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Cultural Differences in Self and the Impact of Personal and Social Influences

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ABSTRACT

A long and rich tradition in Western-dominated social psychology has examined the effects of people's observations of their own behavior on their subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Studies in this tradition examine and find moderating effects of various contextual factors (e.g., volition and publicness) on people's tendencies to align their attitudes/behaviors with their observed behaviors. Conversely, there has been a historical tradition for examining the effects of social influences and group pressure on human thought and behavior. Recent findings reviewed in this chapter suggest that cultural differences in independence and interdependence moderate the relative impact of one's own and other's behavior. People from cultures stressing independence are more influenced by observations of their own behaviors, whereas people from cultures stressing interdependence are more influenced by observations of their peers' behaviors.

Historically, there have been two research traditions in the study of influence: one focusing on the effects of personal information and the other dealing with the effects of social information. Influence based on personal information refers to people being affected by their observations of what they have said and done in the past. Influence based on social information refers to people being affected by their observations of others' attitudes and behaviors. This chapter considers how the impact of these two forms of influence varies across cultures.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

> The last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitudes.
>
> —Victor Frankl

Much theory and research on influence suggest that people are more committed to behaviors they have chosen. One of the first to draw on this insight, Lewin (1952), the father of experimental social psychology, demonstrated that housewives could be persuaded to purchase otherwise undesirable meats (e.g., sweetbreads) if they were convinced not of the benefits of consuming such meats, but instead that they had chosen and publicly committed to purchase and consume these meats. Since Lewin's seminal studies, decades of research have repeatedly shown that people are influenced by personal information (i.e., their observations of what they said and did in the past).

In particular, studies indicate that when individuals behaviorally commit to a situation, they tend to develop attitudes consistent with their commitment (e.g., Kiesler, 1971; Salancik, 1977). Moreover, research has identified four variables that moderate the effect of behavioral commitment on subsequent attitudes. First, people are more persuaded by acts they engaged in publicly rather than privately (cf. Hovland, Campbell, & Brock, 1957). Second, people make judgments about how committed they are to a particular belief based on past efforts exerted in support of their belief. In other words, people make attitude inferences based partly on the frequency of the acts of commitment in which they have already engaged (cf. Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). Third, people are compelled by those commitments that are irrevocable (see Gerard, 1968). Fourth, people are persuaded by those acts that they perceived to have been volitional or freely chosen (cf. Freedman & Steinbruner, 1964). Essentially, after committing themselves to a particular position that is public, effortful, irrevocable, and freely chosen, people are likely to think and act congruently with that position (Aronson, 1992; Cialdini, 1993).

Although the influence of these four moderating variables often coexist, it is the last variable—that of perceived choice—that has received by far the most theoretical and empirical consideration. Salancik (1977) theorized

that, without choice, people need not infer that their behavior has any implication for their attitudes. Publicness, effortfulness, and irrevocability bind individuals to their behaviors, forcing them to come to terms with their previously committed deeds. However, their perception that they have freely elected to act in a particular way instigates the degree to which they give credence to their earlier commitments. Thus, although the publicness, effortfulness, and irrevocability of one's behavior may enhance its impact on subsequent attitudes and behaviors, the influential determinant may be volition or perceived choice.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHOICE

Give me liberty or give me death!

—Patrick Henry

Since the beginning of American political and legal history, the concept of *choice* has been drawn on as a persuasive device for influencing social ideology. Not surprisingly, psychological research and theory have also manipulated choice to illustrate its merits as a powerful influencing weapon on human thought and behavior. In fact, the provision of choice has proved to be so powerful that the motivational consequences of choice extend even to contexts in which the choice is trivial, incidental, or entirely illusory.

In the clearest demonstration of the relationship between choice and human motivation, researchers have repeatedly shown that the provision of choice is linked to intrinsic motivation, which in turn is correlated with greater commitment. Specifically, the provision of choice increases levels of intrinsic motivation and enhances performance on a variety of tasks (Deci, 1975, 1981; Deci & Ryan, 1985). In a typical study, the intrinsic motivation of participants is compared across two conditions, one in which participants are given a choice ("Which one of the following six puzzles would you like to do?") and a second in which participants are told by an experimenter which puzzle to undertake (Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978). Findings consistently indicate that, when given a choice, people tend to do better and persevere more at these activities—both of which may reflect greater commitment.

