The role of Regulatory Focus in How Much We Care about Enemies:

Cross-Cultural Comparison Between European Canadians and Hong Kong Chinese

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Abstract

Past cross-cultural research studies in regulatory focus have showed that East Asians in general tend to be prevention-focused whereas Westerners tend to be promotion-focused. Three studies extend these findings by investigating the role of regulatory focus on people's experiences in enemyship – how people deal with their personal enemies. Study 1 demonstrated that Hong Kong Chinese, as one of representative prevention-focused East Asian groups, showed greater concern about their enemies in terms of perceived threats from their enemies, subjective awareness of enemies, and negative emotional experiences in enemyship, compared to European Canadians as one of representative promotion-focused Western groups. In addition, Study 2 demonstrated that Hong Kong Chinese memorized more pieces of information about a hypothetical enemy than did their Canadian counterparts, which demonstrated a greater concern about enemies among Hong Kong Chinese. Finally, while replicating Study 1, Study 3 demonstrated that participants' regulatory focus explained the cultural differences in enemyship experiences. Implications for regulatory focus, cross-cultural research, and interpersonal relationship research are discussed.

Keywords: regulatory focus, culture, enemies, interpersonal relationships, enemyship

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孫子: "知己知彼，百戰不殆。"

(Sun Tzu said, "If you know both yourself and your enemy, you can win a hundred battles

without jeopardy.")

In everyday life, people experience different kinds of interpersonal relationships. When we read this statement, we might tend to think of positive relationships, including romantic relationship, kinship, and friendship. However, we also have a variety of experiences in negative relationships, notably enemyship. Research indicates that most people have had enemies at some point in their lives and that they had to find ways to deal with these negative interpersonal relationships (Abecassis, Hartyp, Haselager, Scholte, & Van Lieshout, 2002; Card, 2007; Holt, 1989). However, it is only recently that the questions of how people experience their enemies, and how culture influences their enemyship experiences, started to receive as much attention as positive relationships (Adams, 2005; Hartup & Abecassis, 2002; Sullivan, Landau, & Rothschild, 2010; Wiseman & Duck, 1995). As Sun Tzu noted in *The Art of War*, an ancient Chinese book on military strategy, paying attention to our enemies is crucial for success. Is this strategy more likely to be adopted by people in a certain cultural context? Is this strategy encouraged in all cultures? In the current research, we examined how regulatory focus—promotion versus prevention focus—would influence people's experiences with their enemies by conducting comparisons of people from prevention-focused and promotion-focused cultures, and examining individuals' chronic regulatory focus.

Regulatory Focus—Promotion versus Prevention Focus—and Culture

Human motivations deeply influence people's behavioral and thinking processes (Fiske, 2008). One well-established area of research in motivation is the distinction between two kinds of regulatory focus: promotion and prevention. Promotion concerns involve advancement and accomplishment; that is, people high in promotion focus are motivated to pursue gains and success, and thus they are sensitive to the presence vs. absence of positive outcomes. In contrast, prevention concerns involve security and protection; that is, people high in prevention focus are motivated to avoid losses and fulfill obligations, and thus they are sensitive to the presence vs. absence of negative outcomes (Higgins, 1997; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). The difference between promotion and prevention focus has been consistently found across different aspects, such as persistence and motivation (Lockwood et al., 2002; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998); experiences in interpersonal relationships (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Hui, Molden, & Finkel, 2013); experiences in intergroup relations (Sassenberg, Kessler, & Mummendey, 2003; Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004); and information processing (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992).

Cultural context is an important factor in shaping people's self-regulatory focus (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). In Western societies, which tend to be more individualistic, people are likely to have an independent sense of self, which motivates them to seek uniqueness, achievement, and aspirations in order to stand out from their groups (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, people from such individualistic societies would be more likely to adopt promotion strategies, focusing on positive outcomes that they would like to achieve rather than the negative outcomes they should prevent. In contrast, in East Asian societies, where people are more collectivistic, people are likely to have an interdependent sense

of self, which motivates them to maintain group harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and fulfill

the obligations and duties that will prevent disruptions in their relationships (Heine, Lehman,

Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Therefore, people from such collectivistic societies would be more

likely to adopt prevention strategies, focusing on negative outcomes that they would like to

prevent rather than the positive outcomes they could move toward. To summarize, promotion

focus is more prevalent among Westerners (e.g., British and Euro-North Americans), whereas

prevention focus is more prevalent among East Asians (e.g., Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese;

Hamamura, Meijer, Heine, Kamaya, & Hori, 2009; Heine et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Lalwani,

Shrum, & Chiu, 2009; Li & Masuda, 2015; Ouschan, Boldero, Kashima, Wakimoto, & Kashima,

2007; Uskul, Sherman, & Fitzgibbon, 2009).

Enemyship and Regulatory Focus

The tendency of promotion-focused people to be sensitive to positive outcomes, and of

prevention-focused people to be sensitive to negative outcomes, is manifested by the strategies

used in interpersonal relationships and intergroup relations. For instance, promotion-focused

people maintain their friendships through being a good friend, whereas prevention-focused

people maintain their close relationships through trying not to be a bad friend (Higgins et al.,

1994). Also, Gable (2006) demonstrated that prevention goals were positively associated with

the impact of negative events in social interactions, but no relationship between promotion goals

and the impact of negative events was found. Although previous studies showed that promotion-

versus prevention-focused people tended to have different experiences in social relationships, to

the best of our knowledge, no research has directly tested the relationship between people's

regulatory focus and negative interpersonal experiences, notably enemyship experiences. Do

promotion- versus prevention-focused people react differently toward their enemies? Are there

any systematic cross-cultural variations in people's default pattern of regulatory focus and its

differing influence on enemyship experience? To answer these questions, the current research

investigates how regulatory focus would influence people's experiences in enemyship across

cultures.

An enemy is usually defined as someone who takes available opportunities and resources

to try to sabotage or undermine one's own goals and well-being (Adams, 2005; Sullivan et al.,

2010). Inferring from findings indicating that prevention focus engenders an attention bias to

negative outcomes (but not positive outcomes) for both non-interpersonal (e.g., Hamamura et al.,

2009) and interpersonal processes (e.g., Gable, 2006), we expected that prevention-focused

people would be vigilant about potential risks brought by enemies, which results in perceiving

great threats from their enemies. On the other hand, inferring from findings indicating that

promotion focus engenders an attention bias to positive outcomes (but not negative outcomes)

for both non-interpersonal (e.g., Hamamura et al., 2009) and interpersonal processes (e.g., Gable,

2006), we expected that promotion-focused people in general would be less attentive toward or

less aware of enemyship.

