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The Differential Effects of Bases for Moral Behavior and Major Field of Study Upon Moral Judgment

Ray Edgar Paskett
Brigham Young University - Provo

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THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF BASES FOR MORAL BEHAVIOR AND

MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY UPON MORAL JUDGMENT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND SERVICES

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY

RAY EDGAR PASKETT

1960
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INTRODUCTION

In recent years emphasis has been given to the concepts common within psychology and religion. References to the parallels between a religious and a psychological orientation to life appear in the psychological literature (Horney, 1950; Fromm, 1947; Roberts, 1950; Jersild, 1957). However, the indexes of psychological literature contain but few references to studies of moral principles or the moral aspects of tenets of religion. It is surprising, states Broen (1956), "that psychologists, who define their area of inquiry as the study of man's behavior and its motivations, should have neglected so important an area as this area of religious beliefs," leaving it almost untouched by empirical investigation. Haggard (1955) feels that a theory which encompasses the essential characteristics of man must include the basic tenets of religion.

Basic in the doctrine and philosophy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the assumption that moral behavior, meaning, as far as this study is concerned, behavior which is in accordance with the standards defined by the Church, determines the progress and development of man. The behavioral standards of the LDS Church are considered to be fundamental laws which govern man's behavior. This concept is similar to Barta's (1952) "objective good," proposed in his moral theory of behavior. By "objective good," Barta means that wholesome, satisfying adjustment is contingent upon the individual's obedience to the laws, inherent in the universe, upon which sound adjustment is based.

In the light of the emphasis by the LDS Church upon law or
fundamental principles as determinants of "right" or moral behavior, it seems appropriate to examine the effects of these concepts in the lives of the membership of the Church. An additional incentive for making this study was the observation of Hartshorne and May (1928), who noted in their studies of deceit that the effect of certain educational programs was either negligible or detrimental to one of their prime objectives, the teaching of honesty. Also, Haggard (1955) cites the necessity of research in increasing the effectiveness of religious education.

Statement of the Problem

The twofold purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between: (1) university students' determination of the degree of wrongness in situations involving violation of moral principles and the extent of the students' "reasoned" basis for moral behavior, and (2) the students' determination of degrees of wrongness in situations and their chosen field of study.

The following hypotheses were tested: (a) When students are matched according to their degree of acceptance of moral principles, those who base their acceptance on "reason," rather than "dicta," will achieve lower infraction scores. That is, these students will be less severe in their judgments of questionable behavior. Infraction scores are the quantified results of students' responses indicating the degree of seriousness with which they regard situations describing violations of moral principles.

The rationale of this hypothesis is that students indicating "reasoned" moral behavior perceive more readily the gradations of "rightness" of behavior. They tend to view the single infraction as a part of
the behavior of the whole individual knowing that all people make infractions of greater or lesser degree. In a study of the rigidity of moral values and the severity of functional psychological illness, Ewell (1955) noted that the non-psychiatric subject is someone who holds strongly to a small number of values while his moral concepts allow for variations in degree of violation.

On the other hand, it seems reasonable that the person whose moral judgments are based on "dicta" will more rigidly classify the behavior as either wrong or right. Also, his unevaluative acceptance of a moral code handed down by "authority" will reinforce his rigidity of response. Because of these factors, his threshold for "wrongness" will be lower, and what may be considered minor or intermediate infractions will be perceived as more severe.

(b) When students who indicate the same degree of acceptance of moral principles are divided according to their major field of study, students in the social sciences will achieve lower infraction scores than students in the exact sciences. That is, students in the social sciences will be less severe in judgment of questionable behavior.

The rationale of this hypothesis is that students, who tend to classify behavior as either right or wrong, feel uncomfortable in a course of instruction which critically analyzes and observes behavior as a purely natural phenomenon not defined necessarily on the bases of inherent, universal principles. This approach to knowledge prompts them to study in areas not given to ambiguity, such as the exact sciences. As a result, the concentrated course work in the exact sciences leaves them comparatively unexposed to the culturally determined variations in standards of
behavior investigated in the social sciences.

Definition of Terms

1. "Reasoned" moral behavior: "reasoned" moral behavior is defined in this study as behavior, on the verbal level, based on a pragmatic approach to the problem of man's imperfect observance of moral principles. It is not synonymous with the "liberal" concepts which recognize no absolutes, nor is this approach a disregard for the "divine nature" of moral law. It is simply acceptance of the principle as independent and operational in its own sphere. "Reasoned" moral behavior is measured by positive scores on a Reason-Dicta Scale (R-D Scale) constructed by the writer.

2. Moral behavior based on "dicta": "dicta" moral behavior is considered to be behavior based mainly on the result of instruction or un-evaluative obedience to the standard of the group; behavior which is more a matter of social expediency than rational analysis of a moral principle. Consideration of moral principles in isolation, apart from the idea that man only approximates complete obedience, is the central concept in the individual's frame of reference when "dicta" moral behavior is indicated. "Dicta" moral behavior is measured by negative scores on the R-D Scale constructed by the writer.

It should be noted, concerning the definitions of "reasoned" and "dicta," that, as the study progressed, it became evident that this simple distinction was not adequate. Students' written and verbal responses indicated that for them, "reasoned" behavior was a rejection of absolute standards; standards were set by each society or culture. These students also emphasized the pragmatic aspects of the principle. "Dicta" behavior
was marked by more intense feeling regarding the divinity of the principles rather than just unquestioned obedience.

3. Degree of acceptance: Degree of acceptance is determined by quantifying student responses to statements setting forth and defining the moral principles considered in this study. Acceptance means that students acknowledged the statement as correct and as a tenet of their religious belief and code of behavior.

4. Infraction scores: Infraction scores are scores obtained by quantifying a student's responses to situations involving the violation of a moral principle. Each situation was classified by the student as to the extent of the violation. A high score means that the subject tends to react to hypothetical situations, varying in the degree of infraction of moral principles, as if they proximate complete transgression of the moral law.

