

THE CURSE OF LOYALTY: INTERDEPENDENT SELF CONSTRUAL AND SUPPORT  
FOR CORRUPTION

By

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## **DEDICATION**

Neelesh, for treating my aspirations as your own, you have been with me every step of the way, and I am grateful for your companionship, love, and faith.

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## ABSTRACT

Corruption thrives when individuals fail to take actions to stop it. In this dissertation, I integrate research on the self and social roles to illuminate when and why individuals overlook corrupt behavior in groups and organizations. I hypothesize that group members with an interdependent self-construal are more likely than others to support corrupt actors that benefit the group because benefitting group members is consistent with their social role expectations of others. I begin by testing the idea interdependent self-construal is associated with benevolent attributions about group member motives. As predicted, participants with an interdependent self-construal, relative to those with an independent self-construal, expected group members to seek collective gain (Studies 1a-1b). Next, I propose that because interdependent self-construal is associated with positive expectations about group member motives, when group members meet these expectations by engaging in pro-organizational corruption, they will be protected. Hence, interdependent groups will experience greater emergence and proliferation of pro-organizational corruption than independent groups. In Study 2, using an archival dataset of NCAA violations, I show that interdependent schools were more likely to emphasize ingroup loyalty and experienced greater emergence of unethical behavior. Next, I examine when and why interdependent self-construal leads to tolerance of corruption by examining the effects of attributions about motives of the deviant on punishment. In study 3, I show that interdependent self-construal leads to greater tolerance of corruption, only when the corrupt practice is seen as motivated by group interest. In study 4, I examine the mediating role of social role expectation of group members on lower punishment of corrupt behavior, finding that interdependent self-construal influences benevolent expectations about group members and results in protection of the corrupt member, only when the behavior is pro-organizational. Finally, in Study 5, I replicate the previously found



effects of interdependence on tolerance of corruption and specifically examine the effects of outcome of the corrupt act on punishment. Implications for research on the culture, roles, and corruption is discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption, embezzlement, fraud, these are all characteristics which exist everywhere. It is regrettably the way human nature functions, whether we like it or not. What successful economies do is keep it to a minimum. No one has ever eliminated any of that stuff.

--Alan Greenspan

Corruption—defined as the misuse of public office, trust, or power for personal or collective gain (Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Trevino, 2008)—is common across different types of organizations, including government agencies, religious groups, academic institutions, accounting firms, and pharmaceutical companies, to name a few. Corruption leads to lower trust in the organization and its members, increased perception of unfairness among societal members, as well as costs to the legal system to keep corrupt acts under check (Eicher, 2009). National level corruption is associated with reduced economic growth, restrictive trade policies, and reduced private investment (Treisman, 2007). Accordingly, the World Bank has identified corruption as an important barrier to social and economic welfare. Given these negative consequences, understanding the underlying factors that allow corruption to emerge and persist is important.

Although little is known about why people respond favorably or unfavorably to others' corrupt acts, the question of when and why individuals engage in corrupt behaviors has received much attention (for a review, see Moore & Gino, 2013). For instance, people are more likely to cheat when exposed to symbols of wealth and abundance than when exposed to scarcity (Gino & Pierce, 2012). People also cheat more when wearing counterfeit products, as these bogus products make people feel less authentic resulting in a distance from their moral values (Gino, Norton, & Ariely, 2010). People cheat more when multiple people benefit from the cheating than

when there is a sole beneficiary (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2013; Wiltermuth, 2011). In addition, when their dishonest behavior benefited others, people viewed their behavior as less unethical and more justifiable (Gino et al., 2013). Individuals who have a strong moral identity, such that their morals play an important role in their self definition (Aquino & Reed, 2002), are less likely to engage in unethical behavior, even when situational characteristics predispose them to do so.

Aside from factors that motivate individuals to engage in corrupt behaviors, predicting how those around them will respond is important. Indeed, in many cases, corruption occurs and persists largely because members of the group or organization willfully choose not to speak up, electing instead to protect the corrupt members. Given this, understanding *when and why people support corrupt ingroup members* is critical to predicting the conditions under which corruption is most likely to thrive. Surprisingly, little is known about the psychological factors that lead people to offer or withhold support for corrupt group members. I seek to address this issue by examining how group culture influences people's responses to corrupt group members. In particular, I examine the somewhat ironic possibility that interdependent culture may create conditions under which corruption can thrive.

### **SELF CONSTRUAL, ROLE EXPECTATIONS, AND SUPPORT FOR CORRUPTION**

A first step toward understanding when group members will support (versus punish) corrupt actors is to unpack the construct of corruption itself. As noted earlier, corruption involves misusing one's position or standing in order to achieve personal or collective gain. Examples of corruption include lying, bribery, nepotism, and otherwise breaking the law in order to obtain desired outcomes. Importantly, corrupt acts can benefit the individual engaging in the corrupt act, the larger organization to which the corrupt member belongs, or both (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Pinto, Leana, & Pil, 2008). For instance, the accounting fraud at Enron and WorldCom

benefited multiple players, including the firms, top managers, and employees. Similarly, the willingness of banks to bend rules to allow for risky investments and loans that led to the financial crisis in 2008 benefited the banks as well as the borrowers, albeit in the short term. Corrupt practices such as giving bribes to win a contract can potentially benefit not only the high ranked individual giving the bribe, but also the members of their ingroup.

In the present research, I examine the role of self construal in predicting punishment of corrupt acts that are pro-organizational. In fact, the realization that many immoral acts in organizations are likely to benefit the organization has led researchers to examine the antecedents of willingness to engage in unethical behavior that benefits the group, often labelled as pro-organizational unethical behavior (Chen, Chen, & Sheldon, 2016; Thau, Derfler-Rozin, Pitesa, Mitchell, & Pillutla, 2015; Umphress, Bingham, Mitchell, 2010; Umphress & Bingham, 2011). For instance, people who are strongly identified with a group are more willing to engage in pro-organizational unethical behavior in the context of strong reciprocity norms (Umphress et al., 2010) and external competition (Chen, Chen, & Sheldon, 2016). Furthermore, people are more willing to engage in pro-organizational unethical behavior when risks of social exclusion are salient (Thau et al., 2015). Much of this research has examined the causes of unethical behavior, rather than people's willingness to support other's unethical behavior. However, unwillingness of group members to speak up against ongoing corruption plays an important role in the persistence of corruption. By drawing attention to factors that influence the willingness of group members to stand up against corruption, I intend to highlight the important role that group members play in reducing or supporting corrupt practices within the group.

I am interested in examining the effects of an interdependent self-construal on tolerance of corruption. While previous research has examined the role of moral identity and ethical norms

on moral judgments, I am specifically interested in the ways in which interdependent self-construal or the tendency to define oneself in relation to groups influences punishment or support for corrupt practices. I draw on research on social roles to suggest that interdependent self-construal influences expectations about group member motives and further influences willingness to support group serving corruption.

### *Social Role Expectations*

An initial clue as to what would lead group members to support a corrupt actor can be found in the literature on social roles. To the degree that an actor's corrupt behavior can be construed as consistent with one's social role expectations, group members may find it more acceptable. The term *role* is typically used to refer to the set of behaviors and expectations that an individual is expected to follow (e.g., Biddle, 1986). Social roles inform what behaviors and attitudes are desired, appropriate, and acceptable in particular contexts and are useful because they facilitate the smooth functioning of groups and organizations (Ashforth, 2000; Biddle, 1986; Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011). Individuals are generally rewarded for meeting role expectations and punished for failing to meet their role demands. First, observers respond positively with greater trust, liking, and commitment to those who meet their role expectations. For instance, patients are more satisfied with doctors who behave in ways that fit their perceived role expectations (Larsen & Rootman, 1967). Second, observers tend to reject and sanction individuals who do not meet role expectations. For instance, women who are highly assertive and/or have high organizational status violate stereotypical gender role expectations and, consequently, often experience backlash and negative attributions (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Taken together, the research on social roles suggests that, to the degree that individuals perceive a corrupt group member to be acting in accord with his or her social role, they will be more

likely to support the actor by not reporting or punishing him/her.

