

Two studies compared the judgments of U.S. and Indian students regarding the obligation to save someone's life by donating bone marrow. Indians were more likely to consider donation to be morally required, even when the needy person was a stranger "on the other side of the world." Both groups limited obligations to help out-group members, but Americans also limited obligations to help in-group members from the same town. Indians regarded donating more highly when it arose from duty, whereas Americans regarded donating more highly when it went beyond the requirements of duty. Both groups distinguished acts and omissions and treated special obligations as agent general. Although Indians tend to perceive greater obligation, norms in both cultures limit the scope of obligations.

LIMITING THE SCOPE OF MORAL OBLIGATIONS TO HELP A Cross-Cultural Investigation

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Several recent studies have found that cultures differ substantially in moral judgments and in the moral codes that underlie these judgments (e.g., Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Miller, 1994; Miller & Bersoff, 1995, 1998; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). The existence of such differences provides a tool to investigate general questions about how people organize their moral systems. In this article, we focus on the question of limited obligation. In principle, people are faced with a vast array of cases in which they could help others greatly at little cost to themselves. Individuals cannot respond to all possible needy others and thus must limit the scope of their moral obligations to help (Gert, 1988; Singer, 1993; Unger, 1996; Urmson, 1958). Little is known, however, about the ways in which this limitation is achieved. By comparing Indians' and Americans' judgments of perceived moral responsibilities to help needy others under varied contextual conditions, our study was designed to examine possible cultural variation in responses to this fun-

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damental problem inherent in the unbounded scope of positive obligations.

In research that directly inspired the present study, Americans and Hindu Indians made moral appraisals of situations in which a needy person requested help that was easy to provide (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990; see also Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Miller & Luthar, 1989). Indians maintained that there was a moral obligation to help regardless of the level of need or role relationship involved. In contrast, Americans' judgments varied by both need and role. Virtually all Americans judged that helping was morally obligatory when a life and death concern was involved. However, fewer Americans maintained that there was such an obligation when the need was moderately serious (e.g., providing psychological support to someone before surgery) and even less when the need was minor (e.g., loaning someone money to see a movie). Americans also more frequently judged that there was more of a moral obligation to help in cases involving parent-and-young-child or friendship relationships than in cases involving strangers. In contrast to Indians, Americans frequently considered helping in non-life-threatening need situations to be a matter for personal decision making, even while also judging such help to be morally obligatory.

These cross-cultural differences in Americans' and Indians' interpersonal moral judgments were interpreted as reflecting the contrasting cultural view of the self and associated practices emphasized in the two cultural traditions. With their more sociocentric cultural perspectives (Dumont, 1970; Kakar, 1978; O'Flaherty & Derrett, 1978), Hindu Indians were viewed as treating responsiveness to the needs of others as a fundamental moral commitment, whereas, with their more individualistic cultural orientations (Dumont, 1965; Lukes, 1973), Americans were viewed as weighing beneficence concerns against the competing value of individual freedom of choice.

One way in which we examined possible cultural variation in the limitations placed on obligation was to ask whether the cross-cultural differences observed in the Miller et al. (1990) research can be understood in terms of the breadth of moral concern, with Indians feeling greater obligation to fewer people. Narrowed concern would be a different solution to the problem of limiting moral obligations from that of Americans, who limit obligations to the cases of greatest need. We also examined cultural differences in the relevance of specific forms of limitation based on types of relationships between the actor and the person in need, such as kin versus nonkin. Still another way to limit obligations, in principle, is to make a greater distinction between acts and omissions, or to make obligations agent relative, as we shall explain. In one study, we also examine, as a side concern, judgments of the moral worth of beneficent acts.

In regard to the question of narrowed concern, the cross-cultural differences observed in the Miller et al. (1990) investigation could have resulted from Indians generalizing their judgments of interpersonal responsibility only to in-group members, as contrasted with Americans generalizing their judgments of interpersonal responsibility to all possible needy individuals. Past cross-cultural research has shown, for example, that individuals from cultures emphasizing collectivist cultural views tend to make a more marked in-group versus out-group distinction than do individuals from cultures emphasizing individualistic cultural views (Hamilton & Sanders, 1983; Ramanujan, 1990; Triandis, 1990).

In the Miller et al. (1990) study, the high level of perceived moral obligation expressed by Indians may have occurred because Indians treated all of the needy parties as in-group members from their own community, even needy parties that were strangers. This may have happened because the scenarios implied that the strangers were from the same city as the donors. Indians may feel less obligation to out-group members but greater obligation to those in the in-group. In contrast, the lower level of perceived moral obligation shown by Americans in the Miller et al. study may have occurred because Americans felt more of a need than did Indians to limit their degree of moral commitment to each other person to compensate for the fact that they are unwilling to limit their obligation to an in-group. In assuming a rule-oriented approach to morality, American subjects might have reasoned

Why is it so important to help this particular needy person when there are so many others with needs just as great? If one is obliged to help this person, then one is obliged to help everyone, and obligations would be endless and impossible to fulfill.

(See Singer, 1993, for a philosophical perspective on this problem.)

