

Cross-Cultural Differences in the Refusal to Accept a Small Gift: The Differential Influence of Reciprocity Norms on Asians and North Americans

Hao Shen
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Fang Wan
University of Manitoba

Robert S. Wyer, Jr.
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

Asians are more likely than North Americans to refuse a small gift that is offered to them by a casual acquaintance. Five experiments confirmed this difference and explored the reasons for its occurrence. Asians, who are inclined to think of themselves in relation to others, are more likely than North Americans to invoke a reciprocity norm in exchanging gifts with casual acquaintances, and they refuse a gift in order to avoid the feeling of indebtedness they would experience if they cannot reciprocate. North Americans, however, who are inclined to think of themselves independently of others, are more likely to base their acceptance of the gift on its attractiveness without considering their obligation to reciprocate. These cultural differences are not evident when the gift is offered by a close friend with whom individuals have a communal relationship. Implications of our findings for miscommunication between members of different cultures are discussed.

Keywords: culture, social norm, attribution

Cultural differences in norms, values, and overt behavior are widely recognized (for reviews, see Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Wyer, Chiu, & Hong, 2009). These differences range from self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), to nonverbal perception (Ambady, Koo, Lee, & Rosenthal, 1996; Ambady & Weisbuch, in press), to the language used to communicate about social behavior (Semin, 2009), thinking style (Nisbett, 2003), and intergroup negotiation (Leung, 1997). These differences can lead representatives of different cultural backgrounds to misinterpret the intended implications of one another's behavior. Consequently, they can have an adverse effect on interpersonal relations (Brislin, 2009).

One potential source of misunderstanding surrounds the exchange of gifts. The offer of a gift and its subsequent acceptance

or rejection are forms of social communication, and the interpretation of these behaviors, like other communication, is governed by norms and values that vary over cultures and social groups. Thus, for example, an individual's offer of a gift to another is likely to be guided in part by the expectation that the gift will be appreciated. However, when recipients expect that if they accept the gift, they are obligated to respond in kind, they may reject the offer. The failure to understand one another's motives and reactions in such a situation could create hard feelings and damage the personal relationship between the individuals involved.

Cultural differences in the disposition to accept a gift may be a reflection of a more fundamental difference in the tendency to think of oneself as independent or interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). North Americans, who typically have independent self-construals, may base their acceptance of a gift from a casual acquaintance on the attractiveness of the gift itself without considering the reason it is being given or their obligation to reciprocate it. Asians, however, who typically think of themselves in relation to others, may be more sensitive to their obligation to reciprocate (Hofstede, 1980; Singelis, 1994) and consequently may anticipate feeling indebted if they receive a gift without being able to reciprocate. For these reasons, therefore, Asians may be less inclined to accept a gift than North Americans are.

The studies to be reported examined this possibility using both North American and Chinese participants. A series of scenario studies provided preliminary evidence that Chinese are more likely than North Americans to reject a gift from a casual acquaintance. Furthermore, this difference is attributable not only to differences in the appreciation they were likely to experience but also to differences in the feelings of indebtedness they imagined they

This article was published Online First November 8, 2010.

Hao Shen, Department of Marketing, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong; Fang Wan, Department of Marketing, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Robert S. Wyer, Jr., Department of Business and Administration, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

Robert S. Wyer, Jr. is now at the Department of Marketing, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong.

All authors contributed equally and are listed alphabetically. This research was supported in part by Grants GRF641308 and GRF453110 from the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong; Grant UM/SSHRC from the University of Manitoba; and the Dean's Research Grant and the Ross Johnson Research Fellowship from the I. H. Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Hao Shen, Department of Marketing, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong. E-mail: shenhao@baf.msmail.cuhk.edu.hk

would experience if they accepted the gift without having an opportunity to reciprocate. An additional scenario study showed that these cultural differences were restricted to interactions with casual acquaintances and did not generalize to interactions between close friends. Experiments 3 and 4 showed that Asians' acceptance of a gift or benefit, unlike North Americans', was a function of the time and effort they had expended (or expected to expend) in helping the other, thus confirming our assumption that Asians' willingness to accept a gift or benefit was governed largely by a reciprocity norm. Experiment 5 then provided behavioral confirmation of the hypothesis that Asians are more likely than North Americans to reject a gift when they do not have a prior opportunity to benefit the gift giver, and that if they do accept the gift and have an opportunity to reciprocate, the benefit they bestow on the gift giver is proportional to the gift they have received.

Theoretical Background

We consider a gift to be a benefit that one person bestows on another and that is often both unexpected and unnecessary for the other's well-being. Thus, it is distinguished from a favor, which is often requested and is given to someone in need (Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982). Many of the factors that come into play in considering the likelihood of accepting a gift apply to favors as well. Nevertheless, gifts and favors should not be equated, for reasons to be noted later in this article.

Gifts are bestowed for many reasons, of course. Individuals often give to charitable organizations in order to benefit victims of misfortune. Employers give gifts to their subordinates in appreciation for a job well done. Gifts are exchanged between family members and close friends on special occasions (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) and are given as tokens of affection to romantic partners. Most research on gift giving has focused on these conditions (e.g., Huang & Yu, 2000; Joy, 2001; Otnes, Lowrey, & Kim, 1993). In these conditions, the gift tends to be interpreted by representatives of both Asian and Western cultures as an expression of affection, and refusing it could be seen as unfriendly or even hostile in both societies (Belk, 1976; Mauss, 1954).

In many instances, however, people are spontaneously offered a small gift by a casual friend or acquaintance. After lunch with colleagues, for example, or after sharing a taxi ride, someone may offer to pay the bill. Or, a person may offer to share potato chips or candy while waiting for a meeting to start. In these instances, the gift giver's motives are often unclear (Park, 1998). Consequently, the exchange of gifts in these situations is likely to be governed by norm-based expectations, and these expectations may differ across cultures.

In the remainder of this section, we first analyze the affective reactions that potentially occur in response to the offer of a gift. We then review briefly the evidence for cultural differences in the norms and values that underlie these affective reactions and their implications for gift acceptance.

Affective Reactions to a Gift

The offer of a gift can elicit both positive feelings (appreciation) and negative ones (indebtedness; Greenberg & Solomon, 1971; Greenberg & Westcott, 1983). Although both reactions are often viewed as components of a more general feeling of gratitude

(Emmons & McCullough, 2004), they are conceptually and empirically distinct (Fong, 2006; Watkins, Scheer, Ovnicek, & Kolts, 2006).

The appreciation that people experience when they are offered a gift is likely to be mediated by their cognitive appraisal of the conditions in which the offer is made (Ruth, 1996). This appraisal can concern (a) the intrinsic value of the gift itself, (b) the effort required to bestow it, (c) the reason why the gift is being offered, and (d) what one is expected to do in return. Recipients' feelings of appreciation are likely to be greater if they attribute the gift to the giver's genuine liking for them and desire to benefit them than if they attribute it to self-serving motives.