### *Independent versus Interdependent Self Construal*

We propose that self-construal influences people's expectations about what it means to fulfill the role of ingroup member. Specifically, we suggest that interdependent self-construal, which involves the expansion of one's self-concept to include close others and significant groups in one's self definition (Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Oyserman & Lee, 2008), results in a strong prescriptive expectation that group members seek to benefit the group and are committed to group goals. Indirectly supporting this idea, previous research shows that interdependent self-construal is associated with an assumption of common fate with the group. Individuals who have an interdependent self-construal perceive a strong alignment between what is beneficial to self with what benefits the group, such that their personal wellbeing is more strongly influenced by the outcomes of the group than individuals who have individualistic values (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). As a result, interdependent individuals are more committed to group goals (Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1980), show enhanced prosocial orientation (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002), and are less likely to socially loaf in group situations (Earley, 1989) as compared to independent individuals, who tend to define their selves separately from their groups (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

Drawing from these ideas, we suggest that defining oneself interdependently with one's group leads to prescriptive expectations that ingroup members will actively pursue collective gain. Because interdependent self-construal influences the extent to which an individual is motivated to benefit the group, it may also influence the extent to which people *expect* other group members to be motivated by similar group goals. Support for this line of thinking comes from research examining cross-cultural differences in propensity to trust ingroup members.

Collectivistic cultures show greater trust in ingroup members than individualistic cultures (Huff & Kelley, 2003). Collectivistic norms are associated with a stronger ingroup bias, such that collectivists judge ingroup members more favorably than individualists (Gomez, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 2000). Collectivistic cultures also value and prioritize benevolence more than individualistic cultures (Schwartz, et al., 2001). While this previous research has focused on cross-cultural and international differences, I believe that the individual level characteristic of interdependent self-construal will result in a similar expectation of ingroup benevolence. Like collectivists, I predict that interdependent individuals, who value group outcomes and define their self in terms of the group, will expect similar group-serving motives and behaviors from group members. Accordingly, I predict the following:

*Hypothesis 1: Individuals with an interdependent self-construal are more likely than those with an independent self-construal to expect that group members possess group-serving motives.*

#### *Expectancy Violations*

Expectancy violation theory (Burgoon, 1993) predicts that people pay attention to and sanction behaviors that violate their expectations and respond favorably to behaviors that meet expectations. This theory has found much support and shows that when faced with ambiguous interactions, people's expectations about the interaction often shape their experiences and the extremity of their judgment. The more others' behavior deviates from descriptive expectations that people hold about situations, the more extreme the response to it (Kernanen, Batholow, & Bettencourt, 2000). Based on this theory, I predict that the tendency of interdependent individuals to expect group members to be motivated by collective gain will result in the tendency to support individuals who meet these role expectations, even when their behavior is

corrupt. Individuals who have an interdependent self-construal are less likely than those with an independent self-construal to see corrupt behaviors that are motivated by collective gain as violating expectations. Corrupt behaviors may meet expectations about benevolence of group members when a) the behavior benefits the group and b) the actor is motivated by benevolent intentions. However, when the corrupt behavior harms the group or is self-interested, it will violate the interdependent individual's expectations about the benevolence of group members, giving way to punishment rather than protection of the deviant.

Previous research suggests that collectivists value benevolence more than individualists when making social judgments. Individuals from collectivistic cultures place greater emphasis on the extent to which a behavior actually harms others rather than the extent to which it is fair and just, when making ethical judgments (Miller, 1994). Similarly, when making judgments about severity of deviance, collectivists place greater emphasis on the actual harm caused by the deviance than individualists (Miller, 1994). Because of the importance collectivists and individuals with an interdependent mindset place on benevolence of group members (Schwartz & Ros, 1995; Schwartz et al., 2001), they may be more likely than individualists to protect group serving corruption.

Pro-organizational unethical behavior or corruption is characteristic of group serving corruption, that is, members engage in the unethical behavior in order to benefit themselves as well as the group. These behaviors meet expectations about group member benevolence, even though they are immoral. Because, interdependent self-construal is likely to result in tolerance and support of such group serving behaviors, interdependent groups may be particularly susceptible to the emergence and proliferation of pro-organizational unethical behaviors. Previous research shows that members of groups characterized by interdependence or



collectivism construe their self interdependently whereas members of independent groups construe their self as unique or independent from others. Hence, one would expect that due to the tendency of interdependent individuals to protect group serving corruption, interdependent groups would experience greater pro-organizational corruption than independent groups. Furthermore, interdependent self-construal will lead to tolerance of corruption, only when the corrupt act can be perceived as group serving. When unethical behaviors harm the group, however, one would not expect interdependence to lead to support of the behavior. Accordingly, I posit the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 2: Individuals with an interdependent self-construal are less likely than those with an independent self-construal to punish group members who engage in pro-organizational corruption.*

*Hypothesis 3: Individuals with an interdependent self-construal expect group members to be motivated by benevolence, and only protect pro-organizational corruption when these expectations are met.*

*Hypothesis 4: Interdependent groups are more susceptible to the emergence of pro-organizational corruption than independent groups.*

On the surface, these suggestions might seem contradictory to previous work on expectancy violation effects showing that people judge deviant ingroup members more harshly than deviant outgroup members (Marques & Paez, 1994). Previous research on the ‘black sheep effect’ suggests that we hold ingroup members to higher standards than outgroup members. Hence when ingroup members violate our high expectations, we punish them more severely than outgroup members who commit the same violation. However, this previous research examines situations in which deviant acts cause harm to the group. Consequently, when participants feel

interdependent with the ingroup, they may personally feel harmed by the deviant's actions and hence make harsher judgments about the harm causing ingroup deviant. When a member of the outgroup engages in harm causing deviance, participants may not feel that they will accrue the costs of the deviant's actions, resulting in lower punishment. In the current research, I examine situations in which the unethical behavior is in fact beneficial for the group. When unethical actors desire to benefit the group and are successful in this endeavor, interdependent individuals may support such group-serving corruption.

