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Self-Construal Influence on Individual Choice Does Culture Shape our Choices?

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Psychological research conducted over the years has revealed cultural differences across a wide range of domains. As a result, many psychologists have now investigated the ways in which people in various cultures may think, behave, and feel differently (Suh, Diener, and Updegraff 2008), specifically, with a focus on members from Western and Eastern cultures. Cross-cultural research has identified one particular area of difference between members of Western and Eastern cultures: the extent to which the self is defined (Self-construal). This distinction has been referred to as egocentric versus sociocentric selves (Schweder and Bourne 1984), individualism versus collectivism (Triandis 1989), and independence versus interdependence (Markus and Kitayama 1991) and focuses on the extent to which an individual defines herself or himself as either an autonomous individual separate from others or as an individual deeply embedded within a larger social network (Gardner, Gabriel, and Lee 1999).

Countries such as China and India are conceptualized as collectivist cultures where the self is often defined as an entity embedded within a larger social network; whereas in individualistic cultures (e.g. North America) the self is often defined as an autonomous entity separate from others (Triandis 1989). Another distinction made between members of Western and Eastern cultures are differing attitudes towards uniqueness and conformity. Kim and Markus (1999) found that East Asians and Americans had distinct preferences consistent with their respective cultural attitudes towards uniqueness and conformity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conformity in East Asian Culture

The East Asian cultural context is centered on harmony and group cohesion, facilitating an environment that encourages its members to adopt an interdependent concept of the self (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, and Nisbett 1998; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Markus, Kitayama, and Heinman 1997; Smith and Bond 1993; Triandis 1995). The East Asian cultural context

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emphasis on harmony and interdependence fosters fear among individuals within this cultural context of being separate and distinct from the group (Markus and Kitayama 1994). Following social norms is a core cultural goal in many East Asian cultures, promoting harmony and aligning with collectivistic cultural tradition (Hsu 1948; Yang 1981). Many people in this cultural context openly abide social norms and do so without feeling ashamed or pressured to conform which may be the view in individualistic cultures (Kim and Markus 1999). Conformity in East Asian cultural context is a process of feeling connected to others, leading to positive behavioral consequences in this context (Kim and Markus 1999). For example, research has shown that East Asian children tend to be more motivated, persisting longer on tasks compared to European American children when the task is selected by a member from their in-group (Iyengar and Lepper 1999). Additionally, one of the core goals in parenting and educating children in East Asian cultures is for children to respect and obey elders, tradition, and social norms (Kim and Markus 1999; Chao 1994; Crystal 1994). Thus, these findings suggest that following social norms is a part of the daily interaction of members of the East Asian culture and conforming extends beyond individual compliance in the face of group pressure (Kim and Markus 1999). Consequently, the process of conforming and complying with the group appears to reflect a norm within this cultural context of being similar to others and following social norms (Kim and Markus 1999). Such conformity promotes and maintains harmony within the culture as its members blend in with their surroundings, not standing out from the group which may also have positive connotations of connectedness within the East Asian cultural context (Kim and Markus 1999).

Uniqueness in North American Culture

In contrast, North American cultural context emphasizes autonomy and independence where individual rights and freedom are among the core cultural values (Bellah, Madsen,

Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1985; Spindler and Spindler 1990). In this cultural context, the individual's attitudes, feelings, and behavior are believed to be determined by the self, and should not be influenced or controlled by external factors (Markus et al. 1997). As a result, the Western cultural context promotes an independent self-construal, where individuals often view the self as an entity separate and distinct from others (Kim and Markus 1999). Also, in line with those values, a theme of uniqueness emerges within the culture. This theme of uniqueness and independence can be seen in popular American movies (e.g. Divergent, Hunger Games, and Good Will Hunting) which often centers on the idea of the individual going against powerful institutions and standing out from the crowd (Kim and Markus 1999). Thus, it appears that uniqueness is a norm in Western cultures, representing a social standard of going against the norm and being different from one's surrounding (Kim and Markus 1999). Such behavior of standing out from the crowd may symbolize the assertions of one's individuality and self-worth within this cultural context (Kim and Markus 1999).

