into their actual self than the matched comparison group. In a similar vein, Owens and Ascione (1990) found that the type of relationship held between a participant and a role model (e.g., best friend, parent–child) influenced the participant's level of moral behavior. Specifically, the greater the perceived familiarity, the more likely the participant was to behave morally following observation of a role model. The importance of role model type has also been highlighted in foundational work by Lockwood and Kunda (1997). Among the many types of role models studied by these authors, positive (and domain-relevant) role models have been found to be highly influential on the development of the self, compared to negative (and non-domain-relevant) role models. Extending Lockwood's work, McDaniel, Elliot, Jeter, Sonnentag, and Eason (2012) explored the influence of personally known role models (i.e., mother) versus distant role models (i.e., famous person) on participants' moral identity integration. This research revealed that personally known role models, both positive and negative, were more related to participants' moral identity trait integration compared to distant role models. Because of the importance role models can have on an individual's identity and behavior, the current study examined participants' moral identity integration and the moral identity integration of their positive and negative, personally known and distant role models. It was hypothesized that personally known role models would be related to participants' heightened moral identity integration compared to distant role models. Further, it was hypothesized that moral rebels would have higher levels of moral identity integration, as well as role models with higher levels of moral identity integration, compared to compliant participants.

To assess participants' role models' moral identity integration and their own moral identity integration, the current study employed Kelly's (1955) repertory grid methodology. Within a typical repertory grid, each individual nominates others who fit a particular role in his or her life, such as "a family member who they respect and think is moral." According to Kelly, the individuals a participant nominates are important to understanding identity from that participant's perspective. After identifying these personally known individuals, participant rate themselves and each nominee on bipolar constructs or traits (e.g., *forgiving* vs. *unforgiving*, *stingy* vs. *generous*). This methodology allows researchers to examine the importance of particular role models' traits in the identity development of participants. Further, participants' self-ratings provide information about the degree to which participants have an identity focused on moral themes. The current study utilized Kelly's repertory grid procedure and incorporated the moral trait adjectives from Aquino and Reed's (2002) work on moral identity.

Summary

With the previous literature in mind, the general purpose of the current research was to better understand the factors that distinguish moral rebels from compliant individuals. More specifically, the objectives of the current study were to: (1) elicit and measure moral rebel behavior; (2) examine moral rebels' self-appraisals; and (3) examine moral rebels' moral identity integration and the moral identity integration of their role models.

Method

Participants

One hundred twenty-seven undergraduate students (34 males, 93 females; $M_{age} = 18.71$ years, $SD = 1.38$) participated in the present study in exchange for course credit. Participants were sampled from a Midwestern university comprised of predominately Caucasian individuals from middle-class backgrounds.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were told that the purpose of the current study was to examine factors related to the ability to develop and write persuasive arguments. In random order, participants engaged in a persuasive writing task, completed a repertory grid, and responded to a series of questionnaires.

Writing task. A persuasive writing task was devised which allowed the opportunity for moral rebel behavior. In private cubicles, participants were given 10 minutes to write an argument describing a situation in which they would feel justified in vocalizing negative thoughts or feelings about an overweight individual. This topic was selected because justifications could be offered for vocalizing negative thoughts about obese people such as increased health risks and costs, reduced quality of life, and negative appearance. However, by vocalizing *negative* thoughts or feelings about an overweight individual, the moral foundation of "doing no harm to others" (see Graham et al.'s, 2009, moral foundations) is violated. Even with this moral conflict, research has shown that negative thoughts and feelings about overweight individuals are quite common (i.e., obesity stigmatization; see Barnett, Livengood, Sonnentag, Barlett, & Witham, 2010; Barnett, Sonnentag, Livengood, Struble, & Wadian, in press). Thus, by not complying with the experimenter's request to write a negative argument, a participant's refusal to go along with the status quo and take a principled stand against the task that violates his/her values allows for the demonstration of moral rebel behavior (see Monin, et al., 2008).

