

Moral Hypocrisy: Addressing Some Alternatives

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Two studies addressed alternative explanations for 3 pieces of evidence supporting the existence of moral hypocrisy. In Study 1, no support was found for the idea that low salience of social standards accounts for falsifying the result of a coin flip to assign oneself a more desirable task. In Study 2, no support was found for the idea that responses of those who honestly win the flip account for the higher ratings of morality of their action by participants who assign themselves the more desirable task after flipping the coin. Also, no support was found for the idea that responses of those who honestly win the flip account for the inability of personal moral responsibility measures to predict moral action. Instead, results of both studies provided additional evidence of moral hypocrisy.

Moral motivation can be deceptive. A series of six studies designed to determine the nature of moral motivation has produced considerable evidence of moral hypocrisy—motivation to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of actually being moral (Batson, Kobryniewicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997; Batson, Thompson, Seufferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999). These studies have produced only limited evidence of moral integrity—motivation to actually be moral.

Evidence of Moral Hypocrisy

In these six studies, participants were given the opportunity to assign themselves and another participant (actually fictitious) to different tasks. One task was clearly more desirable; it had positive consequences (the chance to earn raffle tickets). The other task had neutral consequences (no chance to earn raffle tickets) and was described as rather dull and boring. Participants were told that the other participant would not know that they were allowed to assign the tasks. The other would think the assignment was made by chance.

Most research participants faced with this simple situation assigned themselves the positive consequences task (.70 to .80, depending on the specific study), even though, in retrospect, very few (less than .10) said that this was the most morally right thing to do. Their action failed to fit their moral principles. This discrepancy was not, however, evidence of moral hypocrisy. It simply suggested moral weakness, that self-interest overpowered any desire to act morally.

Other participants faced a slightly more complex situation. The written instructions that informed them of the opportunity to assign

the tasks included a sentence designed to make the moral standard of procedural fairness salient: “Most participants feel that giving both people an equal chance—by, for example, flipping a coin—is the fairest way to assign themselves and the other participant to the tasks.” A coin was provided for participants to flip if they wished. Under these conditions, virtually all participants said, in retrospect, that either assigning the other participant the positive consequences task or using a fair method such as the coin flip was most moral. Yet only about half chose to flip the coin.

Of those who chose not to flip, most assigned themselves to the positive consequences task (.80 to .90, depending on the specific study). More interesting and revealing, the same was true among those who flipped the coin; most assigned themselves the positive consequences task (.85 to .90). In study after study, the proportion of participants who assign themselves the positive consequences task after flipping the coin has been significantly greater than the .50 that would be expected from an unbiased coin flip. This was true even in a study in which the coin was labeled *SELF to POS* on one side and *OTHER to POS* on the other side (POS being the positive consequences; Batson et al., 1999, Study 1); it was also true in a study in which the less desirable consequences were more negative—uncomfortable electric shocks (Batson, Tsang, & Thompson, 2001). Clearly, some participants who flip the coin are being deceptive; they do not abide by the outcome. To appear fair by flipping the coin yet still serve self-interest by ignoring the coin and assigning oneself the positive consequences task has been taken as evidence of moral hypocrisy.

Nor has the evidence of hypocrisy been limited to those who are relatively low in moral responsibility; quite the contrary. Batson et al. (1997, Study 2) found that an index of personal moral responsibility—which combined scores on Berkowitz and Lutterman’s (1968) Social Responsibility Scale, Schwartz’s (1968) Ascription of Responsibility Scale, and measures of Kohlberg’s (1976) justice perspective and Gilligan’s (1982) relationship–care perspective on moral issues—correlated positively with choosing to flip the coin ($r = .40$). Yet among participants who flipped the coin, those who scored higher on this moral responsibility index were no less likely to assign themselves to the positive consequences task than were those who scored low. Thus, those with a greater sense of moral responsibility did not show signs of greater moral integrity; they

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showed signs of greater hypocrisy. They were more likely to appear moral (flip the coin) but no more likely to actually be moral (allow the coin flip to determine the task assignment).

Self-Awareness and Appearing Moral by Being Moral

Other participants faced an even more complex situation. After receiving the fairness standard and coin to flip, they made the task assignment decision while sitting in front of a mirror. The mirror was used to increase self-awareness and, thereby, pressure to reduce the discrepancy between one's moral standard of fairness and one's task assignment behavior (Wicklund, 1975). Of 26 participants placed in this situation, none of whom said in retrospect that assigning oneself to the positive consequences task was most moral, 10 chose to flip the coin. And, in front of the mirror, the coin flip became scrupulously fair; of the 10 who flipped, exactly half assigned themselves to the positive consequences task. Apparently, having to face head on the discrepancy between one's avowed moral standard (be fair) and one's standard-violating behavior (unfairly ignoring the result of the coin flip) was too much. Those who wished to appear moral had to actually be moral.

Together, the results of these six studies provide considerable evidence of moral hypocrisy. They conform precisely to the pattern we would expect if the goal of at least some of those who flipped the coin was to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of being moral.

Another Possibility: Salience of Social Evaluation

Batson et al. (1999) assumed that a person motivated by moral hypocrisy wants to get the good feelings that accompany seeing oneself as moral—and to avoid the bad feelings that accompany seeing oneself as less than moral—yet still serve self-interest. The mirror made the coin flip fair because it highlighted awareness of the potential discrepancy between one's behavior and one's personal standards for appropriate action in this situation, jeopardizing self-reward. That is, the mirror increased the salience of personal evaluation. There is, however, another possible explanation of the ability of a mirror to make the coin flip honest: salience of social evaluation—or accountability (Adelberg & Batson, 1978; Baldwin & Holmes, 1987). Perhaps seeing themselves in the mirror reminded participants of how others might judge their actions, and participants acted fairly to live up not to their own standards but to the standards of these others.

