DOES MODERN SOCIETY LET ME BE ME? SOME MODERATORS OF USING THE

SELF AS A REFERENCE FOR BEHAVIOR

by

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(Under the Direction of Leonard Martin)

ABSTRACT

Behavior is jointly determined by one's environment and personality, but the extent to which they influence behavior may vary across cultures. Immediate-return societies have a loose culture (i.e., few societal norms) while delayed-return societies have a tight culture (i.e., many strict societal norms). Because of this difference in societal norms, immediate-return societies (vs. delayed-return societies) allow for more expression of individual differences in strong attitudes or personality traits. In two studies, I explored the relation between two internal dispositions and related behaviors. Experiment 1 utilized a strong disposition (i.e., highly heritable), and Experiment 2 utilized a weak deposition (not highly heritable). I hypothesized that the disposition-behavior relation would be stronger for participants placed in an immediate-return (v. delayed-return) mindset when a strong disposition was tested, but that there would be no difference in the strength of the disposition-behavior relationship between condition when a weak disposition was measured. These hypotheses were supported and suggest that some societies may foster a personality-behavior link, whereas others foster a norm-behavior link.

INDEX WORDS: Immediate-return societies, autonomy, situational strength, culture

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most psychologists agree that both one's personality and environment jointly determine behavior. What they disagree on, though, is the relative importance of these two factors (Lewin, 1936; Mischel, 1968; Epstein, 1979; Funder & Ozer, 1983; Kenrick, McCreath, Goven, King, & Bordin, 1990). Some people emphasize the importance of personality, whereas others stress the power of the situation. The general reconciliation between these two positions, of course, is that the relative importance of each factor depends on the conditions under which the people are behaving (Kenrick et al., 1990; Caspi & Moffitt, 1993).

In this paper, I explore the possibility that culture may determine the extent to which people base their behavior on their personality versus the environment. Specifically, I explore the hypothesis that modern, complex societies are more likely than our ancestral ones (i.e., simple foraging societies) to undermine autonomy (Barry, Child, & Bacon, 1959; Zern, 1980), and thus undermine the link between personality and behavior. I explored this hypothesis in two studies by priming mindsets reflective of either modern, complex societies or our ancestral, foraging societies, and then measuring the relation between various personality traits (e.g., narcissism) and behavior related to those traits (e.g., better-than-average effect).

This culture moderation hypothesis is important to test because if people base their behavior on situational cues rather than on their personality, they may fail to establish a behavioral niche that is compatible with their basic genetic endowment (Tesser & Crelia, 1994), which could prevent them from experiencing a high level of

self-concordance in their behavior (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999). This is important since a high level of self-concordance can lead to an upward spiral of well-being (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) which one might miss out on if they never created a behavioral niche.   Thus, if certain cultures undermine the personality-behavior link, then these cultures may undermine the well-being of their members. Before I discuss the role of culture in moderating the personality-behavior association, I briefly review the more general personality-situation debate.

Predicting Behavior: Personality vs. Situation

Early work in psychology attempting to predict behavior emphasized the importance and utility of using one's personality traits, or the differences between a directly observable behavior or characteristic of two or more individuals on a particular dimension (Mischel, 1968). Trait theorist Allport (1966) stated that traits have more than a nominal existence and are "dynamic, or at least determinative, in behavior". In other words, personality traits are viewed as direct causes of behavior. Several personality theorists promoted the view that particular traits are common to many people, vary in amount, and are stable, enduring predispositions that exert mostly generalized effects on behavior (Cattell, 1957; Guilford, 1959; Sanford, 1963; Allport, 1966). These predispositions can either have a biological basis (genetically inherited) or be learned (culturally/socially inherited) (Mischel, 1968; Eaves & Eysenck, 1974; Martin et al., 1986; Lykken, Bouchard, McGue, & Tellegen, 1993; Segal, 2013).

Psychodynamic theorists held similar ideas- focusing on the idea that one's personality does not greatly vary from one situation to another. Research in this area investigated the environment so that its effects could be controlled for and then you could

better measure a person's motives (Mischel, 1968). Trait and psychodynamic theorists argued that personality and personality traits were stable across situations, owing to being determined mostly by broad dispositions (e.g., Guilford, 1959). Little attention was paid to measuring the environmental effects on behavior. According to Levitt (1967), "because trait anxiety is theoretically a constant condition of the individual, it should not fluctuate in response to circumstances".

Mischel (1968) discussed some of this early work and concluded that individual differences, in fact, are not good predictors of behavior. He argued that the correlation found between a personality measure and a non-questionnaire external criterion for that personality is generally between .20 and .30. For instance, Mann (1959) reviewed work on associations between personality and behavior conducted from 1900 to 1957. He surveyed many personality variables (e.g., measures of adjustment, extraversion-introversion, and dominance) and used behavior in groups (i.e., scored for leadership, popularity, etc.) for criterion variables. After obtaining hundreds of correlations, Mann found that the median correlation between any aspect of personality and performance never exceeded .25. The median correlation was closer to .15 in most cases. Although high correlations are found when using one method to assess both the trait and behavior (e.g., two questionnaires), when behaviors are assessed using different measures the associations tend to be very weak, albeit more likely than chance would predict (Mischel, 1968). Perhaps the organization of personality is subtler than broad trait theories of personality would indicate. It is true that people may think of themselves and others as characterized by consistent dispositions, but in truth, their behavior probably varies at least moderately across situations.

Of course, not everyone agreed with Mischel's conclusion. Some researchers maintained that, under the right conditions, individual differences were still important predictors of behavior. Epstein (1979) and Funder and Ozer (1983), for example, reanalyzed three prominent studies in social psychology that supported the idea of situational strength (i.e., Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Darley & Latane, 1968; Darley & Batson, 1973; Milgram, 1975). Funder and Ozer found that the key situational independent variables for each study replication were only correlated to one's behavior r = .38 on average (between .36 and .42). They concluded that although situations most likely play some role in behavior, their effects on dispositional and situational factors may only be strongly seen when you take into account certain variables of the situation (e.g., strong vs. weak situations, expanded upon below) and the dispositions being measured (Funder & Ozer, 1983).

