8

Cultural Aspects of Interviewing

Nkansah Anakwah, Nael Sumampouw and Henry Otgaar*

8.1. Introduction

Society is increasingly becoming multicultural. This increase unfolds because of recent trends in migration and globalization.[1] Because of the increasing multicultural nature of society, individuals from different cultures may serve as witnesses, victims or suspects in criminal investigations.[2] Thus, investigative professionals inevitably interview individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Culture has been shown to affect the encoding, storage and retrieval of autobiographical memories.[3] Without an adequate understanding of the possible role of cultural factors in shaping police interviewing outcomes, the quality of such interviews may be compromised. Cultural understanding is, therefore, instrumental for effective interviewing.

In this chapter, we highlight cultural aspects of interviewing. Section 8.2. provides an overview of culture and several key cultural concepts, and Section 8.3. draws on previous work to highlight implications of culture for interrogations and interviewing. Section 8.4. explains the idea of culturally-competent interviewers.

* **Nkansah Anakwah**, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in Forensic Psychology at Birmingham City University. **Nael Sumampouw**, Ph.D., is a Lecturer, Researcher and Practitioner in Forensic and Clinical Psychology at Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia. **Henry Otgaar**, Ph.D., is Professor of Legal Psychology at Maastricht University, the Netherlands and a Research Professor at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migration 2019: Report*, New York, 2019.

2 Lorraine Hope *et al.*, "Urgent Issues and Prospects at the Intersection of Culture, Memory, and Witness Interviews: Exploring the Challenges for Research and Practice", in *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 2022, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1–31.

3 Laura Jobson, "Cultural Differences in Specificity of Autobiographical Memories: Implications for Asylum Decisions", in *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 2009, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 453–457; Wang Qi and Michael Ross, "What We Remember and What We Tell: The Effects of Culture and Self-Priming on Memory Representations and Narratives", in *Memory*, 2005, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 594–606; Wang Qi, "Are Asians Forgetful? Perception, Retention, and Recall in Episodic Remembering", in *Cognition*, 2009, vol. 111, no.1, pp. 123–131.

8.2. The Concept of Culture

Individuals are cultural beings as they are not immune to their culture of socialization. They are socialized in a culture encompassing beliefs, norms, values and customs. In fact, in his seminal work, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871, the anthropologist Edward Tylor defined culture as a complex whole embodying beliefs, norms, values, symbols, customs, morals and any habits that members of a social group acquire.[4] The cultural schemas acquired by members of a society guide their behaviour and social interactions.[5] Thus, the cultural context of individuals can have implications for their behaviour and psychological processes.[6] In this section, drawing on work from cross-cultural psychology, we explain some cultural concepts of relevance for the current contribution.

8.2.1. Individualism–Collectivism

One of the cultural dimensions that has been shown to be most influential pertaining to social phenomena is the individualism–collectivism cultural dimension. This is the extent to which members of a social group view the 'self' as separate from, or integrated into, the social context.[7] Specifically, whereas there tends to be a very loose relationship between individuals in individualistic cultures, in collectivistic cultures the relationship between individuals tends to be very tight.[8] The individualism–collectivism cultural dimension has been widely examined in the context of cultural differences in

[4] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 1871; Jeanette Altarriba, "The Influence of Culture on Cognitive Processes", in *Advances in Psychology*, 1993, vol. 103, pp. 379–384.

[5] Andrei Boutyline and Laura K. Soter, "Cultural Schemas: What They Are, How to Find Them, and What to Do Once You've Caught One", in *American Sociological Review*, 2021, vol. 86, no. 4, pp. 728–758.

[6] Wang Qi, "The Cultural Foundation of Human Memory", in *Annual Review of Psychology*, 2021, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 151–179.

[7] Geert Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context", in *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2011, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1–26.

