

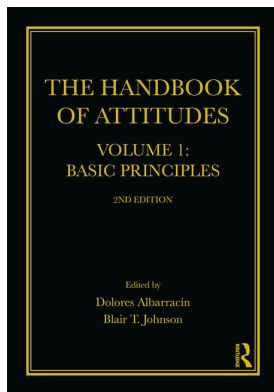
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## **The Handbook of Attitudes Volume 1: Basic Principles**

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### **Culture and Attitude Theorizing**

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# 15

## CULTURE AND ATTITUDE THEORIZING

### Attitudes in Western and Non-Western Contexts

*Sharon Shavitt*

*I do not like them in a box.  
I do not like them with a fox.  
I do not like them in a house.  
I do not like them with a mouse.  
I do not like them here or there.  
I do not like them anywhere.  
I do not like green eggs and ham.  
I do not like them, Sam-I-am.*

—*Green Eggs and Ham*  
by Dr. Seuss

Western cultural traditions emphasize the cultivation of consistent attitudes, attitudes that are impervious to contextual factors. In the West, people learn to act on their preferences and are encouraged to express them across situations in invariant ways (“*not in a box, not with a fox . . .*”). Indeed, the pursuit of happiness depends on having a clear sense of what does and does not bring you joy. This enables deployment of attitudes in the service of making personally satisfying choices. Moreover, in the West, to know someone is to know their preferences. Attitudes, or personal preferences, make a person predictable across contexts. They also convey information about the holder’s values and traits. Therefore, the cultivation and strategic display of one’s likes and dislikes can function in the service of self-expression.

By contrast, in non-Western cultural contexts, personal preferences (preferences that reflect one’s personal wants and priorities) are less likely to be focal and predictable. Because the emphasis in collectivistic or interdependent contexts is on meeting other people’s expectations, preferences in such contexts are likely to be normative and need not be personal (Riemer, Shavitt, Koo, & Markus, 2014). In such contexts, attitudes are likely to be more malleable, more tailored to what is appropriate in each specific context, which facilitates adaptation to norms and to others’ needs.

What are the implications of such cultural differences in attitudes? And what opportunities might these differences open up for enhancing understanding of attitudes and generating new hypotheses for attitude research? In this chapter, I examine attitudes through a cross-cultural lens, reviewing the burgeoning literature on cultural differences in how attitudes are formed and changed. I will

consider how attitudes function in contexts where building and maintaining strong social relationships, fulfilling others' expectations, and being normatively appropriate are central motives. The chapter will assemble and compare the findings of attitude research in such contexts to those that emerge from Western attitude theorizing and research, identifying unanswered questions and fruitful areas for future research. In the process, I hope to illustrate what a consideration of cultural factors may contribute to the large and robust literature on attitudes.

### What Is an Attitude? Cultural Considerations

The attitude construct has been foundational to theories of social judgment and behavior for many decades, with ongoing research interest and a steady stream of publications over that period (see Albarracín & Shavitt, 2018). A growing segment of this attitude research demonstrates that the sociocultural context influences attitudes in various ways. Thus, cultural factors are often described as moderators of established attitudinal processes (see Albarracín, Johnson, & Zanna, 2005). However, some prominent attitude theorists (e.g., Petty et al., 1981; Zanna & Rempel, 2007) have observed that the assumptions that underpin the attitude construct are themselves rooted in Western philosophical traditions. Therefore, before considering cultural differences in attitudinal processes, it is appropriate to consider how well the very definition of attitudes fits across cultures.

Attitudes, as conceptualized in the West by Western scholars, are typically viewed as stable and enduring properties of individuals. Although a wide variety of attitude definitions have been proposed over the years, a review of prominent definitions reveals that views about what is, and isn't, an attitude are often influenced by Western cultural understandings of how preferences are formed, how personal they are, and how stable they are expected to be (Riemer et al., 2014). Alice Eagly (1992), in her comprehensive review of the attitude literature, noted that, "like other hypothetical constructs that psychologists invoke, attitude is defined as a tendency or state *internal to the person*" (p. 694, italics added).

Moreover, the definitional pillars of the attitude construct include *internal consistency* and *stability* (see Fabrigar, MacDonald, & Wegener [this volume] for a review of research on attitude structure). In perhaps the most influential description of the construct, Allport (1935) defined attitudes as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810). In other words, liking or disliking something generally is understood to mean that one's various evaluations of the object, both affective and cognitive, are congruent. It also means that one is generally expected to hold and express the same opinion regardless of the situation, the social context, or any other variable. This assumed stability of attitudes is particularly central to the definition of attitude, drawing from assumptions of a stable self.

Indeed, in a number of historically significant approaches, attitudes were seen as manifestations of personality. Consider this definition by Katz and Allport (1931), "While no sharp line of demarcation can be drawn between attitudes and personality traits, . . . attitudes are more frequently regarded as sets of certain kinds of verbal response expressing value" (pp. 354–355). More than 50 years later, Ajzen (1988) also highlighted some similarities between the concepts of traits and attitudes. Other classic definitions likewise emphasized the notion that attitudes can be understood as habits in the sense that they are enduring and associated with stable and consistent responses (e.g., Murphy & Likert, 1938; Hovland, 1951; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956). Indeed, so definitional was this assumption of stability that changes in attitude self-reports over measurement occasions raised suspicions that they signaled the absence of an attitude—such expressions were *non-attitudes*, as Converse (1974) labeled them.

## What Is an Attitude for? Cultural Assumptions

### A. Coping With Decision Demands

Being enduring and meaningful aspects of the self, attitudes are seen as guiding consistent behavior across a range of situations. This makes them useful in coping with the individual's need to make many personal choices (Fazio, 2000), making those choices more likely to help the individual obtain rewards, meet personal goals, and enhance post-choice satisfaction. The coping function of attitudes (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956) is important across cultures, as attitude everywhere serve as important decision aids. However, in Western contexts, attitudes are more likely to be oriented toward helping a person to make individual choices that serve to enhance personal rewards. This way of conceptualizing attitudes reflects an important but unstated culture-specific assumption, that having personal wants and acting upon them is natural and desirable. By extension, the influence of normative pressures is unnatural and imposed from the outside. Normative factors, when they are addressed, are often conceptualized as pressures or forces to be resisted (“you should decide what to do”).

### B. Serving a Self-Expressive Function

To Western scholars, attitudes often are viewed as forms of self-expression, reflecting the essence of their owner (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956). Attitudes toward a wide range of objects and topics can serve to achieve such social identity goals (Shavitt, 1990), and their expression may be socially strategic (e.g., Berger, 2013). This self-expressive function of attitudes is underpinned by the assumption that one is free to choose one's likes and dislikes and, therefore, those choices can set a person apart. As such, a person's attitudes can be highly expressive of their personal identity and values (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956). As previously noted, these notions are deeply rooted in Western philosophical assumptions (Petty et al., 1981; Zanna & Rempel, 2007). As defined in the West by Western theorists, attitudes are part of a theoretical nexus of concepts that emphasize personhood and personal sources of behavior. These elements imply a strong connection between *personal preferences* and attitudes, to the extent that these concepts are considered interchangeable. In Western contexts, personal preferences are central to attitudes (“I like it because it makes me feel good.”). We have referred to this set of theoretical assumptions as the *person-centric model of attitudes* (Riemer et al., 2014).

