Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
XX(X) 1–20

DOI: 10.1177/0022022110362755
http://jccp.sagepub.com
SAGE

Unpacking Cultural Differences in Interpersonal Flexibility: Role of Culture-Related Personality and Situational Factors

Cecilia Cheng[1], Feixue Wang[2], and Debra L. Golden[3]

Abstract

This research aimed to unpack cultural differences in interpersonal flexibility by examining the impact of culture on interpersonal flexibility via self-construal. In Study 1, a cross-cultural comparison in levels of interpersonal flexibility was performed and the hypothesized mediating role of an interdependent self-construal was tested. Participants included 92 Chinese and 87 Caucasian American university students. Results showed that Chinese participants generally reported greater interpersonal flexibility than their Caucasian American counterparts. Interdependent self-construal accounted for country differences in interpersonal flexibility. Study 2 adopted a cultural-priming paradigm to determine the causal role of culture in context-dependent information processing and interpersonal flexibility. In the experiment, 120 Chinese participants were presented with Chinese cultural, American cultural, or control primes. The dependent measures were context dependency and flexible responses across different negotiation tasks. Compared with participants presented with American primes, those presented with Chinese primes reported more context-dependent thoughts and displayed greater discriminative responses across interpersonal situations.

Keywords

interpersonal relations, flexibility, culture, self-construal, personality

The beneficial role of flexible behavior was emphasized in theoretical discussions in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Mischel, 1973). Studies (e.g., Cheng, Hui, & Lam, 2004; Gan, Shang, & Zhang, 2007; Kaluza, 2000; Schwartz, 1999) documented that when

[1]University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
[2]Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China
[3]Grossmont College, El Cajon, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Cecilia Cheng, Department of Psychology, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
Email: ceci-cheng@hku.hk

undergoing stressful life transitions, individuals who are more flexible in coping, compared with those who are less flexible in coping, report lower anxiety levels, lower depression levels, and less stress-related symptoms such as proneness to worry and exhaustion.

According to theories of social intelligence (e.g., Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1989; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997), interpersonal flexibility is a response style that reflects cognitive astuteness in distinguishing among interpersonal situations and deployment of appropriate responses across interpersonal situations. Compared with individuals lower in interpersonal flexibility, those higher in interpersonal flexibility possess more well-refined psychological intuitions about the situational appropriateness of various types of interpersonal behavior, thus being more sensitive to subtle cues about the psychological meaning of an interpersonal situation (Cantor, Norem, Niedenthal, Langston, & Brower, 1987; Cheng & Cheung, 2005). Such contextualized psychological intuitions enable these individuals to discriminate between old and new interpersonal situations, and such a distinction fosters formulation of new strategies to meet specific demands of different interpersonal situations (e.g., Cheng, Chiu, Hong, & Cheung, 2001; Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993).

The goodness-of-fit theories (e.g., Chess & Thomas, 1991; Walsh, Craik, & Price, 2000) put forward that psychological adjustment requires optimal deployment of different types of responses in the changing milieu. Excessive, indiscriminant, or habitual use of any particular type of responses is maladaptive. Some coping and interpersonal theories have proposed controllability and power as situational characteristics that influence the appropriateness of interpersonal response. The transactional theory of coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987) postulates that psychological adjustment should involve a good fit between the types of responses and situational controllability. Specifically, adaptive responses should consist of (a) attempts to alter the external circumstances in situations whose outcome is controllable (i.e., can be altered with effort, ability, or both) and (b) attempts to change one's own thoughts or behavior in events whose outcome is uncontrollable (i.e., cannot be changed no matter how hard one tries). Schellenberg's (1996) theory of conflict resolution puts forward that situational power is an essential ingredient that influences the effectiveness of negotiation strategies. Specifically, assertion can be successfully applied by a party that possesses more power. However, if a party has been disempowered or is reliant on the other party's agenda for the relationship, the party should refrain from displaying assertive responses. Studies (e.g., Cheng, 2001, 2003, 2009b; Greenhalgh, Neslin, & Gilkey, 1985; Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007) provided support for these notions by revealing that situational controllability and power influenced response appropriateness.

Cultural Differences in Levels of Interpersonal Flexibility

The adaptiveness of discriminative responding has been found among people from an array of cultures and countries, namely North American (e.g., Haythornthwaite, Menefee, Heinberg, & Clark, 1998; Rozanski & Kubzansky, 2005), Chinese (e.g., Cheng, Yang, Jun, & Hutton, 2007; C. B. Lam & McBride-Chang, 2007), Dutch (Slangen-de Kort, Midden, Aarts, & Van Wagenberg, 2001), German (e.g., Kaluza, 2000; Schmidt, Nachtigall, Wuethrich-Martone, & Strauss, 2002), Greek (e.g., Roussi, 2002; Roussi, Krikeli, Hatzidimitriou, & Koutri, 2007), Japanese (e.g., Mino & Kanemitsu, 2005; Watanabe, Iwanaga, & Ozeki, 2002), and Jewish (e.g., Katz, Kravetz, & Grynbaum, 2005; Westman & Shirom, 1995) participants. Despite the cross-cultural generalizability of the adaptive role of flexible behavior, it is noteworthy that researchers from different countries examined flexibility among participants from their own country. Whether individuals from distinct cultures differ in the extent of discriminative responding remain unknown. Moreover, distinct measures have been used by different researchers in studying

discriminative responding, thus making cross-cultural comparisons difficult. A major aim of the present study was to conduct a cross-cultural comparison in levels of interpersonal flexibility.

In the study of cross-cultural differences in behavior, culture shapes individuals' worldviews, values, behavior, and perception of oneself (cf. Triandis, 1994). Individualistic cultures reinforce the striving of individual goals and gratification of individual needs, whereas collectivistic cultures reinforce the maintenance of relational harmony. Chinese individuals, who are more influenced by collectivistic cultural values of relational harmony, may be more motivated to maintain harmonious relationships with others than their Caucasian American counterparts, who are more influenced by individualistic values of autonomy and self-actualization. We hypothesized that the Chinese may display a greater extent of discriminative responding across interpersonal situations than Caucasian Americans.

Role of Interdependent Self-Construal

Although culture may exert direct influences on individuals through creating and preserving social norms that guide behavior, it may also exert indirect influences through shaping individuals' self-construal (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Singelis & Brown, 1995). Hence, mere examination of broad dimensions of cultural variability, such as individualism–collectivism, is deemed inadequate for explaining how culture differs. Cultural differences in behavior should be examined at both country and individual levels (see, e.g., Benet-Martinez & Karakitapoglu-Ayguen, 2003; Ratzlaff, Matsumoto, Kouznetsova, Raroque, & Ray, 2000). Another major aim of this study was to examine how the hypothesized cultural differences in interpersonal flexibility were accounted for by independent (vs. interdependent) self-construal.

Kitayama and Markus (1994) posited that different cultures privilege different types of cultural self-construal. Specifically, Western cultures privilege an independent self-construal, which refers to the tendency of perceiving the self as unique and separate from others. By contrast, Asian cultures privilege an interdependent self-construal, which refers to the propensity of perceiving the self as an integral part of social network. A myriad of studies revealed that country differences in self-construal preferences accounted for differences in attitudes and beliefs between individuals from different countries (e.g., Park & Levine, 1999; Sato & Cameron, 1999), communication style (e.g., Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003), interpersonal behavior (e.g., A. G. Lam & Zane, 2004; Li, 2003), and subjective well-being (e.g., Y. Kim, Kasser, & Lee, 2003; Lu & Gilmour, 2004).

