

CHAPTER 12

Local and Global Evaluations

Attitudes as Self-Regulatory Guides for Near and Distant Responding

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Although we often think of our attitudes and beliefs as inherent and enduring aspects of ourselves, we also find that they fail to guide us in many everyday social situations. At times, we act in accordance with our core values and ideals. Often, however, our behavior seems to be far more strongly shaped by the particularities of the current context. Building on a wealth of past research that has examined issues related to evaluative consistency and inconsistency, this chapter examines the question of when and why evaluative responses might be more or less consistent across contexts from a self-regulatory perspective. Specifically, we propose that evaluations can serve as self-regulatory guides for action either within the current context or outside of it. Whereas flexible action guides that incorporate local details in the current context tend to be useful for responding appropriately to proximal objects, consistent action guides that globally generalize across contexts are more useful for responding to distant objects. From this perspective, cues about distance should functionally influence the extent to which evaluative responses fluctuate or remain consistent across different contexts. This issue is important for understanding self-control, since local and global evaluations may have conflicting action implications, and distance may therefore play a key role in resolving such self-control dilemmas. More broadly, our goal in this chapter is to form a bridge between the literatures on attitudes and self-regulation to improve our understanding of how these often separate fields of research can each elucidate the other.

We begin by briefly reviewing some of the ways that attitudes have been assumed to promote consistency or flexibility in the literature, and then describe why evaluative flexibility, as well as consistency, might be functional from a self-regulatory perspective.

Next we discuss in more detail the notion that evaluations can either summarize information from the current context, thereby promoting evaluative flexibility, or summarize information that is consistent across contexts, thereby promoting evaluative consistency. We propose that distance plays a key role in determining which form of evaluative summary is used to guide behavior, and draw on construal level theory to delineate the cognitive process by which this could occur. After describing a series of empirical studies that provide support for several of our hypotheses, we discuss points of interface with other theories of self-regulation and self-control, and highlight some implications of the present perspective for understanding the role of evaluation in regulating action.

CONCEPTUALIZING ATTITUDES

The study of attitudes has long been motivated by the assumption that attitudes play a key role in regulating behavior. In other words, attitudes guide action: They serve to provide a quick summary of whether an attitude object is positive or negative, which facilitates approach or avoidance of that object (Fazio, 1989; Katz, 1960; M. B. Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Furthermore, attitudes can function to regulate social action and interaction by summarizing information from the social environment (e.g., other people's opinions) that helps individuals create and maintain a shared view of the world with those around them (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009; C. D. Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008; Smith et al., 1956). Thus, attitudes help guide action and interaction by providing efficient, valenced summaries of a large amount of evaluative information that would be difficult to process piece by piece before each behavior we undertake in daily life.

Despite widespread consensus that an important function of attitudes is to guide behavior, researchers have conceptualized the fundamental nature of that behavioral guide in somewhat different ways. Historically, attitudes have often been characterized as dispositional evaluative tendencies toward a given attitude object that are relatively consistent across situations, unless (or until) a successful persuasion attempt changes the first attitude into a new one (Ajzen, 1988; Allport, 1935; D. T. Campbell, 1950; Krech & Crutchfield, 1948; Tourangeau & Rasinski, 1988). Indeed, there is good evidence to suggest attitudes can at least sometimes display a high level of stability across times and contexts (e.g., A. Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Krosnick, 1988; see Eagly & Chaiken, 1995, for a review). Furthermore, stability has frequently been equated with importance or consequentiality, whereas instability in evaluative responding has been assumed to reflect inconsequential attitudes or even just error in measurement (e.g., Bassili, 1996; Converse, 1964, Schuman & Presser, 1981). Attitudes are thus often assumed to be relatively static, schematic mental representations, and to therefore guide evaluative responding in a fairly consistent way.

