

Is individual bribery or organizational bribery more intolerable in China (versus in the United States)? Advancing theory on the perception of corrupt acts



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ABSTRACT

The Chinese government is making unprecedented efforts to curb corruption resulting in several high-profile prosecutions involving local and foreign businesses. Accordingly, we examined the influence of national culture on the intolerance of bribery, based on the premise that bribery is more intolerable when it is committed by the actor seen as more agentic in a given culture. As predicted, Studies 1a, 1b, and 2 found that the Chinese were more intolerant of organizational bribery than individual bribery, whereas just the opposite was true among Americans. Further supporting our reasoning, Study 2 showed that these cross-cultural differences were mediated by participants' tendencies to make internal attributions for the bribe payers' behavior. Study 3 found that when Chinese or American culture was primed, bicultural participants showed analogous reactions, but only when they believed their two cultural identities to be compatible (rather than conflicting) with each other. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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"We must have the resolve to fight every corrupt phenomenon, punish every corrupt official and constantly eliminate the soil which breeds corruption, so as to earn people's trust with actual results. ... [T]he fight against corruption is a long-term, complicated and arduous task. Anti-corruption efforts must be consistent and will never slacken."

[Xi Jinping, President of People's Republic of China (Yang, 2013)]

1. Introduction

China is taking possibly the most ambitious and sustained campaign against corruption since the nation was established in 1949. Not only have individual government officials and businessmen been investigated and arrested, but also local organizations and

international corporations such as GlaxoSmithKline and Danone's Dumex have been singled out for engaging in bribery. While the government is determined and taking a heavy hand, the campaign is a complicated project facing many challenges. As China's economy and society are becoming rapidly internationalized, the workplace values and business norms are becoming more diverse due to the increasing number of Western-educated employees, to multinational corporations opening offices in Mainland China, and to Chinese firms operating overseas (Leung, Friedman, & Chen, 2013). Given the broader social context of anti-corruption and the more culturally dynamic business ecosystem in China, it is important to understand the influence of both Chinese and Western cultures on people's perceptions of corrupt acts.

The present research takes a cross-cultural approach to investigate how judgments of bribery committed by two different entities (individuals and organizations) vary across Chinese and American cultures (Studies 1a, 1b, and 2), as well as to delineate the underlying psychological mechanism for this cultural difference (Study 2). We also take a cultural priming approach to investigate how people with both Chinese and American cultural backgrounds judge the intolerability of bribery as a function of the culture that

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is primed as well as the extent to which their two cultural identities are integrated versus conflicted (Study 3).

In the rich literature on the antecedents of corruption, the cultural dimension of collectivism has been identified as a critical variable, above and beyond economic underdevelopment and institutional factors. For instance, research by sociologists, based on Banfield and Banfield's (1958) theory about "amoral familism," has found that cultures emphasizing particularistic obligation to family members (e.g., Chinese culture) were more plagued by corruption (Lipset & Lenz, 2000). Research by organizational scholars, primarily based on the work by Hofstede (1984) and Triandis (1989), has repeatedly shown a positive correlation between collectivism and each of national corruption level (e.g., Davis & Ruhe, 2003; Triandis et al., 2001), firms' bribery of their governments (Martin, Cullen, Johnson, & Parboteeah, 2007), and individuals' perceptions of the justifiability of accepting bribes (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Hoegl, 2004). Behavioral researchers also have found that collectivism is associated with lower perceived responsibility for one's actions and a higher propensity to bribe abroad (Mazar & Aggarwal, 2011).

However, many important questions remain, particularly those pertaining to the effect of national culture on perceptions of and reactions to bribery. For instance, past research has focused on judgments about those on the receiving end of corruption (Martin et al., 2007). However, any corruption deal also involves the supply side which has been investigated far less often (Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Trevino, 2008). Accordingly, the present study examines how much perceivers view acts of bribery to be intolerable. Furthermore, although the handful of studies on bribery has shown cultural differences in bribery practices and intentions (e.g., Mazar & Aggarwal, 2011), we know relatively little about how individuals with different cultural backgrounds perceive the intolerability of bribery. Given that such perceptions are likely to influence behavior, understanding individuals' judgments of bribery might shed light on how the general public would respond to corrupt acts, their willingness to act against them, and their own tendency to engage in them.

If cultural differences in perceptions of the intolerability of bribery were to emerge, then it is also critical to unearth the psychological mechanisms of such an effect. For instance, we know that cultures vary with respect to how much members perceive the causes of behavior to be due to factors internal versus external to people (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994). In like fashion, bribery may be judged as more internally driven in one culture but as less internally driven or more externally caused in another, which in turn may lead to different judgments of the intolerability of the bribery. In short, the literature is badly in need of rigorous theory and research examining cultural differences in people's perceptions of the intolerability of bribery.

In this research we distinguish between two types of bribery: individual bribery—bribe-giving on behalf of an individual to serve individual interests (e.g., a parent bribing the teacher to win favorable treatment of his child at school; a defendant or prosecutor bribing the judge for biased judgment), and organizational bribery—bribe-giving on behalf of an organization to serve the collective interests (e.g., a listed firm bribing the auditor for fraud report; an international company bribing the foreign government for policy support). The distinction between individual and organizational bribery is important because past research suggests that cultures vary in their construals of individuals and collectives as two separate, cognitively meaningful social entities (Kashima et al., 2005; for a review, see Morris, Menon, & Ames, 2001). Moreover, there are cultural differences in agency beliefs, such that in some cultures the individual is seen as more agentic than the collective, and vice versa in other cultures. In turn, whether the individual or the collective is perceived to be the agent of wrongdoing

is likely to make a difference in attributions of responsibility (Menon, Morris, Chiu, & Hong, 1999) and ultimately, judgments of intolerability.

Specifically, individualistic cultures (e.g., American, Australian) believe individuals to be more salient or agentic entities than groups, which are regarded more as a part of the social environment of, or a situational constraint on, the focal individuals. In contrast, collectivistic cultures (e.g., Chinese, Korean) believe groups/collectives to be more salient or agentic entities than individuals, who have less autonomy to behave freely from environmental constraints. This cultural difference in agency beliefs suggests the possibility that cultures differ in judgments of the intolerability of bribery committed by individuals versus organizations. We expect that in cultures emphasizing the agency of collectives over individuals (e.g., China), organizational bribery might be seen as a more significant transgression than individual bribery whereas in cultures emphasizing the agency of individuals over collectives (e.g., the United States), individual bribery might be seen as a more significant transgression than organizational bribery.

Moreover, if individual bribery is perceived to be more intolerable than organizational bribery in one culture but less intolerable in another culture, it is important to investigate why this may be the case. More generally, and as suggested by Leung et al. (2013), "the different cultural and institutional context of China vis-à-vis that of the West provides immense opportunities for evaluating, extending, and creating psychological theories." By studying characteristics of constructs and their relationships that may take different forms in various cultures, we can not only better understand our own culture (Pruitt, 2004, p. xii) and learn about other cultures but also contribute to the uncovering of universal psychological mechanisms (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007).

In sum, the present research examines the influence of Chinese versus American culture on perceptions of the intolerability of bribery committed by individuals relative to bribery committed by organizations. Beyond demonstrating the indigenous enactments of cultural influence, we also hope to contribute to the development of a general theory on the psychological processes of moral judgment (Brockner, 2003; Gibson & McDaniel, 2010). More specifically, the overarching thesis of the present research is that in both cultures, bribery committed by the more agentic entity will be judged as more intolerable. The present research also may provide practical implications for Chinese (as well as American) policy makers to combat corruption.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

Within some cultures, it has long been established that the individual, compared to the group, is a more agentic entity, having internal qualities (e.g., dispositions, traits) and willpower and acting in accordance with beliefs, desires and intents (for a review, see Brewer & Harasty, 1996; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996). However, recent developments in cultural psychology suggest that the primacy of individuals over groups is not a universally held assumption but rather one more commonly shared in individualistic cultures (e.g., American, Australian, British) than in collectivistic cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean; Kashima et al., 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For instance, research on responsibility assignment found that Asian Americans or people from Asian societies such as China, Hong Kong, and Japan were more likely than Americans to extend blame to the individual wrongdoer's group, to the representative of the group, and to other group members who are not causally related to the wrongdoing (Chao, Zhang, & Chiu, 2008; Chiu & Hong, 1992; Zemba, Young, & Morris, 2006).

More direct evidence for cultural differences in perceptions of individuals versus groups comes from research on implicit theories people maintain about individual versus group agency. Implicit theories consist of knowledge and the latent assumptions that people use in daily life to understand their social worlds (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Gopnik & Meltzoff, 1997; Heider, 1958). Implicit theories of agency refer to beliefs about the intentionality, capacity, and autonomy of actors such as individuals, groups, and supernatural forces (Liu, 2015; Menon et al., 1999; Morris et al., 2001). It has been demonstrated that belief in individual agency is maintained in individualistic cultures in which individuals are construed to be agentic sources of actions, to bear enduring characteristics, and to be more autonomous from environmental constraints. In contrast, the belief in group agency is stronger in collectivist cultures, in which groups are perceived to be intentional agents of social outcomes, to maintain stable properties, and to be less confined by environmental constraints (Kashima et al., 2005; Menon et al., 1999; for a review, see Morris et al., 2001). As shown by Menon et al. (1999), Americans' endorsement of the belief that individuals take control of the situations around them and exercise free will was stronger than their endorsement of the parallel belief about organizations, whereas Singaporean Chinese' endorsement of the belief that organizations set a course for themselves independent of the influences surrounding them was stronger than their endorsement of the parallel belief about individuals.

This cross-cultural difference may help to predict at least some of the cultural variability in people's perceptions of the intolerability of individual versus organizational bribery. If, as suggested above, individuals are perceived as more agentic than collectives in American culture, then Americans might be more ready to assign internal motives (e.g., greed, ambition, desire) to bribing behaviors by individuals than to those by organizations. Moreover, if organizations are perceived as less agentic entities in the American culture, Americans may be less likely to attribute bribing behaviors to an organization's intents and desires relative to external factors such as the broader social environment (e.g., business competition).

In Chinese culture, however, if organizations are perceived as more agentic than individuals, then Chinese might be more ready to attribute bribing behaviors by organizations to their "traits" and "intents" (e.g., missions, strategies, organizational culture, and ethical codes). Accordingly, if Chinese perceive individuals as less agentic and powerful in exerting their free wills, then they might be less likely to attribute individual bribing behaviors to individual dispositions and intents, and more to the group pressure, social environment and situational constraints.

In summary, the common principle underpinning a central prediction of the present studies is that bribery will be perceived as more intolerable in cultures in which the bribing entity is seen as more agentic, and therefore more internally responsible for the bribery. Accordingly, we predicted that:

H1. Chinese will be more intolerant of organizational bribery than individual bribery while Americans will be more intolerant of individual bribery than organizational bribery.