Research Design

This study was conducted on the Brigham Young University campus utilizing a selection of the students of the university as subjects. The Ss were administered the R-D scale, the acceptance statements, and the hypothetical infraction situations. The quantified results were compared by the t-ratio method.

A validation study of the R-D Scale was also made. A number of judges rated the written responses of students to the question of why it was wrong to violate certain teachings of the LDS Church. The correlation between these ratings and the R-D Scale scores was computed.

Delimitations

Four basic teachings which are stressed as indicative of right con-
duct in regards to Church standards were chosen, rather than a more general investigation of all requirements made of the membership. These are: (a) the Word of Wisdom, referred to as a code of health, which requires abstinence from alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea, and tobacco, and suggests the use of grains and fruits in their season; (b) the Sabbath Day, keeping it holy; (c) the commandment not to bear false witness; and (d) the law of chastity, requiring sexual purity of each individual.

Since the principles included in the study are, in some respects, peculiar to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all students who were not members of the Church were dropped from the study. Also, generalizations to other populations would be limited by this consideration.

Summary

Tenets of religion, especially those with moral connotations, are neglected in psychological research, and yet these factors are considered by some to be important variables influencing behavior. Since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints defines, in its doctrine, a code of moral behavior, this seemed to be a fruitful area for a study of the effects of these concepts in the lives of the members of the Church.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between a student's basis for moral behavior and his chosen field of study, and the degree of seriousness with which he perceives situations involving infractions of moral principles. This study was conducted on the Brigham Young University campus. A selection of university students was used as subjects. They were administered the Reason-Dicta Scale, acceptance statements, and brief descriptions of situations involving
infractions of moral principles. The results were quantified and compared by t-ratio.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Background

Interest in the study of moral behavior has increased during the last few decades, particularly among educators, and yet experimental studies in this area are few (Hartshorne & May, 1928; Fadenrecht, 1957; Strunk, 1959). Commenting on the bright future predicted a few decades previously for the psychology of religion, Strunk (1959) observed that his own investigation into the literature of a recent five year period forced him to conclude that, for all practical purposes, the psychology of religion was non-existent; that there was not only a dearth of significant writings, but that the discipline had not even gained a respectable status. The future status of this area of study, according to Strunk, may vary from loss of identity, because of its being absorbed by pastoral psychology, to revitalization resulting from the redefinition of its purposes and terms in view of the contributions of contemporary psychology.

An obstacle to more abundant research appears to be the difficulty of formulating a definition of morality which would be acceptable to all persons engaged in the study of human behavior. Mills (1873) made the observation, referred to by Fadenrecht (1957), that the moral influences of education, though they are the most important, are the most complex of all factors and also the most difficult to specify. The reason for the lack of progress in the psychology of religion, as seen by Murphy (1928), is that psychology "did not possess the methods and concepts which were needed to make religious phenomena intelligible."
Adding to the dilemma encountered in seeking a definition of morality is increased skepticism in regard to the validity of established moral traditions. In a critical analysis of the moral problem, Fromm (1947) concludes that the "growing doubt of human autonomy and reason has created a state of moral confusion where man is left without the guidance of either revelation or reason. The result is the acceptance of a relativistic position which proposes that value judgments and ethical norms are exclusively matters of taste or arbitrary preference and that no objectively valid statement can be made in this realm."

The discipline of psychology has been criticized for avoiding the study of the effect of tenets of religion upon behavior. Broen (1956) states that the behavioral effects of religious beliefs have been more far reaching than any other non-biological variable, millions of persons having attempted to base all behaviors on their compatibility with religious tenets. And yet, affirms Broen, psychologists have not conducted an empirical investigation of this important area. Haggard (1955) believes that the "basic tenets of religion cannot be foreign to a theory which is able to encompass the essential characteristics of man. The central forces which have regulated men's lives are as worthy of study and measurement as, say reactions to electric shock or the learning of nonsense syllables."

One factor accounting at least partially for the apparent distance between the concerns of religious education and other disciplines, noted by Haggard (1955), is the difference in professional terminology. He uses the example of the emphasis in religious education on "faith, hope, and love," elements of behavior which many scientists would rather refer to
simply as variables. Jersild (1957) makes reference to the concepts emphasized by both the religious and psychological approaches to what he describes as "self-fulfillment." Among these concepts are love, emotion, the importance of the "inner life" rather than outward conformity, an attitude of humility, and guilt. More extensive discussions of common elements in both religion and psychology are made by Fromm (1947), Roberts (1950), and Horney (1950).

Gregory (1952) asserts that religion offers untold opportunities for psychological research and suggests such areas of study as: dynamics of personality which lead to identification with certain sects; the cultural accommodation of institutions after the original goal of the institution has ceased to exist; intergroup accommodation, of nations in particular; and the psychology of beliefs and doctrines. However, Price (1924), quoted by Strunk (1959), adds the caution that the psychology of religion can be "concerned with religious phenomena only in so far as they are factors within the conscious process, and find their explanation therein."

Definitions and Theories of Moral Behavior

Although there is no comprehensive definition of morality, Havighurst (1956) points out what he thinks moral character is not. It is not, he says, inborn. It is not the result of didactic teaching only, but it must be a part of a process including more effective elements of a moral education program. Nor is it simply an accumulation of highly specific good and bad habits. He concludes that the results of studies of moral behavior indicate that moral character is learned.

Barta (1952), a practicing psychiatrist, defines action as "good or evil insofar as it is in accord or contrary to God's eternal law" or
objective truth. This still leaves specific actions unclassified as to their rightness or wrongness. For Fadenrecht (1957), morals are based on what mankind throughout the ages has determined to be right or wrong. Another writer (Bennion, 1945) enumerates certain teaching commended in the New Testament as moral concepts which have proven to be valued by civilizations of succeeding centuries.

The effective measurement of moral character cannot be achieved until adequate theories have been formulated and appropriate research conducted to provide the knowledge necessary for constructing the measuring instruments (Haggard, 1955). Hartshorne and May (1928) observed that theories of ethical training lack data "concerning the causal concomitants of specific behaviors and attitudes, and plans and programs are produced by the score which have no experimental basis and which are as likely to damage character as to improve it."