Meanwhile, however, other researchers conceptualize attitudes as intrinsically malleable representations or even *de novo* constructions that flexibly incorporate the particular information that happens to be activated in a given context (Conrey & Smith, 2007; Lord & Lepper, 1999; Schwarz, 2007). These perspectives fit particularly well with research demonstrating that attitudes often fluidly shift in response to other people in the immediate social situation, including conversation partners, significant others, salient social groups, and incidentally encountered strangers (Baldwin & Holmes, 1987; Davis



& Rusbult, 2001; Higgins & Rholes, 1978; Ledgerwood & Chaiken, 2007; Sinclair, Lowery, Hardin, & Colangelo, 2005). From this view, attitudes naturally fluctuate from situation to situation, and evaluative consistency arises only when the evaluative implications of inputs activated in one setting happen to match those activated in another.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL ACTION GUIDES

To some extent, these different conceptualizations of attitudes as stable versus shifting may reflect differences in assumptions about the functionality or usefulness of flexibility versus consistency in guiding action. On the one hand, consistent evaluations should often be effective for regulating behavior, given that local information is frequently irrelevant for evaluative responding. If someone is voting for the next president, for instance, it does not seem particularly useful for variations in the weather, or who happens to be waiting in line at the polling station, to influence her evaluative responses toward the candidates. From this perspective, action would ideally be based on a summary guide of whether a person, object, or event tends to be positive or negative across situations. Thus, a global evaluative response that remains consistent in the face of contextual fluctuation would seem particularly functional in some cases. Such global evaluations could provide a relatively stable summary guide for engaging with an attitude object by taking into account general information from multiple contexts. They might incorporate what is consistently relevant for action toward an attitude object across different situations, including broad principles and values, the opinions of significant others or groups, societal norms, long-term goals, and central and enduring features of the attitude object.

On the other hand, it seems equally plausible that a flexible evaluative response that allows a person to adapt fluidly to his current social environment would be helpful in guiding behavior (see also Schwarz, 2007). Different contexts call for different responses: If someone needs to slice an apple, for example, he might approach a paring knife if it is sitting peacefully on the counter but jump away if it slides off and clatters to the floor. Furthermore, flexible evaluative responses facilitate the creation of socially shared viewpoints, which are a necessary basis of communication, relationships, and the regulation of social action (see, e.g., Festinger, 1950; C. D. Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Ledgerwood & Liviatan, 2010). From this perspective, local evaluations that flexibly tune to the current situation might be optimal for regulating action. These local evaluations could incorporate details of the current context, including the presumed attitudes of others who happen to be in the immediate social situation, as well as nonsocial aspects of the current context, short-term concerns, and unique details of a particular instantiation of the attitude object.

Although both types of evaluations seem potentially useful, it seems possible to distinguish situations in which each form of evaluation would be more or less effective for regulating behavior. After all, in the present moment, individuals need to be able to regulate their actions flexibly to pursue their immediate goals, coordinate action with others around them, and interact effectively with their local environment. Local evaluations could serve to guide action effectively toward objects within the current situation because they are sensitive to specific contextual information. However, humans are also able to transcend their immediate situation to plan for the future, coordinate action at a distance, and predict other people's behaviors. Thus, they must be able to regulate their

actions for not only the here and now but also the there and then. Global evaluations could serve to guide action appropriately toward objects *outside* of the present situation by drawing on evaluation-relevant information that is consistent across contexts.

Importantly, then, information about the proximity of an attitude object should play a key role in determining which form of evaluation arises in a given setting. Specifically, we suggest that cues about distance will set into motion a self-regulatory evaluative system geared toward guiding action either within the current context or outside of it. Responses to proximal objects should be guided by local evaluations that incorporate information relevant for action in the current situation, whereas responses to distal objects should be guided by global evaluations that summarize context-independent information.

How exactly might such a process play out? To better delineate both the construct of distance and the cognitive process by which it could influence evaluative responding, we next describe construal level theory.

DISTANCE AND LEVEL OF CONSTRUAL

According to construal level theory, psychological distance plays a key role in determining how we subjectively represent an object or event (N. Liberman & Trope, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2003). There are different dimensions of psychological distance: An object can be removed from us in time (the future or the past) as well as space, social distance (e.g., others vs. ourselves, us vs. them), and hypotheticality (e.g., a counterfactual alternative vs. reality, a distant chance vs. a near certainty). Interestingly, however, these different dimensions of distance converge in their effects on mental representation (e.g., Fujita, Henderson, Eng, Trope, & Liberman, 2006; Wakslak, Trope, Liberman, & Aloni, 2006; see N. Liberman & Trope, 2008, for a review). As an object or event grows increasingly distant, we tend to mentally represent it more in terms of its essential, superordinate, and stable characteristics. These *high-level construals* are abstract and structured; they extract gist information and leave out irrelevant details that could vary without changing the core meaning we have assigned to the object. In contrast, we tend to subjectively represent psychologically proximal objects in terms of their detailed, subordinate, and contextualized features. These *low-level construals* are more concrete and lack a clear structure separating important from peripheral and irrelevant features.