This set of assumptions about attitudes gives rise to a psychological construct that encapsulates the personal desires and reward-seeking tendencies of the individual. The focus of attitude research in the West is therefore on understanding what individuals “really feel” at a personal level. This focus drives the research agenda and the development of measures that attempt to index attitudes by offering a pipeline into one's true opinions and desires. And it drives the assumption that understanding and predicting choices requires knowing one's personal preferences as the most likely drivers of choice.

## How Well Does the Attitude Construct Fit Across Cultural Contexts?

In contrast to this nexus of theoretical assumptions and goals, a growing body of research in cross-cultural psychology suggests that, in non-Western cultural contexts, attitudes have distinct characteristics and functions. Before reviewing those findings and their implications, I discuss relevant ways of conceptualizing and dimensionalizing culture.

### A. Key Cultural Dimensions

Culture can be conceptualized in numerous ways. Most cross-cultural research has focused on differences in whether the self is construed in primarily *independent* or *interdependent* terms (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and in the *individualistic* versus *collectivistic* values that predominate in a cultural or

geographic context (Hofstede, 1984, 2001; Triandis, 1995). Other distinctions and dimensions are also worthy of note, such as power distance (Hofstede, 1984, 2001); tightness-looseness (Li, Gordon, & Gelfand, 2017); and horizontal versus vertical cultural orientation (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998; see Shavitt & Cho, 2016, for a review). However, the distinction in self-construal and individualism/collectivism accounts for most cross-cultural research in the attitude domain. In individualistic cultures, such as those in North America, people tend to have an independent self-construal that casts the self as agentic, bounded, and distinct from others. In collectivistic cultures, such as many cultures outside the Western industrialized world, people tend to have an interdependent self-construal that construes the self as socially embedded and mutually obligated to others (Triandis, 1989).

Geographically, the focus of cross-cultural research is often on contrasting the patterns that hold in Western contexts (e.g., North American, European, Australian regions, as well as situations that make independent self-construals salient) with those that hold in a broad range of non-Western ones (e.g., Asian, South American, African regions as well as situations that make interdependent self-construals salient). Although most prior research has compared East Asians and European Americans, the characteristics of attitudes in non-Western contexts are relevant to many geographic and sociocultural regions, including those in the developing world or in nonindustrialized regions, as well as non-middle-class contexts in Western societies (Markus & Conner, 2014; see Riemer et al., 2014, for a review).

Prominent theories and frameworks differ in the extent to which they locate culture in the mind, in the broader world, or in both. Triandis (1989) highlighted three distinct aspects of the self (public, private, and collective) and the role of cultural contexts in influencing the probability of sampling each of these three aspects. By shifting the manifestation of self, cultural contexts can lead to different influences on social behavior. This emphasis on the self and situational factors shifting self-construals represents a major focus of cultural research (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder, 1990). Recent approaches have also examined socially constructed representations of culture (e.g., Zou et al., 2009) and have increasingly emphasized the neural and physiological substrates of culture (see Kitayama & Cohen, forthcoming). Thus, research has addressed the role of cultural factors in multiple ways—across nations, across regions or ethnic groups within nations, across situations through the priming of cultural self-construals or sampling of self-aspects, and across individuals within nations by examining cultural orientations, values, and even social classes (Markus & Conner, 2014). In line with this body of work, non-Western contexts include those contexts that activate an interdependent or collective self-construal, in which the predominant focus is on others' expectations and the maintenance of relationships with others. Western contexts include those that activate an independent or personal self-construal, in which the primary focus is on the self and personal goals.

This independent/interdependent cultural distinction is associated with broad motivational differences that influence attitude formation. (For a comprehensive look at motivation and attitudes, see Earl & Hall, this volume.) People from individualistic cultures or who have an independent self-construal tend to be approach motivated—their self-regulatory goals are focused on self-promotion, and they respond more positively to messages that address promotion goals (Aaker & Lee, 2001). These individuals are motivated to project a self-reliant and agentic image and, accordingly, are more likely to agree with statements from the Self-Deceptive Enhancement scale (Paulhus, 1991) such as, “I always know why I like things” and “I never regret my decisions” (Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). These tendencies serve the needs of the independent self, portraying one's attitudes as well-established tools for agentic decision-making.

In contrast, people from collectivistic cultures or who have an interdependent self-construal tend to be avoidance motivated and focused on prevention, and they respond more positively to messages that address prevention goals (Aaker & Lee, 2001) because preventing bad outcomes is more protective of others. Similarly, they tend to elaborate more on social consensus cues when forming their attitudes (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997), and their attitudes are more influenced by collective identity factors (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015). People with an interdependent self-construal also focus more on

adhering to norms and social expectations by exercising impulse control (Chen, Ng, & Rao, 2005; Kacen & Lee, 2002; Zhang & Shrum, 2009). Their goal of appearing normatively appropriate makes them more likely to deny engaging in socially disapproved behaviors (Lalwani et al., 2006; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009), as assessed by the Impression Management scale (Paulhus, 1991; e.g., “I never swear” and “I never cover up my mistakes”). Accordingly, interdependents are less likely to engage in impulsive consumption, whereas independents are more likely to do so, when in the presence of peers versus alone (Zhang & Shrum, 2009).

Such impression management efforts also adapt one’s expressed attitudes to prevailing norms, a strategy that fosters social embeddedness, and evidence suggests that people from collectivistic cultures or who have an interdependent self-construal can do this more readily. Specifically, for collectivists or those with an interdependent self-construal, impression management in response to attitude questions occurs more automatically and with less effort (i.e., less interference from cognitive load) than it does for people from individualistic or independent contexts (Riener & Shavitt, 2011). This suggests that collectivists are more practiced in adjusting their attitudes to normative considerations. This relative automaticity of attitude adjustment is in line with the malleable nature of normative-contextual attitudes.

### ***B. Implications for Attitude Phenomena***

Differences in Western and non-Western cultural contexts offer the opportunity to expand attitude theorizing in productive ways by focusing attention on a broader range of variables. In non-Western contexts such as China or Japan, rather than being independent and distinguishing oneself from others, the focus is on building and maintaining good relationships, fitting into normative expectations, and fulfilling one’s roles and duties. In these cultures, parents direct their children’s attention to normative aspects of events (“What were the other children doing?”) as opposed to their own personal emotional or evaluative responses (“Did you like it?”; Wang, 2013). Children in these societies are also discouraged from voicing their personal preferences and internal states (Chen et al., 1998) and are socialized to control their impulses at an early age (Ho, 1994) and be sensitive to others’ feelings (Trommsdorff, 2006, 2009). Such practices serve to foster attunement to others. Indeed, a host of socialization practices and societal structures reinforce the emphasis on prioritizing contextual norms and relationship outcomes (Markus & Conner, 2014).

