THE MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF TRAIT AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SELF

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Stanley B. Klein and Judith Loftus
Diverse Ways of Accessing Self-Knowledge: Comment on Klein and Loftus

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Klein and Loftus (Chapter 1, this volume) report an important series of experiments that introduce a new paradigm and produce admirably clear results with an interesting theoretical message. The paradigm and chapter are both exciting in our opinion, and represent significant advances in exploring how knowledge about the self may be represented.

We do, however, offer comments suggesting that some of Klein and Loftus' interpretations of their results may be overstated at present. First, we suggest that their results do not provide definitive evidence that no facilitation occurs from prior performance of the tasks related to their target tasks, as they have argued. Second, we argue that the present results may apply to their paradigm but do not necessarily generalize to other ways of accessing self-knowledge.

One of the strong features of this program of research is the use of several methodologies that converge on a common theme. Klein and Loftus are careful to point out that no one set of methods can resolve the issues. Nonetheless, it is clear that the task-facilitation paradigm is central to their thinking, and most of our comments are addressed to issues we see with its use.

THE PRIMING PARADIGM

Klein and Loftus refer to their experimental situation as the task-facilitation paradigm, but it could easily have been referred to as a priming paradigm, a name that would have made clearer the links to existing issues in cognitive psychology. In general, in a priming paradigm cognitive psychologists examine how some target task is facilitated by prior exposure to related information or
tasks that are assumed to prime the target task. In the present case, Klein and Loftus gave their subjects trait adjectives and asked them to perform one of three tasks: judging whether the task described them (descriptive), recalling an episode from the past that exemplified the trait (autobiographical), or providing a definition of the trait (semantic). The target task was preceded by one of the three tasks as a priming event. Following Cofer (1967), we may also distinguish between direct and indirect priming. Direct priming refers to facilitation in a task (on the second occasion) when the same task is performed twice. Indirect priming refers to facilitation of a task when it is preceded by a different (but related) task. Both types of priming are typically measured against a neutral baseline or control condition where the target task is performed by itself (i.e., unprimed).

The basic prediction from exemplar views is based on the following logic: If people make an explicit descriptive judgment of whether a trait applies to them by first accessing a specific autobiographical event, then making the descriptive judgment (which includes accessing autobiographical memories) should prime subsequent autobiographical recall. More specifically, greater priming should occur on the autobiographical task from having previously performed the descriptive task than from having previously performed the semantic task. This did not occur: Speed of producing an autobiographical judgment was equivalent after either the semantic or descriptive tasks, but more priming did occur when subjects performed the same autobiographical task both times. Put another way, direct priming from the same task did occur, but the predicted indirect priming from a judgment (assumed to involve the same process of event recall) was not greater than that which occurred from the semantic task (assumed not to involve event recall).

The same pattern of results occurred when the target task was descriptive; speed of judgment was essentially the same when the previous task had been either autobiographical recall or semantic judgment. One would think that if retrieving autobiographical memories is a part of making trait judgments, then these trait judgments should also benefit from previous autobiographical judgments, because a part of the descriptive task had already taken place. In other words, the autobiographical task should prime the descriptive task more than the semantic task should. This also did not occur. So these results argue against the idea that people implicitly retrieve autobiographical memories of deeds when they make trait judgments, at least for one's self. However, when the target person was mother instead of the self (Experiment 5), the predicted pattern of indirect priming did occur, indicating that subjects recalled behavioral episodes in judging mothers' traits (at least for medium and low descriptive traits).

Klein and Loftus drew the following conclusions (among others): Self-knowledge is represented in terms of enduring and abstract representations (such as traits, schemas, or prototypes) that are accessed directly in making self-judg-
ments. However, in assessing knowledge of others we know less well, traits are more likely to be inferred "on the fly" from knowledge of behavioral episodes. Klein and Loftus also suggest that their data are incompatible with representations of self-knowledge in terms of associative network models in which general trait terms are represented as nodes under which are nested specific behaviors exemplifying the traits.

