CULTURE AND INFORMATION MANIPULATION THEORY:
THE EFFECTS OF SELF-CONSTRUAL AND LOCUS OF BENEFIT
ON INFORMATION MANIPULATION

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This paper offers a preliminary exploration into how culture and cultural orientation influence the perception of deceptive messages. Information manipulation theory (IMT) posits that covert violations of Grice’s four conversational maxims give rise to messages that are functionally deceptive. This study (N = 323) attempted to replicate previous IMT results regarding the perceptions of information manipulation in an academic situation, and with a culturally diverse sample. Locus of benefit (self and other) was manipulated, and the respondents’ self-construal was assessed. Previous IMT findings were replicated, and the effects for self-construal on honesty ratings varied considerably by manipulation type. Explanations for these findings are provided, as are suggestions for future research.

Deception is one of the most significant and pervasive social phenomena of our age (Miller & Stiff, 1993), and has frequently been the focus of communication and psychological inquiry. Knapp, Hart, and Dennis (1974) suggest deception is “publicly condemned, yet privately practiced by a significant proportion of the population” (p. 15). Given the prevalence of deception in interactions, and that deceptive acts affect our personal, academic and professional lives (Burgoon & Buller, 1994; McCormack & Levine, 1990; Miller & Stiff, 1993), it is not surprising that deception research continues to flourish.

While many aspects of deception have been explored at length (e.g., detection of deception and identification of nonverbal cues), recent deception research has shifted toward examining deceptive message design (e.g., Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1990; Burgoon, Buller, Guerrero, Afifi, Feldman, 1996; McCormack, 1992). This research, however, has viewed deceptive messages from a Western perspective, and has failed to consider how those from non-Western cultures might view deception and deceptive messages.

Examination of communication processes in different cultures is essential given that communication is not only an integral part of culture, but also the primary means whereby culture is transmitted (Hamnett & Brislin, 1980). Advances in communication technology and a shift toward a global economy will serve to increase opportunity for intercultural interaction. There is a vast amount of variability in interpersonal communication processes across cultures which has not been explored by those studies examining only one culture (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). The generalizability of those deception studies conducted in the United States is questionable without examining the role of culture (O’Hair, Cody, Wang, & Chao, 1990).

The goal of this paper is to explore how those with both Western and non-Western cultural orientations view potentially deceptive messages. Specifically, the current study investigates Information Manipulation Theory (McCormack, 1992) in a multicultural population.

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Deception, Deceptive Messages, and Information Manipulation Theory

The bulk of research on deception has centered around nonverbal deception cues (e.g., Ekman, 1985; Ekman & Friesen, 1974) and the detection of deception (e.g., DePaulo, Lanier, & Davis, 1983; McCormack & Levine, 1990b; McCormack & Parks, 1986; Toris & DePaulo, 1985). This research suggests that humans are generally poor deception detectors, likely to assume that others are truthful, and often leak deception cues nonverbally (see Kalbfleisch, 1985; Miller & Stiff, 1993; Zuckerman, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1981, for reviews).

Other researchers have viewed deception in terms of strategies used to deceive, and have formulated a number of typologies. These taxonomies include various labels for message types such as: "lies," "exaggerations," and "diversionary responses" (Turner et al., 1975), or "fictions," "crimes," and "unlies" (Hopper & Bell, 1984).

The content and production of deceptive messages have recently been examined in a different light by deception scholars (e.g., Bavelas et al., 1990; Galasinski, 1994; McCormack, 1992; McCormack, Levine, Solowczuk, Torres, & Campbell, 1992). Bavelas et al. (1990) define deception in a purely linguistic manner and argue that messages can range from true to false along a continuum. They also state that the ways in which messages are stated can range from clear to equivocal and suggest that people do not generally lie, they just avoid clear messages (Bavelas et al., 1990).

Expanding on the work of Bavelas and others (e.g., Metts, 1989; Turner et al., 1975), McCormack (1992) proposed Information Manipulation Theory (IMT). IMT is based on Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle, and suggests that conversational understanding rests on the assumption that others are behaving in a cooperative manner. Specifically, Grice (1989) proposes that a conversational participant is expected to adhere to four conversational assumptions or maxims. Quantity refers to conversational participants' expectations concerning how much information should be provided in interaction. Participants in a conversation should make their contribution as informative as required (and not more informative; Grice, 1989). Quality concerns assumptions of the truthfulness of messages. Conversational participants should not present information that they know to be false. Relation involves expectations that participants will contribute information relevant to the topic of conversation as established by preceding discourse. The fourth maxim, manner, deals with not what is said, but how it is said. Participants should avoid ambiguity and obscurity, and present information in a clear and orderly fashion.

