

# **2021 International Wisdom Summit**

## **Wisdom & culture diversity**

### **Panel Discussion**

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The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

2021-10-11

# Wisdom & Culture Diversity

- Dr. Michael Harris Bond
  - Perceiving Another as Wise
- Dr. Xindong Wei (speaker) & Dr. Fengyan Wang
  - Solomon is WEIRD
- Dr. H. Clark Barrett
  - Unwise Choices and the Landscape of Morality

# The cultural puzzle



- What is wisdom?
  - Being effective in a given cultural system?
  - Is it “wise” if it is a cultural default or it is “wise” only if it is uncommon?
    - Interdependent self vs. independent self
  - Duty to know
    - Declarative knowledge?
      - Different reaction to intentional vs. accidental wrongdoings
      - Different expectations about what people “should know”

# The cultural puzzle

Michael Harris Bond


- What is wisdom?
  - Being effective in a given cultural system
    - Effective = Culture fit? Norm adherence?
    - Sympathy/compassion
      - Not the default in cultures prioritizing self-directness & practicality
      - Wise or not?
        - » Cultural misfit:
          - Not impactful → not part of being wise, or wise but not useful?
          - Rare & uncommon; Counter dominant norm → part of being wise?
    - Wisdom & culture (norm adherence)
      - » Outcome: Fit in vs. not?
- Observable action
- Unobservable deliberation
  - » Process: Awareness of fit vs. misfit

Is this presentation on target for this Wisdom Summit

- One of 3 questions: "There appears to be some consensus among scientists, with over 30% of conference participants suggesting that experiential knowledge and sympathy/compassion are central to wisdom and accessible to a similar extent across cultures. What is your take on these claims?"
- My take: 1. experiential knowledge is important if we regard that knowledge as arising from role performance perceived as **effective** ...
- 2. ...and that yes, "sympathy/compassion are central to wisdom and accessible to a similar extent across cultures", but relatively less impactful in cultures prioritizing Self-Directedness and Practicality, i.e., the opposite of Civility [ after controlling for wealth].

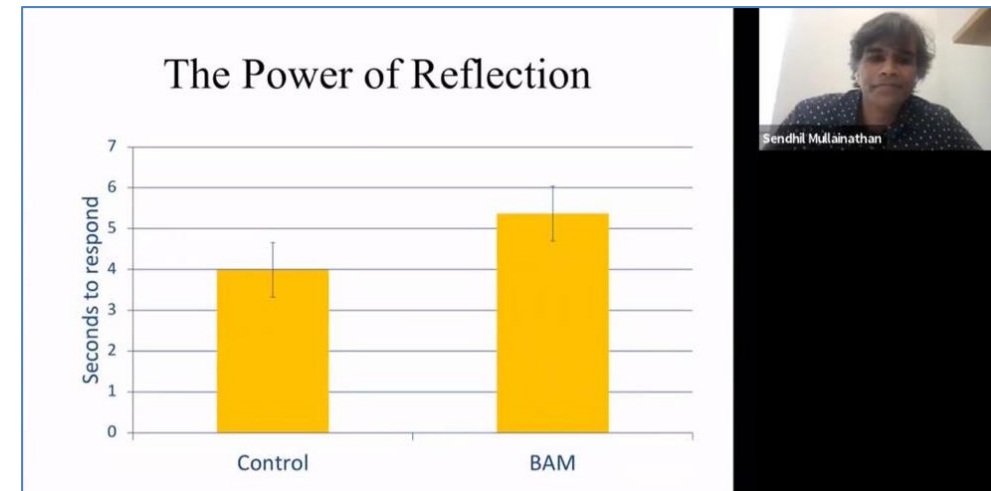
Mark Twain's **wisdom** refined



- "Always **do right**. This will gratify **some people** and astonish **the rest**."
- **Doing right** depends on the **actor** role-playing **effectively** in that cultural system
- **Actors who do right in the right way in their cultural setting** are regarded as **wise**