The specific comparisons provided in their experiments permit a test of their ideas, and, in general, the lack of differential priming from, for example, autobiographical or semantic tasks to the self-descriptiveness task supports their conclusions. However, their analysis could be taken further to answer an interesting ancillary question: Does performance of the prior task produce any priming (or facilitation) on this target task? If so, does the same pattern of priming occur across target tasks? Unfortunately, the analyses presented in the target chapter do not permit answers to these questions, because data from an unprimed (or no relevant experience) control condition are not included. The lack of a controlled unprimed baseline is therefore somewhat problematic. For example, when the autobiographical task was the target task, there were three priming conditions, one involving direct priming (the autobiographical task itself) and two involving indirect priming (the descriptive and semantic tasks). There is clearly greater direct than indirect priming, and there was no greater indirect priming from the descriptive than from the semantic task. However, such results do not entitle us to conclude that no indirect priming occurred. For that we would need comparison with an unprimed control. Although such data are not presented in the target chapter, they were presented in Klein, Loftus, and Burton (1989) where latencies are given for each task presented first as a prime. If we use these data as a proxy for the unprimed baseline conditions, then we can examine how much priming occurs in both the direct and indirect priming conditions for the data presented in Fig. 1.1 of chapter 1.

The relevant data showing the amount of priming for the various conditions appear in Table 9.1. The trend that Klein and Loftus point to, of greater direct than indirect priming for each target task, is clearly present, but these data speak to another point on which Klein and Loftus were silent. There seems to be considerable indirect priming on the self-descriptiveness task; that is, compared to the self-descriptiveness baselines, judgments for this task are facilitated when the subjects had made either an autobiographical or a semantic judgment about the same trait previously. Indeed, such indirect priming is more than half that of

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1The comparison between self and other has thus far used only mother as a target other person. We would resist sweeping conclusions about how knowledge of others is organized and differs from self-knowledge based on this one target person who conceivably has special features for many subjects.

2We thank Stan Klein for providing these data.
the direct priming (from having previously done the descriptiveness task itself). This indirect priming cannot have been due merely to spreading activation in the lexicon or even facilitation due to practice at reading the trait words, or else similar amounts of facilitation should appear in all indirect priming conditions.

Although there is considerable indirect priming when the descriptive task was the target task, there seems to be little when the other two tasks were target tasks. This statement may seem to be belied by the rather sizeable numbers in parentheses for the other two tasks, because priming is often measured in tens of milliseconds in tasks such as naming and lexical decision. However, the unprimed base rates in these traditional tasks are quite low relative to the ones in Klein and Loftus’ experiments; subjects in the semantic and autobiographical tasks take over 4 and 5 seconds, respectively, when they perform the task for the first time. A clearer picture of relative priming effects in the three tasks can be seen from the proportion priming measures given in Table 9.2, where the amount of priming observed in each condition (unprimed–primed) is divided by the unprimed base rate. So, for example, the .38 in the upper left-hand corner is derived by dividing 1,095 (the amount of priming) by the baseline time to perform the task (2,875). This measure may be called the relative proportion of priming.

Table 9.2 shows that the relative proportion of direct priming (the diagonal cells) is quite large (.38, .56, and .44) in the three conditions. However, sizeable indirect priming occurs only when the descriptive task is the target task. Performing the descriptive task first produces almost no priming on either of the other tasks, although the other relevant conditions seem to show a bit more indirect priming (albeit still not close to that seen when the descriptive task was the target). It is not obvious, from Klein and Loftus’ theory (or any other we
TABLE 9.2
Relative Proportion of Priming for the Data in Table 9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prime Task</th>
<th>Target Task</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Autobiographical</th>
<th>Semantic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

know), how to explain these differences in indirect priming across tasks (assuming they are real).

If replicable, these data have important consequences for Klein and Loftus' larger claims that lack of indirect priming argues against spreading activation theories of self-judgments. There was in fact some indirect priming in their experiment, which may be interpreted as indicating that some sort of activation spreads throughout the system. However, the fact that indirect priming is less than direct priming still supports their point that self-definitions are facilitated more by direct performance of the task than indirect performance by having to produce a behavioral episode. Note that the autobiographical task did not create more indirect priming than did the semantic task even on the descriptive task (where there was sizeable indirect priming in both cases). The general point is that in the task-facilitation paradigm, one should examine facilitation from a prior task against some relevant baseline, rather than only comparing tasks against one another. A general theory applied to this task should be able to explain the various patterns of indirect priming, as well as the difference between direct and indirect priming that the authors' have examined.