Consider, for instance, the impact of psychological distance on perception. Researchers have found that participants were better able to visually abstract the big picture from a set of fragments in the Gestalt Completion Test when they imagined working on the task in the distant future (on a day 1 year from now) versus the near future (tomorrow), or when the task was psychologically distant in probability (i.e., when they thought they were unlikely vs. likely to actually receive the task in a later session) (Forster, Friedman, & Liberman, 2004, Study 3; Wakslak et al., 2006, Study 5). Distance has a similar impact on cognition: For example, individuals grouped objects into fewer, broader categories when they imagined using the objects in the distant (vs. near) future, and they predicted that people's behaviors would be more dispositionally driven (and less susceptible to situational variation) at a temporally distant versus proximal time point (Nussbaum, Trope, & Liberman, 2003). Likewise, psychological distance increases the extent to which people focus on superordinate ends versus subordinate means. When an activity was expected occur in the distant (vs. near) future or in a spatially remote (vs. close) loca-

tion, participants were more likely to describe it in terms of its abstract purpose; when the activity was psychological closer, participants used more concrete descriptions that emphasized the means by which the activity was performed (Fujita, Henderson, et al., 2006, Study 1; N. Liberman & Trope, 1998, Study 1).

Importantly, this relationship between psychological distance and construal level elucidates a key mechanism by which distance could influence evaluative action guides. By highlighting the central and defining features of an attitude object, high-level construals could enable relatively global evaluations that integrate what is consistent about the object across contexts. Evaluations of psychologically distant attitude objects could therefore be based on information relevant for evaluating the object's superordinate and central features, and would appear relatively stable in the face of shifting contextual details. For example, a dieter's global evaluation of a piece of cake might screen out situation-specific information (the enticing chocolate icing, the fact that it is served at a birthday party) and focus instead on context-independent information, such as the negative impact of high-calorie foods on his goal to lose weight. In contrast, by including the concrete, contextual aspects of an attitude object, low-level construals could enable more local evaluations that integrate the unique details of the present situation. Because they incorporate evaluative information from specific contextual details that often change across situations, these local action guides would appear relatively malleable. For instance, a dieter's local evaluation of a cake might fluctuate depending on whether the cake looks moist or dry, or whether a stranger happens to like it, or whether the situation seems to call for eating cake (e.g., a birthday party vs. chatting with a friend at a coffee shop).

Thus, we postulate that distance directs the self-regulatory system via its impact on the mental representation of an attitude object, which determines the basis or form of evaluation (i.e., a more global or more local integration of evaluative information). This pattern should therefore generalize beyond any particular dimension of distance. Any variable that influences the level at which an attitude object is mentally construed should be sufficient to trigger these self-regulatory effects.

MENTALLY REPRESENTING THE ATTITUDE OBJECT

The notion that psychological distance might influence evaluative responding by changing the way an attitude object is mentally construed fits well with other perspectives that have emphasized the importance of subjective representation in guiding evaluative consistency. Echoing Asch's (1940) distinction between "a change in the object of judgment, rather than in the judgment of the object" (p. 458), theorists have examined the notion that inconsistency in evaluative responding can arise when the mental representation of an attitude object changes (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2007; Lord & Lepper, 1999; Lord, Lepper, & Mackie, 1984; Schwarz, 2007). For instance, attitude representation theory (Lord & Lepper, 1999) suggests that a person's evaluation of an attitude object depends on his or her subjective representation of that object, and that inconsistency in evaluative responding will arise when a person's subjective representations differ between contexts. Thus, a person's evaluation of the same social category (e.g., politicians) can shift when different category exemplars are activated (e.g., a liked vs. disliked politician) (Sia, Lord, Blessum, Ratcliff, & Lepper, 1997; see also Asch, 1948; Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995).

Similarly, constructionist approaches suggest that attitudes can be best understood as spontaneous integrations across relevant and activated evaluative information (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2007; Schwarz, 2007; E. R. Smith & Conrey, 2007). From this perspective, evaluative responses depend on momentarily activated patterns of information in response to a set of inputs, which can vary from one situation to another. Building on this notion, Ferguson and Bargh (2007) proposed that attitudes might best be conceptualized as evaluations of "object-based contexts" (p. 232)—a phrase that helps to highlight the idea that a person's subjective representation of a given object includes the context in which the object is encountered. According to this perspective, then, variations in the context actually change the target of evaluation. Thus, for example, a person might evaluate a salty pretzel when she is hungry or a salty pretzel when she is thirsty, or a pretzel on a plate versus a pretzel on the ground, rather than evaluating just the pretzel in the absence of its context. The context is thus inextricably bound up with the object of evaluation.