Indirect evidence suggesting the role of regulatory focus in enemyship was reported in a

cross-cultural study of Ghanaians and North Americans (Adams, 2005). Adams and his

colleagues (Adams, Kurtiṣ, Salter, & Anderson, 2012) conceptualized the strategies for

interpersonal relationships used in Ghana as prevention-focused relationality, a constellation of

strategies for maintaining group harmony via fulfilling obligations and duties and avoiding

conflicts. On the other hand, they conceptualized strategies used in North America as promotion-

focused relationality, a constellation of strategies for maximizing positive experiences such as

intimacy and growth in interpersonal relationships. Although the prior work (e.g., Adams, 2005)

did not discuss whether Ghana is a prevention-focused society, Ghanaians were described as highly interdependent people who strongly emphasize fulfilling obligations and responsibilities in their interpersonal relationships in order to prevent frictions in their embedded existing relationships (Adams & Plaut, 2003); this is a characteristic associated with prevention focus. Adams and Plaut reported that, compared to Americans, Ghanaians perceived enemyship as a more prominent concept in their daily life. Specifically, 48% of Ghanaian participants reported that they had enemies, whereas only 26% of American participants reported having enemies. In addition, a significantly higher proportion of participants in Ghana (71%) claimed to be the target of one's enemy, compared to their counterparts in North America (26%). The findings suggested that people with prevention focus (e.g., Ghanaians) hold more prominent concerns about the existence of their enemies compared to people with promotion focus (e.g., Americans).

Hypotheses and Overview of Current Research

The primary goal of the current research was to investigate how regulatory focus would influence people's enemyship perception. We had one guiding hypothesis in the entire research: prevention-focused people, compared with promotion-focused people, would report a greater concern about their enemies. In order to investigate this hypothesis, we conducted two cultural comparison studies (prevention-focused culture versus promotion-focused culture), which were regarded as a proximate comparison of different regulatory foci, and one study that directly measured individuals' chronic regulatory focus across cultures. First, based on the previous findings indicating that Hong Kong Chinese participants were more prevention-focused than Westerners (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Li & Masuda, 2015), we assumed that Hong Kong Chinese, as one of representative prevention-focused East Asian cultures (compared to European Canadians, as one of representative promotion-focused Western cultures), would be more likely

to perceive great threats from enemies, be aware of enemies, and experience negative emotions against enemies (Study 1). Next, we examined how attentive people were to the information about their enemies, by measuring Hong Kong Chinese and European Canadian participants' memories of a hypothetical enemy as a behavioral measure (Study 2). We expected that Hong Kong Chinese would be more likely to memorize enemies' information while compared with European Canadians. Finally, in order to get direct evidence showing the role of regulatory focus in cultural variations in enemyship experiences obtained in Studies 1 and 2, we carried out a study to examine the relationship of individuals' chronic regulatory focus and enemyship experience across cultures (Study 3).

Study 1

In Study 1, we focused on three dimensions: (1) perceived threats from enemies, (2) subjective awareness of enemies, and (3) negative emotional experiences in enemyship. In particular, we expected that prevention focus (versus promotion focus) would be more likely to lead to greater perceived threats from enemies, which would lead to greater awareness of enemies and stronger negative emotion in enemyship. In order to investigate the hypotheses, we recruited Hong Kong Chinese as representative of prevention-focused cultures, and European Canadians as representative of promotion-focused cultures, based on prior findings in cultural psychology showing that East Asians are more prevention-focused than North Americans (e.g., Hamamura et al., 2009; Heine et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Li & Masuda, 2015; Ouschan et al., 2007; Uskul et al., 2009).

Method

Participants. We recruited 56 Chinese participants (21 males, 33 females, and 2 who did not report gender; $M_{age} = 22.09$, $SD = 3.51$) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and 59

European Canadian participants (14 males, 45 females; M_{age} = 19.32, SD = 1.47) from the

University of Alberta. European Canadian participants participated for course credits, while

Hong Kong Chinese participants received a chance to win HK$300.[1]

      Materials and procedure. Participants were asked to complete a set of questions

presented in English, which is a major teaching medium in both universities involved in the

study. In order to ensure that participants from the two cultures shared the same understanding of

the construct, before participants completed the questionnaire they were shown the definition of

enemy adopted in the current study, where enemy was defined as "those people who hate you,

personally, to the extent of wishing for your downfall or trying to sabotage your progress," based

on Adams's (2005) theoretical framework. The participants then completed the following

questions.

      Perceived threats from enemies. Participants answered two items, "My enemies can

make a lot of troubles in my life" and "The action of my enemies may bring a very harmful

consequence to me," on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The reliability between the two items were high (Hong Kong: α = .88; Canada: α = .84), and thus

an average score was calculated for perceived threats from enemies.

      Subjective awareness of enemies. Five items were used to measure awareness of

enemies: "People who claim they do not have enemies are naïve"; "I am the target of enemies:

that is, there are people who want my downfall and are trying to sabotage me"; "Everyone has

enemies"; "It is possible that enemies exist in my close social network (relatives and friends)";

and "I think my enemies are physically close to me." The first three items were adopted from

Adams (2005), and the last two were developed for this research. Participants answered these

questions on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An average

score was calculated for awareness of enemies (Hong Kong: α = .72; Canada: α = .85).

Negative emotional experiences in enemyship. Participants were asked to rate seven

negative emotions (e.g., insecure, scared, and distressed) in enemyship.[2] Some studies suggested

that people with different regulatory focus respond differently to the contexts varying in the

degree of uncertainty (e.g., Halamish, Liberman, Higgins, & Idson, 2008; Liu, 2011). In order to

explore potential variations across contexts regarding the uncertainty level associated with the

enemies, we asked participants to report their emotional experiences in three situations: when

they fully understood the current situation of their enemies; when they only knew partial

information about the current situation of their enemies; and when they had no idea about the

current situation of their enemies. An average score for negative emotional experiences in each

situation was calculated (Hong Kong: αs > .81; Canada: αs > .87).

Results

If we found significant effects regarding gender, they were reported in the footnotes.

Please note that all results remained the same with controlling the significant effects associated

with gender. We follow the same rule in Studies 2 and 3 as well.