If supported, these predictions will provide a number of theoretical advances. Firstly, this research contributes to theory regarding the effects of interdependence on behavior. Previous research suggests that interdependent self-construal influences one's own cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, showing that feeling interdependent with others results in greater perspective taking, positive emotions, and prosocial behaviors (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Yet, researchers have not examined how self-construal may influence expectations of others and hence modify one's social judgments. My research is among the first to suggest that interdependence not only influences one's own behavior, but can also shape the expectations we place upon others. Secondly, I extend role theory to suggest that role expectations may be influenced by individual-level variables such as self-construal. Role theorists have taken into account how cultural and situational factors influence expectations placed upon individuals, but no research has examined how one's own self-construal can influence role expectations. Finally, my research extends existing theorizing on corruption and unethical behavior by extending research attention beyond factors that lead individuals to engage in corrupt acts to focus on members of the group who may serve to protect those engaging in corrupt behaviors. We inform previous theories on responses to deviant members of the group by

suggesting that the outcome of the deviant act is critical in determining whether those who feel interdependent with the group will punish the deviant actor or, instead, support the deviance.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH**

Across a series of studies, I examine the effects of interdependence on responses to corrupt actors in one's group by using either a naturally occurring basis for these cognitions (Study 1A and Study 2) or a mindset priming method (Study 1B, Study 3, Study 4, and Study 5), an approach that has been widely used and validated to reflect individual differences in independence and interdependence (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). I begin by examining whether participants with an interdependent self-construal confer greater benevolent motives to group members, expecting their group members to be motivated by collective gain, more so than participants with an independent self-construal (Studies 1A and 1B). In Study 2, using archival data of National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) sanctions, I examine whether universities with an interdependent culture experience greater corruption than universities with an independent culture. In Study 3, I use a behavioral paradigm to examine whether interdependent mindset leads to lower punishment of a student who cheats on a word puzzle task, when the student indicates that they were motivated to benefit the group rather than benefit the self. In Study 4, I examine whether interdependent self-construal results in greater expectation that group members are motivated by collective gain. I further examine if these expectations about group member motives explains why interdependent individuals are more willing to protect group serving corrupt members. Finally, in Study 5, I examine whether the tendency among those with an interdependent mindset to exonerate corrupt acts are moderated by perceived motives of the actor as well as the outcome of the corrupt act. Thus, across a series of study, I seek to draw converging evidence to examine the effects of

interdependence on corruption.

## STUDY 1A

I begin with two studies to test the idea that people who define themselves interdependently with their group expect members of their group to be motivated by collective gain (Hypothesis 1). Participants completed a measure of individual differences in independence and interdependence along with measures assessing their expectations regarding the motives of ingroup and outgroup members.

### Method

*Participants:* Participants were 68 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers ranging in age from 18-63 years ( $M=33.4$ ,  $SD=11.00$ ) who participated in exchange for \$0.5.

*Interdependence measure:* Participants completed a measure of independence and interdependence (Singelis, 1994), using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items measuring independence included “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways,” and “I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.” Examples of items measuring interdependence included “I feel good when I cooperate with others,” and “my happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.”

*Role expectations about motives of ingroup members:* Participants rated the extent to which they expected members of their group to be motivated by collective gain. They stated their agreement with the following statements: “Members of my group will be motivated to benefit my group” and “Members of my group will be motivated to benefit each other”, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

*Role expectations about motives of outgroup members:* Participants also rated the extent to which they expected members of other groups to be motivated to benefit their own group

members. They stated their agreement with the following statements: “Members of other groups will be motivated to benefit their own group” and “Members of other groups will be motivated to benefit their own group members”, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

### Results and Discussion

As expected, participants’ scores on interdependence (after controlling for independence) predicted the extent to which they expected ingroup members to be motivated by collective gain,  $B(67) = .72$ ,  $SEB = .23$ ,  $t = 3.10$ ,  $p = .003$ . Interdependence did not effect the extent to which participants believed outgroup members would be motivated to benefit their own group members,  $B(67) = .08$ ,  $SEB = .25$ ,  $t = .33$ ,  $p = .74$ . Further, participants’ scores on the measure of independence did not predict the extent to which they expected ingroup members to be motivated by collective gain,  $B(67) = .05$ ,  $SEB = .19$ ,  $t = .25$ ,  $p = .79$ ; or outgroup members to be motivated by collective gain,  $B(67) = .02$ ,  $SEB = .84$ ,  $t = .02$ ,  $p = .98$ . Further, a repeated measures ANOVA showed that participants were more likely to believe that members of their own group were more motivated to benefit their group members than members of the outgroup,  $F(1,67) = 8.72$ ,  $p = .004$ . In addition, participants’ scores on measures of interdependence interacted with ratings of ingroup and outgroup members motives towards collective gain, such that participants who scored higher on interdependence were more likely to believe that ingroup members will be more motivated by collective gain as compared to outgroup members,  $F(1,67) = 9.99$ ,  $p = .002$ . Thus, participants who define themselves interdependently are more likely than others to include the motive to benefit the group as part of the ingroup member role.

## STUDY 1B

After finding that interdependence is correlated with expectations about motives of ingroup members, I wanted to test whether manipulating interdependence has similar effects. I hypothesized that participants primed with interdependence are more likely to expect their group members to be motivated by collective gain as compared to participants primed with independence.

### Method

*Participants:* Participants were 92 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers (48 women, 44 men), ranging in age from 18-73 years ( $M=36.22$ ,  $SD=15.05$ ) who participated in exchange for \$0.3.

*Pronoun identification task:* After providing consent to participate in the study, participants were primed with either independence or interdependence via a task in which they identified pronouns in a paragraph presented to them (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). In the independence mindset condition, the paragraph consisted of pronouns with a focus on *I* (e.g., me, myself), whereas in the interdependence mindset condition, the paragraph consisted of pronouns with a focus on *We* (e.g., us, our). Participants were asked to click on all the pronouns found within the paragraph.

Following the pronoun identification task participants completed measures of role expectations regarding ingroup member motives towards collective gain (Same as Study 1A)

### Results and Discussion

Data of thirteen participants who did not complete the pronoun identification task were excluded from analysis. As expected, participants primed with interdependence were more likely to expect their ingroup members ( $M=5.36$ ,  $SD=.90$ ) to be motivated by collective gain as

compared to participants primed with independence ( $M=4.81$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ),  $t(78)=2.26$ ,  $p=.02$ .

The pilot studies find support for Hypothesis 1, suggesting that people with an interdependent mindset expect group members to be motivated by collective gain, more so than people with an independent mindset. In the next study, I examine the implications of this tendency for interdependent individuals expect benevolence from group members. Specifically, using archival data of university deviance, I examine whether interdependence leads to greater support and proliferation of pro-organizational corruption (Hypothesis 2 and 4).

## STUDY 2

The aim of Study 2 was to examine the effects of cultural interdependence on support for unethical behavior, particularly unethical behavior that can be characterized as pro-organizational. I used data from the National Collegiate Athletic Associations (NCAA) in order to test the idea that cultural interdependence would lead to greater emergence and proliferation of corruption (Hypothesis 2 and 4). I measured cultural interdependence by analyzing the language used by university presidents in their annual address to students. I relied on presidential speeches as leaders of universities are most likely to shape and embody the culture of the university (Schein, 1985; Baron & Hannan, 2002; O’Rielly, Caldwell, Chatman, & Doerr, 2014). A team of research assistants used publically available speeches as well as contacted universities in order to obtain the speeches of university presidents. When the speech was not available, they used alternate documents to measure cultural interdependence in universities (Appendix A). I drew on recent developments in the field of psycholinguistics to measure interdependent cultural norms expressed in these speeches and tested whether interdependence predicted NCAA sanctions received by the school in the last five years. I used the NCAA sanctions database because majority of the unethical behaviors were pro-organizational (e.g. providing extra financial aid or

impermissible benefits to a student athlete, allowing ineligible students to compete, and impermissible offcampus contacts with prospects and family members) and involved deviance that usually was beneficial to a team or university, at least in the short term.

### Context and Sample

The NCAA is a national governing body that regulates sports activities of more than 1200 colleges and universities across United States and Canada. The NCAA defines its core purpose as seeking to “govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount.” In meeting with these goals, the NCAA plays an active role in ensuring fairness in college sports by regulating and monitoring the ethical standards of athletic programs and by setting standards and guidelines to assure fairness in competitions.