In truth, behavior is jointly determined by one's personality and current environment, as proposed early on by Lewin (1936) with the formula B = f(P,E), where B represents behavior, P represents personality and E represents the environment. Many studies have been conducted that support this conclusion (e.g., Schutte, Kenrick, & Sadalla, 1985; Beer, Arnold, & Loehlin, 1998; Matteson, McGue, Iacono, 2013; Wang & Saudino, 2013; Iranzo-Tatay et al., 2015). For instance, Schutte et al. (1985) had participants read descriptions of situations that differed in several ways, including the level of constraint of the situation, or the situation's power to influence people in it. Participants read a description about a situation with low constraint, moderate constraint, and high constraint (i.e., a park, a bar, and a job interview, respectively). After reading the descriptions for each situation, participants were asked to indicate how likely they

would be to perform a list of 15 behaviors in each situation. The researchers used this to create a predicted behavioral range score for each participant. As predicted, Schutte et al. (1985) found that the more constraining the situation described was, the smaller the range of behavior reported for that situation. If you are in a highly constrained situation, such as a job interview, there are fewer behaviors you will feel comfortable expressing than if you are in a situation that is not as constraining, such as a park. This is an example of how different characteristics of a situation can interact with personality to predict which behaviors are likely to be expressed in that situation.

Strong versus Weak Situations

Another suggested characteristic of a situation that can influence behavior, or the expression of one's personality, is situational strength. Snyder and Ickes (1985) suggest that we can characterize situations in terms of how strong or weak they are: strong situations are those with clear guides for behavior whereas weak situations are those with no clear guides for how to behave. A funeral, for example, may be considered a strong situation. There are clear expectations that people should be somber and respectful and wear dark clothing. If people conform to these expectations, then everyone attending a funeral would behave in more or less the same way. As a result, it would be difficult to discern which people were dispositionally friendly, for example, and which were not. Individual differences are only weakly revealed in behavior that occurs in strong situations (Snyder & Ickes, 1985; Caspi & Moffit, 1993; Gelfand & Lun, 2013).

Now consider a weak situation. A couple walks into a new restaurant, and there is no one at the door to greet them. Should they wait for a host or hostess or should they seat themselves? In this case, introverts may wait to see if anyone comes to seat them,

whereas extraverts may feel more comfortable asking other customers for clarification or simply walking to a table. Thus, in a weak situation, we are more likely to see differences in behavior as a function of individual differences (Mischel & Peake, 1982; Meyer, Dalal, & Bonaccio, 2009). This idea is not out of line with early personality work. Psychodynamic theorists proposed that in unstructured, ambiguous environments a person's behavior would reveal his or her basic personality organization (Mischel, 1968).

More recent work has found support for distinction between strong and weak situations. For example, Meyer, Dalal, & Bonaccio (2009) sought to investigate the moderating effect of situational strength on the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance using meta-analytic techniques. First, occupations were characterized as either weak or strong based on the extent to which the particular occupational setting had constraints (i.e., amount of restrictions placed on employee; amount of autonomy employee experiences) and consequences (i.e., "presence of contingencies between one's decisions or behaviors and the outcomes affecting oneself, other, the organization as a whole, etc."). These researchers found that the relationship between conscientiousness and overall job performance was moderated by the strength of the situation. Specifically, this study revealed that the personality variable of conscientiousness is most predictive of performance in weak occupations as opposed to strong occupations.

Pulling together this research, we can shed some light on the personality-situation debate. Research has found that personality is not as constant across situations as previously thought (e.g., Levitt, 1967) and that alone, personality is not a strong predictor of behavior (Mischel 1968). On the other hand, similar conclusions have been made

about the situation's capability for predicting behavior. Funder and Ozer (1983) found that key situational independent variables were only correlated to participant's behavior r = .38 on average (between .36 and .42). Alone, neither personality nor situational variables are ideal for predicting behavior; the interaction between the two variables must be accounted for. Key components of a situation can alter how one behaves and Snyder and Ickes (1985) proposed that one of these components is the extent to which a situation provides clear guides for behavior, called situational strength. The fewer clear guides there are for behavior in a given situation, the weaker that situation. Therefore, individual differences are more readily observed in weak situations than in strong situations because of the relatively few guides for behavior in weak situations (Snyder & Ickes, 1985; Caspi & Moffit, 1993; Gelfand & Lun, 2013). But is this the whole story? According to Caspi & Moffitt (1993), knowing whether a situation is strong or weak is not sufficient to predict if people's personality or the situation will have the strongest influence on behavior. Their work has focused on the importance of a motivation to behave and how that, along with information from the situation, predicts behavior.

The Role of Behavioral Presses

Knowing someone's personality traits and the strength of the situation they are in may not be all that is necessary to know when predicting behavior- you must also know if that person is motivated to behave (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). If people are not motivated to behave at all, then obviously their behavior will not be influenced by their personality or the situation. People must experience a press to behave. Caspi and Moffitt (1993) began their model with the assumption that, when people are motivated to behave, they search for a guide for what to do. Any guide is better than no guide, but strong, stable guides are

the best. So, in situations in which people experience a press to behave and the situation supplies clear behavioral cues, people are likely to base their behavior on those cues rather than on their individual differences, and this will be reflected in their behavior.

In contrast, when people experience a press to behave but they have no clear cues as to how to behave, they search for cues. When such cues are not available in the environment, they search for cues inside of themselves. According to Caspi and Moffitt (1993), the best cues are those that are stable and come quickly to mind. These qualities allow people to act quickly and definitively. Therefore, people who experience a behavioral press in a weak situation are likely to turn to their individual differences for guidance, especially when these differences are highly heritable or automatically accessible (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993; Tesser, 1993).

When people graduate from college, for example, they have to do something: Get a job, go to graduate school, or backpack across Europe. In Caspi and Moffitt's terms, the graduates experience a press to behave. They may have difficulty deciding between their alternatives, however, because there are no clear, definitive rules for which alternative they should take. Moreover, their previous knowledge (e.g., who are the best teachers) is no longer relevant, and they do not yet have the knowledge they will need in the next stage of their life (e.g., skills for a new job). Yet, they have to behave. In the absence of clear external guides, people may turn to their stable, heritable, or easily accessible individual differences. In short, according to Caspi and Moffit (1993), personality is likely to be reflected in behavior when people are motivated to act in a situation with little clear external guidance. In these situations, introverts act like introverts, for example, and extraverts act like extraverts.