Perceived threats from enemies. Hong Kong Chinese perceived greater threats from

their enemies ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.35$) than did European Canadians ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.55$), $F(1,$

$113) = 24.35$, $p < .001$, $d = .92$, 95% CI = [.80, 1.88]. As we predicted, Hong Kong Chinese, who

are from a prevention-focused culture, perceived enemies as more threatening than did European

Canadians, who are from a promotion-focused culture.[3]

Subjective awareness of enemies. Hong Kong Chinese were more aware of enemies (M

$= 3.83$, $SD = 1.08$) than were European Canadians ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 113) = 27.48$, p

< .001, d = .85, 95% CI = [.55, 1.41]. Because of the prevalence of prevention focus, Hong

Kong Chinese reported greater concern about the possible existence of enemies in their life,

relative to European Canadians.[4]

Negative emotional experiences in enemyship. We conducted a 2 (Culture: Hong Kong

vs. Canada) × 3 (Situation: full understanding of enemies, partial understanding of enemies, no

understanding of enemies) mixed ANOVA, with situation as a within-subject factor.

We found a significant main effect of situation, $F(2, 109)$ =31.62, p< .001, η_p^2 = .37,

which indicated that participants reported strongest negative emotions when they did not know

the current situation of their enemies. The main effect of culture was also significant, $F(1, 110)$ =

29.81, p< .001, η_p^2 = .13, in which Hong Kong Chinese reported stronger negative emotion (M =

3.00, SD = .69) than did European Canadians (M =2.40 , SD = .82), d = .79, 95% CI = [.31, .88].

However, the interaction of culture and situation was not significant, $F(2, 109)$ = 2.57, p> .05.

Mediation effect of perceived threats. Mediation analyses with 5,000 bootstrapping

resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) were conducted to examine the mediation effect of

perceived threats in explaining cultural difference in awareness of enemies and negative

emotional experiences in enemyship separately. The analysis for awareness of enemies showed

that Hong Kong Chinese perceived greater threats from their enemies than European Canadians,

b = 1.34, p < .001, and participants who perceived greater threats from their enemies were more

likely to be aware of their enemies, b = .37, p < .001. More importantly, perceived threats

significantly explained the cultural difference in awareness of enemies, 95% CI = [.28, .80] (see

Figure 1).

-------- Insert Figure 1 --------

For the analysis of negative emotional experiences in enemyship, we collapsed scores across the three situations, as we did not find a significant interaction of culture and situations. The analysis showed that Hong Kong Chinese perceived greater threats from their enemies than did European Canadians, $b = 1.37$, $p < .001$, and participants who perceived greater threats from their enemies experienced stronger negative emotional experience, $b = .16$, $p < .001$. More importantly, perceived threats significantly explained the cultural difference in negative emotional experiences in enemyship, 95% CI = [.11, .50] (see Figure 1).[5]

Discussion

Study 1 demonstrated that, relative to European Canadians, Hong Kong Chinese reported higher subjective awareness of their enemies and stronger negative emotion toward enemyship. These cultural differences could be explained by the fact that Hong Kong Chinese perceived greater threats from their enemies. We found initial evidence that suggests that regulatory focus affects enemyship experiences: Hong Kong Chinese, as members of a prevention-focused culture, are concerned about potential negative outcomes associated with enemyships, and as result they are more aware of enemies and experience stronger negative emotion in enemyship, compared to European Canadians, who are members of a promotion-focused culture.

These findings provide evidence that a culture where promotion focus is more prevalent and a culture where prevention focus is more prevalent facilitate different strategies in enemyships. However, a self-report survey method was used in this study to obtain data of participants' perception of threats and emotional experiences about enemyship, which may potentially entail discrepancies with people's actual behaviors.

Study 2

Different from self-report in Study 1, we studied behavioral strategies for dealing with their enemies in Study 2 in order to provide more evidence for cross-cultural difference in enemyship experience. To deal with their enemies people in different cultures may use different behavioral strategies, such as how much attention they pay to and how deeply they process the information about their enemies. Memory recall has been used as a indicator of behavioral measure that shows how much we concern about certain types of information (e.g., Hamamura et al., 2009; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001), with the assumption that we are more likely to recall the information that we pay attention. Study 2 conducted a cross-cultural study to investigate how much people remember information about a potential enemy. We expected that greater perceived threats from enemies would motivate people from a prevention-focused culture to understand their enemies thoroughly in order to prevent potential risks posed by enemies. Thus we expected that people from a prevention-focused culture (Hong Kong Chinese) would memorize more information about their enemies, which indicates a greater motivation to know and understand their enemies, compared to people from a promotion-focused culture (European Canadians).

Method

Participants. We recruited 67 Chinese participants (24 males, 43 females; M_{age}= 20.96, $SD = 3.24$) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and 63 European Canadian participants (21 males, 42 females; M_{age}= 19.02, $SD = 1.43$) from the University of Alberta. European Canadian participants participated for course credits, while Hong Kong participants received a chance to win HK$300.

Materials and procedure. First, participants were given the same definition of enemies as in Study 1, to ensure that participants from both cultures shared the same understanding of the construct. Next, participants were asked to imagine that they were going to play a game with a

hypothetical enemy. They were asked to familiarize themselves with the hypothetical enemy by studying the enemy's profile. They were allowed to spend as much or as little time as they wished to study the profile before moving to the next section.

In the profile, there were 20 statements describing different life events the hypothetical enemy experienced. Some sample life events were, "He/She is majoring in Anthropology and minoring in Comparative Studies," "He/She knows Japanese, French and German," and "He/She comes from a big family."

After viewing the profile, participants answered two questions to indicate their perceived threats from this particular hypothetical enemy. The items were similar to those used in Study 1: "The action of this enemy may bring a bad consequence to me in the game we play together later" and "The enemy will make a lot of troubles to me during the game later," with a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An average score was computed (Hong Kong: $\alpha = .78$; Canada: $\alpha = .66$).

Next, participants completed a few distraction tasks, including playing a game with the hypothetical enemy and answering some unrelated questions. These procedures served two purposes: (1) to complete our cover story (and to have participants believe in it); and (2) to allow a time lag between the study phrase (i.e., viewing the profile) and the performance phrase (i.e., free recall memory task), which is an important standard procedure for this type of memory task.
6

After completing the unrelated distraction task, participants had an incidental free recall test. They were asked to recall as much information about the hypothetical enemy as they could, and type the pieces of information. The number of pieces of correct and incorrect information

they recalled was used as an indicator of participants' concern about the hypothetical enemy.

Finally, participants were asked to answer several demographic questions, and were dismissed.

Results

Perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy. The results indicate that Hong Kong

Chinese perceived greater threats from the hypothetical enemies ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.06$) than did

European Canadians ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 128) = 12.03$, $p = .001$, $d = .61$, 95% CI = [.30,

1.10]. Consistent with Study 1, people from a prevention-focused culture reported greater

perceived threats from the enemy than did those from a promotion-focused culture.