In the present research, we examine the responses of Indian and American college students to a hypothetical scenario in which a person needs a bone marrow transplant and the protagonist is a potential donor. In the case of greatest interest, the needy person is a stranger who lives on the other side of the world, and a million others around the world are suitable donors. Although the subjects are not typical of their respective nations—the terms “Indian” and “American” must be taken as mere abbreviations—they are similar to subjects used in previous studies, and they do represent different cultures with respect to their moral judgments (if not their behavior, which we do not examine).

In addition, in a within-subject design, we manipulated several features of the situation: (a) the number of possible donors in the case of persons on the

other side of the world (need); (b) whether the needy person is in the same town as the donor or on the other side of the world (distance); (c) whether the person is a cousin of the donor or a stranger in the same town (family); and (d) whether the person requests the donation in the same town (request). In the extreme case, we might expect Americans to find none of these potential limiting factors relevant and Indians to find all of them relevant. On the other hand, the perceived relevance of these factors could have little connection with the perceived obligation to the needy stranger on the other side of the world.

We also examined two additional areas of possible cultural variation in the limitations placed on moral obligations. The first concerned the distinction between omissions and actions. Several studies have found that Americans regard harmful acts to be worse than equally harmful omissions (see Baron, 1994, for a review). For example, many people find it morally worse to recommend to a tennis opponent that he eat something to which he is allergic (before the match) than to fail to warn him against eating the food in question (albeit with the same intent; Spranca, Minsk, & Baron, 1991). The act versus omission distinction may be especially pronounced in modern American culture, where it may fit into a worldview in which autonomy plays a central role (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Failing to help someone else is not a violation if individuals are seen as responsible primarily for helping themselves. Americans' moral thinking might be characterized as "live and let live," with the latter injunction interpreted as prohibiting active harm only. As evidenced in the Hindu Indian conception of karma (e.g., Keyes & Daniel, 1983), the tendency in Hindu Indian culture may be to view actions as having intrinsic moral consequences that follow from their effects. They may be more prone to focus on the objective welfare consequences that ensue from behaviors, regardless of whether such behaviors represent actions or omissions. Here, we examine judgments of a friend who either advises the donor not to donate (an act) or says nothing (an omission), knowing that the donor would donate only if the friend were to advise it.

The second area concerned whether obligations to help particular people are regarded as agent general or as agent relative (Nagel, 1986). An agent-relative obligation is one that falls on certain people, and an agent-general obligation falls on anyone. Consider the special obligation to help a family member, such as a cousin. This arises from a specific role relationship (in the sense of Adamopoulos, 1999), as opposed to a general role relationship of the sort that might be involved in helping strangers as well as cousins. However, even though the obligation to help cousins arises from a particular role, it can still be agent neutral, if the outcome of "cousins helping cousins" is something that everyone is obliged to promote. Thus, agent relativity is not necessarily

affected by the type of role relationship but by whether the obligation to promote that relationship falls on everyone or just those within the relationship.

We thus test the agent relativity of the obligation to help by assessing cases with the following two properties: (a) The agent has a special obligation to donate that arises from having a particular relationship with the needy person, specifically, the needy person requested the agent to donate or the agent is the needy person's cousin; (b) an advisor to the agent is not in any special relationship to the needy person. We ask whether the advisor has a greater obligation to advise donation in cases where the agent has a greater obligation arising from the special relationship. If so, the effect of the relationship is agent general.

Obligations that are agent general are more demanding, so agent-relative obligations could be a way of limiting them. If agent relativity is a way of limiting obligations, and if Indians seize more on such means of limiting obligation, then Indians will see obligations as agent relative more than Americans would.

Finally, as a side concern, we assess cultural differences in the perceived moral worth accorded to acts of helping. Past research has shown that qualitative differences exist in American and Hindu Indian conceptions of interpersonal duty. Reflecting the asocial view of self emphasized in modern Western cultures (Bellah et al., 1985; Lutz & White, 1986), Americans tend to view helping as more reflective of the agent's endogenous (internal) motivation if it is undertaken spontaneously as compared with in fulfillment of social expectations (Miller & Bersoff, 1994). In contrast, reflecting the more monistic view of self emphasized in Hindu culture (O'Flaherty & Derrett, 1978), Indians tend to regard helping as equally endogenously motivated in the two types of cases. Based on this greater American tendency to link endogenous motivation to freely given behavior (see also Iyengar & Lepper, 1999), it was anticipated that Americans would show a greater tendency than Indians to accord moral value to helping that is perceived as going beyond the requirements of duty.

In sum, our research addresses the following hypotheses, all of which are stated in the direction implied by the claim that Indians use more strategies than do Americans for limiting moral obligation. In testing these hypotheses, we assess moral obligation in terms both of the degree to which an act is judged as wrong or good and of whether there is judged to be a responsibility governing the behavior.

Hypothesis 1: Moral Judgment of Nondonation. As compared with Americans, Indians will see less moral obligation to help someone on the other side of the world.

Hypothesis 2: Impact of Factors Limiting Obligation. As compared with Americans' judgments of moral obligation, Indians' judgments of moral obligation will be more affected by the limiting conditions of need, distance, family, and request.

