

# Choice, freedom, and well-being: considerations for public policy

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**Abstract:** It is commonly assumed in affluent, Western, democratic societies that by enhancing opportunities for choice, we enhance freedom and well-being, both by enabling people to get exactly what they want and by enabling people to express their identities. In this paper, we review evidence that the relationships between choice, freedom, and well-being are complex. The value of choice in itself may depend on culture, and even in cultural contexts that value choice, too much choice can lead to paralysis, bad decisions, and dissatisfaction with even good decisions. Policy-makers are often in a position to enhance well-being by limiting choice. We suggest five questions that policy-makers should be asking themselves when they consider promulgating policies that will limit choice in the service of enhanced well-being. The relationships between choice, freedom, and well-being are not simple, and an appreciation of their complexity may help policy-makers target their interventions more effectively.

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## Introduction

There is an informal syllogism that is taken as self-evident in most of the modern, developed, democratic world:

The more freedom people have, the more well-being they have.

The more choice people have, the more freedom they have.

Therefore, the more choice people have, the more well-being they have.

There are two sorts of beliefs that combine to make this syllogism seem self-evident. The first is moral: people should be free to choose the kind of lives they

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lead, and the more choice people have, the more freedom they have. The second is prudential: individuals know best what serves their interests, and the more choice people have, the more likely they are to find precisely the thing that they are looking for. Furthermore, providing a large choice set has no downside. People satisfied with a handful of options can ignore the others, whereas people unsatisfied with a smaller subset of options have many more to choose from. In other words, adding options in any domain is Pareto efficient, making some people better off and making no one worse off.

This syllogism has broad implications for policy. Any policy intervention that takes advantage of what we know about how people make decisions to create a ‘choice architecture’ that nudges people in one direction or another (e.g. Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) effectively reduces freedom of choice, so that the presumed welfare advantages of nudging people into wise choices must be weighed against the disadvantages of reducing effective freedom. Though many may agree with Thaler and Sunstein that there is really no neutral way to present any set of options, those for whom maximizing freedom is paramount would argue for choice architectures that aim to enhance freedom (e.g. forced choice), rather than choice architectures that aim to enhance decision quality (e.g. judiciously created defaults). Much of the current debate about the use of behavioral techniques in implementing public policies can be understood as a debate about precisely this issue.

In this paper, we will not take sides in this debate, nor will we make specific policy recommendations. Instead, we will assess the logic and the ‘psychologic’ of the above syllogism, which informs many debates at the heart of behavioral public policy. The logic of the syllogism is impeccable, but recent research has shown that the ‘psychologic’ is not. Beginning with research by Sheena Iyengar (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Iyengar *et al.*, 2004), evidence has accumulated that a point can be reached at which added options reduce the likelihood that any will be chosen – that too much choice can paralyze rather than liberate. Thus, whereas some choice is good – both to enhance freedom and to enable people to satisfy preferences when they make decisions – there can be too much of a good thing. The relationship between the number of options people face and well-being seems to be non-monotonic – an inverted U (Aristotle, 1999; Grant & Schwartz, 2011).

This paper is organized as follows: the next section considers both the importance of at least some choice and the possible consequences of too much choice. We then briefly distinguish among the different aims or goals that choice may satisfy, after which we review the evidence that the apparent benefits of choice may vary across cultures. Building on this research, we next propose five questions that, in our view, policy-makers and researchers would benefit from considering explicitly when they formulate policy.

Finally, we discuss where policy interventions may be able to make inroads into the choice problem and where they may not, as well as the useful distinction between first- and second-order decisions. We suggest that more attention be paid to helping people make second-order decisions about choice – to choose when to choose.

### Choice and choice overload

Freedom and autonomy are essential for well-being: to be happy and healthy, people need to be able to make choices for themselves and to feel that they can direct their own lives (e.g. Seligman, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002; Fischer & Boer, 2011; Bone *et al.*, 2014). Thus, to at least some extent, the rapid proliferation of choice in nearly all domains of life (see Schwartz, 2016) is a great thing, helping people satisfy their individualized preferences and feel a sense of self-determination and freedom. Yet, although there is substantial evidence that choice is good, *more* choice is not necessarily better, at least under some circumstances. The growing literature on *choice overload* has revealed that there can be too much choice, potentially leaving people worse off than they were with somewhat less choice (e.g. Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Botti & Iyengar, 2004; Iyengar *et al.*, 2004; Botti *et al.*, 2009; Hanoch *et al.*, 2009; Haynes, 2009; Carroll *et al.*, 2011). Rather than thoroughly review the extensive literature on the paradoxical effects of having too much choice, we briefly highlight some key ideas in order to lay the foundation for considering how such research might be considered by policy-makers and researchers.

