

Effects of individualist and collectivist group norms and choice on intrinsic motivation

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Abstract Previous research suggests that the positive effect of personal choice on intrinsic motivation is dependent on the extent to which the pervading cultural norm endorses individualism or collectivism (Iyengar and Lepper in *J Pers Soc Psychol* 76:349–366, 1999). The present study tested effects of personal choice on intrinsic motivation under situationally-induced individualist and collectivist group norms. An organizational role-play scenario was used to manipulate individualist and collectivist group norms in participants from a homogenous cultural background. Participants then completed an anagram task under conditions of personal choice or when the task was either assigned to them by an in-group (company director) or out-group (experimenter) social agent. Consistent with hypotheses, when the group norm prescribed individualism participants in the personal choice condition exhibited greater intrinsic motivation. When the group norm prescribed collectivism, participants' assigned to the task by the company director were more intrinsically motivated. The implications of results for theories of intrinsic motivation are discussed.

Keywords Self-determination theory · Group norms · Identified regulation · Internalization · Free-choice paradigm · Culture

Introduction

The value of choice in motivating behavior and evoking adaptive responses is pervasive in both popular culture and psychological theory (Patall et al. 2008; Ryan and Deci 2006; Savani et al. 2008). Research has demonstrated that choice is consistently related to adaptive outcomes such as increased intrinsic motivation, greater task persistence and performance, and higher levels of positive affect and satisfaction (Cordova and Lepper 1996; Langer and Rodin 1976; Reeve et al. 2003; Zuckerman et al. 1978). The proposed mechanism behind these effects is that the provision of choice is empowering and provides individuals with a sense of personal causation, agency, and control (DeCharms 1968; Lewin 1951).

Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985, 2000) is prominent among current social psychological perspectives on choice and offers a comprehensive analysis of the role of choice on intrinsic motivation. According to self-determination theory, the provision of choice enhances intrinsic motivation by promoting perceived agency and personal causation over action. Individuals imbued with a sense of choice feel more autonomous and competent in their environment and behavior. Contexts and social agents that provide choice are therefore likely to enhance intrinsic motivation by promoting perceived autonomy and personal agency. Research has consistently demonstrated the impact of choice on intrinsic motivation in numerous contexts (Patall et al. 2008; Reeve et al. 2003; Zuckerman et al. 1978). In addition, the provision of choice has been shown

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to promote intrinsic motivation across cultures and national groups (Bao and Lam 2008; Chirkov and Ryan 2001; Chirkov et al. 2003). In contrast, a lack of choice has been associated with reduced intrinsic motivation (Katz and Assor 2007; Ryan and Deci 2006). According to self-determination theory, not having choice removes perceived personal agency and undermines intrinsic motivation. Situations in which external agents are perceived as controlling and actions are viewed as the product of external contingencies like rewards or deadlines are linked to reduced intrinsic motivation such that individuals will persist only as long as the controlling agent or contingency is present (Deci et al. 1999; Ryan and Deci 2006; Ryan et al. 1991; Hagger and Chatzisarantis 2011; Hagger et al. 2013). Taken together, this research provides considerable converging evidence in support of the premise of self-determination theory that choice positively affects intrinsic motivation.

An alternative perspective on the link between choice and intrinsic motivation is offered by Iyengar and Lepper (1999), who demonstrated that the enhancing effect of choice on intrinsic motivation is moderated by cultural orientation. Iyengar and Lepper hypothesized that the provision of choice for people from individualist cultural backgrounds that endorsed an independent view of the self would enhance intrinsic motivation, consistent with previous studies. In contrast, it was proposed that intrinsic motivation would be enhanced among people from a collectivist cultural background that endorsed an interdependent self-view if the choice was made by a social agent from their own cultural or social group rather than by the individuals themselves. The proposed mechanism for this contrast was derived from the cultural analysis presented in self-systems theory (Markus and Kitayama 1991). According to this theory, members of interdependent cultures tend to strive for in-group harmony; thus acting in accordance with choices made on their behalf by in-group members will be more consistent with the goal of acting as part of the in-group. As a result levels of intrinsic motivation would be elevated for people of interdependent cultures when choices were made on their behalf by social agents. In contrast, exercising personal choice in a group context would be viewed as incongruent with group goals and less intrinsically motivating.