Many studies highlight how attitudes may function differently in non-Western cultures. We have described the characteristics of attitudes in non-Western cultural contexts in a *normative-contextual model of attitudes* (Riener et al., 2014). See Table 15.1 for a comparison of the person-centric and normative-contextual models of attitudes, and implications for future attitude research.

### ***Attitude-Behavior Relationships***

In non-Western cultural contexts, personal preferences are less likely to drive choices than in Western cultural contexts. Instead, attitudes that reflect normative and contextually sensitive information, including the preferences of important others, become more important than personal preferences in many cases. For instance, in India compared to North America, personal preferences are less predictive of actual consumer product choices (Savani, Markus, & Conner, 2008). Savani et al. compared product choices among middle-class North American and Indian consumers. They found that participants in both cultures constructed their preferences at similar speeds, but those in India were less likely to choose according to these personal preferences and were less motivated to express their preferences through their choices.

Consistent with this, Indian employees are more likely than Americans to make choices consistent with what is expected by authority, irrespective of their personal preferences (Savani, Morris, &

Table 15.1 Differences Between the Person-Centric (Western) and the Normative-Contextual (Non-Western) Models of Attitudes

	<i>Person-Centric Model</i>	<i>Normative-Contextual Model</i>
<b>Conceptualization</b>		
Conceptual definition	Attitudes as predispositions The focus is on the individual alone ( <i>personal</i> preference)	Attitudes as context-specific inclinations The focus is on the individual responding to a particular environment
Components	Affective, cognitive, and behavioral	Personal, social, and contextual
<b>Functions of Attitude</b>		
Behavioral guidance	Regardless of culture, attitudes are essential as behavioral guides.	
Coping	Accessible personal preferences ease decision-making and lead to greater post-decision satisfaction	Accessible personal preferences can be a liability Accessible normative-contextual attitudes ease decision-making and lead to greater post-decision satisfaction
Self-expression	Attitudes manifest personal identity	Attitudes manifest norms of the social context
Group-level functions	Not addressed in this model	Attitudes function to achieve group-level goals such as social order, harmony, trust, and cohesion
<b>Formation of Attitude</b>		
The attitude object	Objects are perceived as separate from the context, and thus remain unchanged	Objects are perceived as embedded in a context, and thus are expected to change with the context
Determinants	Evaluation is more dependent on the object's attributes	Evaluation is more dependent on contextual-normative information
<b>Characteristics of Attitude</b>		
Internal consistency	Affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of one's attitude, as well as various facets within each of these categories, are expected to be consistent Inconsistency within attitude components and facets leads people to experience cognitive dissonance and to seek resolution	Inconsistency within attitude components and facets does not necessarily lead people to experience cognitive dissonance and to seek resolution, unless their behavior is inconsistent with components that impact ingroup members. Instead, personal, social, and contextual components of attitudes are expected to be consistent.
Stability	Unless changed, attitudes remain stable over time and situations	Attitudes are malleable and tuned to the context
<b>Measurement</b>		
Contextual variability	Contextual variability in responses to attitude measures is considered problematic	Attitudes toward an object are expected to differ across social contexts. Measuring this variability and giving focal attention to contextual malleability can explain attitudes more comprehensively
Normative/ingroup information	Attitudes are measured at the individual level	Attitudes can be measured at the ingroup level

Note: Reproduced from Riemer et al., 2014.



Naidu, 2012). For Asian American children, choosing a puzzle to play with based on the preferences of close others is more satisfying and more likely to motivate behavior than choosing according to their own personal preferences, whereas the reverse is true for European American children (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009)

Similar patterns have been reported for environmental attitudes. In Japan and China, personal preferences for a “greener” world do not predict green behavior, yet such preferences are a strong predictor in the U.S. (Chan & Lau, 2001; Eom, Kim, Sherman, & Ishii, 2016). Specifically, an analysis of survey data tapping concern for the environment in 48 countries (Eom, Kim, Sherman, & Ishii, 2016) showed that, for nations that are less individualistic, personal attitudes are less predictive of environmental-behavior intentions. A follow-up experiment showed that, although environmental attitudes are a strong predictor of pro-environmental product choices in the U.S., they are not in Japan. Instead, social norms predict environmental choices in Japan (Eom et al., 2016). A meta-analysis of studies testing the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988) supported these cultural distinctions in the degree to which attitudes predict intention to behave environmentally and the degree to which intentions predict actual environmental behavior. Both predictive links were stronger in more individualistic cultures (Morren & Grinstein, 2016). (See Milfont and Schultz (Volume 2) for a comprehensive review of attitudes toward environmental issues.) These results are consistent with findings across a range of attitudinal domains showing that attitude-behavior correlations tend to be weaker in collectivist than individualist cultures (Bagozzi, Wong, Abe, & Bergami, 2000; Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992; Lee, 2000).

Similarly, in the organizational domain, a recent meta-analysis shows that, in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures, extra-attitudinal factors exert a stronger impact on organizational behaviors (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015). Specifically, across cultures, organizational identification (identification with the collective, as in the organization or employer) has distinct effects on organizational behaviors such as job performance, above and beyond the impact of one’s personal attitudes toward one’s job. This reflects the importance of a sense of identity in shaping behaviors favorable to the employer that go beyond the effects captured by attitude measures. However, identification with the organization has even stronger effects on behaviors in collectivistic compared to individualistic national cultures.

In a similar vein, cultural contexts in which the focus is on social harmony and ingroup norms foster better monitoring and adjustment of one’s behavior based on “what is right” rather than on “what I want.” For instance, in the domain of alcohol consumption, Zhang and Shrum (2009) showed that priming an interdependent versus independent self-construal led to less favorable attitude ratings toward immediate beer consumption, and greater motivation to suppress impulsive tendencies. In line with this, Kacen and Lee (2002) surveyed respondents from Australia, Midwestern United States, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong and found that the relationship between trait buying impulsiveness and actual impulsive buying behavior is stronger for individualists (respondents from Australia, U.S.) than for collectivists (respondents from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore). Further, this relationship was positively correlated with respondents’ independent self-construal among the individualists, but not among the collectivists. Taken together, this research suggests that people in non-Western contexts are less inclined to behave in accordance with their personal wants and preferences.

Moreover, evidence suggests that those in non-Western (Japanese) and Western (Australians) contexts differ not only in how consistent their behavior is with their personal preferences, but also in their views about the extent to which personal preferences and behavior *should* be consistent (Kashima et al., 1992). A study on what Americans call hypocrisy (Effron, Markus, Jackman, Muramoto, & Muluk, 2018) explored reactions to people who behaved in an attitude-inconsistent fashion (e.g., a teacher who was seen smoking on vacation but who urged students in the classroom not to smoke). Americans were harsher in condemning such people—judging them to be hypocritical



and insincere—than were Japanese or Indonesian respondents. In non-Western contexts, people are more tolerant of such inconsistencies (Triandis, 1989). In effect, the emphasis on attitude-behavior consistency reflects an injunctive norm (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990) that prevails in Western contexts but not in non-Western ones (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). As a result, Westerners tend to be more persuaded than others are by appeals that emphasize being consistent with their previously expressed attitudes (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999), and U.S. participants are more likely than Asian participants to behave in a way that is consistent with their compliance to an earlier request (Petrova, Cialdini, & Sills, 2007).

