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Does Individualism Help Explain Differences in Employers' Stigmatizing Attitudes Toward Disability Across Chinese and American Cities?

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Abstract

Purpose—Stigmatizing attitudes toward people with disabilities can jeopardize such individuals' well-being and recovery through denial of employment and community isolation. By shaping social norms that define group membership, the construct of individualism may partially explain differences in stigmatizing attitudes across cultures. Further, widespread globalization has brought intensely individualistic social practices to certain segments of non-Western cultures. This paper examines whether the construct of individualism can help to explain cross-cultural differences in stigmatizing attitudes observed between American and Chinese employers.

Design—Employers (N = 879) from Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago provided information on their attitudes toward hiring people with disabilities, and Path Analyses were conducted to examine potential mediating relationships.

Results—Path analyses indicated that vertical individualism, along with perceived responsibility for acquiring a condition, partially mediated the relationship between culture and employers' negative attitudes about job candidates with disabilities.

Conclusion—These results suggested that greater espousal of competitive and individualist values may drive stigmatizing attitudes across cultures.

Keywords

Individualism; China; Employers; Stigma

Stigmatizing attitudes can have a devastating impact upon the lives of individuals experiencing physical or mental illnesses. Sociologist Erving Goffman, (1963) defined stigma as “the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance (Preface)”, and indeed, individuals who experience stigmatized conditions can face tremendous difficulty recovering from their condition and integrating into their communities. Specifically, individuals with mental and physical disabilities are often seen as being *dangerous* to themselves or others and *responsible* for acquiring their conditions (Corrigan, Larson, & Kuwabara, 2007). Issues of stigma obtain particular urgency as individuals seek to obtain or maintain gainful employment. For people with disabilities, the inability to work can impact their recovery and well-being in a variety of ways. Beyond its impact on self-esteem and social support, denial of employment can adversely affect

individuals by undermining their ability to provide for their families and depriving them of financial resources necessary for treatment (Corrigan & Kleinlein, 2005; Sirey et al., 2001).

In trying to comprehend the factors that give rise to stigmatizing attitudes, Goffman and other theorists have approached stigma as a socially-embedded process (Goffman, 1963). They view stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors as being driven by particular socio-cultural arrangements. Researchers working with people living with HIV, for instance, have noted how stigmatizing attitudes often cleave communities along existing fault lines of class, gender, and racial ethnic differences (Berger, 2006). Beyond informing the locus of stigma within communities and specifying its likely targets, empirical studies have also begun to demonstrate that socio-cultural value systems and beliefs can shape the content that stigmatizing attitudes will assume (Yang et al., 2007). For example, people in Egypt who held negative attitudes toward individuals with mental illness tended to endorse culturally-distinct views that tie the causes of these conditions to ‘contagion’ processes (Coker, 2005).

On a broader conceptual level, we believe that cultural differences in stigmatizing attitudes may also reflect the intensity of cultural investments in social connectedness and the implications of different forms of group membership. Previous studies of stigma in China, for example, have noted stigma is associated with concerns about threats to group status and group harmony, concerns reflective of what have been termed “collectivist” cultural orientations (Rao, Angell, Lam, & Corrigan, 2008). Conversely, in studies of stigma in Western countries, discourses around privacy, individual rights, confidentiality, and other preoccupations typical of individualistic cultural orientations often come to the fore (Rao, Kekwaletswe, Hosek, Martinez, & Rodriguez, 2007). Accordingly, we speculate that these high-level characteristics of cultures may account for some of the observed differences in stigmatizing attitudes of employers across cultural groups.

The Individualism-Collectivism Construct and Its Limits

Since Hofstede (1980) introduced the individualism-collectivism distinction as one of his four dimensions of national culture, research has suggested that, broadly speaking, an individualist cultural orientation tends to be prominent in countries within Western Europe and North America, whereas a more collectivist orientation tends to be evident within cultural groups deriving from East Asia, Africa, Latin America and Micronesia (Hofstede, 1980). In a series of studies validating the constructs cross-culturally, Triandis characterized four essential themes of individualism as self reliance, competition with others, emotional distance from in-groups, and hedonism. The ideal of collectivism, he asserted, was reflected in values oriented toward interdependence, family integrity, and sociability (Triandis, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). A recent meta-analytic review of research on individualism-collectivism suggests that individuals from the People's Republic of China have consistently endorsed strong collectivistic values compared to Americans as a whole (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). However, the same meta-analysis suggests important differences in the strength of individualist values within the United States based on the racial-ethnic background of the individuals surveyed. Specifically, African-Americans tended to score as more highly individualistic, and Asian-Americans as less individualistic than members of other American ethnic groups that were sampled (Oyserman et al., 2002; Saetermoe, Scattone, & Kim, 2001).