Free recall performance. There were 109 participants for the final analysis of this

variable.[7] We coded the response that contained complete information of each statement as

correct response (for example, "He/She knows Japanese, French and German" would be a

correct response, whereas "He/She knows Japanese and French" or "He/She knows many

languages" would not be counted as a correct response), and coded the response that contained

wrong information as an incorrect response (for example, "He/She knows Japanese, English and

French" would be coded as an incorrect response). Two coders (one was the first author) coded

the answers provided by the participants, and the inter-rater agreement was 93%. Discrepancies

about the coding were corrected by the first author, who referred to the given enemy profile

carefully. The results indicated that Hong Kong Chinese recalled more pieces of correct

information ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 2.18$) than did European Canadians ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 107)$

$= 6.03$, $p = .02$, $d = .48$, 95% CI = [.10, 1.50] but there was no cultural difference in the number

of pieces of wrong information participants recalled, $F(1, 107) = 2.05$, $p = .16$ (Hong Kong

Chinese: $M = .32$, $SD = .59$; European Canadians: $M = .50$, $SD = .70$). All these results remained

the same when the total words provided by the participants for the recall task was entered as the covariate in the analysis.

Mediation effect of perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy. We conducted a mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrapping resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to test the mediation effect of perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy on cultural differences in memory recall accuracy. The analysis showed that Hong Kong Chinese perceived greater threats from their enemies, $b = .72$, $p < .01$, but the association between perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy and memory recall was marginally significant in the mediation analysis, $b = .25$, $p = .08$, despite the fact that the indirect effect of perceived threats was significant, 95% CI = [.04, .44] (see Figure 2). We identified, however, that the simple correlation between perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy and memory recall accuracy was significant, $r(109) = .23$, $p = .02$, 95% CI = [.07, .38]. There was no correlation between perceived threats from the hypothetical enemy and wrong information recall, $r(109) = -.03$, $p = .72$, therefore no mediation analysis was conducted.

------------------ Insert Figure 2 ------------------

Discussion

Study 2 replicated the cultural difference in enemyship experience by using a behavioral measure. First, the results of an incidental recall test with 20 statements about a hypothetical enemy suggest that, compared to people from a promotion-focused culture, people from a prevention-focused culture were more motivated to memorize the information about their enemies, which reflected their greater concern regarding their enemies. Furthermore, we did not find cultural difference in the number of wrong information recalled and the results remained the same while we controlled the total amount of words provided by the participants, which suggests

that people from the prevention-focused culture were motivated to memorize the correct details of the hypothetical enemy rather than just writing more seemingly relevant information. In addition, although we obtained only a marginally significant indirect effect of perceived threats on cultural difference in memory recall, we still found a significant association between perceived threats from the enemy and memory recall: People who perceived greater threats from the hypothetical enemy recalled more pieces of information about the hypothetical enemy.

However, the design of Studies 1 and 2 did not allow us to directly examine the role of regulatory focus in facilitating differences in strategies for enemyships. The findings in Studies 1 and 2 were only suggestive to the role of regulatory focus. In addition, there are other possible cultural factors (e.g., dialecticism and holism) rather than regulatory focus that may explain differences in enemyship experiences between Hong Kong Chinese and European Canadians. To overcome these two limitations, Study 3 measured individuals' regulatory focus in a prevention-focused and a promotion-focused culture, and attempted to identify whether regulatory focus explains cultural variations in enemyship experiences.

Study 3

In order to overcome the weaknesses entailed in Studies 1 and 2, we measured individuals' chronic prevention and promotion focus between European Canadians and Hong Kong Chinese, and examined whether we could replicate the results of the cross-cultural comparison undertaken in Study 1 by focusing the mediation role of regulatory focus.

Similar to Study 1, we predicted that regulatory focus would explain cultural differences in enemyship experiences, including perceived threats from enemies, awareness of enemies, and negative emotional experience with enemies. In addition, we predicted that perceived threats

from enemies would explain the relationship between regulatory focus and subjective awareness of enemies and negative emotional experiences in enemyship.

Method

      Participants. We recruited 173 European Canadians (48 males, 124 females, one participant did not report gender; $M_{age} = 19.83$, $SD = 2.87$) from the University of Alberta, and 109 Chinese (43 males, 66 females; $M_{age} = 21.01$, $SD = 3.19$) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, European Canadian participants participated for course credits, while Hong Kong participants received a chance to win HK$300.

      Procedure. The same procedure and all items included in Study 1 were used in Study 3. The reliability for the scales used in Study 1 was satisfactory (Hong Kong: αs > .82; Canada: αs > .79). In addition, we measured participants' prevention versus promotion focus by using the scale developed by Lockwood et al. (2002), which showed a systematic cultural difference in regulatory focus in the prior work (e.g., Uskul et al., 2009). Participants answered the questions using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*; Promotion focus: Hong Kong: α = .79; Canada: α = .83; Prevention focus: Hong Kong: α = .78; Canada: α = .80). Following the procedures in the prior work (e.g., Uskul et al., 2009), a single score of prevention versus promotion focus was calculated by subtracting the score of promotion focus from prevention focus (prevention – promotion), in which higher score indicates that participant has a stronger endorsement in prevention focus than promotion focus.

Results

      The role of regulatory focus on cultural differences in enemyeship experiences. First, we tested whether regulatory focus would be a significant mediator that explains cultural differences in enemyship experiences, including perceived threats from enemies, subjective

awareness of enemies and negative emotional experiences with enemies, by entering participants' cultural background as the independent variable and participants' regulatory score as the mediator.

Following Preacher and Hayes's (2008) method, we carried out mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrapping resamples. First, the analyses showed that Hong Kong Chinese were more prevention-focused than European Canadians, $b = .99$, $p < .001$. We also found that participants who were high in prevention focus perceived greater threats from their enemies, $b = .23$, $p < .01$, reported higher awareness of their enemies, $b = .20$, $p < .01$, and had greater negative emotional experiences with their enemies, $b = .14$, $p < .001$, than did participants who were high in promotion focus. More importantly, we found significant mediation effects of regulatory focus in explaining cultural variation in enemyship: Higher score in prevention focus among Hong Kong Chinese significantly explained their higher scores in perceived threats from enemies (95% CI = [.04, .43]), awareness of enemies (95% CI = [.06, .38]), and negative emotional experiences with their enemies (95% CI = [.07, .23]) than European Canadians (see Figure 3). These analyses converged to show that cultural difference in regulatory focus explained cultural differences in enemyships.[8]

-------- Insert Figure 3 --------

The role of perceived threats from enemies on the relationship between regulatory focus and enemyeship experiences. Next, to replicate the role of perceived threats from enemies in explaining the role of regulatory focus on subjective awareness of enemies and negative emotional experiences with enemies obtained in Study 1, we entered participants' regulatory score as the independent variable and perceived threats from their enemies as the mediator in the mediation analyses. Following previous procedures (Preacher & Hayes, 2008),

we found that prevention-focused people (in relative to promotion-focused people) perceived higher threats from their enemies, $b = .32$, $p < .01$, and this in turn made them more likely to be aware of enemies, $b = .38$, $p < .001$, (95% CI = [.06, .20]) and experience stronger negative emotion with their enemies, $b = .18$, $p < .001$ (95% CI = [.02, .10]) (see Figure 4). These mediation analyses replicated the results obtained in Study 1.