Hypothesis 3: Omission Bias. As compared with Indians, Americans will judge the moral obligation to help as more affected by whether helping results from action or inaction, that is, from a friend giving advice versus from a friend saying nothing.

Hypothesis 4: Agent Relativity. The moral obligation to help will be viewed as agent relative, that is, the obligation of the advisor will be judged to vary as a function of the special considerations of family relationship and of a request that apply only to the donor and not to the advisor. This effect is predicted to be stronger among Indians than among Americans.

Hypothesis 5: Moral Worth. As compared with Indians, Americans will show a greater tendency to accord higher moral worth to behaviors that exceed, rather than just conform to, the requirements of moral duty (i.e., to acts undertaken when conditions are present that limit rather than increase the moral obligation to help).

STUDY 1

METHOD

A "Donation Questionnaire" was administered to 25 male and 25 female Hindu Indian students sampled from Mysore University and the Regional College of Education in the city of Mysore in Karnataka State in Southern India, as well as to 28 male and 42 female students at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States. Students who lived most of their lives outside of the United States, Canada, Australia, Western Europe, or Israel were excluded from this sample. The questionnaire was printed so as to make it as easy as possible for subjects to compare their answers to related questions. U.S. students were solicited by advertisements and were paid for filling out this questionnaire and others. Standard back-translation techniques were employed to generate an Indian version of the questionnaire in the local language of Kannada. In accord with local conventions, Indian students were given small gifts for their participation in the research.

The questionnaire began as follows:

All the questions below refer to situations where someone is dying of a rare disease and could be saved by a bone marrow transplant. Donating bone marrow is not a painful or risky procedure. However, for a transplant to be successful, the marrow must be of a certain type. The questions refer to cases in which someone has the needed type of marrow and learns of the other's need from a newspaper article.

The following sections detail the structure of the questionnaire.

Section 1: Not Donating

A. Effect of need (number of possible donors). The first item read as follows:

Think of a person not donating bone marrow to a stranger who lived on the other side of the world when there are ONLY TEN PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO HAVE THE TYPE OF MARROW NEEDED, as compared to a person who does not donate to a stranger who lived on the other side of the world when there are A MILLION PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE PROPER MARROW TYPE.

The subject was then asked whether not donating would be (a) more wrong if there were ONLY TEN PEOPLE in the world who had the type of marrow needed; (b) more wrong if there were A MILLION PEOPLE in the world who had the type of marrow needed; (c) equally wrong in both cases; or (d) not wrong in either case. The subject then rated the person's behavior on a 7-point scale, ranging from *very wrong* to *very good*, in the case of not donating when 10 others had the marrow and when a million others had it. After each of these items, subjects also indicated (yes or no) whether the person has "a responsibility to donate the bone marrow in this case even if he doesn't want to."

B. Distance (near vs. far). This part examined, in an identical way, the contrast between "a person who does not donate bone marrow to a stranger who LIVED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD" and "a person who does not donate to a stranger who LIVED IN THE SAME TOWN." In both cases, a million people have the type of marrow needed. Questions redundant with those asked earlier were omitted. In this case, these were about the wrongness and responsibility of not donating to a person on the other side of the world.

C. Family (cousin vs. stranger). This part contrasted failure to donate to "a STRANGER living in the same town" and to "a FIRST COUSIN living in the same town."

D. Request. A fourth part, concerning a request, contrasted not donating to "a stranger living in the same town WHO HAS WRITTEN A LETTER TO THE PERSON ASKING FOR A DONATION" and "a stranger living in the same town when the stranger HAS NOT ASKED FOR A DONATION." All

contrasts in Parts C and D gave the same response options as the item described in Part A.

Section 2: Donating

This section concerned donating rather than not donating. It began with “Think of a person donating bone marrow to a stranger who lived on the other side of the world . . .,” and it was otherwise identical to Section 1, except that the comparative questions asked which was “better” rather than “worse,” and the questions about responsibility were omitted (because they had already been asked).

Section 3: Advising

Section 3 asked several questions about giving advice to donate or not to donate, knowing that the advice would be followed. These questions will not be discussed further because, in retrospect, we were interested only in the last four items.

The last four items in this section asked about the effects of role distinctions on advising as a function of need, family, distance, and request. These paralleled the comparison questions in Section 1, but they were about *advising* not to donate, rather than not donating. For example, one question asked whether it was worse to advise not to donate to a cousin or to advise not to donate to a stranger.

Section 4: Withholding Advice

This section began, “Now we would like you to imagine that the person has told his friend that he has decided not to donate. The friend knows that the person will change his mind if the friend tells the person to donate the marrow.” Two sections followed:

A. Passive consent. This part requested two comparative judgments: “the friend who does not say anything to the person about donating” versus “the person who decides on his own not to donate,” and “the friend who does not say anything to the person about donating” versus “the friend who tells the person not to donate.” The former comparison will not be discussed. The latter tests the omission-commission distinction. Again, the response options were the same as in Section 1A.