The research on choice overload continues to develop, and there are certainly important factors that moderate the effects of increased choice (for review and discussion, see Scheibehenne *et al.*, 2010; Chernev *et al.*, 2015; Schwartz, 2016), but there is substantial agreement that large choice sets can have at least three distinct types of negative consequences. First, they can produce paralysis, overwhelming choosers so much that they fail to make any decision (e.g. Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Iyengar *et al.*, 2004; Carroll *et al.*, 2011). In a study of employee participation in corporate retirement plans, for instance, Iyengar *et al.* (2004) found a 2% drop in participation rate with every 10 additional investment options offered by companies. Second, large choice sets can produce subjectively worse outcomes, magnifying regret and dissatisfaction (e.g. Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Schwartz *et al.*, 2002; Botti & Iyengar, 2004; Botti & Hsee, 2010; Chernev *et al.*, 2015). Third, large choice sets can produce objectively worse outcomes, in part because the cognitive burden created by having to evaluate too many options undermines decision-making (e.g. Hanoch *et al.*, 2009; Tanius *et al.*, 2009; Botti & Hsee, 2010). For example, Tanius *et al.* (2009) found that both younger and older adults chose

worse (e.g. more expensive, less convenient) prescription drug plans when choosing from a larger choice set than when choosing from a smaller choice set.

### The aims of choice

We think it is useful to consider the effects of increased choice in relation to the aims of choice. In our view, the aims of choice can be separated into three overlapping categories: preference satisfying, utilitarian, and self-expressive (for similar perspectives, see Shavitt, 1990; Kahn *et al.*, 2005). These distinctions are not always sharp, but we believe they are useful, especially in connection with policy. Indeed, policy interventions may be more plausible and effective with regard to some aims of choice than others.

The most obvious aim of choice is to satisfy one's preferences and experience the subsequent hedonic benefits of choice. Preferences can be about anything, of course – from what food to order in a restaurant to what career to pursue – but we think that most examples of 'preference-satisfying' choices concern hedonic pursuits. The second aim of choice is instrumental or utilitarian, such that a choice is a means to an end (e.g. a student studies organic chemistry with the goal of becoming a doctor) or a trade-off among different alternatives.

Large choice sets seem to impede both hedonic and utilitarian aims of choice, producing both increased regret and dissatisfaction and objectively worse outcomes that less successfully achieve one's goals. Policy, however, may be able to alleviate some of these negative consequences. Although policy is likely to have little to offer with regard to people's specific preferences (*de gustibus non est disputandum*), policy likely has much to offer with regard to both helping people better satisfy their preferences and, especially, helping people better achieve their utilitarian goals through instrumental choice. For example, an individual may have deep concerns about the future, but go about saving for it in an ineffective way; for this person, policy interventions can likely have significant effects.

In contrast, the roles of choice overload and policy may differ when it comes to the third aim of choice: to express something about the self. People choose so as to tell the world (and themselves) who they are as people and what they value; expressive choices are statements about identity (e.g. see Hollis, 1979; Bruner, 1990). Hollis (1979) tells the story of two American political scientists on sabbatical in a remote town in Italy who travel 3 hours to a major city so that they can cast absentee ballots in the American presidential election – one for the Republican candidate and one for the Democrat. They do this not to achieve some utilitarian objective or to exact some pleasure, but to affirm their identity as responsible citizens. We think that policy has little to offer when choice is about identity – an issue that we explore further in the

conclusion of this paper – but it is nonetheless important to consider how large choice sets affect the expressive aim of choice.