-------- Insert Figure 4 --------

Discussion

Study 3 enables us to answer the question of whether regulatory focus determines people's concern about their enemies. Consistent with our expectations, enemyship experiences across cultures were explained by people's regulatory focus, which facilitated differences in the strategies in enemyship. People from East Asian societies, which were found to be more prevention-focused, were more cautious about the existence of enemies, which was reflected by the reported greater perceived threats from their enemies, greater subjective awareness of enemies, and stronger negative emotional experiences in enemyship, than those from North America, which were found to be more promotion-focused. In addition we found the perceived threats from enemies mediated the relationship between regulatory focus and awareness of enemies and negative emotional experiences, which replicated our findings in Study 1.

General Discussion

Relying on the previous cross-cultural findings of regulatory focus (Lee et al, 2000; Li & Masuda, 2015), the present research investigated the influence of regulatory focus in enemyship from three cross-cultural studies between Hong Kong Chinese and European Canadians. We found that participants from Hong Kong, which like participants from other East Asian cultures, such as Japanese, who typically show stronger prevention focus, reported greater concern

regarding their enemies in terms of perceived threats from their enemies, subjective awareness of

enemies, and negative emotional experiences in enemyship, compared to their counterparts from

Canada, as a representative group of promotion-focused Western cultures, where promotion

focus is more dominant in their life experiences (Study 1). In addition, we replicated the pattern

by using a behavioral measure: Hong Kong Chinese memorized more pieces of information

about a hypothetical enemy compared with European Canadians (Study 2). Furthermore, we

replicated the pattern by measuring individuals' chronic regulatory focus, and found direct

evidence showing that regulatory focus (prevention focus dominance) predicted people's

perception of enemyship and regulatory focus explained cultural differences in enemyship

(Study 3). The findings from three studies with different methods and measures converge to

indicate the consistent significant role of regulatory focus in enemyship experience. As the

Chinese strategist Sun Tsu suggested long ago, prevention-focused people (or people from

prevention-focused cultures) may try to reduce the sense of threat by attending to their enemies.

Implications

The current studies provide three major implications for research in cross-cultural

psychology, regulatory focus, and interpersonal relationships.

Implications for regulatory focus research. Study 3 provided direct evidence

demonstrating the role of regulatory focus in enemyship, in which prevention-focused

participants, compared with those who were more promotion-focused, showed greater concern

about their enemies. Consistent with previous studies, which showed that, compared to people

high in prevention focus, people high in promotion focus are less sensitive to negative

information, and their judgment would be less affected by negative information (e.g., Florack,

Ineichen, Bieri, 2009; Scholer, Stroessner, & Higgins, 2008; Shah et al., 2004). An enemy is

usually regarded as someone who would undermine one's goals and well-being, which may entail a salient meaning of loss. Therefore, the construct of enemyship may be inherently more congruent with prevention-focused strategies, which are concerned with security maintenance, but incongruent with promotion-focused strategies, which are concerned with aspiration and advancement. This misfit between the construct of enemyship and promotion focus may make people less concerned about enemyship, as neglecting potential threats is a strategy facilitated by promotion focus. However, there is still room to consider an alternative possibility: instead of simply ignoring enemies, people high in promotion focus are motivated to selectively access positive interpersonal relationships. Consistent with this rationale, Shah et al. (2004) reported that regulatory focus did indeed influence how ingroup favoritism was achieved. They found that participants' promotion focus triggered stronger positive reactions to ingroup members, whereas prevention focus triggered stronger negative reaction to outgroup members. In other words, it suggests that promotion-focused people may divert their attention to other positive interpersonal relationships instead of attending to their enemies, which was the strategies adopted by prevention-focused people, to reduce the threats induced by enemies. Our focus in the current research is to examine how people deal with their enemies, and our results indeed supported the prediction that prevention-focused people are more attentive to enemies. It would be interesting to examine how promotion-focused people reduce the sense of threats from their enemies in the future research. For instance, compared with prevention-focused people, would promotion-focused people be more likely to approach their positive interpersonal relationships in order to reduce the threats induced from enemyship?

Implications for cross-cultural research. Previous studies demonstrated differences in psychological processes between promotion- and prevention-focused cultures (e.g., Hamamura et

al., 2009; Uskul et al., 2009). The current research further scrutinized this question in the context of enemyship experience. Study 3 indicated that regulatory focus was correlated with people's enemyship experience, and it explained cultural differences in enemyship experience. Compared to East Asians, Westerners care about their enemies less was likely due to a lower level of prevention focus (in relative to promotion focus).

Recently, a plethora of cross-cultural studies has demonstrated that the characteristics of a given cultural environment afford people with certain adaptive strategies for interpersonal relationships within that environment. Prior work found that systematic cultural differences in the structure of social relationships, (i.e., relational mobility; Li, Adams, Kurtiṣ, & Hamamura, 2015; Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009; Schug, Yuki, & Maddux, 2010); residential mobility (e.g., Oishi &Kesebir, 2012); and prevalence of independence versus interdependence (Adams, 2005; Adams & Plaut, 2003) influence people's strategies and experiences in different interpersonal relationships. For instance, people living in a society that presents many opportunities for establishing new social relationships were more likely to use self-disclosure as a strategy for strengthening their relationships than were people living in a society with limited opportunities for establishing new social relationships (Schug et al., 2010). Consistent with previous work, the current research provides evidence showing that prevalence of promotion versus prevention focus in one's cultural environment influences several enemyship experiences, including perceptions of enemies, emotional experiences with enemies, and motivation to memorize information about one's enemies to better understand them.