Jung, according to Hall and Lindzey (1957), has investigated the area of religion, among other subjects such as mythology, alchemy, and astrology, in order to provide evidence for his concept of archetypes. Since Jung does not deny Christian assumptions, his psychological pronouncements are frequently accepted, observes Hiltner, whose article appears in a book of readings in the psychology of religion (Strunk, 1959), whether or not there is any truth in the psychological facts presented. In addition to his pioneering efforts in experimental psychology, Wundt (1902; 1916) considered the spiritual and religious factors in the development of the individual.

Murphy (1928), quoted in Strunk (1959), suggests, in regard to method in the psychology of religion, that direct description of the
deeper religious experiences will not be as rewarding as the data from comparative and child psychology in their contributions to the study of religion. Murphy feels that there is nothing to inhibit the experimental study of everyday mystical experiences, and that a beginning has been made as evidenced by the experimental studies of the effect of drugs upon attitudes, of factors affecting confidence in one's own judgment, and of factors determining political opinion.

A proposed theory of moral character development, mainly the work of Peck, referred to by Havighurst (1956), is one step toward the solution of the problem of inadequate theories. According to this theory, character develops through five stages. The adult's character is composed of something from each of the five stages with one of the later stages usually predominating.

The first is the amoral-impulsive stage, characteristic of infancy, with the child seeking only to satisfy his own impulses without inhibition.

The second is the egocentric-expedient stage. At this level of development, the child learns to inhibit impulses in order to gain rewards or to avoid punishment. He engages in self-centered moral behavior in order to gain advantages for himself.

The person in the external-conforming stage defines "right" as acting by the rules of behavior which have been laid out for him. He accepts social conformity as good for its own sake and makes this his principal motive in life.

The behavior defined by the irrational-conscience, or fourth level of development, is behavior which is in obedience to the dictates of one's conscience regardless of its effect on other people. Thus, a person would
tell the truth even if it hurt other people. He has no flexibility and cannot readily apply two different moral principles such as honesty and kindness, in the same situation. An act is "good" or "bad" to him because his conscience tells him so.

In the final stage, the rational-internalized-altruistic level, the person has an internalized set of moral principles by which he judges and directs his own behavior. This person has a rational control of himself which permits him to assess the results of his actions in a given situation and to approve or disprove them on the grounds of their actual consequence and not entirely by his own intentions. If he finds that his well-intentioned behavior does not produce good consequences, he concludes that he has misapplied the principles and must seek a better application of them. He is able to accommodate one principle to another, as honesty to kindness (Havighurst, 1956).

The concepts of "dicta" and "reasoned" used in the writer's study appear to coincide with the irrational-conscience and rational-internalized-altruistic levels of development in Peck's theory, respectively. However, it appears more realistic to assume that both "reasoned" and "dicta" subjects have a more complex basis for their behavior, utilizing qualities from the several stages mentioned in this theory.

Wieman and Westcott-Wieman (1935) stress the necessity of objective appraisal of religious behavior and have formulated six norms to specify basic conditions indispensable to what they consider to be religious growth. These norms are: (1) the degree to which the objective of devotion is of worth in all human activity; (2) the degree to which the individual devotes himself to the objective; (3) the degree to which the
devotee aids in establishing the values of the objective; (4) the degree
to which the devotee senses and discerns the implication of values in
concrete situations; (5) the progressive height which successive objec-
tives attain; and (6) the social effectiveness of the loyalty, or the
degree to which it reforms society.

Studies in Moral Behavior

In support of the assumption that the extent of "reasoned" behavior
varies from individual to individual, Broen (1956) isolated what he
thought were basic variables necessary to the study of religion. One, a
"nearness to God" factor described persons who felt that they could com-
municate with God and that the loving presence and guidance of Diety was
more important than His judgment. Another was the "fundamentalism-
humanitarianism" factor, aligning persons on a continuum according to the
degree to which they emphasize the basic evilness, necessitating fear of
God, or goodness of man. The person who assumes that man is evil of
necessity fears God while the assumption that man is good decreases the
need for intervention in the form of Diety. Broen also measured general
religiosity, defined as relative amount of thought devoted to topics per-
taining to God and man's relationship to Diety, and differential religi-
ous emphasis.

Variations in individual responses on items indicating "moral rigid-
ity" were found by Ewell in a study of psychiatric and non-psychiatric
subjects from a Veteran's Administration hospital. He noted that the non-
psychiatric subject was one who held to and maintained strongly a small
number of moral values, while the psychiatric patient had either a large
number of categorical values which he maintained vehemently or a few
which were easily violated (Ewell, 1954).

A study by Allinsmith (1954) indicated that moral behavior may be motivated by internal as well as external forces. Internalizations in different moral areas are not necessarily alike in degree or in origin. The degree of internalization may be one explanation of the variation in degree of seriousness with which the subjects regarded the hypothetical infraction situations in the present study.

In their study aimed at determining whether the basis for college students' conduct was on the absolute, aesthetic, intelligent judgment, or the public opinion standard for behavior, Anderson and Dvorak (1928) discovered that college students differed from parents and grandparents in that they prefer the standards of prudence, or intelligent judgment, and aesthetics to the standard of right and wrong.

Hartshorne and May (1928), using elaborate situational techniques in their studies of deceit, found that honesty was not a unitary trait and that honesty or its opposite, deceit, was related to many factors including age, intelligence, socio-economic level, and refinement of home training. They also found that knowledge of what is right or wrong does not insure good conduct.

There appears to be at least partial conflict in the findings of studies of constancy of attitudes toward concepts of honesty and religion. Tudor-Hart's (1926) investigation revealed that condemnation of lying on moral grounds became less frequent as adolescents grew older. Lies told to avoid hurt feelings, that is social lies, were considered justified by increasingly larger proportions of adolescents as they advanced in age.

As another example of attitude change, Katz and Allport (1931) found in a
study of religious attitudes of college students that juniors and seniors differed from freshmen and sophomores in having a greater proportion of their number who stressed a liberal impersonal notion of Diety. It seemed that the influence of college training worked slightly in the direction of unorthodoxy (1931). This conclusion is supported by the results of Call's (1959) study which indicated that religious orthodoxy tends to decrease with age.