What about the behavior-attitude relationship, or the degree to which attitudes tend to shift after choices have been made? In non-Western contexts, attitudes are likely to ease decision-making and enhance post-choice satisfaction to the extent that they reflect normative input and are context-sensitive, not to the extent that they encapsulate personal preferences (Riemer et al., 2014). This has implications for the important domain of cognitive dissonance (see Harmon-Jones, Armstrong, & Olson, this volume). Research shows that, in non-Western contexts, dissonance reduction tends to be focused on others' judgments. Thus, in Japan, unlike in the U.S., people justify their choices with their personal preferences and show cognitive dissonance effects when other people are salient, not when they are not (Kitayama, Conner Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004). Similarly, Asian Canadians, who have a collectivistic ethnic background, are more likely to justify choices they made for their friends than choices they made for themselves, whereas the reverse is true for people from an individualistic ethnic background (European Canadians; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005).

### *Attitude Functions*

In Western contexts, attitudes commonly fulfill a social identity function (e.g., Shavitt, 1990), conveying information about oneself to others, seeking approval, and expressing one's values. However, research shows that individual self-expression is less likely to motivate individuals in non-Western contexts (Kim & Sherman, 2007). For instance, South Koreans place less value than Americans do on the act of verbal self-expression and thus are less prone to engage in it. Moreover, the importance of self-expression to Americans leads them to be more committed to the preferences they verbally express (Kim & Sherman, 2007).

Additional evidence suggests that patterns of attitude expression in the digital world also vary in a way that reflects cultural factors (Fong & Burton, 2008; Lai, He, Chou, & Zhou, 2013). In the U.S., expressing one's opinions is more common, whereas in China, seeking others' opinions is more common. Specifically, an analysis of nearly 6,000 discussion postings on U.S.- and China-based discussion boards regarding digital photography revealed that posts on the China-based (vs. U.S.-based) discussion boards were more likely to seek information and opinions from others and were less likely to provide information or recommendations to others (Fong & Burton, 2008). In line with this finding, a comparison of online customer reviews in China (on amazon.cn) and the U.S. (on amazon.com) revealed that American reviews were more self-expressive in the sense that they provided their personal opinions on products and contained more recommendations to others (Lai et al., 2013).

Instead of using attitudes as a tool for expressing the individual self, in non-Western contexts, attitudes are more useful when they promote social embeddedness, and thus they are more likely to do so. For instance, Aaker and Schmitt (2001) showed that Americans tend to hold attitudes that express how distinct they are from others, whereas Chinese people tend to hold attitudes that express how similar they are to others. In the same vein, research on attitude-value linkages shows that, rather than holding unique person-centric preferences that set the self apart from others, people in non-Western contexts tend to hold normative-contextual attitudes that foster conformity and validation of shared norms (Boer & Fischer, 2013). Such attitudes serve to affirm and deepen relationships with important others.

*Attitude Structure*

In order to fulfill their functions, normative-contextual attitudes are likely to be malleable and adaptive to context. Moreover, non-Westerners' relative comfort with contradictions (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010) means that internal consistency between the elements of their attitudes (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements) is less expected and less important. Non-Westerners, particularly East Asians, tend to engage in dialectical thinking (Ng & Hynie, 2014), a belief system that tolerates contradictory information (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010). These culturally patterned thinking styles are consistent with decision rules that Westerners frequently use (e.g., one attribute is more important or diagnostic than the other) versus the compromise rule that Easterners frequently use (e.g., both attributes are important; Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000). This pattern has implications for incongruity resolution. Under the low-involvement conditions that often characterize information processing, when information is contradictory (i.e., when a source cue and attribute information differ in valence), Americans tend to follow an either-or or attenuation strategy, basing their attitudes solely on attribute information. In contrast, Hong Kong Chinese tend to follow an additive strategy in which both cues are combined to reach an evaluative judgment (Aaker & Sengupta, 2000).

Dialectical thinking, prevalent in East Asian contexts (Nisbett et al., 2001) also gives rise to more ambivalent attitudes (e.g., Ng, Hynie, & MacDonald, 2012). Consistent with this principle, survey research shows that people from East Asian societies tend to exhibit more moderate response styles in attitudinal self-reports (Johnson, Shavitt, & Holbrook, 2011), perhaps reflecting their more ambivalent attitudes. Having ambivalent attitudes may be socially functional for maintaining interpersonal harmony, particularly for controversial topics (Pillaud et al., 2013). However, ambivalence complicates the process of making decisions (Li, Masuda, & Russell, 2014). Thus, when making an actual educational decision, East Asian Canadians were more indecisive than European Canadians were (Ng & Hynie, 2014), and dialectical thinking appears to mediate cultural differences in ambivalence (Hamamura, Heine, & Paulhus, 2008) and indecisiveness (Li et al., 2014).

In contrast, in Western contexts, having stable and internally consistent attitudes is fundamentally important to guiding action, and ambivalent attitudes are therefore undesirable (Riemer, et al., 2014). Indeed, among Westerners, having ambivalent attitudes is actually aversive (Has, Katz, Rizzo, Bailey, & Moore, 1992; Woodside & Chebat, 2001) and produces pressure toward consistency (see Harmon-Jones & Olson, this volume). As a result, in Western contexts (e.g., among European Canadians), such attitudes are more likely than univalent attitudes to change (Ng et al., 2012). However, this greater pliability of ambivalent versus univalent attitudes is not observed among East Asian Canadians (Ng et al., 2012), presumably because of their greater tolerance for inconsistency and contradiction, as noted earlier.

**How Does Persuasion Happen in Different Cultures?*****A. Normative Processes***

As already described, attention to cultural differences highlights the centrality of normative factors to the formation of preferences (Riemer et al., 2014). Normative factors have been extensively addressed in the attitudes literature. Most notably, the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) proposed that behavioral intentions are best predicted by a weighted combination of one's attitude toward an act and one's subjective norm—what one believes to be others' attitudes toward the act (see Ajzen, Lohmann, & Albarracín, this volume). This foundational perspective, and the theory of planned behavior that built upon it (Ajzen, 1988), dealt with the influence of norms in detail. These theories highlighted the role of norms as factors that constrain

the relation between attitudes and behavior, contingent on one's degree of motivation to comply with them. They treated norms as distinct from attitudes, in line with long-standing perspectives on interpersonal influences that treated normative and informational influences as separate and qualitatively distinct processes (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; see Fiedler, 2007, for a review; see also Miniard & Cohen, 1981, 1983, for a more thorough proposed distinction between "personal and normative influences").