Based on our findings, we speculate that there would be a system of associations between levels of relational mobility, regulatory focus, and enemyship perception. Those who live in a culture low in relational mobility would need to be prevention-focused to maintain social

relationships. In such a culture, one's enemies remain present in the same community, further

confirming the need to be aware of them. In contrast, those who live in a culture high in

relational mobility would need to be promotion-focused so as to seek new relationships; the high

relational mobility would allow one to escape from and ignore one's enemies, so there is less

need to think about them. These speculations were given credence by the discussion regarding

the promotion versus prevention relationality proposed by Adams et al. (2012). Further studies

should examine how multiple sociocultural factors such as relational mobility predict different

experiences in negative interpersonal relationships, and how these cultural factors may interact in

affecting people's thoughts and behaviors in negative interpersonal relationships across cultures.

Despite the fact that we found consistent evidence showing that regulatory focus

explained cultural variations in enemyship experience, it is possible that other factors may

simultaneously affect enemyship experience across cultures, as suggested by some prior cross-

cultural research proposing that multiple factors simultaneously influence a specific

psychological process (e.g., Falk, Heine, Yuki, & Takemura, 2009; Heine & Buchtel, 2009;

MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). To comprehensively understand people's enemyship

experience, future research should examine the influence of other cultural factors (such as

dialecticism and self-construals) and the interplay of these cultural factors on people's

experiences in enemyship.

Implications for interpersonal relationship research. Our research also provides some

implications for research on interpersonal relationships. First, previous work showed that

regulatory focus determines strategies adopted in friendship (Higgins et al., 1994) and

experiences in romantic relationships (Hui et al., 2013). For instance, people high in prevention

focus try not to be a bad friend, whereas people high in promotion focus try to be a good friend

in order to maintain the friendship (Higgins et al., 1994). Different from positive, "sunny-side" interpersonal relationships (friendship), the current research extended the framework of regulation focus to a negative, "dark-side" of interpersonal relationships (enemyship), demonstrating that prevention-focused people show greater concern about their enemies than do those who are less prevention-focused. Future research should further examine what kinds of personal characteristics may influence experiences in different kinds of interpersonal relationships.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our research. First, we only partially demonstrated causality by inferring the influence of regulatory focus on seen cultural differences through a between-culture comparison of regulatory focus (Studies 1 and 2), and by examining the relationships between participants' regulatory focus and enemyship-related variables (Study 3). Future research should directly manipulate regulatory focus to strengthen causality claims. Second, we did not ask participants to report real-life experiences in specific enemyship contexts; instead, we focused on how participants generally perceived their personal enemies (Studies 1 and 3) and how they reacted to hypothetical enemies (Study 2). Further research should examine whether the current findings generalize to interactions with enemies in real life. Third, as we asked participants to imagine a game with a hypothetical enemy in the manipulation in Study 2, this manipulation might have been perceived as less self-relevant to some participants, blurring effects of the manipulation. Although such tasks have been used frequently in previous work as manipulations, and have been demonstrated to be effective (e.g., Li et al., 2015; Oishi, Miao, Koo, Kisling, & Ratliff, 2012), a different paradigm may make enemyship situations more salient. Fourth, the poor memory performance in Study 2 for both Hong Kong Chinese and

Canadians may have prevented us from providing evidence for the mediation role of perceived threats and motivations to memorize enemy information on the observed cultural differences. So as to overcome this limitation, it is advisable to further instruct participants on the nature of the memory task, explicitly instructing them to memorize potential enemies' information, so as to improve memory performance. Finally, to give further evidence that East Asians are more likely than their Western counterparts to selectively memorize potential enemy's information, it is advisable to compare participants' memory of potential enemies' information to their memory of potential friends', or neutral individuals' information. Although it is beyond the scope of the current paper, a more elaborate design could test whether Westerners have an advantage over East Asians in terms of memorizing information of *potential friends* in contrast to East Asians' advantage for *potential enemies*. This would allow us to simultaneously depict cultural variations in enemyship and friendship—showing both a dark side and a sunny side of culture's effect on interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

Our research not only enriches the understanding of regulatory focus on social cognition, it also facilitates understanding of the dark side of interpersonal relationships across cultures. To date, enemyship has not received as much attention as positive relationships in the regulation focus paradigm. However, the dark side of interpersonal relationships cannot be ignored, and in fact a significant number of people have reported that they had enemies at some point in their life (e.g., Abecassis et al., 2002; Adams, 2005; Card, 2007; Holt, 1989).We believe that investigation of negative interpersonal relationships contributes to deepening the comprehensive understanding of social life across cultures.

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Footnotes

[1] We did not obtain systematic correlations between age and major variables (e.g., perceived threats from the enemy and negative emotion experience with the enemies) across three studies. Therefore we did not discuss the age effect in the current study.

[2] Participants were also asked to rate six positive emotions (e.g., happy, excited, and comfortable) in Studies 1 and 3. In both studies, we found that participants felt stronger positive emotions while having more information about their enemies, $Fs = 33.68$, $ps < .001$ However, we did not find consistent results regarding the main effect of culture and the interaction of culture and situations. In Study 1, we did not find significant effects of culture and the interaction between culture and situation, $Fs < 1$, $ps > .52$. In contrast, we found a significant interaction between culture and situation in Study 3, $F(1.55, 430.37) = 3.27$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, in which European Canadians experienced greater increase in positive emotion when having more information regarding their enemies $F(1.52, 257.20) = 68.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$, than did Hong Kong Chinese, $F(1.60, 172.27) = 40.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .28$. In addition, the main effect of culture was significant, $F(1, 277) = 4.20$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, in which Hong Kong Chinese ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .77$) reported stronger positive emotion experiences than did European Canadians ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .67$) in general. However, the correlation between regulatory focus (prevention − promotion focus) and positive emotional experiences with enemies in Study 3 was non-significant, $r = -.03$, $p = .61$, which suggests that the cultural difference was not attributed to regulatory focus. Due to the unreliable cultural difference in positive emotional experience across two studies and the non-significant relationship between regulatory focus and positive emotional experience, no further discussion was done.

[3] The main effect of gender was significant, $F(1, 109) = 4.63$, $p = .03$, $d = .58$, 95% CI = [.47, 1.43], in which male participants ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.32$) perceived greater threats from their

enemies than did female participants ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.67$), but its interaction with culture was nonsignificant, $F < 1$, $p = .95$.

[4] The main effect of gender was significant, $F(1, 109) = 12.08$, $p = .001$, $d = .83$, 95% CI $= [.29, 1.45]$, in which male participants ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.06$) were more likely to be aware of their enemies compared with female participants ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.23$), but its interaction with culture was nonsignificant, $F < 1$, $p = .98$.

