Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
http://jcc.sagepub.com/

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Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology published online 24 March 2014
DOI: 10.1177/0022022114527344

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://jcc.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/03/21/0022022114527344

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SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:
IACCP
International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology

Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
1–15

DOI: 10.1177/0022022114527344
jccp.sagepub.com
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The Implicit Legacy of American Protestantism

Eric Luis Uhlmann[1] and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks[2]

Abstract

The heritage of a nation founded by devout Puritan Protestants has had wide-ranging effects on U.S. culture and, as experimental evidence suggests, continues to exert an implicit influence on the feelings, judgments, and behaviors of contemporary Americans. The United States is distinguished by a faith in individual merit and traditional values uncommon among economically developed democracies, both of which have been traced, in part, to the moral ideals of the founding Protestant communities. Calvinist Protestantism has further profoundly shaped American workways, including the moralization of work and the manifestation of professional norms that prescribe impersonal and unemotional workplace interactions. The implicit influence of traditional Protestant beliefs extends not only to devout American Protestants, but even to non-Protestant and less-religious Americans.

Keywords

cultural psychology, social cognition, values, attitudes, beliefs, religion/morality

> It seems to me, that I can see the entire destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who came ashore.
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (1840/1990)

Founder effects in evolutionary biology occur when a new population is established by a small group from a much larger population (Mayr, 1942, 1954). Such effects often take place when groups migrate over long distances and settle in a new location. These early representatives of a series have disproportionate effects on the characteristics of all subsequent generations. As a consequence, the characteristics of the new population can be distinct from the original parent population. Mayr (1954) used his theory to explain variations in the morphology (size, bill shape, and feathering) of birds of the same species that colonized isolated islands in small groups. However, founder effects are also observed in human populations. For example, one of the British settlers who colonized the island of Tristan da Cunha in 1814 carried a gene for retinitis pigmentosa. Even today, blindness due to this disease is 10 times as common on Tristan da Cunha as in Britain (Thompson, 1978).

[1]HEC Paris, Jouy-en-Josas, France
[2]University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

Corresponding Author:
Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, 701 Tappan, R6388, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.
Email: jsanchezburks@umich.edu

Although usually thought of in the context of biology, founder effects are also relevant to our understanding of culture (D. Cohen, 2001; Oishi, 2010). In other words, the early members of a culture may lay the foundation for the traditions and values of all subsequent generations. Because children and younger newcomers tend to assimilate, albeit imperfectly, to the traditions of the broader society, initial values are absorbed and carried forward (Cheung, Chudek, & Heine, 2011; Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009; Minoura, 1992; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). Thus, we may observe a certain degree of cultural inertia such that the earliest communities of an emerging society exert a disproportionate influence on the culture's fundamental nature.

The present empirical review shows that a heritage as a nation founded by Puritan-Protestant settlers has had wide-ranging effects on U.S. culture and despite the worldwide trend toward modernization and urbanization, appears to continue to exert an implicit influence on the feelings, judgments, and behaviors of contemporary Americans. In the United States, trends toward hedonism in popular culture co-exist with deep seated moral intuitions based on the traditional values of the founding communities. In making this case, we draw on both international surveys and experimental laboratory research. As we describe, American values are distinguished by strikingly traditional morals relative to other contemporary economically developed democracies as well as a strong faith in individual merit, both of which are traceable in part to the founding Protestant communities. Calvinist Protestantism has also profoundly shaped American workways, including the moralization of work and professional norms that prescribe impersonal and relatively unemotional workplace interactions. Consistent with prior research and theory on implicit social cognition (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), an unconscious influence of traditional Protestant beliefs can and does appear to occur even among individuals who explicitly reject traditional values, and therefore extends even to Americans with no explicit religious beliefs or affiliations. Thus, the cultural legacy of America's founding communities and the operation of basic social cognitive processes help explain the persistence of Protestant influences in the contemporary United States.

America's Protestant Heritage

The Protestant Reformation began in Europe in the 16th century and cleaved the world of Western Christianity in two, leading to political upheaval, religious wars, and cultural changes. Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin decried what they saw as the corruptions and heresies of the Catholic Church, such as the sale of indulgencies and clerical offices, as well as rituals and doctrines they felt only distracted from the pursuit of true faith. The English Reformation resulted in the overthrow of Catholic authority and the establishment of the Anglican Church. However, some dissenters felt that the Anglican Church had not gone nearly far enough in its reforms. Calling themselves "The Godly," they advocated for greater piety, spiritual purity, and adherence to the ideals of the Protestant reformers. Their political opponents derisively labeled them "Puritans," branded them religious fanatics, and retaliated against them by passing laws restricting their religious practices.