More recent findings suggest that the opportunity to make a choice need not be directly linked to the central activity at hand to be associated with increased levels of intrinsic motivation. Even the provision of small and instructionally irrelevant choices can increase intrinsic motivation and learning (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). The Cordova and Lepper study showed that when students work on a computer math game, even trivial choices, such as the option to

select the name by which they would be addressed during the game, increased intrinsic motivation and learning of mathematical concepts.

Indeed, even a pure illusion of choice has powerful motivating effects. Consider one of the theoretical cornerstones of social psychology—cognitive dissonance. When individuals perceive themselves as choosing to engage in counterattitudinal behavior, such as writing essays, subsequent changes in attitudes are observed. In contrast, when they perceive themselves to have been forced into that same behavior, their attitudes do not change (e.g., Collins & Hoyt, 1972; Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger, 1957; Goethals & Cooper, 1972; Linder, Cooper, & Jones, 1967; Sherman, 1970). Likewise, as long as individuals believe that they have chosen to undertake an unpleasant activity, such as administering electric shocks to oneself or eating grasshoppers, they will tend to perceive these behaviors as less unpleasant (Zimbardo, Weisenberg, Firestone, & Levy, 1965).

Researchers have even argued that the illusion of choice can influence the quality of human life (e.g., Rotter, 1966; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). One particularly compelling demonstration conducted by Langer and Rodin (1977) suggested that the health of elderly patients in a nursing home could be significantly improved—even leading to decrements in mortality rates—if the elderly patients were led to perceive themselves as having choices over relatively trivial matters within the institution. Perhaps Lefcourt (1973) best summed up the essence of this research when he concluded that, "the sense of control, the illusion that one can exercise personal choice, has a definite and a positive role in sustaining life" (p. 424).

In summary, the positive effects of choice appear ubiquitous. The provision of choice seems inherently linked with intrinsic motivation, perceived control, and personal commitment, all of which are in turn correlated with numerous psychological benefits. One explanation for the importance of choice may be its concomitance with self-responsibility. As long as people perceive their behaviors to be volitional, they presume responsibility for their actions and, consequently, their behaviors can serve as a source of information for constructing personal attitude statements (Bem, 1972; Bem & McConnell, 1970; Jones & Harris, 1967). Individuals may ask themselves, "What must my attitude have been if I was willing to perform this behavior in this situation?" Such a theory might suggest that a necessary factor underlying the power of choice is that an individual's drive for consistency will take precedence over his or her convictions.

Support for this theory comes from one of the most reliable compliance techniques—the commitment/consistency principle (also known as the foot-in-the-door technique; Dillard, 1991; Freedman & Fraser, 1966). This technique begins with a request that is so small that it almost always elicits compliance. After initial compliance is attained, a larger, related request is then made. Agreement to perform the second request is usually enhanced by this technique

and is often interpreted as resulting from a desire to be consistent with the initial commitment (Cialdini, 1993). Thus, one's perception of choice may be inextricably linked to one's desire to be consistent. Just how central is the power of choice and how pervasive is the desire for internal consistency, especially in societies less permeated by the rhetoric of personal freedom?

CULTURE AND CHOICE

> In the world, there are two great decrees. One is fate and the other is duty. That a son should love his parents is fate: you cannot erase this from his heart. That a subject should serve his ruler is duty: there is no place he can go and be without his ruler-no place he can escape to between Heaven and Earth.
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> —Confucius, Analects

Just as the cultural ideals of individual freedom and liberty are reflected in the way Americans are influenced by the provision of choice and personal history, so too might the ideals of duty and fate mitigate the effects of such powerful influencing tools in cultures less individualistic than our own. In particular, although the provision of choice is an integral part of American ideals, one might wonder what role it plays in contexts less individualistic—contexts that emphasize social interdependence over personal autonomy.

Drawing on the cultural analysis of Markus and Kitayama (1991), one may expect members of more collectivist cultures to be less influenced by their personal histories. Indeed, the findings regarding the effects of freely chosen behaviors on subsequent attitudes and behaviors might be particularly applicable to North Americans and Western Europeans. Markus and Kitayama's theory regarding self-systems argues that, although personal agency and internal consistency are essential elements of the self-concept of American individualists, it may be less relevant to the self-concepts of members of more collectivist cultures (characteristic of Asia and elsewhere).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that Americans possess a model of the self as fundamentally independent. Such individuals desire a sense of autonomy and seek to express their internal attributes to establish their distinctness from others in their environment. For Americans, then, it is important to be consistent with what one has done in the past to establish one's own stable internal attributes. Consequently, making a choice provides an opportunity to display one's preferences, express one's internal attributes, assert one's autonomy, and fulfill the goal of being unique. Thus, for Americans, internal consistency and personal agency may be deeply intertwined with their sense of self-identity.