Repertory grid. Participants completed a Repertory Grid via Idiogrid 2.4 software (Grice, 2002). Within the repertory grid procedure, participants listed individuals for each of the following role categories (based on Kelly, 1955):

1. A family member that you admire and think is moral.
2. A friend that you admire and think is moral.
3. A teacher, coach, preacher, or other adult outside your family that you admire and think is moral.

4. A famous individual (living or deceased) that you admire and think is moral.
5. A family member that you do not admire and think is immoral.
6. A friend that you do not admire and think is immoral.
7. A teacher, coach, preacher, or adult outside your family that you do not admire and think is immoral.
8. A famous individual (living or deceased) that you do not admire and think is immoral.

Participants rated each generated role model, along with their ideal self (how one would wish or hope to be), and their actual self (how one currently views oneself) on 12 bipolar moral traits using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from −2 (*Strongly disagree*) to +2 (*Strongly agree*). The 12 bipolar moral traits (adapted from Aquino & Reed's, 2002, moral exemplar traits, and Park & Peterson's, 2006, classification of moral character strengths) were as follows: *Does not like to learn–Loves to learn*; *Fearful–Brave*; *Unkind–Kind*; *Unfair–Fair*; *Unforgiving–Forgiving*; *Not religious–Religious*; *Unfriendly–Friendly*; *Unhelpful–Helpful*; *Lazy–Hardworking*; *Tells lies–Honest*; *Cold-hearted–Compassionate*; and *Disrespectful–Respectful*. This procedure is similar to previous research utilizing repertory grids (e.g., McDaniel, Daugherty, Rycek, Jeter, & Eason, 2010; McDaniel & Grice, 2005, 2008) and a subset of these specific moral traits has been used in previous repertory grid research examining the moral self of adolescents and young adults (McDaniel et al., 2012).

Questionnaires. Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants evaluated themselves on 16 personality characteristics, which previous research has shown to be related to perceptions of moral rebels (see Monin et al., 2008). Theses bipolar adjectives were used as scale anchors and included the following: *Unpleasant–Pleasant*; *Stingy–Generous*; *Cold–Warm*; *Cruel–Kind*; *Awful–Nice*; *Rude–Pleasant*; *Unfair–Fair*; *Stupid–Intelligent*; *Weak–Strong*; *Insecure–Confident*; *Passive–Active*; *Dishonest–Honest*; *Dependent–Independent*; *Immature–Mature*; *Immoral–Moral*; and *Low self-esteem–High self-esteem*.

Participants also completed an interpersonal social aggression measure and a moral rebel self-report scale. For the interpersonal social aggression measure, participants completed Crothers, Schreiber, Field, and Kolbert's (2009) Socially Aggressive Behaviors subscale of the Young Adult Social Behavior Scale (YASB; $\alpha = .84$). Participants rated each statement on a 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*) scale, with higher scores reflecting more interpersonal social aggression. Example items include: "How often do you interrupt people?" and "How often do you reduce someone's opportunity to express her/himself?" For the moral rebel self-report measure, participants completed Sonnentag and Barnett's (in press) Moral Rebel scale that consists of nine statements rated on a scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Items reflect the extent to which participants refuse to go along with others, but instead desire to adhere to their beliefs even in the face of social opposition. Example items include: "I am not afraid to stand up to others in order to defend my beliefs" and "There have been times that I simply went along with the crowd, even when we were doing something that made me uncomfortable" (reverse scored). The internal reliability of the 9-item scale ($\alpha = .81$) was satisfactory. Higher scores on the Moral Rebel scale reflect a heightened tendency to behave in accordance with one's own beliefs and values. In the current study, scores on the Moral Rebel scale demonstrated a significant, negative relationship with social aggression, $r(127) = -.19$, $p = .03$. This relationship suggests that the Moral Rebel scale is a

measurement of *positive*, *moral* rebel tendencies rather than of social rebellion in general. Previous research would also support this conclusion and it has shown that participants' scores on the Moral Rebel scale are negatively related to participants' tendencies to engage in minor moral violations (see Sonnentag & Barnett, in press).