Despite the individualism-collectivism construct's notable success in organizing a host of contrastive cultural data about self perception, personality, and motivation (Heine & Buchtel, 2009), the individualism-collectivism distinction has come under steady critical attack in the last two decades from scholars within and outside of the fields of cross-cultural psychology. The construct's simple dichotomous characterizations of people within cultures

cannot, for example, explain the influence of Western individualistic tendencies that occur in non-Western societies as a result of globalization (Ewing, 1990; Lindholm, 1997). Leading scholars within the field of cross-cultural psychology agree that ongoing research should better address the heterogeneity of beliefs and values within and across cultures (Matsumoto, 2006). With respect to within-culture heterogeneity, these scholars note the numerous situations and contexts in which people within an individualistically characterized culture display both individualist and collectivist characteristics (Hollan, 1992; Turiel, 2004). Derne (1995), for example, in an ethnographic study of Banarasi Indian society presented ethnographic evidence that, within this strongly collectivist culture, many men endorsed individualist ideals in the form of favoring nuclear family over extended family living arrangements, marrying for love instead of entering into parentally arranged marriages, and engaging in child rearing practices to foster children's autonomy (Derne, 1995).

Hui and Triandis, when they developed and validated the first measures of individualism and collectivism, placed the individualism and collectivism on two discrete dimensions to be examined separately (Hui, 1988; Triandis et al., 1988). In response to criticisms of the construct like those we have cited, Triandis and Gelfand (1988), elaborated upon this initially dichotomous construct. They suggested the value in distinguishing between what they termed *horizontal* (emphasizing equality) and *vertical* (emphasizing hierarchy) varieties of individualism and collectivism. Under the terms of Triandis and Gelfand's elaborated characterization, a *horizontal cultural orientation* tends to reject hierarchy and power differentiation among individuals based on social rank and role, while a *vertical cultural orientation* accepts rank and power differences as necessary and appropriate to social life.

In this report, we were particularly interested in the role of individualism in cultures which had traditionally been characterized as collectivistic. Thus, the constructs of horizontal and vertical individualism were of interest to us. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) characterized these two orientations in the following manner. In communities espousing *horizontal individualism*, people seek to be unique and independent from groups, but do not tend to invest tremendous energy into invidious competition with others or into seeking to obtain socially legitimated forms of rank, status, and power over others. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) offer contemporary Norwegian society as an example of a group evincing this orientation. On the other hand, *vertical individualism* is asserted to be an orientation in which individuals strive for autonomy, distinctiveness and self-definition. They may place relatively lower value upon in-group ties and may devote considerable energies to invidious striving, to finding a basis for favorable comparison with others and to obtaining socially legitimated forms of rank, status and power.

Individualism, Stigma, and Employment

Persons with disabilities frequently experience stigma around hiring and employment (Perlick et al., 2001). Studies have shown that the manner in which one labels a disability can differentially influence employer hiring practices (Bishop, Stenhoff, Bradley, & Allen, 2007). People with disabilities often are not hired or lose jobs when their disability status is discovered. While this continues to occur in the United States, it may be even more common outside the United States where anti-discrimination legislation may exist, but is almost never enforced (Saich, 2006). As a result, people with disabilities confront additional difficulties in meeting their basic needs due to loss of income and health insurance benefits, which can impact access to treatment and, ultimately, individuals' very survival (Kass et al., 1994). One recent commentary suggested that cultural factors, such as individualism or collectivism, might be involved in negative attitudes towards people with disabilities between Chinese and American students (Hampton & Xiao, 2007). However, despite the fact that employers

are a key power group across cultures, there are few cross-cultural studies of employers' attitudes towards people with disabilities outside of the United States.