On the other hand, Nelson (1956) found that religious attitudes held in college tend to persist for fourteen years. In fact, there was a pro-religious trend in attitudes toward the church, toward God-reality, and toward what he defined as God conduct, while there was a shift away from Sunday observance. Also, Kuhlen and Arnold (1944) studied changes in religious beliefs of persons from twelve to eighteen years of age. There were only slight differences among those of different ages, except that the eighteen-year-olds much less frequently stated that they believed every word of the Bible was true.

Petersen (1953) concluded from his study that the expressed religiosity of 570 Brigham Young University students was very high and that there was no appreciable difference between classes in expressed religiosity. There is no significant difference, according to Smith (1954), in the orthodoxy of Mormons in cities where they form the greater percentage of the population and the orthodoxy of those in the cities where they are a small minority.

Summary

The increased interest in the study of moral behavior on the part of educators is not shared by those in the field of psychology, there being
a dearth of significant writings on experimental studies of morality. Obstacles to the psychological investigation of religious phenomena appear to be the lack of basic research and formulation of theories, the difficulty of creating acceptable and adequate definitions, and differences in professional terminology. However, in spite of the obstacles, some writers believe that there is not only a necessity of empirical investigation of religious beliefs, but that there are unlimited opportunities in this important area of study.

Existing definitions of morality are very limited. The relativistic approach to the moral problem adds to the confusion, because, according to this view, ethical norms are arbitrarily established.

Prominent psychologists, such as Jung and Wundt, have considered religious tenets in their theoretical formulations. Proposed theories describe the stages in development of moral character and norms specifying conditions considered to be essential to religious growth.

Studies in moral behavior indicate that internalizations of moral principles vary in degree and in origin, that there are different bases for moral standards, and that honesty is related to factors such as age, intelligence, and socio-economic level. There are conflicting reports regarding the permanence of moral attitudes and religious beliefs. One writer found that religious attitudes held in college persist for fourteen years, while others state that there are changes toward unorthodoxy due to increased age and college experience.
RESEARCH DESIGN

Selection of the Sample

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of two variables, basis for moral behavior and major field of study, upon students' reactions to standards of moral behavior taught by the L.D.S. Church. Students of the Brigham Young University, where the L.D.S. membership of the student body is approximately 95 per cent, were utilized as subjects. In order to get an unbiased sample, the students were chosen from those taking classes in scripture, an area of study conducted by the Department of Religion. A minimum number of credit hours are required of each student in religious instruction and most students take some classes in scripture, thus eliminating selection which might occur due to student choice of specific courses taught within the Department of Religion, such as philosophy. The instrument used was administered to two lower division and two upper division classes, consisting of a total of 212 students.

In addition, to test the second hypothesis, students in an upper division sociology class, 39 in number, and 32 students in a fourth year engineering class were asked to complete the instrument.

Construction of the Instrument

The instrument used in this study, constructed by the writer, consisted of three sections. The content and rationale for the formation of each section follows.

Section I is composed of brief acceptance statements to indicate the degree to which the subject believed each of four principles should be
obeyed. For example, each S was asked to respond to the statement, "The law of chastity requiring cleanliness of mind and body," and indicate the degree to which it should be obeyed by marking his response in the appropriate column, "Doesn't matter," "Partially," or "Completely," and so on for the four principles studied.

Responses were scored "Doesn't matter" equals 0, "Partially" equals 1, and "Completely" equals 2. No S with a total acceptance score less than five was included in the study, and subjects indicating partial acceptance of the law of chastity were dropped because of the emphasis on this principle in other items of the instrument.

Section II, the Reason-Dicta Scale, consists of eight items each of which consists of a descriptive statement of a person's supposed failure to obey the L.D.S. standard of conduct and a statement inferring punishment for the violation. For example, "John Davis has smoked cigarettes for thirty-two years. Recently he became ill, and his physician diagnosed the disease as lung cancer. He should not have been violating the Word of Wisdom."

It was assumed that the person who emphasized the pragmatic aspects of the principle, and who resented strongly the inference of Divine intervention would disagree with the statement, whereas the person who based his behavior on authoritative statements would be less concerned with the inferred punishment factor and agree with the statement simply because he would assume that the individual should not have violated the commandment, regardless of the circumstances.

The possible responses to the second section are, "Agree," "Tend to Agree," "No Opinion," "Tend to Disagree," "Disagree." These were scored
-2, -1, 0, +1, +2, respectively. Those Ss having a score of -3 or more were put in the "dicta" category. Those from -2 to +2 were put in the "neither" group, and those with a positive score of +3 or more in the "reason" group.

The third section consists of twenty hypothetical situations involving infractions of standards of conduct prescribed by the L.D.S. Church. The Ss were asked to rate each situation as to the degree of seriousness of the infraction. These were to be classified as "No Infraction," "Slight Infraction," "Moderate Infraction," or "Severe Infraction," and scored 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

A copy of the instrument is included in the Appendix.

Validation of the R-D Scale

A validation study of the Reason-Dicta Scale was conducted. Students in an upper division psychology class were asked to state why they thought it was wrong to violate the four teachings of the L.D.S. Church considered in this study. Of the 47 subjects in the class, 11 were dropped because of non-acceptance of the principles, incomplete statements, and non-membership in the L.D.S. Church. The written responses of the remaining 36 Ss were then classified by eight judges into one of three categories, "reason," "dicta," or "neither," according to the following instructions:

After reading the students' statements as to why they think it is wrong to disobey the several teachings of the Church, they should be classified into one of three categories: "reasoned," "dicta," or "neither." The criterion for assigning the subject to one of these categories is:

(1) for "reasoned"--the subject indicates predominantly practical, rational applications of the principles mentioned with less emphasis or no mention of the principle as being a divine law. His stated reasons for obedience may be, for example, that the Word of Wisdom aids in maintaining health or that the law of chastity is necessary for stable family
relationships. (R)

(2) for "dicta"--the subject stresses the idea that the principle is a commandment of God with less emphasis on applied values of the principle. Also, he may state that disobedience is wrong because it is a commandment, because of the possibility of censorship by the group, or that it is one's duty as a Church member to obey. (D)

(3) for neither--when the reasons stated give no definite indication that the subject bases his behavior on either "reason" or "dicta" as described above, he should be assigned to the "neither" category. (N)

The group of judges consisted of four faculty members of the Brigham Young University, two from the Department of Educational Research and Services, one from the Department of Mathematics, and one from the Department of Religion; a former stake president and present businessman; three graduate students, two in the Department of Educational Research and Services at Brigham Young University, and one in business engineering from the University of Utah.