In light of these findings, it is reasonable to infer interdependent self-construal as a mediating factor between culture and interpersonal flexibility. Our notion stems from Mischel and Shoda's (1995) cognitive–affective system theory of personality. According to this theory, individual differences in response style are accounted for by some social–cognitive mediating units. These mediating units influence how situational characteristics are encoded. Individuals' unique encoding tendency of external events in turn generates a specific pattern of behavior in response to the changing social milieu. We used this theory to account for the hypothesized country differences in levels of interpersonal flexibility. Specifically, the Chinese were predicted to display greater discriminative responding across interpersonal situations because they favor interdependent self-construal. For individuals having an interdependent self-construal, their information processing operates in a "we" frame of mind that diverts their attention toward the group and social context (Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999). Such an encoding tendency facilitates greater sensitivity to subtle cues embedded in social situations and greater responsiveness to meet specific situational demands. We thus predicted that interdependent self-construal may be a social–cognitive mediating unit that accounts for cultural differences in levels of interpersonal flexibility.

Role of Cultural Priming

Although independent self-construal is more common among individuals from Western cultures whereas interdependent self-construal is more common among individuals from Asian cultures, both types of self-construal can be found in every individual in both types of culture (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Theories of biculturalism (e.g., Hong, Ip, Chiu, Morris, & Menon, 2001; Lu & Yang, 2006) postulate the existence of a bicultural self among individuals, especially those from modern collectivistic societies. These individuals are exposed to both modern (individualistic) and indigenous (collectivistic) values, and it is proposed that their bicultural self is made up of two components: the individual- and the social-oriented selves. Individuals characterized by a bicultural self tend to fashion the display of these two aspects of self according to specific situational demands and social expectations (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). To illustrate, when these individuals are in situations that emphasize achievement (e.g., at work), their individual-oriented self may be more influential in guiding social behavior. Conversely, their social-oriented self may become more influential when they are in situations in which communal needs are valued (e.g., at home).

Adopting a dynamic constructivist approach (Hong et al., 2000), some authors (e.g., Sui, Zhu, & Chiu, 2007; Wong & Hong, 2005) have explored how cultural processes influence the behavior of biculturals who are familiar with and influenced by two different cultures, typically both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (e.g., Lee, Falbo, Doh, & Park, 2001; Lu, Kao, Chang, Wu, & Jin, 2008). In these studies, cultural primes were used to activate the participants' underlying cultural knowledge system. Their responses were compared across different cultural-priming conditions. Consistent with the predictions of theories of biculturalism, findings indicated that bicultural individuals can switch between distinct cultural frames of reference when different cultural primes are presented (e.g., Chen, Chiu, & Chan, in press; Fu & Chiu, 2007). Specifically, after biculturals have been exposed to icons related to Western cultures, these participants tend to think and act in a more individualistic manner. After being exposed to icons related to Asian cultures, however, participants tend to think and behave in a more collectivistic manner.

The semantic procedural interface model of the self (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2005) provides a theoretical framework that describes the cognitive mechanisms by which the independence (vs. interdependence) of the self influences social information processing. This model puts forward that activation of independent self-related knowledge may foster a context-independent cognitive mode, which facilitates subsequent processing of social information in a context-independent manner. By contrast, activation of interdependent self-related knowledge may foster a context-dependent cognitive mode, which facilitates subsequent processing of social information in relation to specific contexts. Because American cultural primes can increase accessibility of independent self-related knowledge (Sui et al., 2007), individuals presented with this type of cues may increase their context-independent information processing and display less interpersonal flexibility. By contrast, Chinese cultural primes can increase accessibility of interdependent self-related knowledge (Sui et al., 2007). Those presented with this type of primes may be more likely to adopt context-dependency information processing and display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility.

Context-dependent information processing can be examined only in a laboratory setting. The third major aim of this research was to adopt a cultural-priming paradigm (see Hong, Benet Martinez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003) to test the hypothesized influence of culture on context-dependent information processing and interpersonal flexibility. Chinese bicultural participants are predicted to attend to distinct types of information and display different extents of interpersonal flexibility in various priming conditions. When their collectivistic values are strengthened, they may be

more attuned to contextual characteristics and may display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility across situations. When their individualistic values are strengthened, they may be more attuned to personal characteristics (e.g., their goals and needs) and may display a smaller extent of interpersonal flexibility across situations.

Overview of the Present Study

The present research aimed to unpack cultural differences in interpersonal flexibility by exploring the role of self-construal and cultural priming. In Study 1, a cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and Caucasian Americans was made using self-report questionnaires. Chinese participants were predicted to display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility across distinct interpersonal situations than their Caucasian American counterparts. Interdependent self-construal was proposed to mediate the link between culture and interpersonal flexibility.

Study 2 examined the hypothesized situational influences of culture on context-dependent information processing and interpersonal flexibility among Chinese bicultural participants. Using a cultural-priming paradigm, Chinese bicultural participants who were reminded of the traditional Chinese (collectivistic) culture were predicted to rely more on the context in information processing and to display greater flexibility in interpersonal responses across situations. Those who were reminded of the American (individualistic) culture were predicted to focus more on self-referent information and to display less flexibility in interpersonal responses.

Study 1

Method

Participants. Participants in this study included Chinese and Caucasian American university students. For the Chinese sample, 92 Chinese undergraduates (23 men, 68 women, 1 did not specify) were recruited from a university in Hong Kong. All of them took part in this study as partial fulfillment of course requirements. The average age of the sample was 19.60 years ($SD = 1.30$). For the American sample, 87 Caucasian American undergraduates (24 men, 61 women, 2 did not specify) participated as partial fulfillment of course requirements. The average age of the group was 20.51 years ($SD = 3.50$). Only Caucasian Americans were recruited, because North Americans refer to a diverse range of cultural groups including some that are more collectivist in orientation (e.g., Hispanics, Asian Americans).

Measures

Interpersonal flexibility. A situation-based measure, the Interpersonal Flexibility Questionnaire (IFQ), was developed in this study to assess interpersonal flexibility. The IFQ is an open-ended measure in which respondents are asked to report the experience of four controllable and four uncontrollable interpersonal problems or hassles as well as their responses to each of the situations. For each event, respondents were first instructed to briefly describe a controllable or uncontrollable interpersonal problem or hassle experienced in the past 3 months. Then they were asked to report their responses to that interpersonal problem. They were reminded to report the actual efforts that they had made and that such thoughts or behavior need not have been completed or successful. After reporting their responses, participants then chose their primary goal of handling the problem from three options: (a) to directly handle the problem (primary approach response); (b) to change one's thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior associated with the problem (secondary approach response); or (c) to avoid making changes in the problem and in oneself (avoidant response). After participants completed both sections for an event, the procedures were repeated

for each subsequent event. Respondents were asked to turn to the next page and to not look back at their previous answers. The order of presenting the controllable or uncontrollable prompts was counterbalanced. Specifically, half of the participants were randomly chosen to report four controllable events and then four uncontrollable events, whereas the other half reported the events in the opposite order.

In the IFQ, interpersonal flexibility was operationalized by a goodness of fit between interpersonal responses and situational controllability. In light of the goodness-of-fit theories (described in the introduction to this article), a good response–situation match is defined as the deployment of (a) primary approach responses to controllable interpersonal problems and (b) secondary approach responses to uncontrollable interpersonal problems. A response that meets any of these criteria is given a score of 1, whereas all other responses are given a score of 0. The IFQ score is derived from averaging the score of the eight events and thus ranges from 0 to 1. A higher IFQ score indicates a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility across interpersonal situations. The IFQ was found to be display good psychometric properties in validation studies (Cheng, 2009a).