B. Effect of role distinctions on withholding advice. Four final items asked for comparisons of withholding advice as a function of need, family, dis-

tance, and request. These paralleled the comparison questions in Section 1, but they were about withholding advice, rather than not donating. For example, one question asked whether it was worse for the friend to say nothing, knowing that the person will not donate when there are only 10 people with the right type of marrow, or to say nothing, knowing that the person will not donate when there are a million people with the right type of marrow.

RESULTS

Moral Judgment of Nondonation

Indians thought that behavior leading to nondonation was more seriously wrong than the Americans thought it to be in almost every condition. In particular, this was true for the least demanding condition, the case of not donating to a stranger on the other side of the world when there are a million other possible donors (Section 1A). Here, 32% of the Indians and 7% of the Americans rated nondonation as *very wrong*, whereas 18% of the Indians and 51% of the Americans rated nondonation as *neutral* or better.

Table 1 shows the means for the rating scale questions concerning nondonation or advising nondonation, judgments of responsibility to donate, and judgments of duty to advise donation. (The same ratings scale items appear more than once in the table because they are involved in different comparisons.) The mean rating of not donating on the 7-point scale (1 = *very wrong*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *very good*) was 1.81 for Indians and 2.42 for Americans ($t_{118} = 4.09, p < .0005$, averaging the five ratings of not donating). The mean rating of advising not to donate was 1.82 for Indians and 2.36 for Americans ($t = 2.83, p = .006$, averaging over the two ratings for advising not to donate). Indians gave lower ratings than did Americans in every case except nondonation to a first cousin (where American ratings were nonsignificantly lower). The fact that the two cultures differed in ratings of advising as well as in ratings of nondonation suggests that the cultural difference is not the result of different perceptions of the difficulty of donating. It is most important that for the single question about advising not to donate to someone on the other side of the world when there were a million possible donors—the case least subject to any limitation—the mean rating was 1.57 for Indians and 2.66 for Americans ($t = 5.21, p < .0005$), with 8% of the Indians and 34% of the Americans giving ratings of 4 (neutral) or higher.

Likewise, Indians judged more than did Americans that the person had a responsibility to donate (or to advise to donate). In the least demanding case of donating to a stranger on the other side of the world when need is low, 64% of the Indians and 30% of the Americans thought that the person had a

TABLE 1
Mean Scale Values for Ratings, and Percentages of Subjects
Judging That the Donor Has a Responsibility to Donate or
That the Advisor Has a Duty to Advise Donation, Study 1

Limiting Condition	Mean Scale Value: Not Donating		Mean Scale Value: Advising Nondonation		% Judged Responsibility to Donate		% Judged Duty to Advise Donation	
	United States	India	United States	India	United States	India	United States	India
Need								
1 million	3.39	2.42	2.66	1.57	14.3	48.0	14.3	71.4
10	2.21	1.86			30.0	64.0		
Distance								
Far	3.39	2.42			14.3	48.0		
Near	2.56	1.56			28.6	76.0		
Family								
Stranger	2.56	1.56			28.6	76.0		
Cousin	1.70	1.74	2.07	2.08	67.1	72.0	25.7	82.0
Request								
No	2.56	1.56			28.6	76.0		
Yes	2.23	1.48			38.6	82.0		

Scale values range from 1 to 7, where 1 = *very wrong* and 7 = *very good*. Some cells are empty because some questions were not asked. The values of some of the cells are identical to values in other cells because their associated answers were involved in more than one comparison.

responsibility to donate ($p < .0005$, Fisher test). Indians said the donor has a responsibility to donate in 68% of the cases, and Americans said this in 36% ($t = 5.01$, $p < .0005$, averaging over the five cases). Indians said that the advisor has a responsibility to advise donation in 77% of the cases versus 20% for Americans ($t = 8.84$, $p < .0005$, averaging the two cases).

Cultures also differed in the number of “not wrong in either case” judgments on all comparative questions. Overall, Indians gave 5.5% “not wrong” responses and Americans gave 19.6% ($p = .001$, t test). Table 2 shows the percentage of “not wrong” responses for all comparisons.

Effect of Factors Limiting Obligation

Members of both cultures—when asked to make direct comparisons of differences in need (number of other donors), distance, family, and request—judged that these factors affected the wrongness of not donating or of preventing a donation. But the cultures differed in the magnitude of the effects. Americans thought that need and family were particularly relevant. Note that

TABLE 2
Percentage of “Not Wrong in Either Case” (Study 1) or “Not Undesirable” (Study 2) Responses to Comparative Questions

<i>Limiting Condition</i>	<i>Not Donating</i>		<i>Advising Not to Donate</i>		<i>Not Advising to Donate</i>	
	<i>United States</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>India</i>
Study 1						
Need (other side of world)	19	3	11	2	27	6
Distance (same town vs. other side of world)	23	4	19	4	39	4
Family (same town)	6	8	7	6	22	8
Request (same town)	20	6	11	2	31	6
Study 2						
Distance (same town vs. other side of world)	21	2	19	4	32	4
Family (same town)	10	2	5	4	29	4

Each question had three other possible answers: more wrong (undesirable) in one case, more wrong in the other case, or equal.

that comparative questions asked simply whether the factor mattered, not how much it mattered. Hence someone could think both that all factors mattered (a little) and that all failures to donate were very wrong.