[8] Liberty Eaton and Johann Louw, "Culture and Self in South Africa: Individualism-Collectivism Predictions", in *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 2000, vol. 140, no. 2, pp. 210–217.

self-construal,[9] communication style,[10] cognition[11] and autobiographical memory reports.[12] Thus, cultural context plays a crucial role in influencing psychological processes. Western cultures are typically oriented towards individualism, whereas non-western cultures are typically oriented towards collectivism.[13]

8.2.2. Self-Construal

Cultural context can shape the self-construal of members of a cultural group. Self-construal is the meaning individuals in a social context ascribe to the 'self' in relation to others.[14] The individualism–collectivism cultural dimension can lead to cultural differences in how people construe themselves.[15] Depending on whether people are socialized in individualistic or collectivistic cultures, they may develop an independent or interdependent self-construal. Individuals socialized in individualistic cultures tend to develop an independent self-construal, a schema of the self that is inherently separate and distinct from others and the social context.[16] That means that individuals with an independent self-construal view the self as more autonomous, independent and possessing unique dispositions. Consequently, individuals with an independent self-construal have a desire to assert their uniqueness in social situations.[17] Thus, individuals with an independent self-construal are

[9] Hazel R. Markus and Kitayama Shinobu, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation", in *Psychological Review*, 1991, vol. 98, no. 2, pp. 224–253.

[10] Bai He, "A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Advertisements from High-Context Cultures and Low-Context Cultures", in *English Language Teaching*, 2016, vol. 9, no. 8, p. 21.

[11] Angela Gutchess and Robert Sekuler, "Perceptual and Mnemonic Differences Across Cultures", in *Psychology of Learning and Motivation – Advances in Research and Theory*, 2019, vol. 71, pp. 131–174.

[12] Wang Qi, "Relations of Maternal Style and Child Self-Concept to Autobiographical Memories in Chinese, Chinese Immigrant, and European American 3-Year-Olds", in *Child Development*, 2006, vol. 77, no. 6, pp. 1794–1809.

[13] Wang, 2009, see *supra* note 3; Michael Minkov *et al.*, "A Revision of Hofstede's Individualism-Collectivism Dimension", in *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 2017, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 386–404.

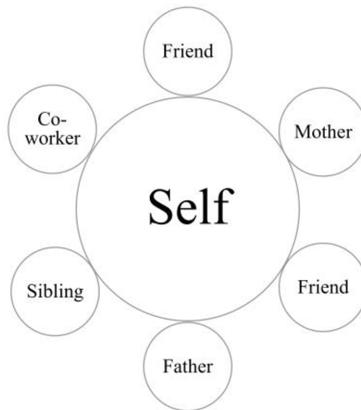
[14] Susan E. Cross, Erin E. Hardin and Berna Gercek-Swing, "The What, How, Why, and Where of Self-Construal", in *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2011, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 142–179.

[15] Hazel R. Markus and Kitayama Shinobu, "Culture and Selves: A Cycle of Mutual Constitution", in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2010, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 420–430.

[16] Tylor, 1871, see *supra* note 4.

[17] Altarriba, 1993, see *supra* note 4.

more responsive to the social context, and this responsiveness is derived from a need to strategically look for the best ways to assert their internal attributes.[18] Their behaviours are mostly based on personal thoughts, feelings and preferences. Individuals socialized in collectivistic cultures tend to develop an interdependent self-construal, a schema of the 'self' that is inextricably connected to and interdependent of others in the social context.[19] Thus, individuals with an interdependent self-construal view the self as embedded within a social context and try to fit in with others. Their behaviour may largely depend on the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in the social context.[20] Figure 1 illustrates the independent-interdependent self-construal.

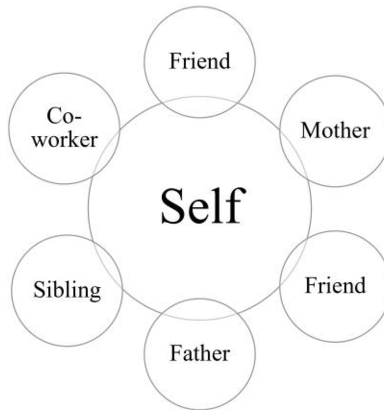


A: Independent self-construal.

[18] Markus and Kitayama, 1991, see *supra* note 15.

[19] Kwame Gyekye, "Persons and Community in African Thought", in Pieter H. Coetzee and Abraham P.J. Roux (eds.), *Philosophy from Africa: A Text with Readings*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 297–312; Aleksandra Pilarska, "Self-Construal as a Mediator Between Identity Structure and Subjective Well-Being", in *Current Psychology*, 2014, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 130–154.

[20] Gutchess and Sekuler, 2019, see *supra* note 11.



B: Interdependent self-construal.