Cultural self-construal. The revised Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994; Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, & Lai, 1999) is a 30-item measure developed based on Markus and Kitayama's (1991) conceptualization of cultural self-construal. This measure consists of two 15-item subscales: independence and interdependence. The SCS was selected because it was developed and validated on undergraduates and is a common measure of cultural self-construal (e.g., Barry & Grilo, 2002; B. T. Lam, 2005). Each subscale ranges from 15 to 105, with higher scores indicating a greater orientation toward independence or interdependence. This scale has adequate internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha = .67 for independent self-construal and .70 for interdependent self-construal subscales for the Chinese sample and .65 for independent self-construal and .66 for interdependent self-construal subscales for the Caucasian American sample).

Procedures. The procedures were identical for both Chinese and Caucasian American participants. For each group of participants, a set of questionnaires was group administered to participants. A research assistant explained the instructions for them. Participants had to sign a consent form before filling in the questionnaires. Upon completion, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results and Discussion

When comparing psychological constructs in cross-cultural studies, configural and metric invariance should be scrutinized. To address these issues, we performed confirmatory factor analysis to examine the measurement models of both independent and interdependent self-construals. Following the recommendations by Cheung and Rensvold (2002), we examined whether the CFI model fit index would be reduced by more than .01 when equality constraints were placed on the model. Two sets of constraints were enacted: (a) on covariances between latent constructs (i.e., configural invariance) and (b) on factor loadings for each item on each latent construct (i.e., item-level metric invariance). For these two variables, CFI decreased from .843 to .836 for configural invariance and to .823 for item-level metric invariance. Such results indicate that participants from both cultural groups generally comprehended and responded to all these measures in a similar manner.

For the preliminary analyses, the overall group (cultural group) and sex effects on the major variables (i.e., independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and interpersonal flexibility) were examined by multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Results showed that the overall main effect of group was statistically significant, $F(3, 170) = 7.87$, $p < .0001$ (partial $\eta^2 = .12$). However, the main effect of sex and the Group × Sex interaction effect were not statistically significant, Fs(3, 170) = 1.94 and .45, ps > .13. The variable of sex was excluded in all subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for and Interrelationships Among Major Variables for Chinese and Caucasian American Participants (Study 1)

	M	*SD*	Skewness	2	3
Chinese (*n* = 92)					
1. Independent self-construal	68.52	7.55	.13	.18	.15
2. Interdependent self-construal	71.54	9.70	.06	—	–.37**
3. Interpersonal flexibility	0.46	0.29	.19	—	—
Caucasian American (*n* = 87)					
1. Independent self-construal	72.48	9.37	–.04	.21*	.06
2. Interdependent self-construal	66.23	9.06	.14	—	–.32**
3. Interpersonal flexibility	0.38	0.24	.08	—	—

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all the variables for Chinese and Caucasian American participants.

Cultural Differences in Levels of Interpersonal Flexibility. Because the MANOVA results revealed an overall significant effect of group, post hoc, independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to examine group differences in independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and interpersonal flexibility, respectively. Results showed statistically significant differences in independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and interpersonal flexibility between Chinese and Caucasian American participants. Compared with their Caucasian American counterparts, Chinese participants reported higher levels of interdependent self-construal and interpersonal flexibility as well as lower levels of independent self-construal, $ts(177) > 1.95$, $ps < .04$ (partial η^2 ranged from .03 to .06).

As predicted, the present results revealed that Chinese participants tended to display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility across interpersonal situations than did their Caucasian American counterparts. Further analyses were conducted to examine whether participants from the two cultural groups differed in strategy deployment across interpersonal situations. A mixed-design (split-plot) MANOVA was used to examine possible group differences in the use of three responses (i.e., primary approach, secondary approach, and avoidant) in controllable and uncontrollable interpersonal situations, respectively. In this analysis, group was a between-participants variable, whereas controllability (i.e., controllable vs. uncontrollable situations) was a within-participant variable. Results showed statistically significant main effects of both group and controllability, $Fs(3, 175) = 7.66$ and 34.44, $ps < .0001$. The Group × Controllability interaction effect was also statistically significant, $F(3, 175) = 3.13$, $p = .03$. Figure 1 depicts the display of various interpersonal responses in controllable and uncontrollable situations for Chinese and Caucasian American participants.

To further examine this significant interaction effect, we performed post hoc, paired-samples *t* tests to scrutinize differences in displaying each type of interpersonal response between controllable and uncontrollable situations for each cultural group. Chinese participants differed in the display

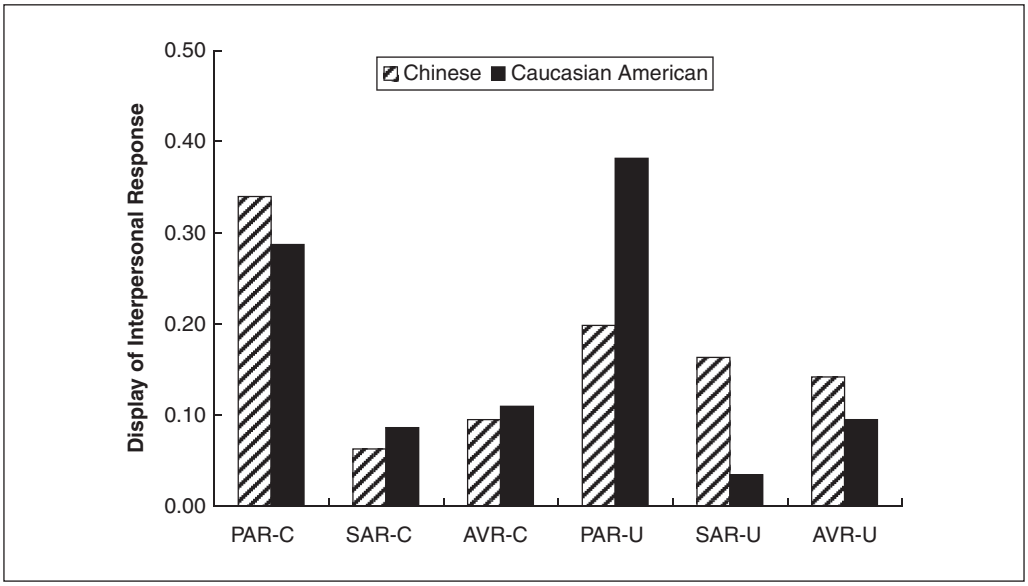

Figure 1. Display of three types of interpersonal responses in controllable and uncontrollable interpersonal situations by cultural group. PAR-C = primary approach response in controllable situations; SAR-C = secondary approach response in controllable situations; AVR-C = avoidant response in controllable situations; PAR-U = primary approach response in uncontrollable situations; SAR-U = secondary approach response in uncontrollable situations; AVR-U = avoidant response in uncontrollable situations.

of both primary and secondary approach responses across situations, ts(91) = 3.33 and −3.13, ps < .002. Specifically, Chinese participants displayed more primary approach responses and less secondary approach responses in controllable than in uncontrollable situations. Caucasian American participants displayed less primary approach responses in controllable than in uncontrollable situations, $t(86) = -2.15$, $p = .03$.

Interdependent Self-Construal as Cultural Mediating Process. Another major aim of this study was to examine the hypothesized mediating role of interdependent self-construal between culture and interpersonal flexibility. It is also possible that interpersonal flexibility may be a mediator that accounts for country differences in interdependent self-construal. The goodness of fit of the hypothesized model (M_H) and the latter alternative model (M_A) was examined by structural equation modeling using the EQS 6.1 program (Bentler & Wu, 2004). Culture was coded as a dummy variable (0 = Chinese, 1 = Americans), and all the variables except culture were centered.

