

Priming modernity and work context strengthens the association between fairness/harm concerns and anger

Manqi Chen

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Email: chenmq@cass.org.cn

chenmanqi@126.com



Moral intuitions and moral emotions

- People make intuitive (vs. deliberate) moral judgments spontaneously in response to morally relevant events in a specific context.
- Contextual factors (such as the level of economic development) can affect how people make sense of an event and emotionally respond to it (Haidt, et al., 2007, see also Alistair et al., 1995; Sivakumar Velayutham, 2003; Emmanouil Dedoulis, 2006).

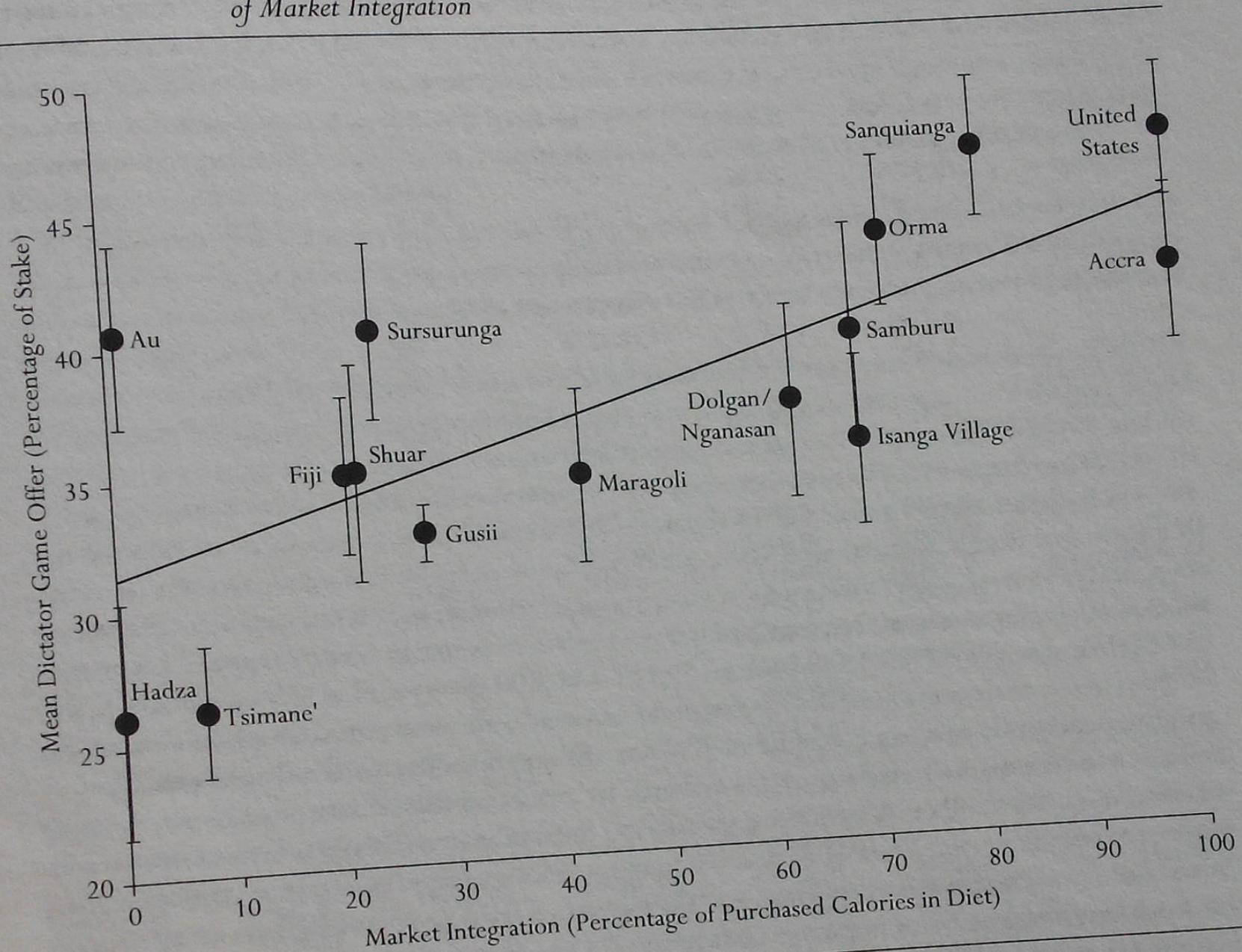
Research Question

- How do modernity and emphasis of fairness norms in modern work contexts affect moral emotions in response to moral events?

- Joe Henrich found that as the level of market integration of a community increases, the norm of fairness becomes more prevalent in the community.

