



Do East-Asians and Westerners Think Alike?

-- Evidence from Perspective-Taking & Probability Judgment

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Abstract

My talk presents representative studies from the two strands of my research agenda. The first study, representing my research agenda in cross cultural communication, examines differences in perspective taking between Americans and Chinese. The second study, representing my research agenda in cross cultural judgment and decision making, examines differences between Americans and Chinese in making Bayesian probability judgments. I discuss implications for theory and practice drawn from both studies.

In the first study, my co-author and I evaluated the extent to which perspective taking is culture dependent, comparing participants from a collectivistic culture with participants from an individualistic culture in a randomized experiment. Using eye-gaze measures, Chinese and Americans were compared in a communication game that required the taking of another's perspective. In the experimental condition (in which a distractor was present) Americans were much less tuned in to their partners perspective than were Chinese. We conclude that cultural patterns of interdependence focus attention on the other, causing Chinese to be better perspective takers than Americans.

In the second study, I challenge Griffin & Tversky's (1992) claim (based on an American study) that people systematically under-use weight information (source credibility) and over-use strength information (how extreme the information is) when making judgments. I argue that weight information often functions as contextual information, and that the process of evaluating evidence will thus be culturally influenced. The findings from a randomized experiment of Bayesian probability judgments on Americans and Chinese participants show that in the control condition Americans under-use the base-rate information, while Chinese do not. In the experimental condition, however, when the base rate is made focal, Americans perform much better (although not as well as Chinese) while Chinese are unaffected. This shows that Americans under-use the base rate information only when it functions as background information.

Biography

Dr. Shali Wu received her M.S. in Statistics and Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on cross cultural interpersonal communication and human judgment and decision process. Her work has appeared in such journals as Psychological Science, Cognitive Science and editor's choice in Science. As a senior research associate at Olin Business School in Washington University, she is currently working to extend her research work in psychology to its application in business, specifically, negotiation and managerial perspective taking. Dr. Shali Wu taught Statistics Methods and Applications, Managerial Statistics at both the University of Chicago and Washington University.

~~~~~ **All Are Welcome** ~~~~~