We set out to compare the attitudes of employers toward individuals with stigmatizing conditions in the United States and the People's Republic or China. We did so with the belief that further understanding of the factors that shape stigmatizing attitudes will assist investigators in developing interventions to reduce the stigma around disability in the workplace. Specifically, we examined stigma as it affects employer attitudes around hiring people with disabilities across three culturally-distinct samples: Hong Kong, Beijing, and Chicago. The cities of Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago were selected because of their members' hypothesized variation on degrees of Westernization. Hong Kong, a former British Colony, was thought to have employers that were more Westernized than employers from Beijing, but less Westernized than employers from Chicago. We compare the endorsement of particular forms of stigmatizing beliefs across these three sample groups and then examine the degree to which the individualist orientations of respondents may mediate any observed cultural differences in stigmatizing attitudes.

While Chinese society has been typically characterized as collectivist, we approached the analysis of the data with an interest in studying the individualistic tendencies of employers cross-culturally in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago. The introduction of free market capitalism in mainland China has brought tremendous economic growth in its wake. For many non-Western countries, integration into market capitalism has entailed the embrace of certain “Western” values and attitudes and the potential for loss of traditional values and practices (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). As an unintended consequence of globalization, cultures that were formerly collectivistic may be shifting and incorporating more individualistic values (Marsella, 1998). Such changes are likely to be occurring in across many parts of China right now, with that country's shift to a market-oriented economy. The scope of this cultural change in urban settings such as Beijing, is complicated by the enormous, historically-unprecedented, internal migration of individuals from rural into urban industrial settings (Cai & Wang; Chan & Zhang, 1999; Y. Chen, Jin, & Yue, 2010). It is possible that rural migrants may assimilate new attitudes rapidly as they interact with urban born and educated elites. Such elites (holders of long-term residence permits) are reported to be over-represented in business leadership tiers in many cities. Given that, however, as scholars of globalization have argued, employers in corporate capitalist settings find it beneficial to have access to a large pool of employees who are highly mobile (not tightly geographically bound to groups or communities of origin), profit-oriented, and competitively assertive, members of both groups, the stable urban elites and the rural-born working classes of China seem likely to be subject to pressures to adopt a more individualist ethos (Lee & Peterson, 2000). Members might be expected to evince attitudes associated with vertical individualism in particular. We were therefore curious to discover how strongly our samples of business people in the two Chinese cites, Beijing and Hong Kong would score on scales of individualism.

Given the importance of secure long-term employment to the well-being of people with disabilities, in the present paper, we set out to examine stigmatizing attitudes among small business leaders in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago. We explored the relationships between culture and employers' beliefs about and attitudes towards hiring individuals with five types of disabilities: HIV, Psychosis, Bone Cancer, Drug Dependence, and Alcohol Dependence. We examined horizontal and vertical forms of individualism in these sample groups, and we tested for a possible mediating relationship of vertical and horizontal individualism in the relationship of culture to employers stigmatizing attitudes toward persons with disabilities. We reasoned that the more distanced social orientation of individualism is more consistent with holding stigmatizing attitudes towards people with

disabilities. Thus, we hypothesized that more individualist orientations might mediate between cultural group and more stigmatizing attitudes toward people with disabilities.

Method

Participants

Eight hundred and seventy-nine employers were randomly sampled in Beijing (N = 302), Hong Kong (N = 284), and Chicago (N = 293). In Chicago, the employers were stratified by race/ethnicity to approximate census-defined racial-ethnic distributions in the population, and the employers were drawn from Dun and Bradstreet listings of small business. In China, lists of employers of small companies were obtained from the Labor Department of Hong Kong, and the Industry and Commerce Bureau in Beijing. Our criteria for small businesses were that the businesses consist of less than 3 to 50 employees, and they should not have a designated human resources division.

In all three cities, employers who were in charge of hiring new employees belonged to 6 different industry categories: Business, Education, Manufacturing (jobs involving production of goods), Health, High Technology, Low Technology (jobs in which no specialized training was required). We selected the six industry categories based on U.S. Department of Labor 2000 Standard Industrial Classification System definitions of ‘major groups’. For the purposes of our study, we collapsed the 23 major categories into 6 overarching industry categories. In addition, we stratified our sample to select 40-60 participants from each of 6 industry types within each city. Companies with formal human resource departments were excluded.