Figure 1: Conceptual representation of the self.[21]

Figure 1A shows how for the independent self-construal, the self is viewed as independent of specific others in the social context. This self-system makes individuals with the independent self-construal more inclined to view the self as more autonomous and separate from the social context. Figure 1B shows how for the interdependent self-construal, others in the social context constitute fundamental units of the self-system. It is this self-system of the interdependent self-construal where the self is viewed as embedded within the social context that guides behaviour.

8.2.3. Self-Presentation

Differences in self-construal can lead to cultural differences in self-presentation. Individuals with independent self-construal are more inclined to self-expression – what has been referred to as self-enhancement. Self-enhancement is a tendency to be less restrained and more expressive in emphasizing one's internal attributes.[22] In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are inclined to modest or reserved responses – what has been referred to as self-effacement.[23] Self-effacement is a tendency to exercise

[21] Markus and Kitayama, 1991, see *supra* note 15.

[22] Yamagishi Toshio *et al.*, "Modesty in Self-Presentation: A Comparison Between the USA and Japan", in *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2012, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 60–68.

[23] Markus and Kitayama, 1991, see *supra* note 15.

self-restraint and be modest in emphasizing one's unique attributes.[24] This standard for self-regulation with the interdependent self-construal can constrain verbal and ideational fluency.[25] The cultural difference in self-presentation has been illustrated with a Chinese and an American proverb, representing the collectivistic and individualistic cultures respectively. The cultural disposition of self-enhancement is typified by the American proverb 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease', whereas the cultural disposition of self-effacement is typified by the Chinese proverb 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered'.[26] The Indonesian proverb 'be like the rice stalk, as it is laden with ripening grains, it bows down' also typifies the cultural disposition of self-effacement. These proverbs demonstrate differences in self-expression in social relations across the respective cultures. Evidence suggests that the independent-interdependent self-construal is correlated with expressivity norms. For example, research sampling from 31 countries showed that individualistic cultures tend to be more expressive than collectivistic cultures.[27]

8.2.4. Communication Styles

Communication is a significant component of culture as different cultures tend to have different styles of communicating. The anthropologist Edward Hall proposed high-context and low-context communication across cultures.[28] Communication in high-context ('HC') cultures tends to be indirect and implicit, whereas in low-context ('LC') cultures, communication tends to be direct and explicit. In HC cultures, many details of a message are left unsaid, allowing the context to communicate what is implied.[29] Thus, in HC cultures, most of the information is already inside the person, with few details as part of the message that is explicitly transmitted.[30] In LC cultures,

---

[24] Steven J. Heine, Takata Toshitake and Darrin R. Lehman, "Beyond Self-Presentation: Evidence for Self-Criticism Among Japanese", in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulltin*, 2000, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 71–78.

[25] Liu In-Mao, "Chinese Cognition", in Michael H. Bond (ed.), *The Psychology of the Chinese People*, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 73–105.

[26] Altarriba, 1993, see *supra* note 4.

[27] David Matsumoto *et al.*, "Mapping Expressive Differences Around the World: The Relationship Between Emotional Display Rules and Individualism Versus Collectivism", in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 2008, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 55–74.

[28] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Press, 1976.

[29] Yamagishi *et al.*, 2012, see *supra* note 22.

[30] Boutyline and Soter, 2021, see *supra* note 5.

most of the details are explicitly transmitted or communicated.[31] The proposition of HC and LC cultures overlaps with the individualistic–collectivistic cultural orientation. Specifically, in individualistic cultures, communication tends to be low in context, as explicitness and directness are emphasized. Communication in collectivistic cultures, however, tends to be indirect and implicit. Table 1 provides a summary of some of the main characteristics of high-context and low-context cultures.

High-context cultures	Low-context cultures
The self is embedded in a network of complex relationships (collectivism).	The self is loosely connected to the social context (individualism).
People are inclined to be connotative. Most information is implicit.	People are inclined to be denotative. Communication is mostly explicit and verbally elaborate.
Communication is indirect.	Communication is direct.
People are less confrontational in order to maintain social harmony.	People are more confrontational regardless of relationship.

Table 1: Characteristics of high-context and low-context cultures.