If this explanation is correct, then the apparent evidence for moral hypocrisy is itself deceptive. Rather than a product of moral hypocrisy, it is a product of straightforward and simple social learning principles (Bandura, 1991). When one does not think about what others might consider right and fair (i.e., when the task assignment decision is totally private and so salience of social evaluation is low), one can bias the coin flip with impunity. When one does think about what others might consider fair (i.e., when the decision is made in front of a mirror and so salience of social evaluation is high), one feels compelled to act in accord with others' standards of fairness, resulting in an unbiased flip. The idea is not that participants are concerned simply to create a positive impression in the minds of others (Jones & Pittman, 1982); after all, no one else actually knows whether they flip the coin or, if so, cheat. The idea is that thinking about how others might judge their

action leads participants to apply these others' standards to their behavior, creating a desire not only to appear fair but also to be fair.

Study 1

Study 1 was designed to test the possibility that the salience of social evaluation, not the salience of personal evaluation assumed by a moral hypocrisy explanation, accounts for the fair coin flip in front of a mirror found by Batson et al. (1999). To provide a clear test of the social evaluation explanation, we used a more direct manipulation of social evaluation than a mirror. We manipulated whether participants' task assignment decision was private or public. Half of the participants were led to believe that (a) their task assignment decision was totally anonymous, (b) the other participant would think the tasks were assigned by chance, and (c) they and the other participant would never meet (private condition). This is the same information provided in previous moral hypocrisy studies. The other half were led to believe that (a) the other participant knew that they were making the task assignment decision, (b) the sheet on which they recorded their decision would be passed on to the other participant, and (c) after performing the tasks, they and the other participant would meet to discuss reactions to the study (public condition). We assumed that these last three pieces of information would make salient to participants both the evaluation of their decision by the other participant and the relevance of standards of fairness the other participant might deem appropriate.

In each experimental condition, there was space at the bottom of the assignment form for participants to describe, if they wished, how they made the task assignment decision. Also in each condition, participants were entirely alone when they made their task assignment decision. They thought that unless they told, no one else would know whether they flipped the coin or, if they flipped, who won. Therefore, participants still had the opportunity to appear moral yet avoid the cost of actually being moral.

Predictions

Predictions for the effect of this private–public manipulation on task assignment decisions vary depending on whether one assumes that the assignment is motivated by salience of social evaluation or by moral hypocrisy. If prior results that have been interpreted as evidence of moral hypocrisy are actually a product of low salience of social evaluation, then among those choosing to flip the coin, assignments should show bias in favor of the self in the private condition but should be fair in the public condition.

If prior results are a product of moral hypocrisy, then among those choosing to flip the coin, assignments should show the same bias in the public condition as in the private condition. Indeed, the public condition might well make participants even more aware of an opportunity to appear moral (they could say that they flipped the coin) without having to actually be fair (they could claim to have won regardless how the flip turned out). If this occurred, then in the public condition more participants should flip the coin, but the subsequent task assignment decision should not be any more fair.

Method

Participants. Participants in Study 1 were 20 female introductory psychology students at the University of Kansas receiving credit toward a course requirement. Using a randomized block procedure, we assigned 10 participants to each experimental condition (private; public). On the basis of probes during debriefing, 1 additional student who had been assigned to the private condition was dropped from the design and replaced because she expressed doubt about the presence of another participant. The sample was restricted to women because the only available experimenter was a woman and we wished to avoid cross-gender self-presentational concerns (Jones & Pittman, 1982). This restriction was not considered a problem because previous studies using the task assignment procedure that included both men and women had found no gender effects (Batson et al., 1999).

Procedure. The general procedure for Study 1 was the same used by Batson et al. (1997, Study 2). Therefore, only aspects of the procedure not described by them are presented in detail.

As in the previous study, all participants were led to believe that they had the opportunity to assign themselves and another same-sex research participant to tasks. One task had positive consequences (the chance to earn raffle tickets). The other task had neutral consequences (no chance to earn raffle tickets) and was described as rather dull and boring. Participants were reminded of the standard of fairness and were provided a coin (a quarter) to flip if they wished.

Manipulation of privacy of the task assignment decision. Unlike in Batson et al. (1997), privacy of the task assignment decision was experimentally manipulated. In a written introduction, participants in the private condition read, "Although there are 2 participants in this session, you will work on your tasks independently, and you will not meet the other participant." Those in the public condition read,

Although there are 2 participants in this session, you will work on your tasks independently. After you have each finished performing your task, we will bring the two of you together to share with one another your thoughts and feelings about the tasks and about your experiences in the study.

The experimenter was not aware which version of the introduction a given participant read.

The sheet that informed participants of their opportunity to assign the tasks provided additional information about the privacy of their assignment decision. After being told that one participant was sometimes asked to assign the tasks, participants in the private condition read, "The other participant is entirely unaware of this, simply being told that the tasks were assigned by chance." This sentence was omitted for participants in the public condition. Further, participants in the private condition read,

The other participant does not and will not know that you are assigning tasks; he or she will think that the task assignment was purely by chance. Because of this and because the two of you will never meet, your anonymity is assured.

Participants in the public condition instead read,

The other participant will simply be informed that you assigned the tasks and which of you will do the positive consequences task and which will do the neutral consequences task. As explained earlier, you will work on your tasks independently. Then, after you have each finished performing your task, we will bring the two of you together to share with one another your thoughts and feelings about the tasks and about your experiences in the study.

Once again, the experimenter was unaware which version of this sheet each participant read.

Task assignment. After the assignment options had been described, all participants were instructed to make their decision, report it on an enclosed

task assignment form, and return the form to the folder. On the form, below the space to assign the tasks, participants in the public condition read a reminder:

Note: We will pass this sheet along to the other participant so that he or she can know to which task, positive or neutral, you assigned him or her. Once you have each completed your tasks, we will bring the two of you together to share with one another your thoughts and feelings about the tasks and about your experiences in the study.

After this reminder, participants in the public condition read, "If you wish, briefly describe below how you made your task assignment decision. This information will be passed along to the other participant." This statement was followed by two blank lines on which participants could describe how they made their decision.