2.1. Accounting for the relationship between culture and bribery intolerance

Cross-national research not only needs to demonstrate cultural differences in people's work attitudes and behaviors, but also to explain why they occur (Bond, 2007; Brockner, 2003). Central to implicit agency theories are perceptions of the intentionality, capacity and autonomy of the social entity (Liu, 2015). An entity

is perceived to be intentional when it is seen to have a "mind" that acts on desires, beliefs and intents. An entity is perceived to be capable when it is seen to be able to carry out actions and manage its goal attainment. An entity is perceived to be autonomous when it is seen to have power to exert free will and overcome environmental constraints. Entities with more intentionality, capacity and autonomy lead perceivers to make stronger internal attributions and/or weaker external attributions for the entities' behavior.

Hence, we examined participants' causal attributions for the bribe payers' behavior, based on the notion that as reflections of perceived agency, causal attributions will mediate the relationship between culture and the perceived intolerability of individual versus organizational bribery. In fact, prior research outside the realm of bribe paying has identified cultural differences in perceivers' causal attributions that are consistent with the present reasoning. Compared to people from the US, people from Asia such as the Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and Hong Kong Chinese have a greater propensity to attribute group actions to group dispositions than to contextual factors; compared to these Asians, the Americans have a greater propensity to attribute individual actions to individual dispositions than to contextual factors (Chiu, Morris, Hong, & Menon, 2000; Choi, Dalal, Kim-Prieto, & Park, 2003; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Friedman, Liu, Chen, & Chi, 2007; Knowles, Morris, Chiu, & Hong, 2001; Menon et al., 1999; Morris & Peng, 1994).

Presumably, in making attributions for bribery behavior Chinese and Americans will assign causality to internal and external factors differently, depending on whether the individual or organization is the bribing entity. For a bribing individual, Americans may be predisposed to see more internal volition and less external reasons as causing the bribery, because Americans believe individuals are agentic, that is, purposive actors with freedom to exert their will despite environmental constraints. For a bribing organization, however, Americans may be less likely to make internal attributions and/or more likely to make external attributions as they believe collectives to be lower in agency. In contrast, the tendency of the Chinese to construe groups as powerful social actors may lead them to see organizational bribery as more internally driven (e.g., due to organizations lacking an ethical code, or intending to impair justice/fairness) and/or less externally driven. Moreover, the tendency of the Chinese to construe individuals as being embedded in and constrained by their social environment may lead Chinese to see individual bribery as less internally and/or more externally driven than in the case of organizational bribery.

Whereas initial work in attribution theory implied that perceived internality and externality lied at opposite ends of a single continuum, more recent theory and research suggest that they reflect two largely independent dimensions (e.g., Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994; Xenikou, Furnham, & McCarrey, 1997). Therefore, we offered separate hypotheses for these two attributional dimensions.

H2a. Chinese will make more internal attributions for organizational bribery than for individual bribery while Americans will make more internal attributions for individual bribery than for organizational bribery.

H2b. Chinese will make more external attributions for individual bribery than for organizational bribery while Americans will make more external attributions for organizational bribery than for individual bribery.

Taken together, prior theory and research pinpoint causal attributions as possible explanations of the predicted cultural difference in the relative intolerability of individual versus organizational bribery. It is less certain, however, whether the

mediating effect of causal attributions on the relationship between national culture and bribery intolerance will be due to internal attributions only, to external attributions only, or to a combination of the two. Hence, we offer the following (more open-ended) hypothesis.

H3. The Chinese-American cultural difference in intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery set forth in H1 will be mediated by the Chinese-American cultural difference in internal attributions and/or external attributions.

3. Plan of study

We employed different methodologies to test the hypotheses. Studies 1a and 1b were designed to evaluate cultural differences in the intolerance of individual bribery versus organizational bribery (H1). To examine the generalizability of this prediction, we surveyed college students (Study 1a) and working adults (Study 1b) in Mainland China and the United States (U.S.). In addition to testing Hypothesis 1, Study 2 probed for mediators of the predicted cultural differences in bribery intolerance. We asked Mainland Chinese and American participants to indicate not only their intolerance of bribery (H1) but also the extent to which they saw the bribe payer's behavior as due to internal and external causes (H2a, H2b, & H3).

The quasi-experimental nature of cross-cultural comparisons makes it difficult to draw causal inferences. In Study 3 we used the experimental paradigm of cultural priming among bicultural individuals developed by Hong and her colleagues (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000), which allowed us to test H1 in a more internally valid way than in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2. That is, Study 3 examined intolerance of bribery by bicultural individuals as a function of the culture that was primed as well as the extent to which they saw their two cultural identities as compatible versus conflicted. More details about the predicted results in Study 3 will be provided in the introduction to that study.

4. Study 1a: cross-cultural difference in bribery intolerance – student sample

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants

We recruited 144 students (48.6% female; $M_{age} = 20.04$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.17$ years) from a public university in Beijing, China and 89 students (71.9% female; $M_{age} = 19.36$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.14$ years) from a public university in Illinois in the U.S. The Chinese sample had a significantly smaller percentage of female participants, $\chi^2(1, N = 233) = 12.22, p < 0.001$, and higher mean age, $F(1, 229) = 25.50, p < 0.001$, than the American sample. There were no substantial differences between results of analyses with and without these demographic differences controlled.

4.1.2. Materials & measures

4.1.2.1. Bribe payer: individual versus organization. Participants received a list of 18 brief behavior descriptions: nine individual behaviors and nine organizational behaviors. The nine individual behaviors described acts by an individual actor who offered benefits to a party with power or resources in order to gain favorable treatment toward that individual or his/her family members. Examples are, “In order to avoid a heavy penalty or reduce the fine, a person who breaks a traffic law gives money or other favors to the police officer,” and, “In order to get more attention and opportunities at school for their children, a parent gives gifts or money to the children's teacher.”

The nine organizational behaviors described acts by an organization that offered benefits to a party with power or resources in order to gain favorable treatment toward that organization. Examples are, “In order to beat out other companies in a bidding war, a company gives gifts or money to the person in charge of the bidding,” and, “In order to sell more products, a pharmaceutical company gives kickbacks to hospital administrators and physicians.”¹ (See Appendix A for the full list.)

The bribing behaviors were generated through two rounds of focus group discussions. Two of the authors independently interviewed a group of university students in Mainland China and the U.S. in which they were asked to name five commonly observed bribing behaviors and then discuss all of them as a group. The top nine individual behaviors and nine organizational behaviors that were perceived to be representative of bribing behaviors by both groups were used in this study. The nine individual behaviors were presented in a fixed order, as were the nine organizational behaviors. However, the order in which the two sets were presented was counterbalanced.

The questionnaire was written in simplified Chinese for the Mainland Chinese sample and in English for the American sample. Two English-Chinese bilinguals translated and back-translated the materials to increase the likelihood of measurement equivalence (Brislin, 1970). Our interest is whether Chinese perceive individual bribery and organizational bribery differently and whether the Chinese pattern of judgment of these two types of bribery is different from the Americans' pattern. Given that the primary comparison is between perceptions of individual and organizational bribing behaviors *within* each culture rather than between cultures on individual bribery perception alone or on organizational bribery perception alone, other possible between-cultural differences in meaning (besides whether the bribes reflected individual or organizational bribery) were somewhat less of a concern.

4.1.2.2. Bribery perception. We used different types of questions to explore participants' perceptions of the intolerability of bribery. First, given that bribery involves abuse of power, misuse of resources, and interference of justice and fairness (Misangyi, Weaver, & Elms, 2008; O'Connor & Fischer, 2012), an important reaction upon learning about a bribing case might be a judgment of how much it is “right or wrong.” Therefore, the first question we asked was, “Do you think people should do this?” with scale point 1 = “Absolutely should not” and 6 = “Absolutely should.” We called this measure “behavioral prescription” in that it captured participants' beliefs about the legitimacy or appropriateness of the behavior. Second, although bribery is a law-breaking behavior (Kaufmann, 1997; Noonan, 1984: 702), it is subject to judgments of morality (Husted, Dozier, McMahon, & Kattan, 1996, see Martin et al., 2007). Therefore, we asked, “Do you think this behav-

¹ To make sure the organizational bribery behaviors are perceived as organizational level phenomena, we intentionally depicted the behaviors as acts by an organizational actor (e.g., an international company) rather than by an individual member in representation of the organization (e.g., the manager in charge of oversea market expansion). We also intentionally avoided depicting the individual behavior set and the organization behavior set in a parallel way such as framing the individual/organizational behavior as, “In order to sell more products, a pharmaceutical sales representative/company gives kickbacks to hospital administrators and physicians.” Embedding an individual behavior in a collective might complicate the perception of the behavior, because it could possibly be seen either as an individual bribery (e.g., driven by personal ambition or greed) or as an organizational bribery (e.g., driven by organizational strategy or norm) just through the physical “hands” of some individuals (see Menon et al., 1999, and Morris & Peng, 1994 for evidence on cultural differences in interpretations of ambiguous situations involving a group and its members). That said, we tried to make the individual and organizational behaviors equivalent in that both sets included elements such as bribing to get ahead, avoid losses, bias authority judgment, violate the norm of fairness, and succeed in competition.

ior is moral?” with scale point 1 = “Absolutely immoral” and 6 = “Absolutely moral.” We called this measure “moral judgment” in that it captured participants’ perception of how much the act reflected an ethical transgression. Third, given that many forms of bribing fall into a grey area and are inherently ambiguous (Ashforth & Anand, 2003), the same act (e.g., gifting) might be regarded as bribery or merely normative social exchange (O’Connor & Fischer, 2012). Therefore, we asked, “Do you think this behavior qualifies as bribery?” with scale point 1 = “Absolutely not bribery” and 6 = “Absolutely bribery.” We called this measure “bribery qualification” in that it captured the extent to which the act fell into the category of being a bribery. Whereas there may well be other ways to judge the intolerability of bribery, we expected participants’ responses to these three constructs to reflect their judgments of the intolerability of the bribing behaviors. More specifically, the lower the ratings on the measures of behavioral prescription and moral judgment, and the higher the ratings on the measure of bribery qualification, the more the act of bribery is seen as intolerable. To reduce concerns about the social desirability of their responses, we guaranteed to participants the anonymity of the questionnaire, emphasized that people may have different opinions on these questions, and encouraged them to express their actual beliefs.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Bribery intolerance

First, to evaluate whether the nine behaviors we generated to measure individual bribery and the nine behaviors to measure organizational bribery load on two factors, we conducted factor analysis by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on each of the three questions used to measure intolerance, namely behavioral prescription, moral judgment, and bribery qualification. Results suggested that the two-factor oblique model fit the data better than the two-factor orthogonal model and the one-factor model in both the Chinese and American samples. The nine individual behaviors and nine organizational behaviors loaded highly (> 0.30) and separately on their respective factors (see [Supplementary Analysis A in the Online Supplementary Material \(OSM\)](#) for details). We also checked the internal reliability of the nine-behavior scale for individual bribery and organizational bribery separately for each of the three questions. The Cronbach’s alpha ranged from 0.88 to 0.91 in the Chinese sample and from 0.81 to 0.90 in the American sample. Given these high levels of internal consistency, we averaged the scores across the nine individual behaviors and across the nine organizational behaviors, respectively, on each of the three questions.