Twelve of the items formed a 3×4 design in which subjects judged the effect of four variables—need, distance, family, and request—on three harmful behaviors: nondonation (Section 1), advising not to donate (Section 3), and not advising to donate when the donor would not donate without positive advice (Section 4). Table 3 shows the percentage of Indians and Americans judging that the behavior in question would be worse in the hypothesized direction (higher need, less distance, etc.). In all cases, the percentage of subjects making this judgment was significantly higher than the percentage making the opposite judgment. Only 4.0% of judgments were opposite across all cases.

Because the pattern of cross-cultural results was similar for not donating, advising not to donate, and not advising to donate (and interactions would, in any case, be difficult to interpret), we computed a single index for each effect (need, distance, family, and request) by counting the number of behaviors in which the subject judged the variable to be relevant in the predicted direction and then dividing this sum by the number of cases in which the subject said something other than “not wrong in either case.” Simple *t* tests of the effect of culture on each measure showed that the two cultures did not differ sig-

TABLE 3
Percentage of Subjects Judging Behavior
As Worse in the Hypothesized Direction^a

Limiting Condition	Not Donating		Advising Not to Donate		Not Advising to Donate	
	United States	India	United States	India	United States	India
Study 1						
Need (other side of world)	64	43	55	45	65	45
Distance (same town vs. other side of world)	48	70	44	44	37	48
Family (same town)	77	39	60	15	56	35
Request (same town)	62	72	48	61	56	68
Study 2						
Distance (same town vs. other side of world)	44	45	20	29	20	37
Family (same town)	58	43	58	40	44	22

a. For example, need is in the hypothesized direction when the subject thinks that obligation is greater when there are fewer other potential donors.

nificantly in the effect of distance or request, and Americans were more likely to see need and family as relevant ($t_{111} = 2.32, p = .022$; $t = 5.44, p = .0005$, respectively). We thus find no support for the hypothesis that Indians are generally more affected by distinctions that limit obligation. (In an analysis of variance of all four measures, the effect of culture was not significant.)

We did parallel analyses for two other questions. One was the response to the 7-point behavior ratings of not donating (1 = *very wrong*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *very good*). The other was the judgment about whether the person has a responsibility to donate. Table 1 shows the results for these questions. Because these questions were not asked for all cases of advising, we analyzed donation questions only. Americans were sensitive to all four manipulations (need, distance, family, and request), and Indians were sensitive to need and distance (t tests for 7-point ratings: $p < .025$; sign tests for responsibility judgments: $p < .05$, except request in Americans, where $p = .092$ two-tailed). These results indicate that Indians gave weight to the limiting conditions only in cases involving the out-group contrast of someone from the other side of the world and not in cases that involved only the in-group contrast of someone from the same town.

The effect of family was greater for Americans than for Indians on both measures ($p < .0005$, t test for behavior ratings, U test for responsibility judgments), and the effect of need was greater for Americans in the scale measure

($p = .014$, t test; overall multivariate tests of the effects of culture were significant for both measures). Otherwise, the cultures did not differ in the sizes of the effects of the four factors. Again, these results fail to support the hypothesis that Indians are more sensitive to factors that limit obligation.

Omission Bias

Both cultures showed an omission bias, and they did not appear to differ. In comparing the advisor who says nothing (knowing that he could cause his friend to donate) with the advisor who advises his friend not to donate, both Indians and Americans thought that the latter was worse: For Indians, 23 thought this, 7 thought the opposite, and 18 thought there was no difference; for Americans, the respective numbers were 25, 4, and 20. (Two Indians and 20 Americans thought that neither was wrong.) We conclude that omission bias is essentially the same between these two cultures, although this issue surely warrants further investigation.

Agent Relativity

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that judgments of the advisor are affected by relationships between the donor and recipient, holding constant the relationship between the advisor and recipient. This is clearest in the case of the request and the cousin. For example, 68% of Indians think that not advising to donate is worse when a request has been made, even though the request was made of the donor, not of the advisor. Likewise, 35% of Indians think that not advising to donate is worse when the donor is the cousin of the needy person, even though the advisor is not the needy person's cousin. (In the case of greater need, subjects might think that there are fewer potential advisors, just as there are fewer donors, so the advisor's relation to the recipient is affected by need. In the case of distance, subjects would reasonably conclude that the advisor's distance from the recipient is also affected.) In sum, subjects in both cultures regard obligations that arise from relationships to be agent general, falling on third parties not involved in the relationship.

Moral Worth of Donating

Section 2 asked for judgments about a person who donates. At issue here is how worthy it is for someone to do what is beneficial to others, as a function of the various factors that affect the judgment of wrongness for not donating. Judgments on the behavior rating scale were uniformly high (mean of 6.45 out of 7) for both cultures and for all four scales. Subjects regarded donation as *somewhat good* to *very good* on the average.