Now consider a different cultural context—one in which the members possess a more interdependent model of the self. In contrast to American individualists, Markus and Kitayama (1991) theorized that members of more interdependent cultures (most non-Western cultures) strive for interconnectedness and belonging with their social ingroups by maintaining harmony and endeavoring to fulfill the wishes of their social ingroups (DeVos, 1985; Hsu, 1985; Miller, 1988; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1990, 1995). Moreover, because the superordinate goal for interdependent selves is to strive for interconnectedness, they possess a more malleable self-identity across contexts, suggesting that how they behaved in the past may not be an accurate reflection of their current or future preferences. For such individuals, the exercise of personal choice may be considerably less significant.

Recent research has provided strong empirical support for this hypothesis (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Iyengar, Lepper & Ross, 1999). In two studies, the provision of personal choice motivated American individualists more than Asian collectivists. In the first experiment (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999), patterned after traditional choice paradigms, Asian- and Euro-American children were exposed to either a choice condition, in which they were offered an option of engaging in one of six activities, or a no-choice condition, in which they were told by an experimenter which of the six activities to undertake. Subsequent findings revealed that, although performance on the activity did not vary by culture, Euro-American children proved significantly more committed to personally chosen activities than were the Asians.

A second study conducted by Iyengar and Lepper (1999) showed even more powerful cultural differences in circumstances in which the actual choices involved seemed quite trivial. Using a paradigm patterned after the one employed by Cordova and Lepper (1996), both Asian- and Euro-American fifth graders engaged in a computer math game in either a personal choice condition or a no-choice condition. In the personal choice condition, participants were given half a dozen instructionally irrelevant and seemingly trivial choices (e.g., "Which icon would you like to have as your game piece?"). In the no-choice condition, participants were assigned the same icons as the ones selected by participants in the choice condition. Once again, compared with the Asian participants, Euro-American children preferred more challenging math problems, showed more task engagement, and actually reported liking the subject of mathematics more when they had been allowed to make such seemingly trivial choices. Indeed, what is intriguing about the findings resulting from these two studies is not just the observed cultural differences in the power of choice, but the observed cultural differences in the power of externally dictated preferences on human motivation. We elaborate on cultural differences in the no-choice condition later in this chapter.

One explanation for these cultural differences is that internal consistency is not as relevant for members of more interdependent cultures. Specifically,

collectivists may be less committed to their previously stated preferences because there is no expectation for past preferences to be reflected in current ones. Consider the study conducted by Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, and Gornik-Durose (chap. 2, this volume) in which Euro-American and Polish participants reported their willingness to comply with a request to fill out a survey after considering their past compliance to similar requests. The results show that one's past actions have relatively more impact on Americans (the more individualistic culture) than on the Polish (the more collectivistic culture). More specifically, researchers found that it was not the nation of origin, but rather the extent to which persons are individualistic or collectivistic, that moderates the likelihood of those persons being influenced by past deeds.

THE POWER OF SOCIAL INFORMATION

> That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call White Black is a matter of concern.
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> —Asch (1955, p.34)

Once more, psychologists' understanding of the determinants of human thought and behavior is shaped by societal preoccupations. Just as the American ideals have glorified the concept of independence, so too do American values renounce the existence of social influence. In parallel with the research on the power of personal information, there has been a tradition of examining the consequences of social information, which is the extent to which people are influenced by their knowledge of what others have said and done. The prospect that individuals may yield to group pressure and may sacrifice their individuality in the face of social norms has dismayed many psychologists, including Asch (1955). There are several examples of such research traditions, but perhaps the most outstanding are the studies of conformity.

In his seminal study, Asch (1952) examined the influence of social information on compliance. In the presence of nine other confederates who all provided the wrong answer, Asch asked Euro-American male participants to name which of three comparison lines was the same length as a standard. To his chagrin, Asch found that 36% of his subjects conformed to group pressure. Subsequently, over 100 studies have been conducted to examine the pervasiveness of and factors affecting conforming behavior. Recent meta-analyses indicate that the greater the size of the majority, the greater the likelihood of conformity (Bond & Smith, 1996). Additionally, research on conformity and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that the more ambiguous the stimulus, the greater the likelihood for people to rely on their peers for making judgments.