Next, to evaluate whether responses to the three different types of questions were related to one another enough to form an overall measure of intolerance, we performed principle component analysis and found that the three questions loaded on only one factor and explained more than 70% of the total variance (see [Supplementary Analysis B in the OSM](#) for details). We also checked the internal reliability of the composite scores of the three questions. The Cronbach’s alphas for individual and organizational behaviors were 0.83 and 0.87 in the Chinese sample and 0.90 and 0.90 in the American sample, respectively, suggesting that the three measures cohered around the same dimension. Correlation analysis suggested that, for the two types of bribery in the Chinese and American samples, behavioral prescription and moral judgment were positively correlated, and both were negatively correlated with bribery qualification (see [Table 1](#)).

Given that the three measures had high inter-correlations and reliabilities, which did not vary much across the two cultures, we used Bribery Intolerance as a summary variable to capture the overall judgment of bribery. The less that a given behavior was per-

ceived to be behaviorally prescribed, the less that it was judged as moral, and the more it was regarded as an act of bribery, the more intolerable it was perceived to be. Hence, an index of intolerance for individual and organizational bribery was calculated by averaging the scores on the three questions (with behavioral prescription and moral judgment reverse scored) for individual and organizational bribery, respectively, such that higher scores indicated more intolerance.

4.2.2. Chinese-American difference in bribery intolerance

We performed a 2 Culture (Chinese, American) \times 2 Bribe Payer (Individual, Organization) \times 2 Order (Individual set first, Organization set first) mixed General Linear Model (GLM) analysis on bribery intolerance with bribe payer as a within-subjects variable. Order did not show any main effect or interaction effect with any of the variables. The main effect of neither culture nor bribe payer was significant, but their interaction effect was highly significant, $F(1, 229) = 70.27$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.24$. The mean scores of bribery intolerance were above three, the midpoint of the scale, indicating that in general bribery was intolerable in both cultures. However, as suggested by pairwise comparisons, Chinese participants were more intolerant of the bribing behaviors by organizations ($M = 5.09$, 95% CI = [4.98, 5.19]) than those by individuals ($M = 4.82$, 95% CI = [4.72, 4.92]), $F(1, 229) = 57.99$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$, whereas American participants were more intolerant of the bribing behaviors by individuals ($M = 5.08$, 95% CI = [4.95, 5.21]) than those by organizations ($M = 4.87$, 95% CI = [4.74, 5.00]), $F(1, 229) = 21.87$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$. Thus, H1 was supported.²

5. Study 1b: cross-cultural difference in bribery intolerance – employee sample

For external validity reasons, we conducted the same survey with working adults in Mainland China and the U.S. (unlike the student samples used in Study 1a). The American participants were recruited online among American nationals on Amazon Mechanical Turk (<https://www.mturk.com>). Mturk has been increasingly used by behavioral researchers as a reliable source of data from a wide range of participants (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Chinese participants were recruited online through Sojump (<http://www.sojump.com>), which is a China-based online data collection platform similar to Mturk that has been used by local and cross-cultural researchers (e.g., Yang, Liu, Fang, & Hong, 2014).

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants

We recruited 88 Chinese participants and 89 American participants. Compared with the American sample, the Chinese sample had a significantly lower mean age ($M_{CN} = 28.91$, $SD_{CN} = 4.83$; $M_{US} = 34.17$, $SD_{US} = 13.15$), $F(1, 175) = 12.43$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$, higher mean educational level ($M_{CN} = 5.08$, $SD_{CN} = 0.31$; $M_{US} = 4.83$, $SD_{US} = 0.51$, along a 8-point scale), $F(1, 175) = 15.42$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, and higher subjective estimate of socioeconomic status ($M_{CN} = 4.94$, $SD_{CN} = 1.41$; $M_{US} = 4.10$, $SD_{US} = 1.75$, along a 9-point scale), $F(1, 175) = 12.40$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$. The two samples were not different in the gender ratio (63.6% Chinese female, 60.7% American female), $\chi^2(1, N = 177) = 0.17$, *ns*. There

² The patterns we reported for the index emerged for each of the three questions, with the Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction being highly significant on the measures of behavioral prescription, $F(1, 229) = 43.00$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.16$, moral judgment, $F(1, 229) = 40.86$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.15$, and bribery qualification, $F(1, 229) = 81.82$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.26$.

Table 1

Correlations among behavioral prescription, moral judgment, and bribery qualification (Study 1a, student sample).

Individual bribery			Organizational bribery		
Variables	1	2	Variables	1	2
<i>Chinese sample</i>					
1. BP	–		1. BP	–	
2. MJ	0.68**	–	2. MJ	0.72**	–
3. BQ	–0.54**	–0.74**	3. BQ	–0.60**	–0.79**
<i>American sample</i>					
1. BP	–		1. BP	–	
2. MJ	0.85**	–	2. MJ	0.92**	–
3. BQ	–0.65**	–0.73**	3. BQ	–0.66**	–0.73**
<i>Differences between the correlation coefficients across the samples</i>					
1. BP	–		1. BP	–	
2. MJ	***	–	2. MJ	***	–
3. BQ	n.s.	n.s.	3. BQ	n.s.	n.s.

Note. BP = Behavioral prescription; MJ = Moral judgment; BQ = Bribery qualification.

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$.

were no substantial differences between results of analyses with and without these demographic differences controlled.

5.1.2. Materials and measures

The materials and measures of Bribe Payer and Bribery Intolerance from Study 1a were used. Factor analysis using SEM found that the nine individual behaviors and nine organizational behaviors loaded highly (> 0.30) and separately on their respective factors (see [Supplementary Analysis A in the OSM](#) for details). The Cronbach's alphas of the nine-behavior scales for individual bribery and organizational bribery for each of the three measures of intolerance (i.e., behavioral prescription, moral judgment, and bribery qualification) ranged from 0.82 to 0.93 in the Chinese sample and from 0.85 to 0.88 in the American sample.

The Cronbach's alphas of the three-item scale of intolerance for individual bribery and organizational bribery were 0.85 and 0.90 in the Chinese sample and 0.91 and 0.91 in the American sample, respectively (see [Supplementary Analysis B in the OSM](#) for details).

5.2. Results

A mixed GLM analysis of 2 Culture (Chinese, American) \times 2 Bribe Payer (Individual, Organization) \times 2 Order (Individual set first, Organization set first) was conducted on bribery intolerance with bribe payer as a within-subjects variable. Once again, only the Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction was significant, $F(1,173) = 26.14$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.13$. Pairwise comparisons showed that the Chinese were more intolerant of organizational bribery ($M = 4.99$, 95% CI = [4.85, 5.13]) than individual bribery ($M = 4.78$, 95% CI = [4.64, 4.92]), $F(1,173) = 22.20$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.11$, whereas the Americans were more intolerant of individual bribery ($M = 4.99$, 95% CI = [4.86, 5.13]) than organizational bribery ($M = 4.89$, 95% CI = [4.75, 5.03]), $F(1,173) = 6.33$, $p = 0.013$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$. This pattern replicated the one found in Study 1a. Thus, H1 was supported once again.

6. Study 2: cross-cultural differences in bribery intolerance and attributions

The primary purpose of Study 2 is to probe the psychological mechanism(s) underlying the cross-cultural differences found in Studies 1a and 1b. We predicted that the Chinese are more intolerant of organizational bribery than individual bribery because they tend to perceive organizational bribery as more internally driven and/or less externally driven than individual bribery. Relatedly,

we predicted American participants to be more intolerant of individual bribery than organizational bribery because of their tendency to make internal and external attributions in an opposite fashion to their Chinese counterparts.

A secondary purpose of Study 2 is to evaluate an alternative explanation of the results of Studies 1a and 1b, which emanates from the possibility that the perceived prevalence of bribing behaviors by individuals compared with those by organizations varied across the two cultures. The theory of “naturalistic fallacy” argues that what is commonly seen tends to be perceived as good or morally right (Moore, 1903). Accordingly, if individual bribery is more commonly encountered than organizational bribery in Mainland China, the Chinese may perceive individual bribery as more legitimate, and therefore will be less intolerant of individual than organizational bribery. Similarly, if organizational bribery is believed to be more widespread than individual bribery in the U.S., Americans may regard the former as legitimate and similar to other ordinary business practices, and hence may be more forgiving of organizational than individual bribery. We tested this possibility in Study 2.

To evaluate further the generalizability of the results of Studies 1a and 1b, we also differentiated between two forms of bribery in Study 2. In Studies 1a and 1b, the bribe was described as “money or gifts”, “all kinds of favors”, or “kickbacks”. However, the resource given in a bribe may induce different judgments. For example, legal regulation is more specific on money giving than gift/favor giving. Furthermore, the meaning of a gift or a favor differs across cultures (Shen, Wan, & Wyer, 2010). To evaluate the influence of the bribe form on cross-cultural differences in bribery intolerance, we differentiated between monetary and non-monetary bribes in Study 2.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants

We recruited 80 students (77.5% female; $M_{age} = 20.84$, $SD_{age} = 1.81$ years) from a public university in Beijing, China and 80 students (60.0% female; $M_{age} = 19.64$, $SD_{age} = 2.48$ years) from a public university in Illinois in the U.S. None of the participants participated in Study 1a. The Chinese sample had a significantly higher mean age, $F(1,158) = 12.21$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$, and a larger percentage of female participants than the American sample, $\chi^2(1, N = 160) = 6.37$, $p = 0.012$. There were no substantial differences between results of analyses with and without age and gender controlled.

6.1.2. Procedure and measures

6.1.2.1. Bribe form. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions of bribe form. The same set of behavior descriptions was presented in both conditions except that the bribe was named as “a favor” in the Non-monetary condition and as “money” in the Monetary condition.