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Caspi and Moffitt (1993) provided evidence for this model. As an example of how individual differences can be differentially expressed depending on the situation, they explain the behavior of repressors and sensitizers. Repressors use avoidance mechanisms (e.g., denial) to cope with stress, whereas sensitizers, in contrast, use approach strategies (e.g., rumination) to cope with stress. Mischel, Ebbesen, and Zeiss (1973) conducted an experiment during which participants received feedback after completing an achievement task and then could either choose to view positive or negative information about themselves. In conditions where clear-cut, unambiguous feedback was provided, repressors and sensitizers did not differ in which type of self-information they wanted to view. However, when unclear, ambiguous feedback was provided, repressors were more likely to select to view positive information regarding the self while sensitizers were more likely to select to view negative information regarding the self. This study shows that in strong, unambiguous situations, the relationship between a trait and behavior is not as strong as in weak, ambiguous situations (Caspi & Moffit, 1993).

In order to support their argument that when people experience a press to behave in weak, ambiguous situations they rely on their automatic, stable traits as guides for behavior, Caspi and Moffit turn to evidence from twin studies. Monozygotic (MZ) twins are more similar phenotypically than dizygotic (DZ) twins on a broad range of intellective, personality, and attitudinal variables (e.g., Plomin, Chipuer, & Loehlin, 1990). However, there are environmental modifiers of heritable dispositions, including, in particular, that heritable behaviors are accentuated in unstructured situations (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). Matheny and Dolan (1975) observed child participants from the Louisville Twin Study in two different situations. The first situation was unstructured

(i.e., playroom setting) and allowed the children to explore their environment freely. In contrast, the second situation was more structured (i.e., task-oriented test-room) and included many uniform behavioral and performance demands. As expected, results from the study suggested MZ twin pairs are more similar in their behavior than are DZ twin pairs regardless of age and setting. In addition, Matheny and Dolan (1975) found that differences between MZ and DZ twin pairs are consistently stronger in the less restricted playroom settings than in the highly restricted test-room settings. According to this data, behaviors in unstructured, weak situations are regulated by strong, genetic influences more than are behaviors in highly structured settings (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). In sum, people's personalities may be most likely to be reflected in their behavior when they are motivated to act in situations that offer few cues for how to act and therefore rely on their stable individual differences that are both accessible and relevant to the situation.

Tight and Weak Cultures

The research on the personality-situation debate has greatly clarified the conditions under which personality versus the environment has the strongest effect on people's behavior. This research, however, has generally focused on small-scale social settings (e.g., funeral, graduation). What has not been explored is the effect of broader settings on the personality-behavior link. One broad setting in which all people find themselves in is their culture. Research has found that there are cultural differences in behavior (Triandis, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 2010), and it is possible that cultures differ in the extent to which behavior is guided by one's personality versus the situation. Is it possible that cultures differ in the extent to which they provide their members with strong or weak guides for their behavior and thus differ in the extent to which they

facilitate the guidance of behavior by personality or the situation? If we adopt Caspi and Moffit's distinction, then we might hypothesize that cultures that provide clear, strong social norms can undermine the personality-behavior association in its members compared to cultures that promote autonomy and self-direction.

Gelfand and colleagues have obtained evidence that cultures do in fact differ in the extent to which they provide guides for behavior. They suggested that cultures could be placed along a continuum that reflects "the degree to which individuals are afforded latitude versus constraint in everyday situations," (Gelfand et al., 2011; Gelfand & Lun, 2013). Tight cultures are those that impose strict norms and expectations on their members and display little tolerance for deviant behavior, whereas loose cultures are those with few norms and expectations and present more occasions for self-direction to their members (Gelfand et al., 2011).

Work by Gelfand et al. (2011) used self-report data from 6823 participants from 33 different nations to investigate how loose and tight cultures differ from each other. They found that nations considered tighter (measured using a six-item Likert scale) are more likely to have governments that suppress dissent, less open media, fewer political rights and civil liberties, more police per capita, and fewer murders and burglaries than looser nations. Their research also found that the degree of tightness-looseness of a nation is associated with society members' flexibility in their daily behavior. Individuals living in tight versus loose cultures experience much higher situational constraint across everyday situations like the bank, park, restaurant, workplace, etc. (Gelfand, 2011). They used hierarchical linear modeling to show that higher levels of situational constraint (i.e., level of constraint found in tight cultures) are associated with more prevention-oriented

guides for the self (e.g., cautiousness, dutifulness, self-monitoring). This suggests that for cultures with strict norms and strong constraints on personality, members' are strongly linked to the culture so that behavior is implicitly and automatically associated with the socially appropriate, constrained actions.

If we integrate this cultural difference with the research on strong and weak situations, then we could hypothesize that tight cultures may undermine the personality-behavior link compared to loose cultures. The problem, though, is that Gelfand and colleagues have only measured tightness and looseness in various cultures. They have not manipulated this difference. Of course, doing so at a cultural level would be difficult if not impossible, but manipulating cultural differences at an individual level is quite common. Researchers have done this with individualism and collectivism (e.g., Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999; Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Bechtoldt, Choi, & Nijstad, 2012). Gardner et al. (1999) primed participants from the United States and Hong Kong with consistent primes (e.g., U.S. participant primed with independent prime) and inconsistent primes (e.g., Hong Kong participant primed with independent prime) using stories and word searches. They found that the participants who received the interdependent prime endorsed collectivist values more so than individualist values and participants who received the independent prime endorsed individualist values more so than collectivist values. In contrast, participants in the control condition who received no prime endorsed the two sets of values equally (Gardner et al. 1999). Furthermore, participants in the inconsistent prime condition (i.e., U.S. participants receiving interdependent prime and Hong Kong participants receiving independent prime) showed a significant difference between their value scores and the

value scores of participants in the consistent prime conditions. For example, participants in the U.S. interdependent-prime condition endorsed collectivist values significantly more than did U.S. participants in the independent- and no-prime conditions.

