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Personality Effects on Tipping Attitudes, Self-Reported Behaviors and Customs: A Multi-Level Inquiry

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Abstract

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Keywords

EPQ, national personality, social norm, tipping

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Comments

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RUNNING HEAD: Personality and Tipping

Personality Effects on Tipping Attitudes, Self-Reported Behaviors and Customs:
A Multi-Level Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Two studies replicate and extend Lynn's (2000) research on national personality and tipping customs. Study 1 finds that national extraversion and psychoticism, but not neuroticism, are related to customary tip sizes. Study 2 finds effects on attitudes and self-reported behavior of personality at the individual level of analysis that only partially support Lynn's explanations for the national level effects. Discussion centers on alternative explanations for the national personality effects on tipping norms.

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1. Introduction

Personality psychologists have recently moved beyond a focus on individual differences to study national differences in aggregate personality scores. For example, scholars have begun to examine the effects of national personality on nations' values (McCrae, 2002), economic performance (Lynn, 1991), health and crime statistics (Lynn & Martin, 1995) and subjective well being (Steel & Ones, 2002). In an extension of this line of inquiry, Lynn (2000) examined the effects of national personality on national culture as reflected in the number of service professions that it was customary to tip (aka, the prevalence of tipping). He found that across 19 nations, the national prevalence of tipping increased with the average level of extraversion and neuroticism within nations and decreased with the average level of psychoticism within nations.

Although his explanations were post-hoc, Lynn (2000) argued that these national level relationships resulted from personality effects on the value that individuals place on various consequences of tipping. Extraversion reflects the extent to which people are outgoing, sociable, dominate and expressive (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Thus, Lynn argued that those who are high on this trait should particularly value the attention from servers that tipping motivates (Bodvarsson & Gibson, 1994) as well as the opportunity for conspicuous spending or status display that tipping represents (Shamir, 1984). Neuroticism reflects the extent to which people are emotionally reactive and prone to negative feelings such as anxiety and guilt (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Lynn argued that people high on this trait should particularly value the guarantee of good and friendly

treatment from servers that tipping provides (Foster, 1972). Finally, psychoticism reflects the extent to which people are anti-social, egocentric, tough-minded and unempathic (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Lynn argued that those who are high on this trait should place less value on the opportunity to financially help servers that tipping provides than do those who are more tender-minded (Shamir, 1984). According to Lynn, these effects of personality on individuals' attitudes toward tipping and its consequences aggregate to affect national support for tipping customs and, thus, explain the national level effects of personality on tipping customs that he observed.

Given the small sample of nations in Lynn (2000), the post-hoc nature of Lynn's explanations, and the many untested assumptions about individual differences underlying those explanations, the correctness of his conclusions is far from certain. Thus, there is a clear need for more research examining the effects of personality on tipping customs and behaviors. This need is addressed in two studies reported below. Study 1 attempts to replicate the effects of national personality on the prevalence of tipping using different measures of tipping customs and a slightly larger sample of nations than those used by Lynn (2000). Study 2 tests some of the assumptions about individual differences in personality, attitudes and tipping behavior underlying Lynn's explanation for the observed relationships between national personality and tipping customs.

2. Study One

Lynn (2000) used the number of tipped professions as a dependent measure. However, national personality should also affect other dimensions of tipping customs. The more people value the consequences or benefits of tipping the more they should be

willing to pay in tips (Lynn & Lynn, 2004). Thus, if national personality affects tipping customs because it reflects the value placed on the consequences or functions of tipping, then it should also affect the amounts that it is customary to tip. This reasoning, combined with Lynn's (2000) findings, leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: National tipping rates will increase with national extraversion.

H2: National tipping rates will increase with national neuroticism.

H3: National tipping rates will decrease with national psychoticism.

In order to test these hypotheses, data on national tipping rates were obtained and analyzed in Study 1.