People's feelings of indebtedness can depend on similar factors (although not necessarily to the same degree; see Fong, 2006). However, these feelings are more likely to result from their failure to conform to a social norm of reciprocity. Individuals are often motivated to maintain equity in their social relationships (Cialdini, 2001; Fong, 2006; Gouldner, 1960; Greenberg, 1980). If people are offered a gift from someone that is greater than the gifts they have bestowed on this person in the past, and if they do not have an opportunity to return the gift, they may anticipate feeling indebted (Cialdini, 2001; Gouldner, 1960). Consequently, they may decline the offer in order to avoid the negative feelings of obligation that would result if they accepted it.

The feelings of indebtedness that result from accepting a gift can also depend on the type of relationship between the parties involved. Clark and Mills (1979, 1993) distinguished between *communal* relationships between close friends and family members and *exchange* relationships that typically exist between casual acquaintances or business associates. In communal relationships, "the norm . . . is to give benefits in response to needs or to demonstrate a general concern for the other person" (Clark & Mills, 1993, p. 684). Although partners in a communal relationship often reciprocate the benefits they receive, this is normally motivated by feelings of appreciation and not feelings of obligation (see Huang & Yu, 2000; Otnes et al., 1993).

In exchange relationships of the sort considered in the present research, however, transactions are governed by *quid pro quo*. That is, benefits are given "with the expectation of receiving a comparable benefit in return, or as repayment for a benefit received previously" (Clark & Mills, 1993, p. 684). In these relationships, people are typically expected to return the gifts that they receive (Clark & Mills, 1979). If this expectation is salient to them at the time they are offered a gift and they are either unable or unmotivated to reciprocate, they may be inclined to refuse the gift in order to avoid the feelings of indebtedness that they anticipate they would experience if they accepted it. On the other hand, the impact of this normative expectation can depend on its chronic accessibility in memory (i.e., the likelihood that it spontaneously comes to mind; see Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, & Tota, 1986; Higgins, 1996). This, in turn, is likely to depend on the prevalence of this norm in the culture to which individuals belong.

Cultural Differences in Responses to a Gift

One of the most pervasive differences between Asians' and North Americans' social motivation and behavior is reflected in the manner in which individuals view themselves and their relation to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; see also Triandis, 1995).

That is, Asians have interdependent self-concepts that emphasize the connectedness between themselves and others. In contrast, North Americans are inclined to think of themselves independently of others.

This cultural difference may be traceable to early child rearing practices. P. J. Miller, Fung, and Koven (2007) reported evidence that Chinese (Taiwanese) parents typically treat negative behaviors of their children as personality deficits that need to be corrected and that they set up themselves and others as comparative standards of excellence for the child to emulate. In contrast, North American parents are inclined to treat their children's misbehavior as a normal part of growing up and as something that does not reflect on the child's value as a human being. As Wyer (in press; Wyer & Hong, 2010) pointed out, this difference can have several effects. In particular, Asians may acquire a disposition both (a) to evaluate themselves in relation to others and (b) to be particularly concerned about the negative consequences of their behavior (i.e., to be prevention focused, as conceptualized by Higgins, 1997). North Americans, on the other hand, may become disposed to evaluate themselves independently of others and to focus on the positive consequences of their behavior without concern about the negative consequences that might result (to be promotion focused).

Although these differences may be manifested in both social and nonsocial contexts (Chiu & Hong, 2007; Wyer, in press), they have particular implications for the exchange of gifts. Both Asians and North Americans are likely to establish communal relationships with their close friends and family members. Individuals' exchange of gifts in these relationships is unlikely to be governed by feelings of indebtedness regardless of their cultural background. However, Asians typically make finer distinctions between in-group and outgroup members than North Americans do (Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996). To this extent, they may be relatively more likely to invoke norms of reciprocity that theoretically govern exchange relationships with casual acquaintances (Clark & Mills, 1979).

Reciprocity and feelings of indebtedness. In exchange relationships, individuals attempt to maintain equity between the benefits they receive and those they bestow (Clark & Mills, 1979, 1993) and consequently are motivated to reciprocate benefits within a short time after receiving them. The reciprocity norm that governs exchange relationships is likely to generalize over cultures. However, to the extent that Asians are inclined to evaluate themselves in relation to others, they are likely to invoke this norm spontaneously. To this extent, they are likely to anticipate feelings of indebtedness if they receive a gift that they are unable to reciprocate. Consequently, they are likely to refuse the gift in order to avoid these negative feelings.

This tendency, however, is likely to be much less strong among North Americans. Although North Americans often reciprocate the gifts they receive, they are likely to treat reciprocity as a matter of personal choice rather than feeling obligated to comply with a social norm (J. G. Miller & Bersoff, 1994, 1998). Therefore, they may anticipate less negative feelings if they fail to reciprocate than Asians do. Moreover, they are more generally disposed to base their decision on the positive consequences of receiving the gift without considering its negative consequences. For these reasons, North Americans' decisions to accept a gift are more likely than Asians' decisions to be based on their attraction to the gift itself

and are less likely to be based on the feelings of indebtedness that might result from their inability to reciprocate.

Feelings of appreciation. Our primary interest in the present research surrounded cultural differences in the motivation to reciprocate gifts and the feelings of indebtedness that result from the inability to do so. However, cultural differences in the magnitude of appreciation experienced could also play a role. Asians tend to attribute a person's behavior to situational factors, whereas people from individualist cultures are more likely to attribute it to internal motives or dispositions (Morris & Peng, 1994; see also Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). To this extent, Asians should be more likely than Westerners to regard the offer of a gift as externally motivated. Survey-based research (Park, 1998) has confirmed this possibility. That is, although North Americans' gift giving is often motivated by their desire to make the recipient happy, Koreans' gift giving is more likely to reflect their desire to enhance the gift giver's reputation in the eyes of others. Thus, to the extent that people feel less appreciative if they attribute a gift to self-serving motives than if they perceive it to be motivated by a sincere desire to benefit them (Fong, 2006), Asians should feel less appreciative when they are offered a gift than North Americans do. The effects of these differences on gift acceptance were also considered in the research to be reported.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 confirmed the existence of a cultural difference in the likelihood of accepting a gift in three different consumption situations. In Experiment 1a, Hong Kong and Canadian participants imagined that they shared a taxi with a friend and that the friend offered to pay the fare. We expected that Hong Kong participants would be less willing to accept this offer than Canadians would. Experiments 1b and 1c replicated the results of the first experiment using two different scenarios. In addition, they confirmed our assumption that feelings of appreciation and indebtedness mediate the cultural difference that we observed. Finally, Experiment 1d eliminated an alternative interpretation of our findings in terms of the role of politeness.