The mean age of all participants was 43 years (SD = 12). There were statistically significant differences in age across the three cities, the mean age (in years) of participants in Chicago was 50, Hong Kong was 45, and in Beijing was 34. In Chicago, 122 employers self-identified as White, 72 as Black, 17 as Native American or Pacific Islanders, 35 as Asian, and 47 as Latino/Hispanic. In Beijing and Hong Kong, the 100% of the sample was Han Chinese. Full sample characteristics, including the average number of employees in employers' firms, are separated by city and listed in Table 1. Statistical comparisons indicated that there were significant differences between characteristics of the sample and population on the number of female owned businesses, educational level of the employers, and rates of employers providing health insurance, and thus subsequent analyses weighted the data which adjusted the sample to fit the population (Corrigan et al., 2009).

Procedures

All study procedures were approved by local Institutional Review Boards or its equivalents, and participants provided informed consent before data collection began. Potential employers were sent advance letters with study information, and employers were contacted by phone and study procedures explained. Trained research assistants conducted each interview, and participants provided socio-demographic information and descriptive information about their businesses (e.g. number of employees, level of education). The participants were interviewed in Cantonese in Hong Kong, Mandarin in Beijing, and English in Chicago, and all instruments were translated and back-translated to English to ensure the original meaning was retained between languages.

A Parsimonious Model

Participants were interviewed as part of a larger study of employer attitudes around hiring people with disabilities. Data was collected from employers that were men and women of various racial/ethnic backgrounds, living in 3 cities, on an individualism-collectivism scale

with 4 subscales, attitudes about men and women with 5 different health conditions, and an employer perspectives scale (measuring specific concerns around hiring people with disabilities; scale described more fully in Corrigan, 2009). Given the numerous ways in which we could have examined the data, we were concerned about making multiple comparisons. Thus, we planned our analysis based on the principle of parsimony, which states, “given two different models with similar explanatory power for the same data, the simpler model is preferred” (Kline, 2005, p.136). We constructed a model to be examined with path analysis based on constructs of interest identified in literature review: culture, individualism, and stigmas around dangerousness and responsibility. Each of these constructs and how they are measured are defined below.

Measures

Culture—For purposes of the present study, the variable of culture was defined categorically, corresponding to the city in which the employer resided (Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago). In order to be included in path analyses, the 3-category variable of participants' location was dummy-coded into 2 variables with Chicago as the reference category. Thus, the first ‘culture variable’ reflected the Hong Kong location and the second ‘culture variable’ reflected the Beijing location.

Individualism—The participants completed the individualism-collectivism scale developed by (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The scale contained 16 items, and four items load onto each of four subscales/factors: horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, horizontal individualism (HI), and vertical individualism (VI). Each subscale contained 4 items. In the present study, we analyzed the HI and VI scales, as these were the constructs we hypothesized would impact stigma.

In one validation study with Korean and American university students the scale demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). In another study of the scale conducted in China, the 16-item version of the scale that was translated into Mandarin converged better to four factors than the 27-item version of the scale (Chen, 2007). In a cross-cultural study of the 16-item translated scale in the U.S. and Taiwan, Cronbach's alphas were .74 and .69 for VI and HI, respectively, in the U.S. and .61 and .63 for VI and HI, respectively, in Taiwan (Chiou, 2001).

Stigma—Stigmatizing attitudes were measured by a modified version of the Attribution Questionnaire (AQ: (Corrigan, Markowitz, Watson, Rowan, & Kubiak, 2003)). The AQ is a measure that uses a vignette to describe the situation of a person with a disability. The participant completes a series of questions that reflect their attitudes towards the person described in the vignette. The measure has demonstrated good psychometric properties and has been used in several studies modeling the stigma of mental illness (Corrigan et al., 2003; Rao, Feinglass, & Corrigan, 2007; Reinke, Corrigan, Leonhard, Lundin, & Kubiak, 2004). In the present study, items of the AQ were modified to fit the study (e.g. wording of items were changed to reflect that participants were employers tasked to hire job candidates). The vignette described a person with one of five conditions (HIV, Psychosis, Bone Cancer, Drug Dependence, and Alcohol Dependence). Each participant completed the AQ questionnaire for a single vignette that described a job applicant with one of the five conditions. The condition was randomly assigned for each participant.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses suggested that a 4 factor model of the AQ, with factors named (1) dangerousness (potentially harmful to self or others) and (2) incompetence (participant perceived the job candidate to be dangerous/incompetent because of health