Cultures may differ in the extent to which they emphasize individual identity and agency (individualism) versus identity with and commitment to the group (collectivism), but it is also true that we can describe individuals as being more individualist or collectivist and, through priming, we can increase or decrease the extent to which any given individual is high or low along the individualism/collectivism dimension (Matsumoto, Weissman, Preston, Brown, & Kupperbusch, 1997; Church, 2000; Fahig & Jaradat, 2015). Ybarra & Trafimow (1998), for example, asked participants to either think of what makes them different from their family and friends (i.e., individualist prime) or to think about what they have in common with their family and friends (i.e., collectivist prime). After this prime, participants indicated their intention, attitude, and subjective norm toward a behavior, ostensibly as a second, unrelated experiment. As expected, participants primed with an individualist perspective weighted attitudes more heavily than subjective norms in forming a behavioral intention, whereas participants primed with a collective perspective weighted subjective norms more heavily than attitudes (Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998). This work is an example of how experimental manipulations can cause participants to behave in a more individualist (or collectivist) manner.

If we could manipulate a cultural difference related to tightness and looseness, then we may be able to influence the relation between participants' personality and their behavior. This relation should be higher when a loose orientation has been primed than

when a tight orientation has been primed. I tested this hypothesis using the difference between immediate-return societies and delayed-return societies.

Immediate-Return versus Delayed-return Societies

According to anthropologists, one particularly useful classification of societies is that between mobile, non-storing, food collectors and settled, surplus producing, food producers (Price & Brown, 1985). Because there are many types of foraging societies aforementioned, some of which still exist today, I focus on immediate-return societies. Woodburn (1982) outlines many attributes of immediate-return societies and how they are distinguished from all other cultures, namely, delayed-return ones. Immediate-return societies and delayed-return societies differ in a number of ways (Woodburn, 1982). I consider four of these differences because they seem especially relevant to the personality-behavior link.

Fission and Fusion. People in immediate-return societies live in small groups (i.e., about 25 people) as part of a loose association of groups spread out over the larger environment. The composition of the local groups is ephemeral, with members going back and forth between groups on an almost daily basis (Ingold, 2004). The official term for this exchange of members is fission and fusion. This practice undermines long-term binding commitments, and allows people to move away very easily from conflict or other undesirable situations. As a result, it is difficult for members of immediate-return groups to exert control over one another (Woodburn, 1982).

Woodburn (1982) told a story of a hunter-gatherer who tried to get the other members of his local group to help him cut a path from their camp to the river. The others just looked at him, laughed, and walked away. No path was built, but it is also the case

that no one dominated or controlled anyone else. This means that, relative to delayed-return societies, immediate-return ones foster autonomy and self-direction.

No Leaders. Although leaders may arise on occasion in immediate-return societies, these leaders do not have the power to compel action in any of the group's members (Lee, 1979; Woodburn, 1982). Leaders are people who are respected for their skills, experience, or charisma, but they can be readily ignored, and in fact will be the victim of leveling mechanisms if they try to exert authority over others (Woodburn, 1982). Thus, decisions in immediate-return societies are made either individually or by consensus. This means that, relative to delayed-return societies, immediate-return ones foster autonomy and self-direction.

Relational Autonomy. As we have seen, immediate-return societies are structured in such a way that they allow their members to experience a great deal of autonomy (Woodburn, 1982; Brunton, 1989). This autonomy, however, is not the same as the individualism foster in many contemporary, Western countries. The autonomy is relational (Ingold, 2004). It is based on mutual trust. Each member of the group will generally allow the other members great, though not complete, latitude in guiding their behavior, and they can be confident that others will do the same for them (Ingold, 2004). They act with others, and not against them. Each member strongly believes that one's autonomy should never be compromised by his or her relationships with others, and in the case when someone believes their autonomy is being infringed upon, that individual may decide to join another band (Henriksen, 1973; Ingold, 2004).

Autonomy is highly valued in immediate-return cultures, but as noted earlier, the high degree of fission and fusion makes control and domination of others almost

impossible anyway. People can simply move away from undesired constraints on their behavior. The bottom line is that, relative to delayed-return societies, immediate-return systems foster autonomy and self-direction.

Cultural Instability. If we consider a society characterized by the three features we just discussed (fission and fusion, no leaders, relational autonomy), it might be easy to come away with the impression that such societies "are no more than randomly associated heaps of people" (Brunton, 1989) - and such a characterization would not be misleading. As Brunton (1989) noted, immediate-return societies have few formal belief systems, rituals, or moral codes. They place little emphasis on tradition- there may not be a clear moral order intrinsic to the band and rituals are inconsistent and may not even be performed (Brunton, 1989). For instance, when asked about their views on incest, members of a Hill Panderam band displayed little agreement. Some expressed complete disapproval, whereas others did not think the partners in such a relationship should be disparaged (Brunton, 1989). According to Brunton (1989), the cultural values in immediate-return societies are so unstable because of the value the members of those societies place on autonomy. A strong cultural value system implies that one set of values is superior to another, that some people are better than others, and members of immediate-return societies reject this assumption. The end result is that, relative to delayed return societies, immediate-return ones provide little in the way of clear, situational cues for behavior.

Delayed-return Societies. Most people today live in delayed-return societies. These societies entail the exchange of crucial goods and services and long-term binding commitments (Woodburn, 1982; Martin, 1999). If I work for a week, then I expect to get

paid at the end of the week. To ensure that such commitments will payoff, members of delayed-return societies establish hierarchical power structures, legally defined relationships, and mechanisms to maintain these structures and relationships. Thus, compared to immediate-return societies, delayed-return ones foster conformity, obedience, strong social cues for behavior, and relationships in which people can exert power over others. Given these differences, compared to immediate-return societies, delayed-return ones reflect strong situations.

In sum, immediate-return societies foster autonomy and cultural instability, whereas delayed-return societies emphasize conformity and obedience. Thus, when members of immediate-return societies experience a strong press to behave, they may find little guidance in their environment and may turn to their individual differences for guidance. In delayed-return societies, on the other hand, when people experience a press to behave, they may find strong, clear cues for how they should behave, and may follow those cues, rather than their personality, to guide their behavior.