Participants in the private condition read no reminder. They simply read, "If you wish, briefly describe below how you made your task assignment decision." This statement was followed by two blank lines.

Perceptions of the morality of one's decision. After participants filled out the task assignment form, they completed several questionnaires. Included on a task assignment reaction questionnaire were two questions that assessed perceptions of morality. The first question was open ended and asked about the most morally right way to assign the tasks: "In your opinion, what was the most morally right way to assign the task consequences?" Three blank lines were provided on which to write an answer. In a different section of the reaction questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the morality of their own decision on a 9-point scale: "Do you think the way you made the task assignment was morally right?" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *yes, totally*). The first question assessed participants' general perception of the morally right way to assign tasks, and the second assessed perceptions of the morality of their own assignment behavior.

Relative importance of one's own welfare, of the other participant's welfare, and of being fair. Also on the reaction questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the importance of five concerns for their task assignment decision: "concern for your own welfare," "concern for the welfare of the other participant," "concern to be fair or just," "concern for treating both you and the other participant equally," and "concern to give both you and the other participant an equal opportunity to be assigned to the positive consequences task" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very important* for each concern). We included these ratings to assess participants' claims about the relative importance for their task assignment decision of their own welfare, of the other participant's welfare, and of being fair. The last three concerns were all designed to assess the importance of fairness.

Check on the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. Also included on the reaction questionnaire was a question that provided a check on the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. Participants were asked, "Did the other participant think that the task assignment was being made purely by chance or that you were making the assignment?" Participants were asked to indicate their answer by placing a check mark by one of two options: "The other participant thought the task assignment was being made: ____ Purely by chance; ____ By you."

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. As expected, all 10 participants in the private condition said that the other participant thought the task assignment was being made purely by chance. Only 1 of the 10 participants in the public condition said this (perhaps because she had reported on the assignment sheet that she flipped the coin); the other 9 said that the other participant thought the task assignment was being made by them. This difference was highly reliable, $\chi^2(1, N = 20) = 16.36, p < .0005$, and indicates that the private-public manipulation was effective.

The most morally right way to assign the tasks. In previous moral hypocrisy studies, the vast majority of participants provided

with the option of flipping the coin have said that using the coin (or some other random method) is the most morally right way to assign the tasks (Batson et al., 1997, 1999). Quite consistent with what had been found previously, all 10 participants in each experimental condition of Study 1 said that using the coin was the most morally right way to assign the tasks.

Task assignment. The procedure in the private condition was an exact replication of the procedure in Batson et al.'s (1997) Study 2, so we expected to find, as had they, that about half the participants in this condition would flip the coin. We also expected to find that regardless of whether participants flipped the coin, the vast majority would assign themselves to the positive consequences task.

As can be seen in Column 1 of Table 1, 4 of the 10 participants in the private condition chose to flip the coin. All 6 of those who chose not to flip assigned themselves the positive consequences task; all 4 of those who flipped the coin did, too. Thus, overall, all 10 participants in the private condition assigned themselves the positive consequences task. Clearly, use of the coin did not increase the probability of the other participant receiving the positive consequences. Still, when asked later about the morality of the way they made the task assignment, those in this condition who gave themselves the positive consequences task after flipping the coin felt that they had acted more morally ($M = 6.75$ on the 1–9 scale) than did those who gave themselves the positive consequences without flipping the coin ($M = 3.00$), $t(8) = 2.40$, $p < .05$, two-tailed. (For convenience, all statistical tests are reported two-tailed, even for directional predictions.) In sum, results of the coin flip in the private condition reveal the same self-serving bias yet appearance of morality that has been taken as evidence of moral hypocrisy.

What about participants in the public condition? Did their awareness that the other participant knew that they were making the task assignment lead more of them to flip the coin? Did it make the outcome of the coin flip more fair? As can be seen in Column 2 of Table 1, the answer to the first of these questions is yes, but the answer to the second is no. In the public condition, 9 of the 10 participants flipped the coin, and of these 9, 8 assigned themselves the positive consequences task. The proportion who apparently won the coin flip (.89) differed significantly from the .50 that would be expected to occur by chance, $z = 2.33$, $p < .02$, providing a replication of the biased coin flip that has been taken as evidence of moral hypocrisy. The 1 participant who did not flip the coin also assigned herself the positive consequences task.

Table 1
Task Assignment Decisions of Participants in Each Experimental Condition of Study 1

Task assignment decision	Experimental condition	
	Private	Public
Not flip coin and		
Assign self to positive task	6	1
Assign other to positive task	0	0
Flip coin and		
Assign self to positive task	4	8
Assign other to positive task	0	1
Total	10	10

Given that only 1 participant did not flip the coin in the public condition, we could not test the significance of the difference in perceived morality of the way participants made the task assignment. Still, we observed that the 8 who gave themselves the positive consequences task after flipping the coin rated the morality of their action quite high ($M = 7.75$), whereas the 1 who did not flip the coin rated the morality low (3). This pattern parallels the pattern found in the private condition and in previous moral hypocrisy studies.

A comparison of results across the two experimental conditions revealed that the proportion choosing to flip the coin in the public condition (.90) was significantly greater than the proportion choosing to flip the coin in the private condition (.40), $z = 2.11$, $p < .04$. (All tests of between-groups comparisons on dichotomous measures are based on loglinear analyses; Fienberg, 1980; Wickens, 1989.) The proportion assigning the other participant to the positive consequences task was not reliably different across conditions (.00 for private; .10 for public), $z < 1.0$, *ns*.

What participants wrote about how they assigned the tasks. Unlike previous moral hypocrisy studies, participants in Study 1 were given the opportunity on the task assignment form to describe how they made the task assignment decision. Those in the public condition thought that what they wrote would be passed on to the other participant; those in the private condition did not. Examination of what participants wrote revealed that responses could be easily classified into three categories: (a) participant wrote nothing, (b) participant wrote that she directly chose the positive consequences for herself (either to gain a chance at the gift certificate or to avoid the neutral consequences task, which had been described as dull and boring), (c) participant wrote that she flipped the coin.