The NCAA committee on infractions actively monitors athletic programs, conducts hearings and reviews when universities and colleges violate NCAA guidelines, and prescribe penalties for violating institutions. A violation is deemed as a major infraction if the violation “provides an extensive recruiting or competitive advantage.” On the other hand, secondary violations are those that “provide only a limited recruiting or competitive advantage and is isolated or inadvertent in nature.” Universities can chose whether to keep the secondary violations private or allow a public record of these violations. On the other hand, all major violations by the NCAA participating schools are made publically available by NCAA along with a public report that provides details about nature of the violation, dates of violation, sequence of events, number of people and teams involved, as well as the penalties incurred.

### *Sanctioned Schools*

For the time period from Jan 1, 2010 to August 1, 2015; One hundred and three schools



received NCAA sanctions for engaging in major violations (Division 1: 63, Division 2: 17, and Division 3:25). A research assistant coded the nature of infraction committed by the school by reading the public report. In order to avoid subjectivity in coding, the research assistant coded using criteria that are used by NCAA to report violations. For instance, NCAA provides information about whether a university adequately monitored its athletic program as well as whether the violation was self-reported. The research assistant coded for these variables not only because I was interested in examining the effects of cultural interdependence on monitoring tendencies, but also because the NCAA documents conveniently allowed us to code these variables. Each of the infraction was coded using the criteria indicated below:

*Self-report of violation:* The NCAA report indicates whether a violation was self-reported. If the report did not mention that the violation was self-reported, it was coded as not self-reported (1= self-report; 2=not self-reported).

*Failure to monitor:* The NCAA report identifies whether a university failed to monitor the deviance. If no information was provided about the universities monitoring systems, the violation was coded as adequately monitored (1=failed to monitor, 2=adequately monitored).

*Individual, group, or institutional level deviance:* If the NCAA report identifies specific individuals who were involved in the deviance (e.g. head coach, assistant) then the deviance was coded as an individual level deviance. If the violation involved a specific sports team and its members (e.g. special treatment for basketball players, discrepancies in financial aid provisions to athletes) then the deviance was coded as a group level deviance. When multiple different teams and officers in the University were involved in engaging and supporting the deviance, then the violation was coded as an institutional level violation (1=individual level; 2=group level; 3=institutional level).

*Number of years on probation:* The first author also coded the sanctions placed by NCAA against the particular individual, team, or university by noting the number of years the individual, team, or school was on probation for committing the violation as indicated in the NCAA report. This served as a measure of severity of deviance.

Research assistants coded whether the university document obtained was a presidential speech or an alternate document. They were also requested to note the gender of the university president in order to control for effects of gender on university president's language use.

*Matched Sample of Schools that Did Not Receive a Sanction*

I sought to examine whether universities that received NCAA sanctions differed from universities that did not receive an NCAA sanction. Approximately one third of the schools received NCAA sanctions in the last 25 years, allowing us to select a sample of schools that never received an NCAA sanction. In order to select a comparison group of universities that differed in their tendency to engage in deviant activities, we selected a random sample of schools that did not receive any NCAA sanctions in a 25 year period from Jan 1, 1990 to August 1, 2015. The schools were matched by division such that the number of schools from each division in the control group (non-sanctioned schools) were the same as the number of schools from each division in the list of sanctioned schools, in order to control for any erroneous effects of school status on culture and propensity to receive sanctions.

*Measuring Interdependent Norms*

Interdependent norms were measured by coding university documents for the extent to which they used the collective pronoun 'we' versus the independent pronoun 'I' to address members of the organization (Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2013). A team of research assistants obtained speeches of university presidents from the year 2009, the year prior to which

we examined whether the school received an NCAA sanction, in order to eliminate the possibility of reverse causality. We contacted the university special collections office, president's office and the university library to obtain the speech, when the speech was not publically available in written, audio, or video formats. Audio and video speeches were transcribed by research assistants and Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Research assistants who were assisting us in locating the speeches were asked to use the following guidelines if they were not able to locate the university president address to the students for the year 2009, they were requested to adopt the sequence indicated in Appendix A to obtain a university document to measure interdependence.

Interdependence was measured by creating a ratio of the number of times the university president used the pronoun *we* instead of *I* while addressing students. We used a word count software called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) in order to obtain an estimate of the extent to which the university president used the pronoun *we* and *I*. The ratio of *we* to *I* usage was created as an index of cultural interdependence at the university. I then examined whether cultural interdependence predicted the tendency to engage in unethical behavior. I was also interested in examining whether interdependence resulted in greater support for corrupt behavior involving reduced self-reporting of deviance, lower institutional monitoring, and involvement of other individuals in the deviance as reflected in greater incidence of group and institutional level deviance.

## Results and Discussion

The interdependence scores were log-transformed due to non-normality of distribution. Table 1 represents the correlation coefficients between log transformed interdependence scores and outcome variables. As expected, cultural interdependence predicted the likelihood of

receiving an NCAA sanction,  $B=.64$ ,  $SEB=.25$ ,  $p=.01$  (president gender and type of university document included as covariates). Next, I examined whether interdependence led to greater group and institutional level violations suggesting that other group members played a role in the spread of corruption in interdependent schools. Cultural interdependence was associated with greater support and involvement of others in violations, experiencing greater group and institutional level violations,  $B=.23$ ,  $SEB=.11$ ,  $p=.03$ . In addition, I examined whether interdependent schools were less likely to self report deviance and showed lower monitoring, reflecting an unwillingness to speak up against corruption. I found that interdependence was not associated with self reporting of deviance,  $B=.11$ ,  $SEB=.31$ ,  $p=.72$ . However, cultural interdependence was associated with lower monitoring by institutions and sports coaches,  $B=.90$ ,  $SEB=.44$ ,  $p=.04$ . Cultural interdependence did not predict number of years on probation or deviance severity,  $B=.23$ ,  $SEB=.16$ ,  $p=.14$ .

These findings provide evidence to suggest that 1) interdependent institutions were more likely to engage in unethical violations and 2) Interdependent institutions showed greater support for unethical behavior by demonstrating lower monitoring and group level deviance. I find that interdependence does in fact lead to greater corruption and that interdependent groups are more likely to fail to monitor unethical behavior and further are more likely to experience group level violations, suggesting that interdependent groups may in fact be more likely to allow and support unethical behavior. Thus, these data provides initial evidence to suggest that interdependence paves the way for emergence of corruption and leads to organizational support for group serving corruption.

The purpose of study 1 was to examine the relation between cultural interdependence and tolerance of pro-organizational unethical behavior. In a field study of university culture and

engagement in unethical behavior in the context of sports organization, we find that cultural interdependence predicts engagement in unethical behavior. Furthermore, interdependent universities are more likely to experience group level violations, suggesting that individual members in interdependent groups may be more likely to support and engage in unethical behaviors themselves. Finally, interdependent groups are also more inclined to turn a blind eye to group member transgression, hence failing to monitor institutional members.

In the studies that follow, I examine the causal role of cultural interdependence in predicting tolerance of corrupt and unethical behavior. Furthermore, I examine situational characteristics that lead to support for unethical behavior, examining the ways in situational circumstances may promote corruption in interdependent groups. Drawing on social role theory, I suggest that cultural interdependence results in tolerance of pro-organizational corruption, only when the corrupt behavior is seen as motivated by group interest. Because cultural interdependence results in the expectation that group members will benefit the group and facilitate its outcomes, those who benefit the group by engaging unethically are supported. In the study that follows, I examine the role of interdependence in tolerance of corruption. Furthermore, I examine the mediating role of expectations of benevolent motives of group members by showing mediation through moderation. By showing the interdependence leads to tolerance of corruption, but only when the corrupt member is perceived to be motivated by collective gain rather than personal gain, we seek to provide evidence of the role of social role expectations in predicting tolerance of corruption.