Behavior is determined both by the situation and personality so that different characteristics of a situation can interact with personality to predict which behaviors are likely to be expressed in that situation. For example, if you are in a highly constrained situation (e.g., a job interview), there are fewer behaviors available to you than if you are in a situation that is not as constraining (e.g., a park). Snyder and Ickes (1985) suggest that situations are characterized by how strong (i.e., clear guides for behavior) or weak (i.e., no clear guides for behavior) they are. Due to the lack of clear guides, individual differences are more readily observed in weak situations than in strong situations.

In order to best predict behavior, in addition to knowing someone's personality traits and the strength of the situation they are in you must also know if that person is motivated to behave (Caspi & Moffit, 1993). When motivated to behave in situations that do not have clear cues for behavior, people will search for strong, stable *internal* guides, such as highly heritable or automatic traits (Caspi & Moffit, 1993; Tesser 1993). Consequently, people's personalities may be most reflected in their behavior when they are motivated to act in weak situations and therefore must rely on their stable individual differences that are accessible and relevant to the situation. Given that cultures differ in the extent to which they impose strict norms and expectations on their members (i.e., tightness v. looseness), members of looser cultures may be able to behave more autonomously compared to members of tighter cultures where the personality-behavior association may be undermined (Gelfand et al., 2011; Gelfand & Lun, 2013). If we could manipulate a cultural difference related to tightness and looseness, as has been done with other cultural variables (e.g., Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998), then we may be able to influence the relation between participants' personality and their behavior.

Two existing societies that differ in their tightness and looseness are immediate-return v. delayed-return societies. Immediate-return societies foster autonomy and cultural instability, whereas delayed-return societies emphasize conformity and obedience. Thus, when members of immediate-return societies experience a strong press to behave, they may find little guidance in their environment and turn to their individual differences for guidance. In delayed-return societies, on the other hand, when people experience a press to behave, they may find strong, clear cues for how they should behave, and may follow those cues, rather than their personality, to guide their behavior.

In line with this research, I hypothesize that participants placed in an immediate-return societal mindset are less likely to have their autonomy undermined compared to participants placed in a delayed-return societal mindset. In other words, I expected participants in an immediate-return mindset to have a stronger personality behavior link than participants in a delayed-return mindset, especially when measuring a strong, stable personality trait.

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIMENT 1

In Experiment 1, I had participants complete a measure of Narcissism (Raskin &

Terry, 1988), and then I primed them with either an immediate-return or a delayed-return

mindset (Martin, 1999). After that, I had participants complete a measure of the better-

than-average effect for trait ratings (Alicke, 1985; Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, &

Bredenburg, 1995; Zell & Alicke, 2011). For this task, participants rate themselves and

the average college student on a variety of traits (e.g., intelligent, attractive). People have

a tendency to rate themselves more favorably than they rate other people, but this is

especially true of narcissists (Raskin & Shaw, 1988; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994;

Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Campbell & Foster, 2007). At least, it would be

true if they used their high level of narcissism to guide their judgments. If they were

relying upon situational norms rather than their personality, however, then there would be

little or no difference between high and low Narcissists on the BTAT.

My hypothesis was that participants' societal mindset would moderate the extent

to which participants would rely on their level of Narcissism to guide their behavior.

Because immediate-return societies exemplify a loose culture in which have few norms

for behavior, participants placed in this societal mindset should be more likely to base

their behavior on internal guides as opposed to external ones. In contrast, the relative

tightness of delayed-return societies should encourage participants in that mindset to rely

on cultural norms, as opposed to relying on internal sources, in order to guide behavior.

In light of this, I predicted that there would be a stronger relation between participants'

levels of Narcissism and their performance on the BTAT when the participants have been

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primed with an immediate-return mindset (loose culture, weak situation) than when they have been primed with a delayed-return mindset (tight culture, strong situation). To be clear I am not predicting a main effect of the prime on performance on the BTAT. Instead, I am predicting that the correlation Narcissism and performance on the BTAT will be stronger following the immediate-return prime than the delayed-return prime.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIMENT 1 METHODS

Participants

Participants were 195 undergraduate students (145 female) from the University of

Georgia who received partial course credit for their participation. Six participants were

omitted from analyses due to failure to complete one or more of the tasks, leaving the

total sample at 189 participants (140 female). The average age of participants was 19.16

years (SD = 1.195). Participants reported being Caucasian (81.0 %), Black or African

American (6.9 %), Asian or Pacific Islander (6.3 %), Hispanic (3.7 %), and Multiracial

(2.1 %).

Materials

Narcissistic Personality Inventory. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory is a

forty-item forced choice scale that is a non-clinical measure of narcissism (Raskin &

Terry, 1988; Vater et al., 2013). Participants answer each item by selecting a statement

that reflects either a high level of narcissism (e.g., "Modesty doesn't become me") or a

low level (e.g., "I am essentially a modest person"). The number of narcissistic phrases

participants chose is added up to provide a narcissism score, with 40 being the highest

possible score and reflecting the highest level of narcissism.

Immediate-return and Delayed-return Mindsets. To prime the societal

mindsets, I had participants complete one of two categorization tasks. In each task,

participants were asked to categorize fourteen sentences into seven pairs. To prime the

immediate-return mindset, the fourteen sentences reflected seven features of immediate-

return societies (e.g., "A cooperative society brings out the best in people" and "A strong

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leader can try to make people do things they do not want to do"). To prime the delayed-return mindset, the fourteen sentences reflected seven features of delayed-return societies (e.g., "A competitive society brings out the best in people" and "Strong leaders are good because they can steer a group in the right direction"). The two priming tasks are listed in Appendix A. The participants were told that there was no right or wrong way to organize the pairs as long as each of the 14 phrases was included only once in one of the 7 pairs.

Better-Than-Average Task. Participants completed the better-than-average task (BTAT) as a behavioral proxy for narcissism due to evidence that narcissists are especially likely to think of themselves as better than the average person (e.g., Gabriel et al., 1994). In this task, participants first rate themselves on twenty-three dimensions using a scale from 1 (e.g., *Messy*) to 21 (e.g., *Neat*). They are asked to circle the number of the scale that represents their position. Then, after a brief filler task, participants are given these rating sheets again and told to put a square around the number that reflects where they think the average person falls on each dimension. Thus, they create a relative measure of themselves and the average student on each dimension. The task is scored by subtracting each participant's rating of the average person from his or her self-rating on each dimension, and then summing these differences. The higher the sum, the more participants believed they were better than the average student.