Despite the apparent pervasiveness of the influence of social information, it may be argued that Americans are not as subject to committing to attitudes and behaviors instigated through social influence when compared with other cultural groups. Not to be understated is the fact that 64% of Asch's (1952) participants did not submit in the face of social opposition. Moreover, although the participants in the Asch experiments complied with the dictates of their social situation, there is little evidence to suggest that their compliance demonstrated in the laboratory led to long-term commitment and internalization of attitudes. Might we observe a greater prevalence of reliance on social information in more socially interdependent cultures?

CULTURE AND SOCIAL INFORMATION

> Filial piety and fraternal submission! Are they not the root of all benevolent action?
>
> —Confucius, Analects

Just as the ideals surrounding personal choice and independence are reflected in Americans' greater commitment to personal information, so too might the ideals of sacrifice and submission suggest the increased persuasiveness of social information among people from more interdependent societies. A growing body of research provides support for this hypothesis.

Drawing once more on the theory of Markus and Kitayama (1991), one might argue that people possessing interdependent self-models will be more receptive to the imposition of others' attitudes when making judgments about personal attitudes and behaviors. Because interdependent selves strive not for autonomy and independence, but rather interconnectedness, they might actually prefer the choices selected by others, especially if the social context enables them to fulfill the superordinate cultural goal of belonging.

The aforementioned study by Cialdini et al. (chap. 2, this volume) on social proof provides some initial insights about this phenomenon. Building on their previous research, Cialdini and his colleagues surveyed the willingness of Euro-American and Polish participants to fill out a questionnaire when considering the prior compliance rates among their peers. Social proof was shown to be a more powerful compliance technique in Poland than in the United States.

Additionally, a recent meta-analysis on conformity tested the hypothesis that collectivists would conform more than individualists (Bond & Smith, 1996). Findings from this meta-analysis suggest that participants from collectivist countries tended to show higher levels of conformity than participants from individualist countries. If conformist behavior is strongly related to collectivism,

then the decline in conformist behavior among Americans since the 1950s observed in the meta-analysis of Bond and Smith might suggest an increase in individualism in the United States.

Although the evidence suggesting collectivists' greater tendency for conformity is substantial, more refined experimentation suggests that it may be too simplistic to contend that interdependent selves are invariably more conformist than independent selves. In particular, for individuals possessing interdependent selves, the effects of having one's preferences dictated by others should depend on the identity of the chooser. Given that the identity of an interdependent self is fused with ingroup members, a choice that conforms to the selection of an ingroup member should provoke significantly more commitment. The same selection made by an outgroup member, however, may be just as uninspiring as other-choice contexts are for American independent selves. Depending on the degree of closeness between the chooser and the self, a person making choices for another can be perceived either as a benevolent agent or an arrogant usurper of an individual's right to choose.

The previously described studies conducted by Iyengar and Lepper (1999) tested the hypothesis that members from more interdependent cultures will be more intrinsically motivated by the choices made by others as compared with their own choices. Earlier we discussed the differential effects on Euro- and Asian-American children of the choice and no-choice conditions. Now we consider the cultural difference within the (two) no-choice conditions. For half of the students in the no-choice conditions, the person making the choice for them was a previously unencountered adult (i.e., the experimenter), whereas for the other students, the person making the choice was a person with whom participants shared a close and interdependent relationship (i.e., their mothers). Results show that, in contrast to the Euro-American participants, Asians were much more motivated and performed the best when their mothers had made the selection.

Iyengar and Lepper (1999) conducted a second cross-cultural study in which participants' closeness to the source of social influence varied. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the effect of social information on the intrinsic motivation level of individualistic persons would be relatively unaffected by whether the source of the social information were members of an ingroup or an outgroup. In contrast, the identity of the source of social information was expected to be much more pronounced among collectivistic persons. In this study Asian- (collectivistic) and Euro-American (individualistic) fifth graders encountered either a choice or a no-choice manipulation while playing a computer math game. Participants were given trivial, instructionally irrelevant choices or had their selections assigned to them by either an equal-status peer group (i.e., their classmates) or a lower status group (third graders at a rival school). The findings were striking. They showed that, in contrast to Euro-Americans, Asians were more intrinsically motivated and learned more when the choices had been made by their classmates than when they made their own choices, which in turn produced better results than when the choices had been made for them by unfamiliar and lower status others. In contrast, for Euro-Americans, the critical distinction proved to

be between having a choice and not having a choice. That is, they showed significantly more commitment, more motivation, and higher learning in the context offering them trivial choices as compared with either of the two no-choice contexts.