Fleeing such persecution and hoping to create a spiritually pure utopia, many separatist Puritans emigrated to America, establishing some of the earliest British colonies in the New World. Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/1990) likened the influence of Puritanism on the culture of America to a fire set on a high hill whose light "still tinge(s) the furthest reaches of the horizon" (pp. 31-32). Even at U.S. independence in 1776, over a century and a half after the founding of Plymouth colony, three quarters of Americans were Puritans (Gelertner, 2007; Morone, 2003). Scholars of American culture have written that Puritan leaders were "as close to an intellectual ruling class as America has ever had" (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 59), and that "Before the Civil War, Puritanism remained the country's dominant spiritual influence" (Gelertner, 2007, p. 153).

Although few, if any, Americans explicitly view themselves as Puritans today, the Puritan-Protestant tradition appears to have had an indelible influence on the values and ideals of the United States. In a cultural analog of the founder effects observed in evolutionary biology (D. Cohen, 2001), the Puritan-Protestant settlers and their spiritual descendants set the tone of American culture for centuries to come. Although further waves of immigration and myriad other events and influences have likewise shaped U.S. culture, the legacy of the Puritan-Protestant founding remains evident today.

Implicit Cultural Cognition

One psychological reason traditional cultural values can persist so stubbornly is the nature of implicit social cognition. Contemporary dual process models distinguish between explicit (i.e., deliberative, controlled, and logical) and implicit (i.e., spontaneous, intuitive, and automatic) attitudes and beliefs (Epstein, 1994; Fazio, 1990; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Consistent with a dual process framework, striking dissociations are often observed between implicit and explicit measures of attitudes (Nosek, 2005; Rudman, 2004). Such dissociations can occur when individuals who explicitly reject cultural beliefs nonetheless internalize them at an implicit level. For example, even individuals who consciously reject cultural stereotypes can think and act in accordance with such stereotypes when they are implicitly activated (Bargh, 1999; Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). In one study, for example, college students subliminally exposed to African American faces were subsequently more likely to behave in a hostile manner, in line with cultural stereotypes of Black Americans as hostile and aggressive (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996).

The influence of traditional Protestant religious beliefs on contemporary Americans has been shown to operate implicitly as well (Sanchez-Burks, 2002, 2005; Uhlmann, Poehlman, & Bargh, 2009; Uhlmann, Poehlman, Tannenbaum, & Bargh, 2011). In certain instances, this influence takes the form of automatic associations which the person does not consciously endorse (e.g., an association between work and divine salvation; Uhlmann et al., 2011). However, it more often takes the form of unrecognized influences on conscious judgments. Haidt (2001) describes "the sudden appearance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good-bad, like-dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of search, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion" (p. 818). Such intuitive judgments are often driven by implicit cultural mores (Haidt, 2001; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Graham et al., 2013; Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). Thus, Americans may seek to uphold the ethic of individual merit, support traditionalist positions on issues like the death penalty, and experience deep negative feelings toward individuals who violate the Protestant work ethic, all without recognizing the ideological and cultural influences on their judgments. If so, then traditional Protestant beliefs should influence the judgments and behaviors of not only devout American Protestants but also non-Protestant and less-religious Americans.

America's Distinctive Values

International surveys identify two key dimensions along which American values are distinctive relative to those of other nations. The first is religious traditionalism. Americans display higher levels of religiosity, moral absolutism, and endorsement of conservative values on issues such as the death penalty, homosexuality, and suicide, than members of most other economically developed democracies (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). The second dimension is an individualistic ethos. U.S. culture is characterized by its commitment to individualistic values and strong faith in individual merit. Part of what makes this set of values so remarkable is