Experiment 1a

Method. Fifty-nine Hong Kong Chinese undergraduate students and 39 Canadian (European American) undergraduates participated. They were told that the experimenter was concerned with how people interact socially. On this pretense, they were asked to "imagine that you and your friend have shared a taxi to the airport. Arriving at the airport, your friend offers to pay the fare." After reading the story, participants indicated what they would do in the situation by circling one of three options: (a) let the friend pay the fare and thank the friend, (b) offer to pay the fare oneself, or (c) insist on paying one's share.

Results. The likelihood of accepting an offer, summarized in Table 1, confirmed our expectations. That is, 26% of the Canadian participants chose to let their friend pay the fare, whereas only 9% of the Hong Kong participants made that choice (Wald $\chi^2 = 4.90$, $p < .05$).

Experiment 1b

This experiment replicated the cultural difference in gift acceptance using a different scenario and provided evidence that the

Table 1
Responses to the Offer of a Gift by Hong Kong and Canadian Participants: Experiment 1a

Response	Hong Kong participants	Canadian participants
Let the friend pay the fee	9%	26%
Pay the fee for the friend instead	0%	15%
Insist on paying one's own fee	91%	59%

difference was mediated by differences in feelings of both appreciation and indebtedness.

Method. Forty Hong Kong undergraduate students and 43 Canadian (European American) undergraduate students participated in this study. They were told that the experimenter was interested in their social interaction and were exposed to the following scenario:

Suppose you were in a supermarket. You saw a salesperson promoting a canned soup. You did not plan to buy any soup at that time and just wanted to pass by. However, the salesperson spotted you and offered you a free sample of soup to taste.

After reading the story, participants estimated the likelihood that they would taste the soup along a scale from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 7 (*very likely*). In addition, they completed a seven-item questionnaire including two items pertaining to appreciation ("I think the salesperson is nice," "I would appreciate the free soup sample offered by the salesperson"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$) and two items pertaining to indebtedness ("I would feel indebted after tasting the soup," "I would feel uncomfortable tasting the soup for free"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$). Participants' agreement with each set of items, reported along scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), were summed to provide single indices of the reactions in question.

In addition, participants were asked the extent to which they would lose face if they tasted the soup without buying it. Finally, they reported their agreement that "this scenario occurs frequently in my life." Both items were reported along a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Results. Participants' reactions to the gift are summarized in Table 2. As expected, Hong Kong participants were less willing to taste the free soup ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.66$) than Canadian participants were ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.16$), $F(1, 81) = 6.51$, $p < .01$. The feelings that we assumed to underlie this difference were also confirmed. Although appreciation and indebtedness were negatively correlated ($r = -.38$, $p < .001$), the correlation was sufficiently low to justify the assumption that they are conceptually distinct. Hong Kong participants anticipated feeling both more indebted ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.01$) than Canadian participants did ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.26$), $F(1, 81) = 11.50$, $p < .001$, and less appreciative (Hong Kong participants: $M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.27$; Canadian participants: $M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.06$), $F(1, 81) = 4.64$, $p < .05$.

Regression analyses confirmed the conclusion that culture had a significant impact on gift acceptance ($\beta = .80$), $t(81) = 2.55$, $p < .01$. However, indebtedness and appreciation also had significant effects on gift acceptance ($\beta = -.45$ and $.54$, respectively; in each case, $t[81] > 3.63$, $p < .001$), and including each of these variables in the analysis significantly reduced the effect of culture to non-

significance (in the case of indebtedness, $\beta = .47$, $t[80] = 1.47$, $p > .15$; in the case of appreciation, $\beta = .53$, $t[80] = 1.78$, $p = .08$). A Sobel (1982) test supported the mediating effects of both indebtedness ($z = 2.52$, $p < .01$) and appreciation ($z = 1.94$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the above cultural difference was mediated by the feelings of appreciation and indebtedness.

Furthermore, Hong Kong participants ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.68$) were more likely than Canadians ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.14$) to agree that they would lose face if they didn't buy the soup after tasting it, $F(1, 81) = 14.35$, $p < .001$. Responses to this item were highly correlated with indebtedness ($r = .70$, $p < .001$) but not with appreciation ($r = -.18$, $p > .10$), indicating that feelings of indebtedness are more likely to be induced by participants' motivation to avoid losing face than feelings of appreciation are. On the other hand, these cultural differences were not due to a difference in the frequency of gift giving. Asians and Canadians did not differ in their estimates of the frequency with which the situation described in the scenario occurred in their lives (3.93 vs. 3.74, respectively; $F < 1$).

Experiment 1c

This experiment replicated our findings in another scenario and provided more evidence of the processes that underlie this difference.

Method. Twenty-six Hong Kong undergraduate students and 29 Canadian (European American) undergraduate students participated in a study of how people interact socially. On this pretense, participants read the following scenario:

Imagine that at the airport, you accidentally bump into a friend who was in your class last semester. Both of you are amazed at the coincidence. Because there was some time left before boarding, you and your friend decide to go to a café at the airport and have a chat. At the café, your friend offers to buy you a drink.

After reading the story, participants estimated the likelihood that they would accept the gift along a scale from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 7 (*very likely*). In addition, they completed a seven-item questionnaire including three items pertaining to appreciation ("I appreciate what my classmate did," "I am grateful for what my classmate did," "I think my classmate is nice"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$) and three items pertaining to indebtedness ("I feel indebted to my classmate," "I feel uncomfortable letting my classmate pay for the drink," "I think I am obligated to give my classmate a favor in the future"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). Participants' agreement with each set of items, reported along scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 7

Table 2
Reactions to a Gift as a Function of Culture and Feeling Type: Experiment 1b

Reaction	Hong Kong participants		Canadian participants	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Willingness to taste the free soup	4.93	1.66	5.72	1.16
Feelings of indebtedness	3.24	1.01	2.38	1.26
Feelings of appreciation	4.26	1.27	4.81	1.06
Concern about face	3.00	1.68	1.81	1.14

(*very much*), was summed to provide a single index of the reaction in question. The seventh item asked participants to report their agreement that "my classmate is sincere when offering to pay for the drink" along the same scale used in responding to other items.

Results. Participants' reactions to the offer of the gift are summarized in Table 3. As expected, Hong Kong participants were less willing to accept the gift ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.41$) than Canadian participants were ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.50$), $F(1, 53) = 6.12$, $p < .05$. Differences in appreciation and indebtedness varied accordingly. That is, Hong Kong participants anticipated feeling both more indebted ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.36$) than Canadian participants did ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.39$), $F(1, 53) = 4.71$, $p < .05$, and less appreciative (Hong Kong participants: $M = 5.18$, $SD = 0.91$; Canadian participants: $M = 5.99$, $SD = 0.76$), $F(1, 53) = 12.91$, $p < .001$.