**GENERALITY OF THE PARADIGM**

Central to Klein and Loftus' argument is the proposition that for self-knowledge there is a functional independence between abstract trait information and behaviors that are somehow tied to those traits. Generally, the Klein and Loftus data suggest that subjects do not seem to use behavioral exemplars to help them make more general trait judgments. But there are two major limitations that we find in this generalization. First, nothing is implied about what subjects might do when they are asked to perform a different sort of task. Second, the fact that subjects do not use behavioral information in this task to inform their trait judgments does not logically imply that these two domains are radically distinct. Subsequently, we agree that behaviors and traits are quite independent domains but our argument is along quite different lines from that of Klein and Loftus.
Method Limitation

Klein and Loftus used a clever methodology with latency measures having pride of place. However, their methods, like all methods, constrain results and limit generality. In this case, latency measures are not the only probe into underlying cognitive processes, nor do they necessarily provide good data on what can go on as opposed to what has gone on in a particular laboratory setting. The same, of course, might be said of the other memory measures they employ in their research. Specifically, the research presented by Klein and Loftus may say little or nothing about what people usually do when they are trying to generate trait judgments. It certainly says nothing about what they are capable of doing under differing circumstances.

Perform the following thought experiment. You are asked whether you are hard working. According to Klein and Loftus, you bypass the opportunity to think about the times in your life when you have been hard working and instead reach right into the trait folder you keep for such purposes and pull out a “yes”\(^3\) answer. There clearly are times in everyday life when one would make such a judgment in that way. A job interview is a situation where you might be asked to make a quick, unreflective judgment, for example, and the job interviewer conceivably might even be assessing latency of response as an index of confidence or honesty. Now, however, imagine a different situation. Suppose you have been accused of being insensitive on gender or race issues, and you are now asked if you are sensitive to the concerns of disadvantaged groups. Do you now reach for the “sensitivity folder” as rapidly as you previously reached for the “hard-working folder”? Probably not. One might imagine that you would be inclined to think through your past sensitive and insensitive behaviors and use this opportunity to update your estimate of your sensitivity quotient.

The argument we want to make here has nothing to do with ecological validity of situations or experimental measures. Clearly, both examples given here are extreme. The point is this: There are many times when people are encouraged to make rather quick judgments about their traits, and in such situations it is even reasonable to imagine that latency might be considered relevant data (for those who worry, as we do not, about the ecological validity of this particular measure). But just as clearly there are times when thinking about behavior is useful and important in making self-judgments, and people may be quite slow and reflective in reaching a judgment. We should be wary of generalizing from tasks in which subjects are pressured to make quick and unreflective judgments to those in which they are likely to think more about the basis of their decisions.

We are convinced that behaviors and traits must have a closer relationship than Klein and Loftus would seem to allow. To take their argument to its extreme, once trait judgments are formed and dissociated from their behavioral evidence,

\(^3\)Surely readers of this chapter would not answer “no.”
it would be hard ever to change one’s judgments about one’s self. Clearly, such change is neither easy nor commonplace, but it does happen. So the fact that in the paradigm used in this research subjects show relatively little evidence of having made trait judgments by consulting their autobiographical memories does not permit the conclusion that they can never make judgments that way or that behaviors and traits are somehow severed from cognitive contact. The data offered by Klein and Loftus do suggest that the strong form of the exemplar hypothesis—people must access behaviors to make trait judgments—is wrong. Their data do not speak to the issue of whether people can use such information, or even whether they often or usually do.

Functional Dissociation

There are additional reasons why one cannot maintain anything like a general or strong version of the argument about a lack of functional identity between traits and their supporting behaviors. Perhaps most compelling is the simple fact that one can obviously generate many behavioral instances for and against any particular trait. So at a minimum there must be links from traits to behaviors, although we admit that such informal data do not necessarily prove that such links are frequently operative or that people traverse them in the opposite direction from behavior to trait. However, there are links in the other direction as well. We give you a behavior and ask whether it shows kindness or intelligence. Obviously, this sort of question is an easy one for most people to answer. Ah, but this is surely semantic knowledge at its most personally remote. You are not answering a question about whether this behavior that you performed indicated your kindness but a question about the meanings of words or perhaps generalizations based on cultural knowledge. However, it is perfectly reasonable to ask a more personal question as well and to expect an answer: “Were you being kind when you did x?” Such judgments may, of course, continue to have a fairly strong semantic memory component, but they probably also involve considerable self-relevant knowledge.