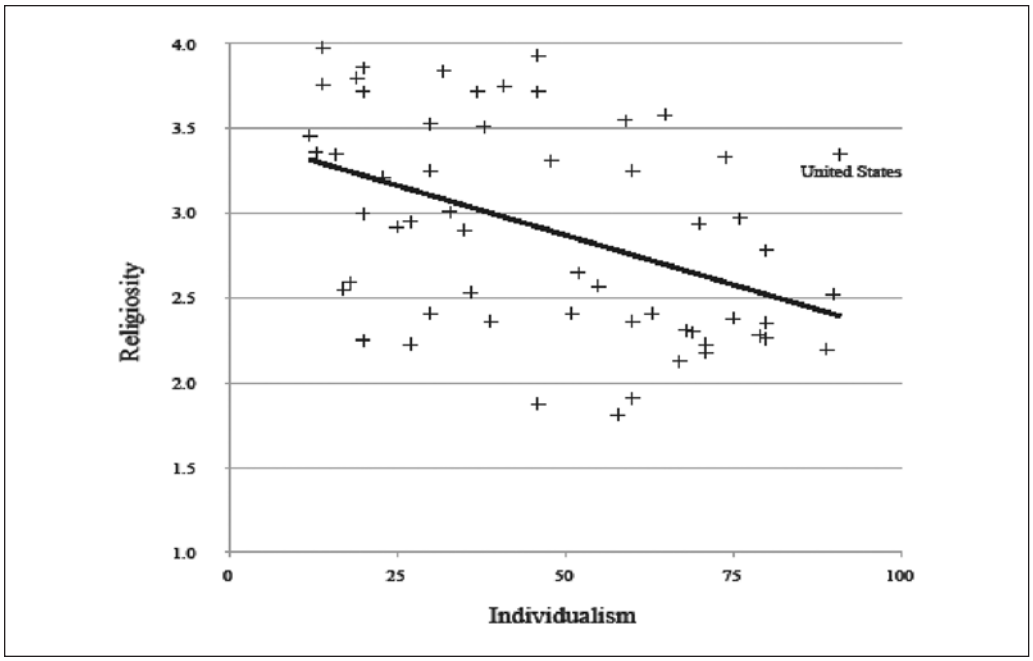

Figure 1. Individualism and religiosity across countries.
Note. Nation-level individualism scores are taken from Hofstede's (2001) individualism index. Religiosity scores are taken from the World Values Survey (Inglehart, Basáñez, Díez-Medrano, Halman, & Luijkx, 2004).

that, as seen in Figure 1, individualism and traditional religiosity are negatively correlated across nations (Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). As we argue, both of these distinctive aspects of the American creed are traceable in part to the religious convictions of the founding communities of the United States.

Religious Traditionalism

As societies become progressively more affluent, traditional religious morality fades in favor of more secular-liberal values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). A prominent exception is the United States, which has remained deeply religious despite high levels of economic development (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). The explosive economic growth in the wake of the Protestant Reformation led to widespread secularization in most historically Protestant countries (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). In contrast, the United States remains just as religious today as in the 1950s (Gallup & Linday, 1999; Greeley, 1991; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Nineteen of twenty contemporary Americans believe in God, seven in ten believe in the devil, approximately half believe that the world is less than 10,000 years old, and four of ten attend church on a weekly basis (Baker, 2005; Dawkins, 2006; Harris, 2006; Lipset, 1996; Sheler, 2006). Indeed, 10 times as many Americans are extremely religious as one would expect based on the economic prosperity of the United States (i.e., based on the per capita gross domestic product [GDP] of the United States relative to comparison countries; Wald, 1987).

Such high degrees of religiosity were originally due in part to a self-selection process in which especially religious Puritan Protestants—often persecuted for their extreme beliefs in their home countries—emigrated to the New World (Fukuyama, 1995; Lipset, 1996; Morone, 2003; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Although these religious settlers were eventually dwarfed in number by immigrants seeking economic opportunities, their early arrival provided them a founding