In summary, two major research streams in American social psychology have investigated the effects of: (a) one's own behavior—especially freely enacted deeds—on subsequent attitudes and behavior (Bem, 1972; Festinger, 1957), and (b) other people's behaviors on individuals' subsequent attitudes and behaviors (for a review, see Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Recent findings reviewed here suggest that the relative impact of one's own behavior and the behavior of others are moderated by cultural differences in individualism/collectivism. Individualists tend to be more influenced by their own behavior relative to collectivists, whereas collectivists are more influenced by other people's behavior relative to individualists, especially those exhibited by people who are close to the target individual.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The fact that cultural differences in individualism/collectivism moderate the impact of one's own behaviors and other people's behaviors underscores the need for further research. We discuss herein five potentially fruitful avenues for future investigation, including: (a) operationalizing the psychological factors presumed to mediate the relationships between culture and attitudes/behaviors; (b) articulating the aspect of individualism/collectivism that is most operative in a given situation; (c) distinguishing the impact of individualism/collectivism from that attributable to other cultural dimensions; (d) identifying moderating influences on the tendency for individualists to be more affected by their own behaviors than collectivists; and (e) identifying moderating influences on the tendency for collectivists to be more affected by other people's behaviors than individualists.

Operationalizing the Psychological Mediator

Many studies examining cross-cultural differences are predicated on the assumption that participants' culture (or nation) is a proxy for some psychological factor that influences their attitudes or behaviors. However, researchers often fail to measure the relevant psychological factor. In many cross-nation studies, researchers (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) do not assess the psychological factor presumed to account for their findings; that is, psychological measures related to individualism/collectivism often are not included in their studies.

It is important that future research include operationalizations of the psychological variables hypothesized to account for cross-nation differences (e.g., Cialdini et al., chap. 2, in this volume). To begin with, there is often considerable within-culture variability in the relevant dimensions: All people from Asia are not collectivistic—or *allocentric* in Triandis' (1995) terms—nor are all people from Western cultures individualistic—or *idiocentric* in Triandis' terms. By measuring the psychological factors, future researchers will be able to evaluate their underlying assumptions that the participants in their studies exhibit beliefs/values associated with their respective nations. More important, researchers will also be able to evaluate whether the psychological factors presumed to differ by nation actually account for observed differences between nations on the relevant dependent variables.

A recent study by Chen, Brockner, and Katz (1998) provided a demonstration of the procedure we advocate. The study was designed to examine conditions under which collectivists showed greater ingroup favoritism than individualists. Specifically, participants from the People's Republic of China (the collectivistic nation) and the United States (the individualistic nation) worked on a task and were given feedback about their individual performance. Half were told that they had performed well (individual success condition, whereas half were told they had performed poorly (individual failure condition). Cross-cutting the individual feedback induction was an orthogonal manipulation of ingroup performance. Half were told that their ingroup had performed well (ingroup success condition), whereas half were told that their ingroup had performed poorly (ingroup failure condition). A three-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA; nation x individual feedback x group feedback) yielded a significant triple interaction effect. The only condition to produce a cultural difference in ingroup favoritism was the individual success/ingroup failure condition, in which participants from the People's Republic of China showed greater ingroup favoritism than did those from the United States.

Additionally, participants also completed self-report measures tapping their individualistic versus collectivistic beliefs. When people were classified as individualistic (I) or collectivistic (C) based on their beliefs (rather than the nation from which they came), a triple interaction among I/C beliefs, individual feedback, and group feedback also emerged. The form of the interaction revealed that it was only in the individual success/group failure feedback condition that participants with relatively collectivistic beliefs showed greater ingroup favoritism than those with more individualistic beliefs.

To evaluate whether the effect of nation was mediated by people's I/C beliefs, an additional regression analysis was conducted in which both triple interaction effects (nation x individual feedback x group feedback and I/C beliefs x individual feedback x group feedback) were entered simultaneously into the equation. The results show that the triple interaction involving nation no longer was significant, whereas the triple interaction involving I/C beliefs remained significant.