Table 1: Correlation table representing the relation between university cultural interdependence and NCAA sanctions (*Study 2*)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Interdependence score	1							
NCAA sanction 1:yes, 0:no	.19**	1						
Self-report of violation 1:yes, 2:no	-.05	-	1					
Failure to monitor 1:Failed 2:Did not	-.20*	-	-.20*	1				
Nature of violation 1:Individual, 2:Group, 3 institution	.21*	-	-.11	-.27**	1			
Years on probation	.14	-	.18	-.40**	.42**	1		
President gender	-.003	-.01	.02	.01	-.01	-.12	1	
University document 1:Speech 2: Alternate	.32**	.12	.09	-.16	.02	.05	.02	1

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

### STUDY 3

Study 3 was designed to test the hypothesis that interdependent self construal leads to protection of corruption, but only when the corruption can be construed as meeting the social role expectations of a good group member. I use a behavioral paradigm to examine whether participants primed with an interdependent mindset protect a group member who cheats on a task when the cheater provides collective gain as the justification for engaging in the unethical behavior (Hypothesis 2 and 3). In a 2 (mindset: independence vs. interdependence) X 2 (motive of the cheater: personal gain vs. collective gain) experimental design, participants who were primed with either independence or interdependence were given the word jumble task of a group member who had ostensibly cheated on the task along with a comment from the cheater indicating their motive for engaging in the unethical act. Participants then completed ratings of punishment of the cheater as well as indicated the amount of money they would give the cheater.

I expected that participants primed with interdependence will not only be less likely to punish the group member who provides collective gain as the rationale for engaging in the unethical act, but will also reward the behavior by giving them more money than they deserve.

### Method

*Participants:* Participants were 130 students from a west coast university (47 women, 84 men) who participated in exchange for course credit.

*Procedure:* Participants arrived in groups of 6-10 students in each session. They were divided into two identical rooms such that each room consisted of 3-5 participants. Participants were informed that the experiment consisted of a series of tasks. In the first task, participants were given the following instructions:

“In this study, you will be matched with another USC student participating in this session sitting in the room adjacent to yours. You will both be presented with some tasks and will be requested to provide an impression of each other based on responses on the task. You have been randomly selected to complete a writing task, whereas the student in the other room that you have been matched with will be performing a word jumble task. You will be requested to first complete the writing task. Your description to the writing task will be then presented to the participant you have been matched with. Following which, you will be provided with the word jumble task of the other participant. The word jumble task involves a monetary reward. Participants will be paid 50cents for each word jumble they solve correctly starting from the beginning. For instance, if the participant solves the first 3 word jumbles and is unable to solve the fourth one but completes the remaining word jumbles, they are requested to only reward themselves 50cents for the first 3 jumbles they solved correctly, resulting in a reward of 1dollar 50cents. Further, if a participant solves

all the 10 jumbles, then all participants will receive .5 extra credit. Participants are requested to score their own word jumble by indicating whether they were or were not able to unscramble the letters to form a word. They are given specific instructions to take the monetary reward from an envelope given to them that contains 1 dollar bills and quarters and return the remaining amount along with the envelope to the experimenter.” After providing these instructions, participants were given the writing task, which was used to prime either an independent or interdependent mindset.

*Writing task:* Participants in the independent condition were requested to write about a particular situation in which they worked alone to complete a task whereas participants in the interdependent condition were requested to write about a situation in which they worked with others to complete a task (Gino & Galinsky, 2012). After completing the writing task, participants were given the word jumble task of the student who had ostensibly cheated on the task. The task also included a comments section in which the student apparently wrote their motive for engaging in the unethical act.

*Cheating situation:* Participants were presented with the word jumble answer sheet (adapted from Gino & Galinsky, 2012) in which the student had wrongly scored their responses to indicate that he or she had correctly solved all the word jumbles. The student had supposedly wrongly unscrambled the word jumbles to indicate that ‘guant’, ‘oracl’, and ‘smoveeldy’ were words. The answer sheet also indicated that the student had taken \$5 as the total reward and had solved all the 10 puzzles.

*Motive of the cheater:* In the self-gain condition, the comment on the word jumble task read “I want the extra money” whereas in the collective gain condition, the comment read “I want everyone to get extra credit.”



Participants were given a few minutes to review the word jumble answer sheet of the student with whom they were ostensibly matched. Participants were asked to indicate how much money the students deserved. Participants were then presented with a questionnaire requesting them to provide an impression of the participants. The questionnaire asked the participant to indicate how much they would punish the cheater by stating their agreement or disagreement with the item “This individual should be punished” which was interspersed between other irrelevant items about rewards and general impression.

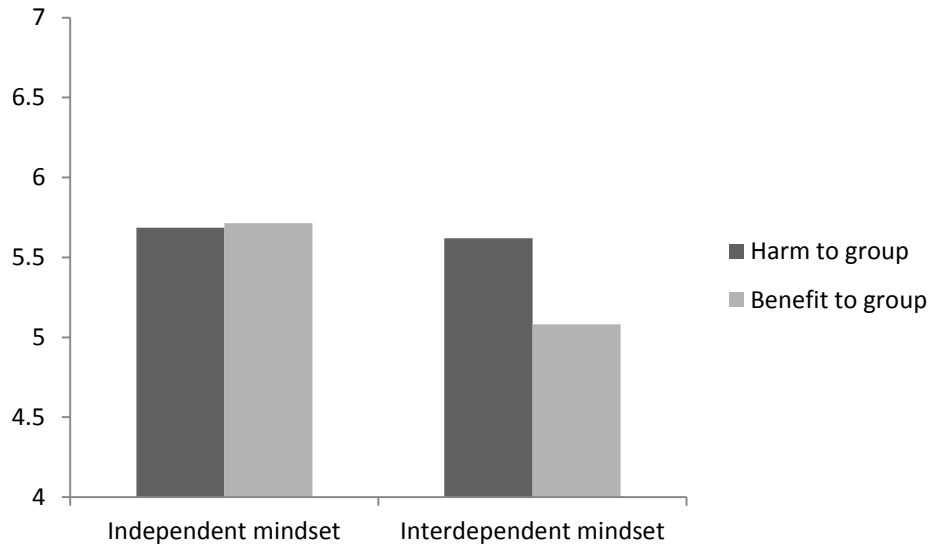
### Results

Data from four participants who did not complete the writing task (less than 3 sentences) were excluded from analysis. First, I examined participants’ ratings of punishment. A 2 (independence vs. interdependence mindset) X 2 (personal vs. collective gain motive) *ANOVA*, yielded a main effect of motive,  $F(1, 125)=9.93, p=.002$ , such that participants were less likely to punish the cheater who provided the motivation to benefit the group ( $M=4.19, SD=1.26$ ) as justification for the cheating as compared to the cheater who claimed to be motivated by self gain ( $M=4.85, SD=1.06$ ). Further, the two-way interaction effect was significant,  $F(1, 125)=5.41, p=.02$ , such that participants primed with interdependence were less likely to punish the cheater who claimed to be motivated by collective gain ( $M=3.81, SD=1.33$ ) than the cheater who was motivated by self gain ( $M=4.92, SD=1.07$ ),  $t(63)=3.66, p=.001$ . Participants in the independent condition did not differ in their ratings of the cheater who was motivated by collective gain ( $M=4.62, SD=1.51$ ) and the cheater who was motivated by self gain ( $M=4.78, SD=1.51$ ),  $t(124)=.78, p=.53$ , See Figure 1.