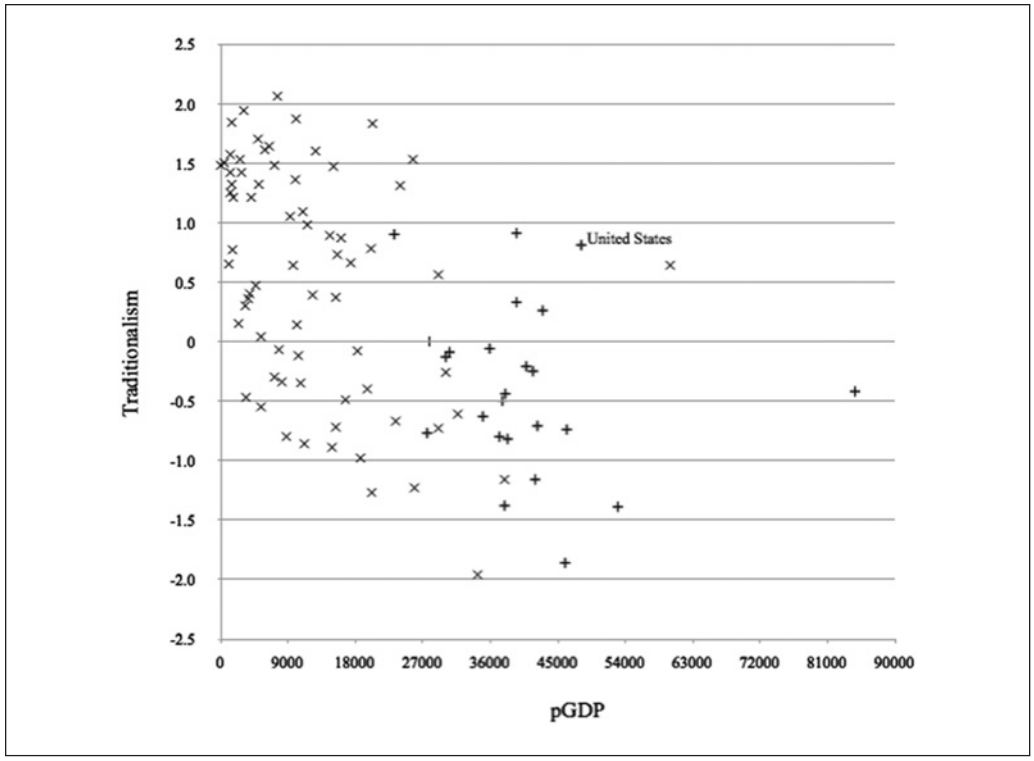

Figure 2. Endorsement of traditional moral values and economic development (per capita gross domestic product [GDP]) across countries.

Note. Traditionalism scores are taken from the World Values Survey (Inglehart, Basáñez, Díez-Medrano, Halman, & Luijkx, 2004) and reflect opposition to homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide, as well as support for the death penalty and other conservative social positions. Per capita GDP figures are from the World Factbook (2011). Western countries are indicated with a "+" and non-Western countries with an "×."

influence on American religious traditions. Indeed, of the nearly 70 nations covered by the World Values Survey, the United States and Brazil—an economically developing Catholic country with an increasing Protestant population—were the only two nations where a belief in God and related religious convictions have not diminished significantly over the last quarter century (Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

Across both nations and individuals, high levels of religiosity are associated with traditional views on moral issues, such as divorce, euthanasia, abortion, and homosexuality (Baker, 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). The sustained religiosity of the United States is evidenced in how Americans espouse values considerably more traditional than the world average and among the most traditional values of any economically developed Western democracy (Figure 2). Americans further exhibit the most traditional values of any historically Protestant country (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Moreover, unlike in every other Western country, U.S. values have not become any more liberal since 1980 (Baker, 2005).

Religious faith leads not only to the endorsement of conservative positions on moral issues but also to an absolutist view of the very nature of morality (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Moral absolutism is measured in the World Values Surveys via endorsement of the item: "There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances." Departing dramatically from the moral relativism of other wealthy democracies, more than half of Americans endorse the absolutist position (Baker, 2005). The percentage of

Americans who are moral absolutists is more comparable with that in Nigeria (60%) than in Sweden (19%).

As noted earlier, of course a great deal has changed since the time of the Puritan settlers, many of whom, for example, banned Christmas celebrations as overly decadent (West, 2003). A sizable number of contemporary Americans explicitly reject traditional values and embrace hedonistic pleasure and moral relativism (Baker, 2005). College educated Americans are particularly likely to endorse moral views that depart from the mores of their broader culture (Haidt et al., 1993). Consistent with dual process models, however, such individuals continue to experience intuitive feelings that reflect traditional Puritan-Protestant values. Uhlmann et al. (2011, Experiment 1) primed American and British college students with deliberative, intuitive, or neutral concepts using a sentence-unscrambling task (Srull & Wyer, 1979). All participants then reported the degree of respect they felt toward a young woman who had numerous sex partners. American participants condemned promiscuous sexuality while in an intuitive or neutral mindset, but reported permissive sexual attitudes while in a deliberate mindset. Reflecting the secular-liberal values of their culture, British participants expressed permissive sexual attitudes regardless of what mindset they were in. Thus, educated Americans appear to exhibit a degree of "hedonic ambivalence" or tension between their implicit and explicit moral beliefs regarding sexuality. The phenomenon of hedonic ambivalence suggests that the culture wars in America may not be something that only occurs between different ideological factions in society. It can also take place within individual persons, as liberal, nontraditional explicit beliefs clash with more conservative, traditionalist gut feelings.