The ratings of the judges were scored "2" for "reason," "1" for "neither," and "0" for "dicta." The scores for each of the 36 Ss, obtained by summing the ratings of the judges, were correlated with their scores on the Reason-Dicta Scale. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between the combined judges' ratings and scores on the Reason-Dicta Scale was .49, significant at the .01 level. While this is not a high validity coefficient, it is statistically significant and does represent fairly good agreement of judges ratings with scores on the Reason-Dicta Scale. It seems possible that the validity coefficient could be increased if the definitions of "reason" and "dicta" were more specific, and if the method of determining the reasons for the person's behavior were improved. For example, Ss could be interviewed and asked to respond to questions
directed toward this objective.

Rather than there being a simple division between "reason" and "dicta," student's responses, in regard to their reasons for obedience to the moral principles, seemed to fall into four general categories rather than just the two as originally intended. The first of the four categories is emphasis on "dicta" in combination with reason. For example, one student responded, "a. In the first place I feel it is wrong to break the Sabbath Day because it was a commandment of God that we keep it holy. b. The first step in the direction of activities not prescribed for the Sabbath often leads to other and greater steps. c. Living all week in the environment of a world of sin and otherwise unrighteous living, the holiness of the Sabbath bring a refreshment and uplift to the soul--to break the Sabbath is to deny oneself of the beauty and freshness of the day as it was meant to be." A second kind of response indicating unquestioned obedience to authoritative statements, was, "It is wrong because we have been commanded to keep the Sabbath day Holy." This same type of answer was given by one subject as the only reason for obeying three of the principles. The idea that the body is the temple of God was added to his reason for obedience to the Word of Wisdom.

"Reason" combined with elements of "dicta" is the third type. One student's answer was, "This is also a commandment. All commandments are for our own good. The more commandments we learn to live the better we will be. To bear false witness will hurt someone needlessly. Life should bring pleasanter things than to be hurt or to hurt someone else."

The final category may be defined as the relativistic approach, or basic acceptance with specific applications being reserved to each
individual. As an example, one student stated, "Is it wrong? It is always good to have one period of time during the week to reflect on the past and plan for the future or just to rest. Before specifying a day to keep holy by worshipping God, I think it is first necessary to know God. If one person can know God by use of a Sabbath, fine. If he cannot, he is better off doing something constructive." And, concerning the law of chastity, "Has excellent pragmatic value. In our culture where chastity is desirable it is only practical to be chaste to avoid emotional conflict and anxiety."

Those in the "reasoned" category included some aspects of skepticism as to the value of the principle and disregard for the necessity of obedience to some of the requirements of the tenet.

In order to test the hypothesis that students indicating "reasoned" moral behavior would, when matched according to degree of acceptance of moral principles with students indicating behavior based on "dicta," achieve lower infraction scores than the students who base their moral behavior on "dicta" in their ratings of hypothetical situations involving infractions of moral principles, the 212 Ss from the religion classes were used. Those indicating non-acceptance of the standards and those who were non-members were dropped from the study. The total number dropped on this basis was 12 freshmen, 6 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 2 seniors, or a total of 23. Because of the large number of freshmen students in the sample, 41 were eliminated by the random number method. This left a sample totaling 148 subjects, including 50 freshmen, 32 sophomores, 38 juniors, and 28 seniors. The Ss were then divided into the "reasoned," "dicta," and "neither" categories according to their scores
on the Reason-Dicta Scale, with the total N for each group being 26, 101, and 21, respectively. A comparison was then made of the infraction scores of the "reason" and "dicta" groups by the t-ratio method, the "neither" group not being considered in this study.

A similar process was followed for the second hypothesis, a comparison of students in sociology with those in engineering, except that they were not divided into "reason" and "dicta" groups, but with the comparison of the infraction scores being made of all those in each group who met the criterion of acceptance. Of the 39 students in the sociology class, 15 indicated that they were majoring in sociology and 8 in psychology. Of the remaining 16, 12 were studying in other areas, 3 indicated non-acceptance, and 1 was a non-member. These were dropped from the study. Since both the sociology and psychology students were studying in the area of the social sciences, it seemed that a combination of these two groups of students would be in accord with the purpose of this study without any undue alteration of the results. These students were used therefore as one group in the comparison with the engineering students. Dropped from the engineer group were 2 students who indicated non-acceptance and 1 whose responses were incomplete.

Summary

Students registered for classes in scripture, taught by the Department of Religion, were selected as Ss for this study. Since classes in religious instruction are required of all students, the sample thus obtained should be a relatively unbiased sample of the student population. This group of students was used in the "reason-dicta" comparison. Also selected as Ss were students in an upper division sociology class and
those in a fourth year engineering class. A comparison was made between the subjects of these major fields of study.

The instrument, constructed by the writer, consisted of acceptance statements, "reason-dicta" items, and infraction situations. A validation study resulted in a significant correlation between students' scores on the "reason-dicta" section and the ratings of judges as to the basis of the students' moral behavior.
RESULTS

Students' comments regarding the instrument indicated they had no particular problem responding to the statements except with the items of the R-D Scale. Here, the inference of a cause and effect relationship was repugnant to some students. Frequently students asked how they should respond to the statements. They were told to react in whatever way they thought they should, according to the meaning of the items as perceived by them. Usually this satisfied them. A typical comment written on the papers was, "I 'agree' because they are L.D.S. people, not because I think these various things happened to them because of their disobedience!"