Subjects were also asked whether need, distance, family, and request affected the moral worth of donating. We constructed a variable for each of these comparative items (e.g., whether it is better to donate if only 10 people could donate or if a million could), coded as 1 for a judgment that donating was better when duty was greater (e.g., high need) and -1 for the opposite judgment. In general, the means of this variable were positive, but not consistently so (.13 for need, .18 for distance, .17 for family, and $-.02$ for request; the first three were different from zero by a sign test, $p < .05$.) Indian scores were more positive on these measures: .26 versus .04 for need ($p = .048$, U test); .32 versus .09 for distance ($p = .013$); .20 versus .14 for family (ns); .24 versus $-.21$ for request ($p = .000$). Indians were also higher on the sum of the four scores ($t = 3.43$, $p = .001$). To a greater extent than Americans, Indians seem to see goodness as behaving consistently with duty. Americans, on the other hand, seem to take the opposite view: that goodness involves going beyond the call of duty. In particular, 27% of Americans, versus 10% of Indians, generally thought that it was better to donate when donation was not a duty (as indicated by a negative sum).

Sex did not correlate with any measures, nor were there any interactions between sex and culture.

STUDY 2

A second study was undertaken to obtain open-ended justification data and to examine an alternative interpretation of the cross-cultural differences observed in the first study. In particular, the large number of Americans responding "not wrong" in the first study might have resulted from our use of the term *wrong*, which may sound excessively judgmental in modern American culture. In the present study then, the term *undesirable* was utilized rather than the term *wrong*. To clarify some of the bases for the observed cross-cultural differences, subjects were also asked to explain the bases for their desirability judgments. It may be noted that the term *undesirable* is broader than the terms *right* or *wrong*, in that it tends to be applied not merely to matters of morality but also to issues of social convention and prudence (Turiel, 1983). However, past research on moral judgment has consistently shown that judgments of the social desirability of an act are positively related to judgments that the act is morally required (e.g., Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Miller et al., 1990). This past research has also documented that Americans and Indians tend to treat the types of helping issues under consideration here as matters either of morality or of personal choice and not of either convention or prudence. Thus, it was judged likely that subjects' assessments of the

desirability of the present behaviors would focus on considerations related to morality versus personal choice and not on considerations related to other domains of social judgment.

METHOD

A questionnaire was administered under conditions similar to those of the first study, and the questionnaire items were a subset of those utilized there. Subjects were 50 Indians and 63 Americans, defined as before.

All questionnaire items were of the direct comparison form, in which the subject either indicated which one of the two behaviors was more undesirable, indicated that the two behaviors were equally undesirable, or indicated that neither was undesirable. Subjects were also requested to justify their answers.

The design incorporated three comparisons (not donating, advising not to donate, and not advising to donate when the default was nondonation) for each of two manipulations (distance, family), plus comparisons involving all pairs of the three behaviors (not donating, advising not to, and not advising). The items, in order, consisted of comparisons of (a) not donating to a person on the other side of the world versus in the same town; (b) not donating to a stranger versus to a cousin (both in the same town); (c) advising not to donate to a person on the other side of the world versus in the same town; (d) advising not to donate versus not donating to a stranger in the same town; (e) advising not to donate to a stranger versus to a cousin; (f) not advising to donate versus not donating (with a reminder added that the donor will not donate unless advised to); (g) not advising to donate versus advising not to donate; (h) not advising to donate to a cousin versus to a stranger; and (i) not advising to donate to a person in the same town versus to a person on the other side of the world.

Data Coding

A five-category coding scheme was devised to code subjects' open-ended explanations for their desirability assessments. The first category, "autonomy of donor," encompassed references to the personal decision making of the donor (e.g., "It's the person's decision so the friend shouldn't intervene"). The second category, "welfare considerations," included references to welfare consequences for the recipient, to the good associated with helping, or to its low cost (e.g., "The thing is required by someone else, hence it is good to donate it"; "There will be not be any loss to him by donating the bone marrow"). The third category, "in-group ties," contained references to bonds

shared between family members or members of the same community (e.g., "It should concern you more if you live in the same area as an individual in need"). The fourth category, "common humanity," comprised references to bonds shared between all human beings (e.g., "All human beings are brothers of ours—why discriminate among them according to their location or residence?"). Finally, the fifth category, "other," encompassed references to factors not accounted for in the other categories. The coding categories were applied to individual items, with each item scored in up to three categories. Coding of the qualitative data was undertaken by Beth Edelstein, a research assistant. Interrater reliability was assessed by the first author, who scored the responses of 10 Indian and 10 American subjects. Correlations across subjects between the two raters on the number of instances of each category per subject were as follows: autonomy of donor, $r = .93$; welfare considerations, $r = .89$; in-group ties, $r = .85$; and common humanity, $r = .90$.

RESULTS

Moral Judgment of Nondonation and Effect of Factors Limiting Obligation

Consonant with the cross-cultural differences observed in the first study, Americans viewed the behaviors as "not undesirable" more frequently than did Indians: 19% versus 3%, respectively ($t_{111} = 4.62, p = .000$). Table 2 shows the results for the separate items. The comparability of the present results to those observed in the first study indicates that the magnitude of the observed cross-cultural differences in the first study is unrelated to the use of the term *wrong*.