Expressive choice may be the most important type of choice: ‘what should I buy?’ is of less significance than ‘who should I be?’. And it is in connection with such identity-shaping decisions that the benefits of freedom and autonomy (i.e. choice) loom largest. There is little doubt (Schwartz, 2000, 2010, 2016) that freedom of choice in self-defining domains has expanded along with freedom of choice in the world of consumer goods. Young people – at least middle-class, Western young people – find themselves with relatively unconstrained choices when it comes to where they live, what they study, what kind of work they do, what religion they practice and how they practice it, what kind of intimate relations they will enter into, what kind of family commitments they will make, and even what kind of person they will be. And having made decisions like these, people are also free to change them. No longer are people ‘stuck’ with the identities and life paths that accidents of birth, or the views of others, have imposed on them. Self-invention and reinvention are now real options – occasional paralysis in the cereal aisle of the supermarket seems a small price to pay for this kind of liberation.

There is some reason to believe that even in domains of relatively trivial choices, large choice sets raise the stakes by transforming one’s decisions into statements about identity (Schwartz, 2010). When there are only a handful of different options for buying jeans, what jeans one buys cannot say much about who one is. There simply is not enough variety in jeans to match the variety of human identities. However, when choice sets increase in size, it becomes more plausible that what jeans one wears says something to the world about who one is (see also Kelley, 1967). At present, data on this possibility are sparse. Cheek (2014) studied this hypothesis and found promising but inconclusive results. Cheek and Schwartz (unpublished data) actually asked participants about whether choices in various domains said something about the self, and found that in many domains, many people thought that they did, and people who felt that they had more choice in a given domain often felt that their choices said more about their identity. Thus, we are left with the possibility – albeit in need of further investigation – that large choice sets may impede the hedonic and instrumental aims of choice, but may actually *enhance* the expressive aims of choice. As with the other aims of choice, the value of more choice is likely non-monotonic (Aristotle, 1999; Grant & Schwartz, 2011): some choice helps people be more free to shape their identity, but more choice may make previously trivial decisions seem important and self-relevant, putting pressure on people to constantly define and redefine who they are through choice. We return to this possibility and its connections to behavioral science and policy in the conclusion to this paper.

## Choice, freedom, well-being, and culture

The notion that one aim of choice is to express the self leads us to a literature that suggests that the functions and meanings of choices, particularly with regard to individual self-expression and well-being, are far from universal.<sup>1</sup> The syllogism with which this paper began can seem self-evident and uncontroversial. But as the cultural research of Hazel Markus and collaborators has shown in recent years, when one leaves the familiar confines of affluent Western democratic societies, it is neither.

North American and Western European societies are fundamentally individualist in nature, and choice has become a powerful engine and manifestation of this individualism (Bellah *et al.*, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).<sup>2</sup> In core values and beliefs, in legal and political systems, in educational and care-taking practices, and even in interpersonal relationships, Western cultures reveal a particular common-sense understanding of what it means to be a person. People are understood to be independent individuals who are – or at least should try to be – free from the constraints of history, other people, and society. According to this way of thinking, each individual has his or her own private set of preferences, motives, attitudes, and goals that guide and motivate thoughts, feelings, and actions, and a good society gives people the freedom to pursue these individual motives and goals.

Western cultures thus afford a ‘disjoint’ model of agency, according to which good selves are crafted through actions that promote independence from other people and that exert individual influence on the environment (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005; Stephens *et al.*, 2011). Under a disjoint model of agency, because one’s goals and actions are seen as deriving from internal motives, when people make choices, they express their personal goals, values, and preferences (Kim & Markus, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2008). As a result, the concepts of choice and freedom are closely linked (e.g. Markus & Schwartz, 2010; Stephens *et al.*, 2011), and choice is essential to exercising independent agency and to achieving maturity, autonomy, and well-being.

1 This section discusses an important cultural distinction between conceptions of self as ‘independent’ and conceptions of self as ‘interdependent’. Here we use ‘self-expression’ to refer to expression of the individual or independent self. Although in collectivist cultures choice could be described as self-expressive in that it expresses the interdependent self, for clarity we limit the meaning of self-expression to independent self-expression.

2 Throughout this section, we contrast ‘North Americans and Europeans’ or ‘Westerners’ with ‘East Asians’ or ‘Easterners’. It should be understood that this is shorthand for the purposes of exposition. Not all North Americans have ‘independent selves’ and not all East Asians have ‘interdependent selves’, as some qualifications we introduce in this section make clear. The important point to take away is that there are different conceptions of the self. Less important for our purposes is exactly who operates with which conception.