An Individualistic Ethos

More specific aspects of Protestant values contribute to a second important way in which American values are distinctive. In contrast to the collectivistic orientation common across much of the world, Western countries are characterized by a more individualistic ethos (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Inkeles, 1983; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, even among Westerners, Americans often stand out for their strong individualism (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). American individualism is reflected not only in responses to questions on international surveys but also on more behavioral and indirect measures (Heine, 2008; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Suggesting an implicit component to such beliefs, individualistic values can be automatically activated and influence judgments and behaviors without the person's awareness (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

American individualism, too, appears to stem in part from a Protestant religious heritage. Catholic tradition emphasizes a community of believers whose relationship with God is mediated by the collective authority of the church hierarchy. In response to the perceived corruptions of the Catholic establishment, the Protestant reformers sought a more individual relationship with God (McNeill, 1954). Martin Luther, for instance, wrote that each individual is "a perfectly free lord, subject to none" (as quoted in Sampson, 2000, p. 1427). Cross-national comparisons indicate that even today, historically Protestant countries are characterized by higher levels of individualism than non-Protestant countries (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Protestant values also contribute to the strong belief in individual merit in the United States. Most major religions, such as Catholicism, promise rewards for pious behavior in the afterlife. In contrast, early Protestant theology held that material success in this life is evidence of God's grace (McNeill, 1954; Weber, 1904/1958). The Protestant notion of a moral elite marked by material wealth is an important contributor to the American belief in meritocracy (Baker, 2005; Schuck & Wilson, 2008).

Americans widely believe that their country is a land of opportunity where hard work is rewarded with an ascent up the economic ladder (Baker, 2005; Schuck & Wilson, 2008; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). Ninety-six percent of Americans believe children should be taught that "with hard work . . . anyone can succeed in America" (Baker, 2005). More than half of Americans believe economic competition is desirable because it motivates people to work hard, compared with only one third of Spaniards and the French (Schuck & Wilson, 2008). Seventy-seven percent of American managers favor terminating an incompetent longtime employee, but less than half of British managers and less than a third of German, Italian, French, and Korean managers feel the same way (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). Two thirds of French, Germans, and Italians believe whether a person succeeds in life is mainly due to "forces outside their own control," but only one in three Americans agrees that this is true (Schuck & Wilson, 2008). Demonstrating that Protestant values make a causal contribution to the belief in meritocracy, experimentally activating the Protestant work ethic (e.g., by completing scale items assessing Protestant work values or unscrambling sentences related to hard work) leads participants to make negative attributions about members of low status groups (Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996; Katz & Hass, 1988; McCoy & Major, 2007; Quinn & Crocker, 1999). Ironically, despite this strong American belief in meritocracy, the United States is characterized by less economic mobility than most other Western countries (Burtless & Haskins, 2008; DeParle, 2012).

Of course, any phenomenon as complex and multifaceted as American individualism is multiply determined. Cultures that developed under frontier conditions, where a lack of formal legal authority makes self-reliance a basic necessity, are characterized by an individualistic ethos (Kitayama, Ishii, Imada, Takemura, & Ramaswamy, 2006; Vandello & Cohen, 1999). For example, Japanese from the northern island of Hokkaido, which was settled under frontier conditions, express values almost as individualistic as those of Americans (Kitayama et al., 2006). At the same time, Americans from regions that once formed the nation's Western frontier are more likely to endorse individualistic values (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). In addition, societies marked by high levels of immigration and residential mobility, such as the United States, are more individualistic (Oishi & Kisling, 2009). Thus, a Protestant heritage is only one of a number of factors that have shaped the individualistic ethos of the United States.

In sum, American values are distinguished by a simultaneous endorsement of individualistic values and commitment to traditional religious morality. Although this national profile is undoubtedly the product of numerous events and influences from the last four centuries of American history, both cross-national comparisons and experimental evidence suggest that Protestant values are one important contributor. As reviewed in the next section, another legacy of American Protestantism is the distinctive nature of U.S. workways.

Implicit American Workways

Workways describe "a culture's signature pattern of workplace beliefs, mental models, and practices that embody a society's ideas about what is true, good and efficient within the domain of work" (Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2007, p. 346). Research on the cultural psychology of workways identifies unique ideologies that shape cultural understandings of how people should think, feel, and act with regard to their work (Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2007). These include the Korean tradition of *chaebol* or "company familism" (Kim, 1988), the Chinese networking system, *guanxi* (Solomon, 1999), and the cultural script of *simpatia* for interpersonal work relations in Mexico (Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). Importantly, these prior literatures identify cultural workways that are all profoundly relational in nature, emphasizing the importance of personal connections, attention to social and emotional information, and the interpersonal context in which work occurs.