FIGURE 4.4

Mean Dictator Game Offers for Each Population, Plotted Against Mean Value of Market Integration



- According to the Joe Henrich, smaller and subsistence-based communities can rely on reputation-based costly punishment and indirect sanctioning to discourage self-maximization at the expense of the public good.
- However, as the breadth and intensity of economic exchange increase, market efficiency requires trust, fairness, and cooperation among individuals engaged in infrequent or anonymous interactions, because fairness norms as a set of shared expectations and motivations help lower transaction costs and sustain long-term, mutually beneficial transactions.
- In short, market integration provides the ecological foundation for the emergence and spread of fairness norms, which in turn support progress in market integration.

Psychological theories of justice (e.g., Deutsch, Lerner, Greenberg)

Domain	Major concern	Justice principle
Work	Productivity maximization	Equity/ fairness
Friendship	Social harmony	Equality
Family	Welfare of ingroup members	Need

Hypothesis

- Priming modernity (exp1) and work context (exp2) would strengthen the link between violation of autonomous morality and anger, such that following modernity/work priming (vs. control priming), Chinese participants would show stronger anger reactions in responses to violation of autonomous morality.

Moral foundation theory

The moral domain a certain event is perceived to belong to can bias the primary foundational moral criterion used to evaluate the morality of the event as well as the type and intensity of emotional reaction to the event.

Moral domains	Moral foundations	Emotional reactions
Community	in-group/loyalty	Contempt
	authority/respect	
Autonomy	harm/care	Anger
	fairness/reciprocity	
Divinity	purity/ sanctity	Disgust

Experiment 1: Priming modernity

- Participants

60 Mainland Chinese (9 men and 51 women;
 $M_{\text{age}} = 21.13, SD = 2.33$)

- Design

Randomly assigned to one of the 3 Priming
(tradition; modernity; control) conditions

Priming materials

- pictorial primes of tradition and modernity, 15 each, in matched categories



- control primes



Procedure

- Priming (tradition; modernity, control)
answer two simple questions about each prime (e.g. what is in this picture?)
- Stimulus events: 11 moral violation news events
Participants selected the most and second most appropriate emotion words (contempt, anger, disgust, or others) to describe their feelings after reading each news.
Participants also selected the two moral issues (fairness- or harm-related morality; ingroup loyalty- or authority-related morality; and purity-related morality) they were most concerned with.

moral violation news

11 news were selected as stimulus events in the current study.

Selection of news events

Based on the results of an online study of moral judgments and emotional reactions to 464 news events, we selected 44 news events that elicited mixed moral emotions (emotions associated with 2 moral domains)

These news were edited to have similar writing styles and length (M = 223.22 Chinese characters)

An online survey (N = 69) was carried out to assess the emotions these news elicited.

A final list of 11 events that elicited mixed moral emotions were included in the final study.

A sample stimulus news

- 5日晚11时许，佛山一女子跳江自尽，河堤上数十围观者无人相救，最终一流浪汉冒险跳入水中，将女子救到河边。因河堤太高，无法上岸，女子也已浑身无力坐不稳，跳下河堤时脚部受伤的流浪汉只得一直托着该女子坐在河边台阶上。直到半小时后，消防队员赶到用绳梯将二人救起，随即送往附近医院。医生对流浪汉脚部伤口进行了简单清洗，并告知伤口过几天还要进一步处理，需花费不少钱。流浪汉没钱治又怕自己感冒，只好赶紧回去换衣服。被救女子老公随后开着奥迪车赶来，给了他50元让他买药打车。
- A woman committed suicide by drowning herself in a river. Among tens of bystanders, only a homeless person offered help to the woman. The homeless person was injured while rescuing the woman and did not have money to pay for the expensive treatment. The woman's husband, who was rich, offered the homeless person 50 yuan (US\$8) only for his treatment.

Analysis

- Multilevel analysis
 - Level 1 (within-subjects, unit of analysis: events)
 - DV = Anger
 - IV = Violation of harm/fairness criteria
 - Level 2 (between-subjects)
 - Priming
 - Cross-level interaction was significant

	tradition		modernity		control	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Anger and the ethics of autonomy	0.50	0.34	0.89	0.47	0.59	0.44
Disgust and the ethics of divinity	0.07	0.45	0.29	0.49	0.20	0.32
Contempt and the ethics of community	0.02	0.34	0.08	0.40	0.09	0.37

The mean of correlation coefficient under three priming conditions

Conclusion (Expt 1)

- The linkage between fairness/harm concern and anger was stronger in the modernity priming condition than in the tradition priming or control conditions.
- Priming modernity strengthens the association between fairness/harm concerns and anger.