Figure 2 summarizes the results of structural equation modeling. As predicted, results revealed nonsignificant chi-square fit indices for the hypothesized model, indicating that this model adequately fits the data. Results of the Sobel test showed that the effect of culture on interpersonal flexibility was significantly reduced (Sobel's $z = 2.01$, $p = .04$) after the effects of interdependent self-construal had been partialed out. By contrast, the alternative model was rejected because of its statistically significant chi-square fit index, which indicates that this model is not empirically valid. Although these results provided some empirical support for interdependent self-construal as a mediator that accounts for country differences in interpersonal flexibility, it is noteworthy that the RMSEA for the hypothesized model was fairly high (.10). Hence, the mediating role of interdependent self-construal should be regarded as tentative and should be interpreted with caution.

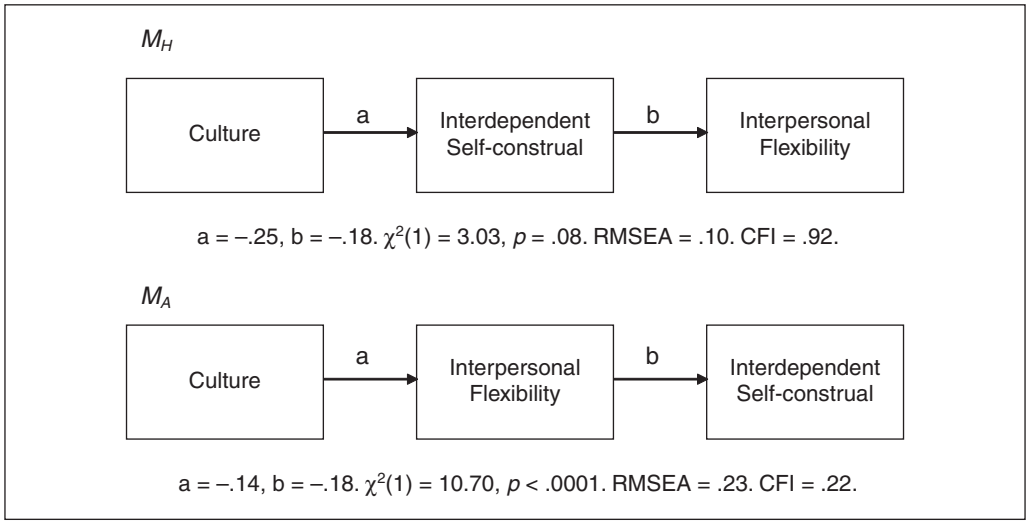

Figure 2. Summary of model testing with goodness-of-fit indices for the hypothesized (M_H) and alternative (M_A) mediational models (Study 1, n = 179).

In summary, results from this study showed that Chinese participants had higher levels of interpersonal flexibility than Caucasian American participants. Interdependent self-construal was found to account for country differences in interpersonal flexibility. Although these results were congruent with our hypotheses, the direction of relationships among the variables remained inconclusive because this study adopted a cross-sectional design and relied solely on self-report questionnaires. An experiment was designed in the next study to fill these knowledge gaps.

Study 2

Results from Study 1 revealed country differences in interpersonal flexibility and indicated that interdependent self-construal was a mechanism that accounted for such country differences. Because individuals with interdependent self-construal tend to perceive themselves as a part of their social milieu and to value their network members' needs and goals (see, e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994), they may be more likely to adopt context-dependent information processing. Previous studies (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2005; K. Kim, Grimm, & Markman, 2007) have shown that individuals characterized by an interdependent self-construal are more sensitive to contextual cues than are those characterized by an independent self-construal. When processing information, the former group of individuals tends to be more influenced by the context but the latter group tends to be relatively free from contextual influences. Hence, individuals who tend to perceive themselves as an integral part of their social network are predicted to be characterized by a context-dependent mode of information processing.

The present experiment adopted a cultural-priming paradigm (Hong et al., 2003) to examine the hypothesized influence of culture on interpersonal flexibility and context dependency in information processing. In this study, cultural primes were presented as cues to remind Chinese biculturals of either collectivistic or individualistic values, and their context-dependent information processing and flexible responses across interpersonal situations were then examined. The study by Sui and colleagues (2007) documented that Chinese cultural primes could activate interdependent self-construal, whereas American cultural primes could activate independent self-construal among

Chinese biculturals. Chinese biculturals who were reminded of individualistic values were predicted to be more attuned to self-related factors (e.g., personal needs and goals) in their information processing and thus less responsive to changes across different interpersonal situations. By contrast, those who were reminded of collectivistic values were predicted to be more attuned to contextual factors (e.g., situational demands, interactants' thoughts and feelings) in their information processing and more responsive to changes across different interpersonal situations. In short, compared with their counterparts primed with individualistic values, Chinese biculturals primed with collectivistic values were predicted to have a greater tendency to (a) adopt a context-dependent mode in information processing and (b) display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility across situations.

Method

Participants. Participants were 120 Chinese undergraduates (53 men, 66 women, 1 did not specify) who took part in this study. This group of participants was recruited from a university in Zhuhai, China. Their average age was 19.84 years (SD = 1.19). All the participants received a small gift for their participation.

Zhuhai is deemed appropriate for studying biculturalism because this city was one of the selected few that were opened to the Western world in the early 1980s. Since then, Zhuhai has evolved from a fishing village to a modern city, and its economy has flourished rapidly. In the past decades, overseas enterprises have set up representative offices and industries in the Zhuhai Special Economic Zone. Many international exhibitions and major events (e.g., the International Aviation Exhibition) are held every year. All these bring Zhuhai into the spotlight on the international stage and attract people from all over the world to visit the city every year.

Previous studies have revealed a coexistence of indigenous (e.g., relational harmony, filial piety) and Western (e.g., autonomy, individual-oriented achievement) values among the Chinese (e.g., Chang, Wong, & Koh, 2003; Lu & Kao, 2002; Pek & Leong, 2003; Zhang, Zheng, & Wang, 2003). The biculturalism of Zhuhai students was further reflected in the present findings. Specifically, all the Chinese participants (n = 30) in the pilot study had seen the cultural icons before and could correctly distinguish the Chinese icons from the American ones. In the main study, none of the participants reported problems in writing 10 sentences about a particular culture after being exposed to primes related to that culture.

Experimental Design. This study adopted a 3 (priming: Chinese vs. American vs. control) × 2 (power: high vs. low) × 2 (order: high power first vs. low power first) mixed design. Priming and order are between-participants variables, whereas power is a within-participant variable. Before the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of three priming conditions. After the priming task, participants were required to complete two negotiation tasks, one in which they had abundant power and the other in which they had little power (see the *Measures* section for details). The presentation order of these tasks was counterbalanced. For each priming condition, 20 participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (a) high power–low power and (b) low power–high power.

Procedures. All questionnaires were administered in groups under the direction of a research assistant who oriented them with instructions. They had to sign a consent form before filling in the questionnaires. The priming task was presented first. The priming procedures followed those adopted in the study by Hong and colleagues (2003). In the Chinese (or American) priming condition, participants were presented with a set of eight pictures, each depicting a traditional Chinese (or American) icon. Examples of Chinese icons are a Chinese dragon and the Great Wall. Examples of Americans icons are Mickey Mouse and Mt. Rushmore. Then participants were asked to write 10 thoughts related to Chinese (or American) culture. In the control condition, participants

were shown a set of eight pictures, each of which depicts two to three geometric figures. Participants were instructed to write 10 sentences that describe the figures in the picture.

Upon completion of the priming task, participants were instructed to read carefully a hypothetical interpersonal vignette and report what they would do in that situation. To prevent participants from comparing different interpersonal vignettes and copying answers given in the previous vignette, the answer booklet was collected before the second one was distributed. In the second booklet, participants were asked to complete an allegedly unrelated questionnaire as a filler task and then the second interpersonal vignette.