Much prior scholarship has addressed ways in which a Protestant heritage has shaped Americans' norms and values related to work (Fischer, 1989; Fukuyama, 1995; Lipset, 1996; Tocqueville, 1840/1990; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; Weber, 1904/1958). However, only recently have experimental studies provided causal evidence of an effect of Protestant religious ideas on American workways. As will be described in greater depth below, in contrast to members of other cultures, Americans value working beyond material reason and even implicitly associate work with divine salvation (Uhlmann et al., 2009, 2011). At the same time, Americans implicitly conform to norms of workplace professionalism that prescribe unemotional and politely impersonal workplace interactions (Sanchez-Burks, 2002, 2005).

The Moralization of Work

A key aspect of the Protestant ethic is that work is moralized for non-instrumental reasons—individuals are expected to labor even in the absence of any material need to do so (McNeill, 1954; Weber, 1904/1958). Although many cultures worldwide value work, they often do so for pragmatic or group-centered reasons (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). For instance, hard work is a requirement of basic survival in some economically underdeveloped countries, making productive labor a familial obligation. Also, in the Korean workway of chaebol, the entire company is characterized as an extended family, and high work productivity is a matter of ingroup loyalty (Kim, 1988). Protestantism, in contrast, places work firmly in the domain of deontological morality—values pursued for their own sake, without regard for material consequences for the self and ingroups. Consistent with these traditional beliefs, contemporary Americans labor for more hours per year than members of most other economically developed countries (Friedman, 2008), a pattern of behavior observed even in the 1800s by Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/1990). This cultural commitment to hard work shows no sign of fading: Today's Americans actually work a full 20 days a year more than a quarter century ago (Linstedt, 2002; Wessel, 2003).

Experimental evidence further suggests Americans implicitly attribute a religious significance to work. One of the most distinctive aspects of the Protestant faith is the link drawn in Calvinist theology between hard work and divine salvation (McNeill, 1954; Tocqueville, 1840/1990; Weber, 1904/1958). Calvin and other influential Protestant thinkers characterized work as a spiritual calling and even wrote of the "Gospel of work" (Gelertner, 2007, p. 61). To the extent a psychological link between hard work and salvation survives anywhere in the historically Protestant Western world, it should do so in the still highly religious United States. Uhlmann et al. (2011, Experiment 2) tested this hypothesis using an implicit prime-to-behavior paradigm (Bargh et al., 1996). American, Canadian, German, Argentinian, and Italian participants completed a scrambled sentences puzzle (Srull & Wyer, 1979), which either contained words related to divine salvation (e.g., almighty, redeem) or equally positive but non-religious words. As expected, American participants—and only American participants—responded to the implicit salvation prime by working harder on a subsequent task. This "salvation prime" effect indicates that Protestant work values have not become fully secular in American culture and continue to be linked to religious ideas.

Because Americans associate sex with religious piety (a link shared with many other cultures), and associate work and divine salvation (a link based on traditional Puritan-Protestant values), they may link sexual values and work values with each other. An implicit association between work and sex would be expected to occur based on basic principles of cognitive balance, which hold that if A is linked to B, and C is linked to B as well, then A and C should in turn be linked (Festinger, 1957; Greenwald et al., 2002; Heider, 1958). Cultures that lack one or more of these links (between hard work and salvation, for instance) should not exhibit an implicit link between work and sex morality. Supporting this reasoning, bicultural Asian-Americans responded to an implicit work prime by expressing more conservative attitudes toward sexuality, but only when

their American identity was first made salient. When their Asian identity was made salient, they exhibited no implicit link between work and sex morality (Uhlmann et al., 2011, Experiment 3).

As predicted based on prior research and theory on implicit social cognition (Bargh, 1999; Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), not only devout American Protestants, but even non-Protestant and non-religious Americans exhibit such *implicit Puritanism* (Uhlmann et al., 2009, 2011). Cultural mores appear to seep into implicit cognitions, affecting all members of a culture to at least some degree.