8.2.5. Power Distance

Cultures also differ to the extent of which they relate with authority figures. The cultural differences in relationship with authority figures has been referred to as power distance.[32] Thus, power distance is the extent of which members of a social group emphasize hierarchy in social relationships. Whilst there is more emphasis on hierarchy in social relationships in high-power distance cultures, in low-power distance cultures there is less emphasis on hierarchy in social relationships. Within work settings, for example, individuals in low-power distance cultures can freely express themselves to authority figures and express disagreement, whilst high-power distance cultures emphasize respect, obedience and fear of authority figures. Consequently, when individuals from high-power distance cultures are interacting with authority figures, free expression tends to be impeded.[33] Thus, the extent of power distance may impact behavioural dynamics when interacting

[31] Yamagishi *et al.*, 2012, see *supra* note 22.

[32] Wang, 2009, see *supra* note 3.

[33] Apoorva Ghosh, "Power Distance in Organizational Contexts: A Review of Collectivist Cultures", in *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 2011, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 89–101.

with authority figures. The power distance cultural dimension is associated with the individualism–collectivism dimension, with most individualistic cultures low on power distance and most collectivistic cultures high on power distance.[34] Table 2 illustrates some main characteristics of high- and low-power distance cultures.

High-power distance cultures	Low-power distance cultures
Members of society expect and accept class divisions as part of social order.	Members of society consider each other as equal.
Parents teach children obedience, respect and fear for the elderly.	Parents teach children independence and treat them as equals.
Employees expect rules and directives from superiors.	Employees expect to be consulted and take part in decision-making.
Teacher-centred education (that is, teachers are expected to initiate communication).	Student-centred education (that is, students are expected to initiate communication).
Religions stressing hierarchy of priests are common.	Religions stressing equality of believers are common.
Individuals are less likely to openly criticize superiors, parents and other forms of authority.	Individuals are more likely to openly express their views to superiors, parents and other forms of authority.
People normally address authority figures using their titles.	People normally address authority figures using their first name.
Socialization with authority figures in informal gatherings is less common.	Socialization with authority figures in informal gatherings is common.
The powerful in the society have privileges.	Everybody in the society should have equal rights.

Table 2: Characteristics of high- and low-power distance cultures.

8.3. Cultural Aspects of Interviewing: A Review of the Literature

Cultural concepts such as those discussed above have important implications for cross-cultural interviewing (including for police, law enforcement, military, security and intelligence). In this section, we review previous research and highlight implications for interviewing in cross-cultural settings.

[34] Minkov *et al.*, 2017, see *supra* note 13.

8.3.1. Eyewitness Reports

Culture can shape the content and nature of eyewitness memory reports. Recent research suggests cultural differences in eyewitness memory reports.[35] Using the individualistic–collectivistic cultural framework, participants were sampled from Ghana and the Netherlands. Mock witnesses viewed stimuli scenes of crimes (theft, assault, accident and robbery) and later reported what they saw. Mock witnesses with a collectivistic cultural orientation provided less elaborate reports than mock witnesses with individualistic cultural orientation. The cultural difference in elaborate provision of details could be attributed to the systematic difference in self-expression across individualistic and collectivistic cultures.[36]

Findings from the research on cultural differences in eyewitness reports are consistent with previous work in autobiographical memory reports. Specifically, research has shown that individuals with a collectivistic cultural background provide less elaborate stories of life experiences than individuals with an individualistic cultural background.[37] For example, when asked to provide earliest childhood memories and self-descriptions, North American and Chinese participants differed in their autobiographical memory reports, in that reports provided by Chinese participants were less elaborate and specific than those provided by North American participants.[38] This cultural difference in elaborate reporting has also been found to be present among children from different cultures.[39] Specifically, East Asian children have been found to provide generic accounts of past experiences and also to portray

---

[35] Nkansah Anakwah *et al.*, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Eyewitness Memory Reports", in *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 2020, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 504–515; Nkansah Anakwah *et al.*, "The Acculturation Effect and Eyewitness Memory Reports Among Migrants", in *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 2020, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 237–256.

[36] Gutchess and Sekuler, 2019, see *supra* note 11.

[37] Michael Ross and Wang Qi, "Why We Remember and What We Remember: Culture and Autobiographical Memory", in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2010, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 401–409; Wang, 2006, pp. 1794–1809, see *supra* note 12.

[38] Wang Qi, "Culture Effects on Adults' Earliest Childhood Recollection and Self-Description: Implications for the Relation Between Memory and Self", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2001, vol. 81, no. 2, pp. 220–233.