Measures. Interpersonal flexibility. Negotiation tasks designed by Magee, Galinsky, and Gruenfeld (2007) were adopted for assessing interpersonal flexibility. In each task, participants were asked to read carefully a document that described specific requirements of that particular task. All participants played the role of a job candidate, and their major task was to negotiate with the recruiter about their fringe benefits to be included in the final contract: salary, housing allowance, medical and dental benefits, and number of annual-leave days.

In these tasks, power was manipulated by the availability of an alternative for a job negotiation. A great amount of power was indicated by having an attractive alternative, and thus the participant was less dependent upon his or her opponent for negotiation of benefits. A small amount of power was indicated by the absence of an attractive alternative, making the participant more dependent upon his or her opponent for negotiation of benefits. Specifically, in the high-power condition, candidates were instructed that they had received an attractive job offer for the same position from another company of the same scale. They were also told that the current economy was prosperous and all their family members were self-supporting. In the low-power condition, candidates were instructed that they had not had any job offers for months. They were also told that the economy was currently having a downturn, and their family members were not working and were dependent on their financial support.

For each task, participants were instructed to plan the strategies they would adopt during an upcoming interview and to write all their relevant thoughts and negotiation strategies. Participants were given as much time as needed to complete each task.

Coding and Categorization Procedures. Participants' written pieces in both negotiation tasks were coded by two independent judges, who coded participants' answers separately. Both judges were blind to the aims, design, and hypotheses of the study. No identifying information, such as acronyms and abbreviations of variable names or experimental conditions, was labeled on the coding sheets. Before conducting the coding tasks, the judges received training that included discussion and practice on coding.

Both coders had to complete two coding tasks. First, they counted the number of self-referent thoughts (e.g., "I will try my best to fight for what I deserve") and context-referent thoughts (e.g., "It will be hard to find a job because the current economy is poor") given by each participant for negotiation planning. Because the number of thoughts written in the pieces varied across participants, a proportion was computed by dividing each participant's total number of relevant thoughts (i.e., aggregation of the number of self- and context-referent thoughts) by the number of context-referent thoughts.

Second, the coders indicated whether the participant had stated an intention to make the first move in a particular negotiation task. Each response was coded as 1 if the participants explicitly stated in their pieces an intention to make the first move or as 0 if participants did not mention any first moves or explicitly stated an intention not to make the first move. Magee and colleagues (2007) advised that to avoid ambiguity in data coding, a response should be categorized as a first move only if a code of 1 was given by both judges. Interjudge reliability was performed for reliability checks. The kappa coefficient showed a good consistency between the two judges ($\kappa = .87$).

Participants were then classified into different response patterns based on their code for first moves in both negotiation tasks. Specifically, participants were classified as having a "flexible" pattern if they displayed situation-appropriate responses across different power conditions: being coded as 1 (i.e., making the first move) in the high-power condition but 0 (i.e., not making the first move) in the low-power condition. Participants were categorized as having an "active-inflexible" pattern if they consistently made the first move regardless of the characteristics of conditions, that is, if they received a code of 1 in both power conditions. Participants were classified as having a "passive-inflexible" pattern if they failed to make any first move in distinct power conditions, receiving 0 in the two power conditions. Participants were categorized as having a "reverse" pattern if they varied their responses across different situations but their variable response pattern did not match the specific situational demand; that is, they were coded 0 in the high-power condition but 1 in the low-power condition.

Results and Discussion

In the preliminary analyses, we first explored the possible sex and order effects on the patterns of interpersonal flexibility. Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine possible sex differences in the pattern of interpersonal flexibility because both are categorical variables. Results revealed no statistically significant associations between interpersonal-flexibility pattern and sex, $\chi^2(3) = 4.28$, $p = .23$. We also examined whether the patterns of interpersonal flexibility were possibly influenced by the presentation order of the two negotiation tasks. Results again showed a statistically nonsignificant relationship between interpersonal flexibility pattern and order, $\chi^2(3) = 1.95$, $p = .58$. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then conducted to examine possible sex and order effects on the proportion of context-referent (vs. self-referent) thoughts for negotiation planning. Results showed that all the main and interaction effects were statistically nonsignificant, Fs(1, 116) < .99, ps > .32. Because no statistically significant sex and order effects were found, these two variables were omitted in all subsequent analyses.

Influences of Cultural Priming on Interpersonal Flexibility. Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine whether distinct patterns of interpersonal flexibility were displayed in different priming conditions. There was a statistically significant association between cultural priming and interpersonal flexibility, $\chi^2(6) = 17.84$, $p = .007$. Figure 3 depicts the proportion of participants with different patterns of interpersonal flexibility in the three priming conditions. Post hoc pairwise comparisons for the chi-square tests revealed a statistically difference in the proportion of participants having a flexible response style between the Chinese priming condition and the control condition, $\Delta(\chi^2) = 5.17$, $p < .05$. Such a result showed that there were more participants who showed discriminative responding across interpersonal situations in the Chinese priming condition than in the control condition. Moreover, a statistically difference was found in the proportion of participants having an active-inflexible response style between the American priming condition and the control condition, $\Delta(\chi^2) = 4.31$, $p < .05$. There were more participants who consistently displayed primary approach responses across situations in the American priming condition than in the control condition.

Influences of Cultural Priming on Contextual-Dependency Information Processing. The aforementioned findings showed a link between cultural priming and flexible interpersonal responses. We further examined whether cultural priming also influenced the proportion of context-referent (vs. self-referent) thoughts given in negotiation planning. The ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant main effect of cultural priming on the proportion of context-referent thoughts, $F(2, 117) = 42.37$, $p < .0001$ (partial $\eta^2 = .42$).

Post hoc Bonferroni tests were performed to compare the proportion of context-referent thoughts among participants who underwent different priming conditions. Compared with participants in the control priming condition ($M = 46\%$), participants in the Chinese-priming condition

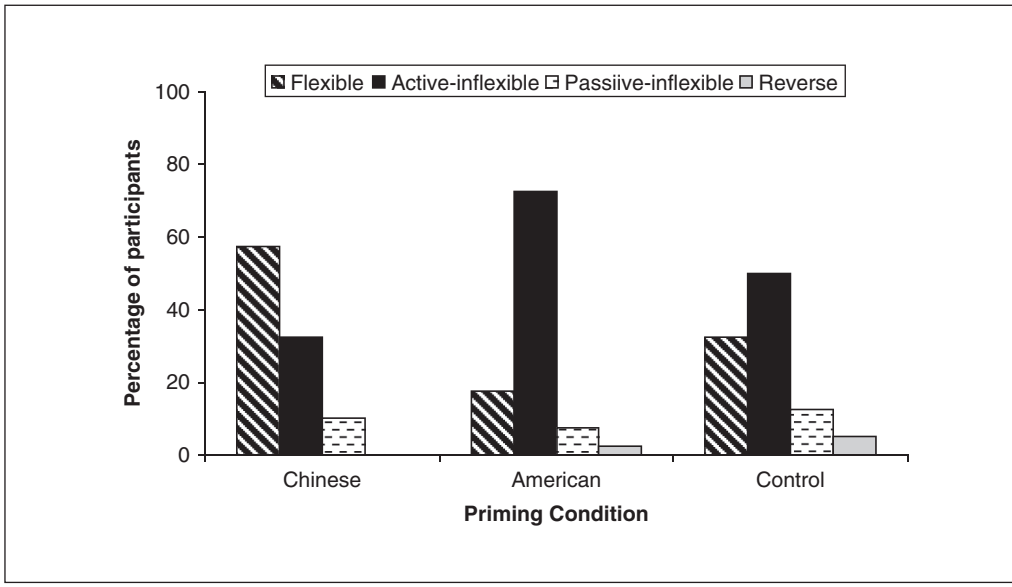

Figure 3. Percentage of Chinese participants characterized by distinct interpersonal-flexibility patterns in the three priming conditions (Study 2; n = 120).