Social Sensitivity Task. The social sensitivity task (SST) was used to measure a potential moderator of defensiveness. Participants are asked to determine whether certain statements would most likely be found in a genuine suicide note or in a note by someone who does not intend to commit suicide but is making a cry for help. They are told that the average college student can get about 12 out of 17

correct because the task measures a more general social sensitivity. After participants designated each phrase as "fake" or "genuine" and a brief filler task, they were given false feedback indicating they performed worse on this task than the average participant. They then indicated the extent to which effort, luck, ability, and task difficulty influenced their scores on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In reality, the notes are all reflective of statements that could be found in a genuine or fake suicide note and the feedback provided to participants did not indicate one's level of social sensitivity. Participants indicating strong influences by luck and the task are considered more defensive than participants indicating strong influences by effort and ability.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a university participant pool made up largely of introductory psychology students. The participants were run individually in a small room. The experimenter began by asking them to read and sign the consent statement. Next, the experimenter provided participants with a general overview of the study and sat them at a computer on which they completed the NPI and the first part of the SST where they designated the suicide notes as fake or genuine. After that, participants completed a pencil-and-paper version of the priming task. Specifically, they categorized 14 sentences into seven pairs. Then, they returned to the computer where they completed the BTAT and indicated the extent to which effort, luck, ability, and task difficulty influenced their scores on the SST. When participants had completed these last tasks, they answered a few demographic questions, and were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIMENT 1 RESULTS

Based on the hypothesis that the immediate-return mindset was associated with a

loose cultural orientation and a weak situational orientation, whereas delayed-return

mindset was associated with a tight cultural orientation and a strong situational

orientation, I predicted that the relation Narcissism and performance on the BTAT would

be stronger following the immediate-return prime than the delayed-return prime. The

results supported this prediction.

I regressed participants' BTAT scores on Narcissism, societal prime, and the

interaction between the two to determine if the magnitude of any main effects and/or

interaction effects. The scores for the predictors were zero-centered using z-scores. This

analysis yielded a main effect of Narcissism, $\beta = -.145$, $t(188) = -2.00$, $p = .047$.

Participants high in Narcissism reported larger better than average effects than

participants low in Narcissism. This pattern replicates previous findings and suggests that

our behavioral proxy for Narcissism was in fact a good proxy of that trait (Campbell &

Foster, 2007). No main effect of societal mindset was found when predicting one's

BTAT score, $\beta = -.04$, $t(188) = -.582$, $p > .05$. Societal mindset alone did not predict a

participant's BTAT score.

The analysis revealed a significant interaction between narcissism and societal

prime, $\beta = -.162$, $t(188) = -2.26$, $p = .025$ (See Figure 1). To get a better sense of what

was driving this interaction I calculated the simple effects for individuals with high

versus low levels of narcissism. These analyses revealed a moderate effect of condition

for participants with high levels of narcissism, β(unstandardized) $= -.372$, $t(188) = -1.84$,

$p = .067$, whereas for participants with low levels of narcissism there was no effect of condition on BTAT scores, β(unstandardized) $= .277$, $t(188) = 1.37$, $p = .174$.

It is possible that in addition to condition, there could also be an effect of defensiveness, as measured by one's reaction to being told they did poorly on a social sensitivity test that most individuals excel at. Prior research has found that when people are behaving autonomously they experience less defensiveness (Hodgins, Yacko, & Gottlieb, 2006). In order to investigate the possibility that one's level of defensiveness could mediate the relationship between societal mindset and relying on the self, a regression analysis was used with the scores from the suicide task included. The results of this analysis revealed that there was a moderate effect of condition on one's defensiveness score, $\beta = -.137$, $t(188) = -1.861$, $p = .064$.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIMENT 1 DISCUSSION

The results of Experiment 1 supported my prediction. Participants primed with an immediate-return mindset displayed a stronger relation between their level of Narcissism and their performance on the BTAT than participants primed with a delayed-return mindset. This prediction was based on the observation that immediate-return societies are associated with a loose cultural orientation and a weak situational orientation, whereas delayed-return societies are associated with a tight cultural orientation and a strong situational orientation. Thus, participants primed with an immediate-return mindset may be more likely than those primed with a delayed-return mindset to turn to internal guides for their behavior, especially guides that are stable and that come to mind quickly (Caspi & Moffit, 1993). Narcissism, being a highly heritable individual difference, possesses both of these characteristics. So, participants who were primed with an immediate-return mindset were more likely than those primed with a delayed-return mindset to consult their level of Narcissism when rating themselves in relation to the average person.

CHAPTER 6

EXPERIMENT 2

In Experiment 1, I studied the effects of societal mindsets on the extent to which participants based their behavior on a highly heritable individual difference. I used a highly heritable trait because Caspi and Moffitt suggested that when people cannot find external cues to guide their behavior, they turn to heritable traits because they are stable and highly accessible. In Experiment 2, I explored whether immediate-return mindsets and delayed-return mindsets would influence the likelihood of participants basing their behavior on a trait lower in heritability.

I had participants complete a measure of Machiavellianism ($h^2 = .31$, Vernon et al., 2008), perform a categorization task to prime either an immediate-return or a delayed-return mindset, and then perform a task that was sensitive to levels of Machiavellianism. Specifically, I asked participants to read through a series of scenarios depicting behaviors that were somewhat questionable at the ethical level, and I asked them to indicate how likely it is they would perform each behavior. People high in Machiavellianism generally report more willingness to engage in unethical behavior than people low in Machiavellianism (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Trevino, 2010). My question was whether this relation would be moderated by the societal primes. Following Caspi and Moffit (1993), we might expect the societal prime to have little if any effect on the relation between Machiavellianism and ethical decision making. When people look inward for guidance, they do turn to traits that are highly heritable (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). Machiavellianism is low in heritability relative to Narcissism. So, people primed with an

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immediate-return mindset may be no more likely to consult their level of

Machiavellianism as a guide for their behavior than people in a delayed-return mindset.