Our approach similarly suggests that variations in subjective representation can give rise to inconsistencies in evaluative responding, and that evaluations can flexibly tune to the current context. However, we also suggest that the extent to which a mental representation of an object includes the immediate context can vary depending on the *level* at which the object is construed. Concrete mental representations include aspects of the immediate context and give rise to local evaluations of the "object-centered context." Abstract representations, on the other hand, screen out peripheral and contextual details, and therefore give rise to global evaluations of the object's central and enduring aspects.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The notion that attitudes can summarize evaluative information in different ways depending on the psychological distance of the attitude object (or, more broadly, the level at which that object is mentally represented) suggests a number of intriguing predictions that are important for understanding when individuals will regulate their action to meet the demands of their local social environment, or to transcend the current context in favor of long-term and cross-situational concerns. In the first research to test this model, we examined the implications of a global-local perspective for understanding when people will be susceptible versus resistant to incidental social influences (Ledgerwood, Trope, & Chaiken, 2010). As guides to action and interaction in the current situation, local evaluations should flexibly adapt to the immediate social context. Therefore, evaluations of psychologically close (vs. distant) attitude objects should show greater malleability in response to the attitudes of an incidentally encountered stranger.

However, although global (vs. local) evaluations should be less influenced by contextual factors, they should still relate to other attitude-relevant variables. Specifically, as guides to action and interaction that must transcend the present situation, global evaluations should reflect factors that relate to the core, enduring features of an attitude object. For example, ideological values can be considered broad principles that apply to attitude objects across situations, relate to their central and defining features, and tend to be socially shared within ongoing and important relational contexts (see, e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1981; Jost et al., 2008; Rokeach, 1968). Thus, although evaluations of psychologically distant or abstractly construed attitude objects (vs. near or concretely con-

strued objects) should be less influenced by the immediate social context, they should still strongly reflect an individual's ideological values.

We tested these predictions in a series of five studies. The first study focused on temporal distance and examined whether attitude alignment with an incidental stranger would be greater when a policy was set to be implemented in the near (vs. distant) future. In Studies 2 and 3, we used more direct manipulations of construal level to determine whether our hypothesized mechanism was really responsible for the effects observed in Study 1. Our fourth and fifth studies were designed to show that temporal distance and level of construal do not merely attenuate the relationship between evaluation and any potential predictor, but instead differentially moderate this relationship depending on whether the predictor is contextual or central to the attitude object. We predicted that whereas temporal distance or a direct manipulation of construal would weaken the relationship between evaluative responding and an incidental stranger's views, it would leave unchanged—or even increase—the consistency between participants' evaluations and their previously reported ideological values.

Local Action Guides Facilitate Incidental Social Alignment

Our first study was designed to test the basic notion that evaluative responses toward psychologically near objects would indeed show greater context dependence than evaluative responses toward psychologically distant objects. Drawing on our self-regulatory perspective, we hypothesized that participants would align their attitudes with those of an incidental stranger when contemplating an attitude object that was temporally close, but not one that was temporally distant. Participants took part in an anticipated interaction paradigm (adapted from Chen, Shechter, & Chaiken, 1996), in which they expected to discuss a proposed policy on organ donation with another person in the study. They learned that the policy would be implemented either next week (near-future condition) or next year (distant-future condition), and that their discussion partner was either in favor of or against the issue. Distance to the partner and the length of time until the ostensible conversation were always held constant; the only difference between conditions was therefore whether the attitude object itself was close or distant in time.¹ Participants then privately reported how likely they would be to vote for the described policy (i.e., they did not expect their responses to be shared with their partner). In actuality, this attitude measure was our variable of interest and, ultimately, no discussion took place.