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# The cultural puzzle

Xindong Wei & Fengyan Wang

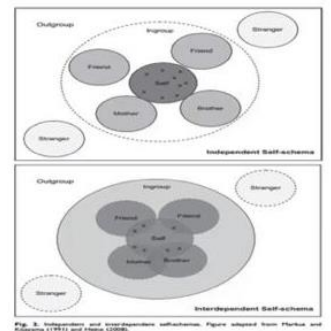
- What is wisdom?
  - Wisdom: Interdependent > independent self?
  - Is it still considered as “wise” if it is a cultural default or it is “wise” only if it is uncommon?
  - Wisdom & culture (norm adherence)
    - Outcome: What is the final decision you made for your friend?
    - Process: Awareness of the potential options your friend might have (but might go for the cultural default or not)

Articulated  
decision

Unobservable  
deliberation

## Introduction

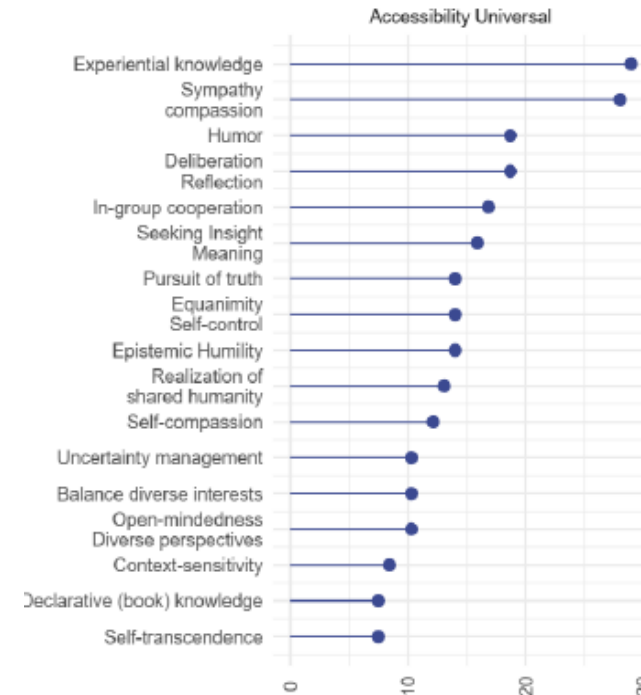
- Solomon's Paradox in Chinese culture
- Independent self & Interdependent self
- Interdependent self : Friend's conflict is mine  
personal conflict  $\approx$  friend's conflict



# The cultural puzzle

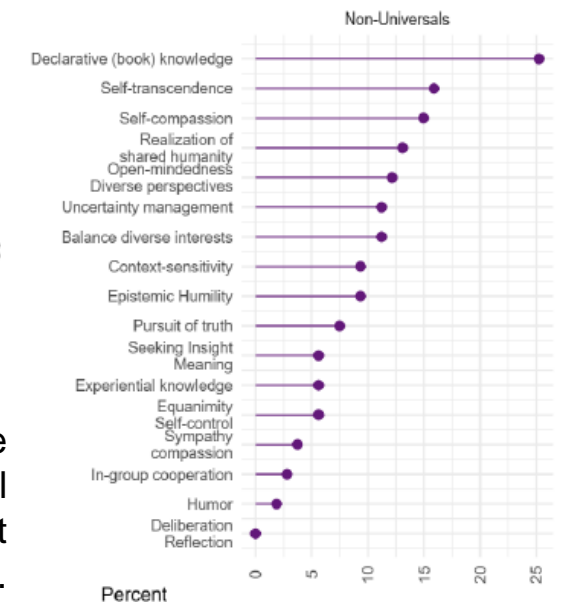
Clark Barrett

- What is wisdom?
  - Duty to know
    - Different reaction to intentional vs. accidental wrongdoings
    - Different expectations about what people “should know”
  - Declarative knowledge
    - Observable – Specific content?
    - Unobservable – Process of deriving knowledge?



Accessibility universals are psychological processes that exist in all cultures, are used to solve the same problem across cultures, and are accessible to the same degree across cultures - i.e., the likelihood of a person using this psychological process is similar across culture

Non-universals are psychological processes that do not exist in all cultures.



# The cultural puzzle

- An observation
  - Wisdom discourses:
    - Highlights processes (cognitive, emotion, motivation,...)
  - Culture & wisdom discourses:
    - Focuses on the observable (usually differences)
    - Needs to consider the unobservable (processes)?
      - More commonalities than differences?

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