Regression analyses indicated that although culture had a significant impact on gift acceptance ($\beta = .97$), $t(53) = 2.47$, $p < .05$, indebtedness and appreciation also had a significant impact ($\beta = -.50$ and $.70$, respectively; in each case, $t[53] > 3.40$, $p < .01$), and including each of these variables in the analysis reduced the effect of culture to nonsignificance (in the case of indebtedness, $\beta = .62$, $t[52] = 1.65$, $p > .10$; in the case of appreciation, $\beta = .51$, $t[52] = 1.21$, $p > .20$). A Sobel (1982) test supported the mediating effects of both indebtedness ($z = 1.90$, $p < .06$) and appreciation ($z = 2.42$, $p < .05$).

Finally, Hong Kong participants were less inclined to agree that the classmate was sincere when offering the gift to them ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.95$) than Canadian participants were ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 0.97$), $F(1, 53) = 10.96$, $p < .01$. This inclination was highly correlated with feelings of appreciation ($r = .59$, $p < .001$) but was weakly correlated with feelings of indebtedness ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$). Although feelings of appreciation and feelings of indebtedness were negatively correlated ($r = -.42$, $p < .001$), the correlation was again sufficiently low to justify the assumption that they are conceptually distinct. These data suggest that participants' perception of the classmate's motive in offering the gift was more likely to influence their feelings of appreciation than their feelings of indebtedness.

Experiment 1d

An alternative interpretation might be given to the findings of Experiments 1a–1c. Specifically, Asians might believe it is polite to reject a gift initially but to accept it if the offer persists in the offer. Thus, for example, they might initially protest a companion's offer to pick up the check for dinner at a restaurant but might

acquiesce if the companion insists. In contrast, Westerners might believe it is impolite to refuse the warm-hearted gesture of a friend. If this is true, however, cultural differences in gift acceptance should be more evident if a politeness norm is explicitly called to participants' attention than it would be otherwise.

To examine this possibility, 52 Hong Kong participants and 45 Canadian (European American) participants read the same scenario we presented in Experiment 1c. Then, some participants were asked to think about how they should respond "in order to make yourself feel better," whereas others were asked to think about how they should respond to the offer "in order to be polite." In each case, participants indicated what they would do by circling one of three options: (a) let the friend pay for the drink and thank him/her, (b) offer to buy the friend a drink instead, or (c) insist on paying for one's own drink. We replicated the cultural difference in gift acceptance we observed in Experiment 1c. That is, 62% of the Canadian participants chose to let their friend pay for their drink, whereas only 23% of the Hong Kong participants did so (Wald $\chi^2 = 7.93$, $p < .01$). When participants were told to think about how they would respond in order to be polite, however, this difference disappeared (56% vs. 50%, in the case of Canadian vs. Hong Kong participants, respectively). The interaction of culture and instructions was marginally significant (Wald $\chi^2 = 2.71$, $p < .10$).

Thus, both Asians and Westerners appear to believe that it is polite to accept a gift if it is offered. As a result, they are equally likely to accept a gift on the basis of this consideration. These results ruled out the explanation that the cultural difference in gift acceptance is due to a difference in the politeness norm that governs Asians' and Westerners' gift acceptance. If anything, calling attention to a politeness norm eliminated the cultural difference in gift acceptance rather than increasing it.

Discussion

Experiments 1a–1d were scenario studies and, therefore, are somewhat artificial (this concern was remedied in Experiment 3, to be described presently). Nevertheless, the converging evidence obtained in responses to quite different hypothetical situations (a friend's offer to pay for a taxi, the offer of a free sample in a shopping situation, and the offer of a cup of coffee by a classmate) increases confidence in the generality of the conclusion that Asians are less willing to accept a gift that they are unable to reciprocate than North Americans are. Furthermore, this is apparently a result of differences in both cultural representatives' feelings of appreciation for the offer and the feelings of indebtedness they anticipated experiencing if they accepted the gift. Furthermore, Experiment 1d indicated that this difference is not a result of cultural differences in the perception that it is polite to refuse the gift. Rather, it emerged only when participants were asked to make a decision that would make them feel better.

Other data reinforce our conclusion. For example, Asians in Experiment 1b were more likely than North Americans to report that they would lose face if they accepted the gift without reciprocating, and these judgments were more strongly associated with feelings of indebtedness than with feelings of appreciation. At the same time, Asians in Experiment 1c were relatively less inclined than North Americans to believe that the gift giver's motives were sincere (see also Park, 1998), and these beliefs were more highly

Table 3

Reactions to a Gift as a Function of Culture and Feeling Type: Experiment 1c

Reaction	Hong Kong participants		Canadian participants	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Willingness to accept the gift	3.92	1.41	4.90	1.50
Feelings of indebtedness	4.03	1.36	3.22	1.39
Feelings of appreciation	5.18	0.91	5.99	0.76
Attribution of sincerity	4.88	0.95	5.75	0.97

correlated with feelings of appreciation than with feelings of indebtedness.

In combination, therefore, these studies confirm the conclusion that Asians are more hesitant to accept a gift than North Americans are and that their reactions are a result of both feeling less appreciative and anticipating feeling more indebted. Furthermore, their relative lack of appreciation results in part from their perception that the gift giver's motives were self-serving (in Experiment 1c), whereas their feelings of indebtedness were associated with their belief that they would lose face by accepting the gift without reciprocating (in Experiment 1b).

Experiment 2

Our interpretation of the results of Experiment 1 assumes that individuals imagined themselves to be in an exchange relationship with the gift giver. If their relationship with the gift giver is communal, the effects of reciprocity norms on gift acceptance, and the cultural difference in gift acceptance that is mediated by these effects, should not be evident (Clark & Mills, 1993). Experiment 2 examined this possibility. We assumed that Asians would be more willing to accept a gift from a close friend than from a casual acquaintance. However, we expected North Americans to be willing to accept a gift regardless of their relationship with the gift giver.

Method

Fifty-three Hong Kong undergraduate students and 54 Canadian (European American) undergraduate students participated. Participants read one of two scenarios. In casual acquaintance conditions, they were told to imagine that (a) they had accidentally bumped into someone at the airport with whom they were acquainted but did not know well, (b) they had decided to go to a café at the airport and have a chat, and (c) at the café, the acquaintance had offered to buy them a drink. In the close relationship conditions, the scenario was similar except that the gift giver was described as a friend with whom the participants had a close relationship.

After reading the story, participants estimated their likelihood of accepting the gift along a scale from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 7 (*very likely*). In addition, they estimated the extent to which they would feel uncomfortable about accepting the gift along a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Results

Feelings. Although participants reported feeling more uncomfortable about receiving the gift from a casual acquaintance than receiving it from a close friend, $F(1, 103) = 4.92, p < .05$, this effect depended on participants' cultural background, $F(1, 103) = 4.44, p < .05$. Specifically, the difference was evident among Hong Kong participants ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.61$, when the gift giver was a casual acquaintance, vs. $M = 2.88, SD = 1.54$, when the giver was a close friend), $F(1, 103) = 9.23, p < .01$, but not among Canadians (3.56 vs. 3.52, respectively; $F < 1$).