condition), (3) responsibility (participant is responsible for acquiring health condition), and (4) staff conflict (hiring participant would cause staff conflict), fitted well with the data (χ^2 = 0.003, df = 164, p = 1.00; RMSEA < 0.001, CFI = 1.00). Higher scores on each of the subscales indicated that a participant holds more stigmatizing attitudes than participants who scored lower. In the present study, we analyzed scores from the dangerousness and responsibility subscales, as these two constructs are considered to be two important aspects of stigma (Corrigan et al., 2002). The dangerousness subscale contained 7 items and the responsibility subscale contained 4 items.

Data analysis

We tested the relationship between culture and stigmatizing attitudes, and examined whether the level of endorsement of horizontal and vertical individualism mediated the relationship between culture and stigma. After calculating basic psychometric data and descriptive statistics on the sample and variables of interest, we conducted ANOVA analyses to examine individualism subscale scores across the three cities. We then conducted path analysis on the six variables of interest: the Hong Kong culture variable, the Beijing culture variable, horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, responsibility, and dangerousness. Path analysis was chosen as an analytic technique, because of its advantage in examining multiple mediators in one parsimonious model (Pedhazur, 1997). Path analysis allowed us to specify an initial model, and then modify the paths between variables to produce a final model based on model fit, modification indices, and path coefficients. The criteria for good model fit are a $\chi 2 < 3.0$, p value > 0.05, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.05, a Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) above 0.9, and an Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) above 0.9, and a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) above 0.9 (Kline, 2005). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.0 (SPSS Inc., 2007) and LISREL version 8.80 student edition (SSI, Inc., 2006).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Before beginning the formal test of mediation, we conducted preliminary analyses to examine the properties of the measures used. Cronbach's alpha on the horizontal and vertical individualism subscales were 0.57 and 0.58, respectively. This poor internal consistency reliability likely reflected the small number of items per subscale (Hattie, 1985); when the two individualism subscales are combined into one 8-item scale, the alpha increased to 0.64. Mean scores on the individualism subscales were 20.5 (*SD* = 4.4) for HI and 17.9 (*SD* = 4.4) for VI. On the AQ, Cronbach's alpha for the responsibility (4 items) and dangerousness (7 items) subscales were 0.53 and 0.83, respectively, and just as with the individualism subscale scores, alpha dropped as the number of items decreases. Mean scores on the subscales were 27.6 (*SD* = 12.8) for dangerousness and 14.0 (*SD* = 6.4) for responsibility. Mean scores on the HI, VI, dangerousness, and responsibility subscales, along with their Cronbach's alphas, are listed separately by city in Table 2.

We then conducted ANOVA to examine individualism-collectivism scores across the three cities. Culture was a significant predictor of HI and VI: HI: $R^2 = 0.17$, F (2, 834) = 84.2, $p < 0.001$ and VI: $R^2 = 0.14$, F (2, 833) = 67.9, $p < 0.001$. The Chicago employers scored highest on HI, followed by the Beijing and then Hong Kong employers. For VI, Beijing employers scored highest, followed by the Hong Kong employers and then the Chicago employers. The estimated marginal mean scores for horizontal and vertical individualism are depicted by culture in Figure 1.

Path Analysis

Our initial path model included the Hong Kong and Beijing culture variables (with Chicago as a reference category) as predictors, horizontal individualism and vertical individualism as mediator variables, and responsibility and dangerousness as outcome variables. The initial analysis suggested poor model fit, and modification indices provided by LISREL suggested that if a path was added from responsibility to dangerousness, and if direct paths were added between the culture variables and dangerousness, the $\chi 2$ would decrease. In addition, low path coefficients suggested that horizontal individualism was not contributing much to the model, and so this variable was removed.

The final model, depicted in Figure 2, had good fit indices ($\chi^2 = 2.11$, df = 1, p = 0.15; RMSEA < 0.036, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = 0.98). This model included three endogenous variables: two mediating variables, vertical individualism ($R^2 = 0.14$) and responsibility for acquiring a condition ($R^2 = 0.30$), and one outcome variable, dangerousness ($R^2 = 0.41$). The inclusion of both direct and indirect effects between culture and dangerousness indicate that vertical individualism and responsibility are only partial mediators in the relationship. The employers in Hong Kong and Beijing tended to have higher VI scores than employers in Chicago, and higher VI scores predicted higher scores on responsibility and dangerousness. In other words, VI contributed to employer perceptions that job candidates with disabilities were responsible for acquiring their conditions and were dangerous.