As in the first study, Indians considered distance to be more relevant ($t_{111} = 2.25, p = .027$). Americans considered family to be more relevant, but the difference was not significant. Table 3 shows the percentage of subjects showing each effect for each behavior (excluding subjects from each case who said "not undesirable"). Combining both effects (distance and family), the effect of culture was not significant ($F_{1,111} = .42$). Again, the results do not support the hypothesis that Indians are more sensitive to factors that might limit obligation. Consonant with the findings of Study 1, the results show Indians giving more weight to the limiting conditions in the case involving an in-group versus out-group contrast (distance) than in the case involving only in-group members (family).

The result for family (but not for distance) must be qualified by an interaction involving sex ($p = .001$ using the ratio as the dependent variable). The cultural difference (the United States being more affected) was found for

TABLE 4
Percentage of Usage of Different Justifications, Study 2

<i>Justification</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>India</i>
Autonomy of donor	25.3	11.6
Welfare considerations	11.8	29.1
In-group ties	26.3	18.4
Common humanity	14.4	10.4

females ($p = .001$, t test) but not for males (ns). Among Indians, males were more affected by family relationships ($p = .034$, t test). However, females were more affected among Americans ($p = .003$). Interactions involving sex were not found in the first study—nor was there even any tendency in this direction—so they are difficult to interpret.

Omission Bias and Agent Relativity

As observed in the first study, the cultural groups differed in the difference between the number of times they gave “not undesirable” judgments regarding advising not to donate and regarding advising to donate ($p < .0005$, U test). On the one item involving direct comparison between these two behaviors, the cultures again did not differ significantly (42% of Americans vs. 34% of Indians judging that advising not to donate was more undesirable).

As shown in Table 3, 58% of Americans and 40% of the Indians thought that the advisor’s behavior was more undesirable for not telling the friend to donate to a cousin versus to a stranger. This percentage was large, relative to the other effects. It is apparently irrelevant that the needy person is the donor’s cousin only and not the advisor’s. The special obligation to family members seems to be agent general.

Response Justifications

Table 4 shows the percentage of subjects using the different types of justifications. With the exception of common humanity justifications (ns), significant cross-cultural differences were observed in usage of each of the categories ($p < .0005$, U test; U tests were used because of the highly skewed distributions). As compared with Indians, Americans more frequently made reference to the autonomy of the donor and to in-group ties. In contrast, Indians more frequently made reference to welfare considerations. Notably, most responses could be encompassed within the present justification categories,

all of which bear on the moral versus personal choice status of the behaviors: The categories shown in Table 4 account for 74% of the responses, and 5% of the responses were blank. None of the remaining 21% mentioned justifications that suggested that the desirability probe had led subjects to focus on nonmorally relevant aspects of the behaviors.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present results are congruent with past findings (Miller & Bersoff, 1992, 1994, 1998; Miller et al., 1990; Miller & Luthar, 1989) that Indians perceive a greater moral obligation to help than do Americans in situations where there is a serious need and the cost of helping is relatively low. We found this result even in the most extreme case examined here, that is, in the case of a stranger on the other side of the world in which a million others were available to help. Notably, we found no evidence that members of either culture think much about the argument for consistency: "If I am obliged here, then I am obliged everywhere, so my obligations would be too great." In particular, no such responses appeared in the justifications given in the second study. These trends, then, imply that earlier cross-cultural differences in judgments of interpersonal responsibility (Miller et al.) cannot be explained in terms of Indians taking a more circumscribed view of the circle of relevant others than do Americans.

Instead, the present results suggest that a central explanation of the cross-cultural differences observed in moral judgment appears to be that Americans are concerned with balancing autonomy considerations with interpersonal obligations almost wherever these obligations occur. In contrast, Indians are concerned with welfare considerations as they affect family, friends, other in-group members, and out-group members. In justifying their responses, Americans more frequently mentioned considerations of autonomy and Indians more frequently mentioned welfare considerations. This explanation is consistent with previous accounts, but it has not been tested so severely before now (Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Miller et al., 1990; Miller & Luthar, 1989). It was only in cases involving donating to a cousin that Americans and Indians agreed in their judgments of interpersonal responsibilities (i.e., for some questions).

The present results contribute to an understanding of the ways in which moral obligations are limited within different cultural populations. They suggest that in all cultures individuals place boundaries on the scope of their interpersonal responsibilities to others, although the extent and nature of these boundaries differ. In terms of the effect of the limiting conditions, Americans were observed to be sensitive to need, distance, family, and

request, whereas Indians were observed to be sensitive only to need and distance. Such results appear explicable in terms of a similar cultural response to out-group members and a culturally variable response to in-group members. Americans as well as Indians limited their moral obligations to out-group members. This was seen in both cultural populations maintaining that there is less moral obligation to help someone from the other side of the world than from the same town (distance), and that in cases involving persons from the other side of the world, there is less obligation to help when there are many, as compared with few, potential donors (need).