Next, I examined participants’ willingness to assign money to the cheater. A 2(independence vs. interdependence mindset) X 2(personal vs. collective gain motive) *ANOVA*,

yielded a main effect of motive,  $F(1, 124)=5.30, p=.02$ , such that participants in the interdependent condition ( $M=2.81, SD=1.38$ ) assigned more money to the cheater than participants in the independent condition ( $M=2.18, SD=1.63$ ). The two-way interaction effect of mindset priming and motive of the corrupt actor was significant,  $F(1, 125)=6.19, p=.01$ . As expected, participants primed with interdependence assigned more money to the cheater when collective gain ( $M=3.12, SD=1.25$ ) was reported as the motive for cheater than self-gain ( $M=1.84, SD=1.76$ ). Participants primed with independence did not differ in the extent to which they assigned money to the cheater motivated by collective gain ( $M=2.46, SD=1.46$ ) or self-gain ( $M=2.51, SD=1.41$ ),  $t(60)=.02, p=.89$ .

Thus, interdependent self-construal leads to lower punishment of a group member who cheats to benefit the group. This study demonstrates that even in experimentally created minimal groups, participants primed with interdependence are more likely to protect a member who engages in group-serving corruption than participants primed with independence. Not only are participants less likely to punish the group oriented corrupt member, but they are also more likely to reward them by assigning more money.



*Figure 1: Effects of self-construal mindset priming and outcome of the corrupt act on punishment of a group member who engaged in the corrupt act (Study 3).*

#### STUDY 4

In Study 4, I sought to examine the mediating role of benevolent expectations about group members in explaining why interdependent self-construal leads to protection of corrupt behavior (Hypothesis 3). To examine whether participants with an interdependent mindset protect corrupt group members who serve group interests, we used a 2 (mindset: independence vs. interdependence) X 2 (outcome of the corrupt act: harmed the group vs. benefited the group) design. Participants were either primed with independence or interdependence. Participants then read a corruption scenario involving an official in their county who misrepresented information in order to obtain a development grant for the county. The corrupt act either resulted in harm to group or benefited the group. Participants then completed ratings of punishment of the corrupt official. We examined whether role expectations about group member motives explain why interdependent individuals protect those who engage in group serving corruption.

## Method

*Participants:* Participants were 200 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers (96 women, 104 men), ranging in age from 18-66 years ( $M=34.69$ ,  $SD=12.25$ ) who participated in exchange for \$0.50.

*Pronoun identification task:* After providing consent to participate in the study, participants were primed with either independence or interdependence via a task in which they identified pronouns in a paragraph presented to them (Same as Study 1B). In the independence mindset condition, the paragraph consisted of pronouns with a focus on *I* (e.g., me, myself), whereas in the interdependence mindset condition, the paragraph consisted of pronouns with a focus on *We* (e.g., us, our). Participants were asked to click on all the pronouns found within the paragraph.

Following the pronoun identification task participants completed measures of role expectations regarding ingroup member motives and read the corruption scenario (presented in a random order).

*Role expectations about motives of ingroup members:* Participants rated the extent to which they expected members of their group to be motivated by collective gain. They stated their agreement with the following statements: “Members of my group will be motivated to benefit my group” and “Members of my group will be motivated to benefit each other”, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

*Corruption Scenario:* Participants were then presented with the corruption scenario involving a county official named Dave Rogers who had applied for a development grant. Participants read the following details about the corrupt act:

“Dave Rogers, a county commissioner had applied for the development grant early in the year. The grant monies could be used towards general county functions including building and maintaining roads, recreational facilities, running hospitals and schools, as well as towards adoption and foster care programs. The allocation of the grant depended on a number of factors including county plans for road construction, performance of schools and social service programs, number of families below federal poverty line, and the total contributions of the county to state taxes. Dave Rogers over reported the number of families in your county whose family income was below the federal poverty line. He exaggerated the number of families below poverty line by 25% of the actual number of families in the grant application.” In addition, participants were told that “when determining the allocation of the grant to your county, the criteria of number of families below the poverty line was given importance and influenced the allocation decision. County commissioners who obtain a grant for your county receive a bonus of 10% of their salary at the end of the fiscal year.”

*Outcome of the corrupt act:* In the outcome harm condition, participants read that the county was penalized \$700,000 from the basic county allocation, whereas in the outcome benefit condition, participants were told that their county received the \$700,000 development grant.

After reading the scenario, participants rated the extent to which they would punish Dave Rogers by stating their agreement with four statements including, “Dave Rogers should be punished,” using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants also indicated the extent to which they held Dave Rogers responsible for his actions (Dave Rogers is responsible for his actions; Dave Rogers had no choice) and the extent to which they were willing to take his perspective (I would do the same thing, if I was in Dave Rogers shoes; If I was in Dave Rogers position, I would take the same action) by completing two items

related to each using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Finally, participants completed a demographic questionnaire.

### Results and Discussion

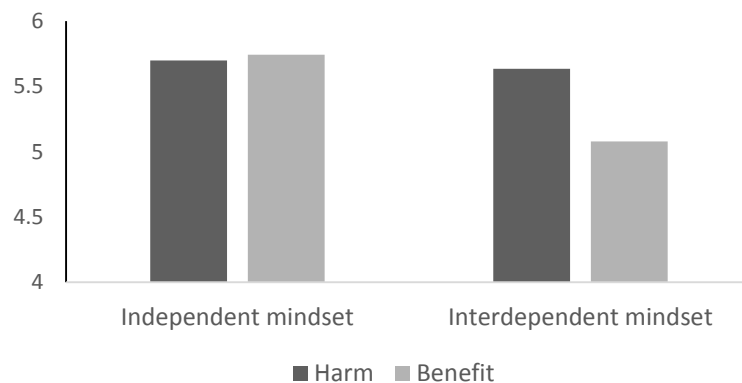
A 2 (mindset: independence vs. interdependence) X 2 (outcome of the corrupt act: benefited the group vs. harmed the group) between participants *ANOVA*, yielded a main effect of mindset priming, such that participants primed with an interdependence mindset were less likely to punish the county official who engaged in a corrupt act ( $M=5.35$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ) as compared to participants primed with an independent mindset ( $M=5.74$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ),  $F(1,198)=4.58$ ,  $p=.03$ . There was a marginal interaction effect of mindset priming and outcome of corrupt act,  $F(1, 198)=3.13$ ,  $p=.07$ . When the corrupt act harmed the group, participants primed with independence ( $M=5.68$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ) and those primed with interdependence ( $M=5.63$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) did not differ in their ratings of punishment,  $t(104)=.31$ ,  $p=.76$ . In contrast, as expected, when the corrupt act benefited the group, participants primed with interdependence ( $M=5.07$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ) were less likely to punish the corrupt official than participants primed with independence ( $M=5.71$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ),  $t(93)=2.33$ ,  $p=.02$ . As expected, participants who were primed with interdependence and read about a corrupt official whose behavior benefited the group were least likely to punish the official as compared to participants in the other three experimental conditions,  $F(196)=2.94$ ,  $p=.03$  (See Figure 2).

In addition, participants who were primed with an interdependent mindset ( $M=5.62$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) were more likely to expect group members to be motivated to benefit the group than participants primed with an independent mindset ( $M=5.62$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ). Participants expectations about group member motives to benefit the group predicted punishment ratings,  $B=-.14$ ,  $SE=.06$ ,  $t=-2.35$ ,  $p=.02$ , such that the greater the attribution of benevolence towards group members, the

less severe were the punishment ratings. In addition, ratings of group member motives mediated the relation between interdependent self-construal and punishment of the corrupt actor.

Interdependence prime did not significantly predict punishment ratings, when motives of group members was included in the model,  $B = -.30$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $t = -1.74$ ,  $p = .08$  (95% bootstrapping confidence intervals of indirect effects,  $LL = -.001$ ,  $UL = .06$ ).