2.1 Method

Data on national extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism were obtained from Steel and Ones (2002). They compiled the results of studies conducted between 1975 and 1998 that reported mean Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) scores on extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism among normal adult populations. Data was available for 39 nations, including nations from every continent except Antarctica. Sample size per country ranged from 430 to 1,912 with an average of 1,059. Male and female norms were averaged to produce a national score on each personality dimension. Supporting the validity of cross-national analyses using these national personality scores, researchers have demonstrated that the EPQ has a similar factor structure across 34 of the nations included in the current sample (Barrett, et al. 1998) and that national EPQ scores are related in meaningful ways to other national variables such as subjective well being (Steel & Ones, 2002). However, EPQ data from India has failed to converge with other

relevant measures (McCrae, 2001), so it was dropped from the analyses -- leaving useable EPQ data on 38 nations.

Data on national customary tip sizes given to restaurant servers, porters and taxi drivers was obtained from the internet at www.magellans.com. This source reported the customary size of tips in each of 75 nations. The information in the guide was compiled in 2002 from numerous other travel guides and agreement between 2 or 3 sources was sought for each entry (L. Staneff, personal communication). The customary tip amount given to restaurant servers and taxicab drivers was recorded as a percentage of the bill or fare. In five nations where the restaurant tipping custom is to round up the bill or to leave a specific and small amount instead of a percentage, the customary restaurant tip was recorded as 3 percent, which was the smallest restaurant percentage tip the source reported. In thirty-five nations where the taxicab tipping custom is to round up the bill or to leave a specific and small amount instead of a percentage, the customary taxicab tip was recorded as 5 percent, which is midway between no tip and the smallest taxicab percentage tip (ten percent) that the source reported for other countries. The customary tip amount given to porters was recorded in U.S. dollars per bag. In three cases where the customary tip was reported as a flat amount regardless of the number of bags, that observation was dropped from analysis due to non-comparability with the other cases. Across all three professions, if tipping was legal but not customary in a country, the tipping rate was recorded as zero and was retained in the analyses. Correlations among the three customary tip sizes were positive, large, and statistically significant ($.52 < \text{all } r\text{'s} < .61, p < .001$).

2.2 Results and Discussion

The effects of national personality on tipping customs were assessed by regressing each of the measures of customary tip rates on extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Due to missing values for various measures, the total useable sample size in this study was 27 for the analyses involving restaurant and taxicab tipping and 26 for the analysis involving porter tipping. These analyses produced R^2 s of .30, .30, and .19 respectively. These analyses also produced two main effects that were reasonably consistent across measures. First, consistent with H1, all three measures of customary tip sizes increased significantly with national extraversion –

- restaurant tip amount ($\beta = .34$, $t(23) = 1.82$, one-tailed $p < .05$),
- taxicab tip amount ($\beta = .39$, $t(23) = 2.09$, one-tailed $p < .03$), and
- porter tip amount ($\beta = .45$, $t(22) = 2.14$, one-tailed $p < .03$).

Second, consistent with H3, two of the three measures of customary tip sizes decreased significantly or marginally significantly with national psychoticism –

- restaurant tip amount ($\beta = -.32$, $t(23) = -1.83$, one-tailed $p < .05$),
- taxicab tip amount ($\beta = -.29$, $t(23) = -1.62$, one-tailed $p < .06$), and
- porter tip amount ($\beta = .07$, $t(22) = .37$, one-tailed $p > .50$).

These findings conceptually replicate and extend the similar findings of Lynn (2000) by demonstrating that national extraversion and psychoticism are moderately correlated with customary tip sizes as well as with the number of customarily tipped professions.

In these analyses, contrary to H2, national neuroticism was unrelated to any of the measures of customary tip size –

- restaurant tip amount ($\beta = -.10$, $t(23) = -.56$, one-tailed $p > .50$),

- taxicab tip amount ($\beta = -.08$, $t(23) = -.43$, one-tailed $p > .50$), and
- porter tip amount ($\beta = .08$, $t(22) = .37$, one-tailed $p < .36$).

Neuroticism increases the prevalence of tipping, but appears to have little effect on customary tip sizes. This inconsistency in the effects of neuroticism is not easily explained and warrants further investigation. Perhaps some insight can be gained by examining the relationship between this personality trait and attitudes toward service and tipping at the individual level of analysis. Study 2 examines these individual level relationships.