Self-Construals and Individual Preferences for Uniqueness or Conformity

Cultural differences in preferences for uniqueness and conformity could be related to the individual's construction of the self which is shaped by culture (Triandis 1989). Kim and Markus (1999) documented culturally consistent preferences, choices, and behaviors in individuals from Western and Eastern cultures. They used abstract targets such as drawings, shapes, and colors that either appeared different or the same as the surrounding targets to represent uniqueness and conformity (Kim and Markus 1999). It was found that Americans preferred stimulus which was different from the other stimulus (unique) and East Asians preferred stimulus that were similar to the other stimulus (Kim and Markus 1999). The core cultural ideas and values about interdependence in East Asian cultures and independence in North American cultures were expressed in the choices, behaviors, and preferences of the members of each culture (Kim and

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Markus 1999). However, it has not been shown that it is cultural values of interdependence and independence that shape these individual preferences for uniqueness and conformity. It seems that endorsing an independent self-construal may encourage a unique mindset, where the individual is more likely to separate themselves from the group and make a choice that solidifies their uniqueness. In contrast, endorsing an interdependent self-construal may encourage the individual to adopt a conformity mindset, where they are more likely to blend with their surroundings and make a choice that is consistent with the norm. However, previous research has not established a clear link between cultural values regarding uniqueness and conformity and the way an individual defines the self.

Self-Construal and Priming

In the present research, the causal role of self-construal was examined by priming participants with either independent or interdependent self-construals and seeing whether it would lead to differences in choice patterns that mirror themes of uniqueness and conformity that is traditionally found between East Asian and North American cultures. By including self-construal priming conditions in the present study, it is possible to directly observe the impact of cultural information on people's preferences and choices. Priming studies experimentally alter the mindsets of cultural members in order to align them with the researcher's theory (e.g. Gardner et al. 1999; Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto 1991). Self-construal priming conditions are a powerful strategy for establishing a link between an observed cultural phenomenon and a specific variable believed to account for the cultural difference (Suh et al. 2008). This technique is very useful not only for conceptually identifying potential mediators of cultural differences but also making it possible to directly measure the variable in question (Matsumoto and Yoo 2006).

As mentioned before, individuals in collectivist cultures tend to endorse an interdependent self-construal and those in individualist cultures tend to endorse an independent self-construal. However, both forms of self-construals are present in varying degrees in each cultural context. Culture may strengthen accessibility to one particular aspect of the self (Triandis 1989), but all individuals are able to think of themselves in both individual and collective terms (Suh et al. 2008). Several studies have shown that self-construals can even be shifted by a situational prime (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Trafimow et al. 1991; Triandis, McCusker, and Hui 1990). Salient contextual cues can temporarily modify self-construal styles, demonstrating the malleability of the self (e.g. Gardner et al. 1999; Suh et al. 2008). Therefore, even though an individual's culture may play an important role in determining the self-construal that is frequently accessed, self-construals are able to shift in response to situational accessibility (Gardner et al. 1999).

Although individuals may be able to display multiple forms of self-construals, in the present research, I am particularly interested in the instances when either the independent or the interdependent aspect of the self is relatively more salient than the other. It is expected that when the independent aspect of the self is more accessible than the interdependent aspect of the self, individuals will make choices that affirm their uniqueness and individuality by choosing target objects that are different from its surrounding. In contrast, when the interdependent aspect of the self is more accessible than the independent aspect of the self, individuals will make choices that align with ideas of conformity and interdependence by choosing target objects that are more similar to its surroundings. In sum, it is believed that the relative salience of the interdependent versus independent self-construal plays a very important role in explaining the cultural differences of attitudes and preferences for uniqueness and conformity found cross-culturally by Kim and Markus (1999).

PRESENT RESEARCH

In the present study, a social episode was designed to empirically link the observed cultural differences in preferences and attitudes towards uniqueness and conformity (Kim and Markus 1999) to the way an individual defines herself or himself (self-construals) which is shaped by culture (Triandis 1989), in order to support the idea that culture influences our choices. Studying choice across cultures is important because the act of choosing between two or more objects is a common occurrence in virtually every culture. Although the primary interest is in comparing Western and East Asian cultures, I did not limit my participant pool to them. York University is a very multicultural school, due to different levels of acculturations there is diversity within cultural groups as well as similarities across groups. As a result, culture was assessed by administrating items from the Asian Values Scale (AVS; Kim, Atkinson, and Yang 1999) and the European American Values Scale (EAVS; Wolfe, Yang, Wong, and Atkinson 2001). Both measures are intended to assess a wide range of values that vary across cultures, such as independence versus interdependence (Butler, Lee, and Gross 2007). Therefore, individuals that are not from an Asian or European background are still able to participate in the study and respond meaningfully (Butler et al. 2007).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two priming conditions; an interdependent self-construal prime condition, or an independent self-construal prime condition. In both conditions, the participants were given a questionnaire to complete which each included a story that primed them with either independent or interdependent values. The AVS and EVS served as a manipulation check for the primes. Since most of the participants are Canadian and have probably internalized Canadian values which emphasize individualism more than collectivism (Kemmelmeier et al. 2003), most of the participants would naturally score higher on the European value scale than on the Asian value scale. Therefore, to check whether the primes were