Iyengar and Lepper supported this premise in two studies on children from individualist (Anglo-American) and collectivist (Asian-American) cultural backgrounds. Anglo-American children provided with personal choice over which anagram task to solve, or which parameters in a computer game they preferred, spent longer, and performed better, on the tasks compared to children from the same cultural background who had choices made for them by an unfamiliar or out-group social agent (the experimenter) or

by a familiar or in-group agent (mother or peer). In contrast, and consistent with the hypothesis, children from an Asian-American background spent longer, and performed better, on the tasks when the choices were made for them by the familiar or in-group agent compared to when they had personal choice or when the choice was made for them by the unfamiliar or out-group social agent. The authors concluded that personal choice for members of groups with a collectivist orientation is of diminished value relative to choices made by social agents from the in-group because such choices give the actor the opportunity to demonstrate in-group harmony and willing conformity.

Considering Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings that the effects of choice on intrinsic motivation may vary according to whether choice is perceived as personal or provided by an out-group or in-group member and the individual's cultural background, it stands to reason that the same effects may hold for individuals operating in groups that endorse collectivist and individualist values within a given culture. Research from the social identity theory perspective has demonstrated that people of the same cultural background can be induced to endorse collectivist and individualist values. For example, McAuliffe et al. (2003) manipulated individualism and collectivist group norms using an organizational role-playing scenario and demonstrated that participants behaved consistently with the group norm when evaluating group members displaying normative and non-normative characteristics.

Following McAuliffe et al.'s methods, we aimed to replicate and extend Iyengar and Lepper's findings by examining the effects of situationally-induced individualist and collectivist group norms and choice provision (personal choice or choice provided by an out-group or in-group social agent) on intrinsic motivation. Our innovation in the current study was to experimentally manipulate cultural norms of individualism and collectivism in an organisational context rather than rely on individual differences in cultural norms based on ethnic background as Iyengar and Lepper did. Specifically, we adopted an organizational role play scenario to induce individualist and collectivist group norms in groups of participants from the same (individualist) cultural background (McAuliffe et al. 2003). Groups of participants were then required to solve anagrams under conditions of personal choice over the task, assignment of the task by an in-group social agent (an ostensible company managing director as part of the group norm manipulation), and assignment made by an out-group agent (the experimenter). The personal choice, in-group assignment, and experimenter assignment conditions were equivalent to the personal choice, mom/peer-choice, and experimenter choice conditions, respectively, from Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) studies. Consistent with Iyengar and Lepper's findings, we expected a significant

interaction effect of group norm and choice provision on persistence on the anagram task during a free-choice period, which constituted our dependent measure of intrinsic motivation. Specifically, it was hypothesized (H_1) that participants assigned to the individualist group norm condition would exhibit significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation when provided with personal choice over the anagram task than when the task was assigned to them by the in-group member (company director) or the experimenter. In contrast, participants assigned to the collectivist group norm condition were hypothesized to exhibit significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation when an in-group member assigned the task to them relative to when they were provided with personal choice or the task was assigned to them by the experimenter (H_2). Results were expected to make a unique contribution to the literature by demonstrating that the pattern of effects for cultural norms and choice on intrinsic motivation can occur in people acting in groups that endorse individualist and collectivist norms rather than individual variations in cultural orientations.

Method

Participants and design

Participants were 210 undergraduate psychology students (female, $n = 111$; male, $n = 99$; M age = 23.23, $SD = 6.60$, range 17–53) who volunteered to participate in the study for course credit. The study adopted a 2 (group norm: collectivist vs. individualist) \times 3 (choice condition: personal vs. experimenter vs. in-group member) between-participants design.¹ Participants were all British nationals who had lived in the United Kingdom all their lives.

Design and procedure

The experiment was introduced to participants as an organizational role-play exercise. Participants were run individually in a laboratory equipped with a video player and concealed video camera. On arrival, participants were shown into a laboratory by the experimenter and were asked to sit behind a desk. On the desk was the video player and video screen, a number of popular magazines, six manila envelopes containing anagram sets clearly marked with the categories *nature*, *education*, *space*, *sport*, *occupations*, and *entertainment*, four colored pens, a sheet containing the

description of the main characteristics of a hypothetical company, and a consent form. Participants were first asked to read and complete the consent form. Participants were then informed that they would be randomly categorized as employees of one of two hypothetical companies: *Renovatech* or *Tech Industries*. In reality, all participants were categorized as employees of *Tech Industries*. This was to make salient the categorization of participants into a group that was distinct and separate from other groups and establish in-group and out-group comparisons.