6.1.2.2. Bribe payer. On a within-subjects basis and within each of the bribe form conditions, participants read three of the nine individual bribing behaviors and three of the nine organizational bribing behaviors that we used in Study 1a and 1b (see [Appendix A](#)). We examined three behaviors instead of nine because questions pertaining to the hypothesized mediators (attributions) greatly increased the length of the survey. Factor analysis using SEM found that the three individual behaviors and three organizational behaviors loaded highly (> 0.30) and separately on their respective factors (see [Supplementary Analysis A in the OSM](#) for details). The Cronbach's alphas of the three-behavior scales for individual bribery and organizational bribery for each of the three measures of intolerance (i.e., behavioral prescription, moral judgment, and bribery qualification) ranged from 0.65 to 0.80 in the Chinese sample and from 0.58 to 0.80 in the American sample.

The three individual behaviors were presented in a fixed order, as were the three organizational behaviors. The order in which the two sets were presented was counterbalanced. Given that order did not show any main effect or interaction effect with any of the variables, we collapsed across this dimension in the results reported below.

6.1.2.3. Bribery intolerance. Bribery intolerance was measured with the three questions used in Studies 1a and 1b. The Cronbach's alphas across the three questions were 0.87 and 0.82 for individual and organizational bribing behaviors, respectively, in the Chinese sample and were 0.89 and 0.91, respectively, in the American sample (see [Supplementary Analysis B in the OSM](#) for details).

6.1.2.4. Perceived prevalence. Participants reported their perception of prevalence of each behavior in their society (1 = “extremely uncommon”, 6 = “extremely common”).

6.1.2.5. Internal and external attributions. We asked participants to estimate the likelihood (1 = “highly unlikely”, 6 = “highly likely”) that the behavior would be caused by ten reasons, five internal (“This person [company] does not have high moral standards”, “This is due to the behavioral style of this person [company]”, “This is to fulfill the person's [company's] aspiration”, “This is to achieve success or prevent failure”, and “This involves personal [organizational] gains or losses”) and five external (“Other people [companies] are doing this, so this person [company] has to do this too”, “This is a social norm”, “This is because of external pressure”, “This is normal in social interactions”, and “To develop relationship with . . . , the person [company] has to do so”). The five internal reasons were presented in a fixed order, as were the five external reasons. The order in which the two sets were presented was counterbalanced. The Cronbach's alpha of the five-item scale on internal attribution and external attribution for individual bribery and organizational bribery ranged from 0.77 to 0.88 in the Chinese sample and 0.72 to 0.89 in the American sample. Composite scores for internal attribution and for external attribution were calculated.

6.1.2.6. Control variables: individualism and collectivism. To control for the potential effect of individualism and collectivism on bribery intolerance, we used the 16-item scale developed by [Triandis and Gelfand \(1998\)](#) to measure horizontal/vertical individualism/collectivism. Horizontal orientation emphasizes equality, whereas

vertical orientation emphasizes hierarchy. Individualism emphasizes independent self-construal whereas collectivism emphasizes interdependent self-construal ([Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995](#)). Thus, the scale includes four dimensions with four items on each dimension: vertical individualism (e.g., “It is important for me to do my job better than the others”), horizontal individualism (e.g., “I'd rather depend on myself than others”), vertical collectivism (e.g., “It is important to me that I respect the decision made by my groups”), and horizontal collectivism (e.g., “I feel good when I cooperate with others”). Responses ranged from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 6 (“Strongly agree”). The Cronbach's alpha for each of the four dimensions ranged from 0.56 to 0.73 in the Chinese sample and 0.65 to 0.76 in the American sample. The index of each dimension was calculated by taking the mean of the four items. The four indices were treated as control variables in the analyses.

6.2. Results

[Table 2](#) shows the descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and bivariate correlations among all variables in the Chinese sample and American sample separately.

We performed a mixed GLM analysis of 2 Culture (Chinese, American) \times 2 Bribe Payer (Individual, Organization) \times 2 Bribe Form (Non-Monetary, Monetary) on each of bribery intolerance, internal attribution, external attribution, and perceived prevalence, with culture and bribe form as between-subjects variables, bribe payer as a within-subjects variable, and the four measures of horizontal/vertical individualism/collectivism as control variables. None of the control variables showed any significant effect on any of the four dependent variables.

6.2.1. Chinese-American difference in bribery intolerance

The GLM analysis found a number of effects of lesser theoretical importance such as: (1) a significant main effect of bribe form, $F(1, 152) = 20.18$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.12$, indicating that monetary bribes ($M = 4.95$, 95% CI = [4.81, 5.09]) were more intolerable than non-monetary bribes ($M = 4.50$, 95% CI = [4.64, 4.36]), and (2) the two-way interaction of Bribe Payer \times Bribe Form was significant, $F(1, 152) = 12.86$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, indicating that monetary bribe by individuals ($M = 5.08$, 95% CI = [4.92, 5.23]) was more intolerable than by organizations ($M = 4.83$, 95% CI = [4.67, 5.00]), $F(1, 152) = 9.72$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$, whereas non-monetary bribe by individuals was less intolerable ($M = 4.42$, 95% CI = [4.27, 4.58]) than by organizations ($M = 4.58$, 95% CI = [4.41, 4.74]), $F(1, 152) = 3.86$, $p = 0.051$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$.

Of far greater importance, the focal two-way interaction of Culture \times Bribe Payer was highly significant, $F(1, 152) = 45.04$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.23$. The patterns of Chinese-American difference were the same as those found in Studies 1a and 1b: Chinese participants exhibited more intolerance of organizational bribery ($M = 4.86$, 95% CI = [4.69, 5.04]) than individual bribery ($M = 4.49$, 95% CI = [4.33, 4.66]), $F(1, 152) = 19.93$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.12$, whereas the American participants exhibited more intolerance of individual bribery ($M = 5.01$, 95% CI = [4.84, 5.17]) than organizational bribery ($M = 4.55$, 95% CI = [4.37, 4.72]), $F(1, 152) = 30.83$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$. Therefore, H1 was supported once again.

It is noteworthy that the three-way interaction of Culture \times Bribe Payer \times Bribe Form was not significant, suggesting that the pattern of cross-cultural difference in relative intolerance of individual bribery versus organizational bribery generalized across the two different forms of bribe, monetary and non-monetary alike.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations (Study 2, student sample).

	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age	20.84 19.64	1.81 2.48															
2. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	–	–	–0.36** 0.05														
3. Bribe form (0 = non-monetary, 1 = monetary)	–	–	0.19 0.01	–0.12 0.20													
4. Vertical collectivism	4.74 4.56	0.82 0.85	0.21 –0.15	–0.09 –0.15	0.13 –0.11	(0.73) (0.72)											
5. Vertical individualism	4.26 3.72	0.74 0.92	0.22 0.15	–0.06 –0.22*	0.15 –0.07	–0.02 0.19	(0.65) (0.72)										
6. Horizontal collectivism	4.38 4.66	0.62 0.75	0.12 –0.05	–0.03 0.29**	0.04 0.01	0.31** 0.36**	–0.32** –0.25*	(0.54) (0.76)									
7. Horizontal individualism	4.37 4.70	0.67 0.71	–0.16 –0.08	0.10 –0.16	–0.04 –0.11	–0.22 –0.08	0.29** 0.21	–0.29** –0.20	(0.51) (0.65)								
8. Ind_Internal attribution	4.48 4.86	0.57 0.62	0.07 –0.11	0.01 0.25*	0.14 0.15	–0.16 0.10	0.17 –0.01	–0.12 0.15	0.29** 0.01	(0.78) (0.72)							
9. Org_Internal attribution	4.69 4.70	0.52 0.60	–0.02 0.02	–0.07 –0.12	0.03 0.08	0.11 0.19	0.19 0.10	–0.05 0.04	0.11 0.03	0.63*** 0.54***	(0.80) (0.79)						
10. Ind_External attribution	4.27 2.92	0.70 0.88	0.01 0.13	–0.03 0.20	–0.19 –0.15	–0.19 0.02	0.17 –0.11	–0.05 0.05	–0.03 –0.12	–0.10 0.11	0.14 0.12	(0.77) (0.89)					
11. Org_External attribution	4.59 3.90	0.63 0.85	–0.04 0.07	0.05 0.18	–0.18 0.03	0.02 0.01	0.15 0.02	–0.09 0.01	0.16 –0.04	0.18 0.33**	0.38** 0.29**	0.44*** 0.56**	(0.77) (0.81)				
12. Ind_Prevalence	4.18 3.03	0.88 0.87	0.08 –0.06	–0.08 0.05	–0.13 –0.46***	–0.03 0.13	0.09 0.03	0.03 –0.07	–0.05 0.07	–0.06 –0.13	0.09 –0.23*	0.62*** 0.49***	0.12 0.14	(0.69) (0.75)			
13. Org_Prevalence	4.80 4.09	0.75 0.75	0.00 –0.04	–0.14 –0.09	–0.12 –0.11	0.01 0.13	–0.09 –0.05	0.13 0.08	0.05 0.06	0.23* 0.23*	0.25* 0.25*	0.14 0.26*	0.21 0.31**	0.47** 0.32**	(0.75) (0.64)		
14. Ind_Intolerance	2.54 1.97	0.72 0.82	–0.03 –0.14	–0.01 0.18	0.32** 0.51***	0.01 –0.02	0.04 –0.21	–0.05 0.09	0.04 –0.12	0.35** 0.35**	0.29** 0.26*	–0.07 –0.24*	.02 0.00	–0.19 –0.36**	–0.14 –0.05	(0.87) (0.89)	
15. Org_Intolerance	2.14 2.45	0.68 0.81	–0.05 0.11	–0.25* –0.03	0.15 0.19	0.06 –0.06	0.28* –0.13	–0.11 0.07	0.14 –0.06	0.27* 0.21	0.49*** 0.52***	0.01 –0.17	0.06 –0.06	–0.05 –0.33**	–0.04 0.01	0.52** 0.57**	(0.82) (0.91)

Note. Numbers in regular font are for the Mainland Chinese sample and numbers in italic are for the American sample. Numbers in the parentheses are the Cronbach's alphas for the scales.

"Ind" refers to individual. "Org" refers to organization.

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

6.2.2. Chinese-American differences in mediators

6.2.2.1. Internal attribution. The same three-way mixed GLM analysis was conducted on internal attribution and yielded a significant main effect of culture, $F(1, 152) = 4.42$, $p = 0.037$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, indicating that in general Chinese participants made less internal attributions ($M = 4.59$, 95% CI = [4.47, 4.71]) than American participants ($M = 4.78$, 95% CI = [4.66, 4.90]).

Of greater importance, the culture effect was qualified by a significant Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction, $F(1, 152) = 8.73$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$. Pairwise comparisons showed that Chinese participants made more internal attributions for organizational bribery ($M = 4.67$, 95% CI = [4.54, 4.80]) than for individual bribery ($M = 4.51$, 95% CI = [4.37, 4.64]), $F(1, 152) = 7.00$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, whereas American participants made more internal attributions for individual bribery ($M = 4.83$, 95% CI = [4.69, 4.97]) than for organizational bribery ($M = 4.72$, 95% CI = [4.59, 4.85]), $F(1, 152) = 3.12$, $p = 0.080$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$ (see Fig. 1a). Hence, H2a was supported.