successful in priming the independent or interdependent aspect of the self, it was expected that those primed with interdependence will report higher Asian values than those primed with independence. Similarly, those primed with independence will report higher European values than those primed with interdependence. Once participants completed the questionnaire, they were asked to choose one pen from a group of pens as their reward. The presentation of the pens was such that there was a clear distinction between the two colors of pens; the blue pen was in the majority (representing conformity) and the black pen was in the minority (representing uniqueness). The pens were presented in a clear round pen holder that held approximately 30 pens in total. When a participant selected a pen, another pen of the same color immediately replaced it to ensure that the presentations of the pens were consistent throughout the study. Both the blue and black pens were equally accessible from the pen holder. The purpose of this was to test how the presentation of the pens will affect individual's choice pattern. In other words, how will the cultural values conveyed to individuals through the presentation of pens effect their preferences and choice? Will the participants simultaneously appropriate and perpetuate these values through choosing a pen that is consistent with the cultural information they were primed with?

Studying cultural values this way allows researchers to examine the impact of culture on individual's behavior without the external pressure to act in a culturally appropriate manner (Kim and Markus 1999). It was hypothesized that consistent with the values and attitudes towards uniqueness and conformity of the respective cultures, individuals in the interdependent prime condition will show a preference for conformity and chose a pen in the majority (blue pen) making a common choice. In contrast, individuals in the independent prime condition will show a preference for uniqueness and chose a pen in the minority (black pen) making an uncommon choice.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The participants in the study were recruited from York University using convenience sampling. A total of 60 undergraduate students took part in the study (30 participants in each condition). The participants' gender, age, and cultural background were recorded. After successful completion of the study, participants were rewarded with a pen.

Materials

Each participant received a questionnaire packet consisting of two parts. In the first part, participants were given a filler activity asking them to comment on their favorite season. Afterwards, participants were asked to read a short story that either reinforced collectivist values or individualist values, priming participants with either the independent or interdependent aspect of the self (Butler et al. 2007). In this task, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: the independent self-construal prime condition or the interdependent self-construal prime condition. In the second part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to report on their cultural values. The study measured participants' choice patterns using pens as target objects to choose. Two different color pens (black and blue) were arranged in a manner that presented the blue pens in the majority and the black pens in the minority. The pens were the same brand to limit the possibility of participants' choice being influenced by other factors such as branding of pens. After completing the questionnaires, participants answered demographic questions.

PROCEDURE

Prime Conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to either an independent self-construal prime condition, or an interdependent-self prime condition developed by Trafimow et al. (1991) and validated in later studies (Trafimow and Finlay 1996; Ybarra and Trafimow 1998).

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Participants were primed with either an independent or interdependent story that has been shown to alter the balance between independent and interdependent self-construals on a self-construal task (Trafimow et al. 1991). The independent and interdependent story was adapted from Gardner et al. (1999) and describes a dilemma in which the main character has to make a choice on whom to select to complete an important task. In the independent self-construal prime condition, the main character only considers benefits to themselves and choses the person who is best suited to complete the task. In the interdependent self-construal prime condition, the same story was presented but the main character chooses a member from their own family and considers benefits to the family. After reading the story, participants were asked to report on their cultural values.