Group norm manipulation

Group norms were manipulated by presenting participants with one of two pre-recorded videos lasting 2 min. Prior to watching the video, participants were told: “Please watch this video of employees of *Tech Industries*, the company to which you have been assigned, designing a new logo for the company. The way they work and interact reflects the general work philosophy of the company. As a *Tech Industries* member you will, from time to time, be asked to evaluate other company employees”. Both videos were filmed in the same studio which resembled a company meeting room. The same three actors (2 male and 1 female) were depicted playing the roles of *Tech Industries* employees. The actors were ostensibly working on a new logo for the company. One video aimed to evoke an individualist group norm and depicted the actors working with very little interaction and verbal and non-verbal communication. A second video aimed to produce a collectivist group norm and presented the actors working cooperatively and interacting verbally and non-verbally throughout. Both videos were muted. Following the video presentations, participants were asked to write down behaviors that they would expect to observe in company employees in accordance with the company’s work philosophy. Participants were then presented with a single statement and asked to rate the general group dynamic depicted in the video: “Please rate on the scales below the general working practice of the group of *Tech Industries* employees in the video”. Responses were made on two nine-point Likert scales with endpoints individualist (1) or collectivist (9) and independent (1) or interdependent (9). The inter-item correlation for these items was $r = .84$ ($p < .001$) and the average was used as a group norm manipulation check (McAuliffe et al. 2003).

To establish some identification with the company, participants were then asked to complete two tasks. In the first task participants were presented with a photo of the managing director of *Tech Industries*, a grey-haired male aged about 50 wearing a shirt and tie, and were informed that this was their line manager as an employee of the company. Participants were asked to write down all the

¹ Experimental cell $n = 35$ per condition with relatively equal gender distribution in each condition. Full sample size and gender distribution is available in Appendix A, Table 1 as online supplemental material.

behaviors that they felt the managing director should exhibit consistent with the company's philosophy. In the second task participants were told that they would have to contribute to the company's workload by developing a logo to be used for a new product. After completing these tasks, participants' were then asked to report their level of identification with the group. The purpose of this measure was to assess the extent to which participants identified with the mission and ethos of the hypothetical company and its employees constituting the in-group. Group identification was measured on three items: "Being an employee at *Tech Industries* is important to me", "I identify with being an employee at *Tech Industries*", and "I feel a sense of belonging with the group of *Tech Industries* employees" with responses were made on nine-point scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9). The scale exhibited adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$).

Choice manipulations

After completing the group norm manipulation, participants were presented with the choice manipulation. A yoked design was used in which participants were grouped in triads within the group norm condition (Zuckerman et al. 1978). The first participant in each triad was assigned to the personal choice condition and could choose the category of the anagram task. The following two participants were randomly assigned to the experimenter or in-group member assignment conditions and were asked by the social agent in the relevant condition to work on the same category of anagram task chosen by the first participant in the triad.

Personal choice condition The experimenter explained to the participant that part of working for *Tech Industries* involved working on problem-solving tasks and that today's task involved completing sets of anagrams. Participants were given the following instructions: "In front of you are six envelopes containing instructions and a set of themed anagrams. [The experimenter points to the six envelopes labelled 'space', 'sports', 'occupations', 'nature', 'university, and 'entertainment']. Which one would you like to do? It's your choice." After the participant had chosen an anagram task, the experimenter pointed out the four colored pens and provided the following instruction: "Please choose the color of pen you would like to use to complete the anagrams." After the participant had made their choices, the experimenter collected in and removed the remaining envelopes and pens. Each participant was given 5 min to complete the anagram task and was then informed the experiment was over.

Experimenter assignment condition The procedure for the experimenter assignment condition was identical to the

personal choice condition with the exception that the experimenter assigned the anagram task to be solved, and pen color to be used to complete their answers, to the participant. The experimenter introduced the anagram task using the following script: "In front of you are six envelopes containing instructions and a set of themed anagrams. I would like you to do the [theme of anagram task completed by the previous participant in the personal choice condition] task." After presenting the assigned anagram task to the participant, the experimenter provided the following instruction: "Here are some colored pens for you to use to complete the anagrams. I would like you to use the [color chosen previous participant in personal choice condition] pen". The experimenter then collected in the remaining envelopes and pens, with the exception of the assigned task and pen, and told the participant to begin the assigned anagram task with the assigned pen.