As predicted, participants' voting intentions aligned with those of their interaction partner when the policy was going to be implemented in the near future: When the partner supported (vs. opposed) the near-future policy, participants expressed a greater likelihood of supporting it as well. In contrast, participants were unaffected by their partners' views when the policy was going to be implemented in the distant future. Moreover, these findings were obtained despite participants in the two conditions reporting equal motivation to get along with their discussion partner, suggesting that the distance manipulation was not simply changing the extent to which they were focused on agreeing or affiliating with other people. This is consistent with our suggestion that although local and global evaluations may be particularly useful for facilitating certain types of social coordination, they arise in response to cues about distance rather than in response only to explicit affiliative goals. Study 1 therefore provided intriguing initial support for the idea that

responses to near attitude objects are guided by a local evaluative summary that integrates information from the current social context, whereas responses to distant attitude objects are guided by a global summary that is less context-dependent.

In our next two studies, we zeroed in on the mechanism hypothesized to underlie the distance–evaluation link observed in Study 1. In other words, instead of indirectly manipulating level of construal by varying the temporal distance of the attitude object, these studies directly induced participants to adopt an abstract or concrete processing orientation using a procedural priming technique. Research has shown that when participants are led to adopt a particular processing orientation on one task, the primed cognitive procedures then transfer to subsequent, seemingly unrelated activities (e.g., Freitas, Gollwitzer, & Trope, 2004; Fujita, Trope, Liberman, & Levin-Sagi, 2006).

One way to procedurally prime abstract or concrete thinking is to lead participants to focus either on the superordinate, goal-related aspects of activities or else on more subordinate, concrete means. Thus in Study 2, we adapted a procedure developed by Freitas and colleagues (2004) that manipulates level of construal by asking participants to generate either more and more superordinate goals (abstract construal condition) or else more and more subordinate means (concrete construal condition). In Study 3, we sought to conceptually replicate these results by using an alternative manipulation of construal level. Past research has shown that abstract construals can also be procedurally primed by asking participants to generate category labels, whereas concrete construals can be procedurally primed by asking participants to generate exemplars (Fujita & Han, 2009; Fujita, Trope, et al., 2006).

Insofar as our effects truly reflect differences in level of construal, such diverse manipulations of processing orientation should produce results that mirror those obtained in our first experiment. In Studies 2 and 3, therefore, participants first completed one of these two priming procedures designed to induce abstract or concrete thinking. Next, they learned that an anticipated interaction partner was either in favor of or against doctor-assisted suicide. Finally, they completed a 7-item measure of their attitudes toward euthanasia.

As predicted, social alignment was moderated by level of construal. Participants' attitudes aligned with those of their partner when they had been led to think concretely, but not when they had been led to think abstractly. These findings thus supported the notion that people form local action guides when responding to a concretely represented attitude object, but form global action guides when responding to an object that has been construed more abstractly.

Global Action Guides Preserve Ideological Consistency

Importantly, our perspective predicts not only that local action guides will tune to a particular situation, but also that global action guides will show stability across time and contexts. Although the studies reported thus far provide important support for a global–local model, it is unclear whether the lack of a social alignment effect in the distant future or abstract construal conditions truly reflects attitude stability. It is possible, for example, that such an effect could result from apathy engendered by time discounting. If evaluative responding at a distance is truly directed by global action guides that summarize context-independent information, then temporal distance should decrease the extent to which

a contextual, but *not* a central, factor predicts evaluation of an attitude object. Thus, responses to psychologically distant attitude objects should still be predicted by people's overarching, decontextualized ideological values.

In Studies 4 and 5, we assessed participants' ideological support for the societal status quo (one of two key elements of left-right ideologies; see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) as a potential predictor of evaluation that should relate to the central features of a number of different political issues. Study 4 again manipulated temporal distance, and measured participants' attitudes toward a policy on deporting illegal immigrants. In Study 5, we directly manipulated level of construal using the procedural priming manipulation from our second study, and measured participants' voting intentions and attitudes toward universal health care. We reasoned that insofar as an influx of illegal immigrants (Study 4) and a radical change to the health care system at the time (Study 5) both threaten to disrupt the status quo, the extent to which people value preserving the status quo should predict their evaluations of such policies. In both studies, each participant expected to interact with another student who seemed to support or oppose the policy in question.

The results supported our predictions. When participants were led to think concretely, their attitudes were predicted by their partner's attitude, and not by their previously reported ideological values. In both studies, individuals' evaluative responses toward a political policy were more positive when their partner was in favor of rather than against the policy, regardless of their previously reported ideological values. However, after being led to think abstractly, participants' attitudes were predicted by their ideological values rather than by their partners' views. In Study 3, the extent to which participants valued preserving the societal status quo at time 1 significantly predicted their support for a policy that would increasingly deport illegal immigrants at time 2, regardless of their partner's attitudes on the topic. Likewise, in Study 4, the greater participants' ideological support for protecting the status quo, the more they opposed radically revamping the health care system, whereas the opinions of an incidental stranger had no effect on their evaluative responses.