The Salience Argument. The fact that reflections on behaviors affect our judgments about our traits is also self-evident from experience and experimental data showing that accessing behavioral data changes the content (if not the speed) of trait judgments. There are several experiments that generally show that thinking about behaviors or otherwise making them salient leads to strong corresponding trait and attitude judgments. Such evidence is potentially quite damaging to the argument of Klein and Loftus, and so they are at some pains to turn these data into support for their argument on pages 36–38. Ultimately they argue that in the most convincing of previous demonstrations (e.g., Fazio, Effrein, & Falender, 1981), the behavioral judgments were actually fairly abstract and far from behavioral exemplars. Thus, Klein and Loftus suggest that the Fazio et al. study really
provides no support for behavioral exemplars (as opposed to abstracted summaries) priming trait judgments. They then go on to provide data of their own showing that making such abstracted behavioral judgments does, in fact, facilitate subsequent trait judgments. This makes the latency data and the judgment data line up to salute the Klein–Loftus model. Abstract behavioral summaries facilitate the speed of trait judgments just as they make trait judgments more likely or extreme. These are not, however, the data we require to dispose of the argument that behavior salience affects trait judgments in ways other than latency. Rather, we would like to see subjects placed in the Fazio paradigm with the requirement that they make concrete behavioral judgments and observe the effects on their trait judgments. We expect, but Klein and Loftus presumably do not, that when subjects generate a number of specific instances of kindness they will then rate themselves as kinder. This would show that thinking about even concrete behaviors affects trait judgments but not necessarily the speed with which trait judgments are made.

Amnesics. The case of amnesics is an interesting one in this regard. For example, patient K. C. studied by Tulving, Hayman, and Macdonald (1991) seems to have a relatively stable self-concept while being unable to remember much of his personal experiences. K. C. is particularly notable in this regard in that he is unable to remember a single incident from his life. Klein and Loftus argue that such loss of autobiographical experiences should produce catastrophic problems in self-identity if exemplar models are correct in suggesting that we make inferences about our own traits by consciously consulting (or recollecting) events of our recent past.

We have two responses. First, that argument applies only to those who would argue that the only way we can make trait judgments is by consulting behaviors. We would agree that the amnesic data diminish the force of the strong exemplar view. On the other hand, we have argued that there may be many ways that people make trait judgments in everyday life, including using stored, already computed summaries of one’s behavior. Amnesics may have access to such summaries just as the rest of us do. What we would argue is that the rest of us also have the capacity, which we use at least some of the time, to make trait judgments by recollecting the past behavior of self and others. The fact that amnesics cannot do this does not prove any general statement about functional separations between the behavioral and trait domains.

Second, we also think it possible that Klein and Loftus have drawn the wrong conclusions from observations about amnesics by assuming that exemplar checking must be a conscious process. The great lesson of memory research with amnesics is that although they may be poor on various direct measures of memory such as recall, when their memories are assessed using various implicit memory measures they show performance (priming) just like normal subjects (Shimamura, 1986).

Recently, there has been considerable interest in studying implicit measures of
memory (Roediger, 1990; Schacter, 1987) in which retention is expressed as transfer or priming of recent experiences on some other task. Implicit measures of memory often reveal different effects of independent or subject variables from explicit measures of retention such as recall or recognition. Trait judgment tasks can thus function as implicit measures of memory, as pointed out by Smith and Branscombe (1988). In particular, trait judgments (whether of self or others) could be classified as a conceptual (or conceptually driven) implicit memory task because priming is produced on a meaningful dimension. These conceptual tests are contrasted with perceptual implicit memory tasks that are more affected by changes in surface features of materials such as mode of presentation (see Roediger, Weldon, & Challis, 1989, for explicit criteria to distinguish the two types of tests).

To return to amnesics, it is quite possible that they (and the rest of us) use personal experiences in making trait judgments but do so without conscious recollection of these experiences. Implicit memory tests such as trait judgments need not draw on conscious recollection of experiences; remember that amnesics do show normal effects on implicit memory tests in cases where there performance is quite poor on explicit memory tasks. If trait judgments operate as implicit memory measures, then conscious recollection of episodes may not be the basis for such judgments. Episodes from the past may thereby bias the judgment without necessarily being recalled. The test-facilitation paradigm, with its focus on conscious recollection of events, may then not be so critical to the issue as Klein and Loftus assume.