Discussion

Our analyses suggested that individualism plays a role in cultural differences that exist in employers' attitudes towards people with disabilities. Specifically, the findings suggested systematic differences across Chinese and American respondents in their endorsement of individualism. Our main hypothesis, that dimensions of individualism would mediate the relationship between culture and stigma was partially supported. Vertical individualism, or the tendencies toward independence vis-à-vis competitive self-assertiveness and acceptance of rank and hierarchy, explained some of the mechanisms in the process between culture and stigma. The employers' perceptions of a person's ‘responsibility’ for acquiring their condition also played a role in employers' perceptions that the person was ‘dangerous’ because of their disability. Given this finding, one might expect, for example, an employer not to hire a person with a disability because vertical individualism dictates that persons with disabilities should be self reliant, corresponding with responsibility for one's own condition.

Culture appeared to be tied closely with individualism, but the pattern of these differences runs contrary to traditional conceptualizations of the constructs. Based on our reading of the voluminous literature documenting high endorsement of collectivistic values in Chinese society, our finding that the Beijing sample rated highest in vertical individualism, followed by Hong Kong with Chicago scoring lowest, contradicts expectations framed on the level of broad-scale cultural characterizations. Hence, it appears that Chinese cultural orientations toward individualism are more complex and heterogeneous than more traditional conceptualizations would suggest. The most straightforward explanation for these findings would be the interpretation alluded to in the introduction of this study. Chinese society has for the last three decades been undergoing rapid transformation, with Beijing at the heart of a historically unprecedented surge into market capitalism. Triandis (1995) spoke to the possibility that “affluence, exposure to mass media and modernization can contribute to a shift toward individualism,” The groups whom our survey targeted, business leaders in Beijing's small sized firms, were younger than their counterparts in Hong Kong, and far younger than those we sampled in Chicago. We did not possess information on the

birthplace (rural vs. urban) of individuals from our Beijing survey, information that might have helped to better explain the tendencies in the data that we observed. Regardless of their regional extraction, the views of these individuals appears to reflect an incorporation of more traditionally Western set of values into at least one segment of Chinese collectivistic society.

We found support in these data for the view that individualism appears to demonstrate a type of domain specificity, with a distinctiveness for individuals anchored in a particular social-historical moment (the market capitalist boom centered in Beijing) or occupying one particular sphere of Chinese society (business and trade leadership). Ongoing research into modern Chinese society will be needed to clarify whether this transformation reflects a focal or much more widespread cultural shift.

These findings lend strength to criticisms of overly simplistic applications of individualism-collectivism (Hollan, 1992; Turiel, 2004). Furthermore, much of the cross-cultural research that has demonstrated the validity and explanatory power of individualism and collectivism has been based on samples of university students (Oyserman et al., 2002). The limits of the construct, especially when invoked as a global descriptor of cultural orientation, may be more apparent in the present study with its use of non-student samples. Furthermore, the finding that vertical individualism is particularly marked as a orientation in our Chinese samples may reflect the overlay of individualist ideals upon values of traditional, pre-communist Chinese society, one in which hierarchical relationships are valued and legitimate. The competitive striving to be the best, to exert leadership and control over subordinates are consistent with the dictates of vertical individualism.

Interestingly, Chicago respondents not only produced the lowest endorsement of vertical individualist ideals when compared to Chinese respondents, they also endorsed statements favorable to the horizontal dimensions, that is, anti-hierarchical and egalitarian norms of individualism. This finding is contrary to a study by Triandis (1995), who found the United States as having a vertical individualist orientation. However, our sample was predominantly non-white, and thus, ethnic/racial minorities reported values that differed from larger U.S. society. This finding is not unprecedented in the literature, where, one study notes, African-Americans and Asian-Americans had higher scores than European-Americans on the horizontal dimensions of the same individualism subscales (Komarraju & Cokley, 2008). Accordingly, we noted that our sampling frame for Chicago was designed to over sample employers from diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds. Thus, our findings, similar to those found by Komarraju and colleagues (2008) might reflect a tendency for business leaders from ethnic minority groups, many of whom have historically experienced racially-based discrimination, to favor values centered around notions of equality (Fischer & Shaw, 1999).