Cultural Values. Cultural values were assessed by including items taken from the Asian Values Scale (AVS; Kim et al. 1999) and the European American Values Scale (EAVS; Wolfe et al. 2001). Both measures are intended to assess a wide range of values that vary across cultures, such as independence versus interdependence (Butler et al. 2007). Following Butler et al. (2007), 10 items were selected from each scale that separates Asian and European Americans in the most relevant dimensions (role and norm conformity versus flexibility) from the original scale development studies (Kim et al. 1999; Wolfe et al. 2001). The items chosen are presented in the Appendix. Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from -3, representing "strongly disagree," to +3, representing "strongly agree" (Butler et al. 2007). The AVS items had an alpha of .69, and the EAVS had an alpha of .63. Following Rudmin (2003), the two scales were combined by subtracting the AVS from the EAVS. This combined measure produced a range of 5.00 indicating strong endorsement of European values to -0.55 indicating mild endorsement of Asian values, with a mean of 2.10 (moderate endorsement of European values). Individuals who scored around the mean were classified as holding both European and Asian values.

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Choice. Participants were presented with a group of pens in a clear pen holder consisting of only black and blue colors to choose from as their reward for completing the questionnaire. The participants were unaware that their choice was being recorded as part of the study. To measure individual choice patterns towards conformity or uniqueness, the pens were arranged in a manner that presented the black color pens in the minority, appearing different from its surroundings to represent uniqueness. And the blue color pens were in the majority, appearing similar to its surroundings to represent conformity. Participants choice was recorded as either uncommon if they choose a black pen or common if they choose the blue pen.

RESULTS

Manipulation checks. To check whether the priming manipulation affected participants as intended, participants' scores on the value scales were examined. As expected, participants in the independent prime condition reported higher European values (M = 1.67, SD = 0.57) than participants in the interdependent prime condition (M = 1.39, SD = 0.74; Dunnet's MD = 0.28, SE = 0.11, p < .05, Cohen's d = 0.43). Similarly, participants in the interdependent prime condition reported higher Asian values (M = 0.59, SD = 0.77) than participants in the independent prime condition. (M = 1.36, SD = 0.71; Dunnet's MD = 0.77, SE = 0.13, p < .01, Cohen's d = 1.04). These results indicate that both primes were successful in activating a relatively greater independent self-construal in the independent prime condition and a relatively greater interdependent self-construal in the interdependent prime condition.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Cultural Values in Each Prime Condition

		Asian Values		European Values	
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independent Prime Condition	30	1.36	.71	1.67	.57
Interdependent Prime Condition	30	.59	.77	1.39	.74

Choice. A 3 (Cultural Values: East Asian vs. European American vs. Both East Asian and European American) X 2 (Prime conditions: Interdependent vs. Independent) X 2 (Choice: uncommon color vs. common color) mixed log-linear test was used in the analysis. The test revealed no three-way interaction, $x^2(1, 59) = 0.41$, P > .01, and no two-way interaction that involved Choice: For Prime Condition X Choice interaction, $x^2(1, 59) = 0.22$, P > .01, and for Cultural Values X Choice interaction, $x^2(1, 59) = .87$, P > .01. These results indicate that participants' choice was not affected by the prime condition they were assigned to. Therefore, suggesting that the presentation of pens do not have any effect on individuals' choice or preferences for a particular pen.

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Table 2

Results of a Mix Log-Linear analysis: Two-way Interaction between Prime Condition X Choice

Conditions	Choices	
	Uncommon	Common
Independent Prime	17 (56%)	13 (44%)
Interdependent Prime	10 (33%)	20 (67%)