(M = 71%) gave a greater proportion of context-referent thoughts, whereas those in the American-priming condition (M = 16%) reported a smaller proportion of such thoughts (ps < .0001). These results indicate that biculturals tend to report a relatively large number of context-referent thoughts when reminded of collectivistic values but a relatively small amount of such thoughts when reminded of individualistic values.

Taken together, findings from the present experiment revealed that cultural priming was linked to patterns of interpersonal flexibility and contextual-dependency information processing. Bicultural participants being reminded of the traditional Chinese (collectivistic) culture were more likely to vary their strategies across different interpersonal situations and to adopt contextual cues when formulating negotiation strategies. By contrast, bicultural participants being reminded of the American (individualistic) culture were more likely to display active-inflexible responses regardless of the characteristics of different interpersonal situations and to adopt self-referent information when formulating negotiation strategies.

General Discussion

The present research is the first to examine country differences in levels of interpersonal flexibility. Results from Study 1 indicate that Chinese individuals tend to report a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility than their Caucasian American counterparts. The Chinese, who are characterized by a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility, tend to display more primary approach responses and fewer secondary approach responses in controllable than in uncontrollable interpersonal situations. By contrast, Caucasian Americans are relatively less flexible in that they tend to display more primary approach responses in uncontrollable than in controllable situations.

These patterns of results were largely replicated in Study 2, which adopted a cultural-priming paradigm. Results indicate that Chinese biculturals who are reminded of the traditional Chinese culture are more likely to adopt a flexible response style, which is characterized by the display of

more primary approach and less secondary approach responses in controllable than in uncontrollable situations. However, their counterparts who are reminded of the Western culture are more likely to adopt an active-inflexible response style, which is characterized by a consistent display of primary approach responses in both controllable and uncontrollable interpersonal situations.

This research further explored the role of personality and situational factors in the study of culture and interpersonal flexibility. As shown in Study 1, country differences in levels of interpersonal flexibility can be accounted for by the cultural self-construal. The present results suggest that compared with their Caucasian American counterparts, the Chinese display higher levels of interpersonal flexibility because they tend to perceive themselves in relation to other people. The Chinese place greater values on group goals than personal goals and may thus be more motivated to flexibly adjust themselves to fit into the expectations of others or specific demands of social situations. Results from Study 2 further revealed the influence of culture on context-dependent information processing. Biculturals who are exposed to cues related to traditional Chinese culture are more likely to use context-referent—rather than self-referent—information to formulate strategies for handling interpersonal problems. Their counterparts who are exposed to Western cultural cues, however, are less likely to use context-referent information in strategy formulation.

Using Personality and Situational Variables to Unpack Cultural Differences in Interpersonal Flexibility

The present findings revealed country differences in the levels of interpersonal flexibility, but such differences should be considered relative rather than absolute in nature. This is because individual differences in the levels of interpersonal flexibility are yet to be found among the Chinese. As shown in Study 2, both Chinese participants who display a flexible response style and those with an inflexible response style were found in the control condition (see Figure 3). Interestingly, there were even more Chinese participants characterized by an active-inflexible response style than those characterized by a flexible response style in this condition. Such a pattern is similar to that yielded in the American-priming condition (i.e., having more participants with an active-inflexible than a flexible response style) and is contrary to that yielded in the Chinese-priming condition (i.e., having more participants with a flexible than an active-inflexible response style).

Such findings are not surprising in the present sample of Chinese university students. This is because under the new national curriculum of China, students are encouraged to appreciate their own culture while getting to know and respecting others' cultures. There are ample opportunities for Chinese university students to understand Western cultures through studying textbooks and educational materials written by Western authors and instructors; attending lectures, seminars, and talks given by foreign speakers; and interacting with international students and visiting scholars from overseas. The study by Hwang (1989) documented a growing tendency of Chinese university students to express stronger needs for autonomy and exhibition and a concomitant decline in needs for deference and nurturance. Such a tendency was reflected in their greater individualistic orientation and desire for autonomous social participation. Moreover, students and youngsters are generally more open to modern ideas and liberal attitudes than are nonstudents and people who are older (see Lai, 2007, and Luk-Fong, 2006, for a discussion). Having a variety of channels to access Western culture and being receptive to such cultural influences, Chinese university students in a modern city may thus behave in an individualistic manner.

Although there were more participants with an active-inflexible response style than those with a flexible response style in the control condition, a reverse pattern was found in the Chinese priming condition. Such results shed light on the necessity to study the situational influences of culture. Using a cultural-priming paradigm, the present study showed that participants exposed

to traditional Chinese culture were more likely to use context-referent cues and display a flexible response style. By contrast, those exposed to Western culture were more likely to use self-referent cues and display an active-inflexible response style. The present findings were consistent with existing studies that examined how individuals differ in responses under distinct cultural-priming conditions. Studies on Chinese biculturals showed that compared with their counterparts who were reminded of American culture, participants who were reminded of traditional Chinese cultural values were more likely to think and behave in a collectivistic manner, such as making more group attributions (Hong et al., 2003) and displaying greater cooperation toward in-group members (Wong & Hong, 2005). The present research extends the existing findings to an interpersonal setting and provides further evidence on the influence of cultural priming on context-dependent mode of information processing and flexible response style in the changing social milieu.

These findings may have broader implications for the study of cultural influences on individuals' thoughts and behavior in the age of globalization. Because information can be freely transferred across cultural boundaries via cyberspace, most individuals are constantly exposed to a variety of cultural stimuli. Although individuals from collectivistic cultures may be "predisposed" to think and act in a group-oriented manner, social changes may also influence these individuals by reducing indigenous values while simultaneously breeding new ones that are more individualistic in nature. However, recent studies (e.g., Chiu & Cheng, 2007; Chiu, Mallorie, Keh, & Law, 2009) revealed that biculturals differ considerably in the extent to which they perceive modern and indigenous values. Some of them tend to perceive the two sets of values as compatible and are more receptive to the influence of modern values. Yet others tend to perceive the two sets of values as opposing and are less influenced by modern values. Such individual differences may explain in part why some participants in our sample were characterized by a flexible coping style whereas others were characterized by an active-inflexible coping style.

Despite such individual differences, biculturals who are familiar with both collectivistic and individualistic cultures may act differently when exposed to distinct cultural values. For instance, when interacting with people from Western countries, biculturals may tend to display more primary approach responses. By contrast, when interacting with Asians, biculturals may tend to display distinct responses according to the Asian person's particular role or status. The recent study by Chen and colleagues (in press) revealed that compared with their North American counterparts, Chinese students were more likely to emphasize the importance of role in judgment making. However, when North American students were asked to imagine themselves working in a country with collectivistic values, they became motivated to place greater importance on role in order to meet cultural expectations. These findings indicate that individuals can switch between the two modes (individualistic vs. collectivistic) of thinking, thus highlighting the importance of situational influences for studying the link between culture and interpersonal flexibility.

Cautionary Notes and Concluding Remarks

Before we conclude, some research caveats are noteworthy. First, the samples of both studies were confined to university students, and thus the present findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other samples, such as high school graduates and the elderly. University students are relatively homogeneous in educational level and age. Compared with non–university students, university students may be more receptive to modern values and more sensitive to sociocultural changes in the world. Frequent exposure to new ideas in university studies may expand students' response repertoire. A broader response repertoire may enable them to display more discriminative responses across a diversity of interpersonal situations (see, e.g., Haythornthwaite et al., 1998; Kaluza, 2000 for discussions). In addition, the extent of flexibility may vary as a function of

age. Having more diverse experience in life, older people may be more flexible than younger ones. The present research should be replicated with groups having more heterogeneous demographic characteristics, such as working adults and community volunteers, to broaden the generalizability of findings.