Counter to what we expected, individualism did not entirely explain the relationship between culture and stigma. Horizontal Individualism did not play a role in explaining the relationships. However, vertical individualism took a place in the pathway between culture and perceived dangerousness. Particularly in China, moral responsibility for contracting a condition seems to play an important role in employers' negative attitudes about hiring people with disabilities. While Beijing employers may have found that the cultivation of individualist incentives and the implementation of hierarchical structures beneficial in organizing business and trade ventures, these structures and ways of thinking appear to have negatively influenced some of the employers' attitudes towards hiring people with disabilities.

Notably, employers' perceptions of a job candidate's responsibility for acquiring a condition also played a role in the relationship between culture and perceived dangerousness. Vertical

individualism appeared to have an effect through responsibility, as Hong Kong and Beijing employers who reported more vertical individualism also reported that the job candidate held more responsibility for acquiring a condition. Perceptions of responsibility, in turn, contributed to reported perceptions that a job candidate was dangerous. Past studies of the constructs of dangerousness and responsibility found that dangerousness has contributed to interpersonal rejection and desired distance from people with mental illness (Corrigan et al., 2003; Corrigan et al., 2002). In the employment arena, perceptions of responsibility and dangerousness are likely to act as barriers to hiring people with disabilities, further contributing to social isolation and jeopardizing their well being.

This study had some limitations. First, the results were based on age-confounded, cross-sectional data, and as such, one should use caution in making causal inferences about the variables studied. While we posit a role for social transformation of urban Chinese society in shaping some of our findings, we lack the historical baseline data that could establish its role more conclusively. We have remarked, as well, upon the distinctiveness of our sample of employers from these three great commercial cities, and thus, we suggest caution in drawing inferences about the relationships between factors of culture, individualist orientations, and stigma in the broader populations of the United States and China. Second, the measures used here demonstrated poor internal consistency reliability and had limited validation in the Chinese context. The stigma measure was developed after formative qualitative work was conducted in China to ensure their cultural sensitivity, but we recognize that further psychometric validation of the Chinese versions of the instruments (particularly the AQ) would be helpful. Specifically, to more strongly validate these measures cross-culturally, future studies should explore the measures' differential item functioning across cultures and possibly revise problematic items to improve cross-cultural transferability.

Despite the limitations, the present study found support for differing attitudes towards people with disabilities across cultures. Furthermore, individualism and perceptions of responsibility can explain part of this process: employers who have hierarchical and individualistic tendencies in China can hold stigmatizing attitudes towards people with disabilities. However, the results here posit one possible mechanism but do not tell the whole story: individualism within the non-Western context does not fully explain cross-cultural differences in stigmatizing attitudes. Therefore, future studies would benefit from further investigating mediation, and even moderation, among these variables. In addition, examining other potential contributors to cross-cultural differences in stigma, such as economic development and power structures within communities and organizations, would serve to strengthen these findings and help to identify and develop culturally-tailored mechanisms for reducing stigma. For the clinician and educator, these findings suggest the need for increased awareness of cross-cultural influences upon hiring behaviors of employers and development of culturally sensitive stigma reduction interventions for employers to help improve the lives of people with disabilities form diverse communities.

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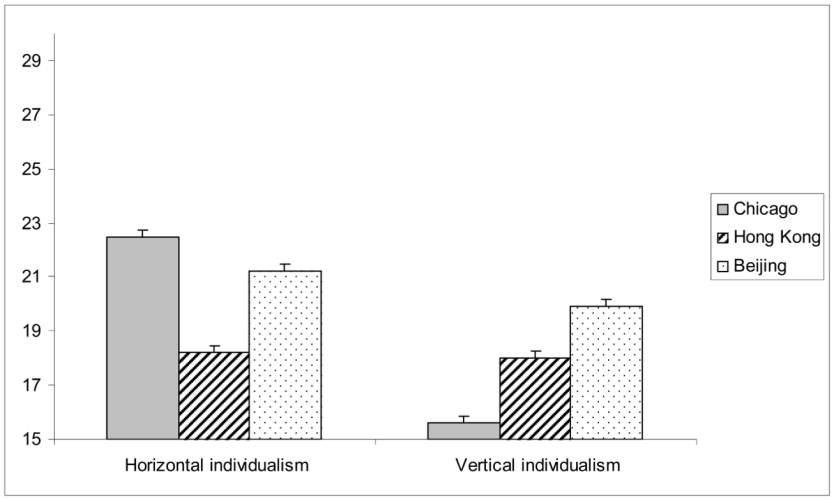

Figure 1.