Note. $\chi 2 = 0.22$, df = 1. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages. $p > .05$
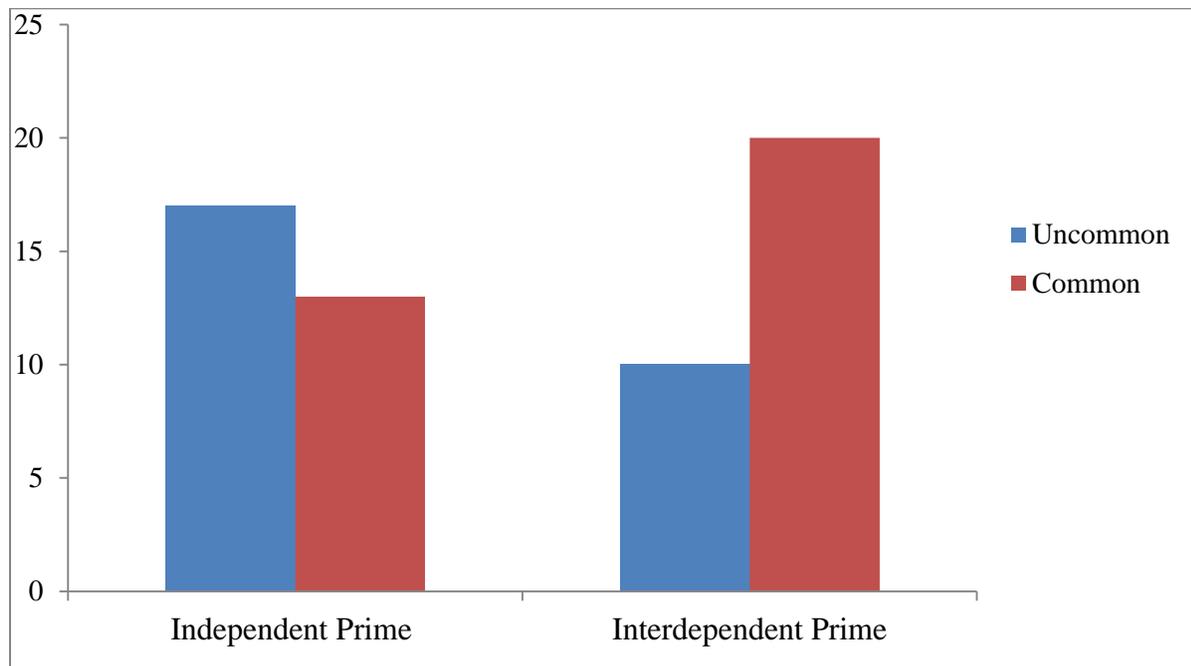

Figure 1. The number of participants making either a common or an uncommon choice in each prime condition.

DISCUSSION

A mixed log-linear analysis revealed no significant interaction between Cultural Values, Prime conditions, and Choice. The results obtained do not appear to support the hypothesis that

the content of self-construal priming influence individuals' choice pattern towards uniqueness and conformity. Thus, suggesting that self-construals do not play a significant role in predicting participates' preferences and choices.

Although the results were not significant, a trend did emerge in the data that is consistent with the hypothesis of the present study. Among the participants in the prime conditions, a noticeable difference was found between the selections of pens. In the interdependent prime condition, more than half of the participants (67%) chose the pen of the more common color (See Table 2). Similarly, in the independent prime condition, slightly more than half of the participants (56%) chose the pen of the more uncommon color (See Table 2). More than half the participants in each condition exhibited a choice pattern that is consistent with the respective cultural values they were primed with. If participants' choices were not influenced by the presentation of the pens then we would expect an equal preference for both the common and uncommon color across both conditions. However, it was found that when the independent aspect of the self (where the individual views herself/himself separate from others) is salient, participants were more likely to make an uncommon choice than a common choice. Likewise, when the interdependent aspect of the self (where the individual views herself/himself embedded in a larger social network) is salient, participants were more likely to make a common choice.

If participants' response (choice) in each condition were regarded as reflecting cultural attitudes towards norms then each responses could be interpreted as either following the norm (when a common color pen was selected) or going against the norm (when an uncommon color pen was selected). This pattern of finding is in-line with previous findings on cultural differences in practice related to attitudes towards norms. Previous research has found that East Asians were more willing to conform to the norm than European Americans were, whether the task at hand was insignificant (Kim and Markus 1999), or more important, as implied in past research on life

satisfaction (Suh et al. 1998), child-rearing practices (Chao 1994), and motivation (Iyengar and Lepper 1999). The observed trend suggests that the way an individual views themselves in terms of being separate or embedded in a group impacts their choice pattern towards uniqueness and conformity.

Additionally, the observed trend may reflect the influential role of the meaning of acts which is shaped by culture (Kim and Drolet 2003) on participants' choice patterns. Previous research has found that people basis their preferences, which in turn influences their choices, on the meaning attached to a target object rather than the specific properties of the object (e.g. Hunt 1955; Irwin and Gebhard 1946; Rozin and Zellner 1985; Zajonc 1968). In line with these findings, it could be suggested that participants based their choice of pen on the meaning associated with each color rather than the properties of the pen. To better illustrate, participants may have chosen the uncommon color, not because of the specific color of the pen, but for the meaning associated with the act. Participants may have perceived the uncommon color as representing uniqueness, going against the norm, and standing out from the crowd. Priming participants with independence would have made these values more salient to the individual (Butler et al. 1999), explaining the greater frequency of participants within this condition choosing the uncommon color than the common color. Similarly, participants primed with interdependence would have values of conformity and harmony made more salient to them (Butler at et. 1999) which re-enforces the idea of following the norm (Markus and Kim 1999). Participants might have perceived the common color as representing conformity since it was in the majority, blending in with its surroundings. Thus, partially explaining why more than half of the participants within this condition chose the common color more often than the uncommon color. Consequently, regardless of the individual properties of the targets (whether they are pens or abstract figures), the meaning attached to an object which is shaped by culture may be a more