[39] Jessica J. Han, Michelle D. Leichtman and Wang Qi, "Autobiographical Memory in Korean, Chinese, and American Children", in *Developmental Psychology*, 1998, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 701–713; Carole Peterson, Wang Qi and Hou Yubo, ""When I Was Little": Childhood Recollections in Chinese and European Canadian Grade School Children", in *Child Development*, 2009, vol. 80, no. 2, pp. 506–518.

themselves in more modest tones than North American children.[40] Compared to East Asian children, accounts by North American children were more complex, consisting more of reference to descriptives (words that provide descriptive texture of narratives, including modifiers, adjectives and adverbs), temporal markers (words showing chronological time and temporal relations, including causal relations, conditional states and oppositional states), and internal states (words indicating emotional states and inner cognitive processes).

It has been argued that the observed cultural differences in memory reporting may be accounted for by the influence of the cultural self-construal on the accessibility, content and style of reports.[41] The autonomous (independent) self, for example, may lead to channel cognitive resources to encode and recall personal experiences elaborately. The relational (interdependent) self-construal, on the other hand, has been argued to lead to the less elaborate recall of personal experiences. Instead, social knowledge is prioritized more with the interdependent self-construal.[42] Due to the view of the self as embedded within the social context, individuals with the interdependent self-construal may prioritize details about social interactions and group activities when remembering past events.[43] Consistent with this, previous work shows that whilst individuals with the interdependent self-construal focus on social interactions, individuals with the independent self-construal focus on their own roles.[44] In view of cultural differences in elaborate reporting, investigators obtaining witness accounts in cross-cultural settings should emphasize the need for detailed reporting and focus on asking open questions (for example, 'Please tell me what happened in your own words'). That is because the use of open questions allows the interviewee to give an unrestricted free narrative, thereby eliciting long and detailed information.[45]

---

40 Wang Qi, "The Emergence of Cultural Self-Constructs: Autobiographical Memory and Self-Description in European American and Chinese Children", in *Developmental Psychology*, 2004, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 3–15.

41 Wang and Ross, 2005, see *supra* note 3.

42 Wang Qi and Jens Brockmerier, "Autobiographical Rembering as Cultural Practices: Understanding the Interplay Between Memory, Self and Culture", in *Culture and Psychology*, 2002, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 45–64.

43 Yamagishi *et al.*, 2012, see *supra* note 22.

44 Hall, 1976, see *supra* note 28; Altarriba, 1993, see *supra* note 4.

45 Gavin E. Oxburgh, Trond Myklebust and Tim Grant, "The Question of Question Types in Police Interviews: A Review of the Literature From a Psychological and Linguistic

Thus, given that culture has implications for under-reporting of details, the use of open questions would be useful in prompting the reporting of detailed information.[46] Also, prompting interviewees to report as much details as possible, no matter how insignificant, may help mitigate any cultural disposition to be less elaborate in reporting witnessed events.

8.3.2. Deception Detection

One of the cues for detecting deception in law enforcement and counter-terrorism contexts is detail provision.[47] Recent research suggests that the use of detail to detect deception may be weakened in cross-cultural settings. In one study, participants were sampled from high- and low-context cultures.[48] In line with propositions on cultural differences in high-context–low-context communication styles, Arab (HC), Chinese (HC) and British (LC) participants were sampled. Interviewees from the respective cultures were interviewed in pairs about a visit to a restaurant. Overall, cultural cues were more present than deception cues. Specifically, British interviewees reported more details than Arab and Chinese interviewees, consistent with the high-context and low-context culture communication styles. Verbal cues to deception were more present in British interviewees than Arab and Chinese interviewees. Thus, deception detection in cross-cultural interviews should be done with caution to avoid mistakenly interpreting a cultural cue as a cue for deceit.

Linguistic self-presentation when deceiving may also vary culturally. The extent to which deceptive and truthful statements contain self (versus other) references may differ across cultures, in line with the self-construal theory. When asked to provide genuine or fabricated statements about their experiences, African, South Asian and Western European participants

---

Perspective", in *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, 2010, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 45–66.

[46] Lorraine Hope and Fiona Gabbert, "Interviewing Witnesses and Victims", in Neil Brewer and Amy B. Douglass (eds.), *Psychological Science and the Law*, The Guildford Press, 2019, pp. 56–74; Hope *et al.*, 2022, see *supra* note 2.