In-group member assignment condition The procedure for the in-group member assignment condition was identical to the personal choice condition with the exception that the anagram task was assigned to them by the ostensible managing director of the company. This was achieved by the presentation of video in which the actor, identified as the managing director of *Tech Industries* during the group norm manipulation procedure, presented the anagram tasks and chose the task and pen color for the participant. The video was pre-recorded on a CD and displayed to the participant on the video player. The instructions provided by the managing director were identical to those in the experimenter assignment condition. The participant had no opportunity to interact with the ostensible company director. Once the participant had finished watching the video, the experimenter collected in the remaining envelopes and pens, the assigned task and pen excepted, and told the participant to begin the assigned anagram task with the assigned pen.

Intrinsic motivation

After the participant had completed the anagram task, the experimenter then excused herself from the laboratory by saying "I shall be gone only a few minutes in order to evaluate your task performance. You may do whatever you like while I am gone, you can read magazines, carry on with the task or do whatever you want". The experimenter then left the room. Participants' activities in the absence of the experimenter were monitored on the concealed video camera. After exactly 10 min, the experimenter returned, asked the participant to sign a final data-release form, and then provided a funnel debrief of the participant to probe for suspicion.

Results

Preliminary analyses

A 2 (group norm: collectivist vs. individualist) \times 3 (choice condition: personal vs. experimenter vs. in-group member) ANOVA on the group norm manipulation check scale revealed a significant main effect for group norm, $F(1, 204) = 574.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .738$. Consistent with the manipulation, participants assigned to the collectivist group norm condition rated the group as more collectivist ($M = 7.61$, $SD = 1.04$) compared to those assigned to the individualist group norm condition ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.63$). There was no significant main effect for choice condition or an interaction effect. A 2 (group norm) \times 3 (choice condition) ANOVA on the group identification scale revealed a significant main effect for group norm, $F(1, 204) = 24.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .107$. Participants assigned to the individualist group norm condition reported greater identification with the group ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.90$) relative to those in the collectivist group norm condition ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 2.14$). There was no significant main effect for choice condition or an interaction effect. A likely reason for higher levels of identification with the individualist norm is that that norm was consistent with the pervasive cultural orientation of the participants, whose background was from a social group with a predominantly individualist cultural orientation. Given the differences on the group identification variable in the current study, and previous research demonstrating that group identification affects the extent to which individuals assume the normative characteristics of a group norm manipulation (e.g., McAuliffe et al. 2003), we included group identification as a covariate in subsequent analyses.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation was measured by time spent by participants on the anagrams during the free-choice period with scores on the dependent variable ranging from 0 to 600 s. A 2 (group norm) \times 3 (choice condition) ANCOVA on time spent on anagrams with group identification as a covariate revealed a significant interaction effect, $F(1,203) = 6.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .063$. The interaction is illustrated in Fig. 1. Tukey planned comparisons within group norm condition indicated that participants assigned to the individualist group norm condition spent significantly longer on the puzzles in the personal choice condition ($M = 310.71$, $SD = 204.16$) than those in the experimenter assignment ($M = 194.37$, $SD = 204.07$, $p = .021$) and in-group member assignment ($M = 185.60$, $SD = 192.59$, $p = .010$) conditions. There

was no significant difference in time spent on the anagrams for participants in the experimenter and in-group member assignment conditions. In contrast, participants assigned to the collectivist group norm condition spent significantly longer on puzzles in the in-group member assignment condition ($M = 327.77$, $SD = 189.56$) relative to those in the personal choice condition ($M = 207.63$, $SD = 196.63$, $p = .013$). There was, however, no significant difference in time spent on the anagrams for participants in the in-group member and experimenter assignment ($M = 250.66$, $SD = 196.63$) conditions and participants in the personal choice and experimenter assignment conditions. Analyses of simple effects within the choice conditions revealed that participants assigned to the personal choice condition spent significantly longer on the anagrams in the individualist group norm condition compared to those in the collectivist group norm condition, $F(1,203) = 5.06$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$. Analogously, participants assigned to the in-group member assignment condition spent significantly longer on the anagrams in the collectivist group norm condition compared to those in the individualist group norm condition, $F(1,203) = 8.15$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .039$. There was no significant effect of group norm on time spent on anagrams among participants in the experimenter assignment condition. Finally, there was no significant effect for group identification in any of the models.²