[5] We also explored mediation models when awareness of enemies was treated as the mediator for predicting cultural difference in perceived threat from enemies and negative emotional experiences with their enemies. The mediation model was significant for predicting perceived threats but not negative emotional experiences with enemies. Taking together, perceived threats from enemies, which was a significant mediator for other enemyship-related experiences, seem to be a more reliable mediator.

[6] During the distraction phase, participants played a game with the hypothetical enemy, in which participants were asked to indicate resource allocation between them and the hypothetical enemy in nine trials (Social Value Orientation scale; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997). It was a self-report scale, so no effort was required when participants played the game. Next, participants answered few unrelated scales, in which these scales were not significantly correlated with participants' memory task performance.

[7] Twenty-one participants were excluded because they did not follow the instructions. Participants were supposed to recall the information about the hypothetical enemy. Instead, these participants either wrote about their feelings about the hypothetical enemy, or completely missed this section and left it blank.

[8] We found a significant interaction of gender and culture in predicting regulatory focus, $F(1, 277) = 7.09$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, in which female participants ($M = -1.14$, $SD = 1.29$) had a stronger prevention focus than male participants ($M = -1.58$, $SD = 1.30$) among European Canadians, $F(1, 170) = 4.15$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, whereas female participants ($M = -.41$, $SD = .88$) had a weaker prevention focus than male participants ($M = -.06$, $SD = .92$) among Hong Kong participants, $F(1, 107) = 3.97$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. The results of mediation analyses conducted in Study 3 remained unchanged while controlling the effect of gender.
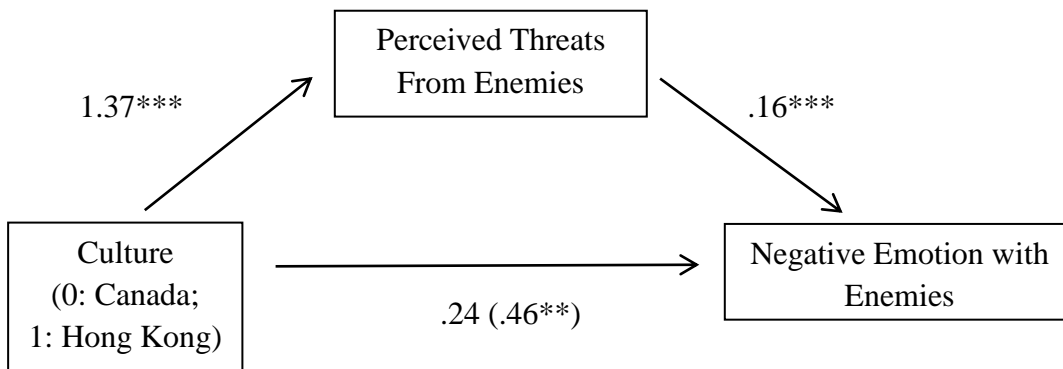
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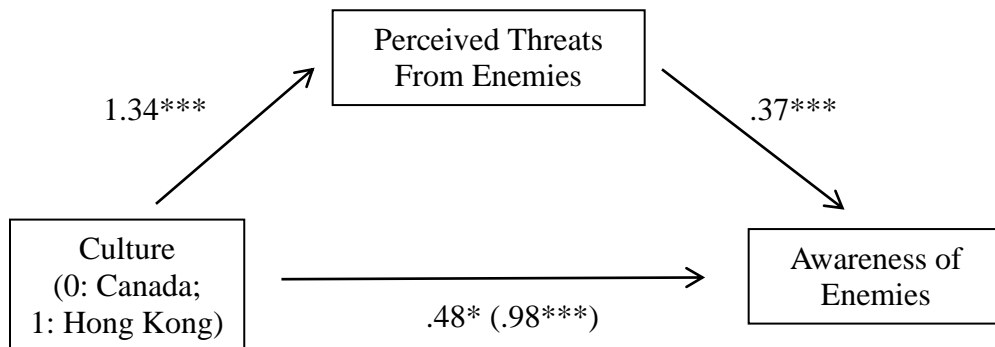
B

Figure 1.Indirect effect of perceived threats from enemies on cultural difference in (A)

awareness of enemies (n = 115) and (B) negative emotion in enemyship (n = 114) in Study 1.

Direct effects of cultural differences are shown in parentheses. Numbers represent

unstandardized regression coefficients.*** *p*< .001. **p< .01.

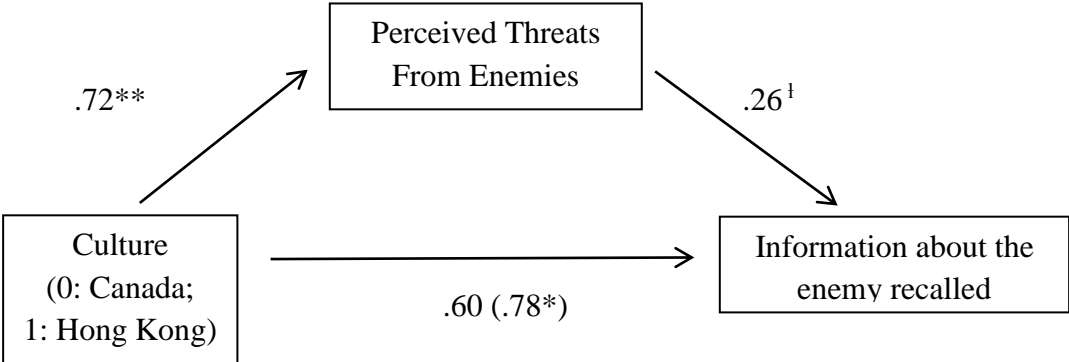*Figure 2*. Indirect effect of perceived threats on the cultural difference in information about the

hypothetical enemy recalled in Study 2. Direct effects of culture are shown in parentheses.