In the public condition, all 9 participants who flipped the coin wrote that they flipped. The 1 participant who did not flip wrote nothing. In the private condition, of the 6 participants who did not flip the coin, 2 wrote nothing; the other 4 wrote that they chose the positive consequences task for themselves. Of the 4 who flipped the coin, 3 wrote that they flipped; 1 wrote that she chose the positive consequences task for herself (she explained in the debriefing that the coin flip went against her, so she ignored it). The pattern in the two conditions was significantly different, $\chi^2(2, N = 20) = 8.33$, $p < .02$.

It seemed clear that most participants in the public condition wanted the other participant to know that they had flipped the coin, even though their use of the coin did not noticeably improve the other participant's chances of being assigned to the positive consequences task. Participants in the private condition were less concerned with appearances. Half were willing to report, truthfully, that they simply assigned themselves to the positive consequences task. None in the public condition said this.

Importance of own welfare and of being fair. On the reaction questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the importance for the task assignment decision of their own welfare, of the other participant's welfare, and of fairness. As can be seen in Table 2, participants in both the private and the public conditions rated their concern for the welfare of the other participant as moderate ($M_s = 4.60$ and 4.20 , respectively, on the 1–9 scale). There were, however, differences between the conditions in participants' ratings of the importance of their own welfare and of being fair. Participants in the public condition rated concern for their own

Table 2
Mean Importance of Different Concerns When Making the Task Assignment Decision in Each Experimental Condition of Study 1

Concern	Experimental condition				<i>t</i> (18)	<i>p</i>
	Private		Public			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Own welfare	5.80	2.04	3.90	1.73	−2.24	.04
Welfare of other participant	4.60	1.26	4.20	2.25	0.49	<i>ns</i>
Be fair or just	5.10	1.85	7.90	1.91	3.33	.004
Treat both equally	4.80	2.10	8.20	1.62	4.06	.001
Give both an equal opportunity	4.70	2.06	8.10	1.60	4.13	.001

Note. *N* = 10 in each condition. Specific wording for each concern was, "Concern for your own welfare"; "Concern for the welfare of the other participant"; "Concern to be fair or just"; "Concern for treating both you and the other participant equally"; "Concern to give both you and the other participant an equal opportunity to be assigned to the positive consequences task." Participants were asked to rate the importance of each concern for their task assignment decision on a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very important*).

welfare as less important ($M = 3.90$) than did participants in the private condition ($M = 5.80$), $t(18) = -2.24$, $p < .04$. Participants in the public condition rated concern for fairness as more important (M s = 7.90, 8.20, and 8.10 for the three fairness items, respectively) than did participants in the private condition (M s = 5.10, 4.80, and 4.70), $t(18) > 3.00$, $ps < .005$. Recall, however, that their coin flip was no more fair.

Reflecting participants' perception that use of a fair method (e.g., flipping the coin) was the most morally right way to make the task assignment, the rated importance of each of the three fairness concerns correlated significantly with the perceived morality of the way one made the assignment decision. These correlations were highly positive both overall and within each experimental condition, all $rs > .65$, all $ps < .03$.

Failure to find support for a social evaluation explanation. Given that the public condition of Study 1 was a far more direct way than a mirror to increase the salience of social evaluation, our results challenge a social evaluation explanation of the ability of a mirror to make the coin flip honest that had been observed by Batson et al. (1999, Study 2). Apparently, that honesty was not because the mirror served to motivate participants to bring their behavior in line with social standards. Had it been, then our more direct social evaluation induction—leading participants to believe that the other participant knew they were assigning the tasks—should also have made the coin flip honest, which it did not. As the theory of objective self-awareness predicts, participants in front of the mirror seem to have been motivated to bring their behavior in line with personal standards (Wicklund, 1975).

Support for a moral hypocrisy explanation. Results of Study 1 are very consistent with a moral hypocrisy explanation, which claims that participants are concerned to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of being moral. This concern should be intensified if there is an opportunity to appear—or fail to appear—moral to another as well as to oneself, as was true in the public condition. Accordingly, a moral hypocrisy explanation predicted increased use of the coin in that condition, which is what we found. The present procedure still allowed participants to appear moral

without actually having to be moral. They could flip the coin (or report that they had), yet even if the flip went against them, they could still assign themselves to the positive consequences task. It seems that some participants, especially in the public condition, did just this, thereby appearing moral while avoiding the cost of being moral.

Study 2

A consistent finding in Study 1 and in previous moral hypocrisy studies has been that participants who assign themselves to the positive consequences task after flipping the coin rate the morality of the way they make the task assignment decision higher than do participants who assign themselves to the positive consequences condition without flipping the coin—even though the coin flip has no noticeable effect on the assignment decision. This difference in rated morality has been taken as further evidence of moral hypocrisy. Perhaps, however, the higher morality reported by those who assign themselves to the positive consequences task after flipping the coin (compared with those who do so without flipping) is not a product of moral hypocrisy. Perhaps it is because those who flip, win, and then assign themselves to the positive consequences task rate the morality of their action high, whereas those who flip, lose, but still assign themselves to the positive consequences task rate the morality of their action low.

Those who actually win the flip have every right to rate the morality of their action high. They have used an entirely fair procedure to determine who is assigned to which task. If those who lose but still assign themselves the positive consequences task rate the morality of their action no higher than do those who assign themselves the positive without going through the charade of a coin flip, then no hypocrisy need be involved. The results could be due to a mixture of some participants acting morally and some not, with the former claiming to have acted morally and the latter not. If so, then the results might provide evidence of moral weakness but not of moral hypocrisy.