[47] Pär Anders Granhag *et al.*, "Discriminating Between Statements of True and False Intent: The Impact of Repeated Interviews and Strategic Questioning", *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 2016, vol. 11, pp. 1–17; Aldert Vrij, Samantha Mann, Sharon Leal and Ronald Fisher, "'Look into My Eyes': Can an Instruction to Maintain Eye Contact Facilitate Lie Detection?", in *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 2010, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 327–348.

[48] Sharon Leal *et al.*, "Cross-Cultural Verbal Deception", in *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 2018, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 192–213.

differed in their use of self (versus other) references: African and South Asian participants used more first-person pronouns and less third-person pronouns when lying than when telling the truth; Western European participants, on the other hand, used more third-person pronouns and less first-person pronouns when lying than when telling the truth.[49] Thus, future research should explore the use of linguistic self-presentation in detecting deception in other cultural contexts.

8.3.3. Compliance and False Confessions

The independent-interdependent self-construal has implications for suggestibility and false confessions. This is due to the role of the cultural self-construal in social influence.[50] Evidence suggests that self-construal is associated with interrogative compliance both at the individual and cultural level.[51] In that study, participants were sampled from China and Germany and completed measures of interrogative suggestibility and self-construal. Consistent with the proposition on cultural differences in independent–interdependent self-construal, Chinese participants scored higher on interdependent self-construal than German participants, who scored higher on independent self-construal than Chinese participants. Furthermore, participants from the predominantly interdependent self-construal culture (China) were more inclined to interrogative compliance than participants from the predominantly independent self-construal culture (Germany). The role of self-construal in interrogative compliance was also found at the individual level. Within the respective cultures, individuals with more interdependent and less independent self-construal were more prone to interrogative compliance. This finding at the individual level provides further support to the role of self-construal in interrogative compliance and false confessions.

Thus, although interviewees from each culture may differ from each other with regards to susceptibility to interrogative compliance, interviewees from cultures with predominantly interdependent self-construal are more prone to interrogative compliance and, likely, false confessions than

[49] Paul J. Taylor *et al.*, “Culture Moderates Changes in Linguistic Self-Presentation and Detail Provision When Deceiving Others”, in *Royal Society Open Science*, 2017, vol. 4, pp. 1–11.

[50] Rod Bond and Peter B. Smith, “Culture and Conformity: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Using Asch’s (1952b, 1956) Line Judgment Task”, in *Psychological Bulletin*, 1996, vol. 119, no. 1, pp. 111–137.

[51] Aileen Oeberst and Wu Song, “Independent vs. Interdependent Self-Construal and Interrogative Compliance: Intra- and Cross-Cultural Evidence”, in *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2015, vol. 85, pp. 50–55.

interviewees from cultures where the independent self-construal is predominant. In view of previous work showing the association of compliance with false confessions,[52] it is possible that interviewees from predominantly interdependent self-construal cultures would be at risk of false confessions than interviewees from cultures where the independent self-construal is predominant.

8.3.4. False Memory Creation

The role of culture in shaping cognition may have implications for the production of false memories.[53] Previous work shows that individuals socialized in individualistic cultures develop an analytic cognition, where they attend more to focal details at a visual field, whereas individuals socialized in collectivistic cultures develop a holistic cognition, where they attend more to the entire field (contextual details).[54] This cultural difference has been demonstrated using a change blindness paradigm.[55] In that study, East Asian and North American participants were sampled and presented with 30 different pairs of scenes (still photos), consisting of focal objects (for example, a foreground vehicle) and contextual objects (for example, a building in the background and clouds). For each pair of images, one of them had a slight change or modification to either the focal object (for example, a change in the colour of the vehicle) or contextual object (for example, a change in the location of clouds). Participants were then asked to indicate and report if they noticed any change. Compared to the North Americans, the East Asians were more sensitive to the contextual changes.

Research using the Deese-Roediger-McDermott (‘DRM’) paradigm has also demonstrated that cultural differences in holistic-analytic cognition

[52] Henry Otgaar *et al.*, “The Link Between Suggestibility, Compliance, and False Confessions: A Review Using Experimental and Field Studies”, in *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 2021, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 1–11.

[53] See Chapter 10 of this book.

[54] Masuda Takahiko and Richard E. Nisbett, “Attending Holistically Versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans”, in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2001, vol. 81, no. 5, pp. 922–934; Richard E. Nisbett, Choi Incheol, Peng Kaiping and Ara Norenzayan, “Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition”, in *Psychological Review*, 2001, vol. 108, no. 2, pp. 291–310.