Furthermore, interdependence did not influence ratings of responsibility or perspective taking,  $F's < .80$ ,  $p > .35$ , ruling out alternative explanations suggesting that interdependence results in lower attributions of responsibility towards individuals (Morris & Peng, 1994) and overall greater perspective taking (Gino & Galinsky, 2012). Participants primed with an interdependent self-construal expected group members to be motivated by collective gain, resulting in protection of those who engaged in corrupt behavior with the intent to benefit the group. Thus, interdependence influences social role expectations of group members which influences their responses to corrupt group behavior.



*Figure 2: Effects of self-construal mindset priming and outcome of the corrupt act on punishment of a group member who engaged in the corrupt act (Study 4)*

## STUDY 5

The purpose of Study 5 was to show that the tendency to protect the group-serving corrupt member among those who have an interdependent self-construal is only seen when the corrupt behavior does, in fact, benefit the group (Hypothesis 2 and 3). Furthermore, I sought to replicate the findings of Study 4 using a different corruption scenario and with a different population. I predicted that when the corrupt behavior harms the group, participants primed with interdependence will forgo the tendency to protect the deviant collectively oriented deviant. In a 2 (mindset: independence vs. interdependence) X 2 (outcome of corrupt behavior: harm vs. benefit) X 2 (motive of the corrupt official: personal gain vs. collective gain) experimental design, participants read about a corrupt official at their university who admitted a student in exchange for endowment funds.

### Method

*Participants:* Participants were 300 students from a West coast university (women=157, 143 men;  $M_{\text{age}}=20.5$ ) who participated in exchange for course credit.

*Pronoun identification task:* After providing consent to participate in the study, participants were primed with either independence or interdependence using the pronoun identification task (same as Study 2).

*Corruption Scenario:* After providing consent to participate in the study, participants were presented with a scenario about a corrupt official at their university. Participants read that an official in their University Office of Admissions gave preferential treatment to a student when making admission decisions and that the student, whose application had previously been disregarded as below expectations, was later flagged as ‘important to the university’ by the official. The student’s parents were ostensibly in talks with the official to donate a large sum of



money to the Business school in exchange for the student's admission to the university.

*Outcome of the corrupt act:* In the group harm condition, participants were informed that the parents of the student did not contribute to the university endowment and reported their dealings with the university official to news media resulting in a significant decline in endowment that year. In the group benefit condition, participants were told that the parents contributed generously to the endowment and used their connections to seek other contributors, resulting in a significant increase in the university endowment.

*Motives of the corrupt official:* In the personal gain condition, participants read that "the official was not concerned about obtaining funds for USC. Instead the possibility of receiving a bonus motivated the senior official to admit the student." In the collective gain condition, participants read that "the official was not concerned about obtaining the bonus for himself. Instead the possibility of receiving funds for USC motivated the official to admit the student."

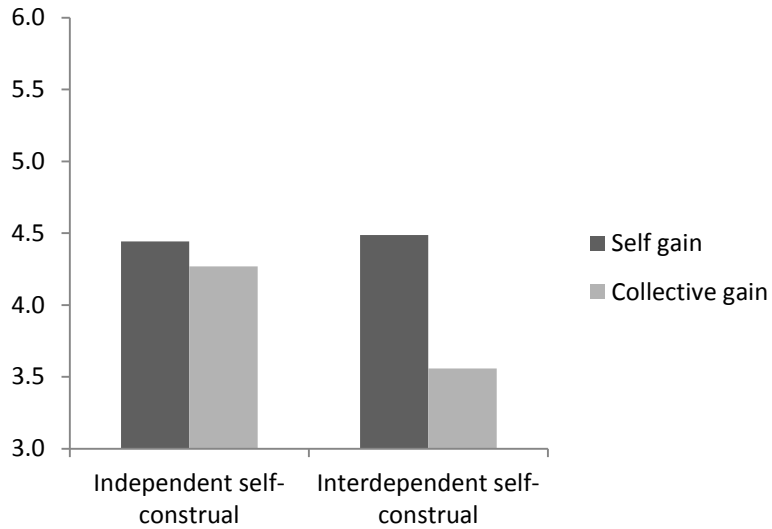
After reading the scenario, participants completed ratings of punishment of the official (same as Study 3).

## Results and Discussion

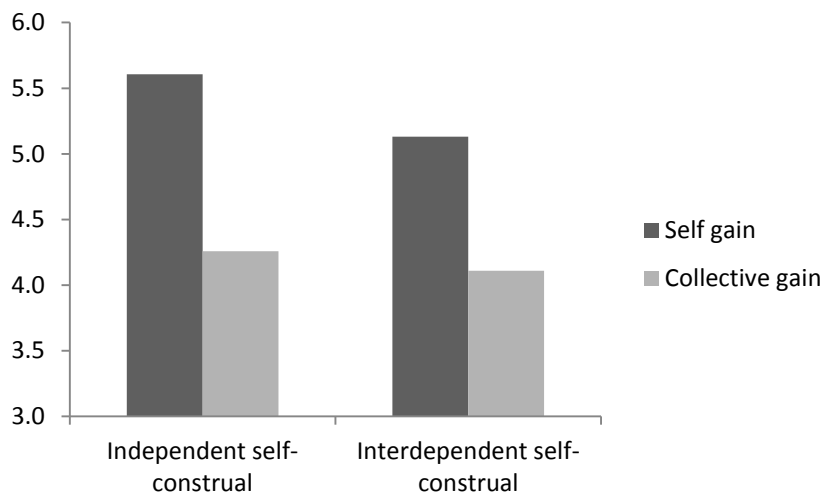
Data from 8 participants who did not complete the pronoun identification task were excluded from analysis. A 2 (mindset: independence vs. interdependence) X 2 (outcome of corrupt behavior: harm vs. benefit) X 2 (motive of the corrupt official: personal gain vs. collective gain) ANOVA yielded a main effect of outcome of corrupt behavior,  $F(1, 291)=18.22$ ,  $p<.001$ , such that when the behavior benefited the university ( $M=4.22$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ), the official was punished less than when the behavior harmed the university ( $M=4.89$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ). There was an overall main effect of mindset priming,  $F(1, 291)=4.88$ ,  $p=.03$ , such that participants primed with interdependence ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=1.48$ ) punished the corrupt official less than participants primed

with independence ( $M=4.71$ ,  $SD=1.54$ ). There was also a main effect of motive,  $F(1, 291)=27.14$ ,  $p<.001$ , such that a corrupt official motivated by collective gain ( $M=4.14$ ,  $SD=1.47$ ) was punished less than the official motivated by personal gain ( $M=4.95$ ,  $SD=1.46$ ). A significant two-way interaction of outcome of the corrupt behavior and motive indicated that the motives of the corrupt official more significantly impacted punishment ratings in the harm condition, but less so in the benefit condition,  $F(1, 291)=5.22$ ,  $p=.02$ . In addition, the three way interaction effect of outcome of the corrupt act, mindset priming, and motive of the corrupt official was significant,  $F(1, 291)=4.75$ ,  $p=.03$ . As expected, in the outcome-benefit condition, participants primed with interdependence were less likely to punish the corrupt official in the collective gain condition ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) than the personal gain condition ( $M=4.45$ ,  $SD=1.52$ ),  $t(73)=3.00$ ,  $p=.004$ . However, participants primed with independence did not differ in their ratings of punishment of the corrupt official irrespective of whether he was motivated by personal ( $M=4.44$ ,  $SD=1.56$ ) or collective gain ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=1.57$ ),  $t(72)=.17$ ,  $p=.86$ . In the outcome-harm condition, participants were less likely to punish the corrupt official who was motivated by collective gain ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=1.46$ ) as compared to the corrupt official who was motivated by personal gain ( $M=5.50$ ,  $SD=1.16$ ),  $t(141)=5.49$ ,  $p<.001$ , irrespective of whether they were primed with independence or interdependence.