The engineers were, however, the most indignant at the illogicalness of the statements. One student stated emphatically that, "It is apparent just by reading these that they are invalid. You can't make such an assumption. It's illogical." Another crossed out the descriptive part of the situations, leaving the "he should not" sentence, to which he indicated agreement. The most verbal opposition came from this group. Reference is made to this condition even though the engineers were not divided into groups according to the scores on the R-D Scale.

By contrast, there was little or no comment from the sociology and religion students. With the brief explanation, to respond as they thought best, they completed the instrument without question.

Other infrequent responses indicating student reaction were:
Most of these questions are rather "loaded." When we do our Father's will we have a much better chance of coming through life unscarred in many ways.

These answers allow that there is a degree of sin. This is not L.D.S. doctrine. All should be severe.

Strict adherence to all the principles of the gospel may lead one to answer in a way to condemn the offender in each case. However, there is a degree to all sins and a punishment affixed accordingly.

This demonstrated intolerance of "sin" does not extend to the repentant person. They should be accepted with love and affection.

It became evident that diverse opinions exist in regard to the teachings of the Word of Wisdom and the Sabbath Day. The basic elements of the Word of Wisdom, including abstinence from tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic beverages, were generally accepted, but the suggestion of the use of grain and fruits in season was considered by some to be faddish. Concerning the Sabbath Day, some Ss thought worthwhile activities were as important as church attendance.

The division of students into "reason" and "dicta" groups was made on the basis of their scores on the R-D Scale. The frequency of each score and the division into the groups is indicated in Table 1.

The break between the "reason" and "dicta" groups was made on the assumption that a score of "0" indicated the mid-point of the "reason-dicta" continuum. It was arbitrarily determined that students scoring two points either side of the mid-point were classified in the "neither" group. This was done to insure the distinctiveness of the two groups.

It was noted that the number of subjects determined to be in the "reasoned" category was much fewer by comparison with the division in the validation study. There were 101 in the "dicta" group, 26 in the
Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Students' Scores on the R-D Scale

Indicating the "Reason-Dicta" Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dicta Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Neither Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reason Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-6</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>-4</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>-3</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

TOTAL: 101 | 21 | 26
"reasoned" group, and 21 in the "neither" group in the sample of religion students. These totals are compared to 13 in the "dicta" group, 14 in the "reasoned" group, and 9 in the "neither" group in the validation sample. A possible explanation of this fact is that the responses of students in the religion classes may have been influenced by the stress in those particular courses upon the relationship between God and moral principles involved in this study. The answers may have been appropriate to the occasion. The idea that a selective factor is operating is less tenable since courses in religion are required of all students. The other alternative is that the division of students in the validation study is misleading.

In order to test the hypothesis that the "reason" group would be more lenient in their moral judgment than the "dicta" group, the means of their infraction scores were computed. To determine whether the difference between the means was significant, t-ratio was used. The data for this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparison of "Reason" and "Dicta" Subjects as to Their Infraction Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30.31</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicta</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>38.28</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical analysis of the infraction scores of students in the "reason-dicta" comparison produced a t-ratio of 3.69 indicating that the
difference between the reason mean of 30.31 and the dicta mean of 38.28 is statistically significant at the .001 level. Therefore, the hypothesis that students indicating "reasoned" moral behavior will achieve lower infraction scores than students who base their moral behavior on "dicta" in their ratings of hypothetical situations involving infractions of moral principles is well supported. This means that students basing their acceptance of moral principles on "reason" are less severe in their judgments of questionable behavior than students who base their acceptance on "dicta."

The comparison of the sociology-psychology students with the engineering students in regard to their infraction scores was also made by the t-ratio method. The data for the computations are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of Sociology-Psychology and Engineering Subjects as to Their Infraction Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$\bar{X}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociology-Psychology</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29.57</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33.90</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical analysis of the infraction scores of the sociology-psychology and engineering students resulted in a t-ratio of 1.92. This indicates that the difference between the mean infraction score of 29.57 obtained for the sociology-psychology group and the mean infraction score of 33.90 for the engineers is significant at the .05 level. Therefore,
the hypothesis is supported that when students indicating the same degree of acceptance of moral principles are divided according to their major field of study, students in the social sciences will achieve lower infraction scores than students in the exact sciences. That is, students in the social sciences are more lenient in their judgment of moral violations than students in the engineering sciences.

It may be noted, however, that the difference in infraction scores between the "reason" and "dicta" groups may be due to a difference in orthodoxy rather than a difference in basis for acceptance of the principles. A comparison of their acceptance scores resulted in a chi square of 5.71. To be significant at the .05 level with two degrees of freedom a chi square of 5.99 is required.

Summary

The results indicate that difference in infraction scores between the "reason" and "dicta" groups is statistically significant, and the hypothesis that the infraction scores of the "reasoned" group would be lower is supported. The difference between the sociology-psychology group and engineering students in regards to their infraction scores was also significant. The hypothesis that the sociology-psychology students would obtain the lower score is also supported.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between (a) bases for moral behavior, and (b) a student's chosen field of study and the degree of seriousness with which the student perceives varying infractions of moral principles. This study was conducted on the Brigham Young University campus, utilizing students of the university as subjects.

Interest in the study of moral behavior is not equally shared by psychologists and educators, the former practically neglecting this topic, while there is increased interest among those of the latter group. However, prominent psychologists have considered religious factors in their theoretical formulations, and some promising studies have been made and inherently productive theories have been derived. Writers have contributed but few valuable concepts to the psychology of religion.

In order to test the hypothesis that subjects indicating "reasoned" moral behavior will achieve lower infraction scores than students who base their moral behavior on "dicta," students in scripture classes, part of the curriculum of the Department of Religion, were selected as subjects. These were administered the instrument used in this study which was constructed and validated by the writer. The instrument consists of three sections, acceptance statements, a "reason-dicta" scale, and hypothetical infraction situations. Students in an upper division sociology class and a fourth year engineering class also responded to the items of the instrument. Results of this testing were used to test the second hypothesis.
that sociology students would obtain lower infraction scores than engineering students.