CHAPTER 7

EXPERIMENT 2 METHODS

Participants

Participants (N = 155; 92.3% female) in Experiment 2 were undergraduates from

the University of Georgia who completed the study to receive partial credit for an

introductory psychology course. The average age of participants was 18.74 years (*SD* =

1.21).

Materials

Machiavellianism Scale. I measured the participants' level of Machiavellianism

with the twenty-item Machiavellianism Scale (Christie & Geis, 1970). Participants read

statements reflecting different levels of the Machiavellian belief that the ends justify the

means (e.g., "Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do

so" and "Honesty is the best policy in all cases"). Participants indicated on a scale from 1

(s*trongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) how much they agreed with each statement.

After reverse-scoring the appropriate items, the participants' responses were totaled and

then divided by twenty for an average Machiavellianism score (*M* = 3.54, *SD* = 0.61).

Higher scores reflect higher levels of Machiavellianism.

Societal Mindset Prime. I primed the immediate-return and the delayed-return

mindsets using a categorization task as in Experiment 1.

Ethical Situations. Our behavioral proxy of Machiavellianism was composed of

four hypothetical situations in which the main actors in the situations engaged in

unethical behavior. Previous research has used ethical vignettes as a way to measure

one's ethical principles and behavior (e.g., Velasquez, 1982; Cavanaugh & Fritzsche,

1985; Hebert, Meslin, Dunn, Byrne, & Reid, 1990). In one scenario, for example, a manager realized that the projected quarterly sales figures would fall short and the manager would not receive a bonus. So, the manager shipped the orders for next quarter in order to inflate the sales figures for this quarter. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) the extent to which they endorsed the action of the person in the scenario. Their responses were averaged such that higher levels of agreement reflect higher levels of Machiavellianism.

Social Sensitivity Task. I used the same SST as in Experiment 1 in order to measure defensiveness.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a participant pool made up largely of introductory psychology students. They were run one at a time in a small room. The experimenter began by asking participants to read and sign the informed consent statement and providing a general overview of the experiment. Next, the experimenter seated the participants at a computer to complete the Machiavellianism scale and the first part of the SST where they designated the suicide notes as fake or genuine. Then, participants completed a pencil and paper version of the categorization task to prime either the immediate-return or the delayed-return mindset (distributed in a counterbalanced order). When participants had completed the priming task, they were directed back to the computer to complete the ethical decision task and the second part of the SST by indicating the extent to which effort, luck, ability, and task difficulty influenced their scores on the SST. Lastly, participants reported demographic information and were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

CHAPTER 8

EXPERIMENT 2 RESULTS

The goal of Experiment 2 was to see if priming participants with an immediate-return mindset or a delayed-return mindset would moderate the relation between their level of Machiavellianism and their endorsement of unethical behavior. Given that Machiavellianism is lower in heritability than Narcissism and that people turn to heritable individual differences were looking for inner guides, we might expect that the societal primes would not moderate the relation between Machiavellian and ethical decision-making. The results provided no support for moderation.

I regressed participants' ethical decision scores on Machiavellianism, societal prime, and the interaction between the two. The scores for the predictors were zero-centered using z-scores. This analysis yielded no main effect of condition on participants' ethics score, $\beta = -.048$, $t(154) = -.593$, $p = .554$, but did reveal a main effect of Machiavellianism, $\beta = .291$, $t(154) = 3.759$, $p < .001$. Participants high in Machiavellianism showed more willingness to endorse unethical behavior than participants low in Machiavellianism. This pattern replicates previous findings and suggests that our behavioral proxy for Machiavellianism as in fact a good proxy of that trait (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

Unlike Experiment 1, however, the analysis did not reveal a significant interaction between Machiavellianism score and cultural prime, $\beta = -.047$, $t(151) = -.599$, $p = .55$ (See Figure 2). Thus, the likelihood of participants turning to a low heritable trait to guide their behavior was not moderated by societal mindset. Unlike in Experiment 1, a

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participant's condition did not significantly predict the defensiveness scores, $\beta = -.130$,

$t(154) = -1.518$, $p = .131$.

CHAPTER 9

EXPERIMENT 2 DISCUSSION

In Experiment 1, priming participants with an immediate-return mindset or a delayed-return mindset moderated the extent to which they guided their behavior in accord with their level of narcissism. In Experiment 2, this priming did not moderate the extent to which participants guided their behavior in accord with their level of Machiavellianism. There was only a main effect of Machiavellianism.

This pattern is consistent with Caspi and Moffitt's prediction that people are not likely to turn to traits low in heritability to guide their behavior in weak situations. Of course, that is not the only possible explanation of the pattern. Experiment 2 differed from Experiment 1 in a number of ways, including the semester in which it was run, the experimenters running the experiment, and the particular measures used.

CHAPTER 10

GENERAL DISCUSSION

I ran two experiments to test whether cultural variables could moderate the extent to which people guide their behavior on the basis of their individual differences or situational cues. Specifically, I primed participants with either an immediate-return mindset or a delayed-return mindset (Martin, 1999). The former reflects a weak situation, whereas the latter reflects a strong situation. Thus, people are more likely to look inward for guidance when in an immediate-return mindset than when in a delayed-return mindset. In addition, people are more likely to guide their behavior in accordance with situational cues in strong situations compared to in weak situations. In weak situations, people turn inward to find behavioral guides and look for guides that are stable and highly accessible (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). Because heritable traits possess these features (Tesser, 1993; Tesser & Crelia, 1994), people in lose situations are more likely to base their behavior on their heritable traits.

It is important to note that the societal primes did not alter the mean level of participants' performance on the BTAT. They influenced the relation between performance on that task and participants' level of Narcissism. In other words, the primes in and of themselves make people report a stronger or weaker better-than-average effect. It made participants more or less likely to use their level of Narcissism to determine their performance on that task. People in an immediate-return mindset were more likely to consult their highly heritable traits to guide their behavior.