3. Study Two

Lynn's (2000) explanations for the observed relationships between national personality and tipping customs rested on the ideas that: (1) those customs reflect the aggregate tipping behavior of individuals, (2) the tipping behavior of individuals depends on their attitudes toward tipping, (3) individuals' attitudes toward tipping depend on their attitudes toward the consequences or functions of tipping, and (4) individuals' attitudes toward the consequences or functions of tipping depend on their personalities.

Specifically, his explanation for the effect on tipping customs of national extraversion was that extraverts like and support tipping because they appreciate the attention and social interaction from servers that tipping motivates as well as the opportunity for conspicuous spending or status display that tipping represents more than do introverts.

This explanation suggests the following individual-level hypotheses:

H4a: Extraverts will like attention and social interaction from servers more than do introverts.

H4b: Extraverts will tip to impress others more than do introverts.

H4c: Extraverts will like and support tipping more than do introverts.

H4d: The effects of extraversion on attitude toward tipping will be mediated by the liking for server attention/interaction and the use of tipping for impression management.

H4e: Extraverts will tip more than introverts.

H4f: The effects of extraversion on tipping will be mediated by attitude toward tipping.

Lynn's (2000) explained the effects of national neuroticism on tipping customs by arguing that neurotics like and support tipping because they appreciate the guarantee of good and friendly treatment from servers that tipping provides more than do emotionally stable people. In an earlier article (Lynn, 1994), he argued that neurotics appreciate the guarantees provided by tipping because they fear the server's envy and bad treatment more than do emotionally stable people (see Foster, 1972). This extended explanation suggests the following individual-level hypotheses:

H5a: Neurotics will perceive servers as unhappy about serving others more than do emotionally stable people.

H5b: Neurotics will fear server misbehavior more than do emotionally stable people.

H5c: Neurotics will view tipping as a guarantee of good treatment more than do emotionally stable people.

H5d: Neurotics will like and support tipping more than do emotionally stable people.

H5e: The effects of neuroticism on attitudes toward tipping will be mediated by perceptions of server unhappiness, fear of server misbehavior, and perceptions of tipping as a guarantee.

H5f: Neurotics will tip more than emotionally stable people.

H5g: The effects of neuroticism on tipping will be mediated by attitude toward tipping.

Finally, Lynn (2000) explained the effects on tipping customs of national psychoticism by arguing that tender-hearted people like and support tipping because they appreciate the opportunity to financially help servers that tipping provides more than do psychotic people. This explanation leads to the following individual-level hypotheses:

H6a: Psychotics will like helping servers less than do tender-hearted people.

H6b: Psychotics will like and support tipping less than do tender-hearted people.

H6c: The effects of psychoticism on attitudes toward tipping will be mediated by attitude toward helping servers.

H6d: Psychotics will tip less than do tender-hearted people.

H6e: The effects of psychoticism on tipping will be mediated by attitude toward tipping.

These hypotheses are tested in Study 2 below.

3.1. Method

The subjects in this study were recruited from a commercial consumer panel run by Survey Sampling International to participate in an online survey about tipping. Those people participating in the study ranged in age from 18 to 84 with a mean of 46 years. Fifty percent

of the participants were men, 2 percent were Asian, 4.6 percent were Black, 88.3 percent were White, 3.3 percent were Hispanic, and 1.9 percent had some other ethnic/racial background.

Participants were asked to complete the following measurement instruments along with others not used in the current study:

- (1) a set of three demographic questions concerning their sex, race and age,
- (2) a question about how much they usually tip a waiter or waitress,
- (3) a set of eleven attitude and belief statements about service (see Table 1; these items were analyzed separately),
- (4) a set of seventeen attitude and belief statements about tipping (see Table 1; four of these items -- T1, T3, T6 and T14 -- reflected overall attitude toward tipping and were combined into an index of liking/support for tipping whose coefficient alpha was .80; the remaining items were analyzed separately), and
- (5) the revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985).

Insert Table 1 about here

3.2. Results and Discussion

3.2.1. Extraversion

As expected extraverts more than introverts liked server attention/interaction ($r_{\text{with } S1, S4 \text{ and } S6} = .12, -.16, \text{ and } .23$ respectively, $n = 366$, all p 's $< .05$), expressed a tendency to tip to impress others ($r_{\text{with } T9} = .12$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$), liked and supported tipping ($r = .22$, $n = 366$,

$p < .01$), and tipped waiters/waitresses a larger percentage of the bill ($r = .11$, $n = 329$, $p < .05$). Thus, though the correlations were small, Hypotheses 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4e were all supported.