To the extent that norms are theorized as extrinsic factors that impinge upon attitude expression, this perspective in Western contexts invited an emphasis on processes of resistance to persuasion versus conformity to norms (see Kim & Markus, 1999), with the implication that resistance is desirable whereas conformity is undesirable. In non-Western contexts, in contrast, norms are central, and people seek and infuse normative information into their attitudes. If an attitude or a choice is normative, it is therefore good. Rather than seeing normative choices in conformist terms, they are seen as a means to achieve harmony (Kim & Markus, 1999) and the "glad concurrence" of one's preferences with those of important others (Miller, Chakravarthy, & Das, 2008). This has numerous implications for processes of attitude formation and change.

For instance, Hong and Chang (2015) showed that an independent versus interdependent cultural context (examined via measured or primed self-construal) strengthens the influence of incidental affect on evaluations, whereas an interdependent cultural context strengthens the reliance on reasons. Moreover, independents (interdependents) value a selected option more highly when they use a feeling-based (reason-based) strategy in choosing. This is consistent with the notion that, in Western contexts, attitude change serves the goal of enhancing one's own personal satisfaction and positive feelings whereas, in non-Western contexts, concerns about justifying one's preferences to others are more likely to spontaneously drive attitude formation.

Similarly, evidence from an online shopping context suggests that people in Eastern (vs. Western) cultures *tend* to rely more on peer endorsements. In one study, college students in Hong Kong and Australia were exposed to the website of an online textbook store. Including listings of peer customer endorsements (brief quotes from other students at their university) was more influential in building trust in the bookseller for students in Hong Kong compared to students in Australia (Sia et al., 2009).

These examples highlight that the attitudes and reactions of others are spontaneously sought and referenced in non-Western contexts. The process is not so much one of "conformity" to explicit norms as it is the infusion of other-referencing into one's evaluative processes.

## ***B. Information Processing***

The cultural context in which persuasive messages are processed shapes persuasion in various ways. A burgeoning literature speaks to the role of culture in message effectiveness and in information processing strategies (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997; Briley, Wyer, & Li, 2014).

### *Message Elements*

One implication of the cultural differences reviewed so far is in identifying which aspects of a message matter most for persuasion. On the one hand, Western models of persuasion emphasize a message's rhetorical content discussing the merits of a given position or object—the "persuasive arguments." These arguments are focal in person-centric models of persuasion such as the elaboration likelihood model (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, they may be less likely to drive persuasion in non-Western contexts. For instance, U.S. consumers appear to respond more positively to comparative advertising messages, which offer persuasive arguments that compare products on specific elements, than South Korean consumers do (Choi & Miracle, 2004).

As already described, cultures vary in whether attitudes are expressions of personal preferences or instead are oriented toward maintaining good connections with others (Riemer et al., 2014). To the extent that building and maintaining strong social connections motivates persuasion, this puts the focus on understanding a distinct set of message elements, not necessarily or solely the arguments themselves. Consider the example of advertising. Miracle (1987) described the distinct goals of advertisements in the U.S. and Japan. In American ads, he argued, advertisements aim to teach consumers about the brand, focusing on its attributes and benefits, on the assumption that attitudes change upon learning that the attitude object possesses favorable characteristics. The focus is therefore on communicating directly with the audience, articulating or demonstrating these characteristics in a compelling way. In contrast, the goal of Japanese ads is to “make friends” with consumers, telling a story and showing them that the company understands them and can be trusted to take care of their needs. In this cultural context, attitudes change upon developing a feeling of trust in, and a sense of connection with, the communicator. This type of communication is indirect, focusing on the right mood, tone, and aesthetics, as opposed to persuasive arguments (Hall, 1989).

The topics of tone, aesthetics, and storytelling are not often addressed by persuasion models. Although there is work on such topics as narrative persuasion (e.g., Green & Brock, 2000) or how visual elements such as white space can convey trustworthiness (Pracejus, Olsen, & O’Guinn, 2006), attitude research has rarely engaged with the question of how to build a sense of connection to the message source or how to communicate shared values indirectly. The focus is primarily on the persuasiveness of the advocated belief itself. This highlights the importance of explicit message arguments, which may matter more to persuasion in Western cultures, yet largely overlooks other elements.

The notion that direct and indirect modes of communication vary across cultures (e.g., Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1989) and differ in their effectiveness, highlights the need for research on the nature and effectiveness of indirect cues in conveying trustworthiness and establishing a connection with the message recipient. Examining how message elements can communicate indirectly, and comparing these influences in each cultural context, represents an important opportunity for future inquiry.

Another element of messaging that may vary across cultures is the degree to which a communication, such as a website, is directed at individuals versus groups. For instance, a comparison of the corporate websites of major Western (U.S., U.K.) and Eastern (Japan, South Korea) firms suggests that the type of interactions they enable are culturally influenced (Cho & Cheon, 2005). In Western compared to Eastern websites, interactions between consumers and the marketer are more prominent, whereas peer-to-peer interactions among consumers are less prominent. That is, in line with cultural differences in views of persuasion, corporate messaging in the West compared to the East is more likely to engage with consumers as individuals and less likely to treat them as socially embedded. For example, Alden, Hoyer, and Lee (1993) found in a cross-national content analysis of humor in advertising that humorous ads in collectivistic countries (South Korea, Thailand) featured more group-oriented situations with more characters than did such ads in individualistic countries (U.S., Germany).

Research is needed on whether addressing the interdependence and embeddedness of message recipients (e.g., via recognizing the desire for, and enabling, peer-to-peer interactions or via featuring group-oriented scenarios) is more important in building trust in collectivistic, interdependent contexts. Addressing interdependent audiences as group members may be an indirect yet more persuasive approach.

### *Message Benefits*

Even when communication is direct, attitude change in non-Western contexts is more responsive to claims about social benefits. Several studies have documented such cultural patterns in the

prevalence and/or persuasiveness of socially focused versus personally focused appeals (e.g., Han & Shavitt, 1994; Kim & Markus, 1999; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008; Zhang & Gelb, 1996). In general, these studies suggested that the prevalence of marketing communications matches the cultural value profile of the societies in which they appear. Advertising messages (such as magazine ads or TV commercials) in Western societies such as the U.S. are more likely to feature appeals to individual benefits—uniqueness, personal rewards, and hedonism. In contrast, advertisements in Asian cultures such as South Korea are more likely to feature appeals to social benefits and expectations—harmony, group outcomes, others' views (e.g., Han & Shavitt, 1994; Kim & Markus, 1999; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008). Moreover, the persuasiveness of appeals to individual benefits is greater in Western versus Eastern cultural contexts, whereas the persuasiveness of appeals to social benefits is greater in Eastern versus Western cultural contexts (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Kim & Markus, 1999; Zhang & Gelb, 1996). In line with this, the persuasiveness of appeals to individualistic versus collectivistic benefits also varies by self-construal (Wang & Mowen, 1997) such that U.S. consumers' responses to a credit card message depended on whether consumers viewed themselves as independent and separate from others versus interdependent and connected to others. Thus, both national group and self-construal predict the persuasiveness of messages highlighting individualistic versus collectivistic benefits in parallel ways.