Second, the present research adopted two distinct research methods for examining the relationship between culture and interpersonal flexibility. Adopting a self-report method and a cross-sectional design, Study 1 can reveal the strength of relationships among the target variables. However, the direction of relationships remains unexplored. Study 2 was conducted using an experimental design as an attempt to clarify the direction of links among the variables. Although a unique advantage of this research method is the identification of causal links among the variables, experimentation is limited by artificiality that weakens the ecological validity of findings. Future studies may adopt a longitudinal, cross-lagged panel, or quasi-experimental design to tackle this problem of artificiality. Although these research methods cannot make direct inferences about the direction of causality, using such design allow statistical inferences about the directionality of relationships while enhancing the ecological validity of findings.

In conclusion, the present study was the first to perform a cross-cultural comparison of levels of interpersonal flexibility. Results indicate country differences in levels of interpersonal flexibility, with Chinese individuals tending to display a greater extent of interpersonal flexibility than Caucasian Americans. Individuals who display greater flexibility are more likely to perceive themselves as an integral part of their social network. The link between culture and interpersonal flexibility has been replicated in an experiment that adopted a cultural-priming paradigm. Compared with individuals exposed to American cultural or neutral cues, individuals exposed to traditional Chinese cultural cues are more likely to rely on contextual cues in information processing and display greater flexibility in their interpersonal response style. Those exposed to American cultural cues are more likely to use self-referent cues in information processing and consistently display primary approach responses regardless of situational characteristics.

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank Sally Chan, Longcheng Chen, Zhaolong Chen, Kin-yu Fung, Xinwen Jiang, Carmen Lam, Gigi Lam, Kit-yan Lee, Pui-kin Ser, Jane Tsoi, Jun Wu, Mui-fan Yong, and Zimian Zhu for assistance in data collection and coding.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Financial Disclosure/Funding

Preparation of this article was supported by Research Grants Council's Competitive Earmarked Research Grant HKU6233/04H and Seed Funding Programme 200611159018.

References

Barry, D. T., & Grilo, C. M. (2002). Cultural, psychological, and demographic correlates of willingness to use psychological services among East Asian immigrants. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, *190*, 32-39.

Benet-Martinez, V., & Karakitapoglu-Ayguen, Z. (2003). The interplay of cultural syndromes and personality in predicting life satisfaction: Comparing Asian Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *34*, 38-60.

Bentler, P. M., & Wu, E. J. C. (2004). *EQS for Windows user's guide*. Encino, CA: Multivariate Software.

Cantor, N., & Kihlstrom, J. F. (1987). *Personality and social intelligence*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cantor, N., & Kihlstrom, J. F. (1989). Social intelligence and cognitive assessments of personality. In J. R. S. Wyer & T. K. Srull (Eds.), *Social intelligence and cognitive assessments of personality* (pp. 1-57). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cantor, N., Norem, J. K., Niedenthal, P. M., Langston, C. A., & Brower, A. M. (1987). Life tasks, self-concept ideals, and cognitive strategies in a life transition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *53*, 1178-1191.

Chang, W. C., Wong, W. K., & Koh, J. B. K. (2003). Chinese values in Singapore: Traditional and modern. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *6*, 5-29.

Chen, J., Chiu, C., & Chan, F. S. (in press). The cultural effects of job mobility and the belief in a fixed world: Evidence from performance forecast. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Cheng, C. (2001). Assessing coping flexibility in real-life and laboratory settings: A multimethod approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 814-833.

Cheng, C. (2003). Cognitive and motivational processes underlying coping flexibility: A dual-process model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 425-438.

Cheng, C. (2009a). *Assessing adaptive flexibility in the changing interpersonal milieu: A situation-based measure.* Unpublished manuscript, The University of Hong Kong.

Cheng, C. (2009b). Dialectical thinking and coping flexibility: A multimethod approach. *Journal of Personality*, *77*, 471-494.

Cheng, C., & Cheung, M. W. (2005). Cognitive processes underlying coping flexibility: Differentiation and integration. *Journal of Personality*, *73*, 859-886.

Cheng, C., Chiu, C., Hong, Y., & Cheung, J. S. (2001). Discriminative facility and its role in the perceived quality of interactional experiences. *Journal of Personality*, *69*, 765-786.

Cheng, C., Hui, W., & Lam, S. (2004). Psychosocial factors and perceived severity of functional dyspeptic symptoms: A psychosocial interactionist model. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *66*, 85-91.

Cheng, C., Yang, F., Jun, S., & Hutton, J. M. (2007). Flexible coping psychotherapy for functional dyspeptic patients: A randomized controlled trial. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *69*, 81-88.

Chess, S., & Thomas, A. (1991). Temperament and the concept of goodness of fit. In J. Strelau & A. Angleitner (Eds.), *Explorations in temperament: International perspectives on theory and measurement. Perspectives on individual differences* (pp. 15-28). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Cheung, G. W., & Rensvold, R. B. (2002). Evaluating goodness-of-fit indexes for testing measurement invariance. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *9*, 233-255.

Chiu, C., & Cheng, S. Y. Y. (2007). Toward a social psychology of culture and globalization: Some social cognitive consequences of activating two cultures simultaneously. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *1*, 84-100.

Chiu, C., Mallorie, L., Keh, H.-T., & Law, W. (2009). Perceptions of culture in multicultural space: Joint presentation of images from two cultures increases ingroup attribution of culture-typical characteristics. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *40*, 282-300.

Fu, J. H., & Chiu, C. (2007). Local culture's responses to globalization: Exemplary persons and their attendant values. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *38*, 636-653.

Gan, Y., Shang, J., & Zhang, Y. (2007). Coping flexibility and locus of control as predictors of burnout among Chinese college students. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *35*, 1087-1098.

Gardner, W. L., Gabriel, S., & Lee, A. Y. (1999). "I" value freedom, but "we" value relationships: Self-construal priming mirrors cultural differences in judgment. *Psychological Science*, *10*, 321-326.

Greenhalgh, L., Neslin, S. A., & Gilkey, R. W. (1985). The effects of negotiator preferences, situational power, and negotiator personality on outcomes of business negotiations. *Academy of Management Journal*, *28*, 9-33.

Gudykunst, W. B., Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomey, S., Nishida, T., Kim, K. S., & Heyman, S. (1996). The influence of cultural individualism-collectivism, self-construals, and values on communication styles across culture. *Human Communication Research*, *22*, 510-543.

Hannover, B., & Kuhnen, U. (2005). Culture, context, and cognition: The Semantic Procedural Interface model of the self. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *15*, 297-333.

Haythornthwaite, J. A., Menefee, L. A., Heinberg, I. J., & Clark, M. R. (1998). Pain coping strategies predict perceived control over pain. *Pain*, *77*, 33-39.

Hong, Y., Benet Martinez, V., Chiu, C., & Morris, M. W. (2003). Boundaries of cultural influence: Construct activation as a mechanism for cultural differences in social perception. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *34*, 453-464.

Hong, Y., Ip, G., Chiu, C., Morris, M. W., & Menon, T. (2001). Cultural identity and dynamic construction of the self: Collective duties and individual rights in Chinese and American cultures. *Social Cognition*, *19*, 251-268.

Hong, Y., Morris, M. W., Chiu, C., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 709-720.

Hwang, C. H. (1989). A follow-up study on the psychological needs of Chinese university students. *Bulletin of Educational Psychology*, *22*, 1-21.

Kaluza, G. (2000). Changing unbalanced coping profiles—A prospective controlled intervention trial in worksite health promotion. *Psychology and Health*, *15*, 423-433.

Kapoor, S., Hughes, P. C., Baldwin, J. R., & Blue, J. (2003). The relationship of individualism-collectivism and self-construals to communication styles in India and the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *27*, 683-700.