In another comment in this volume, Tulving (chapter 11) reports interesting new data about judgment’s of K. C.’s personality before and after his accident. The interesting question is whether K. C.’s self-knowledge of his personality matches his premorbid (outgoing) personality or his new (more introverted) one? If Klein and Loftus are correct that self-knowledge is held in enduring and abstract schemas or even in schema that are occasionally updated by conscious recollection of experiences, then K. C. should not be aware of his personality change. However, Tulving’s study shows that his self-descriptive trait judgments agree with his mother’s; K. C. judges himself as reserved now. Surely K. C. updated his personality trait judgments via his changed behavior since the accident, even though he cannot consciously recollect the relevant behavioral episodes. This bolsters our contention that judging trait descriptiveness functions as a conceptual implicit memory test: Amnesics show change on the measure (through their experiences) even in the absence of conscious recollection. In short, amnesics (and the rest of us) may use experiences in making trait judgments about ourselves, but not in a way that is necessarily consciously accessible.4

4Our interpretation of these results differ in some ways from Tulving’s. He assumes that conceptual priming on semantic memory reflects “abstract” representations; we assume that since judgments are changed on the basis of episodes, they are not so abstract.
Another interesting population that could be used to evaluate Klein and Loftus' ideas are those people with multiple personalities. When there are two or more personalities, will there be priming or transfer of one judgment to the same judgment when the person has shifted to a new personality? If so, will this priming be greater than with repetition priming when the personality has not shifted between occasions of testing? We know that people with multiple personalities show substantial semantic differential differences for their different personalities (Osgood & Luria, 1954; Osgood, Luria, Jeans, & Smith, 1976). Also, in an implicit memory study, a multiple personality case showed priming over occasions when the personality has shifted, but only on perceptual and not conceptual tests (Nissen, Ross, Willingham, Mackenzie, & Schacter, 1988). Thus, we might expect that even direct conceptual priming may not occur in Klein and Loftus' task-facilitation paradigm. One complication is that the same subject may give different responses to the same trait question, making direct comparison problematic. Nonetheless, the natural (if rare) phenomenon of multiple personality cases may serve as an interesting within-subject variation for the study of self-judgments. Bipolar disorder may also represent an interesting case to test their ideas.

SELF AND OTHER KNOWLEDGE

Despite our criticisms, we reiterate that we found the methods and data presented in the target chapter provocative and important. Ultimately, however, we think the most important feature of this body of research is the stimulus it provides for collecting data as opposed to speculating about how self-knowledge is encoded, stored, and retrieved. Clearly, Klein and Loftus did not mean to say that self-knowledge consists only of stored, abstract trait attributions. We agree. The relations between traits and behaviors, we would argue, depend on what questions subjects are asked, how reflective they are, and how they choose to access the knowledge base that reflects their self-knowledge. Admittedly, that seems an uninspired summary. Much the same could be said of various other kinds of knowledge. Perhaps one of the lessons learned after 25 years of cognitive psychology is that people can and do access and perhaps represent their knowledge in many ways. There is probably no single way information about trees, George Bush, mothers, and self is stored, and there seem to be many ways we can access and manipulate that information.

The more interesting question at this point is whether different domains of knowledge are structured differently in principle. Klein and Loftus seem to argue that knowledge about self and about others differs only in quantitative ways (i.e., in terms of the amount of relevant experience). When we first acquire behavioral knowledge about a person (self or other), we may generate a trait summary. In time, however, that trait becomes autonomous from the evidence supporting it,
and links between the trait and related behaviors are, for all intents and purposes, 
severed. Thus, the main difference between making judgments about self and 
others is that these links have been severed in the former because of great use. In 
principle, however, we may have links between behaviors and traits well pre-
served for self-knowledge in certain areas. And these same links might be broken 
for mother or another important figure about which one has much behavioral 
information as the Klein and Loftus data seem to show in Experiment 5. So, for 
example, imagine a new father making judgments about his fatherly behaviors 
and whether he is a good father. We might imagine that such judgments require a 
good deal of reflection and weighing of behavioral information. On the other 
hand, as our friend makes judgments about whether his own father was a fatherly 
sort of person, he might make such a judgment quickly and without much 
behavioral assessment because he has made that same judgment many times in 
the past. The point we wish to make, then, is that for Klein and Loftus there 
seems to be no other way that self and other knowledge differ except in how often 
trait judgments have been made in the past.

Is there more to the self-other difference? We suspect that there is. Self- 
theorists, at least in modern social psychology, have developed a strong case of 
Bemian wariness—a sort of Bem’s razor. Bem’s (1967) paper would suggest 
that all trait judgments are generated on the fly, that there is no privileged 
summary information about traits available to me that is not available to you 
given equivalent information), and that we should not assume storage of abstract 
knowledge about the self unless absolutely necessary. Although Bem (1972) 
subsequently backed away from the stronger forms of that argument, the legacy 
has been one of extreme mistrust of our own experience of self in this most 
phenomenological of domains. One salient virtue of the Klein and Loftus chapter 
is that it seeks to break the hegemony of the Bemian notion that traits must be 
inflected from behavior. However, our criticisms of this tradition are along different 
lines from those of Klein and Loftus.