6.2.2.2. External attribution. The same three-way mixed GLM analysis on external attribution yielded a significant main effect of culture, $F(1, 152) = 68.28$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.31$, indicating that in general Chinese participants made more external attributions ($M = 4.41$, 95% CI = [4.26, 4.57]) than American participants ($M = 3.42$, 95% CI = [3.27, 3.58]).

Once again, and of greater importance, the Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction was significant, $F(1, 152) = 24.14$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.14$. Pairwise comparisons showed that more external attributions were made for organizational bribery than for individual bribery by both Chinese participants ($M_{\text{organization}} = 4.58$, 95% CI = [4.40, 4.75]; $M_{\text{individual}} = 4.25$, 95% CI = [4.07, 4.44]), $F(1, 152) = 12.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, and American participants ($M_{\text{organization}} = 3.91$, 95% CI = [3.74, 4.09]; $M_{\text{individual}} = 2.93$, 95% CI = [2.75, 3.12]), $F(1, 152) = 119.10$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.44$ (see Fig. 1b). However, as suggested by the significant interaction, the difference was significantly larger in the American sample ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.98$) than in the Chinese sample ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.32$), indicating that, compared with Chinese, the Americans made much more external attributions for organizational bribery than for individual bribery. Hence, H2b was partially supported.

6.2.2.3. Perceived prevalence. The same three-way mixed GLM analysis on perceived prevalence of bribery yielded significant main effects of culture, $F(1, 152) = 63.83$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.30$, and bribe form, $F(1, 152) = 10.14$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$, such that bribes were perceived as more prevalent by Chinese participants ($M = 4.49$, 95% CI = [4.34, 4.65]) than by American participants ($M = 3.55$, 95% CI = [3.40, 3.71]), and non-monetary bribery ($M = 4.19$, 95% CI = [4.04, 4.34]) was perceived as more prevalent than monetary bribery ($M = 3.85$, 95% CI = [3.71, 4.00]).

Of greater importance, the Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction approached significance, $F(1, 152) = 3.86$, $p = 0.051$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$. Pairwise comparisons showed that the bribing behaviors by organizations were perceived as more prevalent than those by individuals among both Chinese participants ($M_{\text{organization}} = 4.84$, 95% CI = [4.66, 5.01]; $M_{\text{individual}} = 4.15$, 95% CI = [3.96, 4.35]), $F(1, 152) = 42.45$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.22$, and American participants ($M_{\text{organization}} = 4.05$, 95% CI = [3.87, 4.22]; $M_{\text{individual}} = 3.06$, 95% CI = [2.86, 3.25]), $F(1, 152) = 89.26$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.37$ (see Fig. 1c). However, as suggested by the significant interaction, organizational bribery was perceived to be much more prevalent than individual bribery in the U.S. ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.99$) than in Mainland China ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.68$). This result suggested that the cross-cultural difference in perceived prevalence could possibly be at least a partial mediator of the cross-cultural difference in bribery intolerance.

In addition, and of lesser theoretical importance, the Bribe Form \times Bribe Payer interaction was significant, $F(1, 152) = 6.42$, $p = 0.012$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, suggesting that the perception of higher prevalence of organizational bribery than individual bribery was greater for monetary bribery ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.01$) than for non-monetary bribery ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.66$). Finally, all of the significant main effects and 2-way interaction effects were qualified by a significant three-way interaction of Culture \times Bribe Payer \times Bribe Form, $F(1, 152) = 4.05$, $p = 0.046$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$. The previously found pattern of interaction between culture and bribe payer on perceived prevalence was more salient for monetary bribery than for non-monetary bribery.

In sum, the Culture \times Bribe Payer interaction was significant on internal attribution, external attribution, and perceived prevalence. Therefore, all three variables were included in the next step of the mediation analysis. Furthermore, the pattern of the interaction on these mediators generally held across non-monetary and monetary bribes. Therefore we collapsed across this dimension in subsequent analyses.

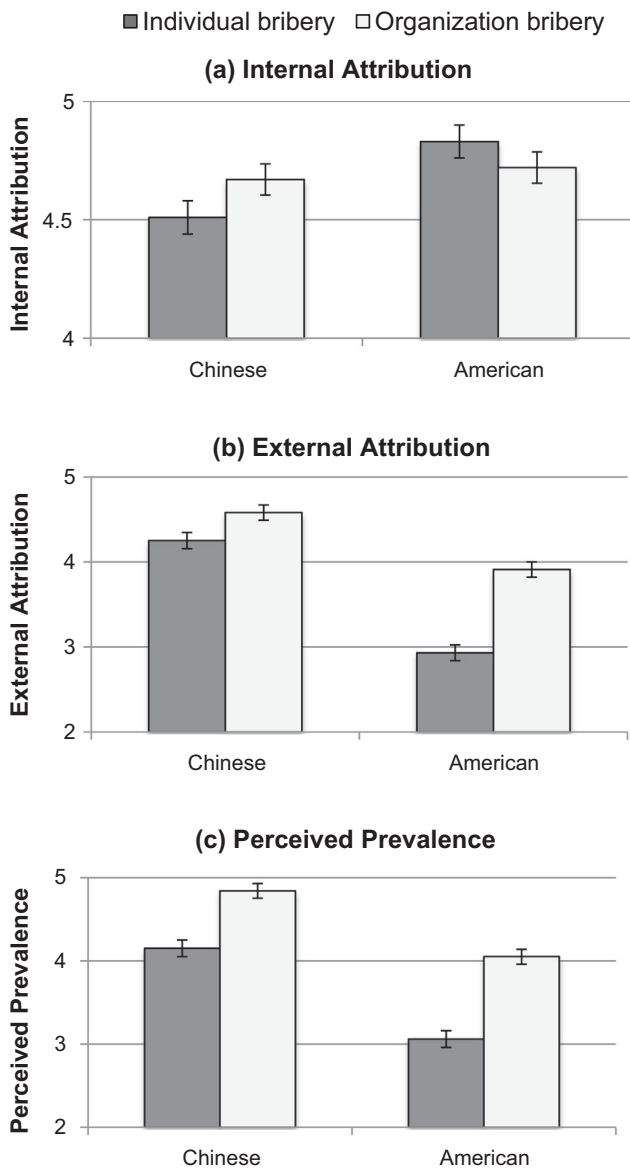


Fig. 1. Internal attribution, external attribution, and perceived prevalence as a function of culture and bribe payer (Study 2, student sample). Note. Error bars represent standard errors.

Table 3

Multiple mediations of cultural effect on intolerance of iorganizational-versus-individual bribery (Study 2, student sample).

Variables ^a	Model 1	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 3
Vertical collectivism	–0.01 (0.08)	–0.08 (0.07)	0.01 (0.08)	–0.01 (0.08)	–0.07 (0.07)
Vertical individualism	0.13 (0.08)	0.11 (0.07)	0.13 (0.08)	0.13 (0.08)	0.12 (0.07)
Horizontal collectivism	0.02 (0.10)	0.07 (0.09)	0.01 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)	0.05 (0.09)
Horizontal individualism	0.05 (0.09)	0.09 (0.08)	0.07 (0.09)	0.05 (0.09)	0.10 (0.08)
Culture (American = 0, Chinese = 1)	0.84*** (0.13)	0.69*** (0.12)	0.76*** (0.14)	0.84*** (0.13)	0.63*** (0.13)
Internal attribution	–	0.55*** (0.10)	–	–	0.53*** (0.10)
External attribution	–	–	–0.12 (0.08)	–	–0.11 (0.08)
Perceived prevalence	–	–	–	0.00 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)
<i>F</i>	12.77***	17.38***	11.18***	10.58***	13.29***
<i>R</i> ²	0.29	0.41	0.31	0.29	0.41
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.27	0.38	0.28	0.27	0.38
ΔR^2	0.29***	0.11***	0.01	0.00	0.12***
<i>Indirect effect of culture on intolerance through the mediator^b</i>					
Internal attribution	–	0.15 [0.05, 0.31]	–	–	0.15 [0.05, 0.31]
External attribution	–	–	0.08 [–0.01, 0.20]	–	0.08 [–0.02, 0.21]
Perceived prevalence	–	–	–	–0.00 [–0.06, 0.04]	–0.01 [–0.09, 0.02]

Note. Each of intolerance of bribery, internal attribution, external attribution, and perceived prevalence was calculated by subtracting the relevant score of individual bribery from the relevant score of organizational bribery.

The results were not substantially different when horizontal/vertical individualism/collectivism were not included in the regressions.

^a Entries are unstandardized coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

^b Entries are the indirect effect of culture on intolerance through the mediator. Values in brackets are the bias corrected 95% confidence interval.

****p* < 0.001, ***p* < 0.01.

6.2.2.4. Multiple mediation. Whereas bribe payer was treated as a within-subjects variable in previous analyses, in the mediation analyses we used the difference scores on all the variables by subtracting the scores on individual bribery from the respective scores on organizational bribery (e.g., bribery intolerance = organizational bribery intolerance – individual bribery intolerance), with positive (negative) scores indicating more (less) intolerance of (*M* = –0.05, *SD* = 0.85, *Min.* = –2.44, *Max.* = 2.33), internal attributions for (*M* = 0.03, *SD* = 0.56, *Min.* = –1.60, *Max.* = 1.60), external attributions for (*M* = 0.65, *SD* = 0.83, *Min.* = –1.27, *Max.* = 3.67), and perceived prevalence of (*M* = 0.84, *SD* = 0.93, *Min.* = –1.33, *Max.* = 3.67) organizational bribery than individual bribery. We computed difference scores primarily for two reasons. Conceptually, we were interested in whether the *relative* intolerance of individual-versus-organizational bribery can be explained by the *relative* difference in internal attributions, external attributions, and perceived prevalence of individual-versus-organizational bribery. For instance, if a person makes more internal attributions for individual bribery than for organizational bribery, then the person is expected to be more intolerant of individual bribery than organizational bribery. Methodologically, we used the bootstrapping analysis program developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008) to test for mediation. Empirically, this program does not allow for the testing of moderated mediation models for repeated measures, which is another reason why we used difference scores.

Table 3 presents the results of a hierarchical regression analysis. Model 1 is the baseline model which shows that there was a significant main effect of culture (*b* = 0.84, *p* < 0.001) on intolerance of organizational-versus-individual bribery. Once again, none of the four control variables pertaining to individualism and collectivism showed a significant effect (*ps* > 0.10).