Furthermore, liking of server attention/interaction (S6) was positively correlated with liking/support for tipping ($r = .19$, $n = 366$, $p < .001$) and significantly mediated the effect of extraversion on that later variable (Sobel test, $z = 2.44$, $p < .02$). However, that mediation was only partial as extraversion predicted unique variance in liking/support for tipping even after controlling for liking of server attention/interaction (partial $r = .18$, $n = 363$, $p < .001$). In contrast, the tendency to tip to impress others (T9) was unrelated to liking/support for tipping ($r = -.05$, $n = 366$, $p > .30$) and did not moderate the effect of extraversion on that later variable (Sobel test, $z = 1.30$, $p > .19$). These findings partially support Hypothesis 4d.

Finally, liking/support for tipping was positively correlated with tip percentage ($r = .26$, $n = 329$, $p < .001$) and significantly mediated the effect of extraversion on tip percentage (Sobel test, $z = 3.08$, $p < .002$). That mediation was complete as extraversion was unrelated to tip percentage after controlling for liking/support for tipping (partial $r = .06$, $n = 326$, $p > .29$). These findings support Hypothesis 4f.

Together, these analyses provide some support for Lynn's (2000) explanation of extraversion effects on tipping customs. As Lynn argued, extraverts do like server attention/interaction more than do introverts and as a consequence they like and support tipping more, which in turn leads them to leave larger percentage tips than do introverts. However, contrary to Lynn's assumptions, the tendency to tip as a way of impressing others did not positively mediate extraversion effects on liking/support for tipping and there appear to be other, unidentified mediators of this relationship.

An exploratory examination of extraversion's relationships with the other service and tipping attitude items (see Table 1) suggests that extraverts are more likely than introverts to claim that they tip because servers depend on tips for their livelihood ($r_{\text{with T10}} = .16$, $n = 366$, $p < .01$), because they want to be well treated on future visits to the restaurant ($r_{\text{with T11}} = .18$, $n = 366$, $p < .01$), and because they would feel guilty not tipping ($r_{\text{with T16}} = .10$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$). These findings suggest that extraverts may value the role of tipping as an incentive/reward more than do introverts. Testing this and other potential mediators of extraversion effects on liking/support for tipping is one direction for future research on this topic.

3.2.2. Neuroticism

As expected neurotics more than emotionally stable people believed that servers dislike serving others ($r_{\text{with S5}} = .12$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$) and expressed concern about server misbehavior ($r_{\text{with S11}} = .18$, $n = 366$, $p < .01$). However, they were not more likely than emotionally stable people to see tipping as a guarantee of good treatment from servers ($r_{\text{with T17}} = .08$, $n = 366$, n.s.), like/support tipping ($r = -.04$, $n = 366$, n.s.), or leave large percentage tips ($r = -.01$, $n = 329$, n.s.). Since neuroticism was unrelated to liking/support for tipping and to tip percentage, all the hypotheses about the mediators of these relationships were meaningless. Thus, hypotheses 5a and 5b were supported by small but significant correlations while hypotheses 5c thru 5g were not supported.

Contrary to Lynn's (2000) expectations, the perception that servers dislike serving others and the concern about server misbehavior were both significantly, negatively correlated with liking/support for tipping ($r_{\text{with S5 and S11}} = -.13$ and $-.20$ respectively, $n = 366$, $p < .001$). Since Lynn's (2000) explanation for the effect of neuroticism on the

prevalence of tipping assumed that these perceptions and concerns would increase liking/support for tipping, the negative relationships observed seriously undermine his explanation. An alternative explanation that does not involve neuroticism effects on individual liking/support for tipping is needed. Unfortunately, an exploratory investigation of neuroticism's relationships with various service and tipping attitudes produced few significant effects (see Table 1) and, therefore, proved unhelpful in identifying what that alternative explanation might be. One speculative explanation is presented in the discussion to follow, but clearly more insight, theory and research on the relationship between national neuroticism and the prevalence of tipping is needed.