Results

Measuring Moral Rebel Behavior

The first objective of the present study was to elicit and measure moral rebel behavior through a persuasive writing task. To address this objective, four independent coders categorized the written arguments made in the persuasive essay task into one of two categories reflecting if the participant (1) acquiesced with the task (e.g., "I would vocalize negative thoughts when an overweight person takes up too much space on a plane"), or (2) refused to comply with the task based on moral grounds (e.g., "It is never okay to verbalize cruel thoughts about an overweight person because you may hurt their feelings"). The first category of behavior was classified as obedient behavior and the second category was characterized as moral rebel behavior. It is important to note that writing off-topic was not counted as moral rebel behavior. Writing off-topic is not *actively* rebelling against an unjust social pressure and does not fit the conceptual definition of moral rebellion (as operationalized in this manuscript and described by Monin et al., 2008). Only two participant's essays were unrelated to the experimenter's request for essays describing negative thoughts and feelings about overweight people. These two essays were excluded from analyses. There were 21 individuals classified as displaying moral rebel behavior, while the remaining 106 participants were classified as obedient. The kappa inter-rater reliability for the four raters using the two-code system was .82 ($p < .001$), which indicates almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Disagreements were resolved by a majority opinion (i.e., 3 out of the 4 raters having the same code) in all cases except one. That one essay was reviewed again until agreement was reached.

These two behavioral codes (moral rebel and obedient) were then used to test for mean differences on the self-report Moral Rebel scale (Sonnentag & Barnett, in press). Results revealed that individuals who displayed moral rebel behavior in the writing task scored significantly higher on the Moral Rebel scale ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 0.94$) than individuals who displayed obedient behavior ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.92$), $t(125) = 2.25$, $p = .03$.

Self-appraisals

The second objective of the present study was to examine the use of adjectives previously used to capture perceptions of moral rebels (see Monin et al., 2008) and examine how moral rebels apply these adjectives to themselves. In line with Monin et al. (2008), a principal components factor analysis with a promax rotation was conducted on the 16 bipolar personality adjectives. Examination of the scree plot suggested a two-factor solution that accounted for 56% of the variance. Non-overlapping factor loadings ($\geq .5$) were included in the solution, which resulted in the first factor (called positive interpersonal qualities) comprised of *Kind*, *Nice*, *Warm*, *Honest*, *Fair*, *Pleasant*, *Mature*, *Moral*, and *Polite* and the second factor (called positive intrapersonal qualities) comprised of *Strong*, *Confident*, *Active*, and *High*

self-esteem. The positive interpersonal qualities had a Cronbach's alpha of .90 and the positive intrapersonal adjectives had a Cronbach's alpha of .84.

Average scores on both the positive interpersonal and intrapersonal adjectives were related to participant's behavior in the writing task and Moral Rebel scale scores. Results revealed that individuals who displayed moral rebel behavior in the written essay reported significantly lower positive interpersonal ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.75$) and positive intrapersonal descriptors ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.38$) than individuals who displayed obedient behavior ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(22.89) = 3.33$, $p = .003$, and ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(125) = 4.52$, $p < .001$, respectively. Further, higher scores on the Moral Rebel scale were related to lower levels of positive interpersonal, $r(127) = -.22$, $p = .01$, and intrapersonal descriptors, $r(127) = -.18$, $p = .04$.

Moral Trait Integration

The final objective of the present study was to examine whether the degree of moral trait integration differs between moral rebel and obedient participants. Similar to McDaniel et al. (2012), levels of moral trait integration were calculated by subtracting the reported level of a trait from the highest possible scale rating (+2). The highest possible rating on the scale represents Damon's (1984) concept of morality. The smaller the discrepancy between a reported moral trait and the highest level of morality, the greater the level of moral trait integration. An average discrepancy across all moral trait discrepancies (from the repertory grid measurement) was calculated with lower means indicating greater levels of moral trait integration (see Table 1). Individuals who displayed moral rebel behavior in the writing task had significantly higher levels of moral trait integration ($M = 0.70$, $SD = 0.53$) than individuals who displayed obedient behavior ($M = 0.95$, $SD = 0.39$), $t(24.55) = 2.04$, $p = .05$. Additionally, higher levels of moral trait integration were significantly related to higher scores on the Moral Rebel scale, $r(127) = -.20$, $p = .03$ and lower scores on the interpersonal social aggression measure, $r(127) = .29$, $p = .001$.