This possibility highlights the desirability of knowing which participants, especially among those who flipped the coin and then assigned themselves to the positive consequences task, actually won the coin flip. To permit us to know who won, we developed a procedure that combined (a) surreptitious observation of participants by the experimenter while they made the task assignment decision with (b) a modified version of the labeled coin procedure used previously by Batson et al. (1999, Study 1). The modification was to have the label on each side of the coin be a different color, making it possible for the observing experimenter to see which label was up. Accordingly, in Study 2 we placed participants in the task assignment dilemma (private condition) and provided them a labeled coin to flip if they wished. One side of the coin was labeled *SELF to POS*; the other side was labeled *OTHER to POS* (POS being the positive consequences). The first label was yellow; the second was blue.

Predictions

We expected that more of the participants in Study 2 would choose to flip the coin than had in the private condition of Study 1. In the one previous moral hypocrisy study in which participants were provided with a labeled coin, Batson et al. (1999, Study 1)

found that .70 chose to flip—perhaps because flipping a labeled coin appeared more clearly moral. Also as in that study, we expected the vast majority to assign themselves to the positive consequences task, regardless of whether they flipped the coin. Further, we expected that those who either assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task or flipped the coin, honestly won, and assigned themselves the positive would rate the morality of their action quite high, higher than would the remaining participants. Expectations differed, however, for the rated morality of their action by those participants who used the coin (or said that they did), did not win the flip, and yet assigned themselves the positive consequences task.

If these participants were ready to admit that they had not assigned the tasks fairly (moral weakness), then their rating of the morality of the way they assigned the tasks should be no higher than the ratings of participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without flipping the coin. In contrast, if these participants wished to appear moral yet avoid the cost of being so (moral hypocrisy), then their ratings of the morality of their action should be higher than the ratings of participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without flipping the coin.

Knowing who won the coin flip would also allow more precise assessment of the relation between moral hypocrisy and individual differences in moral responsibility. Recall that Batson et al. (1997) had found that individual-differences measures of moral responsibility were significantly positively correlated with flipping the coin but were not significantly correlated with task assignment. This pattern suggested that the moral motivation associated with higher scores on these measures was moral hypocrisy, not moral integrity. Perhaps, however, the reason the correlation with task assignment was not significant was because the assignment of self to the positive consequences task by those who honestly won the coin flip obscured the relationship. Perhaps if individuals who honestly won the coin flip were excluded from the analysis, measures of moral responsibility would predict not only who chose to flip the coin but also who assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task.

Method

Participants. Participants for Study 2 were 44 introductory psychology students (28 women, 16 men) at the University of Kansas receiving credit toward a course requirement. On the basis of probes during debriefing, 1 additional woman and 1 additional man were dropped from the design and replaced because they expressed doubt about the presence of another participant. To avoid cross-gender self-presentation concerns (Jones & Pittman, 1982), we ensured that each participant was conducted through the study by a same-sex experimenter. More women than men were included in the sample because the female experimenter had more times available to schedule participants.

Procedure. The procedure for Study 2 was identical to the procedure described earlier for the private condition of Study 1, except for the following four modifications.

First, as in Study 1, a coin (a quarter) was provided for participants to flip if they wished, but in Study 2 the coin had a round sticker on each side. The exposed side had a yellow sticker and was labeled *SELF to POS*; the other side had a blue sticker and was labeled *OTHER to POS*.

Second, in Study 1 an opportunity to describe the decision had been included in the private condition to provide comparability with the public condition, in which it served as an opportunity to appear moral to the other

participant. In Study 2, all participants were told that the task assignment decision was entirely anonymous. Therefore, we omitted the opportunity to describe how the decision was made.

Third, unknown to participants, the experimenter observed whether they flipped the coin. The research-cubicle door, which was to the right and behind where the participants sat and so was outside their visual field, had a small window. This window was covered, but there was a small gap in the cover through which the experimenter could see whether participants flipped the coin and, if so, which color label came up.

Fourth, all participants completed measures of moral responsibility at a questionnaire session held 1–14 days before their laboratory session. When originally scheduled, participants were told that there would be two questionnaire sessions and that they would receive research credit for each. Once participants arrived for the first session, they learned that it had been necessary to cancel the second. The assistant administering the questionnaires explained that to fulfill the researchers' obligation to provide two sessions and the associated research credit, arrangements had been made to schedule participants for a second, unrelated study. This second study was actually our laboratory session. We scheduled participants for the laboratory session in this way to reduce the likelihood that they would perceive a relation between it and the questionnaire session.

Included among the measures completed at the questionnaire session were the four that Batson et al. (1997) had used to measure personal moral responsibility—Berkowitz and Lutterman's (1968) Social Responsibility Scale, Schwartz's (1968) Ascription of Responsibility Scale, and single-item measures of Kohlberg's (1976) justice perspective and Gilligan's (1982) relationship-care perspective on moral issues (see Batson et al., 1997, for a description of each of these measures). In addition, we also included Davis's (1983) Empathic Concern Scale. This scale contains eight items, such as "I often have tender, concerned feelings for other people less fortunate than me." Some researchers have interpreted this scale as a measure of readiness to be sensitive to the plight of others (e.g., Davis, 1994; Eisenberg et al., 1989), which should encourage moral integrity. Others have interpreted it as a measure of desire to see oneself as—rather than to be—a kind, caring person (Batson, Bolen, Cross, & Neuringer-Benefiel, 1986), which should encourage moral hypocrisy. The former interpretation suggests that scores on the Empathic Concern Scale should correlate positively both with choosing to flip the coin and with readiness to assign the other participant to the positive consequences task (after excluding those who honestly won the coin flip). The latter interpretation suggests that scores should correlate positively with choosing to flip the coin but not with readiness to assign the other participant to the positive consequences task (even after exclusion).

Results and Discussion

Choosing to flip the coin. Of the 44 participants in Study 2, 32 (.73) chose to flip the labeled coin. This proportion was quite comparable to the 28 of 40, or .70, who flipped the coin in the only previous study in which participants were provided with a labeled coin (Batson et al., 1999, Study 1).