3.2.3. Psychoticism

Contrary to expectations, psychotics were not less likely than tenderhearted people to enjoy helping servers via tipping ($r_{\text{with } T2} = .05$, $n = 366$, n.s.), like/support tipping ($r = -.07$, $n = 366$, n.s.), or leave large percentage tips ($r = -.03$, $n = 329$, n.s.). Since psychoticism was unrelated to liking/support for tipping and to tip percentage, all the hypotheses about the mediators of these relationships were meaningless. Thus, none of the hypotheses regarding psychoticism (H6a thru H6e) were supported by the data.

The failure to find psychoticism effects on attitudes toward helping servers via tipping, on liking/support for tipping, and on tip percentages raise serious questions about Lynn's (2000) argument that psychoticism's negative effects on tipping customs are attributable to psychotics' lack of altruism. Thus, alternative explanations were sought in an exploratory investigation of psychoticism's relationships with various service and tipping attitudes. Those exploratory analyses revealed numerous small but statistically significant effects (see Table 1). Of particular note are the tendencies for psychotics

more than tender-hearted people to say that they tip to impress others ($r_{\text{with T9}} = .11$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$), tip for future service ($r_{\text{with T11}} = .13$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$), vary tips depending on who they are with ($r_{\text{with T13}} = .12$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$), leave small tips for the fun of it ($r_{\text{with T7}} = .13$, $n = 366$, $p < .05$), and rebel and refuse to tip ($r_{\text{with T15}} = .16$, $n = 366$, $p < .01$). Also notable is the tendency for psychotics less than tender-hearted people to say they would feel guilty for not tipping ($r_{\text{with T16}} = -.17$, $n = 366$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that psychotics are more Machiavellian in their tipping than others and less likely to leave tips simply because it is expected. Thus, it may be psychotics' disregard for social rules/expectations and failure to internalize norms rather than their lack of empathy that underlies the negative effects of psychoticism on tipping customs.

4. Conclusion

The results of these studies support the idea that personality plays a role in the development of tipping attitudes, behaviors and customs, but suggest that role is different than previously believed. While the results of Study 1 replicated and extended two of the three national-level relationships between personality and tipping customs discovered by Lynn (2000), the results of Study 2 cast doubt on most of his explanations for those relationships. Only Lynn's explanation for national extraversion effects on tipping customs received any support. Consistent with that explanation, extraverts do like server attention/interaction more than introverts and as a consequence they like and support tipping more, which in turn leads them to leave larger percentage tips than do introverts. However, contrary to Lynn's assumptions, the tendency to tip as a way of impressing others does not positively mediate extraversion effects on liking/support for tipping and there appear to be other, unidentified mediators of this relationship.

Lynn's (2000) explanation for the national neuroticism effect on tipping customs was not supported. Contrary to that explanation, neurotics did not see tipping as a guarantee of good treatment, like/support tipping, or tip larger percentages than emotionally stable people. Furthermore, believing that servers dislike serving others and being concerned about server misbehavior are associated with a decreased liking/support for tipping rather than the increased liking/support theorized. Perhaps national neuroticism is related to the prevalence of tipping, not because neurotics like tipping as a guarantee of good treatment as Lynn suggested, but because they feel more need to conform to the behavior of others than do emotionally stable people. As tipping norms evolve out of the pre-normative tipping behavior of some individuals, pressures to leave tips as a way of avoiding negative comparisons with tippers grow and neurotics, who are particularly sensitive to others' scrutiny (Christensen, Danko & Johnson, 1993), may feel this pressure more intensely than others. If so, then more professions would be tipped in nations whose populations are high in neuroticism than in nations whose populations are low in neuroticism. Furthermore, since negative, avoidance-based motivations for tipping should lead people to leave minimally acceptable tip sizes (Azar 2004), neurotic national populations may resist pressures to tip ever increasing amounts and this may explain the absence of a national neuroticism effect on national tipping rates.