**Autobiographical Memory.** So at the risk of offending Bemians past and 
present, consider the following question. What do we know about our own 
behavior that others probably do not know? One answer is that we have more 
information about situational contingencies and the circumstances of behavior for 
our own behavior. Indeed, research on autobiographical memory makes this very 
point.

For example, Reiser, Black, and Abelson (1985) suggest that autobiograph-
ical memories are retrieved by accessing the larger (more abstract) knowledge 
structures used to encode the event. One recalls last Saturday night’s concert by 
thinking about concert-going in general. They note that specific instances of

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5With apologies to William of Ockham.
behavior can also be encoded in terms of generalized behaviors. So applauding a musical performance can be seen as an example of applauding, even perhaps (more generally) showing appreciation or playing out a scene from the concert-going script. They argue that activities (close to what have been called scripts) will provide a more efficient cue for specific behaviors than will general actions, and they showed that activities are more effective than general actions as cues with both latency and successful retrieval measures. Also, when the two cues are presented in combination, giving the activity cue followed by the general action cue is more effective than the reverse order. These data were interpreted as suggesting that there may be tighter links between specific behaviors and the scripts in which they are embedded than between behaviors and more general summaries (such as, taken to the extreme, traits).

Our point here is not to argue on behalf of any particular arrangement of traits, behaviors, contexts, and other autobiographical knowledge. Rather we want to suggest that at our present stage of knowledge about how self-relevant information is organized we are probably well advised to assume that this organization includes more than behaviors and traits and represents a complex set of interrelationships.

Privileged Information About Self. There is something more. We know (or think we know—which is sufficient for present purposes) why we performed a particular behavior, and we know this not by performing some abstract attributional mental gymnastics but because we were privy to our own intentions and other relevant mental states prior to our performance of the behavior. Moreover, at our best we have a fairly sophisticated knowledge not only about how our behaviors are affected by situational forces but how those relate to our goals and intentions. It seems important that such information be represented in our conceptions of self, but it is not easy to imagine how this might be done.

There are, however, at least two general issues that any such model must be able to address. The first is that although specific behaviors may be well coordinated with specific traits, it is also true that the same specific behavior can reflect many traits. Thus, your remembering that you helped your mother-in-law with her taxes may be, depending on your mental state at the time, an example of kind or snoopy behavior. Therefore, your knowledge that you are kind might, depending on your intentions at the time of the helping behavior, lead you to access that behavior as an exemplar. But the reverse is more problematic. Having accessed the tax behavior does not automatically lead you to any particular trait.

Second, people’s trait judgments, at least for themselves, are not so much

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6It is not especially germane to our argument that sometimes we are deluded, that profound unconscious forces may affect our behavior, or that much of the time we have no relevant mental states at all that accompany our behavior. All we require is that sometimes we have such privileged knowledge.
about past behaviors as about goals and intentions (Read, Jones, & Miller, 1990). If that were so, a functional dissociation between behaviors and traits at least for one's self would not be surprising, because those links were never formed explicitly in the first place. The judgments are about intentions, not past behavior. On the other hand, trait judgments of others are much more likely to be summary judgments of their past behaviors because we do not ordinarily have direct information about their intentions and goals.

Our general point is this: Traits and behaviors may be (probably are) linked in many ways. Klein and Loftus rely on what has historically been the most popular and influential of the ways by suggesting that traits are summaries of previous behaviors. We do not wish to dispute the possibility that at least some of the trait knowledge we have about others and ourselves may arise in just this way. We simply propose that there is more. Especially for information about the self, traits may represent summaries of goals and intentions so that in trying to decide whether one is kind or unkind people may access their knowledge of their general goals rather than their past behaviors. There are many ways they may access these goals. If such goals are strong enough, they may be easy to access more or less directly. If not, they may be accessed through a variety of means including situations, usual activities, and contexts.

**SUMMARY**

The points we have made can be summarized as follows

1. the task-facilitation paradigm can be considered as a conceptual priming paradigm;
2. there is evidence of some indirect priming in this paradigm on (at least) the trait description task;
3. other paradigms for accessing self-knowledge may give rise to quite different conclusions from those of Klein and Loftus;
4. traits and behaviors are likely more tightly linked in most cases than they assume;
5. assessing self-knowledge may be affected by episodes or experiences but in nonconscious ways as in studies of implicit memory; and
6. trait descriptions of oneself may reflect goals and intentions rather than summaries of past behavior.

**REFERENCES**