The most morally right way to assign the tasks. As might be expected given the high rate of flipping the coin, a majority of participants thought that this was the most moral way to assign the tasks. Of the 32 who flipped, 26 said that flipping the coin (or using some other random method) was most morally right; the remaining 6 said that assigning the other the positive consequences was most moral. Of the 12 who did not flip, 7 said flipping the coin was most morally right, 4 said assigning the other the positive consequences, and 1 said there was no morally right way to assign the tasks. No one thought assigning oneself to the positive consequences task was most moral. (There were no reliable sex effects—main effects or interactions—on this or any other measure.)

Task assignment. In spite of what they thought was morally right, 9 of the 12 participants who chose not to flip the coin (.75) assigned themselves to the positive consequences task, leaving the dull and boring task for the other participant; only 3 assigned the other person to the positive consequences. More important, of the 32 who chose to flip the coin, 27 (.84) assigned themselves to the positive consequences task. This proportion differs significantly from the .50 that would occur by chance when participants flipped a coin, $z = 3.89$, $p < .001$, indicating that we had once again found the biased coin flip that has been taken as evidence of moral hypocrisy. Clearly, for many participants there was a discrepancy between their task assignment behavior and their moral standard.

Role of the coin in task assignment. The experimenter's surreptitious observation of the task assignment, combined with the easily visible yellow and blue labels on the coin, allowed us to move beyond knowledge of bias to knowledge of which participants who flipped the coin actually won the flip. We classified participants' task assignment behavior into four categories: (a) assign other to positive task (8 participants did this—3 without flipping the coin, 5 with); (b) flip the coin, get *SELF* to *POS*, assign self to positive task (11 participants did this); (c) not flip the coin, assign self to positive task (9 participants did this); and (d) flip the coin, get *OTHER* to *POS* or otherwise fiddle the coin flip, assign self to positive task (16 participants did this). The rated morality of their action by the 16 participants in the final category was our primary interest.

Before presenting results and analyses for participants' rated morality of their action, we should explain the criteria for inclusion in the final category Classification into each of the other three categories was simple, but classification into the final category was more complex. It included participants who arrived at their task assignment in three different ways. First, 5 participants flipped the coin once, got *OTHER* to *POS*, yet assigned themselves to the positive consequences task. Second, 7 participants used the coin but rigged the flip so that they won. For example, several participants who lost the initial coin flip flipped the coin again until it came up *SELF* to *POS*. When asked in the postdecision interview how the coin came up initially, each of these participants said that the initial flip favored them. Third, 4 participants did not flip the coin at all but reported on the task assignment reaction questionnaire and in the postdecision interview that they did. One of these participants did take the coin out of its pouch but never flipped it. The other 3 did not touch the coin, even though in debriefing they reported, respectively: "I flipped the coin . . . I think the coin was the fair way to do it"; "I flipped; best 2 out of 3"; "I wanted the positive consequences, but I flipped the coin to make things fair."

We classified these three ways of making the task assignment together because each involved at least a claim to have used the coin, but each also involved not really letting the coin determine who got which task. Given that they fiddled the coin flip so that it came out in their favor, we called these 16 participants *fiddlers*. Having used the coin in this way, did these 16 participants claim to have acted morally? Or were they willing to admit that what they had done was no more moral than assigning themselves the positive consequences task without reference to the coin at all?

Perceived morality of the assignment. When participants in past moral hypocrisy studies had been asked whether they thought the way they made the task assignment decision was morally right

(1 = *not at all*, 9 = *yes, totally*), those who flipped the coin reported thinking what they had done was more morally right than did those who did not flip. We, too, found that participants who flipped the coin thought the way they made the decision was more morally right ($M = 6.72$) than did participants who did not flip ($M = 4.92$), $t(42) = 2.38$, $p < .03$. This was true even though those who flipped were as likely as were those who did not to assign themselves the positive consequences task.

Our knowledge of participants' task assignment behavior allowed us to conduct a more fine-grained analysis of rated morality than had been possible in past studies. Table 3 presents, separately for each of the four task assignment behavior categories, participants' mean ratings of the morality of the way they made the task assignment decision. As can be seen, those in Category 1, who assigned the other to the positive consequences task, rated the morality of the way they made the decision quite high ($M = 8.50$); so did those in Category 2, who flipped the coin, won, and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task ($M = 7.45$). In contrast, participants in Category 3, who did not flip the coin and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task, rated the morality of the way they made the task assignment decision relatively low ($M = 3.89$). Participants in Category 4, who fiddled the coin flip and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task, rated the morality of the way they made the decision moderately high ($M = 5.56$).

To test our predictions concerning rated morality, we conducted three planned comparisons using orthogonal contrasts. First, we compared the ratings of participants in Categories 1 and 2 with those of participants in Categories 3 and 4, and we found a highly significant difference, $F(1, 40) = 35.15$, $p < .001$. Clearly, as expected, those who either assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task (Category 1) or flipped the coin, honestly won, and assigned themselves the positive consequences task (Category 2) rated their action as more moral than did those who assigned themselves the positive consequences task without honestly winning the coin flip. Second, we compared the ratings of participants in Category 1 with those of participants in Category 2, and we found no reliable difference, $F(1, 40) = 1.64$, $p > .20$. Third, we compared the ratings of participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without flipping the coin (Category 3) with those of participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task after fiddling the flip (Category 4); this was the comparison of most interest. As predicted, participants in Category 4 rated the morality of their action significantly higher than did participants in Category 3, $F(1,$

Table 3
Mean Rated Morality of the Way They Assigned the Tasks by Participants in Four Task Assignment Behavior Categories of Study 2

Task assignment behavior category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Assign other to positive task	8	8.50	0.76
Flip the coin, win, and assign self to positive task	11	7.45	1.37
Not flip the coin, assign self to positive task	9	3.89	1.45
Fiddle the coin flip, assign self to positive task	16	5.56	2.37

Note. Of those who assigned the other to the positive task, 3 did so without flipping the coin, and 5 did so after flipping.