Experiment 2: Priming work context

- **Participants**

N = 67 (18 men and 49 women; $M_{age}=22.27$, $SD=1.86$)

- **Design**

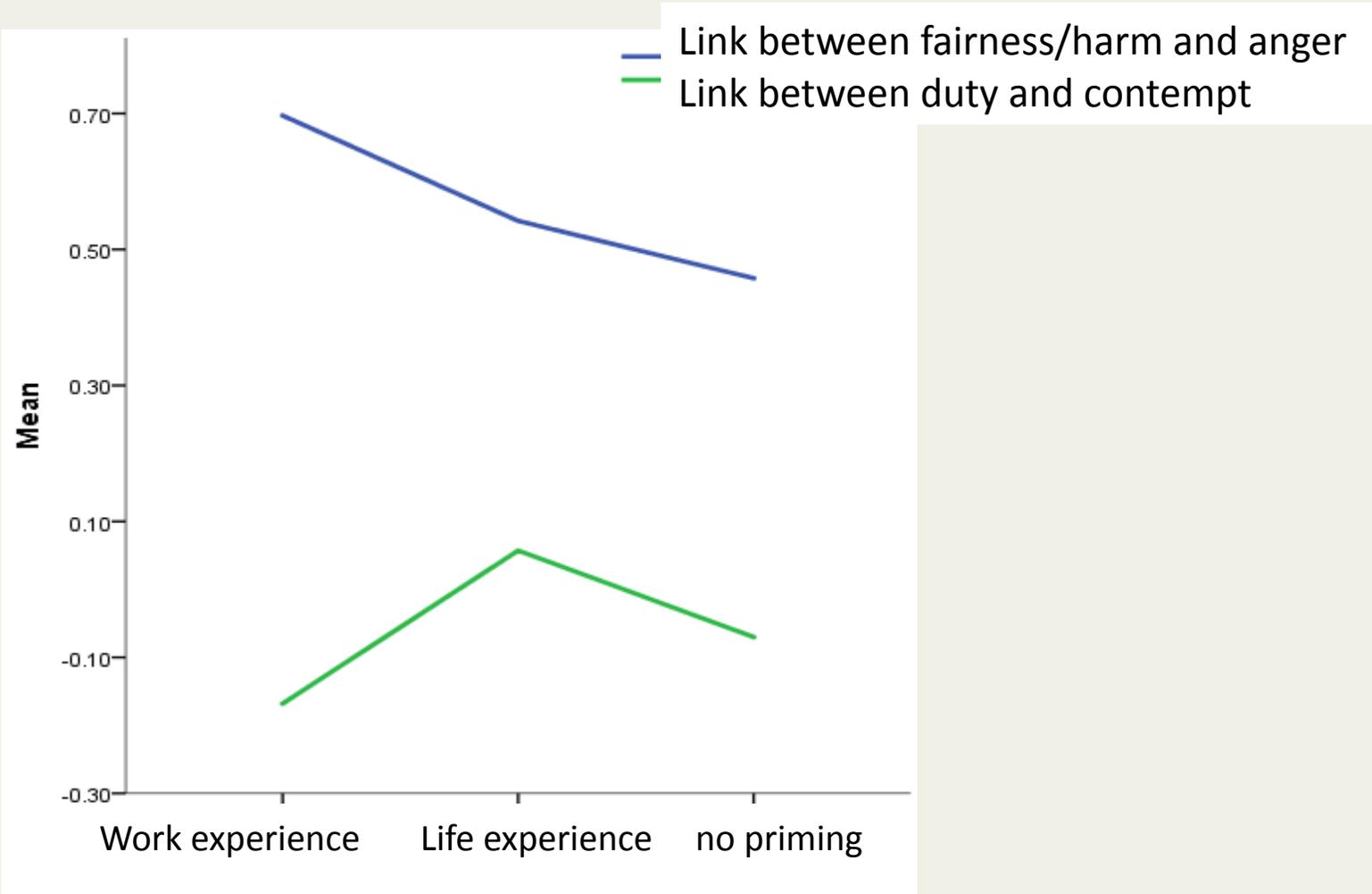
a Priming (3 levels: work-related; 2 control conditions) between-subjects design.

Procedure

- **work context priming condition**
describe a memorable work experience
- **Control 1**
describe a memorable life experience
- **Control 2**
no recall task

Stimulus events, measures, and analysis

- Same as Experiment 1



The mean linkage between moral emotion and moral concern (Fisher's z) under work experience priming / life experience priming (control 1) / no priming (control 2)

General Discussion

- As China modernizes, the Chinese respond to violation of the ethics of autonomy with higher intensity of anger.
- Because fairness is emphasized in contemporary work context in China, priming work context also elicits stronger anger reactions to violations of ethics of autonomy among Chinese Mainlanders.
- Consistent with the Moral Foundation Theory, these results show that the level of social development can affect emotional reactions to moral issues.

Thank you!