1. Evaluate some major points made by Baumeister in light of some theories and evidence Markus and Kitayama present in their analysis of culturally divergent selves.

One of the most frequently cited limitations of social psychology rests in the inability to accurately generalize compelling findings beyond certain fixed population boundaries. Issues of this sort plague studies that range from micro-level analyses of processes constituting the self to macro-level theories of group dynamics and interactions. Research designs are often limited, by convenience, to include populations which are homogeneous in characteristics such as geography, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and age, to name a few. One reaction to this issue has been the development of an area of study, within social psychology, which tracks meaningful variations between cultures.

For the most part, these "cultural" studies have focused on the contrasting cultural values of individualism and collectivism, sometimes labeled independence and interdependence. The prototypic individualistic culture is found within North American mainstream society, and collectivism is more consistently found in East Asian societies. These broad concepts, which fall within the umbrella of culture, have been found to shape the lives of individuals within their respective cultures in a number of ways, even including basic perceptual variations. While it is not usually claimed that these concepts of individualism and collectivism are universal within any culture, certain societies have been shown to promote more consistent endorsement of one frame of reference over the other. As this area of research continues to develop, classic social psychological literature can be reanalyzed to include such cultural considerations.

Baumeister (1998) supplies a seemingly comprehensive dissection of the complex entity known as the self. This work can reach further significance if read in light of assertions made by Markus & Kitayama (1991), which stress the role culture plays in the formation and maintenance of the self. Baumeister's most basic assumptions define the self in terms of its three main roles. First, reflexive consciousness refers to a sense of awareness or knowledge of one's self. This idea closely reflects the notion of a self-concept. The second part is defined as the interpersonal aspect of the self. It takes into account the social context in which an individual is defined and interactions with the environment. Finally, the executive function of the self is presented as the prominent aspect, which holds control over action and decision.

The perspective endorsed by Markus and Kitayama (1991), concerning the dimensions of the self, would account for further variation within this rigid system. Within Baumeister's divisions, there lies an implicit hierarchical structure, which is not fully developed. Focus is placed on the executive function, with the interdependent root existing in a complimentary manner. While this structure may hold true for many members of certain cultures, the dynamic between roots of the self may be much different for members of other cultures. Ideas of independence and interdependence affect the basic construal of the self, and individuals within interdependent cultures may not hold tightly to a reflexive consciousness that contains such rigid boundaries. Further, the executive function may not exist in a manner that is defined in such opposition to the interpersonal aspect of the self. In fact, the idea of an interpersonal aspect may be less accurate than redefining the entire system to incorporate interpersonal motives into each of the other aspects of the self. These are simply some specific possibilities illustrating

how the view or model of the self is inherently culturally bound, and any universal explanation must hold the ability to adjust according to cultural context.

Baumeister (1998) undertook great difficulty to explain much of the activity that occurs within the executive function. This includes underlying assumptions concerning internal motivation, which can clearly fall under the influence of cultural context. Achievement motivation is a domain which receives much attention within social psychological study and is closely related to motives dealing with self-presentation. This line of inquiry often addresses the desire to be seen as strong, independent, creative, and unique. Markus and Kitayama (1991), though, point out that motivation can be individually oriented or socially oriented. Thus, in some cultures, it can be found that the strongest motivation drives people to endorse behavior that is interpreted as the opposite of uniqueness. Rather, values such as self-restraint and fitting in rest higher upon the hierarchy of motives for achievement and even self-presentation. So, social motives can be internalized and embedded within the self-concept and facilitated through the executive function, all in conjunction with activity of the interpersonal aspect of the self.

As this sort of cross-cultural comparison strengthens throughout social psychological literature, it continues to reach new areas. Ayse Uskul, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Michigan, conducts studies addressing how cultural factors influence the reception of health messages and public media campaigns. The research is particularly stimulating in that it has shown some evidence that reception of an independent or interdependent “prime” can affect the reception of health messages

framed in terms of independent or interdependent motives. Although current findings still suggest mixed interpretation, there is apparently potential in the ability to induce a certain level of perceptual homogeneity, through priming, in order to increase the mass perception of culturally tailored messages, even amongst cultures that contain a particularly heterogeneous make-up.

Clearly, the excitement surrounding these studies of cultural variation, within psychology, appears justified. Perhaps the greatest anticipation, though, rests in the extension of these ideas beyond the East/West, Interdependent/Independent paradigm. This presents only one example of how two specific cultures vary along a specific dimension, yet the implications are decidedly broad and influential. Further analysis is necessary into the true and basic significance of context. While an effect is undeniable, the specific mechanisms of contextual effects are yet to be outlined and examined. It is not yet known exactly what developmental forces lead individuals towards the "chronic accessibility" of certain cultural values or standards, but it is clear that the effects reach far into almost every aspect of individual experience and selfhood.