Thus, the pattern of findings observed by Chen et al. (1998) suggests that it was participants' I/C beliefs that accounted for the observed differences between cultures in participants' ingroup favoritism.

Delineating the Germane Aspect of Individualism/Collectivism

A second mandate for future research stems from the multifaceted nature of individualism/collectivism. Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Triandis (1995) have noted that the construct actually consists of a number of related but conceptually distinct dimensions, including individual–collective primacy (i.e., whether people put more emphasis on their individual versus their social ingroup's interests, especially when the two are in conflict), independent versus interdependent self-construal (whether people define themselves based on their distinctiveness from others or their connectedness to others), self-reliance, and sociability, to name just a few. It is likely that certain aspects of I/C beliefs are more significant in some situations than in others.

To illustrate this point, consider again the study by Chen et al. (1998). In their study, participants completed multiple measures of I/C beliefs, including Triandis' (1995) scale of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, Singelis' (1994) measure of interdependent self-construal, and a shortened version of the Triandis et al. (1986) idiocentrism–allocentrism scale (previously used by Brockner & Chen, 1996). When participants were classified on the basis of preexisting categories based on the survey instruments, no mediating effects of I/C beliefs on the impact of nation were observed.

In fact, the Chen et al. conceptualization suggested that it was the participants' I/C primacy beliefs in particular that should have a moderating influence on their reactions to personal and ingroup feedback. Accordingly, the authors selected those items from the previously existing scales that seemed to most closely correspond to the notion of individual-collective primacy (e.g., "I usually sacrifice my self-interests for the benefit of the group I am in" and "I will stay in a group if they need me, even if I am not happy"). The results show that it was only participants' responses to the items tapping I/C primacy that accounted for the relationship between culture and ingroup favoritism.

Furthermore, there were substantial differences between participants from the two nations in their responses to the previously existing scales. For example, participants from the People's Republic of China had significantly greater levels of interdependent self-construal (Singelis, 1994) than those from the United States. However, responses to the previously existing scales did not explain the relationship between nation and ingroup favoritism. In other words, even if one were to find national differences on certain dimensions, it is still necessary to evaluate whether differences between nations along these dimensions actually account for differences between nations on the main dependent variables.

Distinguishing the Impact of Individualism/Collectivism From Other Constructs

Our third recommendation for future research pertains to distinguishing the mediating effects of individualism/collectivism beliefs from other factors that may differ between nations. Consider, for example, Hofstede's (1980) notion of power distance, which refers to the extent to which people perceive differences between persons in their level of formal authority to be a natural and even desirable aspect of the social order. In high power distance nations, people with less formal authority believe that it is appropriate and useful to make clear distinctions between those who have authority versus those who do not. The opposite is found in low power distance nations, in which people share in the power maintained by those in high-authority positions. Although power distance is conceptually distinct from I/C beliefs, the two tend to be empirically related to a modest degree. Collectivists tend to have high power distance beliefs, whereas individualists generally have low power distance beliefs. Just as we recommend that future research include measures of I/C beliefs (to evaluate whether such beliefs account for the relationship between the nation from which people come and their responses to the primary dependent variables), so too is it important to measure other psychological factors showing between-nation differences. This is done to evaluate whether these factors provide an alternative explanation of observed relationships between participants' nation and their responses to the primary dependent variables.

When Are Individualists Influenced by Their Own Behavior?

One of our primary assertions is that the attitudes of people from individualistic cultures are more likely to be influenced in the direction of espoused behaviors, relative to collectivists'. Moreover, we have asserted that cultural differences in the tendency for attitudes to become aligned with actions are especially pronounced for behaviors enacted with perceived choice (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). Choice was one of several contextual factors identified by Kiesler (1971) and Cialdini (1993) as moderators of the influence of behavior on subsequent attitudes. Others include publicity, effortfulness, and irrevocability. The common principle underlying the hypothesized moderating influence of the various contextual factors is *retrospective rationality* (Salancik, 1977). When people see themselves performing behaviors that are volitional, public, irrevocable, or effortful, they are likely to infer in retrospect that they truly believe in those behaviors.

Although contextual factors other than choice have been hypothesized to moderate the impact of people's behaviors on their attitudes, social psychologists have devoted far more attention to the choice factor than all others combined.