Discussion

The present research examined whether individualist and collectivist group norms moderated the effect of personal choice on intrinsic motivation and task performance. As expected, when group norms prescribed individualism participants displayed the highest levels of intrinsic motivation when provided with personal choice over the task. This is consistent with the positive effect of choice on intrinsic motivation pervasive in the self-determination theory literature (Patall et al. 2008). In contrast, when the group norm endorsed collectivism participants exhibited the highest levels of intrinsic motivation when an in-group member assigned to task to the participant. Findings are consistent with the pattern of effects observed by Iyengar and Lepper (1999) for children from a collectivist cultural

² The key dependent variable, time spent on the anagrams during the free-choice period, was non-normal and U-shaped in distribution as observed elsewhere (Wiechman and Gurland 2009). We therefore conducted a square-root transformation (McClelland 2000) of the persistence data and repeated our analysis to check that the findings on the raw scores were affected by departures from normality. The analysis revealed an identical pattern of effects to those found using the raw scores. A breakdown of the effects for the analysis using the transformed scores is provided in Appendix B as online supplemental material.

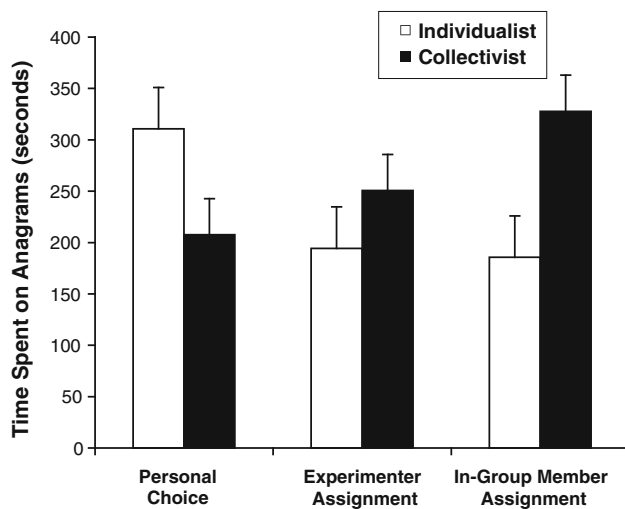


Fig. 1 Mean time (seconds) spent on anagrams during free-time period by experimental condition. Error bars represent standard errors

background (Asian-American). Current results extend previous research by reproducing these effects under situational manipulations of group norms as opposed to generalized cultural orientations.

While exercising personal choice enhanced people's intrinsic motivation when the group norm endorsed individualism, the introduction of a collectivist group norm revealed that intrinsic motivation was enhanced under conditions that should diminish intrinsic motivation according to the explanations offered by contemporary theories on choice. This is consistent with Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) research in children with dispositional individualist and collectivist cultural orientations as well as findings from other studies that demonstrate variations in choices and preferences across people from collectivist and individualist cultural backgrounds (Savani et al. 2008). Iyengar and Lepper (1999) indicate that their findings should lead to the revision of theories on choice, such as self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985, 2000). Their proposed mechanism was based on theories of cultural influence such as self-systems theory (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Individualist orientations condone independence and highlight the value of personal development when making decisions. As a consequence it is unsurprising that in-group contexts that endorsed individualist norms personal choice led to higher intrinsic motivation and better task performance. Analogously, collectivist orientations emphasize the value of interdependence among in-group members. Intrinsic motivation is enhanced when a member of the in-group assigns the individual to a task relative to having personal choice over which task to do, which is less likely to fulfil group goals, and when the task is assigned by an out-group member.

Deci and Ryan (2000) provide an interpretation of Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings to reconcile the cultural analysis with tenets from self-determination theory. Deci and Ryan propose that while persistence with tasks in the free-choice paradigm is indicative of intrinsic motivation, the persistence data alone do not account for participants' *experience* of intrinsic motivation while engaged in the task. They contend that it is important to align the behavioral measure of intrinsic motivation with self-report measures of interest, choice, enjoyment, and competence. Together the behavioral and self-report measures would provide converging evidence to corroborate the nature of the persistence and whether it was truly intrinsically motivated. It is possible participants' with a collectivist cultural background in Iyengar and Lepper's study, or those in a collectivist group norm in the current experiment, were acting out of an extrinsically-referenced obligation to an in-group member.