Gift acceptance. As indicated in Table 4, Hong Kong participants were significantly less willing to accept the gift from a casual acquaintance ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.41$) than from a close

Table 4
*Reactions to a Gift as a Function of Culture and Relationship:
Experiment 2*

Reaction	Close friend		Casual acquaintance	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Willingness to accept gift				
Hong Kong participants	4.88	1.60	3.76	1.41
Canadian participants	4.96	1.29	4.81	1.62
<i>M_{diff}</i>	-0.08		-1.05	
Feelings of indebtedness				
Hong Kong participants	2.88	1.54	4.31	1.61
Canadian participants	3.52	1.70	3.56	1.97
<i>M_{diff}</i>	-0.64		0.75	

Note. *M_{diff}* = mean difference.

friend ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.60$), $F(1, 103) = 7.51, p < .01$. However, this difference was not apparent among Canadians (4.81 vs. 4.96, respectively; $F < 1$). The interaction of relationship type and cultural background was marginally significant, $F(1, 103) = 2.86, p < .09$.

Mediation analyses indicated that participants' report of their feelings of discomfort had a significant impact on gift acceptance ($\beta = -.39$), $t(105) = -5.08, p < .001$, and that when these feelings were introduced as a mediator, the interaction of culture and relationship type was reduced to nonsignificance ($\beta = .12$), $t(102) = 0.90, p > .35$. A Sobel (1982) test confirmed this conclusion ($z = 1.95, p < .05$).

In summary, the results of this experiment confirm that cultural differences in the willingness to accept a gift of the sort we considered in this research are restricted to conditions in which the gift giver is a casual friend or acquaintance. When the gift giver is a close friend, and normative expectations to reciprocate do not exist, Asians are just as willing to accept the gift as North Americans are.

Experiment 3

We have assumed that Asians tend to spontaneously invoke a reciprocity norm when receiving a gift from a casual friend and, therefore, that they feel more obligated than North Americans to reciprocate the gift. To validate these assumptions, it is necessary to consider the different influence of reciprocity norms on Asians' and North Americans' reactions to a gift. The next three experiments accomplished this. In addition, instead of inferring individuals' reactions to a gift from their responses to hypothetical situations, Experiments 3–5 examined individuals' actual behavior.

Specifically, we have assumed that individuals whose decisions to give and receive benefits are governed by a reciprocity norm are motivated to maintain a balance between the benefits they give and those they receive, and that they feel indebted if a negative balance exists (Cialdini, 2001; Greenberg, 1980). If this is so, and if Asians are more motivated to comply with such a norm than North Americans are, they should be more likely to keep track of the benefits they give and receive, and should be willing to accept a gift only to the extent that they feel they have either have bestowed

a benefit on the gift giver in the past or anticipate doing so in the near future.

Experiments 3 and 4 investigated this possibility. Experiment 3 was conducted at the student center of a Canadian university. Students were randomly approached and asked to complete either a long (10-min) or short (1-min) survey. After doing so, participants were unexpectedly offered candy bars as a gift, being urged to take as many as they wished. We expected that Chinese participants' behavior would be guided by a reciprocity norm and that they would avoid taking more candies than they perceived to be justified by the benefits they had bestowed on the experimenter. Therefore, they should take fewer candies if they had completed a short questionnaire than if they had completed a long one. In contrast, North Americans should be less concerned about keeping a balance between benefits given and received, and so the amount of candies they take should depend less on the length of the questionnaire they had completed than the amount taken by Chinese participants.

Method

Reciprocity in this study was inferred from number of chocolate bars taken by the participants. Because previous research has shown that female students generally like chocolate or candy more than male students (Andrade, 2005; Shen & Wyer, 2008), only females were used as participants. Forty-two Chinese female students and 45 Canadian (European American) female students participated.

To recruit participants, we set up a research station at the university student center. This location was particularly desirable, as it was frequented by many students from mainland China. Chinese and Canadian female students who passed the station were approached by our research assistants (both Canadian and Chinese assistants were employed on a random basis). Participants were asked if they would help out with a marketing survey. The survey asked participants for their reactions to eight unrelated products (an mp3 player, a treadmill, a massage chair, etc.). In the short questionnaire condition, they simply gave numerical ratings to eight products along a scale from -5 (*dislike it*) to $+5$ (*like it*). In the long questionnaire condition, however, they were told to imagine a hypothetical situation in which they were using each of the eight products and were asked to describe each situation in as much detail as possible. Pretesting indicated that the short survey took an average of 45 s to complete, whereas the long one took an average of 8.5 min.

After participants had finished the questionnaire, the experimenter told participants that we happened to have some chocolate candy bars available and that they should feel free to take as many as they wished. The experimenter unobtrusively recorded the number of chocolate bars that each participant chose. Participants were then thanked and dismissed.

Results

We expected Chinese participants to base the amount of candies they took on a reciprocity norm and to take fewer candies if they had completed a short questionnaire for the experimenter than if they had completed a long one. In contrast, we expected that North American participants would be less concerned about reciprocity

and that the number of candies they took would be less influenced by the benefit they had bestowed on the experimenter.

Our hypothesis was supported. Chinese participants took fewer chocolate bars when they finished a short questionnaire ($M = 0.73$, $SD = 0.77$) than when they had finished a long one ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.05$), $F(1, 83) = 10.13$, $p < .01$. In contrast, Canadian participants took a similar number regardless of the length of the questionnaire (1.11 vs. 1.12, respectively; $F < 1$). The interaction of culture and length of questionnaire was significant, $F(1, 83) = 5.09$, $p < .05$.

Experiment 4

The results of Experiment 3 indicate that Asians are more likely than North Americans to base their acceptance of a benefit on a reciprocity norm and, therefore, that they are relatively more disposed to ensure that the benefits they receive do not exceed the benefits they bestow. Nevertheless, an ambiguity arises in interpreting these results. That is, Asians may have been more likely than North Americans to interpret the candy bars as *compensation* for the service they had previously provided to the experimenter. Experiment 4 decreased this possibility. That is, it showed that Asians applied a reciprocity norm in accepting a gift under conditions in which they were less likely to perceive that the gift was compensation for past services rendered. Moreover, they applied the norm in the absence of any external demand and thus when the motivation to gain social approval was eliminated.

Participants were told that the experimenter needed help with a questionnaire that usually took either 2 min or 2 hr to complete and were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to help. Participants were expected to agree to help in the first case but to decline to help in the second. The experimenter then indicated that some candies we had used as incentives in another experiment had been left over and that they could have some.