In Models 2a–c, each of internal attribution, external attribution, and perceived prevalence was entered into the regression examining organizational-versus-individual bribery, along with culture as a predictor. Only internal attribution showed a significant effect (*b* = 0.55, *p* < 0.001), such that more internal attributions (for organizational bribery than individual bribery) were associated with more intolerance (of organizational bribery than individual bribery). Mediation analysis with 5000 bootstrap samples and bias-corrected (BC) 95% confidence interval (CI) found that the indirect effect of culture through internal attribution was significantly different from zero (effect = 0.15, BC 95% CI = [0.05, 0.31]).

Model 3 included all three potential mediators. Once again, only internal attribution showed a significant effect (*b* = 0.53, *p* < 0.001) and the indirect effect of culture through internal attribution was significantly different from zero (effect = 0.15, BC 95% CI = [0.05, 0.31]). That is, external attribution showed no significant effect (*b* = –0.11, *p* = 0.158). Hence, internal attribution but not external attribution accounted for the Chinese-American difference in relative intolerance of organizational-versus-individual bribery. The effect of perceived prevalence also was not significant (*b* = 0.05, *p* = 0.496) and thus was ruled out as an alternative explanation. The multiple mediation model and results are depicted in Fig. 2.³

6.2.2.5. Additional analyses. We also conducted multiple mediation analyses for the Chinese and American samples separately. We used the macro developed by Montoya and Hayes (2016) that uses

³ Results of the same mediation analyses with each of Behavioral Prescription, Moral Judgment, and Bribery Qualification as the dependent variable were not substantially different from the results on the omnibus measure of intolerance as the dependent variable.

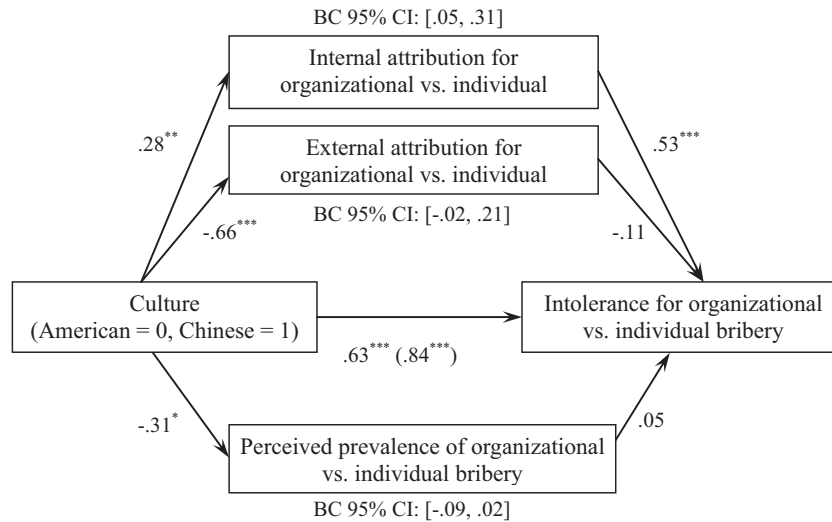


Fig. 2. Cross-cultural differences in bribery intolerance and mediators (Study 2, student sample). Note. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

bootstrapping method to estimate the total, direct, and indirect effects of an independent variable on the dependent variable through one or more mediators in a repeated-measures design in which both the mediator(s) and the dependent variable are measured on a within-subjects basis. In our case, the three mediators and the dependent variable were all measured on a within-subjects basis (i.e., repeatedly for the individual and organizational payers). Consistent with the findings in the main analysis with the pooled sample, analysis for each sample found that the indirect effect of Bribe Payer on intolerance was only significant through internal attribution (Chinese: effect = 0.10, $SE = 0.05$, BC 95% CI = [0.01, 0.20], excluding zero; American: effect = -0.09, $SE = 0.05$, BC 95% CI = [-0.19, -0.01], excluding zero) but not significant through external attribution or perceived prevalence (see [Supplementary Analysis C in the OSM](#) for details).⁴

6.3. Discussion

Study 2 replicated the findings of Studies 1a and 1b in that Chinese participants showed more intolerance of organizational bribery than individual bribery whereas American participants showed more intolerance of individual bribery than organizational bribery. The patterns applied to both non-monetary and monetary forms of bribe.

Most importantly, Study 2 showed that Chinese participants perceived that organizational bribery was more internally driven than individual bribery, whereas American participants perceived that individual bribery was more internally driven than organizational bribery. This cross-cultural difference in internal attribution, in turn, accounted for the finding that the Chinese were harsher in their judgments of organizational than individual bribery whereas the Americans were harsher in their judgments of individual than organizational bribery. As such, at a broader level of analysis the two cultures actually showed similar psychological processes: they were both more intolerant of a bribing behavior when they perceived the bribe, whether it came from an individual or an organization, to be more causally attributable to that entity.

One possible reason for internal but not external attribution showing a mediating effect could be that the former maps onto agency more directly than does the latter. Agency refers to an entity being seen as the initiator or cause of its behavior. As such, internal attributions may come closer to the notion of agency than do external attributions. On a related note, the present findings showed that internal and external attributions did not lie on opposite ends of a single continuum. The correlation between the two, while negative and significant, was modest, $r = -0.20$, $p = 0.013$.

7. Study 3: bribery intolerance as a function of cultural prime and bicultural identity integration

To complement the quasi-experimental method in Studies 1a, 1b and 2, Study 3 aims to test the effect of culture on intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery with greater internal validity. We employed the cultural priming paradigm by experimentally manipulating the salience of the Chinese or American cultural frame on a group of biculturals and examining whether their intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery varied as a function of the primed cultural frame.

Past research has shown that Hong Kongers are bicultural: they grow up in a Chinese cultural milieu and are also exposed to Western culture through education and the media (Fu et al., 2007). Based on knowledge activation research (Higgins, 1996; Schwarz, Bless, Wänke, & Winkielman, 2003), past studies have also shown that biculturals switch their cultural frames in response to culturally-related cues, which, in turn, guide subsequent judgments and behaviors. For instance, when temporarily primed with Chinese or American cultural icons, they showed characteristically Chinese or American responses, respectively, in cognition (Hong, Benet-Martínez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003; Hong, Chiu, & Kung, 1997; Hong, Ip, Chiu, Morris, & Menon, 2001; Hong et al., 2000), behavior (Wong & Hong, 2005), and affect (No et al., 2008).

Moreover, prior theory and research also have shown that how biculturals react to cultural cues depends upon the relationship between their differing cultural identities. Bicultural identity integration (BII) refers to the degree to which people experience their two cultural identities as close and compatible versus distant and conflicting (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). Empirical evidence has shown that the cultural priming effect is contingent on the level of BII (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Friedman, Liu, Chi, Hong, & Sung, 2012;

⁴ Though our focus was on the within-culture comparison between individual and organizational bribery, for exploratory purpose we conducted the multiple mediation analysis for individual and organizational bribery separately. The findings are largely consistent with the main findings. See [Supplementary Analysis D in the OSM](#) for details.

Mok & Morris, 2009, 2013; Zou, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2008). Bicultural individuals, such as Chinese Americans, high in BII (“compatible biculturals”) are more likely to respond to cultural priming in a convergent way—showing characteristically Chinese (American) responses when primed with cues from the Chinese (American) culture. This is because high identification with the primed culture motivates the individual to exhibit group-prototypical behaviors and conform to the cultural norms (Zou et al., 2008). In contrast, those low in BII (“conflicted biculturals”) are more likely to respond to cultural priming in a divergent manner—showing characteristically American (Chinese) responses when primed with cues from the Chinese (American) culture. This is because disidentification or felt-dissimilarity with the primed culture motivates individuals to distance themselves from the culture, avoid being associated with the culture, and defy the cued norms (Mok & Morris, 2013; Zou et al., 2008).

Considering the moderating effect of BII on cultural frame switching, we predicted that Hong Kong participants high in BII will exhibit the patterns of Chinese-American differences in bribery intolerance set forth in H1 and found in Studies 1a, 1b and 2. Those high in BII are expected to be more intolerant of organizational bribery when primed with the Chinese culture and more intolerant of individual bribery when primed with the American culture. That is, they will assimilate their judgment in accordance with the primed culture. In contrast, those low in BII are expected to show the *opposite* pattern—being more intolerant of individual bribery when primed with Chinese culture and more intolerant of organizational bribery when primed with American culture. That is, being reminded of one culture tends to make those low in BII want to distance themselves from that culture, especially when the primed culture is associated with something negative—bribery. In sum, the primary prediction in Study 3 was the three-way interaction effect between cultural priming, bribe payer, and BII.

7.1. Method

7.1.1. Participants

We recruited 117 bicultural Hong Kong Chinese undergraduate students from a public university in Hong Kong (HK). They were 41.9% female, had a mean age of 21.27 years ($SD = 1.25$), had lived in Hong Kong for 18.56 years on average ($SD = 6.38$), and 77.8% of them were born in HK.

7.1.2. Design, materials, and procedures

The manipulated independent variables were Cultural Priming (consisting of three levels, i.e., Chinese, American, and Neutral) and Bribe Payer (consisting of two levels, i.e., individual and organization). Both of these factors varied on a between-subjects basis. BII was a measured independent variable.

Participants were informed that they would take part in two separate studies. In “the first study” they were asked to write down their thoughts after viewing some pictures, which served as the cultural priming manipulation. In “the second study” they were asked to fill out a survey pertaining to certain social phenomenon, which included the bribe payer manipulation and measurements of bribery intolerance and BII.

7.1.2.1. Cultural priming. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three priming conditions. In the Chinese and American cultural priming conditions, participants were asked to write up to ten statements to describe the characteristics of Chinese or American culture to someone who supposedly knew nothing about it. To buttress the priming manipulation, the instructions invited participants to watch a two-minute slide show of pictures relating to Chinese or American culture before they provided their descrip-

tions. Participants were also instructed that the pictures were simply to give them inspiration and that they did not have to make reference to the content of the pictures in their descriptions. Then, a ten-picture slide show of Chinese/American culture (e.g., festival scenes, fictional characters, famous works of architecture, culturally familiar foods and drinks) was played with one picture at a time for 12 s. In the subsequent 10 min a one-in-all slide with all ten pictures was shown while the participants wrote their descriptions of Chinese or American culture. Fig. 3 shows examples of the Chinese and American cultural pictures. In the neutral priming condition, participants viewed a ten-picture slide show of meteorological phenomena and wrote statements about the characteristics of meteorology. At the end of the 10 min, the experimenter asked participants to stop writing, collected the handouts and left the lab.