According to self-determination theory individuals may internalize externally-referenced behaviors if they perceive them to service personally-important and relevant goals. These *identified* reasons or regulations are separate from intrinsic motivation as they reflect reasons for acting that emanate from outside the self, albeit those endorsed by the self and consistent with self-determined values, rather than acting for the enjoyment, satisfaction, and sense of choice derived from the behavior itself. For participants from a collectivist cultural background, or those acting in a context that endorses collectivism, salient goals would be to promote harmony and demonstrate belongingness to the group. They may have wilfully chosen to relinquish their need for personal choice to an in-group member because the group norm makes group goals, such as relatedness, interdependence, and in-group harmony, salient. Therefore, the internalization of the in-group member's support for group goals may have promoted persistence on the task in this context for self-determined, but not intrinsic, reasons.

Strengths, limitations and future directions

The main strength of the current research is the replication of Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings using a situational manipulation of individualist and collectivist group norms on behavior rather than individual differences in individualist and collectivist orientations based on cultural norms. The pattern of effects found in the current study, therefore, arises as the result of relatively minimal, situational manipulations of group norm rather than chronic development though long-term experience with a cultural norm. Furthermore, it means that a similar pattern of effects emerges among individuals from the same cultural background when the group norm prescribed either individualism or collectivism. This has important implications for

the understanding of the effect of cultural norms and choice on intrinsic motivation and for future research aimed at extending current findings. Our results indicate that even a relatively ‘minimal’ group norm manipulation could lead individuals to adopt different cultural norms and act consistent with those norms in situations that endorse personal choice over tasks and tasks assigned by other in-group members. From a methodological perspective, we anticipate that the current study design and manipulations will provide researchers with the means to investigate the effects of cultural norms and choice on intrinsic motivation without the need to pre-screen individuals for their independent or interdependent cultural orientations.

Future research should seek to corroborate the hypothesized mechanisms for the effects found for group norms and choice on intrinsic motivation found in the current study through the identification of candidate mediators. According to self-determination theory, individuals acting in a group norm that endorses collectivism have internalized the actions and choices made by the in-group member and view them as supportive of their self-determination. It follows that the degree of internalization of the values of the in-group member, the company managing director in the current study, would mediate the effect (Ryan and Deci 2006). It would therefore be prudent to include self-report measures of the extent to which individuals viewed the values of the company director were consistent with their own and supported their autonomy alongside the current manipulations in future experiments. In addition, perceptions of relatedness and interconnectedness with the line manager may also act as mediators. Participants are more likely to feel that their autonomy is supported by the in-group member, and endorse the assignment of the task to them by the member, if they feel related and interconnected with the manager (Bao and Lam 2008; Ryan and Deci 2006). Testing these candidate mediators should be a priority for future research to test these proposed mechanisms.

An interesting methodological distinction between Iyengar and Lepper’s (1999) research and the current study was that the focal social agents in the experimental manipulations differed. Iyengar and Lepper’s methods required Anglo-American and Asian-American parents or peers make the choice on behalf of the child while in the present study the ostensible managing director of the hypothetical company assigned participants to the anagram task. This is an important distinction as parents and peers are likely to have strong interpersonal relationships with the participants in Iyengar and Lepper’s experiments. Participants in the current study, on the other hand, had no personal experience or relationship with the company director and likely viewed him as an authority figure. These differences did not seem to impact the pattern of results for task persistence across the studies and provides preliminary

evidence that even situations in which individualist and collectivist group norms are induced by ‘minimal’ means are sufficient to alter participants’ interpretation of the situation and their levels of intrinsic motivation. However, this may also raise the question as to the mechanisms underpinning the effects. As mentioned previously, one possible interpretation of the greater levels of persistence in the in-group assignment condition is that participants were acting for extrinsic reasons that were either internalized (identified regulation) or controlled (introjected regulation). An important avenue for future inquiry would be to replicate current findings with an ostensible peer (e.g., a co-worker) as the focal figure in the in-group assignment condition. This would provide a test of whether the current pattern of effects was replicated when the focus was on an in-group member that was not an authority figure and more closely aligned with Iyengar and Lepper’s manipulations.