The availability of the candies was ostensibly unconnected to the experimenter's request for help. Furthermore, the experimenter had no apparent knowledge of whether the participants had agreed to help or not. Thus, there was no external demand to take more or less candy as compensation for the task that participants agreed to perform. We nevertheless expected that Asians would be more willing to accept candies after agreeing to help the experimenter (in the short questionnaire conditions) than after declining to help (in the long questionnaire conditions). In contrast, we expected that Canadians would not think appreciably about the relevance of the candy they were offered to the benefit they agreed to bestow. To this extent, the amount of candy they accepted should not depend on whether they agreed to help the experimenter or not.

Method

Forty-six Hong Kong female undergraduate students and 26 Canadian (European American) female undergraduate students participated for extra course credit. A female Hong Kong research assistant conducted the study for Hong Kong participants, whereas a female Canadian assistant conducted the study for Canadian participants. In other words, the ethnic background of the experimenter was the same as that of the participants.

After they had finished several unrelated studies, participants were told that the experimenter was working on an additional

study for a dissertation but had no money to pay subjects for participating. On this pretense, participants were asked if they would like to help the experimenter by completing a questionnaire that would require either 2 min or 2 hr. They were given a piece of paper and were told that if they were willing to help, they should write down their e-mail address on the paper and that the experimenter would e-mail the questionnaire to them.

After participants had made the decision, they were asked to turn the paper face down. Thus, the experimenter had no knowledge of their decision at the time. The experimenter then indicated that some candies that had been used as stimuli in previous experiments had been left over and that participants could feel free to take some. The experimenter then gave each participant a small cup of 10 candies and told them that they could take as many as they wanted before leaving the experiment. Participants were then dismissed, and the number of candies they drew was determined by counting the number that remained in the cup they were given.

Results

Manipulation checks. Eighty-five percent of the participants agreed to help the experimenter if the questionnaire was short, but only 26% of participants did so if it was long (Wald $\chi^2 = 20.51$, $p < .001$). This was true of both Chinese (76% vs. 16%) and Canadians (100% vs. 43%). However, Chinese were generally less likely to volunteer to help than Canadians were (43% vs. 69%, respectively; Wald $\chi^2 = 6.02$, $p < .01$).

Candy choices. We expected that Hong Kong participants' candy choices would be governed by a reciprocity norm and that they would be less inclined to accept candies if they had not agreed to help than if they had. In contrast, we expected Canadians to base the amount of candy they took on their personal desire for it independently of whether they had agreed to help the experimenter.

Our prediction was confirmed. Hong Kong participants accepted fewer candies in the long questionnaire condition (when they had typically declined to help; $M = 1.32$, $SD = 1.18$) than in the short questionnaire condition (when they had typically agreed to help; $M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 68) = 5.36$, $p < .05$. However, this difference was not evident among Canadian participants (1.71 vs. 1.42; $F < 1$). The interaction was marginally significant, $F(1, 68) = 3.71$, $p < .06$.

Because no Canadian declined to help with the short questionnaire, a comparison of candy choices as a function of their actual decision to help and the length of questionnaire could not be made. However, Hong Kong participants chose fewer candies if they had declined to help the experimenter ($M = 1.35$, $SD = 1.26$) than if they had agreed ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 68) = 5.10$, $p < .05$. In the case of Canadian participants, however, this effect was nonsignificantly reversed (2.00 vs. 1.39), $F(1, 68) = 1.64$, $p > .20$. The interaction was again significant, $F(1, 68) = 5.48$, $p < .05$.

In conclusion, Chinese participants were more likely to base their acceptance of candies on whether they had previously committed themselves to help, suggesting that their decision was governed by a reciprocity norm. In contrast, Canadian participants' decisions did not depend on whether they had agreed to help or not.

Experiment 5

Experiments 3 and 4 confirmed our assumption that Asians are more likely than Westerners to invoke a reciprocity norm and, therefore, are more motivated to maintain a balance between benefits they give and those they receive. Thus, the results are consistent with our assumption that the cultural difference in the willingness to accept a gift is influenced by a difference in the application of this norm. However, the acceptance of candies in both studies occurred in response to a service that participants had either performed in the past or anticipated performing in the future. Thus, it did not constitute reactions to a gift per se.

Experiment 5 provided direct evidence that Asians are less likely than North Americans to accept a gift. Furthermore, it demonstrated that when Asians do in fact accept a gift, they are more likely than North Americans to relieve any feelings of indebtedness they experience by providing a benefit to the gift giver in proportion to the magnitude of the gift they have accepted.

The experiment was conducted at a Canadian university 2 days before Easter. Research assistants approached either Asian or North American female students and told them that we were celebrating the holiday by distributing gifts and, on this pretense, presenting a plate of candy bars and asking them to feel free to take as many as they wished. After students had taken candies, however, they were unexpectedly told that we would like them to help with a survey that is related to gift giving. Their willingness to do so was recorded.

We expected that Asian students would accept fewer chocolate bars than North American students, confirming the results of our scenario studies (Experiment 1). Second, on the basis of the evidence obtained in Experiments 3 and 4, we expected that Asian students who had taken candies would be more likely to base their decision to help on their desire to reciprocate the gift they had received. That is, we expected their decision to take the survey to depend to a greater extent on the number of candies they had taken than North Americans' decision.

Method

Sixty-seven Asian female students and 66 Canadian (European American) female students at a Canadian university were approached on campus 2 days before Easter by a female research assistant of either the same ethnicity or a different one. They were told that a club at the university was celebrating Easter by distributing gifts and, on this pretense, were presented with a plate of candies and asked to take as many candies as they wished.

Then, regardless of how many candies they had taken, the assistant unexpectedly indicated that the club with which she was affiliated was conducting a survey pertaining to gift giving and asked if they would be willing to help out by completing it. In fact, the survey provided a check on our assumptions concerning their reactions to the gift. That is, the survey contained six items, three of which pertained to feelings of appreciation ("I was thankful for receiving this gift," "I appreciated the gift offered by the giver," "I was grateful for what the giver did"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) and three of which pertained to indebtedness ("I felt indebted receiving this gift," "I felt obligated to return a favor after receiving this gift," "I felt like I owe the gift giver something"; Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$). Students responded to each item along a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Results

Gift acceptance. The number of candies that participants accepted was analyzed as a function of participants' own cultural background (Asian vs. North American) and the similarity of their background to that of the experimenter. As expected, Asian participants accepted fewer candies ($M = 0.85$, $SD = 0.74$) than North American participants did ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.73$), $F(1, 129) = 9.78$, $p < .01$, and this difference did not depend on whether the cultural background of the gift giver was similar (1.13 vs. 1.53) or dissimilar to that of the participants (0.61 vs. 0.97; $F < 1$). This result replicated the findings of the scenario studies (Experiment 1).

Unexpectedly, however, participants accepted fewer candies if the cultural background of gift giver was different from their own ($M = 0.77$, $SD = 0.55$) than if it was similar ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 0.84$), $F(1, 129) = 20.00$, $p < .001$. Although the reason for this difference can only be speculated, it suggests that participants may have felt generally less comfortable taking a gift from someone to whom they felt dissimilar. Whatever the reason, the difference does not compromise our main conclusions.