[55] Masuda Takahiko and Richard E. Nisbett, “Culture and Change Blindness”, in *Cognitive Science*, 2006, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 381–399.

can have implications for the production of false memories.[56] In the DRM paradigm, participants are presented with a list of words. Each list contains words that are associatively related to a critical lure (a word which is not presented as part of the list).[57] When asked to retrieve the list of words that were presented, participants usually include the lure word as part of words they saw or heard.

Using the DRM paradigm, Wang *et al.* (2021) examined whether individuals from an individualistic culture and a collectivistic culture differed in generating false memories about the same event. Dutch and Chinese participants watched a series of DRM pictures (focal items: for example, jam, dough, milk and butter) presented together with their own names or other people's names in different backgrounds, and their memories were later tested. Dutch participants remembered more focal DRM items, suggesting that Dutch participants had better memory for focal objects. Chinese participants also made more correct item-context bindings, suggesting they had better memory for contextual details. Furthermore, whilst Chinese participants were more likely to indicate familiarity with lure pictures, Dutch participants were more likely to indicate that they saw vivid details of lure pictures that were not presented. Results also showed that self-reference induced more item-context false bindings (creating new memory episodes by recombining memories of different episodes) for Dutch participants than it did for Chinese participants. The finding on self-reference in inducing false memory creation provides support for the role of the cultural self-construal in shaping cognition. Because the independent self-construal is prioritized in Western contexts, it is possible that Dutch participants' attention were drawn from the context to their own names. As eyewitness errors may have grave implications for the criminal justice system (for example, wrongful convictions), sensitivity to this cultural factor in interviewing can facilitate the effectiveness of cross-cultural interviews.

8.3.5. Reporting of Misleading Post-Event Information

The reporting of misleading post-event information has been shown to be shaped by self-construal. In a study using a co-witness paradigm, participants viewed footage of forensic autopsy and later discussed what they saw

[56] Wang Jianqin *et al.*, "How Culture Shapes Constructive False Memory", in *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 2021, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 24–32.

[57] Zhu Bi *et al.*, "The Relationship Between DRM and Misinformation False Memories", in *Memory and Cognition*, 2013, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 832–838.

with a co-witness (confederate).[58] During the discussion of the footage, the confederate introduced erroneous information. Participants later completed a free recall test and their self-construal (independence and interdependence) was measured. The results showed an association between independent self-construal and conformity, with mock witnesses high on independence being less likely to report the misleading post-event information. However, no association between interdependence and conformity was found. It is important to mention that while this research provides some evidence on the role of the self-construal in reporting misleading post-event information, participants for that study were sampled from the same cultural context (Western) and measured on levels of independent-interdependent self-construal. Future research should explore the role of the self-construal in intra-cultural variations of misinformation conformity in other non-Western cultures.

Recent cross-cultural investigation into the misinformation effect has provided further support for the role of culture in reporting of misleading post-event information.[59] Participants from Ghana and the United Kingdom viewed a mock crime event of a laptop theft in a travel agency and were later presented with a post-event narrative containing misleading details about the video event. For example, in the original event, the colour of the laptop was grey, but in the post-event narrative, it was indicated that the laptop was blue. Participants were later given free recall and recognition tests about the event. In their free recall, participants in both cultural groups did not differ in the reporting of misleading post-event information. However, in the recognition test, Ghanaian participants reported more misleading post-event information than the United Kingdom participants. Thus, while suggestive questioning in interviewing should be avoided, additional care should be taken when interviewing in cross-cultural contexts.

8.3.6. Investigator Authority and Detail Provision

The authority of an investigator can impact interviewees from different cultures differently. That can happen because of the cultural dimension of power distance. Power distance has been argued to impede the free and spontaneous

[58] Bianca Petterson and Helen M. Paterson, "Culture and Conformity: The Effects of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal on Witness Memory", in *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 2012, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 735–744.