2. What is terror management? Discuss three different kinds of specific evidence used to support the theory.

From time to time, a theory emerges, within psychology, that aims explain an immense amount of human behavior. These macro-theories often stem from a very simple proposition containing a canon of massive implications. They may explain thoughts and behaviors of individual people and the formation and maintenance of overarching systems and institutions. Often the proposition can arise that a seemingly random force holds the answers to some of the world's most pressing questions. Terror management presents a classic example of this type of theory, and it rests upon the overwhelming impact of the implicit knowledge that every single person will inevitably face the inescapable circumstance of death.

Terror management taps into the fact that death is not a secret. As one member of class pointed out, her own child faced difficulty upon realization of his/her impending doom. Thus, the researchers behind terror management posit that it is inconceivable that this knowledge does not effect virtually our every action. Solomon & Greenberg (1991) present a methodical argument, which highlights a number of ways that people have come to cope with the terror accompanying knowledge of death.

In fact, almost every aspect of culture or other institutional forces that result from collective human activity is explained as a function of terror management. The main argument asserts that by becoming so involved and invested within these cultural creations, a sense of meaning and value is created. This allows people to form goals and priorities which exist at a level above terror of death. They essentially provide an

adaptive method to block the potential anxiety. They have provided evidence that supports the idea that culture, values, and religion can provide useful distractions that allow people to live productive lives despite the terror of death.

One paradigm created to test the terror management theory uses manipulations that increase mortality salience amongst participants. So, some participants are instructed to read articles about death or even spend some time thinking about their own death. The logic states that this sort of activity should encourage participants to strengthen the cultural forces that are used as buffers against this terror encroaching upon their consciousness. Some compelling findings look at how people react to the moral transgressions of others. As the theory suggests, the researchers find that if mortality salience is induced, people express more morally vigilant behaviors. For example, those who are instructed to think about death express more punitive attitudes towards criminals. In turn, participants in a mortality salience condition will also recommend higher rewards for heroism and show a higher appreciation for morally sound behavior.

Terror management theorists also cite self-esteem as a force that exists primarily to buffer against anxiety induced by cognition of mortality. A participant's self-esteem is manipulated by feedback that is received from an experimenter. Within the mortality salience paradigm, it is found that increased self-esteem can buffer the anxiety that participants experience after being exposed to a death reading. The reduced anxiety is consistent in measures of self-report and physiological indicators, making the assertion especially compelling.

Terror management presents an interesting research situation, in regard to culture, because it accounts for culture as a factor within the model, as a buffer against anxiety produced by knowledge of death. So, while an initial reaction might be that certain cultures may not exhibit the same terror management strategies, the theorists could assert that values and institutions within that culture, itself, may be serving as boundaries to the effect. Even so, the authors made some attempt to address group differences in level of terror orientation. For example, it was found that, within the American system, political conservatives are more terror oriented than their more liberal counterparts.

In theorizing about the role of independent or interdependent construal of the self upon terror management, several possibilities exist. It is conceivable, that fear of death is simply more consequential amongst individualistic cultures, because the self is such a bounded and finite entity. Cultures and individuals that are more likely to endorse collectivism may not harbor such a high fear the death of the bounded self since the construal of self is more invested within a community of people and institutions. Terror management theorists, though, would undoubtedly respond to this assertion by citing the interdependent nature of some cultures as a mechanism, in itself, for coping with an underlying anxiety of death. There is much room for research in this area, which could perhaps find an effect of priming for independence or interdependence upon coping mechanisms for mortality salience.

Thus, we have encountered one of the greatest difficulties of these broad, macro-theories. They often lack the ability to be decidedly falsified by any individual line of research. Solomon & Greenberg were well aware of this difficulty, and the basic

response states that the ability of a theory to be unequivocally disconfirmed is essentially impossible and largely unimportant. Terror management is supported by the value that it holds for the field. Seemingly radical, macro-theories have a way of opening new avenues of thought to an entire field of scientists. Especially in domains, such as social psychology, which are dominated by a small number of publishing contributors, an "off-the-wall" insight can sometimes become necessary. A certain level of perspective is difficult to maintain, when one becomes isolated into a specific discipline, and new theories can illuminate problematic assumptions that might otherwise remain accepted by an entire field of devoted scientists.