40) = 5.22, $p < .03$. Nor was the higher rating among Category 4 participants a function of only one type of fiddler (e.g., those who rigged the flip); a comparison of rated morality among the three types did not approach statistical significance, $F < 1.0$.

In sum, even though the coin had no more effect on their decision than it had on the decision of those who did not claim to use the coin at all, the fiddlers still said they thought the way they made the task assignment decision was more moral. Their sham reference to use of the coin seems to have provided sufficient appearance of morality that they could claim to have acted, if not totally morally, at least moderately so. And by fiddling their use of the coin, they made sure that they got the more desirable task. They were able to appear moral—or at least not immoral—without incurring the cost of being moral.

At the same time, participants who fiddled the coin flip to assign themselves the positive consequences task rated the morality of their action significantly lower ($p < .01$) than did both (a) those who assigned the other to the positive consequences task (Category 1) and (b) those who assigned themselves the positive consequences task after flipping the coin and honestly winning (Category 2). Those who fiddled the coin flip were willing to admit that the way they made the task assignment decision was not totally morally right.

Importance of own welfare and of being fair. As in Study 1, on the reaction questionnaire, participants rated the importance for the task assignment decision of their own welfare, of the other participant's welfare, and of fairness. As can be seen in Table 4, participants who assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task (Category 1) and participants who flipped the coin, honestly won, and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task (Category 2) had similar ratings for the importance of each concern (between-groups t s < 1.0 for each of the five concerns). Participants in these two categories tended to rate the three fairness concerns highest, followed by concern for the other participant's welfare, which, in turn, they rated higher than concern for their own welfare. These relative ratings seem quite justified in the case of those who assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task (Category 1). One wonders if they are as justified in the case of those who flipped the coin, won, and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task (Category 2). What would these participants have done had the coin not come

up in their favor? The prevalence of fiddlers among participants who lost the initial flip suggests that not all would have allowed the coin to determine their fate. Nor would all have been able to rate the morality of their action so high.

Compared with each of these first two groups, participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without flipping the coin (Category 3) rated the importance of concern for their own welfare higher ($ps < .04$), concern for the other participant's welfare lower ($ps < .03$), and each of the three fairness concerns lower ($ps < .01$). The 16 fiddlers (Category 4) did not differ reliably from any of the other three groups in the rated importance of concern for their own welfare or for the other participant's welfare. The fiddlers' fairness ratings closely resembled and did not differ statistically from those of participants in either Category 1 or Category 2 (all t s < 1.60). But they rated the importance of each of the three fairness concerns higher than did participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without flipping the coin ($ps < .01$). The fiddlers rated fairness high despite the fact that they, too, assigned themselves to the positive consequences task and did so after claiming to use the coin yet not allowing it to affect their decision.

As in Study 1, the rated importance of each of the three fairness concerns correlated significantly with the perceived morality of the way one made the task assignment decision. These correlations were highly positive, all r s $> .55$, all $ps < .001$, reflecting once again participants' perception that the use of a fair method (e.g., flipping the coin) was the most morally right way to make the task assignment.

In sum, the ratings of the importance of the various concerns provided additional evidence that the 16 fiddlers were motivated to appear to have acted in a fair, moral way. They avowed a concern to be fair and to give both themselves and the other participant an equal opportunity to be assigned the positive consequences task. Yet they made sure that they were the one who got the positive consequences.

Correlations with dispositional measures of moral responsibility. Batson et al. (1997) had found that three of their four measures of moral responsibility correlated significantly with flipping the coin. Their correlations were as follows: Social Responsibility Scale ($r = .47$), a single-item measure of concern for justice in social conflict situations (.24), and a single-item measure of con-

Table 4
Mean Importance of Different Concerns When Making the Task Assignment Decision in Each Task Assignment Behavior Category of Study 2

Concern	Task assignment behavior category							
	1		2		3		4	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Own welfare	3.38	1.41	3.64	2.29	5.67	2.45	5.19	2.23
Welfare of other participant	5.25	1.75	5.09	2.07	3.44	1.13	4.19	1.38
Be fair or just	7.50	1.93	7.45	1.69	4.00	1.22	6.38	2.00
Treat both equally	7.25	1.75	7.18	1.72	4.33	2.00	6.56	2.06
Give both an equal opportunity	6.88	2.80	7.73	1.42	4.22	1.92	7.06	1.73

Note. The four task assignment behavior categories were as follows: (a) assign other to positive task ($n = 8$), (b) flip the coin, win, and assign self to positive task ($n = 11$), (c) not flip the coin, assign self to positive task ($n = 9$), and (d) fiddle the coin flip, assign self to positive task ($n = 16$).

cern for relationship–care in social conflict situations (.41). None of their moral responsibility measures, however, correlated significantly with assigning the other person to the positive consequences task. We added the Empathic Concern Scale, and we found a similar pattern of correlations. Across the entire sample, flipping the coin was positively correlated with scores on the Social Responsibility Scale, $r(42) = .41, p < .01$, scores on the Empathic Concern Scale ($r = .37, p < .02$), and (weakly) with reported concern for justice ($r = .23, ns$) and for relationship–care ($r = .16, ns$). None of our moral responsibility measures, however, correlated reliably with assigning the other person to the positive consequences task (correlations ranged from $-.18$ to $.14$).

We were especially interested in these correlations when the 11 participants who flipped the coin, got *SELF to POS*, and assigned themselves to the positive consequences task (Category 2) were excluded. Among the remaining 33 participants, did the moral responsibility measures correlate positively not only with flipping the coin but also with assigning the other participant to the positive consequences task? They did not. Instead, the correlations looked much the same as for the entire sample. Correlations with flipping the coin were, in the order presented above, $.46 (p < .01)$, $.37 (p < .04)$, $.31 (p < .08)$, and $.28 (p < .12)$. But once again, none of the moral responsibility measures correlated reliably with assigning the other person to the positive consequences task (correlations ranged from $-.16$ to $.13$). These correlations provide even clearer evidence that the motivation associated with higher scores on these measures is moral hypocrisy, not moral integrity. (For none of these measures were differences across the four task assignment behavior categories reliable).