To examine moral identity integration in participants' ratings of their role models, an average moral trait discrepancy, similar to the above self-discrepancy, was calculated for each role model. Participants' ratings of positive role models showed significantly higher levels of moral trait integration ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.29$) than negative role models ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.47$), $t(126) = 44.57$, $p < .001$. For individuals displaying moral rebel behavior in the writing task, positive family member, positive friend, and negative family member role models were significantly more morally integrated than for individuals displaying obedient behavior (see Table 1). Further, the average of all positive role models' moral trait integration was significantly higher for individuals displaying moral rebel behavior ($M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.31$) than for individuals displaying obedient behavior ($M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.29$), $t(125) = 2.12$, $p = .04$. However, there was no difference between individuals displaying moral rebel or obedient behavior in terms of the average moral trait integration for all negative role models, $t(125) = 1.39$, $p = .17$, see Table 1.

In line with McDaniel et al. (2012), the moral identity integration of participants was also examined by considering the incorporation of multiple moral traits into the self, as well as the integration seen for various role models on moral traits, using Cronbach alphas. Utilizing the Fisher–Bonett test for small samples (Kim & Feldt, 2008; Suen, 2009), Cronbach alphas were statistically compared for significant differences. Individuals displaying moral rebel behavior in the writing task showed significantly higher levels of moral trait integration consistency across the 12 moral

TABLE 1 Average Degree of Moral Trait Integration and Degree of Consistency of Moral Trait Integration for Moral Rebel and Obedient Participants and Positive and Negative Role Models

Person	Moral rebel *Mean* (*SD*)	Obedient *Mean* (*SD*)	Moral rebel Cronbach's α	Obedient Cronbach's α
Self	**0.70*** (0.53)	**0.95*** (0.39)	**.90****	**.78****
Positive family member role model	**0.28**** (0.31)	**0.49**** (0.36)	**.89***	**.79***
Positive friend role model	**0.35***** (0.41)	**0.70***** (0.45)	**.90**†**	**.84**†**
Positive teacher role model	0.59 (0.52)	0.54 (0.42)	**.93***	**.86***
Positive famous person role model	0.53 (0.46)	0.61 (0.47)	.90	.92
Negative family member role model	**1.90*** (0.76)	**2.29*** (0.79)	.90	.89
Negative peer role model	2.48 (0.74)	2.37 (0.74)	.88	.88
Negative teacher role model	2.31 (1.03)	2.43 (0.74)	**.96****	**.89****
Negative famous person role model	2.47 (0.65)	2.65 (0.68)	.81	.84

Notes: Lower means indicate greater levels of moral trait integration. Independent *t*-tests were conducted comparing means between moral rebel and obedient participants. The Fisher–Bonett test (for small samples) was conducted comparing Cronbach's alpha between moral rebel and obedient participants. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; $^{\dagger}p < .10$. Emboldened text indicates significance.

traits ($\alpha = .90$) than individuals displaying obedient behavior ($\alpha = .78$; see Table 1). Further, role models for individuals displaying moral rebel behavior, as opposed to obedient behavior, generally had higher levels of moral trait integration consistency as seen in positive family member, positive friend, positive teacher, and negative teacher role models (see Table 1).