Perhaps the tendency to focus on choice—a concept linked to individual freedom—is the product of an individualistic orientation on the part of Western social psychologists. Similarly, the handful of studies that have examined how cultural variables moderate the impact of people's behavior on their attitudes have also focused on the choice factor (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). Yet it is important for future researchers to evaluate whether the observed tendency for individualists to be more influenced than collectivists by behaviors enacted volitionally also would apply to behaviors enacted publicly, irrevocably, and effortfully. In other words, is there something unique to high-choice conditions that cause the attitudes of individualists to be more influenced by their behaviors relative to collectivists? Or are Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings part of a more general phenomenon in which the conditions hypothesized to moderate the impact of people's behavior on their attitudes (e.g., publicity) are more applicable to those from individualistic than collectivistic cultures?

When Are Collectivists Influenced by Other People's Behavior?

Just as it is important to identify moderating influences on the tendency for individualists to be more swayed by their behavior, so too is it important to delineate the conditions under which collectivists are more affected by other people's attitudes and behaviors. Previous theory and research suggest that the closeness of the relationship between the target person and the other parties moderate the influence of the latter on the former. To be a collectivist does not mean that the person feels highly connected to other people and groups in general. Rather, collectivists feel more of a bond with, and therefore are more likely to be influenced by, others who are members of their ingroup (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Indeed, it appears that collectivists generally make more of a psychological distinction than do individualists between others deemed to be members of their ingroup versus those perceived to be in their outgroup.

One implication of these findings is that the tendency for collectivistic participants to be more influenced than individualists in the Asch (1952) conformity paradigm should be more pronounced when the others are ingroup members. Bond and Smith (1996) offered a similar prediction in their meta-analytic review, but to date this worthwhile hypothesis has not been tested.

APPLIED IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the Iyengar and Lepper (1999) studies are also of considerable practical significance. As in previous research (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Lepper & Cordova, 1992), the findings suggest that seemingly trivial manipulations of

instructionally incidental features of an educational activity may produce powerful differences in student motivation and learning. Considerable research shows that students permitted to make actual choices involving instructionally central decisions often make dysfunctional decisions that can interfere with learning (Lepper & Malone, 1987; Steinberg, 1989, 1991). Thus, it is significant that many of the substantial benefits of choice may be obtained by offering choices along instructionally irrelevant dimensions without the attendant risk that students may inadvertently sabotage their own learning. Such findings may be of particular value in the development of teaching strategies or the design of educational software, in which the choices may be offered to students to maximize learning, especially across diverse student populations (Lepper, Woolverton, Mumme, & Gurtner, 1993; Malone & Lepper, 1987).

Similarly, the findings from the Iyengar and Lepper (1999) studies may be helpful in understanding issues related to worker motivation and performance in culturally diverse organizations and globalized corporations. Organizational psychologists have long been interested in the effects of employees' self-determination at work on their productivity and morale. Self-determination is inherent in such concepts as participatory management, empowerment, and the high-involvement workplace (e.g., Vroom & Jago, 1988). The Iyengar and Lepper (1999) findings suggest that, in individualistic cultures, employees' motivation (particularly intrinsic motivation) may well be enhanced by giving them greater control, choice, and decision-making authority. The same types of self-determination may be less apt to have similarly enhancing effects on people from collectivistic cultures. This is not to say that employees in collectivistic cultures never appreciate self-determination at work. It just may be that they prefer different forms of self-determination relative to their individualistic counterparts. Perhaps a form of self-determination in which collectivists participate along with ingroup members—in which they perceive that *we* participated, rather than *I* participated—would have positive effects on the productivity and morale of employees from collectivistic cultures.

Several studies suggest that, although American employees tend to prefer individualized goals, collectivistic employees tend to perform better when engaged with group goals (e.g., Chatman & Barsade, 1995; Earley, 1989, 1993, 1994). In short, cultural differences in the preference for choice may also have significant motivational and performance consequences in organizations.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

A long-standing debate in social psychology centers on the relative importance of personal versus situational factors as determinants of people's beliefs and behaviors (e.g., Mischel, 1968). More recently, the debate has taken a different and, we believe, more productive approach, in which the goal is to identify the conditions under which personal versus situational variables are more influential.

Our analysis is consistent with this latter approach to the person–situation debate. Situational factors (most notably, the behaviors of other people) appear to be particularly significant among collectivists, whereas personal variables (most notably, one's own behaviors) are especially influential among individualists.

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