7.1.2.2. Bribe payer. A different experimenter then entered the room and announced the start of “the second study.” Previous research has shown that the priming effect of the cultural pictures works for about 10 min and decays quickly. To keep the length of the questionnaire short, instead of treating Bribe Payer as a within-subjects variable as in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2, we randomly assigned participants to either the individual bribe payer condition or to the organizational bribe payer condition. Importantly, then, Study 3 also allowed us to evaluate whether support for our hypotheses was not limited to instances in which individual and organizational bribery were treated as a within-subjects variable (as reported in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2). In both conditions, participants were presented with the three descriptions of behaviors used in Study 2.

7.1.2.3. Bribery intolerance. For each behavior, participants were asked the same three questions as in Study 2. The Cronbach's alpha of the three-item scale of intolerance was 0.90 for the individual behaviors and 0.85 for the organizational behaviors (see [Supplementary Analysis B in the OSM](#) for details). The indices of individual bribery intolerance and organizational bribery intolerance were then computed by taking the mean of the three questions for individual behaviors and organizational behaviors, respectively.

7.1.2.4. Bicultural identity integration. To keep the questionnaire brief, we asked participants in all conditions to indicate their agreement with three statements (1 = “Strongly disagree”, 7 = “Strongly agree”). Two statements were adopted from [Benet-Martinez and Haritatos' \(2005\)](#) scale measuring perceived integration of and conflict between two cultures (e.g., “I don't feel trapped between the Chinese and American cultures,” “I feel part of a combined culture (I feel a product of the Chinese and Western culture)”). The third item was adopted from [Ng and Lai \(2011\)](#) and measured one's identification as a “Hong Konger”, which is a distinctive identity that implies a combination of Western and Chinese culture (cf. [Brewer, 1999](#)). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.64. A composite score for BII was computed such that higher scores indicated higher integration of one's identifications with Western and Chinese cultures.

7.1.2.5. Control variables. We controlled for the participant's own chronic tendency to be individualistic or collectivistic, using the four measures from Study 2 of horizontal/vertical individualism-/collectivism. The Cronbach's alpha of the four measures ranged from 0.75 to 0.81.

Chinese Cultural Primes



American Cultural Primes



Fig. 3. Examples of iconic pictures in Chinese and American cultural priming conditions (Study 3, student sample).

7.2. Results

7.2.1. Bribery intolerance in the neutral priming condition

To learn about the default reaction of HK participants to individual versus organizational bribery, we first conducted a GLM analysis examining the effect of Bribe Payer (Individual, Organization) and BII on bribery intolerance in the neutral priming condition. BII was treated as a continuous variable and the four measures of hierarchical/vertical individualism/collectivism were treated as control variables. Horizontal collectivism showed a positive ($b = 0.70$) and significant effect, $F(1,35) = 15.13$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.30$, suggesting that participants who were high on horizontal collectivism (emphasizing equality and interdependence) were generally more intolerant of bribery. There was no main effect of Bribe Payer, $F(1,35) = 0.01$, $p = 0.944$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$, no main effect of BII, $F(1,35) = 0.03$, $p = 0.864$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$, and no interaction effect of Bribe Payer \times BII, $F(1,35) = 0.02$, $p = 0.901$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$, on bribery

intolerance. These results suggested that when no culture was made salient, regardless of their level of BII, participants' intolerance of individual and organizational bribery were relatively equal. Moreover, estimated means were above 4.5, suggesting that the acts of bribery were generally seen as intolerable.

7.2.2. Individual-versus-organizational bribery intolerance as a function of cultural priming and BII

To test the moderating effect of BII on bribery intolerance when either the Chinese or American culture was made salient, we conducted a hierarchical regression in which the independent variables were cultural priming and bribe payer (both coded as dummy variables) and BII as a continuous variable. The four measures of horizontal/vertical individualism/collectivism once again served as control variables. In the first step we entered the control variables along with the three main effects associated with the independent variables. In the second step we added all three of

Table 4
Stepwise general linear model analysis on bribery intolerance (Study 3, student sample).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Horizontal individualism	0.07 (0.10)	0.07 (0.11)	0.06 (0.10)
Vertical individualism	−0.19 (0.09)	−0.19 (0.10)	−0.17 (0.09)
Horizontal collectivism	−0.21 (0.13)	−0.20 (0.13)	−0.16 (0.13)
Vertical collectivism	0.29 ⁺ (0.12)	0.28 ⁺ (0.13)	0.36 ⁺⁺ (0.13)
Cultural priming (American = 0, Chinese = 1)	−0.17 (0.17)	−0.70 (1.17)	−4.41 ⁺ (1.86)
Bribe payer (individual = 0, organization = 1)	0.00 (0.17)	−0.05 (1.15)	−2.41 (1.45)
BII	0.17 (0.10)	0.14 (0.18)	−0.08 (0.20)
Cultural priming × Bribe payer		0.34 (0.34)	6.18 ⁺ (2.35)
Cultural priming × BII		0.07 (0.21)	0.74 ⁺ (0.33)
Bribe payer × BII		−0.02 (0.22)	.44 (0.28)
Cultural priming × Bribe payer × BII			−1.08 ⁺ (0.43)
R ²	0.16	0.17	0.25
Adjusted R ²	0.07	0.04	0.11
ΔR ²	0.16 [†]	0.01	0.08 ⁺
F	1.76	1.30	1.85 [†]

Note. Entries are unstandardized coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

⁺⁺ $p < 0.01$, ⁺ $p < 0.05$, [†] $p < 0.07$.

the two-way interaction effects, and in the third step we added the three-way interaction (see Table 4). Vertical collectivism showed a significant positive effect (Model 1: $b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.12$), $F(1,66) = 5.56$, $p = 0.021$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$.

Of greatest importance, the predicted three-way interaction was significant (Model 3: $b = 1.08$, $SE = 0.43$), $F(1,62) = 6.28$, $p = 0.015$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$. To specify the nature of the three-way interaction, we conducted additional analyses of the Cultural Priming × Bribe Payer interaction among participants with high and low BII (centered at two standard deviation units above and below the mean) separately.

7.2.2.1. High BII participants. The Cultural Priming × Bribe Payer interaction was marginally significant when BII was high, $F(1,62) = 3.38$, $p = 0.071$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$. More specifically, whereas neither simple effect was significant, participants with high BII were somewhat more intolerant of organizational bribery ($M = 5.48$, 95% CI = [4.62, 6.33]) than individual bribery ($M = 4.81$, 95% CI =

[4.07, 5.56]) when primed with Chinese culture, and were somewhat more intolerant of individual bribery ($M = 5.58$, 95% CI = [4.76, 6.41]) than organizational bribery ($M = 4.82$, 95% CI = [4.23, 5.42]) when primed with American culture (depicted in Fig. 4). These findings are conceptually analogous to the results pertaining to H1 shown in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2, in which we compared participants from different cultures.

7.2.2.2. Low BII participants. The Cultural Priming × Bribe Payer interaction was significant when BII was low, $F(1,62) = 7.32$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.11$, but took an opposite form to that shown when BII was high. That is, participants with low BII were more intolerant of individual bribery ($M = 5.09$, 95% CI = [4.37, 5.80]) than organizational bribery ($M = 4.29$, 95% CI = [3.71, 4.88]) when primed with Chinese culture, $F(1,62) = 2.87$, $p = 0.095$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, but were more intolerant of organizational bribery ($M = 4.79$, 95% CI = [4.09, 5.50]) than individual bribery ($M = 3.40$, 95% CI = [2.30, 4.50]) when primed with American culture, $F(1,62) = 4.50$, $p = 0.038$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$ (depicted in Fig. 4). Conceptually replicating the results of previous research (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002), we found that those low in BII behaved divergently from the cultural system made salient by the priming manipulation.

7.3. Discussion

The results of Study 3 showed that among those high in BII, the results pertaining to Hypothesis 1 are conceptually analogous to those found in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2. Moreover, such results emerged in the context of a design entailing greater internal validity than in the earlier studies in that cultural priming was experimentally manipulated. That is, among those high in BII, those primed with Chinese culture showed more intolerance of organizational bribery whereas those primed with American culture showed more intolerance of individual bribery. Furthermore, and as expected, biculturals low in BII showed the opposite pattern. Previous research suggested that participants who feel conflict between two cultural identities diverged from the norms, practices, beliefs, and decision rules cued by the primed culture because they seek to distance themselves from that culture (Zou et al., 2008). Another noteworthy contribution of the results of Study 3 is that they conceptually replicate and extend the results of the previous studies to a context in which bribe payer was manipulated on a between-subjects basis rather than on a within-subjects basis.

8. General discussion

With the use of different methodologies the present studies demonstrated and accounted for some of the variability in people's intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery in different cultural settings. Studies 1a, 1b, and 2 consistently showed that organizational bribery is more intolerable than individual bribery in the Chinese culture whereas individual bribery is more intolerable than organizational bribery in the American culture. Moreover, in Study 3 in which internal validity was stronger, conceptually analogous results emerged when BII was high but in an opposite fashion when BII was low. Investigation of the mediating mechanisms found that the greater intolerance by the Chinese of organizational than individual bribery and the greater intolerance by the Americans of individual than organizational bribery were due to how much they made internal attributions for the bribe payer's behavior.

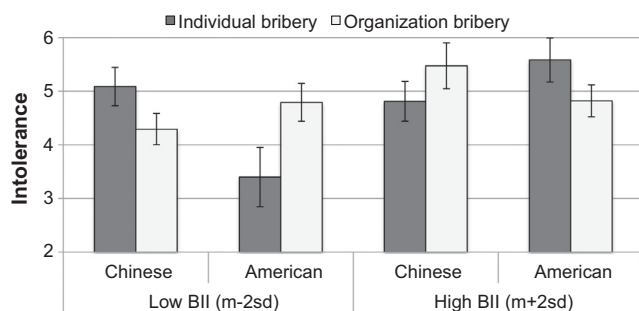


Fig. 4. Bribery intolerance as a function of cultural priming, bribe payer, and bicultural identity integration (BII) (Study 3, student sample) Note. Error bars represent standard errors.

8.1. Theoretical implications

8.1.1. Corruption

Previous examinations of corruption have been conducted primarily at the macro level, or have focused on the psychology of those who received bribes or who misused their power (see [Martin et al., 2007](#)). Our research attempted to understand people's perceptions of those who engage in corruption. The results suggested that some bribe payers are perceived to be more agentic than others in initiating bribery. Given that corruption involves the influences of multiple parties ([Ashforth et al., 2008](#); [Moore, 2009](#)), our research thus offers a more complete understanding of corruption.

Our research also made an important distinction between perceptions of bribery by individual actors and by organizational actors. Research on individual and corporate corruption has been relatively isolated from each other. Although past research suggest that corruption, regardless of whether it is enacted at the national, firm or individual level, is generally more prevalently practiced in countries that are collectivistic and less developed. Our research, for the first time, examined the *comparative* perceptions of organization and individual actors of bribery. The findings show that organizational bribery is more psychologically meaningful and hence a serious transgression than individual bribery in the Chinese culture, whereas just the opposite is the case in the American culture.