The results indicated that the difference in infraction scores between the "reason" and "dicta" groups was statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that the infraction scores of the "reasoned" group would be the lower. The second hypothesis, that sociology students would achieve lower infraction scores than engineering students was also supported. The statistical comparison indicated that the difference in the scores between the two groups was significant.

Implications of the Results

The implications of the results, with regard to bases for acceptance of moral principles, are of importance to existing theories and educational programs. The validation study does indicate that there are differences between individuals in their acceptance of authoritative statements, in their emphasis upon the Divine nature ascribed to principles regulating conduct, and in the appeal to them of the pragmatic value of these principles. Any of these reasons, or a combination of them, may be utilized by the individual as part of his basis for observance of moral standards. The results of the comparison of students, as to their basis of acceptance, indicates that this difference in emphasis does appear to affect their moral judgment.

Possible explanations for the difference between students in the social sciences and those in engineering in their moral judgment may be: either the degree of rigidity with which they regard infractions of moral principles is the result of an orientation to life which also influenced their choice of these major fields of study; or, the experience in this
area of instruction affects the seriousness with which they regard the
infractions. Perhaps it may be a combination of both these factors.

The existence of "reasoned" and "dicta" bases for moral behavior,
even though crudely defined by this study, gives some perspective to the
concept of difference in origin and degree of internalization proposed by
Broen (1956). Perhaps Broen's measurement of general religiosity could be
utilized in refining the definitions of "reason" and "dicta" and in more
accurately distinguishing between these bases for behavior.

Elements of the norms for evaluating religious growth, suggested by
Wieman and Westcott-Wieman (1935), appear to be of possible value in re-
fining the concepts of this study and in isolating the factors operative
in relation to these variables. For example, a study could be conducted
to determine whether the extent of "reasoned" behavior is related to the
degree to which the individual devotes himself to the objective and the
social effectiveness of the loyalty.

The results of this study have implications concerning the educa-
tional program of the L.D.S. Church. The differences between persons, in
regard to their emphasis on authoritative statements, the Divine nature
of principles, or the pragmatic value of standards of behavior, should
indicate that no single approach to moral or religious education will be
most effective. Appeal to students should be made on the basis of
"reason" and rationality as well as by indicating the virtue of accepting
authoritative pronouncements. This idea is also suggested by the
Anderson and Dvorak (1928) study which indicated that college students
prefer the aesthetic and rational standard of morality to the standard of
right and wrong.
Conclusions

Within the framework of the limitations previously mentioned, it is concluded that:

1. Those persons who base their behavior on "reason," rather than on dicta, tend to be less severe in their moral judgment. That is, they tend to classify situations involving infractions of moral principles as being less serious in consequence than those basing their behavior on "dicta."

2. Students majoring in the social sciences tend to be more lenient in assigning degrees of wrongness to moral violations than students in the engineering sciences. This means that social science students regard specific violations as being less serious in consequence than those in engineering.

3. The measuring instrument used in this study, especially the R-D Scale, needs to be modified and enlarged. Refinement of the definitions of "reason" and "dicta," and isolation of the several factors evidently operative relative to these bases for behavior would make psychological measurement in this area more effective.
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APPENDIX

Validation Questionnaire

State briefly why you think it is wrong to disobey the following principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. Keeping the Sabbath Day holy:

2. Not to bear false witness:

3. The Word of Wisdom:

4. The law of chastity:
Complete the following information. Do Not sign your name.

Year in college:  
- Freshman  
- Sophomore  
- Junior  
- Senior  
- Graduate  

Major______________________________  
Age______________________________  
Sex______________________________  
Church Affiliation____________________

The purpose of this study is to learn how individual students evaluate and classify principles of behavior. You are asked to respond to each statement or situation. Follow the directions for each section. There are no "right" answers. Your first impression is the best. Consider every statement or situation not asking for your personal evaluation as if the persons concerned were raised in L.D.S. homes and were taught the principles of the Gospel.

Section I
Indicate the degree to which you think each of the following principles should be obeyed.

1. The law of chastity requiring cleanliness of mind and body.

   Doesn't matter    Partially    Completely   
   ___          ___          ___

2. The Word of Wisdom requiring abstinence from drinking wine or strong drink and the use of tobacco, and suggesting the use of grains and fruits in their season.

   ___          ___          ___

3. The commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy by resting from labor and paying devotion to God.

   ___          ___          ___

4. The commandment not to bear false witness which may be assumed to include all forms of dishonesty.

   ___          ___          ___

Section II
Respond to each of the following statements indicating the degree of your agreement or disagreement by checking the appropriate column to the right of the statement.

(1) agree  
(2) Tend to agree  
(3) No opinion  
(4) Tend to disagree  
(5) Disagree

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</tbody>
</table>
1. John Davis has smoked cigarettes for thirty-two years. Recently he became ill, and his physician diagnosed the disease as lung cancer. He should not have been violating the Word of Wisdom.

2. After dinner last Sunday, Marianne went roller skating. She fell and injured her shoulder rather badly. She should not have gone roller skating on Sunday.

3. Orvil Smith had not been paying his tithing faithfully. He went bankrupt in his business and had to sell out. He should have been paying a full tithe.

4. Norman and Dick drove nearly a hundred miles to date a couple of girls they thought they could "make time" with. On the way home at about three o'clock in the morning, they went over an embankment and Dick was killed. They should not have been dating that kind of a girl.

5. When I am considering the kind of person I would go with on a date, I usually choose those of whom my parents would approve. The reason so many young people get into trouble is because they do not accept their parents' advice.

6. Kurt, an L.D.S. boy, contracted venereal disease while he was in the Army. He was treated by his family doctor. Kurt should have obeyed the law of chastity.

7. Harold went deer hunting on Sunday with his older brother. As he was walking through the brush his gun discharged, the bullet passing through him. He died a few minutes later. He should not have violated the Sabbath Day.