The view of the self as independent is so deeply ingrained in the Western way of life that it may be hard for Western researchers and policy-makers to see that there could be other models of how to be a good self. Yet, there *are* other models of selves and agency (Markus *et al.*, 1997; Fiske *et al.*, 1998; Miller, 2003). In many collectivist societies and cultures, for example, people are not viewed as independent entities separate from others; instead, they are viewed as fundamentally *interdependent* or in relationships with other people. In collectivist cultural contexts, in which people define the self in relation to others, choice does not represent a route to expressing the individual self. Rather, the cultural emphasis on attending to the needs of others and adjusting accordingly shapes a ‘conjoint’ model of agency, according to which good selves are crafted not through individual choice and self-expression, but through promoting interdependence with others (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005; Stephens *et al.*, 2011). Under a conjoint model of agency, choice is less likely to be directly associated with freedom and well-being, and the lack of individual choice is not as threatening to autonomy or the self (Savani *et al.*, 2008; Chen *et al.*, 2013). In fact, people who construe the self more interdependently and understand agency conjointly may actually prefer to accept choices made by other people rather than make their own independent choices (e.g. Stephens *et al.*, 2011).

Conjoint models of agency and interdependent self-construals are not limited to non-Western cultural contexts. Indeed, recent research has shown that even within the United States, working-class individuals are more likely to construe the self interdependently, following models of agency that share much of the emphasis on adjusting to others rather than asserting independence that characterizes Western cultural contexts (Vandello & Cohen, 1999; Stephens *et al.*, 2009). Notably, although interdependence is common in both non-Western and American working-class cultural contexts, it has different sources. Interdependence in East Asian contexts is part of the dominant discourse and is fostered by mainstream practices and institutions of the larger society, whereas the interdependence in the American working-class context seems to be primarily a function of holding a lower status within the larger social hierarchy (Triandis, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998; Stephens *et al.*, 2007; Stephens *et al.*, 2009).

The research just cited (for a more detailed review, see Markus & Schwartz, 2010) underlines the fact that the connections between choice, well-being, and autonomy are not as clear cut as research conducted with people from Western, middle-class cultural contexts would suggest. Importantly, although choice is an expressive act across cultures, the specific meaning of choice can vary substantially, as can its implications for well-being. In individualist cultural contexts with a disjoint model of agency, a good self is one who acts

independently on the environment and asserts individual preferences and goals; thus, extensive individual choice is essential to well-being and autonomy. In collectivist cultural contexts with a conjoint model of agency, however, individual choice is not as fundamental to crafting a good self, and thus may not be as important a path to well-being and autonomy. Accordingly, proliferation of choice may provide positive consequences for the more affluent members of Western societies, but it is unlikely to hold such positive consequences for both working-class Westerners and people from other parts of the world.

In sum, choice, freedom, autonomy, and well-being are not inextricably linked; they need not imply each other or follow logically one from the other. Hence, the opening syllogism may indeed hold, but only in the specific cultural context upon which the majority of research on choice and well-being has focused. As with many other claims made by social science, the syllogism that we take to be self-evident and universal may actually only apply to a small fraction of the world's population (see Henrich *et al.*, 2010).

### **Additional limits on preferences for choice**

Cultural contexts and models of agency and the self represent important caveats to the view that increasing the amount of available choice follows people's preferences and increases their well-being, but there are further limits on the extent to which even people who mainly construe the self independently want extensive choice. For instance, older adults want substantially less choice than young adults (Reed *et al.*, 2008, 2013), and young adults mainly want choice in domains in which they feel confident that they can make successful choices (Reed *et al.*, 2012; Patall *et al.*, 2014). People also report wanting more choice when thinking about decisions in the abstract, but when actually making decisions, they often prefer having fewer options from which to choose, particularly when considering the feasibility of making a choice (Goodman & Malkoc, 2012; Ackerman *et al.*, 2014).