Taken together, then, these findings provide considerable initial support for the global-local model of evaluation proposed here. When participants construed an attitude object concretely, whether because it was close to them in time or they had been led to adopt a concrete processing orientation, their attitudes fluidly incorporated the opinions of an incidental stranger with whom they expected to have a fleeting interaction. However, when participants construed that same object more abstractly, because it was distant in time or they had been led to adopt an abstract processing orientation, their attitudes were less susceptible to incidental social influence. Instead, these global evaluations incorporated elements of participants' previously reported ideological values that related to the central and defining features of the attitude object.

CONNECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The notion that evaluations can serve to guide action at local and global levels fits well with existing theory and research on self-control that distinguishes between immediate and long-range implications of behavior. In this section, we discuss several ways in which

the global-local perspective proposed here can both complement and extend existing research, and highlight one way in which our approach provides a unique perspective on the issue of self-regulation.

Social Dilemmas

Research on social dilemmas has examined how people behave in situations that involve a trade-off between local (individual and/or short-term) concerns on the one hand, and global (collective and/or long-term) concerns on the other. For instance, in his 1973 discussion of social dilemmas, John Platt defined *social traps* as situations in which behavior leading to a short-term or individual gain simultaneously contributes to a long-term or collective loss. In counterpoint, *social fences* referred to situations in which behavior that would produce positive long-term or collective gains also led to negative short-term personal outcomes.

Classically, researchers have sought to explain and predict behavior in social dilemma situations from a rational choice perspective, which assumes that individuals decide whether to cooperate or compete based on the expected utility of each behavioral option (e.g., G. R. Hardin, 1968; Platt, 1973; for reviews, see Dawes, 1980; Weber, Kopelman, & Messick, 2004). For instance, Kelley and Grzelak (1972) showed that increasing the size of short-term, individual consequences versus long-term, collective consequences led participants increasingly to choose actions that improved their own individual outcomes at the expense of the collective. Likewise, a rational choice model suggests that individual differences in the tendency for individuals to focus on the self versus others should predict competitive versus cooperative responding in social dilemma situations. Research confirms that social value orientation (individual differences in prosself vs. prosocial orientation) can predict choice in social dilemmas: Prosself individuals tend to take more of a shared resource in a commons dilemma and to defect more often in a prisoner's dilemma game than do prosocial individuals (Gärling, 1999; Kramer, McClintock, & Messick, 1986; Parks, 1994).

A global-local model of attitudes suggests additional hypotheses about evaluative responding in social dilemmas that a rational choice model would not necessarily predict. For instance, it implies that the extent to which individuals value cooperation versus competition (e.g., as measured by their social value orientation) should more strongly predict evaluations of cooperative versus competitive options in social dilemmas when respondents construe these dilemmas in abstract terms. In contrast, low-level construals of social dilemmas should increase the extent to which individuals align with the social context, and might therefore lead people increasingly to match their opponent's behavior rather than responding in line with their overarching values.

Put more broadly, a global-local perspective suggests that varying cues related to psychological distance should engender changes in the extent to which people's responses are driven by more global or more local evaluations, even when such cues have no bearing on the expected utility of cooperative or competitive behavior. For example, when long-standing social norms promote fairness or public welfare, distance should increasingly lead participants to rely on global evaluations that draw on these cooperative norms. Interestingly, a public goods dilemma study that found above-average levels of cooperative behavior (Marwell & Ames, 1979) also incorporated two aspects of distance often absent from

such research: time (participants made their decisions over the course of a few days rather than immediately; see also Dawes, 1980) and spatial distance (participants reported their decisions to an experimenter in a different location, over the phone, rather than to someone in the same laboratory room). From a global-local perspective, increasing psychological distance in these ways, as well as others, should lead individuals to base their responses increasingly on global rather than local evaluations in various social dilemmas.