Feelings of indebtedness and appreciation. Asians who completed the survey reported feeling both more indebted ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.27$) as a result of receiving the gift than North American participants did ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 90) = 7.59$, $p < .01$, and less appreciative (Asian participants: $M = 5.88$, $SD = 0.68$; North American participants: $M = 6.30$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1, 90) = 8.42$, $p < .01$. These differences were not contingent on the similarity between the cultural background of gift giver and that of participants ($F < 1$). No other effects were significant.

The relation between gift acceptance and the decision to help. We assumed that Asian participants' decisions would depend on their prior acceptance of the gift, whereas North American participants' decisions would not. This assumption was confirmed. Asian and North American participants were equally likely to agree to help with the survey (73% vs. 69%, *ns*). Among Asian participants, however, the likelihood of agreeing to help increased significantly with the number of candies they had accepted ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), whereas among North American participants, this correlation was negligible ($r = -.10$, $p > .40$). The difference between the two correlations was significant ($z = 5.92$, $p < .001$).

General Discussion

Although the offer of a small gift is a common occurrence, the factors that influence people's willingness to accept such an offer have rarely if ever been investigated. Our research provides one of the first demonstrations of a cultural difference in the willingness to accept such an offer and gives insight into the reason for this difference.

In particular, Asians are less likely than North Americans to accept gifts from a casual acquaintance, and this difference is traceable to differences in both the feelings of appreciation that Asians and North Americans experience in response to the offer and the feelings of indebtedness they anticipate experiencing if they accepted it (Experiments 1a–1d). The cultural differences in feelings of appreciation result from differences in perceptions of the gift giver's motive for offering the gift, whereas cultural differences in feelings of indebtedness are due to differences in the

disposition to invoke a reciprocity norm. Furthermore, these cultural differences disappeared when the gift was offered by a close friend with whom individuals have a communal relationship (Experiment 2).

Reciprocity and Relational Thinking

Cultural differences in the role of reciprocity are particularly noteworthy. Considered in their totality, our results suggest that Asians are more likely than North Americans to invoke a reciprocity norm spontaneously when both giving and receiving benefits. That is, they keep track of the balance between benefits given and received and attempt to maintain this balance. Consequently, they are more inclined than North Americans not only to base their acceptance of a gift on their opportunity to reciprocate (Experiments 3–4) but also, if they do accept a gift, to provide subsequent benefits to the gift giver in proportion to the magnitude of the gift they have received (Experiment 5).

This cultural difference could also be a reflection of Asians' greater disposition to think about themselves, other persons, and objects in relation to one another rather than independently. As noted earlier, this difference, which could have its roots in early socialization practices, has been identified in a wide variety of domains, cutting across both social and cognitive behaviors (Chiu & Hong, 2007; Nisbett, 2003; Wyer, in press). However, situational factors that induce a disposition to engage in relational thinking in one situation can generalize to other, unrelated situations (e.g., Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; for reviews, see Oyserman & Sorensen, 2009; Wyer, Shen, & Xu, in press). To this extent, these factors could potentially influence gift acceptance.

In this regard, Oyserman and Sorensen (2009) suggest that relational thinking is a cultural syndrome, or a cluster of interrelated processes that exists in memory regardless of one's cultural background but that varies in its accessibility. To this extent, chronic cultural differences in the disposition to engage in relational thinking might be overridden by transitory factors that influence their likelihood of coming to mind in the situation at hand.

In the present context, this suggests that the difference between Asians' and North Americans' invocation of a reciprocity rule, and thus their likelihood of accepting a gift, might not be evident under conditions in which situational factors affect their more general disposition to engage in relational thinking.

Implications for Social Communication

The exchange of gifts is a common way of initiating a close relationship (Otnes et al., 1993). To this extent, the finding that Asians are more likely than North Americans to refuse a gift could indicate that it is more difficult for a stranger to establish a close personal relationship with Asians than with North Americans. Our findings also have more general implications for the misinterpretations that can arise when members of different cultures exchange gifts. For example, Asians who offer a gift to a North American acquaintance are likely to assume that if the gift is accepted, it will ultimately be reciprocated. North Americans, however, are likely to appreciate the gift and accept it without necessarily feeling obligated to return it. By the same token, North Americans who offer a gift to an Asian under conditions in which the gift cannot

easily be reciprocated may find that the gift is rejected and may misinterpret it as a rebuff and an unfriendly act. In both cases, therefore, the misattribution is likely to have an adverse effect on the parties' interpersonal relationship.

Our research was restricted to the reciprocation of gifts that are spontaneously offered in informal social interactions, but its implications for the exchange of gifts in other situations may nevertheless be worth considering. As we have noted, refusing a gift that is given on special occasions (e.g., birthday or Christmas) can be viewed as unfriendly and hostile. However, Asians might still feel indebted as a result of receiving such a gift and more inclined to reciprocate when they have an opportunity to do so. In contrast, Westerners might not feel as obligated to return such a gift and might reciprocate only if they want to express their appreciation to the gift giver. Future research could examine these possibilities in a traditional gift-giving setting.

Some caution should be taken in generalizing our findings, however. For example, feelings of appreciation and indebtedness may underlie responses to a favor as well as a gift. Nevertheless, they may operate differently. As noted earlier, a favor is intended to help people who are unable to solve a problem by themselves. In such instances, accepting a favor can sometimes damage people's self-esteem (Fisher et al., 1982). In contrast, a gift can be given even if people do not necessarily need it. It seems likely that small favors (e.g., helping someone to carry a box to the office or commenting on the clarity of the instructions to be given to participants in an experiment) would be equally inconsequential. Nevertheless, the distinction is worth keeping in mind.

The present research has focused on only one of several factors that could lead to miscommunication between members of different cultures. A more general consideration of these factors is undoubtedly warranted. Some factors may be rather subtle. As but one example, eye contact is often interpreted as an indication of interpersonal intimacy (Argyle & Dean, 1965). Therefore, casual acquaintances typically consider a moderate level of eye contact to be optimal. However, cultures may vary in the optimal level of eye contact that is considered normative. Thus, suppose a person from a culture in which a high degree of eye contact is normative interacts with someone from a culture in which less eye contact is normative. The second individual will perceive the first to convey inappropriate intimacy, whereas the first will consider the second to be aloof and not very friendly. These reactions could occur without conscious awareness of the reasons for the discomfort being experienced. This and other factors that potentially create miscommunication among persons of different cultures are worth exploring.