### *Routes to Persuasion*

Moreover, research indicates that cultural factors influence not only how heavily normative or social factors are weighted in attitude formation, they also influence the processes by which such information influences attitudes (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997). In past research conducted in Western contexts, research has established that social or normative information is likely to be processed as a peripheral cue, influencing persuasion only when elaboration likelihood is low (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). However, for people in collectivistic contexts, social or normative information is more likely to be processed as central information than as a peripheral cue. That is, social consensus information that communicates descriptive norms (e.g., “80% of consumers surveyed prefer this brand”) impacts attitude formation under high motivation conditions through elaborated processing, influencing Hong Kong consumers' brand evaluations regardless of their level of motivation (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997). This process contrasts with what is observed among American consumers, who primarily consider social consensus cues when they are not sufficiently motivated to engage in elaborated processing (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). In short, what type of information is considered central versus peripheral, and thus how information is processed and influences attitudes, varies by culture. Social normative information is centrally important to people in non-Western contexts, but is seen as less informative in Western contexts.

Similar findings have been obtained for the processing of information about communicators or endorsers. Previous work testing the elaboration likelihood model has also addressed the impact of communicator characteristics in some detail (e.g., Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983); however, again, these types of cues typically serve as shortcuts, influencing message recipients in lieu of actively elaborating upon message arguments. In contrast, in contexts in which social normative goals are made salient, the social characteristics of endorsers, such as their group affiliations and attractiveness, can influence attitudes through active elaboration (Shavitt, Swan, Lowrey, & Wänke, 1994). For instance, Shavitt et al. (1994) found that, when people were primed to focus on their social image before seeing a restaurant ad, they were more persuaded by the physical appearance and university affiliations of the ad endorsers under high involvement compared to low involvement and processed the endorser information more elaborately. Although these studies were not cross-cultural, such findings support the notion that cultural contexts that emphasize normative goals are likely to foster elaborative processing of social normative cues.

## General Goals

As reviewed earlier, independent and interdependent cultural contexts are characterized by key differences in the goals that are active and that therefore are effective to emphasize in persuasive appeals (e.g., Aaker & Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Torelli & Shavitt, 2010; Yang, Stamatogiannakis, & Chattopadhyay, 2015). Most of the cultural differences in goals and motivations are familiar to attitude researchers in psychology, having been based on foundational psychological work. For instance, as described earlier, self-regulatory goals differ by culture. Thus, individualists and people with an independent self-construal tend to be promotion-focused, whereas collectivists and people with an interdependent self-construal tend to focus on prevention goals. This has multiple implications for the persuasiveness of appeals.

Appeals are generally more persuasive when they match the self-regulatory goals likely to be dominant in a given context (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Hong & Lee, 2008). This matching effect has been demonstrated in various ways. For instance, people with a dominant independent (interdependent) self-construal tend to view promotion-focused scenarios as more (less) important than prevention-focused scenarios (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). Thus, individuals with a salient independent self-construal perceived a message as more important when it emphasized potential gains (e.g., “If you pick Alternative B, there is a 2/3 probability that you will not win any of the \$1200 worth of prizes and a 1/3 probability that you will win all \$1,200 worth of prizes”) than when the message emphasized potential losses (e.g., “If you pick Alternative B, there is a 2/3 probability that you will lose all of the \$1,200 worth of prizes and a 1/3 probability that you will not lose any of the \$1200 worth of prizes”). In contrast, people with a salient interdependent self-construal perceived a loss-framed (vs. gain-framed) message as more important. In addition, people with independent or interdependent self-construals find strong message arguments that align with their self-regulatory concerns to be more persuasive than arguments that do not (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005; Wang & Lee, 2006).

Yang et al. (2015) broadened the motivational differences known to be linked to the independent/interdependent cultural distinction, showing that attainment goals are more motivating for people in an independent culture (U.S.), whereas maintenance goals are more motivating in an interdependent culture (Hong Kong). Further, an independent self-construal activates the desire to attain goals relevant to individual advancement, such as achieving particular financial savings or weight loss objectives. In contrast, an interdependent self-construal activates goals to maintain one’s current state, such as keeping a consistent body weight or bank balance. These effects appear to emerge not because of regulatory focus differences but because attainment goals are associated with agency and individual advancement, whereas maintenance goals are associated with responsiveness to the social environment and the continuity of relationships. Thus, these agentic versus responsiveness goals function in the service of broader goals systems that are active in Western versus non-Western contexts.

Briley, Rudd, and Aaker (2017) demonstrated a particularly important implication of this cultural difference in agentic and responsiveness goals. They investigated what gives rise to a positive outlook when facing a serious health challenge, such as traumatic injury or cancer. Optimism is key to health and recovery, and the authors showed that adopting either the agentic or responsive mental frames that correspond to one’s cultural self-construal gives rise to optimism about recovery. In one study with cancer survivors, European Americans who were prompted to adopt a mental frame in which they were initiating action (versus responding to situations) were more optimistic about beating their illness and, accordingly, expected to have more energy in the future. The opposite pattern held for Asian Americans. Similar effects were shown when independent and interdependent cultural self-construals were primed. Moreover, the findings extended beyond positive attitudes about recovery to preferences for more physically demanding remedial health programs, and choices of more physically strenuous vacation plans.



### C. Holistic Versus Analytic Thinking Styles

In addition to the differences in information processing patterns reviewed so far, foundational research suggests that Western and non-Western cultural contexts give rise to fundamentally different cognitive patterns. That is, people raised in Western versus non-Western cultures tend to adopt distinct *thinking styles* (Nisbett et al., 2001; Nisbett, 2003), with a range of implications for evaluative processes (e.g., Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013; Monga & John, 2007, 2008).

Thinking styles refer to the way that people perceive, categorize, and explain their environment (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Westerners not only tend to construe themselves as independent of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995), they tend to use an *analytic* thinking style, which emphasizes the independence of objects and the use of formal categorization principles to understand them. In contrast, non-Westerners tend to construe themselves as interdependent with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Accordingly, they often adopt a *holistic* thinking style, emphasizing the interrelations between elements in the world (Nisbett et al., 2001). Moreover, evidence suggests that priming an independent or interdependent cultural self-construal activates the corresponding thinking style (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002), at least under certain conditions (Grossman & Jowhari, 2018).

These cultural differences in thinking styles have fundamental implications for attitudes and persuasion. One implication concerns the perceived links among attributes of objects, such as the perceived connection between a product's price and its quality (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013). Compared to U.S. participants, those from India are more likely to believe that price and quality are related attributes and that "you get what you pay for." Moreover, although people in general evaluate expensive products more favorably than their cheaper counterparts, people in non-Western (vs. Western) cultural contexts who tend to process holistically are more influenced by price cues when evaluating certain products (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013). Indeed, people from ethnic backgrounds that tend to be characterized by holistic thinking (Hispanic and Asian consumers) are more likely than European Americans to spontaneously use price information to evaluate the quality of an alarm clock or a calculator. These differences are mediated by differences in peoples' holistic thinking tendencies. The findings suggest that attributes of an attitude object may be perceived to be more interconnected for holistic than analytic thinkers.