Intertemporal Choice

Our focus on psychological distance as a critical dimension in guiding self-regulation echoes the role accorded to temporal distance in research on intertemporal choice and time discounting. This literature suggests that individuals tend to underestimate the value of future rewards, such that as temporal distance to the reward increases, value decreases at a decelerating rate (Ainslie, 2001; Chapman, 1996; Green, Fry, & Myerson, 1994; Kirby, 1997; for reviews, see Frederick, Loewenstein, & O'Donoghue, 2002; Green & Myerson, 2004). Whether this tendency reflects an inability to delay gratification or a rational accounting for the risk inherent in far-off rewards (see, e.g., Kagel, Green, & Caraco, 1986; Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989), the prediction is the same: Individuals will often choose short-term gains (e.g., \$10 now; a short-term improvement in health that will begin immediately) over long-term rewards of objectively greater value (e.g., \$100 later; a long-term improvement in health that will begin 2 years from now).

A global-local model of attitudes likewise predicts that when individuals make decisions in the here and now, their responses will be guided by local (immediate) rather than global (long-term) information. However, increasing psychological distance (from the attitude object, or even from another, unrelated aspect of the situation) should lead people increasingly to rely on global action guides that incorporate information about long-term rewards. For instance, individuals should be more likely to choose \$100 later over \$10 today when reporting their decision to a dissimilar (i.e., socially distant) other rather than to someone who is similar.

A global-local perspective also makes predictions for decision making beyond situations involving intertemporal choice (see also Fujita, Trope, & Liberman, 2010). For example, a patient deciding between two medications might consider whether to choose the one favored anecdotally by an acquaintance versus the one favored by statistics across thousands of trials. In such a situation, a local action guide should incorporate information about the acquaintance's opinion in the present social context, whereas a global action guide should summarize information that is consistent across multiple contexts, such as statistical evidence based on many different patients in many different settings. Thus, a global-local model would predict that psychological distance should increase the extent to which patients' choices are influenced by global statistical information (vs. an acquaintance's opinion) in such a situation, even though both types of information are equally proximal in time. Indeed, recent results support this prediction (Ledgerwood, Wakslak, & Wang, 2010).

Construal-Level Analysis of Self-Control

Most obviously, the current perspective relates to a construal level analysis of self-control, which proposes that self-control conflicts develop when low-level and high-level constru-

als of the same object or event prompt opposing behavioral responses (see Fujita, 2008; Fujita, Trope, et al., 2006). According to this perspective, self-control increases when individuals mentally represent an object in terms of its high-level (vs. low-level) features. For example, when participants were led to construe a scene in a broad (high-level) or specific (low-level) way, they reported that they would feel more negatively about succumbing to a temptation within the described setting (e.g., cheating during an exam; Fujita, Trope, et al., 2006, Study 5).

Similarly, a global–local model of attitudes suggests that level of construal plays an important role in determining behavior. According to this perspective, high-level construals should increase the extent to which evaluative action guides draw on global information that applies to an attitude object across situations. Thus, while a person might positively evaluate cheating on an exam in one particular situation (because it will lead to a higher test grade, or because one's classmates approve of it), a global evaluation is more likely to incorporate negative information about cheating that exists across situations (it conflicts with one's core values of honesty and integrity; it would disappoint one's parents or others with whom one has long-term, important relationships). Because high-level construals lead people to rely more on global rather than local action guides, they increase the extent to which self-control conflicts of this type are resolved in favor of global (rather than local or impulsive) concerns. In this way, global evaluations confer value to exercising self-control by emphasizing what is long-term and context-independent, while screening out the evaluative implications of context-specific temptations.

Global evaluations may also be necessary to recognize that the presence of a temptation poses a self-control problem, which represents a critical first step in exercising self-control (Myrseth & Fishbach, 2009). Because local evaluations tune to the current situation, a locally evaluated temptation is perceived as simply a desirable object. A temptation's negativity comes from the fact that it detracts from an overarching, long-term goal: evaluative information that will be included in a global evaluation. Likewise, global evaluations should help to promote counteractive control operations, such as devaluing temptations and precommitment, by highlighting positive evaluative information related to a long-term, context-independent goal and deemphasizing the positivity of local temptations (e.g., Fishbach & Trope, 2005; Fujita & Han, 2009; Trope & Fishbach, 2000).

One important way that this perspective differs from previous construal-level analyses of self-control is in its emphasis on the potential impact of irrelevant, contextual features on evaluative responding. Thus, we propose that people's responses are critically influenced by not only low-level, peripheral features of an attitude object, but also incidental, situational details external to the object itself (like a stranger's opinion).