Lynn's (2000) explanation for national psychoticism effects on tipping customs was also unsupported. Contrary to that explanation, psychotics did not dislike helping servers via tipping or support tipping less than tender-hearted people. Perhaps national psychoticism is negatively related to the prevalence of tipping and to national tipping rates, not because psychotics are less altruistic than tender hearted people, but because

they are anti-social rule breakers who are less likely to internalize and support tipping norms. Consistent with this possibility, psychoticism was significantly negatively correlated with feeling guilty for not tipping and was marginally significantly negatively correlated with liking/support for tipping.

In summary, Lynn (2000) theorized that national personality affects tipping customs because personality traits affect the value that individuals' place on the consequences of tipping. The results of Study 2 both support that theory and highlight its incompleteness. In particular, that theory proved unable to account for the effects of national neuroticism and psychoticism on tipping customs. Generating alternative explanations for these effects required a consideration of conformity pressures and norm internalization. Adding these processes to Lynn's original explanation produces a more complete theory of national personality effects on tipping norms, but one that needs further testing and refinement. I encourage more personality scholars to join the exploration of these issues.

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Table 1

Service And Tipping Attitude Items And Their Correlations With Personality And Tipping Behavior

	Correlation with			
	Extra- version (n=366)	Neuro- ticism (n=366)	Psycho- ticism (n=366)	Percent Tip (n=329)
Service Attitude Items^a				
S1: I like it when restaurant servers give me attention and fawn over me.	.12*	.04	.06	-.00
S2: I often wonder if a waiter or waitress really likes me.	.03	.21**	.03	-.14**
S3: Being waited on makes me feel superior.	-.01	.14**	.06	-.15**
S4: I prefer having servers deliver service quietly and unobtrusively.	-.16**	-.02	.02	-.11
S5: I think that deep down, most waiters and waitresses dislike having to serve other people.	-.04	.12*	.20**	-.07
S6: I like chatting with restaurant waiters and waitresses.	.23**	.05	.00	-.00
S7: I feel sorry for people who have to wait on tables.	-.01	.14**	.15**	-.11
S8: I enjoy having servers at my beck and call in restaurants.	.06	.09	.16**	-.06
S9: I feel uncomfortable being served by other people.	-.09	.11*	.06	-.15**
S10: I like to order waiters and waitresses around.	-.10	.05	.15**	-.20**
S11: I sometimes wonder if the waiter or waitress has done something bad to my food.	-.07	.18**	.20**	-.11*

Tipping Attitude Items^a

T1: I dislike having to tip waiters and waitresses.	-.15**	.07	.06	-.21**
T2: I like to help waiters and waitresses by giving them large tips.	.09	.12*	.05	.18**
T3: Paying waiters and waitresses is the responsibility of restaurant owners not of customers.	-.13*	-.01	.06	-.19**
T4: How much I tip mostly depends on how much I like the waiter or waitress.	.00	.09	.07	-.02
T5: Tipping is a good way to motivate servers to take care of customers.	.07	.07	.09	.07
T6: I would prefer to have waiters and waitresses paid higher wages instead of tips.	-.19**	.08	.02	-.20**
T7: I sometimes leave very small tips or no tips at all just for the fun of it.	.07	.07	.13*	-.13*
T8: Tipping encourages servers to be overly attentive and intrusive.	.03	.08	.06	-.20**
T9: I sometimes leave large tips as a way to impress others.	.12*	.06	.11*	-.06

T10: I tip generously because the servers depend on tips for their livelihood..	.16**	.07	.04	.15**
T11: I tip well in order to get 'the royal treatment' on future visits to my favorite restaurant.	.18**	-.02	.13*	.02
T12: How much I tip mostly depends on how good the service is.	.03	.03	.07	.10
T13: How much I tip mostly depends on who I am with.	.01	.03	.12*	-.09
T14: I strongly support the custom of tipping.	.22**	-.01	-.07	.21**
T15: I sometimes rebel against social expectations by refusing to tip.	-.10	.10	.16**	-.28**
T16: Leaving a restaurant without tipping the server would make me feel guilty.	.10*	.07	-.17**	.15**
T17: To me, tipping is a form of insurance that guarantees I will be treated well by servers.	.07	.08	.01	-.07
Liking/Support for Tipping Index (average of T14 and reverse codings of T1, T3, and T6)	.22**	-.04	-.07	.26**

^aParticipants responded to each statement using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale.