

Attitude Theories Through a Cross-Cultural Lens



Sharon Shavitt

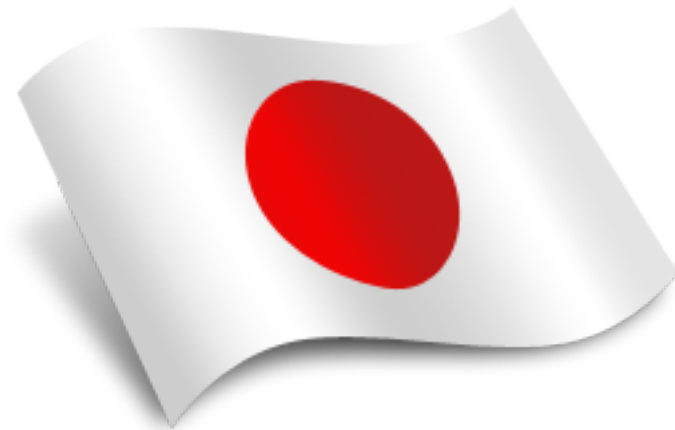
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Scenario 1

In Japan, you are shopping for prints in a public market. After carefully comparing and selecting just the right ones, you go to pay the cashier.

The cashier smiles approvingly and says; “All the Americans like these ones.”

Although the cashier intends her remark as a compliment, how do you feel?



Attitudes in Different Contexts

HERE

**Expression of unique
personal preferences**

ELSEWHERE

**Normative preferences
are good**

How to Find Interesting Theoretical Opportunities

Sometimes they are lurking at the interface between existing areas.

Especially productive areas that do not intersect

Example: Cross-Cultural Theories,
Attitude Theories

Riemer, Shavitt, Koo & Markus, in press, *Psych Review*

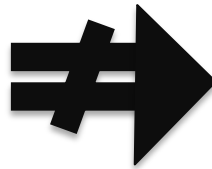


Opportunities to Expand Attitude Theorizing

CROSS-CULTURAL WORK

ATTITUDE THEORIES

West versus the Rest



Business as usual

**Many differences,
distinct processes**

**Core assumptions
unaffected**

Attitude: The Traditional View



Internal consistency

Stability

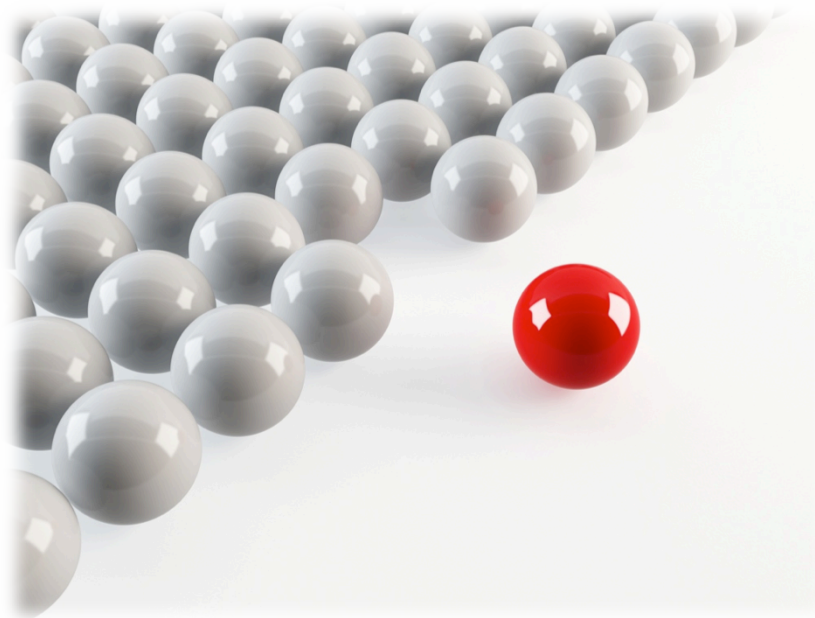
Coping with uncertainty

Guiding behavior

Converse, 1974; Festinger, 1957; Hass, et al. 1992; Haugtvedt & Petty, 1992; Heider, 1958; Katz, 1960; Krosnick and Petty 1995; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Shavitt, 1990; Smith, Bruner & White, 1956

Theorizing about Attitudes

Rooted in Western sociocultural assumptions:
Centrality, desirability of personal preferences



The Person-Centric Model

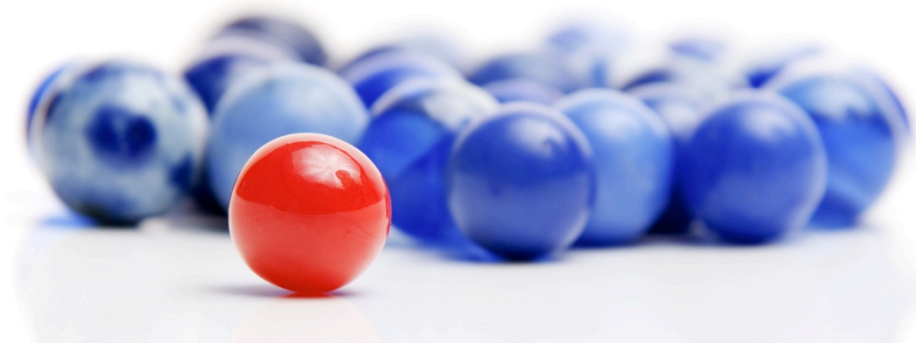
Emerged from Western perspectives:

Agency of the individual

Imperative to pursue personal goals

Achieving independence requires clear,
consistent preferences accessible across contexts

Resistance to others' views, norms



What about the non-West?

Non-West: Interdependent contexts

Western contexts differ from others in their

Values

Thinking styles



Cultural Values

WEST: INDIVIDUALISM

Personal goals, enjoyment
Pursue independence, self-reliance
Socialized to nurture and express consistent personal preferences through choices

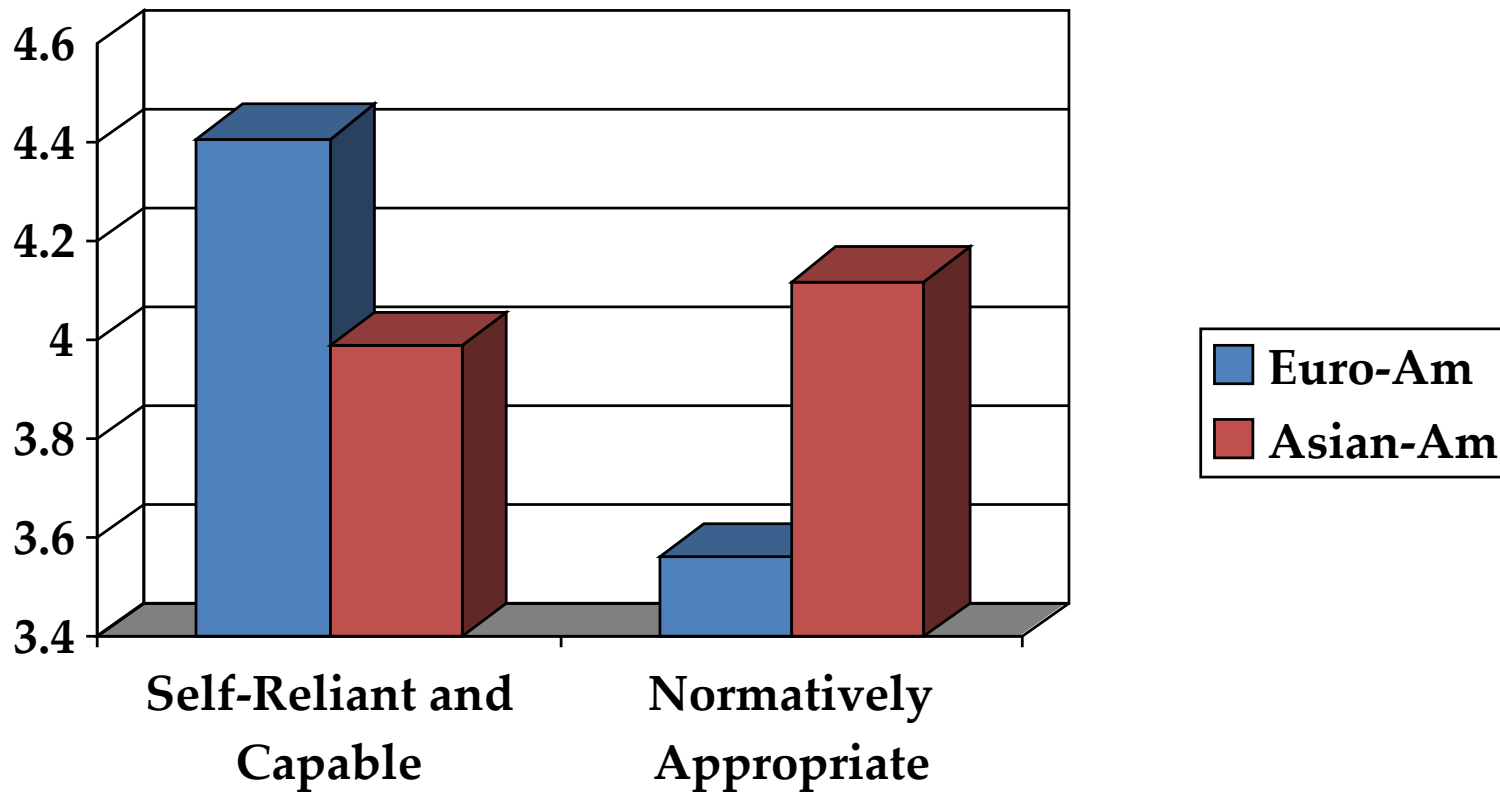
NON-WEST: COLLECTIVISM

Ingroup goals, relationships
Pursue interdependence and approval, meet obligations
Socialized to *inhibit* personal preferences, adapt readily to norms, others' views

Markus & Kitayama 1991, 2003; J. Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Savani, et al. 2008; Triandis, 1989; Zhang & Shrum, 2009

Self-Presentation and Culture

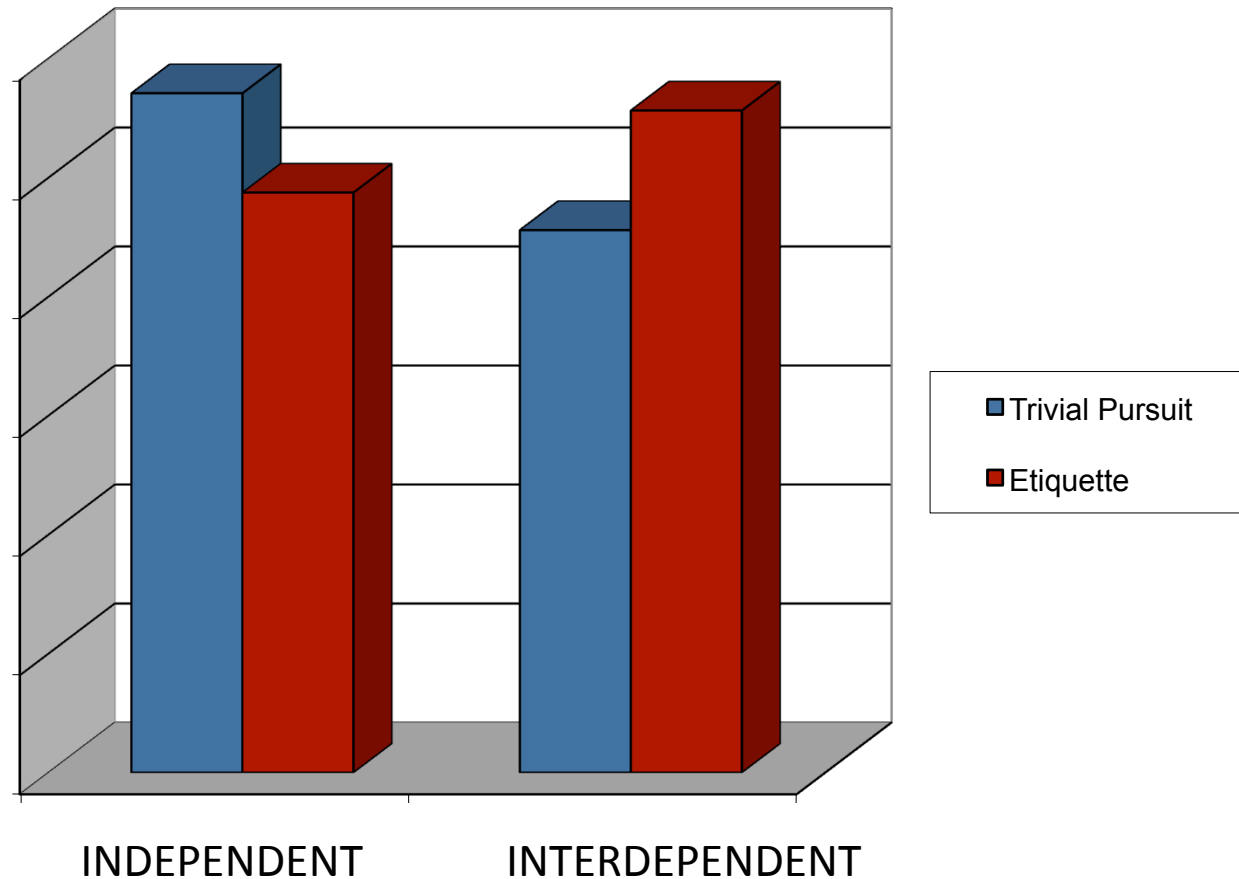
Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006, *JPSP*



Self-Presentation and Culture

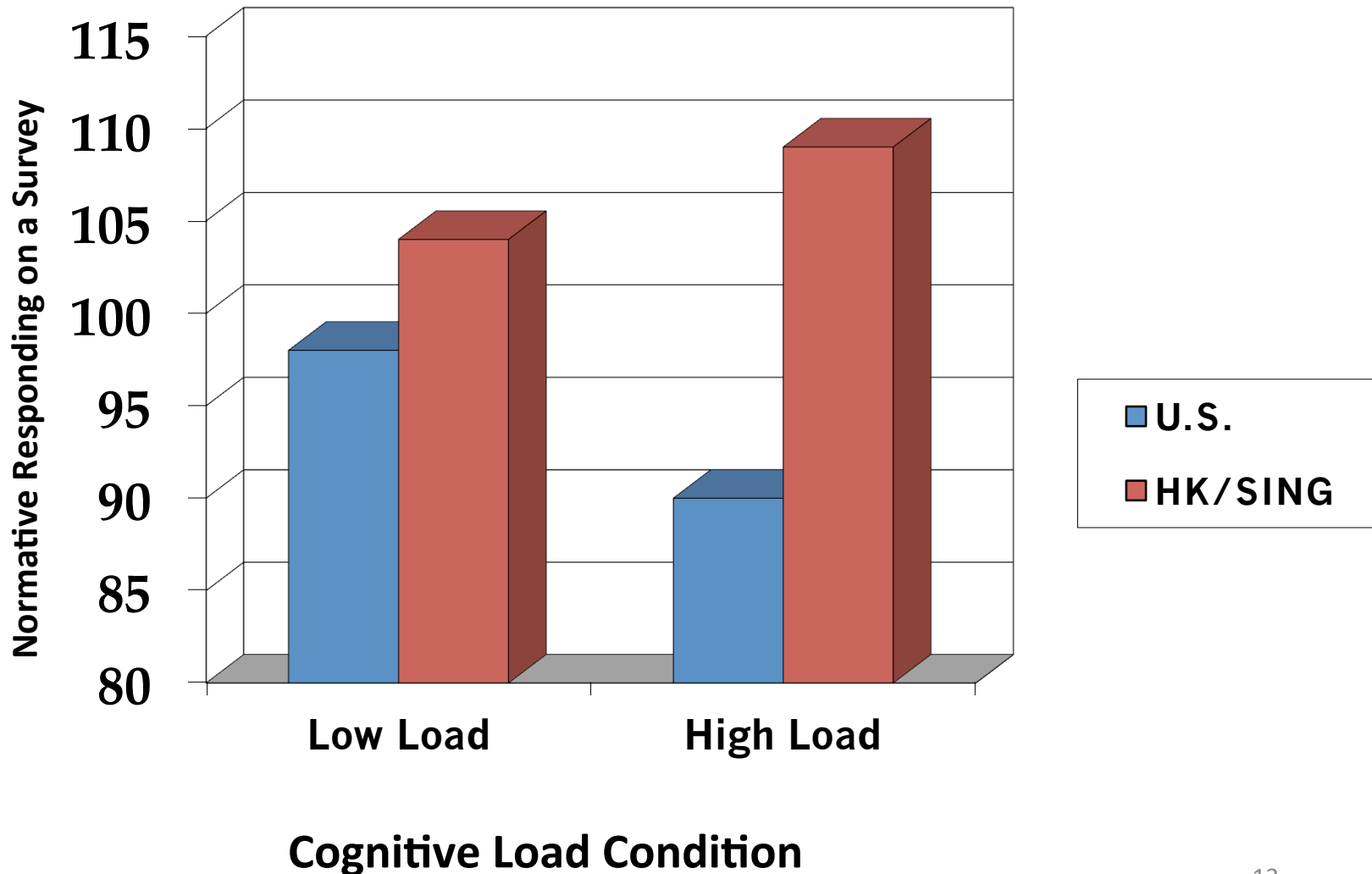
Lalwani and Shavitt, 2009, *JPSP*

Correct Answers (out of 20)



Normative Responding is Easier for Non-Westerners

Riemer & Shavitt, 2011, *JCP*



Cultural Thinking Styles

WEST: ANALYTICAL

Attention to focal object

Expect stability in objects
across contexts

Formal logic, contradictions
need to be resolved

See elements as separable,
distinct

NON-WEST: HOLISTIC

Attention to context

Expect fluctuation in objects
across contexts

Dialectical thinking, comfort
with contradictions

See things as related,
connected

Normative-Contextual Model



Ambivalent

Malleable and fluid across situations

Uncertainty is reduced by tuning to others' views

Guiding behavior to fit in

Internal Consistency vs. Ambivalence

In non-Western contexts, things not perceived to be incongruous just because they differ in valence

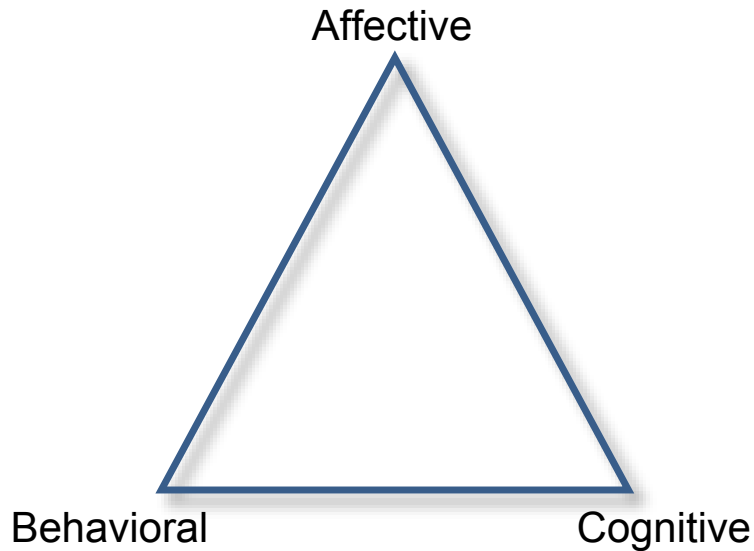
Attitude - behavior inconsistency not aversive

Agenda: Instead of theoretical focus on internal consistency, how to address duality?

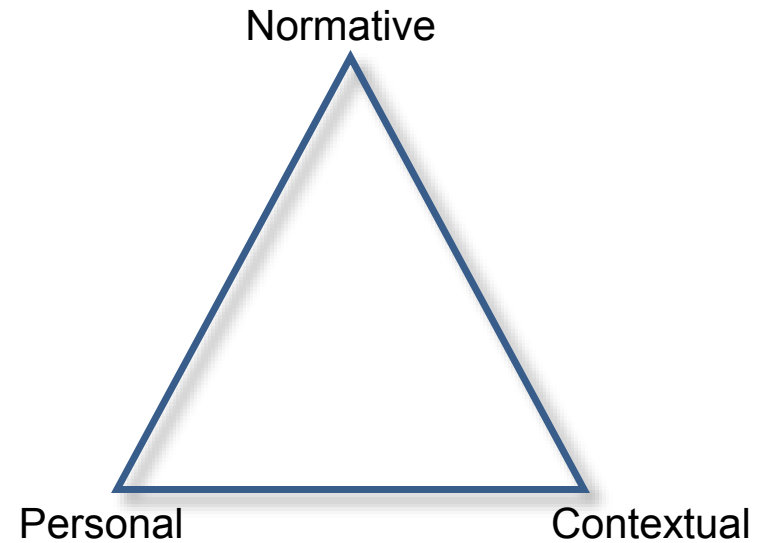
(Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997; Aaker & Sengupta, 2000; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Park, Koo, et al. 2013; Wong, Rindfleisch & Burroughs, 2003)

Normative-Contextual Model: Emphasis on Different Type of Consistency

Person-Centric Attitude



Normative-Contextual Attitude



In the West: Coping with Uncertainty

An accessible personal preference gives a
“feeling of knowing”: Is object good or bad?

Accessible personal preferences are functional:

Coping with new options

Directing decision making

Enhancing post-choice satisfaction



(Blascovich et al. 1993; Fazio, 2000; Fazio, Blascovich, & Driscoll 1992; Katz 1960;
Wilson & Schooler 1991)

In the Non-West: Coping with Uncertainty

An item can be good *and* bad. “Feeling of knowing” may come from:

Absorbing the views of important others

Discerning contexts in which certain preferences are normative



What Guides Behavior?

Decision Quality and Post-choice satisfaction

West: Enhanced by accessible personal preferences

Non-West: Imperative is responding to others' expectations.

Accessible personal preferences a liability?



How to Find Interesting Theoretical Opportunities

Looking at one theoretical domain through lens of another highlights areas not yet addressed

See the gaps and opportunities to stretch good theories into new territory

Riemer, Shavitt, Koo & Markus, in press, *Psych Review*



Complementary Attitude Models

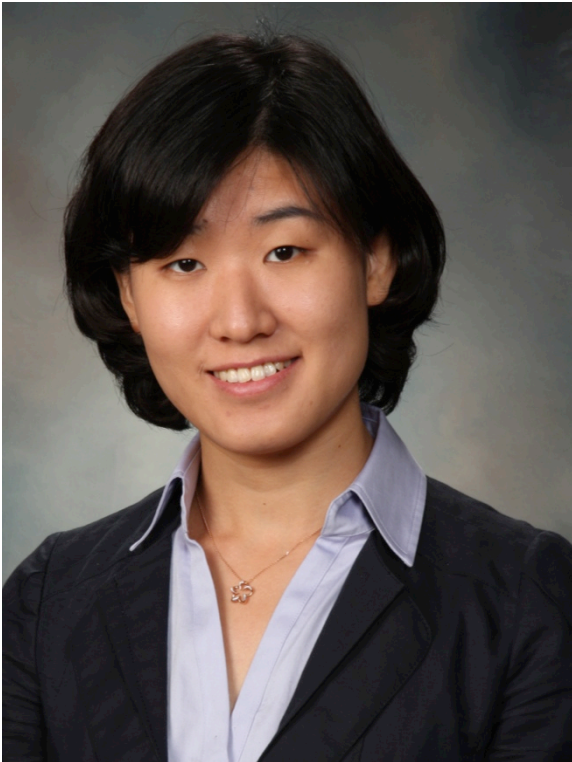
Person-Centric Model

- Personal predispositions
- Internally consistent and stable over situations
- Variability is problematic. Focus on identifying strong, enduring attitudes.
- Cultivating and expressing strong preferences.

Normative-Contextual Model

- Context-afforded inclinations
- Ambivalent, malleable and tuned to the context
- Variability is focal. Mapping variability explains attitudes more comprehensively.
- Disconnecting from personal preferences.

Coauthors



Minkyung Koo

Hila Riemer

Hazel Markus



Thank you!