[59] Nkansah Anakwah *et al.*, "The Misinformation Effect and Eyewitness Memory Reports: A Cross-Cultural Investigation", 2022 (manuscript submitted for publication).

provision of information.[60] Recent evidence suggests that cultural dimension can potentially impact the interviewing dynamics. In one research, participants were sampled from a high-power distance culture (Ghana), where there is more emphasis on hierarchy in social relationship, and a low-power distance culture (the Netherlands), where there is less emphasis on hierarchy in social relationships.[61] On Hofstede's Power Distance Index (ranging from 0 to 100), which measures the extent to which the less powerful members of society expect and accept that power is unequally distributed, the Netherlands and Ghana score 38 and 80 respectively, where a high score reflects high-power distance. In this study, participants sampled from the high- and low-power distance culture viewed a mock crime event of a theft and later provided written responses. These participants were then asked to assume that they were reporting to either the police or a peer. Dutch participants reported more details when reporting to police than when reporting to a peer. However, Ghanaian participants did not differ in the level of detail reported to police or a peer. Thus, there is a need for an effective rapport to enhance detail provision in cross-cultural settings. Future work could explore how best to minimize power imbalance in cross-cultural interviews. Specifically, there is a need for future research to explore culturally sensitive rapport building strategies to enhance detail provision.

8.4. Culturally-Competent Interviewers

Based on the previous sections concerning the effect of culture on interviewees' reports, it is crucial to conduct interviews in a culturally sensitive manner by culturally-competent professionals.[62] Referring to Betancourt and colleagues' definition of cultural competence,[63] interviewers are expected to be mindful of the effect of their own and their interviewee's culture, be alert of the dynamics that are created from these differences, and adapt the interview session accordingly to meet the interviewee's culturally unique needs.

---

[60] Liu, 1986, see *supra* note 25.

[61] Nkansah Anakwah *et al*., "The Authority Effect and Eyewitness Memory Reports Across Cultures", 2022 (manuscript submitted for publication).

[62] V. Barber Rioja and Barry Rosenfeld, "Addressing Linguistic and Cultural Differences in the Forensic Interview", in *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 2018, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 377–386; Lisa A. Fontes and Carol Plummer, "Cultural Issues in Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse", in *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 2010, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 491–518.

[63] Joseph R. Betancourt *et al.*, "Defining Cultural Competence: A Practical Framework for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health and Health Care", in *Public Health Reports*, 2003, vol. 118, no. 4, pp. 293–302.

For example, culturally competent interviewers prefer to question interviewees such as children on alleged sexual abuse in a language in which the interviewees are proficient. As a consequence, a translator or interpreter is required when an interviewer who is proficient in the interviewee's language is not available.

Next to these linguistic issues, culturally competent interviewers should be cognizant of culturally sensitive experiential elements such as the issues of shame and guilt in sexual abuse cases that might impede the disclosure.[64] Therefore, extended rapport-building might be required not only with the interviewee but also their significant others.

In general, it is vital that the interview is conducted in a culturally sensitive manner. It starts with the interviewers' awareness as cultural beings who bring their habits of formality or informality, warmth or coolness, proximity or distance, and non-verbal behaviours into the interview session.[65] Moreover, planning the appropriate time (for example, ensuring that interview sessions do not interrupt praying times or cultural ceremonies), managing the environmental aspects of the interview (for example, sitting on the floor in a less formal manner) and assigning appropriate interviewers (for example, ensuring that the interview is conducted by one of similar gender or specific background because of cultural reasons) are some examples of cultural sensitivity that can be important when conducting interviews.

8.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we drew on work in cross-cultural psychology and highlighted some key cultural concepts pertinent to police interviewing. We then provided a review of research showing the potential role of culture in impacting interviewing outcomes. It is clear that the cultural background of interviewees can impact the dynamics of interviewing. Thus, there is a need for more cultural sensitivity in interviewing contexts to enhance the quantity and quality of details. To this end, more training for legal and investigative professionals on cultural aspects of interviewing is needed. Research on interviewing should also explore non-Western contexts to provide more insight into the role of culture. Future research should explore effective strategies to

---

[64] Lorraine T. Benuto and Jena Garrick, "Cultural Considerations in Forensic Interviewing of Children", in William T. O'Donohue and Matthew Fanetti (eds.), *Forensic Interviews Regarding Child Sexual Abuse*, Springer International Publishing, 2016, pp. 351–364.

[65] Lorraine A. Fontes, *Interviewing Clients Across Cultures: A Practitioner's Guides*, Guilford Press, New York, 2008.

enhance information provision in cross-cultural settings. There is also a need to adapt extant interviewing protocols to a wider cultural context. An understanding of cultural factors is instrumental for effective interviewing in cross-cultural contexts.