The type and aims of a given choice can also influence how many options people want. Reed *et al.* (2008) found that people want more choice in mundane, everyday domains (e.g. flavors of jam) than in the more consequential domain of health care decisions (e.g. prescription drug plans). People are also often more likely to want a larger variety of options when making hedonic or self-expressive choices compared to more utilitarian choices (e.g. Ariely & Levav, 2000; Ratner & Kahn, 2002; Kim & Drolet, 2003; Rozin *et al.*, 2006). For hedonic and self-expressive choices, the act of making a choice in itself can serve an important function (e.g. Hollis, 1979; Choi & Fishbach, 2011), but because utilitarian choices are more focused on the outcome rather than the process of choice, people do not feel the need for as

much choice. Indeed, people may be happy to have someone else make such decisions, provided the outcome is satisfactory (Botti & McGill, 2011). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis on choice overload (Chernev *et al.*, 2015) found that people are more likely to find large choice sets unappealing and overwhelming when they have little familiarity with or knowledge about the choice domain, when the choice is relatively complex and difficult, and when they are relatively uncertain about their preferences.

Thus, taken together, previous research suggests that even people for whom choice may be an important path to self-expression and well-being sometimes prefer to choose from relatively small choice sets. This may be particularly true when choices are difficult, complex, instrumental, and utilitarian, and when people feel unconfident about their ability to make a good decision by themselves. Importantly, these descriptions also apply to many of the choices that are the focus of policy-makers' research and recommendations, such as retirement plans, medical insurance plans, and investment and savings plans. Accordingly, we now turn to some of the implications of the research reviewed above for public policy.

### Choice and public policy

As mentioned in the 'Introduction' section, our goal is not to make specific policy proposals or to take explicit sides in the debate regarding paternalist – libertarian or otherwise – policies. Rather, our goal is to consider the connections between choice, freedom, and well-being that have been taken for granted in much of behavioral research and public and private policies. In this section, we outline some implications of the research reviewed above that we view as particularly important for public policy decisions, although we do not attempt to make any specific policy recommendations ourselves.

Public policy in the United States and other Western countries often seems to follow from, as phrased by Botti and Iyengar (2006), "the conviction that social welfare can be pursued through the provision and exercise of choice" (p. 24). There is a wide variety of arguments in opposition to and in favor of providing – and perhaps requiring – a substantial amount of choice for individuals, and a thorough discussion of each is outside the scope of the current paper (for a discussion of many of these arguments, see Sunstein, 2015). Here, we limit ourselves to proposing five questions that policy-makers may want to consider more thoroughly before deciding that constantly providing individuals with more choices and options from which to choose is the best way to improve decision quality, well-being, and freedom. Our main goal is to help explicitly identify potentially problematic assumptions that often implicitly motivate policies and policy recommendations.

The first question is: *do people want more choice?* At first glance, much of the research on choice seems to suggest that people indeed love choice and almost always prefer more choice over less, even if receiving more choice leads them to worse outcomes (e.g. Botti & Hsee, 2010). Yet, we have reviewed research highlighting at least two important points: first, the previously assumed widespread appeal of choice may be limited to young, middle- and upper-class Westerners; and second, even within cultural contexts that place high value on individual choice, people do not necessarily always prefer to have more choice. Even American college students – perhaps the most choice-oriented people in the world – may be happier with fewer options when choices are unfamiliar, complicated, and not self-expressive. Choice of medical insurance plan – which people may feel very uncertain about, says relatively little about one’s identity, and is extremely complex – is an example of domain in which it may not be wise to take for granted that people actually want more – or perhaps any – choice (e.g. Botti & McGill, 2011; Sunstein, 2015). Furthermore, because people may report preferences for different amounts of choice depending on the context in which they are asked about their preferences (e.g. they may prefer less choice if asked right before they make a choice versus far in advance of a possible choice; Ackerman *et al.*, 2014), answering this first question may be more complicated than simply asking individuals how much choice they hypothetically desire.

The second question is: *will more choice improve the quality of decisions?* From a traditional rational choice theory perspective, providing more individual choice will facilitate utility maximization and preference matching, and people will make better choices for themselves than others would make for them. However, although there is much work left to be done, the research on choice overload suggests that, in some cases, people may make worse decisions when they choose from larger choice sets. In studies on Medicare drug plan choice, for instance, older adults often choose objectively worse plans for themselves when making choices from larger choice sets. People also often feel worse about their decisions from large choice sets, even if the choices they make objectively meet their criteria. Moreover, if having too many options creates choice paralysis, people might not make any decision, and in cases like insurance and retirement plans, having a suboptimal plan may be much better than not having one at all.