The category boundaries around a focal attitude object may also vary across cultures, because of differences between analytic and holistic thinkers in how they tend to categorize objects (Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004; Nisbett et al., 2001). Analytic thinkers are more accustomed to formulating rules that govern internal properties of objects and tend to categorize objects via application of those rules. In contrast, holistic thinkers organize objects on the basis of their relationship to other objects or to the field, and therefore they tend to categorize objects according to their overall similarities (Nisbett et al., 2001). Thus, when presented with pictures of a cow, a chicken, and grass, East Asians tend to categorize the cow and grass together based on the relationship between the two (the cow eats the grass) whereas Westerners tend to categorize the cow and the chicken into one group based on the traits that characterize them (Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004).

Cultural differences in the way people categorize objects (rule/trait based vs. similarity/relationship based) have implications for the way they organize and store information about attitude objects. For example, Ng and Houston (2006) showed that Americans are less likely to retrieve brand exemplars (i.e., specific products or subcategories) than brand beliefs (i.e., general descriptive or evaluative thoughts), whereas the reverse was the case for Singaporeans. These results emerged from an analytic tendency to focus on "global beliefs" abstracted from prior product experiences versus a holistic tendency to focus on contextual and incidental details about the product.

Because holistic thinkers tend to focus on the interrelations between objects, they are less likely than analytic thinkers are to assume that a given object will remain stable over time (Nisbett, 2003).



Instead, holistic thinkers expect to observe fluctuation in objects and trends. In contrast, analytic thinkers view objects as independent of one another and, therefore, are more likely to assume that any given object will remain stable over time. This logic also has implications for the nature of trends that analytic versus holistic thinkers are likely to expect. It suggests that analytic thinkers expect linear trends such that any future change should follow previous trends, whereas holistic thinkers are likely to expect fluctuations. Consistent with this logic, analytic thinkers (Canadians) are more likely than holistic thinkers (Chinese) to make judgments based upon recent trends when predicting future stock market performance and making investment decisions. As a result, analytic (vs. holistic) thinkers are more likely to buy stocks when there has been an increasing trend and less willing to buy stocks when prices have been decreasing (Ji, Zhang, & Guo, 2008).

Another implication of differences in thinking styles stems from differences in how one perceives an object's relationship with its context. Holistic thinkers tend to "integrate and connect" (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001; Oyserman & Lee, 2007; Oyserman, Sorensen, Reber, & Chen, 2009), adopting a big picture view that highlights the relationships between objects in a given context. As a result, holistic thinkers often focus on relationships between objects and their context in order to draw inferences about them. In contrast, analytic thinkers, tend to "separate and distinguish" between individual objects and to distinguish focal objects from their context (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001; Oyserman & Lee, 2007; Oyserman et al., 2009). As a result, analytic thinkers often use information about the object's category to explain and predict events (Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001).

Because non-Westerners tend to adopt a holistic thinking style, they tend to see more connections between individual attitude objects and the context or environment in which they are observed. Consider the question, would an object placed on a wooden table be evaluated differently than if it were placed on a marble table? The answer appears to depend on thinking styles. Analytic thinkers are more likely to view a product and its display context as separate elements, whereas holistic thinkers view a product and its context as continuous parts of a larger whole (Zhu & Meyers-Levy, 2009). In one study, Zhu and Meyers-Levy (2009) primed participants' self-construal and asked them to evaluate a mug on either a glass or wooden table. Participants primed with an interdependent self-construal assimilated the object and its context, evaluating the mug as more trendy when placed on the glass table but more natural when placed on the wooden table ("integrate and connect"). However, participants primed with an independent self-construal contrasted the object and its context ("separate and distinguish"), evaluating the mug as more trendy when placed on a wooden table but more natural when placed on a glass table.

In a similar fashion, a customer in a store might use information about the retailer (e.g., store reputation) to make judgments about the products that are on display. That is, the store in which products are sold may constitute a context that influences the way an object is perceived. Lee and Shavitt (2006) showed that cultural self-construal predicts whether a retail store's reputation influences the inferences that consumers make about a product's quality. Specifically, when participants were primed with an interdependent (vs. independent) self-construal, they were more likely to use a store's reputation to evaluate a microwave's quality. Interdependent participants evaluating a GE microwave sold at a high-end department store viewed it more favorably than when the same microwave (same brand name and price) was described as being sold at Kmart (K. Lee & Shavitt, 2006).

In line with this, research shows that cultural orientation influences the extent to which shelf placement impacts judgments. For example, Jain, Desai, and Mao (2007, study 3), showed that participants with an interdependent self-construal judged the fat content of snacks differently when they were displayed using a taxonomic product placement (e.g., target cookies displayed together with other cookies) versus a goal-driven product placement (targets displayed together with other healthy-eating options); those with an independent self-construal judged the fat content of the snacks similarly regardless of the snacks' placement.

Finally, evidence about how people respond to a product's country of origin (e.g., Japanese cameras, German cars) also support the notion that non-Westerners' attitudes tend to be formed not only on the basis of the intrinsic attributes of the attitude object, but also based on background factors (where the product comes from). Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000) showed that the country of origin of a mountain bike affected the evaluations made by Japanese respondents more than the evaluations made by U.S. respondents. And the previously described study of U.S. and Chinese photography discussion boards (Fong & Burton, 2008) found that individuals on the Chinese compared to U.S. discussion boards engaged in significantly more discussion of the country of origin of products. Taken together, these lines of evidence suggest that non-Westerners' evaluations tend to be more dependent on a variety of contextual inputs.

### *Implications for Attitude Change*

If a holistic thinking style leads non-Westerners to see more connections than Westerners do between individual attitude objects and their contexts, this would also have implications for the conditions under which attitudes change when confronted with new information. For instance, Monga and John (2008) primed thinking style before asking participants to read a press release about Mercedes-Benz that contained unfavorable information. Participants primed to think analytically versus holistically were more likely to attribute the cause of the negative information to the brand internally and thus showed greater attitude change in response to the information. In contrast, participants primed to think holistically considered a broader set of reasons when explaining the negative brand information, and thus, their attitudes toward Mercedes-Benz were less influenced. This is consistent with the notion that, when analytic thinkers process information, they focus on and make inferences about the focal attitude object, whereas holistic thinkers perceive the attitude object in more contextually bounded terms. Thus, for holistic thinkers, a persuasive message related to an object may be applied to the context as a whole, rather than to a specific focal object.

Finally, cross-cultural research has shown that thinking styles predict how people use existing attitudes to evaluate new objects in the category. The new objects were fictitious product options that "extend" a known brand into a new category (Monga & John, 2007). Marketers often leverage successful brand names to extend their reach to new product categories (e.g., Crest toothpaste extended its brand into Crest Whitestrips). However, Western consumers may reject such extension efforts unless they perceive a clear "fit" between the parent and extension categories (Aaker & Keller, 1990). For example, if Coca-Cola extended its brand into the snack foods category, analytic thinkers may reject that extension, implicitly assuming that all items in the Coca-Cola brand category will share a key feature—their flavor. However, non-Western consumers are more accepting of such extensions because the "Coca-Cola" category can be symbolically connected to a broader range of brand and usage experiences. For instance, one may think that Coca-Cola beverages and snacks go well together at the movies (Monga & John, 2009) or that Coca-Cola symbolizes good times.