Workplace Relational Ideology

In addition to placing a high value on work, U.S. culture has distinctive ideals and norms regarding the appropriate approach to carrying out one's work. Early Protestant thinkers such as John Calvin believed that emotions and personal relationships distract from the pursuit of work as a moral calling (Bendix, 1977; Daniels, 1995; McNeill, 1954; Weber, 1904/1958). In line with this Protestant Relational Ideology (Sanchez-Burks, 2005), American norms of workplace professionalism prescribe the importance of attending to the task rather than the social emotional dimension of work situations. Consistent with a cultural workways approach, however, such norms only apply to workplace interactions. In social contexts, Americans appear to be just as attentive to social emotional cues as are members of other cultures.

Experimental evidence provides strong support for the existence of Protestant Relational Ideology. Although work values that reflect Calvinist theology seem to characterize Americans in general, this influence may be strongest for individuals with an especially high degree of exposure to Calvinist Protestantism specifically. American Presbyterians and Methodists (members of two denominations within modern Protestantism with historical ties to Calvinism; Fischer, 1989; McNeill, 1954) are less likely than non-Protestant Americans to automatically attend to emotion conveyed in spoken words and to engage in non-conscious behavioral mimicry while working, providing evidence of a reduced focus on relational cues in such contexts. But in social contexts, Calvinist Protestants are just as attuned to emotional information and eager to create rapport as are non-Protestant Americans (Sanchez-Burks, 2002).

Although most readily observed among individuals with very high degrees of exposure to Calvinist Protestantism (e.g., Presbyterians and Methodists), American culture as a whole bears the imprint of Protestant Relational Ideology (Sanchez-Burks, 2005). American norms of workplace professionalism frown on making reference to one's life outside of work in workplace settings, for example, by prominently displaying family pictures in one's office space. The Chinese, in contrast, believe that displaying pictures of one's family at work brings Quan Jia Fu or "Whole Family Fortune." In an empirical investigation of the effects of U.S. culture on non-work role referencing, a multicultural sample of managers was asked to create an image of the office space of a "very professional" or "unprofessional" employee (Uhlmann, Heaphy, Ashford, Zhu, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013; Experiment 1). Managers with a greater degree of exposure to U.S. culture were more likely to construct "unprofessional" office spaces that included non-work artifacts such as family pictures and other personal effects.

Failure to conform to such culturally prescribed norms of workplace professionalism can have severe repercussions. American, but not Indian participants discriminated against a job candidate who indicated he would discuss his family to build rapport with a potential client (Uhlmann et al., 2013; Experiment 2). Cultural differences were greatest among participants who had prior recruiting experience, and thus were more knowledgeable about relevant professional norms. This experiment provides direct evidence that Protestant Relational Ideology resides not only in the heads of individuals but is manifested in institutional practices that, in turn, work to reinforce and perpetuate this cultural ideology. The findings reveal that those individuals who most closely conform to the cultural ideal—that is, maintaining the implicit divide between the personal and

the professional, work and non-work—are more likely to be accepted into positions of influence in society. Such an individual-organizational process is one reason the United States continues to fit Tonnies's (1887/1957) description of a society where people separate *gemeinschaft und gesellschaft*.

The clear line drawn in the American mind between work and non-work—what Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) called "a split between the machine and the suburban garden" (p. 133)—reflects itself not only in workspace artifacts, hiring decisions, and recollections of work meetings but also in who Americans chose to form emotionally meaningful relationships with. Individuals from the United States are significantly less likely than members of other cultures to form close personal friendships with colleagues from work (Kacperczyk, Sanchez-Burks, & Baker, 2014; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2003; Morris, Podolny, & Ariel, 2000).

Again, however, this impersonal orientation toward others only applies to the workplace (Daniels, 1995; Weber, 1904/1958). Outside of work, Americans appear just as sensitive to the social context as are members of other cultures. In a relevant study, American and East Asian managers read the following passage: "Overall the evaluation indicates your strengths are in communication skills, anticipating events, and creativity. The other areas are not as strong as these—some are poor, but it's difficult to evaluate those areas. Good job!" Participants were either told that the passage came from a supervisor's performance evaluation of an employee (work context condition) or a friend telling another friend the results of the latter's personality test (social context condition). Americans in the social condition and East Asians regardless of condition perceived the feedback as negative, but couched in face saving terms. Only Americans in the work condition interpreted the feedback literally and assumed the supervisor had a positive opinion of the employee (Sanchez-Burks et al., 2003).

Further evidence suggests a paradox in Americans' approach to collaborations. Since Tocqueville (1840/1990), Americans have been perceived as being highly social when it comes to forming groups and joining teams with strangers, provided there is a common task interest such as generating funds for Tsunami relief or forming a startup venture. Whereas it is common across many cultures to rely on preexisting groups for charity efforts (e.g., an existing church or a state agency) or business ventures (e.g., one's guanxi network), Americans appear far more willing to collaborate with people who share nothing in common but a mutual task interest.