The third question is: *will more choice improve well-being?* Well-being is a complex concept, but if people feel less happy and frequently make worse decisions that impair their health and financial status, it seems unlikely that well-being has improved, and research on choice paralysis and choice overload suggests that when choice is overwhelming, people can both make worse decisions

for their present and future well-being (e.g. failing to save for retirement) and feel more regret and self-blame about decisions that prove less satisfying (Schwartz, 2016). Moreover, well-being may not even be closely related to abundant choice for some people, such as those from collectivist cultural contexts. Thus, the path from choice to well-being that seems so clear in the syllogism with which this paper began may often require more careful reflection accompanied by consideration of empirical evidence.

The fourth question is: *will more choice impose too much of a burden?* When people have to make more choices or choose from among more options, the cognitive cost of decision-making increases. Some people may be able to absorb this increased cost fairly easily, but for others it may outweigh the potential benefits of increased choice. Recent research on poverty, for example, suggests that the material scarcity experienced by poor people imposes a serious cognitive burden (Mani *et al.*, 2013; Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013), and as a result, increasing choice may place an even larger burden on people who are in the most vulnerable situations and would suffer most from the consequences of choice paralysis. Increases in choice that seem straightforwardly positive to people in comfortable financial positions may therefore not have such simple consequences for people who are already struggling to make ends meet.

The final and perhaps most complex question is: *will more choice make people more free?* This question depends on, among other things, one's definition of freedom, and if freedom is defined in such a way as to require constant individual choice, then providing more choice may be seen as increasing freedom, although perhaps to the detriment of decision quality and well-being. Although we will not address the nuanced debate on the meaning of freedom here, we believe this question is not as straightforward as it appears, particularly in situations in which people may not want to have to choose for themselves or to choose from so many options. Indeed, might requiring people to make choices when they do not want to, even in the name of freedom, itself be a form of liberty-threatening paternalism (e.g. see Sunstein, 2015)? The debate on the meaning of freedom also highlights that not all people and cultures view freedom in the same way, and, as we reviewed earlier, whether or not freedom is even closely connected to choice can depend on an individual's cultural context and model of agency. At the very least, we believe that this question and the other four we have proposed deserve more explicit and careful consideration than they sometimes receive, and rather than taking one or more of the answers for granted, policy-makers and researchers might do well to consider explicitly what we know about the sometimes tenuous links between choice, well-being, and freedom.

## Conclusion: the role of public policy and behavioral science

The central goal of this paper has been to examine the growing body of research that questions the assumption that promoting choice and freedom is always the same as promoting well-being and welfare. In our view, carefully re-evaluating the presumed relationships between choice, freedom, autonomy, and well-being has the potential to greatly benefit policy, giving policy, in turn, greater potential to benefit well-being. Yet it may also be worth considering the limits to what policy can accomplish, and how those limits might influence how we think about the role of behavioral science.

We suggested earlier that increased choice may increase the expressive value of even mundane choices, and that increased freedom provides the opportunity – and perhaps the requirement – that people define the self through choice. Schwartz (2010) theorized that the increased pressure on individual self-definition (see also Taylor, 1989, 1992a, 1992b) as a result of changing views of and opportunities for choice and freedom may be the most negative consequence of having too much choice, focusing attention on material aspects of identity and distracting from the social relationships and more meaningful pursuits in life that might make people happier and healthier. Policy may be unlikely to offer much help to individuals who are struggling under the psychological weight of too much choice and freedom in many (including private) domains of life without also compromising the liberating, life-enhancing consequences of increased freedom. And if policy is limited, what else can be done? One possibility is to more consciously spread some of the insights from behavioral science to the public, perhaps raising awareness and influencing cultural attitudes about choice, agency, and freedom. We might, for example, encourage people to engage in more second-order decision-making, getting people to think more carefully about when it is worth spending the time and effort to make a careful choice and when it is not.

Might sharing some of the science reviewed in this paper be a useful step toward reducing the cultural pressure placed on choice as a result of increasing individualism and autonomy (Schwartz, 2000, 2010)? It might, but doing so may also shift the traditional role of behavioral science from solely *studying* people and cultures to (purposefully) *influencing* people and cultures, and that might not be a shift we are comfortable making. For now, we close by raising the possibility that, in a journal dedicated to exploring how behavioral science can help public policy, it might sometimes be worthwhile to explore how behavioral science can help people outside of policy as well.

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