Thus, the tendency to protect other-oriented corrupt individuals who benefit the group holds true in the interdependence condition, but not in the independence condition. When primed with interdependence, participants are more likely to protect group-oriented deviants. Because interdependent individuals expect group members to be motivated by collective gain, they are more willing to protect individuals who serve to benefit the group, even when they do so by engaging in unethical behavior.



*Figure 3: Effects of self-construal mindset priming and outcome of the corrupt act on punishment of a group member who engaged in the corrupt act that benefited the group (Study 5)*



*Figure 4: Effects of self-construal mindset priming and outcome of the corrupt act on punishment of a group member who engaged in the corrupt act that harmed the group (Study 5)*

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research provides insight into when and why corruption persists in group and organizational settings. I theorized that individuals who have an interdependent self-construal expect group members to be motivated by collective gain and behave in group-serving ways. I

further hypothesized that this role expectation results in the protection of those who engage in corrupt acts with the motive of benefitting the group, resulting in greater emergence and sustenance of corruption in interdependent groups. On the other hand, creating a distance between the self and one's group by priming independence results in a reduced likelihood of protecting those who engage in group serving unethical behaviors. The results of five studies supported my predictions.

Studies 1A and 1B showed that interdependent individuals expect group members to be motivated by collective gain, more so than independent individuals. Study 2 used field data to show that cultural interdependence was associated with greater emergence of corruption. In Study 3, using a behavioral paradigm I demonstrated that participants who have an interdependent mindset protect a group member who cheats on a word puzzle, but only when the cheater meets social role expectation of a benevolent group member by indicating that s/he was motivated by collective interest. Study 4 showed participants primed with an interdependent mindset were less likely to punish a deviant group member who misrepresented information in order to get more money for the county, particularly when the corrupt act benefited the group and not when it harmed the group. Study 5 provided additional support for our predictions with a different participant population, showing that participants will protect an ingroup member who engages in academic corruption to get more money for their university, but only when the behavior is motivated by collective gain and benefits the group. These studies are among the first to examine how self-construal influences responses to corruption, suggesting that interdependence is associated with tolerance and protection of group members who engage in corrupt behaviors. Because corrupt acts present a unique situation in which what is deviant may not necessarily be harmful, it is important to examine how groups differ in the extent to which

people embrace corruption or, instead, stand up in opposition to it.

I show that priming interdependence influences expectations about the motives of others. Previous research shows that self-construal shapes one's own motives, values, cognitions, and group related emotions (Oyserman & Lee, 2008; Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002). Extending this research, I show that self-construal also influences expectations about others' motives and behaviors. Because role expectations influence what behavior would be considered normative in a group, it not only shapes the behaviors of group members but also group members responses to those behaviors. Interdependent individuals expect group members to be motivated by collective gain and, therefore, protect those who engage in corrupt behaviors for the benefit of the group. My research contributes to the work on cross cultural differences in person perception (Morris & Peng, 1994), showing that interdependent individuals use different criteria to make social judgments, placing a greater emphasis on benevolence than individuals who are individualistic.

My research is among the first to examine the costs of collectivism and group interdependence by showing that interdependent individuals are less likely to punish corrupt individuals in their group under certain circumstances. Previous research has emphasized the positive aspects of collectivism and group interdependence such as enhanced cooperation among group members (Earley, 1993; Wong & Hong, 2005), enhanced trust among group members (Huff & Kelley, 2003; Chen, Peng, & Saporito, 2002) greater commitment to group goals (DeDreu, Nijstad, & Kippenberg, 2008), increased helping behavior (Oyserman & Lee, 2008; Wagner, 1995; Wong & Hong, 2005), and reduced deviance (Bond & Smith, 1995). However, I demonstrate that group interdependence results in negative effects such as protection of deviants who benefit the group. Group interdependence also leads to greater emergence and sustenance of pro-organizational corruption. My research lends support to previous research showing that

priming interdependence is associated with greater willingness to engage in corrupt acts (Mazar & Aggarwal, 2011) as well as increased likelihood of mimicking immoral behaviors of other ingroup members (Gino & Galinsky, 2012).

This research also contributes to the study of cross cultural differences in deviance tolerance (Chan, Gelfand, Triandis, & Tzeng, 1996; Gelfand et al., 2006; 2011). Previous research suggests that interdependent cultures and collectivistic societies are less tolerant of deviance. However, I suggest that when deviant acts benefit the group, interdependent individuals may be more willing to justify and rationalize deviant behavior. I also inform research on the black sheep effect (Marquez & Paez, 1994), which suggests that people are more likely to punish deviance from ingroup members than outgroup members. I show that under certain circumstances (e.g., a well-intended actor who wants to benefit the group by engaging in an immoral act), individuals may be less likely to punish an ingroup deviant than an outgroup deviant.

My research suggests that while interdependence may have many positive effects for groups and organizations, it is important to also be aware of potential downsides, including protection of deviants who are group oriented. One way that corruption may thrive in interdependent groups and collectivistic cultures is through the unwillingness of group members to punish corrupt acts that benefit the group. Indeed, these findings may help to illuminate why certain countries characterized by high levels of interdependence are associated with greater corruption than countries low in interdependence (e.g., Cullen, Porboteeah, & Hoegl, 2004; Mazar & Agarwal, 2011; Wated & Sanchez, 2005) and ultimately highlight the importance of incorporating safeguards against undetected corruption and unethical behavior in interdependent groups.

My research also provides practical implications for organizations to reduce corruption. Firstly, organizations that can be characterized as interdependent must realize that employees may often unwittingly support corruption by not reporting it. Hence, organizations should set up explicit norms about the nature of corruption and create awareness about the types of corruption that may go unnoticed. Secondly, employees should be made aware of the long-term harm caused by unethical behavior to the organization and society. In particular, articulating how corruption can ultimately harm the group or organization may encourage individuals to report it. Thirdly, organizations should not only emphasize the outcomes of its employees in terms of financial gains to the organization, but also the processes by which employees attain these outcomes. Given that corruption is less likely to be reported in interdependent contexts, it may be particularly important to allow monitoring by external agencies, especially in occupations where there is a high potential for corruption.

### **CONCLUSION**

The present studies indicate that interdependent individuals and groups characterized by high levels of interdependence are susceptible to the proliferation of corruption. Members of such groups are more protective of those who engage in group-serving corrupt behaviors than individuals with independent self-construal. It is my hope that the findings presented here will assist researchers and organizational leaders wishing to prevent the spread of corruption.

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## **APPENDIX A**

University commencement address by the president (preference given to fall commencement over spring commencement) for the year 2009

University convocation address by the president for the year 2009

University commencement address by the president (preference given to fall commencement over spring commencement) for the year 2006, 2007, or 2008 (preference given to the year closest in time to 2009)

University convocation address by the president for the year 2006, 2007, or 2008 (preference given to the year closest to 2009)

University commencement address by the president (preference given to fall commencement over spring commencement) for the year 2010-2015 (preference given to the year closest in time to 2009)

University convocation address by the president for the year 2010-2015 (preference given to the year closest to 2009)

A letter from the president to students and faculty (preference given to a letter closest in time to 2009)

Welcome address to students on the presidents website (When audio or video version is available, it is given preference over a written welcome note)

Welcome note to students by the second most senior person at the university