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important predictor of attitudes and behavior (Kim and Drolet 2003). Therefore, suggesting that participants in both conditions may not have perceived the act of choosing a pen in the same way but associate different meanings to each color as a result of the cultural values they were primed with.

However, further research is required to support this theory as there were a number of limitations in the present study. One important limitation is the sample size of the study. The current sample size of 60 participants (30 in each condition) is small. The study could have benefited from a larger sample size since it generally produces more reliable data. Another limitation of the study is the lack of a control group (no priming). Including a control group would have provided a comparative group to contrast the results from the priming conditions with participants' typical responses (Suh et al. 2008). Furthermore, it would have been interesting to have switched the different colored pens positioning halfway through the study. So for example, the color that is originally placed in the minority (uncommon color) would switch in the second half of the study, and be placed in the majority (common color). By alternating the colors throughout the study, it would have limited the influences of the actual colors on participant choices.

Also, it is important to note that there are alternative explanations for the observed trend in participants' choice patterns. For instances, participants could have chosen a pen at random. If this was the case then we would expect more common color pens to be selected since there was a higher frequency of common colors in the group of pens. This explanation could account for why more participants in the interdependent condition choose the common color more often than the uncommon color. However, this explanation does not explain why more people in the independent condition chose the uncommon color more often than the common color. If participants were picking at random then it stands to reason that in both conditions participants

should choose the common color more often than the uncommon color. Another explanation could be that when participants saw the uncommon color, they interpreted the absence of this color as representing the more popular color. Reasoning that since there are fewer numbers of color X, people before them must have chosen it more frequently, signifying its popularity. Thus, choosing an uncommon color over a common color could have reflected participants' intent to choose a more popular color over a less popular color. Furthermore, another explanation could be that participants' choice of a pen was influenced by a pre-existing pen collection. If a person already possessed many pens of the same color then they might be more likely to avoid choosing the same color pen when given the option to select one pen from a group of pens. These are all potential explanation for the observed trend across both conditions and as a result, it has limited the interpretation of the data.

A potential implication of the study is that cultural values of interdependence and independence which are re-enforced in various degrees in East Asian and Western cultures do not account for the cultural differences in attitudes and preferences towards uniqueness and conformity. As a result, future research is encouraged to identify other specific mechanisms through which culture operates to influence individuals' choice patterns. For instance, future research could explore different cognitive processes as a potential mediator for the observed cultural phenomena. Fiske et al. (1998) found that East Asians tend to think in holistic ways (focusing on the whole of an object rather than its individual parts), whereas North Americans tend to think in analytic ways (methodical step-by-step approach to thinking). These differences in cognitive process style may help explain the difference in attitudes and preferences towards uniqueness and conformity. A holistic way of thinking refers to viewing an object as a basic unit rather than focusing on each subsection as an independent basic unit (Fiske et al. 1998). This type of categorization may lead to a greater liking for the common color since the uncommon

color would most likely be viewed as a small component of the larger presentation of pens that upset the arrangement of the basic unit that is otherwise carefully structured. Given that the uncommon color deviates from its surroundings, disturbing the arrangement of the basic unit. In contrast, an analytic way of thinking results in viewing the subsections of an object as independent basic units (Fiske et al. 1998). This type of categorization may lead individuals to view the uncommon color in the assortment of pens as an independent basic unit. Resulting in more attention allocated to the uncommon color since it stands out from its background, which may lead to a greater liking for it over the less noticeable color.