There were a number of limitations of the current study and their implications for the interpretation of current findings and future research should be highlighted. A clear limitation of the study is the lack of a self-report measure of intrinsic motivation as a means to verify the persistence measure as an index of intrinsic motivation. Administering a self-report measure would provide additional evidence to support the finding that individuals operating in the collectivist group norm experienced significantly greater intrinsic motivation in the in-group member assignment condition relative to personal choice condition. In the absence of this measure, we cannot unequivocally rule out the possibility that participants acting in the collectivist group-norm context, and having the task assigned to them by an in-group member, may have been acting for identified reasons, an extrinsic form of motivation in which individuals act to service important externally-referenced, but self-determined, goals for group harmony and belongingness. In a similar line of argument, Ryan and Deci (2006) suggest that individuals with a collectivist cultural orientation may persist for longer when others assign tasks to them for introjected reasons, a form of extrinsic motivation which reflects acting out of an internalized obligation to others. These reasons for acting may have been more salient in this context than personal or individual reasons, and, therefore, may have been why individuals given personal choice in this context spent less time on the task by comparison. A priority for future research, therefore, would be to conduct a replication of the current study and include self-report measures of intrinsic motivation, as well as measures of internalized extrinsic motives, such as identified regulation (Ryan and Connell 1989).

A criticism often levelled at research on choice is the relatively arbitrary nature of the choices presented in experimental manipulations. Theorists have suggested that multiple uninformed and trivial choices have little value

and often do not constitute choice at all (Schwartz 2000, 2009). From a self-determination theory perspective, Ryan and Deci (2006) suggest that uniformed or arbitrary choices can be viewed as controlling if they provide no information on whether the choice is consistent with needs for autonomy and are a reflection of an individual's true endorsement of the selected option. Rather, it is the *experience* of choice that matters with respect whether choice will enhance intrinsic motivation. In contrast, a meta-analysis found stronger effects for *instructionally-irrelevant choices* than *instructionally-relevant choices* on intrinsic motivation (Patall et al. 2008). The authors suggested that choices with little consequence may actually represent an opportunity for individual expression and enhance intrinsic motivation. In the current study, the choices presented to participants in the personal choice condition (selecting the theme of anagram task and pen) was consistent with those offered to participants in previous studies on choice including Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) study, but could be construed as superficial and trivial and, therefore, relatively inconsequential for motivation. However, as we did not measure participants' experience of intrinsic motivation, it is not clear as to the extent to which participants experienced the choice as intrinsically motivating. Future experiments could address this limitation by including a manipulation of the consequences and meaning of the choice to participants, as well as including self-reports of intrinsic motivation. These inclusions may shed light on whether the relative arbitrariness of the choice impacts on intrinsic motivation under conditions of individualist and collectivist group norms.

A further limitation of the current study is the omission of a measure of performance on the anagram task. While the focal dependent variable in studies on intrinsic motivation has typically been involvement with the task during a free-choice period (e.g., Deci 1971, 1972), studies have also collected performance data during the initial experimental period and used it as an additional dependent variable (e.g., Harackiewicz 1979; Iyengar and Lepper 1999). Consistent with hypotheses relating to task persistence during the free-choice period, participants with higher levels of intrinsic motivation were expected to solve more anagrams during the initial period as they tended to invest more effort in the task and have a greater need to demonstrate competence. This would provide additional evidence to support the predicted pattern of interactive effects of the group norm and choice manipulations on intrinsic motivation. Researchers are advised to collect performance data alongside persistence data in future replications of the current findings.

Finally, we did not measure or control for individual differences in cultural orientation in the course of the present study. We could therefore not unequivocally rule

out the possibility that dispositional cultural orientations may have affected the current findings, and would be a pertinent control variable in future research. The absence of a dispositional measure notwithstanding, participants recruited in the current study were from a Western European nation and could be assumed to have a largely individualist cultural orientation. It would be interesting to examine whether individuals from a national group from an Eastern nation with a largely collectivist cultural orientation would exhibit similar responses to the group norm manipulation and the same interactive effects of group norms and choice on intrinsic motivation. Future studies should extend the current research by examining the interaction of individual differences in cultural orientation with the choice and group norm manipulations on intrinsic motivation using a measure of dispositional individualism and collectivism. An alternative design would be to use the measure to pre-screen a sample of predominantly individualist- and collectivist-oriented individuals within a particular culture and replicate the current study in those extreme groups.

Conclusion

The present study extended previous research by demonstrating that the situational induction of individualist and collectivist group norms, rather than individual differences in individualist and collectivist cultural orientations, affected the effect of personal choice and social-agent assignment conditions on intrinsic motivation. It contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that personal choice may be less optimal when the pervading group norm endorses collectivism and that the assignment of tasks by in-group members to individuals in such a group environment is more likely to evoke greater intrinsic motivation.

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