References

- Ambady, N., Koo, J., Lee, F., & Rosenthal, R. (1996). More than words: Linguistic and nonlinguistic politeness in two cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*, 996–1011. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.996
- Ambady, N., & Weisbuch, M. (in press). Facial expressions: Culture and context. In A. J. Calder, G. Rhodes, J. V. Haxby, & M. H. Johnson (Eds.), *The handbook of face perception*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Andrade, E. B. (2005). Behavioral consequence of affect: Combining evaluative and regulatory mechanisms. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*, 355–362. doi: 10.1086/497546
- Argyle, M., & Dean, J. (1965). Eye-contact, distance, and affiliation. *Sociometry, 28*, 289–304. doi: 10.2307/2786027
- Bargh, J. A., Bond, R. N., Lombardi, W. J., & Tota, M. E. (1986). The additive nature of chronic and temporary sources of construct accessibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 869–878. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.50.5.869
- Belk, R. W. (1976). It's the thought that counts: A signed digraph analysis of gift-giving. *Journal of Consumer Research, 3*, 155–162. doi: 10.1086/208662
- Brislin, R. W. (2009). Theory, critical incidents, and the preparation of people for intercultural experiences. In R. S. Wyer, C. Y. Chiu, & Y. Hong (Eds.), *Understanding culture: Theory, research and application* (pp. 379–392). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Chiu, C.-Y., & Hong, Y.-Y. (2007). *Social psychology of culture*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2001). *Influence: Science and practice* (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1979). Interpersonal attraction in exchange and communal relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37*, 12–24. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.37.1.12
- Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1993). The difference between communal and exchange relationships: What it is and is not. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19*, 684–691. doi: 10.1177/0146167293196003
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2004). *The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford, England: University Press.
- Fisher, J. D., Nadler, A., & Whitcher-Alagna, S. (1982). Recipient reactions to aid. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*, 27–54. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.91.1.27
- Fong, C. P. S. (2006). *The impact of favor-elicited feelings on reciprocity behavior across time* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong.
- Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement. *American Sociological Review, 25*, 161–178. doi: 10.2307/2092623
- Greenberg, M. S. (1980). A theory of indebtedness. In K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg, & R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 3–26). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Greenberg, M. S., & Solomon, S. P. (1971). Indebtedness: An adverse aspect of asking for and receiving help. *Sociometry, 34*, 290–301. doi: 10.2307/2786418
- Greenberg, M. S., & Westcott, D. R. (1983). Indebtedness as a mediator of reactions to aid. In J. D. Fisher, A. Nadler, & B. M. DePaulo (Eds.), *New directions in helping* (Vol. 1, pp. 85–112). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (1996). Knowledge activation: Accessibility, applicability, and salience. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 133–168). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist, 52*, 1280–1300. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.52.12.1280
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hong, Y. Y., Morris, M., Chiu, C. Y., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist, 55*, 709–720. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.7.709
- Huang, M. H., & Yu, S. (2000). Gifts in a romantic relationship: A survival analysis. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 9*, 179–188. doi: 10.1207/S15327663JCP0903_5
- Joy, A. (2001). Gift giving in Hong Kong and the continuum of social ties. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*, 239–256. doi: 10.1086/322900
- Kitayama, S., & Cohen, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of cultural psychology*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Kühnen, U., & Oyserman, D. (2002). Thinking about the self influences thinking in general: Cognitive consequences of salient self-concept.

- Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 492–499. doi: 10.1016/S0022-1031(02)00011-2
- Leung, K. (1997). Negotiation and reward allocations across cultures. In P. C. Earley & M. Erez (Eds.), *New perspectives on international industrial/organizational psychology* (pp. 640–675). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Markus, H., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224
- Mauss, M. (1954). *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. Chicago, IL: Free Press.
- Miller, J. G., & Bersoff, D. M. (1994). Cultural influences on the moral status of reciprocity and the discounting of endogenous motivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 592–602. doi: 10.1177/0146167294205015
- Miller, J. G., & Bersoff, D. M. (1998). The role of liking in perceptions of the moral responsibility to help: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 443–469. doi: 10.1006/jesp.1998.1359
- Miller, P. J., Fung, H., & Koven, M. (2007). Narrative reverberations: How participation in narrative practices co-creates persons and cultures. In S. Kitayama & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 595–614). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Morris, M. W., & Peng, K. P. (1994). Culture and cause: American and Chinese attributions for social and physical events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 949–971. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.949
- Nisbett, R. E. (2003). *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Otnes, C., Lowrey, T. M., & Kim, Y. C. (1993). Gift giving for “easy” and “difficult” recipients: A social roles interpretation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 229–244. doi: 10.1086/209345
- Oyserman, D., & Sorensen, N. (2009). Understanding cultural syndrome effects on what and how we think: A situated cognition model. In R. S. Wyer, C. Y. Chiu, & Y. Hong (Eds.), *Understanding culture: Theory, research and application* (pp. 25–52). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Park, S. Y. (1998). A comparison of Korean and American gift-giving behaviors. *Psychology and Marketing*, 15, 577–593. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1520-6793(199809)15:6<577::AID-MAR6>3.0.CO;2-3
- Rhee, E., Uleman, J., & Lee, H. K. (1996). Variations in collectivism and individualism by in-group and culture: Confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 1037–1054. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.71.5.1037
- Ruth, J. A. (1996). It’s the feeling that counts: Toward a framework for understanding emotion and its influence on gift-exchange processes. In C. Otnes & R. F. Beltramini (Eds.), *Gift-giving: An interdisciplinary anthology* (pp. 195–214). Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- Semin, G. R. (2009). Language, culture, cognition—How do they intersect? In R. S. Wyer, C. Y. Chiu, & Y. Hong (Eds.), *Understanding culture: Theory, research and application* (pp. 259–270). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Shen, H., & Wyer, R. S. (2008). The impact of negative affect on responses to affect-regulatory experiences. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 18, 39–48. doi: 10.1016/j.jcps.2007.10.008
- Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 580–591. doi: 10.1177/0146167294205014
- Sobel, M. E. (1982). Asymptotic intervals for indirect effects in structural equation models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 290–312). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Watkins, P., Scheer, J., Ovnicek, M., & Kolts, R. (2006). The debt of gratitude: Dissociating gratitude and indebtedness. *Cognition & Emotion*, 20, 217–241. doi: 10.1080/02699930500172291
- Wyer, R. S. (in press). Cultural differences in procedural knowledge and their impact on consumer behavior. In A. Y. Lee & S. Ng (Eds.), *Handbook of culture and consumer behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wyer, R. S., Chiu, C. Y., & Hong, Y. (Eds.). (2009). *Understanding culture: Theory, research, and application*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Wyer, R. S., & Hong, J. (2010). Chinese consumer behavior: The effects of content, process and language. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of Chinese psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 623–640). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wyer, R. S., Shen, H., & Xu, A. J. (in press). The role of procedural knowledge in the generalizability of social behavior. In D. E. Carlston (Ed.), *Handbook of social cognition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Received August 17, 2009

Revision received June 14, 2010

Accepted June 19, 2010 ■