Estimated Marginal Mean Scores for Horizontal and Vertical Individualism in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Chicago.

Standard errors are shown by the bars above the means. ANOVA demonstrated statistically significant differences on each subscale across cultures ($p < 0.001$).

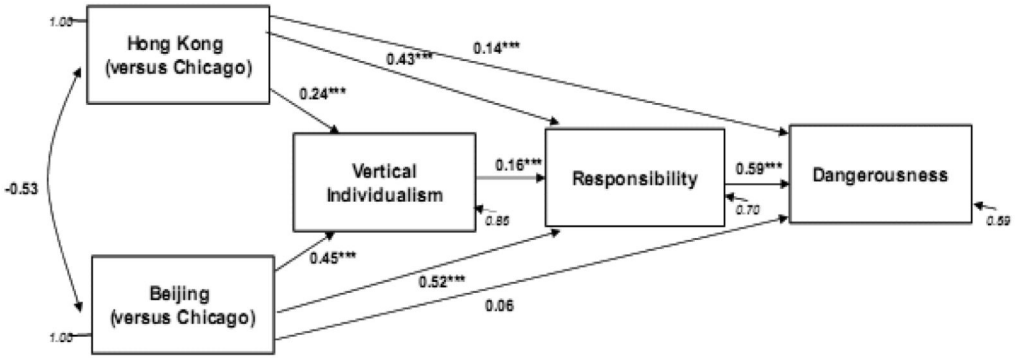

Figure 2.

Path Diagram of Vertical Individualism and Responsibility as Mediators between Location and Dangerousness.

The large, bolded numbers indicate the standardized path coefficients, interpreted as standardized regression coefficients, with associated t tests significant at the $p < 0.001$ level marked with asterisks (***). The smaller, italicized numbers next to each variable represent variances. The number next to the curved line between the Hong Kong (versus Chicago) and the Beijing (versus Chicago) variables is the correlation between the two variables.

Table 1

Socio-demographics of Employer-Participants Across Three Cities

Item	Chicago N=293 *M* (*SD*)/%	Beijing N=302 *M* (*SD*)/%	Hong Kong N=284 *M* (*SD*)/%
Age	49.7 (12.3)	34.4 (8.5)	44.7 (10.1)
Gender (% female)	47%	49%	50%
Highest Schooling			
Elementary school or less	0%	0%	1%
Some high school	0%	3%	29%
High school diploma/GED/Secondary school	4%	15%	12%
Some college	14%	1%	2%
Two-year college degree/Higher diploma	8%	28%	18%
Bachelor's Degree	41%	48%	28%
Master's Degree	26%	5%	8%
Doctoral Degree	5%	0%	2%
Ethnicity (report all that apply)			
Hispanic (% yes)	16%	--	--
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	--	--
Black or Africa American	26%	--	--
Chinese	1%	--	--
Other Asian	11%	--	--
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	--	--
White	44%	--	--
Number of employees	13.6 (16.1)	35.2 (35.7)	15.1 (21.3)
Industry sector			
Business	22%	14%	17%
Education	15%	16%	17%
Health	17%	9%	16%
High Tech	16%	20%	14%
Low Tech	15%	21%	20%
Manufacturing	15%	20%	17%

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha and Mean Scores Across the Three Cities

Subscale	Chicago N=293	Beijing N=302	Hong Kong N=284
Vertical Individualism			
Cronbach's Alpha	0.65	0.47	0.50
Mean (SD)	15.8	19.9	18.0
Horizontal Individualism			
Cronbach's Alpha	0.55	0.53	0.55
Mean (SD)	22.4	21.0	18.1
Dangerousness			
Cronbach's Alpha	0.83	0.77	0.85
Mean (SD)	20.4	30.9	31.2
Responsibility			
Cronbach's Alpha	0.53	0.41	0.18
Mean (SD)	9.2	17.0	15.2