CONCLUSION

Why do we make the choices that we do? Is there a recognizable pattern to our simple everyday choices? Well interestingly, research has shown that the values expressed on a cultural level can also be displayed on an individual level, through individuals' choices (Kim and Markus 1999). In other words, the core values expressed in an individual's culture can also be exhibited in the person's actions, leading to a recognizable pattern to their choices and preferences. In particular, Western countries value ideals such as individuality and autonomy, where its members are encouraged to be unique and different from others (Kim and Markus 1999; Snyder and Fromkin 1980; Brewer 1991). In many East Asian countries, however, ideals such as harmony and connectedness are valued, where conforming to social norms and being similar to others are positively viewed by its members (Fiske et al. 1998; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Markus et al. 1997; Smith and Bond 1993; Triandis 1995). As a result of these prevalent cultural values, a theme of uniqueness emerges within the Western cultural context and members establish their individuality through attempting to be unique (Kim and Markus 1999; Brewer 1991). Similarly, a theme of conformity emerges within the East Asian cultural context where members maintain harmony within the group through conforming to social norms and blending

in with their surroundings (Kim and Markus 1999; Fiske et al. 1998; Markus and Kitayama 1991). Kim and Markus (1999) found that the cultural values centering on uniqueness and conformity that have been traditionally found in Western and Eastern cultures were also expressed in the choices and preferences of its members. They found that American's were more likely to select subfigures and stimulus that were unique from its surroundings, whereas East Asians were more likely to choices subfigures and stimulus that were similar to its surroundings (Kim and Markus 1999). These findings indicate that the values prevalent in an individual's culture may also be reflected in their choices. However, the exact cultural mechanisms that accounted for the cultural consistent choices and preferences have not been identified.

The intent of the present paper is to address this gap by identifying a potential mediator of the observed cultural phenomena. I examined the causal role of interdependent versus independent self-construals on individuals' choices and preferences towards uniqueness and conformity. It was hypothesized that interdependent and independent self-construals account for the cultural differences in attitudes and preferences towards uniqueness and conformity found cross-cultural by Kim & Markus (1999) both on the cultural and individual level. A social episode was designed where participants were presented with a group of pens that were strategically arranged to reinforce Western and Eastern cultural values regarding uniqueness and conformity. By priming either the interdependent or independent aspect of the self and immediately observing participants' choices after, I was able to directly examine the impact of cultural information on participants' behavior. Using a mixed log-linear test, the analysis revealed no significant interaction between Cultural Values, Prime conditions, and Choice, suggesting that the presentation of pens did not influences participants' choices in either prime condition. In other words, whether a pen was presented as the more common or more uncommon color did not have a clear impact on participants' preferences for a particular pen; across both

conditions. The results suggest that self-construals do not play a significant role in predicting participates' choice patterns towards uniqueness and conformity. However, the data did reflect a trend that is consistent with the hypotheses of the present research.

Although the present study was not able to produce significant results, it is nonetheless a very important area of research that should be further studied. The influence of culture on our choices has several implications for our lives as we make choices daily. By further studying this topic, we can develop a better understanding of the interaction between the individual and their culture as well as expand our knowledge of the extent of cultural influences on our actions. Furthermore, culture, as influential as it may be on our behavior, it is learned and created by us and therefore certain aspects that hinder us as individuals and as a society can be changed and improved.

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Appendix

Items taken from the Asian Values Scale (Kim et al., 1999).

1. Children should not place their parents in retirement homes.

2. The worst thing one can do is bring disgrace to one's family reputation.

3. One need not achieve academically to make one's parents proud. (Reverse scored)

4. Parental love should be implicitly understood and not openly expressed.

5. When one receives a gift, one should reciprocate with a gift of equal or greater value.

6. One should not make waves.

7. One need not follow the role expectations (gender, family hierarchy) of one's family. (Reverse scored)

8. Educational and career achievements need not be one's top priority. (Reverse scored)

9. One should be able to question a person in an authority position. (Reverse scored)

10. One need not remain reserved and tranquil. (Reverse scored)

Items taken from the European American Values Scale (Wolfe et al., 2001).

1. Sometimes, it is necessary for the government to stifle individual development. (Reverse scored)

2. A woman who is living alone should be able to have children.

3. I'm confident in my ability to handle most things.

4. It is important for me to serve as a role model for others.

5. The idea that one spouse does all the housework is outdated.

6. I am rarely unsure about how I should behave.

7. I prefer not to take on responsibilities unless I must. (Reverse scored)

8. I do not like to serve as a model for others (Reverse scored)

9. Good relationships are based on mutual respect.

10. Abortion is okay when the mother's health is at risks.