Lastly, a participant's level of moral trait integration was predicted from each role model's level of moral trait integration. For individuals displaying moral rebel behavior in the writing task, higher levels of moral trait integration of positive family member, positive teacher, and positive famous person role models were predictive of higher self-levels of moral trait integration (see Table 2). Further, for these same individuals, lower levels of moral trait integration of negative peer role models were predictive of higher self-levels of moral trait integration. For individuals displaying obedient behavior, higher levels of moral trait integration of positive friend and positive teacher role models were predictive of higher self-levels of moral trait integration (see Table 2).

Discussion

The present study tested a novel persuasive writing task as an avenue for eliciting moral rebel behavior. This task was shown to be useful in capturing moral rebel

TABLE 2 Level of Moral Trait Integration for Moral Rebel and Obedient Participants Predicted by Role Model Moral Trait Integration

Role model	*F*	*p*	R^2	β	*df*
Positive family member integration					
Moral rebel	**14.12**	**.001**	**.43**	**0.65*****	**(1,19)**
Compliant	2.04	.16	.02	0.14	(1,104)
Positive friend integration					
Moral rebel	2.56	.13	.12	0.35	(1,19)
Compliant	**14.36**	**<.001**	**.12**	**0.35*****	**(1,104)**
Positive teacher integration					
Moral rebel	**11.19**	**.003**	**.37**	**0.61****	**(1,19)**
Compliant	**13.58**	**<.001**	**.12**	**0.34*****	**(1,104)**
Positive famous person integration					
Moral rebel	**10.00**	**.005**	**.35**	**0.59****	**(1,19)**
Compliant	0.05	.82	<.001	0.02	(1,104)
Negative family member integration					
Moral rebel	2.30	.15	.11	0.33	(1,19)
Compliant	1.00	.32	.01	−0.10	(1,102)
Negative peer integration					
Moral rebel	**11.59**	**.003**	**.38**	**−0.62****	**(1,19)**
Compliant	0.01	.93	<.001	0.01	(1,104)
Negative teacher integration					
Moral rebel	0.05	.82	.003	−0.05	(1,18)
Compliant	<0.01	.99	<.001	<0.01	(1,104)
Negative famous person integration					
Moral rebel	0.16	.69	.009	−0.09	(1,18)
Compliant	0.17	.68	.002	−0.04	(1,102)

Notes: **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Emboldened text indicates significant differences.

behavior in a laboratory setting. Participants' behavior in this task resulted in statistically different scores on a self-report measure of moral rebellion, which enhances the validity of the writing task.

Even though the current study's task to elicit moral rebel behavior was successful, the small numbers of moral rebels found must be noted as a limitation. Only, 21 of 127 participants displayed moral rebel behavior in the current study. However, the small number of moral rebels in the present study is not surprising given that moral rebel behavior is considered to be a type of exemplar behavior (by definition, it should be rare). Similar low rates of non-conforming behavior have been seen in situations outside the moral realm (see Asch's, 1956, conformity study). Because of the small numbers of moral rebels present in the current research, caution is needed when drawing conclusions and generalizing the results. Further, although the two measurements of participants' moral rebel behavior were successful in the current study, the multiple measurements could have influenced each other. However, it is important to note that the writing task and self-report measure were presented in random order across participants and these assessments yielded consistent results

across the study. Future research should separate these measurements to safeguard against any the influence each measure may have on the other.

Although the measurement of moral rebel behavior was relatively successful, future research could examine different factors that may increase the expression of moral rebel behavior. For example, the tendency to behave like a moral rebel may be similar to Marshall and Brown's (2006) Traits as Situational Sensitivities (TASS). Within the TASS, individuals who are relatively high on a quality only require moderate situational cues to exhibit the quality while individuals who are relatively low on a quality require strong situational cues. Thus, there could be different "tipping points" or situational pressures needed for different individuals to display moral rebel behavior in a given situation. Future research could manipulate situational characteristics to explore this possibility. Moreover, examination of tipping points may further elucidate the relationship between actual moral rebel behavior (i.e., present or not present as measured by a laboratory task) versus a continuous self-report measure of the tendency to be a moral rebel.