Mediators

My predictions were based on the general assumption that immediate-return mindsets were associated with a loose cultural orientation, a weak situational setting, and relatively higher autonomy. I had no direct measures of these intervening variables, and this is for two reasons. First, I viewed the experiments as initial attempts to see if the societal primes had any effect on the extent to which people guide their behavior on the basis of their individual differences. If the primes produced their predicted effects, then I could run follow-up studies to try to get more information about the mediators. Second, it is not clear that the mediators would be open to introspective awareness. I am doubtful that a self-report autonomy scale (e.g., Basic Psychological Needs Scale), for example, would show a difference between the immediate-return condition and the delayed-return condition. That is am empirical question, of course, but I thought it was one that could wait until after the initial effect had been demonstrated.

If self-report measures turn out to be uninformative with regard to the mediators, I could try to gain information about the mediators using other types of tasks. In these two studies, I measured the potential mediator of defensiveness, as there is evidence that priming an autonomous motivational orientation reduces ego-defense relative to priming a controlled orientation (Hodgins, Yacko, & Gottlieb, 2006). I expected to see that priming an immediate-return mindset would produce a similar reduction in ego-defensiveness relative to priming a delayed-return mindset. Although analyses investigating the effect of defensiveness on participants' BTAT scores revealed a non-significant effect, there are other potential mediators that to be tested in future research.

One possibility would be to cross the immediate-return and delayed-return primes with a manipulation of strong and weak situation or autonomy and control. If the results I obtained are due to the immediate-return prime being associated with a weak situation and a higher autonomy orientation, then priming a strong situation or a control orientation after the prime may eliminate its effects. Participants may no longer turn to their heritable traits to guide their behavior. Similarly, priming a weak situation or an autonomy orientation after a delayed-return prime may wipe out the effects of that prime. Even though people have been primed with a delayed-return orientation, they may turn to their heritable traits to guide their behavior.

Niche Finding

Overall, the results suggest that different cultural mindsets can influence the extent to which people guide their behavior on the basis of their individual differences. This is a novel finding in and of itself, but the results also have broader implications for people's well-being. If people do not guide their behavior on the basis of their heritable traits, then they may fail to create for themselves a behavioral niche that is compatible with their basic disposition. In other words, they will not be guiding their behavior in accordance with their authentic self. To use the terms of Sheldon and colleagues (e.g., Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), people will not be high in self-concordance. When people fail to pursue self-concordant goals, they may fail to place themselves in an upward spiral of well-being (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). They set up goals they do not really wish to pursue, exert little energy attempting to attain those goals, and often fail to attain them. Even if they do attain those goals, they will find that they experience little satisfaction --

because the goal is not self-concordant. It is not really valuable to them. So, they fail to set additional goals, fail to pursue any goals they do set up, and so on.

The general implication is that if societies differ in the extent which they encourage their members to look inward to their heritable traits as guides for their behavior, societies may also differ in the extent to which they foster an upward or a downward spiral of well-being for their members. Immediate-return societies may more likely than delayed-return societies to foster looking inward and upward spirals of well-being. Most societies today, however, are delayed-return societies.

CHAPTER 11

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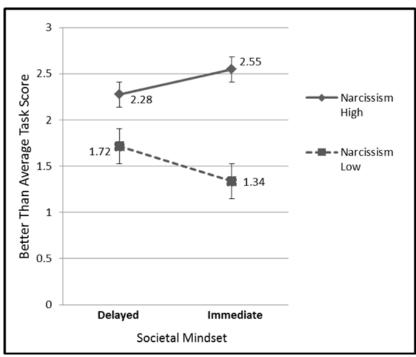
FIGURES

Figure 1: Interaction between condition and NPI score for Experiment 1.
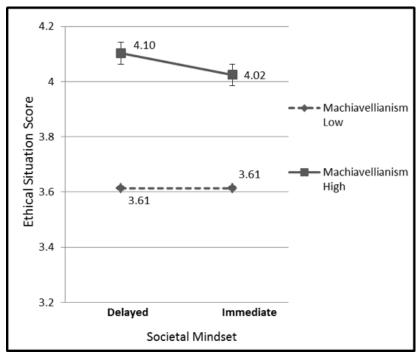

Figure 2: Interaction between condition and Machiavellianism score for Experiment 2.

CHAPTER 13

APPENDIX A

Please sort the following 14 statements into 7 pairs. There is no one right way to do this.

Do it in any way that seems right to you. Just place the same letter next to the two

statements you have chosen for each pair.

Immediate-return Prime

___1. A cooperative society brings out the best in people.

___2. Legally binding contracts reduce people's flexibility, freedom, and choice.

___3. More often than not, human interference hurts nature.

___4. Helping other people when they are down strengthens a society.

___5.It is best if we can support our group while still expressing our individuality.

___6. A strong leader can try to make people do things they do not want to do.

___7. People who discuss and compromise can help a group arrive at a satisfying

decision.

___8. Inequality can hurt people at the bottom.

___9. It is best when we have few formal laws and can rely upon people's good nature to

lead them to do the right thing.

___10. It is good to be able to depend on others when times are tough.

___11. It is important that we express our individuality even in the face of strong social

traditions.

___12. Nature usually unfolds in a beneficial way, even with little human intervention.

___13. If we stay vigilant, we can keep certain individuals from gaining too much power

and restricting the freedoms of the rest of us.

___14. Groups make their best decisions when everyone in the group agrees on the final

decision.

<div align="center">Delayed-return Prime</div>

___1. A competitive society brings out the best in people.

___2. Legally binding contracts can assure people that they will eventually get the

outcomes they are seeking.

___3. Human ingenuity has helped us tame nature.

___4. Helping other people when they are down weakens society.

___5. People who don't endorse all of a group's values can undermine the group.

___6. Strong leaders are good because they can steer a group in the right direction.

___7. It is good not to compromise on your personal values if you want your group to

arrive at a satisfying decision.

___8. Inequality can motivate people at the bottom to try harder.

___9. Strong laws help assure that people will do the right thing with regard to other

people.

___10. It is best not to depend on others when times are tough.

___11. Widely accepted social traditions enrich us as individuals and help bind us

together as a group.

___12. With technology, we can shape the world into almost anything we want.

___13. It is important to have experts that can tell the rest of us what to do.

___14. A group can make a good decision even when all of its members do not agree.