3. Discuss some examples of automatic inference and automatic social judgment. Under what conditions can people control these processes? Are there any unintended consequences of a deliberate effort to exert such control? Provide examples from both lab experiments and daily life.

Most behaviors can be illuminated as the manifestation of a combination of forces dominated by varying levels of both automation and control. In fact, Wegner & Bargh (1998) essentially define automaticity, negatively, in regard to processes of control. Complete control is thought to include intention, feeling of control, effort, and monitoring. Automaticity can occur, at some level, through the absence of any of the features of control. Due to the decided inability of an individual to consciously monitor all action and control, automaticity is a key factor in daily life. This can be easily conceptualized as a parallel to the automaticity involved in the physiology of the body. In daily life, it is impossible to consciously monitor and maintain one's heart rate and breathing, or the billions of other cell activity that takes place, allowing the individual to function at a certain level of productivity.

The processes of automatic inference can be analyzed according to a number of motivationally rooted concepts. Most basically, automatic attention can be goal-dependent. In weaving through the world of social information, the pieces which are most relevant to implicit and explicit goals is most easily recognized and pulled out of the social context. This relates specifically to the selective processing of favored information. One type of information that is most consistently found in this category is

information that is relevant to the self. A number of research paradigms highlight this effect. The "cocktail party effect," for example, finds that people are more likely to hear their name or information relevant to them in a conversation that they are not consciously attending to. Other examples show that people can more likely associate aspects of themselves to positive trait terms, despite cognitive load. It is apparent that some concepts and terms can be thought of as "chronically accessible," and people are more likely to have an automatic response to this information.

Social judgment is closely related to the processes of automatic inference. It has been found that intention and attention are both necessary to form impressions and make judgments. When judgments are made, though, people automatically infer personality traits for certain observed behaviors. As with most highly efficient processes, automatic inference is subject to strong effects of forces such as context and expectations. Primed with concepts like hostile, kind, or intelligent, certain behaviors are more likely to be encoded into the corresponding trait constructs.

As automatic inference can conflict with explicit and deliberate goals, such as self-presentation, a number of conflicts arise. People may feel a strong desire to exert control over these automatic processes, but often, this control is not easily obtained. Stereotyping is a perfect example of this type of automaticity/control conflict. While many social and individual forces may influence a person to endorse stereotypes, through manifestation of attitudes and behaviors, some societies have come to promote a strong explicit drive against stereotyping behavior.

This element of social desirability can present a strong threat to an individual's identity and invoke consistent anxiety responses. Studies have found that by instructing participants to control their sexist tendencies or by increasing time pressure, people will show increased sexist behavior. Some stereotype activation can be so subtle and automatic that it is hardly noticeable. For example, a study found that activation of the elderly stereotype seemed to encourage people to walk more slowly.

The popular "shooter" studies, of Wittenbrink and Correl, show results that could be interpreted through the ironic processes induced by social desirability. White Americans and Black Americans can be presumed to differ dramatically in some types of social pressure that they encounter. Specifically, there is much more pressure upon White Americans to be unprejudiced and exert egalitarian ideologies. This underlying pressure could be a strong factor that is influencing White Americans to show bias against Blacks in the shooter studies. It seems almost necessary to design a study that separates the ironic processes activated by social desirability from any manifestation of actually underlying bias. Also, as this social desirability seems to deeply affect values that individuals hold closely to their self-concept, self-affirmation research may find some interesting applications. Specifically, people may be more likely to seek self-affirming behaviors after performing some sort of stereotyping behavior that is contrary to their self-concept.

Clearly, these examples show that attempts to actively control automatic inference and social judgment are quite problematic and often result in an increase in the negative automatic behavior. A simple thought experiment shows that it is quite difficult to pick a

thought, idea, or object and decide to suppress the concept from consciousness. The thought either invades consciousness or finds some other form of subtle expression. This paradox may lend some insight into fundamental brain activity. The brain seems to function in terms of activation, rather than suppression. So, the simple act of defining a concept to suppress simply further activates brain activity surrounding that very concept.

Broadly analyzed, the conditions necessary for control involved an allocation of motivation and resources. This seemingly simple equation, though, contains an infinite number of combinations of circumstances, and the threshold necessary to exert control seems to vary as well. In essence, there is no unqualified rule defining the conditions that will facilitate true personal control. It is even debatable that any circumstance exists that promotes processes characterized by unquestioned control. As complex human beings, we are rarely aware of the underlying drive states that influence motivation at any given time. Even so, automated and controlled activity seem to operate in a way that presents a cohesive story to the individual, allowing us to perceive a certain level of control and maintain the illusion of unlimited individual agency.