The present study also sought to examine moral rebels' self-appraisals. Utilizing the same adjectives used in previous research examining perceptions of moral rebels (Monin et al., 2008), the current study found that moral rebels ascribe lower levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities to themselves as compared to obedient individuals. In other words, moral rebels were more negative about their social qualities and more negative on internal esteem qualities than obedient individuals. This effect could be interpreted in multiple ways. One way would be to think that compliant individuals have a positivity bias in their self-attributions and moral rebels are more "accurate" or "realistic" in their self-appraisals. A robust effect in social psychology, termed the better-than-average-effect, reveals that people consistently evaluate themselves more favorably than others, which is fueled by self-serving concerns. Since moral rebels are less focused with self-serving interests, their positive self-appraisals should be lower than their obedient peers. A second way to explain this finding would be to think that moral rebels are more modest about their positive interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities than compliant individuals. It would make sense that moral rebels value honesty (accurate or realistic self-perceptions) and modesty (reporting lower positive interpersonal qualities), however, the current study's methodology cannot directly speak to this issue. Further, because of moral rebels' risk of social rejection (see Monin et al., 2008), it is possible that moral rebels may have heightened levels of psychopathology such as low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety. Because there is a paucity of research on the self-appraisals of moral rebels, future research is needed to understand their lower self-ratings of positive interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities.

Finally, the current study examined moral rebels' moral trait integration and the influence of role models on their moral identity. The current study revealed that individuals who displayed moral rebel behavior had significantly higher moral trait integration compared to individuals displaying compliant behavior. Additionally, higher levels of moral trait integration were significantly associated with higher levels of participants' self-reported tendency to be a moral rebel and lower levels of interpersonal social aggression. These results, in concert with McDaniel et al.'s (2012) findings, support the possible developmental maturity of moral rebels. McDaniel et al. (2012) found 18- to 19-year-olds to be more morally integrated than 8- to 13-year-olds. Given the present sample was primarily composed of 18- to 19-year-olds, these findings point to the possibility that moral rebels are higher in developmental maturity than others their age. Future work could examine moral

rebels' moral trait integration across a variety of ages to see if a consistent pattern of developmental maturity is present.

Another noted difference between individuals displaying moral rebel or compliant behavior in the present study was in moral trait integration of their role models. Individuals displaying moral rebel behavior had significantly more morally integrated positive role models, than individuals displaying obedient behavior. On the other hand, negative role models that individuals did not want to be like were similarly morally integrated when comparing moral rebel and compliant participants. Further, when predicting the participant's level of moral trait integration, only the negative friend role model for moral rebels was significant. In fact, this relationship was negative demonstrating that a negative friend role model with lower levels of moral trait integration was actually associated with higher levels of moral trait integration in moral rebels. The colloquial notion of "running with the wrong crowd" or negative role models dragging down the self was not supported in the present study. Thus, this downward social association seems to be related to a bolstering of the self for individuals displaying moral rebel behavior (for further information on social comparison of personally known role models see McDaniel et al., 2010).

Individuals displaying moral rebel or compliant behavior also differed on which role models were more predictive of moral trait self-integration levels. Higher levels of moral trait integration for positive family member, positive teacher, and positive famous person role models were significantly predictive of higher levels of moral trait integration for individuals displaying moral rebel behavior. However, for individuals displaying compliant behavior, higher levels of moral trait integration for positive friend and positive teacher role models were significantly related to higher levels of moral trait integration. It is possible that compliant individuals make more peer-related, horizontal role model comparisons while moral rebel individuals make more upward social comparisons. Given the possible higher developmental maturity of moral rebels (discussed above), upward social comparisons in moral rebels may foster greater levels of positive behavior.

In conclusion, there is still much to be learned about moral rebel behavior. However, valuable information about eliciting in-the-moment moral rebel behavior, moral rebels' self-appraisals, personality qualities, and moral trait integration, and the relationship role models may have on moral rebels' moral trait integration was gained in the present study. Findings from the current study will help guide future research that explores differences between individuals who stand up for their beliefs and those who simply comply.

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