On one hand, Americans appear highly relational by virtue of this penchant for working in groups. On the other hand, Americans have been shown to be relatively non-relational in their approach to working relationships. How is it possible to rely so heavily on collaborative efforts when relationships are given such little weight? One series of cross-cultural experiments provides some clues. An important hurdle to an effective collaboration is to successfully navigate interpersonal conflict that appears from time to time in most teams. Although extensive research clearly establishes that such conflicts hamper team performance (including that of American teams), it appears Americans are comparatively unlikely to believe such conflict really matters. In one study (Sanchez-Burks et al., 2008), Americans and Koreans were assessed on their lay beliefs (i.e., folk wisdom) about the consequences of task-focused and interpersonal conflict on team performance. Americans found it as intuitive as for East Asians that task-focused conflict hampers team performance. However, in the United States, there is far less conviction that relationship conflict can have a negative effect. Further studies showed that this remarkable optimism drives decisions about whether to begin certain collaborations. Americans appear particularly willing to join a workgroup that is highly likely to experience interpersonal friction so long as team members bring specific expertise to the group. These studies documented how Protestant Relational Ideology can not only produce a distinctive folk wisdom, but one that is empirically inaccurate in light of robust empirical evidence. Nonetheless, this optimism does provide an advantage. Anticipated interpersonal friction will not always materialize and whereas other cultural groups may forego a collaboration based on such a prediction, Americans would

benefit from taking the chance. Thus, there appears to be an upside to this facet of American beliefs about work.

In sum, a Protestant-Puritan heritage appears to have profoundly shaped the implicit workways of contemporary America. Consistent with traditional Calvinist teachings, Americans implicitly view work as a moral imperative, even associating it with divine salvation. At the same time, American norms of workplace professionalism frown on expressing emotions and sharing personal information as unwelcome distractions from the pursuit of one's calling. Although the implicit influence of Calvinist Protestantism is in some cases strongest among those who explicitly endorse such teachings (e.g., Sanchez-Burks, 2002), it also demonstrably affects many non-Protestant and non-religious Americans. Future research should more systematically assess variability within the U.S. population in the implicit influence of Protestantism, focusing on potential religious (A. B. Cohen & Rozin, 2001; Sanchez-Burks, 2002) and regional (Fischer, 1989; Rentfrow et al., 2013) variation.

Conclusion

Traveling through the United States in the 1800s, French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the many aspects of U.S. culture that struck him as exceptional, among these Americans' religious devotion, individualism, and dedication to hard work. It is a testament to both his genius and the enduring nature of culture that so many of these observations still hold true today. Indeed, de Tocqueville's insights are supported by a growing body of empirical evidence demonstrating significant differences between the values of Americans and those of other nations, including other Western countries.

Moreover, as argued by de Tocqueville, these seemingly disparate aspects of American exceptionalism are all traceable in part to the founding Puritan-Protestant communities of the United States. A self-selection process in which especially devout Protestants emigrated to the New World helps explain the religiosity, traditional values, and moral absolutism of contemporary Americans. American individualism and faith in individual merit stem in part from Protestantism's emphasis on an individual relationship with God and earthly rewards for pious behavior. Finally, Protestant work values, as articulated by John Calvin, underlie the American view of work as a moral calling and norms prescribing impersonal and unemotional workplace interactions.

The influence of traditional Protestant values on the judgments and behaviors of contemporary Americans is often implicit in nature. Americans exhibit intuitive gut feelings toward sexually promiscuous individuals that are more negative than their deliberatively endorsed views (Uhlmann et al., 2011), implicitly associate work with divine salvation (Uhlmann et al., 2011), and are less likely to automatically attend to social and emotional information in work than in non-work settings (Sanchez-Burks, 2005; Sanchez-Burks et al., 2003). Reflecting their basis in broader cultural mores, implicit cognitions consistent with traditional Protestant values are observed not only among devout American Protestants but also among non-Protestant and less-religious Americans.

Researchers who study culture have long been frustrated by the "ultimate origins" dilemma of how to identify the founding influences that have shaped a culture's fundamental nature. Societies founded comparatively recently in human history provide a unique opportunity to begin to identify such influences with greater certainty than might otherwise be possible. Much like the bills and feathering of the birds of an isolated island, the culture of the United States continues to bear the imprint of its founding members.

Authors' Note

Both authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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