Beyond Individualism/Collectivism: New Theoretical Perspectives in Culture-Based Research

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BEYOND INDIVIDUALISM/COLLECTIVISM: NEW THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN CULTURE-BASED RESEARCH

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Most of the early work on cross-cultural differences in consumer behavior applied explanations based on Hofstede’s (1981) cultural dimensions, most particularly on differences in individualism/collectivism ratings across countries. This roundtable will focus on the discussion of new frameworks that are transforming culture-based research beyond the broad and descriptive emphasis on individualism/collectivism. In particular, this roundtable’s objective is to discuss research that deals with cultural processes: definitions, cognitive mechanisms, process instruments, and tacit measures.

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This roundtable focused on the discussion of new frameworks that are transforming culture-based research beyond the emphasis on individualism/collectivism. Issues addressed included relevant instruments, tacit measures, and cognitive mechanisms that can enrich the study of culture. The session provided an opportunity to discuss these issues with cross-cultural researchers differing in their disciplinary backgrounds, areas of expertise, and methodological approaches. Our panel included marketing scholars as well as social psychologists whose work is shaping current thought about cross-cultural consumer psychology. Some of these scholars had approached culture through the lens of social cognition and applied similar paradigms to the study of culture. Others had approached cultural influences on consumers’ judgments and choice through the lens of behavioral decision-making. Some had examined situational factors that affect salient self-construal, whereas others had focused more on dispositional aspects and/or chronic and stable cultural differences. The substantive focal areas represented by these participants also varied broadly, including causal reasoning, country of origin perceptions, persuasion, categorization, self-concept, regulatory focus, choice, affect, etc.

Among the issues and questions discussed at the session:

Can culture best be understood as a set of values and goals, as cognitive structure(s), or as a system of behaviors? What are the implications of these distinctions for theory and measurement?

A salient issue in current research on cross-cultural consumer psychology concerns methods of measurement or assessment of cultural orientation and values. Should the results of cultural orientation measures be expected to be isomorphic with national and group-level cultural designations? If not, how can observations across these levels of analyses be integrated?

What are the drawbacks and proper uses of direct self-rating measures of orientation in consumer psychology? What tacit measures show promise for capturing differences in culturally patterned behavior?

At the roundtable, Carolyn Yoon (University of Michigan) presented two databases of norms for cross-culturally tested stimuli developed through comprehensive study. For those with an interest in using these stimuli, the links are provided below.

CATEGORY NORMS: http://agingmind.cns.uiuc.edu/culture/Cat_Norms/
PICTURE NORMS: http://www.psychonomic.org/archive/http://agingmind.cns.uiuc.edu/culture/Pict_Norms/