General Discussion

Psychologists have given relatively little attention to the character of moral motivation. Those who have considered moral motivation at all have focused on its strength and power to stand up to temptation—or not (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Hartshorne & May, 1928; Hartshorne, May, & Maller, 1929). Even if weak, moral motivation has been assumed pure in intent. Its goal has been assumed to be, simply, to act in accord with one's moral standards or principles (moral integrity). To propose that the goal of at least some moral motivation is to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of actually being moral (moral hypocrisy) casts doubt on this simple assumption. It also provides a reason other than insufficient inculcation of moral standards or situational pressure to account for failure to act in accord with moral principles (Batson et al., 1999). To the degree that individuals are motivated not to actually be but only to appear moral, whenever they can manage this appearance without incurring the cost of actually being moral, they should.

Results of the six studies designed to test for the existence of a moral hypocrisy motive suggest not only that this motive exists but also that it is powerful and pervasive (Batson et al., 1997, 1999). Participants who were allowed to appear fair and moral by flipping a coin to assign themselves and another research participant to tasks yet still benefit themselves by claiming that the coin assigned them to the more desirable task often did just this.

However, before concluding that a moral hypocrisy motive is powerful and pervasive, it is important that we be sure that the evidence supporting this conclusion cannot be explained in other

ways. We considered possible alternative explanations for three key elements of the supporting evidence.

First, in Study 1 we considered an alternative explanation for the basic moral hypocrisy effect—coin flip followed by self-serving task assignment. Might this effect be explained in terms of salience of social evaluation?

To test whether being induced to think about how others—especially another affected by one's action—will evaluate the action motivates people to be fair even when they can still favor themselves, we led some research participants to believe their task assignment decision would be public. We found that this belief increased the proportion of participants who flipped the coin, but it did not reduce bias in the task assignment. Of the 9 participants in the public condition who flipped the coin, 8 claimed to have won. The finding of an increased rate of flipping the coin but not increased fairness of the result is entirely consistent with a moral hypocrisy explanation. It is not consistent with a salience of social evaluation explanation. Apparently, the bias observed in these and other moral hypocrisy studies is a product of more than insufficient salience of social standards.

Second, in Study 2 we considered an alternative explanation for the finding that those who assign themselves to the positive consequences task after flipping (or claiming to flip) the coin rated the morality of the way they made the task assignment decision higher than did those who assign themselves the positive consequences task without reference to the coin. We considered the possibility that this finding was a product of two distinct processes. First, those who flip the coin and honestly win may (quite appropriately) rate the morality of their action high. Second, those who falsely claim to have won the coin flip may rate the morality of their action no higher than do those who assign themselves to the positive consequences task without reference to the coin. If the relatively high ratings of morality are a product of those two processes, then the biased result of the coin flip seems to be evidence of moral weakness, not moral hypocrisy.

To test this possibility, we needed to know who actually won the coin flip and who did not. We were able to gain this knowledge in Study 2 while still having participants believe that their task assignment decision was totally private. We did this by placing different colored labels on the two sides of the coin; one label specified *SELF to POS*, and the other specified *OTHER to POS*. The experimenter then surreptitiously observed participants' task assignment behavior to see whether they flipped the coin and, if so, which color label came up. This observation revealed three ways that participants fiddled the coin flip, claiming to have won without actually doing so. Some simply chose to ignore the result of the flip, some rigged the flip so that it appeared to come out in their favor, and some claimed to have flipped the coin without doing so.

On average, these fiddlers rated the morality of the way they made the task assignment decision lower than did either participants who assigned the other participant to the positive consequences task or participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task after honestly winning the coin flip. Yet these fiddlers rated the morality of the way they made the decision higher than did participants who assigned themselves to the positive consequences task without claiming to have used the coin. This difference, which was also reflected in claimed concern to be fair, seems far more consistent with a moral hypocrisy explanation than a moral weakness explanation.

For whose benefit were the fiddlers' charades with the coin enacted? In most cases, they seem to have been enacted for the fiddler's own benefit. All participants in Study 2 were alone when they made the task assignment decision, were quite unaware that they were being observed by the experimenter, and believed that the other participant would never know how they assigned the tasks or even that they had made the assignment. Yet only 4 of the 16 fiddlers adopted the directly duplicitous strategy of claiming to have flipped the coin without actually doing so. The other 12 went through the motions of being fair by flipping the coin, only to ignore or fiddle the outcome to their personal advantage. To an outside observer, these charades with the coin may not seem very moral, but they were apparently good enough to merit a moderately high rating of morality.

Third, also in Study 2 we reexamined the finding of Batson et al. (1997) that the moral motivation associated with measures of self-reported moral responsibility was moral hypocrisy, not moral integrity. Perhaps the lack of association of these measures with the task assignment decision in the Batson et al. (1997) studies was due to responses of those participants who honestly won the coin flip. We found no support for this alternative. Even after excluding responses of those participants in Study 2 who honestly won the coin flip, we still found that several of these measures correlated positively with flipping (or claiming to flip) the coin, yet none correlated positively with assigning the other participant to the positive consequences task. This finding provides further evidence that the motivation associated with measures of self-reported moral responsibility is moral hypocrisy.

Conclusion

We began by noting that moral motivation can be deceptive. What may look like motivation to be moral (moral integrity) often is not. It is instead motivation to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of actually being moral (moral hypocrisy). To recognize the prevalence of moral deception certainly complicates our understanding of moral motivation. But this recognition seems to be a crucial step in unraveling the mysteries of why people act morally—and why, all too often, they do not.

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