8.1.2. Culture

The present findings also are of interest to culture researchers. Our studies go beyond purely documenting a cross-cultural difference to also revealing the mechanisms (i.e., agency construals and attributions) through which culture influences the perceived intolerability of bribery. This echoes the call for a shift of paradigm “from cross-cultural differences in social cognition” based on the pan-cultural model “to social-cognitive mediation of cultural differences” based on the dynamic constructivist cultural model ([Hong & Chiu, 2001](#); [Hong et al., 2000](#)). Instead of treating cultures as stable and monolithic forces that exert domain-general influences, our research suggested that cultural patterns reflect the dynamic process of meaning construction in which internally accessible, domain-specific cultural theories (e.g., implicit theories of agency) and features of cultural contexts (e.g., bribery in the individual and organizational domains) jointly influence people's cognition ([Leung & Morris, 2014](#); [Weber & Morris, 2010](#)). As suggested in Studies 1a, 1b and 2, Chinese people did not judge the intolerability of bribery committed by individual actors and organizational actors similarly, and neither did the Americans. Their perception and interpretation of the social reality varied as a function of the agentic actor salient in their culturally constructed implicit theories. In particular, our findings on the Hong Kongers in Study 3 suggest that cultures are like open systems and individuals may have access to more than one system; when and how the cultural system influences one's judgment depends on factors such as contextual cues and identities ([Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015](#)).

It is noteworthy that Chinese and Americans showed the same basic psychological process in judging the intolerability of bribery. As shown in Study 2, both cultures perceived a bribing behavior as more intolerable when it was seen as more internally driven. The cross-cultural difference in bribery intolerance arises from how Chinese and Americans applied this rationale to different bribing entities. As such, the research advances our understanding of basic conceptual foundations ([Brockner, 2003](#)) and etic (vs. emic) psychological mechanisms of culture ([Gelfand et al., 2007](#)).

8.2. Practical implications

The findings suggest that the cultural lens through which people view and interpret social reality influence judgments about bribery. In the Chinese culture the construal of collectives as more powerful actors makes organizational bribery a more meaningful transgression. In this regard, we note how the attempts to combat corruption and the public outrages in China have been targeted at large-scale organizational misconducts (e.g., the infant milk formula scandal) and reforms of the system and institutions (e.g., the Chinese Communist Party's anti-corruption agency—the Central Discipline and Inspection Committee). However, corruption cases in China often begin with typical interpersonal interactions, which in turn evolve into exchanges of small favors, and may then escalate into something more dramatic. This “slippery slope” effect might account for the leniency toward individuals who are seen as less agentic actors. Therefore, in China policies and measures may need to be taken to regulate the acts of bribery at the individual level, especially those that involve close relational others (e.g., family members of politicians), as a first step toward preventing more damaging forms of bribery from exerting influence. In fact, some of the anti-corruption policies and measures in China recently have begun targeting individuals, such as the launching of more explicit stipulations on specific behaviors by government officials and businessmen.

At the same time, the greater intolerance of individual bribery by Americans may indicate that Americans focus more on blaming the “bad apples” ([Ashforth et al., 2008](#)) and less on the problems with the system (“the bad barrel”). This individualistic bias has been pointed out by some contemporary legal researchers as a key reason for the more favorable treatment to corporations in the U.S. ([Hans & Ermann, 1989](#); [Laufer, 2008](#)). The notion that collectives lack bodies and minds may make it difficult to attribute criminal intent and guilty will to corporations ([Cullen, Maakestad, & Cavender, 1987](#)). Interestingly, the US has started exerting tighter regulations on corporations especially after the 2008 financial crisis, possibly because American authorities may have come to believe that doing so would be an effective way to minimize future acts of corruption by individuals.

8.3. Limitations and future directions

The current studies also have some limitations that suggest avenues for future research. First, it is important to consider the present results in relation to the recent findings of [Mazar and Aggarwal \(2011\)](#), who found a positive relationship between collectivism and the tendency to engage in bribery in three studies. At first blush, these findings may seem somewhat contradictory to the present findings in suggesting that people from collectivistic cultures (such as China) see bribery as less intolerable than do people from individualistic cultures (such as the U.S.); that is, being willing to engage in bribery may reflect less intolerability of the act.

A key difference between the present studies and those of [Mazar and Aggarwal \(2011\)](#) is that we examined the *comparison* of individual versus organizational bribery whereas Mazar and Aggarwal did not. [Mazar and Aggarwal \(2011\)](#) examined the relationship between collectivism and the tendency to engage in bribery, be it at the organizational level (in their Study 1) or the individual level (in their Studies 2a). In contrast, we evaluated the *difference* between individual and organizational bribery in how they are judged in different cultural settings. Because [Mazar and Aggarwal \(2011\)](#) did not do such a comparison on whether collectivism is *more* strongly related to bribery by one actor than

another, the present findings are not directly comparable with theirs.

Second, the Chinese–American difference in relative intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery might be open to alternative accounts. For instance, one possibility of why the Chinese are more intolerant of organizational bribery is that it only benefits the actor, whereas individual bribery could benefit individuals other than the actor. To evaluate this possibility, we conducted analyses by excluding the individual behaviors that involved benefiting significant others (i.e., two of the nine behaviors in Studies 1a and 1b: bribing the teacher to benefit one's child, bribing the doctor to benefit one's family member, which also was one of the three behaviors in Study 2). The results did not substantially change when these individual behaviors were excluded from the analyses.

Another alternative account is concerned with the severity of the harm. It could be argued that Chinese tolerate organizational bribery less than individual bribery because organizational bribes are bigger in scope than individual bribes and the consequences are perceived to be more severe for organizational bribes. But, if that were the case, then one would have to explain why Americans were more intolerant of the bribery that was less severe, namely, the individual bribery.

Third, our research focus is on the perception of corrupt acts, in this case the intolerance of bribing behaviors. The approach we have adopted is to examine the construal of agency salient in a given culture and how deviations from them are likely to be seen as more transgressing than are deviations from the construal and mental representations that are salient in another culture. Future research should take into account other cultural differences besides agency beliefs. For instance, American and Chinese cultures differ in their value orientations such as priority of individual goals versus group goals, construal of self (as reflected in individualism and collectivism), and emphasis on equality versus hierarchy (as reflected in power distance). Would taking some ethically questionable action without the “blessing” of one's boss be seen as even more unethical in a high power distance culture than if the same action were taken in a low power distance culture?

Fourth, our research focuses on the comparison between perceptions of individual bribery and organizational bribery *within* each culture. For exploratory purpose we conducted between-culture comparison for individual bribery and organizational bribery separately. Across multiple studies we found that Chinese were significantly more intolerant of organizational bribery than the Americans and the Americans were significantly more intolerant of individual bribery than Chinese (see [Supplementary Analysis E in the OSM](#) for details). This seems to be inconsistent with the possibly widely shared impression that collectivistic cultures are just more tolerant of bribery in any form. It is possible that people from collectivistic cultures are more likely than those in individualistic cultures to *engage* in bribery in general (be it for personal interest or collective interest). Recent evidence, although indirect, also suggested that identification with the collective is associated with greater commitment of unethical pro-organizational behaviors (e.g., [Chen, Chen, & Sheldon, 2016](#); [Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010](#)). However, our studies suggest that, at least from the third party observers' perspective, people from collectivist cultures are harsher than those in individualistic cultures in their *judgment* of organizational bribery. Future studies can further investigate this actor-perceiver difference in corruption-related judgment and behavioral choice. The fact that collectivists' attitudes and behaviors toward corruption may be contingent on their agency role would be an interesting and fruitful area of research.

A potential limitation of Study 3 is its somewhat small sample size and accompanying low power. By definition, low power makes

for a conservative test, one that is unlikely to find significance. However, we found significance in spite of low power, which made the findings arguably all the more noteworthy. Of course, another problem with small samples is the generalizability of the results. Though we agree that future research with larger sample sizes is needed, we are optimistic about the generality of the findings in Study 3 in that we are not the first to show the “convergent effect” among those high in BII and the “divergent effect” among those low in BII. Thus, at a higher level of abstraction our findings do have generality even though past studies examining BII were not investigating the same phenomena that we were examining.

9. Conclusion

The present research takes a cross-cultural approach and a cultural priming approach to understand the influence of national culture on the perceived intolerance of bribes by individuals and organizations. Our research demonstrates not only the cross-cultural difference in intolerance of individual versus organizational bribery but also the role of internal attributions in accounting for this difference. We hope our studies stimulate more research along these lines, contributing to the development of theories on the psychology of corruption, while offering practical suggestions on combatting corruption in China and around the globe.

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Appendix A. List of individual and organizational bribery behaviors

Individual behaviors:

- *1. In order to get more attention and opportunities in school for their children, a parent gives gifts or money to the children's teacher.
2. In order to get better care and treatment, the family member of a patient gives gifts or money to the doctor in charge.
3. In order to get a promotion, a government officer gives gifts or money to his chief officer.
4. In order to get a favorable judgment or to prevent a judgment in favor of the other party, a person gives gifts or money to the judge.
5. In a city mayoral election, a candidate gives all kinds of special favors to the voters in order to get more votes.
6. In order to avoid a heavy penalty or reduce the fine, a person who breaks a traffic law gives money or other favors to the police officer.
7. In order to get a visa more smoothly or more quickly, an applicant gives money or other favors to the officer in charge.
- *8. In order to impress at an interview for graduate school admission, a student applicant gives gifts or money to the interview committee members.
- *9. In order to get a good job, a university graduate gives money or gifts to the personnel in charge of the organization (company or government department) to which he is applying.

Appendix A (continued)

Organizational behaviors:

- *10. In order to beat out other companies in a bidding war, a company gives gifts or money to the person in charge of the bidding.
11. In order to get a loan, a company gives gifts or money to the bank official in charge of loan approval.
12. In order to pass an inspection, a company gives all kinds of favors to the inspectors in charge of quality control.
13. In order to maintain good relationships with certain government departments, a university admits children of officials from these departments, even though the children do not meet the admission criteria.
14. In order to get a license or pass an inspection, a company gives all kinds of favors to relevant government officials.
- *15. In order to sell more products, a pharmaceutical company gives kickbacks to hospital administrators and physicians.
16. In order to successfully obtain research funding, a university gives all kinds of favors to the members of a grant review committee.
- *17. In order to positively exaggerate or fabricate its image, a company gives all kinds of favors to news media personnel.
18. In order to open a new market in a country, an international company gives all kinds of favors to the local government officials.

* Note. The behavior was used in Study 2, with minor modifications of the wording. The bribe was framed as “various favors” in the non-monetary condition and “money” in the monetary condition.

Appendix B. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2016.12.002>.

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