8. While driving home from skiing last Sunday, Blaine had a collision with another car at an intersection. He was seriously injured. This is an example of what might happen when a person violates the Sabbath Day.
Section III

Rate each situation as to whether there is an infraction of a moral principle, and, if so, the degree of the infraction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(No inf.)</th>
<th>(Slight)</th>
<th>(Mod.)</th>
<th>(Severe)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No inf.</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Arthur thought he would see what it was like to get drunk. One night when he was with a group of fellows who drank occasionally, he consumed enough liquor so that he became drunk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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2. Jeanette wore a modest evening dress to the formal dances at high school. The style was acceptable to her "steady."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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3. Mike started to pal around with a few friends who smoked. They prodded him into taking a cigarette. He smoked one or two and said that was enough for him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
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</table>

4. David associated with friends who had no qualms about drinking liquor. He drank with them frequently and once every few months he came home drunk.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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</table>

5. Jim and Mary are seniors in high school. They have just begun to date each other. Usually they hold hands going to and from the social events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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</table>

6. Fred Colton owns a construction company. He builds homes and in order to display them to the public he arranges to show them to prospective buyers on Sunday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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</table>

7. Judy purchased a beautifully styled strapless evening gown and wore it to the summer formal. Her date expressed his approval of her selection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
<th>Mod.</th>
<th>Severe</th>
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8. Arnold and Pamela are engaged to be married. They have participated in sexual relations with each other on several occasions.

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<th>No inf.</th>
<th>Slight</th>
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9. Allen went to Dorothy's home after a date. She served refreshments and then Allen took a drink of wine that Dorothy offered to him.

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<th>No inf.</th>
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10. When Susan went to college she noted that the style of dress was less modest, especially for social occasions. She thought it would be better to be accepted than to be restricted by others' ideas of modesty in dress.

11. Sandy and Dick have been going "steady" for several months. It is common for them to part and neck until one or two o'clock in the morning.

12. Bob was completing his basic training. For the convenience of the soldiers the chow truck was sent out with coffee and doughnuts. Bob helped himself to both.

13. It is customary for most boys and girls at high school to hold hands on their dates and to have a good night kiss. After a date or two Ron kissed Ann.

14. Roger started using cigarettes in order to feel more like he belonged to a certain group of friends. He smokes all the time now.

15. Sam frequently sees Barbara at the apartment where she and several girls are staying. He remarked to a friend how attractive Barbara looked in her shorty nightgown.

16. Connie was planning for a date to one of the most important formal dances at the university. She decided she would be more attractive in a gown which accentuated her female figure.

17. Jim Jones is not seen in Church very often. He has to work six days a week at his job. Some time ago he started to build a garage and to plant the lawn around his new home. The past few weeks he has spent each Sunday building and planting.

18. Bart was stationed with the Army in a large eastern city. He is one of several L.D.S. service-men at the camp. He was invited to attend a farewell party for his friend who was getting discharged. The friend purchased several gallons of beer for his buddies and all joined in drinking it, including Bart.
19. Bill is taking an examination in a class at a university utilizing the honor system. After the professor leaves the classroom he has easy access to a few brief notes he has jotted down. He uses the notes.

20. Don and Jean have been dating steadily for two years. Although neither of them has decided definitely that they want each other as husband and wife, they both feel that they love each other more than anyone else they know. Recently they have extended their expression of affection to petting.
THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF BASSES FOR MORAL BEHAVIOR AND
MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY UPON MORAL JUDGMENT

AN ABSTRACT
SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND SERVICES
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
RAY EDGAR PASKETT
1960
THESIS ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the individual's bases for moral behavior and his major field of study are related to his moral judgment. Previous studies have indicated that the effect of certain moral education programs was either negligible or detrimental to the accomplishment of their objectives. Because of the emphasis by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon fundamental principles as determinants of moral behavior, it seems appropriate to examine the effects of these concepts upon the individual.

It was hypothesized that: (a) when students are matched according to their degree of acceptance of moral principles, those who base their acceptance on "reason," rather than "dicta," will achieve lower infractions scores, that is, these students will be less severe in their judgments of questionable behavior; and, (b) when students who indicate the same degree of acceptance of moral principles are divided according to their major field of study, students in the social sciences will be less severe in their judgment of questionable behavior. This study was limited to members of the LDS Church.

Interest in the study of moral behavior has increased recently among educators, but psychologists have conducted few, if any, empirical investigations in this area. Interest in the psychology of religion is practically non-existent. Obstacles to more abundant research appear to be the lack of acceptable definitions of morality and limitations in methodology. However, prominent psychologists have considered religious
factors in their theoretical formulations, and some promising studies have been made. One or two inherently productive theories have also been devised.

Students in scripture classes, part of the curriculum of the Department of Religion, were selected as subjects. In order to test the hypothesis that subjects indicating "reasoned" moral behavior will achieve lower infraction scores than students who base their moral behavior on "dicta," the subjects were administered an instrument constructed and validated by the writer. The instrument consists of three sections; acceptance statements, the "Reason-Dicta" (R-D) Scale, and hypothetical infraction situations. Students in an upper division sociology class and a fourth year engineering class also responded to the items of the instrument. Results of this testing were used to test the second hypothesis that sociology students would obtain lower infraction scores than engineering students.

A validation study of the R-D Scale was conducted. There was a significant correlation between the judges' ratings of the students' reasons for obedience to moral standards and the students' scores on the R-D Scale.

The difference in infraction scores between the "reason" and "dicta" groups was statistically significant in the direction hypothesized. Therefore, it is concluded that students indicating "reasoned" moral behavior tend to be less severe in their judgment of questionable behavior than students who base their acceptance of moral standards on "dicta."

Statistical analysis of the infraction scores of the sociology students and engineering students indicated that the difference in their
group scores was also significant in the direction hypothesized. It is concluded that students in the social sciences tend to be more lenient in their judgment of moral violations than students in the engineering sciences.
This Abstract of a thesis by Ray E. Paskett is accepted in its present form by the Department of Educational Research and Services of Brigham Young University as satisfying the Abstract requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

July 1960

Signed

Robert E. Kent
Chairman, Advisory Committee

Charles Taylor
Member, Advisory Committee

Robert L. Kent
Chairman, Major Department