Katz, S., Kravetz, S., & Grynbaum, F. (2005). Wives' coping flexibility, time since husbands' injury and the perceived burden of wives of men with traumatic brain injury. *Brain Injury*, *19*, 81-90.

Kim, K., Grimm, L. R., & Markman, A. B. (2007). Self-construal and the processing of covariation information in causal reasoning. *Memory & Cognition*, *6*, 1337-1343.

Kim, Y., Kasser, T., & Lee, H. (2003). Self-concept, aspirations, and well-being in South Korea and the United States. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *143*, 277-290.

Kitayama, S., & Markus, H. (1994). *Emotion and culture: Empirical studies of mutual influence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lai, C. L. (2007). Biculturalism in Chinese societies. *Journal of Psychology in Chinese Societies*, *8*, 91-99.

Lam, A. G., & Zane, N. W. S. (2004). Ethnic differences in coping with interpersonal stressors: A test of self-construals as cultural mediators. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *35*, 446-459.

Lam, B. T. (2005). Factor structure of the self-construal scale in a Vietnamese-American adolescent sample. *Psychological Reports*, *96*, 152-158.

Lam, C. B., & McBride-Chang, C. A. (2007). Resilience in young adulthood: The moderating influences of gender-related personality traits and coping flexibility. *Sex Roles*, *56*, 159-172.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of Personality*, *1*, 141-169.

Lee, R. M., Falbo, T., Doh, H. S., & Park, S. Y. (2001). The Korean diasporic experience: Measuring ethnic identity in the United States and China. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *7*, 207-216.

Li, H. Z. (2003). Inter- and intra-cultural variations in self-other boundary: A qualitative-quantitative approach. *International Journal of Psychology*, *38*, 138-149.

Lu, L., & Gilmour, R. (2004). Culture, self and ways to achieve SWB: A cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Psychology in Chinese Societies*, *5*, 51-79.

Lu, L., & Kao, S. (2002). Traditional and modern characteristics across the generations: Similarities and discrepancies. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *142*, 45-59.

Lu, L., Kao, S.-F., Chang, T.-T., Wu, H.-P., & Jin, Z. (2008). The individual- and social-oriented Chinese bicultural self: A subcultural analysis contrasting mainland Chinese and Taiwanese. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *36*, 337-346.

Lu, L., & Yang, K.-S. (2006). Emergence and composition of the traditional-modern bicultural self of people in contemporary Taiwanese societies. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *9*, 167-175.

Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2006). Primary school teachers' perceptions of school children coping with changing family situations—A hybrid Hong Kong experience. *Social Psychology of Education*, *9*, 425-441.

Magee, J. C., Galinsky, A. D., & Gruenfeld, D. H. (2007). Power, propensity to negotiate, and moving first in competitive interactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *33*, 200-212.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*, 224-253.

Mino, S., & Kanemitsu, Y. (2005). Cognitive appraisal and situation-appropriate coping flexibility as related to clerical workers' job satisfaction in stressful situations. *Japanese Journal of Health Psychology*, *18*, 34-44.

Mischel, W. (1973). Toward a cognitive social learning reconceptualization of personality. *Psychological Review*, *80*, 252-283.

Mischel, W., & Shoda, Y. (1995). A cognitive-affective system theory of personality: Reconceptualizing situations, dispositions, dynamics, and invariance in personality structure. *Psychological Review*, *102*, 246-268.

Oetzel, J. G., & Ting-Toomey, S. (2003). Face concerns in interpersonal conflict: A cross-cultural empirical test of the face negotiation theory. *Communication Research*, *30*, 599-624.

Park, H. S., & Levine, T. R. (1999). The Theory of Reasoned Action and self-construal: Evidence from three cultures. *Communication Monographs*, *66*, 199-218.

Pek, J. C., & Leong, F. T. (2003). Sex-related self-concepts, cognitive styles and cultural values of traditionality-modernity as predictors of general and domain-specific sexism. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *6*, 31-49.

Ratzlaff, C., Matsumoto, D., Kouznetsova, N., Raroque, J., & Ray, R. (2000). Individual psychological culture and subjective well-being. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and subjective well-being* (pp. 37-59). Cambridge, MA: MIT.

Roussi, P. (2002). Discriminative facility in perceptions of control and its relation to psychological distress. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, *15*, 179-191.

Roussi, P., Krikeli, V., Hatzidimitriou, C., & Koutri, I. (2007). Patterns of coping, flexibility in coping and psychological distress in women diagnosed with breast cancer. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, *31*, 97-109.

Rozanski, A., & Kubzansky, L. D. (2005). Psychologic functioning and physical health: A paradigm of flexibility. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *67*, S47-S53.

Salovey, P., & Sluyter, D. J. (1997). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Sato, T., & Cameron, J. E. (1999). The relationship between collective self-esteem and self-construal in Japan and Canada. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *139*, 426-435.

Schellenberg, J. A. (1996). *Conflict resolution: Theory, research, and practice*. Albany: State University of New York.

Schmidt, S., Nachtigall, C., Wuethrich-Martone, O., & Strauss, B. (2002). Attachment and coping with chronic disease. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, *53*, 763-773.

Schwartz, C. E. (1999). Teaching coping skills enhances quality of life more than peer support: Results of a randomized trial with multiple sclerosis patients. *Health Psychology*, *18*, 211-220.

Shoda, Y., Mischel, W., & Wright, J. (1993). Links between personality judgments and contextualized behavior patterns: Situation-behavior-profiles of personality prototypes. *Social Cognition*, *4*, 399-429.

Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*, 580-591.

Singelis, T. M., Bond, M. H., Sharkey, W. F., & Lai, C. S. Y. (1999). Unpackaging culture's influence on self-esteem and embarrassability: The role of self-construals. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *30*, 315-341.

Singelis, T. M., & Brown, W. J. (1995). Culture, self, and collectivist communication: Linking culture to individual behavior. *Human Communication Research*, *21*, 354-389.

Slangen-de Kort, Y. A., Midden, C. J., Aarts, H., & Van Wagenberg, F. (2001). Determinants of adaptive behavior among older persons: Self-efficacy, importance, and personal dispositions as directive mechanisms. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *53*, 253-274.

Sui, J., Zhu, Y., & Chiu, C.-y. (2007). Bicultural mind, self-construal, and self- and mother-reference effects: Consequences of cultural priming on recognition memory. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *43*, 818-824.

Triandis, H. C. (1994). *Culture and social behavior*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Walsh, W. B., Craik, K. H., & Price, R. H. (2000). *Person-environment psychology: New directions and perspectives* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.

Watanabe, S., Iwanaga, M., & Ozeki, Y. (2002). Effects of controllability and desire for control on coping and stress responses. *Japanese Journal of Health Psychology*, *15*, 32-40.

Westman, M., & Shirom, A. (1995). Dimensions of coping behavior: A proposed conceptual framework. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, *8*, 87-100.

Wong, R. Y., & Hong, Y. (2005). Dynamic influences of culture on cooperation in the prisoner's dilemma. *Psychological Science*, *16*, 429-434.

Zhang, X., Zheng, X., & Wang, L. (2003). Comparative research on individual modernity of adolescents between town and countryside in China. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *6*, 61-73.

Bios

Dr. Cecilia Cheng is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Hong Kong. Her research interests lie in the areas of personality and social psychology, health psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and applied social psychology.

Dr. Feixue Wang is an associate professor of psychology at Sun Yat-Sen University. Her research interests include interpersonal trust, social identity and group behavior, and cross-cultural studies on trust and cooperation.

Dr. Debra Golden is an adjunct psychology instructor at Grossmont College. She has taught cross-cultural psychology, introductory psychology, and human sexuality for more than 10 years. She has conducted research on cross-cultural issues as well as human sexuality and relationships.