In contrast, in cases involving individuals from the same town, it was only Americans who responded to the limiting conditions. Indians treated interpersonal responsibilities to a needy party from one's own town as unaffected by whether they were a stranger or a cousin (family) and by whether they requested help (request). These latter results are consonant with past evidence (Miller et al., 1990) that Indians treat interpersonal responsibilities to help needy strangers from their own community as similar to responsibilities to help needy family members. It appears that Indians focus on welfare considerations in determining obligations to help in-group members. Given that welfare considerations did not vary in the present study as a function of whether the needy party from one's own town was a family member or had made a request, Indians' judgments were unaffected by these limiting conditions.

It is important that the present results appear unlikely to be explained in terms of Indians being more prone to respond in a socially desirable manner than are Americans. Past research has demonstrated that the moral judgments of Indians are frequently low in social desirability, at least from the perspective of Western moral theory (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981). This may be seen, for example, in their tendencies to treat stealing as morally justifiable in situations involving helping a friend (Miller & Bersoff, 1992) or to portray corporal punishment of wives as morally required (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). We also note that the experimenters in both countries were from the respective country. Thus, if the subjects were trying to please someone, it was someone from their own culture. To the extent to which this type of process contributes to the results, however, it does not represent an alternative explanation. Rather, it would suggest that the research was tapping into the subjects' view of cultural norms, which was its intention.

The present results also do not appear to arise from a response bias in which Indians are prone to treat behavior as morally obligatory. Not only was it documented in the present study that many Indians considered helping as nonmorally obligatory in cases involving out-group members from the other side of the world, but it has been shown in past research (Miller & Bersoff,

1994) that Indians do not tend to consider it morally obligatory to help in cases involving minor need.

Another way of limiting obligations is by restricting them to acts, not omissions. Our main scenario concerned an omission, failure to donate, so this means that acts versus omissions is clearly not a major argument available to Indians. We did compare acts and omissions directly in the role of the advisor, and we found no cross-cultural differences in either direction in the magnitude of omission bias, that is, the tendency to think of harmful acts as worse than equally harmful omissions.

An additional way of limiting judged obligation is to think of obligations that arise from special relationships as agent relative, so that the obligations are limited to those in the relationships. The present results suggest that the increased obligations resulting from family membership and from a request is agent general. That is, subjects in both cultures believe that it is a good thing for family members to help each other, and, because it is a good thing, we all should promote it, even when our own family members are not involved. Likewise, they believe that it is a good thing to respond to requests and to promote such responsiveness. This attitude toward family obligations is consistent with the utilitarian view of these obligations (e.g., Sidgwick, 1874/1962), which holds that these obligations arise from the fact that the family is an efficient institution for carrying out certain functions. It is also consonant with evidence indicating that family ties represent one of the few cases in which individuals from both modern Western cultures and from more traditional cultures appear to share a view of interpersonal responsibilities as having an intrinsic rather than merely voluntaristic basis (Heelas & Lock, 1981; Schneider, 1968).

In sum, although Indians judge omissions of help to distant strangers to be more serious than Americans judge them to be, Indians have at their disposal a range of ways to limit their judgments of moral obligation, including basing them on in-group versus out-group status and on the omission-commission distinction. We found no evidence that either culture used agent relativity to limit judged obligations.

It should be emphasized that the present questionnaire concerned judgment alone, in hypothetical cases. We do not know, for example, whether Indians would be more likely to donate marrow in the circumstances described, or would be more forgiving of those who fail to meet obligations. It is possible that the greater obligation implied by Indians' moral code is compensated for by a greater tolerance of transgressions of the code (Bersoff & Miller, 1993; Miller & Luthar, 1989). If Indians hold themselves to their moral code as strictly as Americans do, it might be expected that they would

either engage in this type of prosocial behavior more often or would suffer more negative social sanctions for their behavior.

Finally, as hypothesized, Americans displayed a greater tendency than did Indians to accord moral value to helping that goes beyond what is required by duty. (This is unrelated to the general question about how cultures limit obligation.) Although there was a tendency for donating to be judged as better when the duty to help was greater, this trend was less marked among Americans than among Indians. These results are consonant with claims that the hydraulic view of motivation that is emphasized in American culture may be less pronounced in certain non-Western cultural contexts (Miller & Bersoff, 1994). It appears that Americans tend to view an act of helping as more praiseworthy when it goes beyond the requirements of social duty, because they consider the act to be more reflective of the agent's altruistic intentions in such cases. In contrast, Indians may view an act of helping as more praiseworthy when it is performed in fulfillment of social duty, because they tend to regard altruistic intentions as being expressed in the fulfillment of interpersonal responsibilities.

One of our results may be relevant to current international controversies about human rights, such as those that have occurred recently between the United States and China. It is possible that the U.S. attitude toward autonomy is unusual and that many other cultures have difficulty understanding the importance that Americans place on this issue in comparison to other moral issues. Our Indian subjects, at least, see a positive obligation not only for donors but also for advisors. Indeed, Miller et al. (1990) found that the idea that "this is a moral question, but it is the actor's decision, not mine" (an idea they termed *the personal-moral category*) was almost nonexistent in their Indian subjects. It appears that a central locus of cross-cultural differences in interpersonal morality rests less in the value accorded helping than in cultural conceptions of the self as inherently autonomous versus inherently interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

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