Thus, when Indians (holistic thinkers) and Americans (analytic thinkers) were asked to evaluate various fictitious brand extensions perceived to have low fit with the Kodak brand (e.g., filing cabinets), the holistic (vs. analytic) thinkers perceived greater fit between Kodak and the extensions and, thus, evaluated the brand extensions more favorably (Monga & John, 2007). Moreover, when holistic thinking was primed, participants became more favorable toward the brand extensions (Monga & John, 2007). Related research suggests that people with an interdependent self-construal are better able to think of alternative ways to relate an extension to the parent brand and to find relationships between them, perceiving a greater fit and thus evaluating brand extensions more favorably than analytic thinkers do (Ahluwalia, 2008).

In short, what is perceived as fitting into the same attitudinal category will vary between Western and non-Western cultural contexts. As a result, the use of existing attitudes to evaluate new objects

may vary as well. For instance, in non-Western cultural contexts, there may be a greater tendency to generalize from one's existing evaluations to symbolically related attitude objects. Further research is needed to understand the implications of such cultural differences in categorization for attitudinal processes.

### *Theoretical and Measurement Implications*

The types of findings just reviewed raise fundamental questions about what constitutes an *attitude object*. The expectation that objects can be evaluated in the abstract, irrespective of context, is an implicit assumption of Western attitude theorizing and attitude measurement. From the analytic perspective, objects exist independently, and thus the essence of objects is stable over time (Nisbett et al., 2001). By contrast, as reviewed earlier, the holistic perspective assumes that objects are interrelated, and therefore, it is less likely that a phenomenon will remain stable over time. To the extent that attitude objects are seen as being stable versus in perpetual flux (Nisbett, 2003), this has broad implications for the degree to which people will tend to form and consult abstract evaluations. Indeed, cultural differences in the tendency to focus on global and abstract evaluations versus particularistic and contextual evaluations (Ng & Houston, 2006), reviewed earlier, is consistent with this possibility.

Moreover, the finding described earlier that holistic thinkers assimilate an object to its context when making judgments (Zhu & Meyers-Levy, 2009) highlights the fact that in non-Western or interdependent contexts, perceptions of an attitude object are likely to change when the background changes. In non-Western or interdependent contexts, a given attitude object is likely to be perceived as embedded in its context and, thus, constantly changing with it (Riemer et al., 2014). In such cultures, the judgment of the object and the object of the judgment are more likely to vary by context.

Another way that attitudes change as a function of context is highlighted by Oyserman's identity-based motivation model (e.g., Oyserman, 2009, Oyserman et al., 2009; Oyserman, Fryberg, & Yoder, 2007), which emphasizes the situated nature of cultural identity. As a result, situated cues can affect which normative standards are invoked for evaluation. For instance, Oyserman et al. (2007) showed that, in some cases, members of ethnic cultural minorities may associate unhealthy behaviors (e.g., eating high-fat foods) with their ingroup norms and associate healthy actions (e.g., eating salad, flossing teeth) with the outgroup. In other words, they dismiss healthy behaviors as "not something we do." Because people may have multiple cultural self-views and identities, their attitudes may depend on which group-linked norms are highlighted in each context. Such group-based attitudes and behaviors can be reshaped by making those aspects of identity salient whose norms are congruent with the desired behavior (Oyserman et al., 2007). One implication is that understanding attitudes requires measuring the distinct group-related norms associated with those attitudes (Oyserman, 2009). The insights from such measures can lead to interventions that stimulate more health-promoting attitudes and behaviors.

It should also be noted that the range of situations and contexts in which norms play central roles in attitudes may vary with how tight or loose the culture is (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2011; Li, Gordon, & Gelfand, 2017). In tight cultures, where norms are strictly enforced, normative considerations may dominate most evaluations and decisions, and it will be particularly important to measure and account for normative perceptions in order to understand attitudes and persuasion.

Recent cross-cultural efforts to incorporate norms into measures of social perception have examined intersubjective consensus, perceptions of what the normative consensus is in a given culture. For example, Fischer et al. (2009) measured individualism-collectivism from a descriptive norm perspective. Instead of measuring personal beliefs, Fischer et al. measured what people thought most others in their most important reference group think is relevant to individualism-collectivism. Fischer and colleagues found that personal beliefs predicted self-directed behaviors, whereas intersubjective

beliefs predicted traditional behaviors. Further, Zou et al. (2009) showed that cultural differences in psychological characteristics are mediated by cultural variation in intersubjective perceptions but not by one's personal attitudes toward such characteristics.

Such findings highlight the value of incorporating both normative and contextual information into measures of attitudes because, as reviewed earlier, the assumption that a given object is generally evaluated globally and in the abstract is less likely to be appropriate to a non-Western cultural context. Incorporating contextual specificity into attitude measures has long been emphasized as a means of enhancing the predictive validity of attitudinal self-reports (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Such measurement changes could offer valuable theoretical insights, as well. In non-Western contexts, contextually specific measures would be particularly important in meaningfully capturing attitudes and the perceived normative constraints that prevail in those contexts. One way to do this is by using scenario-based attitude measures rooted in specific contexts (Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). Further research is needed that treats the “delta” or change in attitudes across contexts as a focal variable of theoretical interest and maps the degree of malleability in response to various inputs.

## Conclusions

*You're on your own. And you know what you know.  
And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go. . . .  
—Oh, The Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss*

The development and expression of personal preferences and choices rooted in these preferences are foundational in Western contexts. Thus, attitude theorizing has traditionally viewed attitudes as intrapersonal entities designed for the pursuit of individual goals. Much of the extant knowledge about attitudinal phenomena has emerged from research based on this person-centric assumption (Riemer et al., 2014). However, the accumulating literature on cross-cultural differences invites the broadening of assumptions about attitudes and the consideration of novel hypotheses stimulated by those expanded assumptions.

As reviewed here, in non-Western cultural contexts, normative and social considerations take priority, and an emphasis on meeting obligations and others' expectations is foundational. In these contexts, attitudes are characterized by distinct functions and features. Such normative-contextual attitudes are likely to be more malleable, more ambivalent, and more attuned to contextual variation. They are less focused on individual self-expression and more focused on fitting in with others. These attitudes are less abstract, more context-specific, and more sensitive to interconnections among the attributes of an attitude object and between attitude objects.

These distinct qualities of normative-contextual attitudes offer a range of theoretical and measurement implications that are worthy of further research. An approach that addresses such implications can expand the value of attitude theorizing. Developing a psychology of attitudes as tools for maintaining relationships, fulfilling social roles, and being normatively appropriate offers promise for enhancing our understanding of both culture and attitudes.

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