In addition, our model suggests that global attitudes might play an interesting role in overcoming temptation in situations where temporarily succumbing to a temptation has a relatively low cost. Consider, for example, a dieter at a party, who wonders whether to indulge in just one small piece of chocolate cake. In such a case, past behavior (e.g., successfully following the diet for the last week) and/or future plans (e.g., deciding to be especially good about following the diet starting tomorrow) might help to justify a temporary indulgence. However, a global evaluation of the indulgence should be negative, insofar as it summarizes information that is consistent across contexts; thus, if the dieter forms a global evaluation of indulging in the cake, he should view it negatively and successfully resist the temptation. Indeed, research shows that high-level construals can increase the extent to which participants implicitly associate temptations with negativ-

ity (Fujita & Han, 2009), consistent with the notion that global evaluations integrate context-independent, negative information about a temptation, while screening out temporary positive details.

The Functionality of Local Action Guides

Importantly, this perspective also differs from many theories of self-regulation in suggesting that behaving in accord with short-term and situation-specific cues can be quite functional. Whereas self-control has most typically been conceptualized as a conflict between undesired short-term impulses and desirable long-term consequences (see, e.g., Fujita et al., 2010; Mead, Alquist, & Baumeister, in press; Trope & Fishbach, 2000; von Hippel & Ronay, 2009), a global-local model suggests that at times, flexibly acting in accord with the demands of the present social context is both desirable and beneficial, so that it makes sense for humans to be able to regulate their behavior both locally, in the present situation, and globally, across different situations. Although certainly it is often true that controlling local impulses to behave in line with global concerns is beneficial (e.g., Ainslie, 1975; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Fujita, Trope, et al., 2006; Mischel et al., 1989), it is also the case that flexibly tuning one's behavior to the current context (even at the expense of long-term goals or normative standards) can have important positive consequences, such as maintaining and improving social bonds.

For instance, behavioral mimicry has been shown to facilitate interpersonal relationships by improving liking and rapport (e.g., Bernieri, 1988; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). Research on social tuning suggests that participants' racial attitudes shift to align with the presumed attitudes of an experimenter; such shifts in cognition should theoretically help to regulate positive interpersonal interactions (Sinclair et al., 2005; see also C. D. Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost et al., 2008). Finally, one might argue that a plethora of context effects—including automatic effects of context on attitudes and behavior, as well as situationally activated goals—represent key components of an important and adaptive *local* self-regulatory process, allowing individuals to adjust their behavior automatically to the specific requirements and affordances of the immediate social situation (see, e.g., Aarts, Gollwitzer, & Hassin, 2004; Bargh, 1997; Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2006; Fishbach, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2003; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Kay, Wheeler, Bargh, & Ross, 2004; Ledgerwood & Chaiken, 2007; Shah, 2003).

CONCLUSION

In summary, we have proposed that people must be able to regulate their behavior both within and outside the present context. To do so, they rely on evaluative action guides that can integrate across activated information in two different ways. Local evaluations serve to guide behavior in the here and now by integrating specific details of the present context. They can therefore fluidly incorporate the views of incidental others and tend to look relatively malleable. Global evaluations, on the other hand, enable individuals to transcend the here and now to act on the "there and then." They summarize what is invariant about an attitude object across contexts and therefore tend to reflect people's core values and ideals, and appear relatively stable in the face of changing contextual details. We believe this perspective has the potential to integrate the literatures on atti-

tudes and self-regulation to shed light on the self-regulatory functions of evaluation and the importance of evaluation in guiding effective self-control.

NOTE

1. It is important to distinguish between the manipulation of temporal distance used in this research and one of the classic manipulations of involvement used in persuasion research. Time has often been used in conjunction with a carefully selected issue to manipulate involvement by changing whether a participant will be personally affected by the issue (e.g., whether a university policy change will be instituted next year, while participants are still attending the university, or 10 years from now, after participants have graduated; A. Liberman & Chaiken, 1996; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). However, in many cases—as with the national policies used in the studies described here—the applicability of a policy to a particular individual does not change over time; thus, manipulating the date of a policy's implementation should not change the extent to which people are motivated to think about it. This theoretical and methodological point has been confirmed empirically: Data collected in our laboratory show that whereas a manipulation of involvement increased the number of thoughts participants listed and the amount of time they spent elaborating on a political policy, our manipulation of temporal distance had no such effect (Ledgerwood et al., 2010).

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