Numbers represent unstandardized regression coefficients. **p< .01. *p< .05. ¹ p = .07.
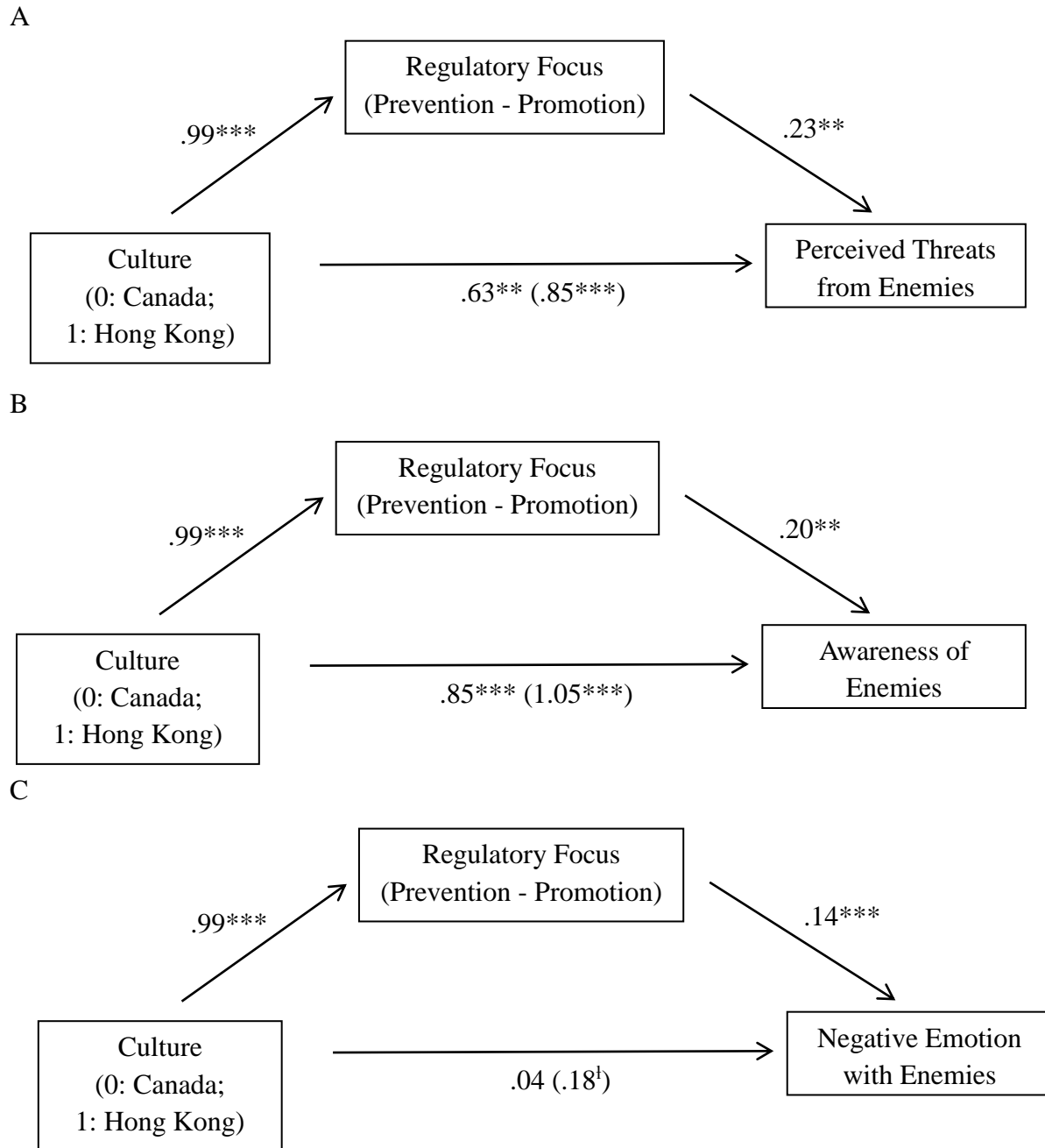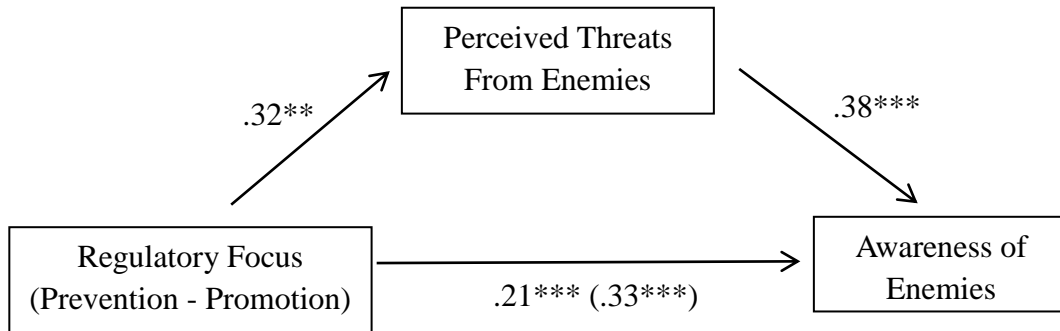
A

B

C

Figure 3. Indirect effect of regulatory focus on the cultural differences in (A) perceived threats of

enemies, (B) awareness of enemies, and (C) negative emotion in enemyship in Study 3. Direct

effects of culture are shown in parentheses. Numbers represent unstandardized regression

coefficients.*** p< .001. **p< .01. [1] p = .07.

A

Perceived Threats
From Enemies

.32**

.38***

Regulatory Focus
(Prevention - Promotion)

.21*** (.33***)

Awareness of
Enemies

B

Perceived Threats From
Enemies

.32**

.18***

Regulatory Focus
(Prevention - Promotion)

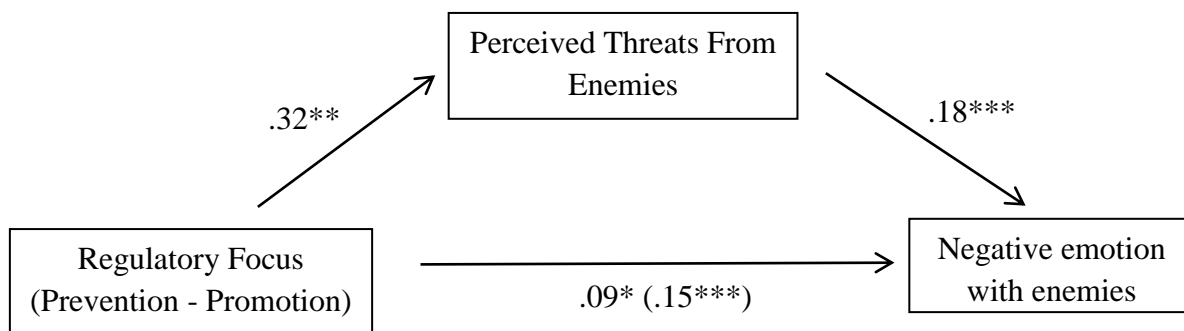.09* (.15***)

Negative emotion
with enemies

Figure 4. Indirect effect of perceived threats from enemies on the relationship between
regulatory focus (prevention dominance) and enemyship in (A) awareness of enemies and (B)
negative emotion in enemyship in Study 3. Direct effects of regulatory focus are shown in
parentheses. Numbers represent unstandardized regression coefficients.*** $p< .001$. **$p< .01$.
*$p< .05$.