Consistent with other conceptualizations of deception (e.g., Levine, 1994; Miller, 1983), IMT suggests that deceptive communication may be defined as communication that intentionally misleads another. The difference between IMT and other conceptualizations of deceptive communication is that IMT proposes specific ways in which this deception might occur. That is, according to IMT, deception occurs when deceivers covertly (implying intent) violate one or more of the conversational assumptions regarding the quantity, quality, manner, and relevance of information. That is, IMT suggests that deceivers intentionally deceive others by violating these maxims knowing that other conversational participants are expecting them to operate under these maxims. Message receivers are deceived when they incorrectly assume that the speaker is behaving cooperatively (McCormack, 1992).

In a preliminary test of IMT, McCormack et al., (1992) found that messages that violated the maxims of quality, quantity, manner, or relevance were seen as significantly more deceptive than baseline/truthful messages. Further, messages violating the
quality maxim were considered most deceptive of the four types. Similar results were obtained by Jacobs, Dawson and Brashers (1996), although Jacobs et al. draw different conclusions from their data, namely that all deception results from violations of quality (see Levine, 1998 and McCormack, Levine, Morrison & Lapinski, 1996 for replies).

One issue which has remained largely ignored by researchers of deception and deceptive messages, however, is culture. Nearly all of the studies examining deceptive communication have been from a Western perspective. Some relevant works, however, are evident and will be discussed in the following sections.

**Deception and Culture**

In a recent study of perception of deceptive messages, Yeung, Levine, & Nishida (1999) found that participants from Hong Kong saw violations of quality and relevance as the most deceptive of the message violations proposed by IMT. Although Yeung et al. found that violations of manner and quality did not differ significantly from a baseline honest message, they did find that, for all four maxim, perceptions of violations were correlated with perceptions of deceit. The authors suggest that differences in communicative expectations (e.g. preferences for directness) and social roles might account for these differences.

Lewis and Saarni (1993) address the issue of deception in non-Western, non-industrialized cultures from an anthropological standpoint. They discuss "simple societies" such as the Waika Indians of Orinoco, Venezuela, and suggest that in these cultures, deception typically centers around aggression or dominance and involves access to food and goods, or desirable mates. Gender knowledge is another common reason for deception in simple cultures, including women concealing information from men related to gender-specific practices. Lewis and Saarni (1993) suggest that individuals in these cultures deal with envy by using deception. By making themselves "unenviable" through deception, they avoid the risk of others' attempts to acquire their good fortune for themselves. It is also suggested that there are several deceptive behaviors that occur across cultures. These include deception centered around clandestine affairs, protecting one's possessions from a competitor, and feigning emotion one does not really feel (Lewis & Saarni, 1993).

Aune and Waters (1993), compared motivations for deception in Samoan and North American subjects. They found that the more collectivistic American Samoan participants indicated they would be more likely to deceive another if it were an issue related to family or other ingroup concerns. They found that North Americans are primarily motivated to deceive when they feel an issue is private or to protect the target person's feelings.

In a study of deceptive communication styles in Chinese immigrants, O'Hair et al., (1990), examined levels of vocal stress in truthful and deceptive messages. They found that Chinese exhibit higher levels of vocal stress when revealing negative emotions.

Other authors have examined the acceptability of various communication styles in negotiation. Nishiyama (1994) discusses deception in a cultural framework from an organizational perspective. He examined the tactics and behaviors of Japanese negotiators. Nishiyama suggests that there are a number of strategies and behaviors that are considered everyday business practice in Japan, yet are interpreted as deceptive by American business people. Some of these misinterpretations may stem from cultural misperceptions or from language difficulties. Commonly misunderstood messages include nonverbal behaviors and inconsistencies between official policy (tatemae) and true intentions (honne).
Similarly, the difference between the Japanese public self and private self has been discussed by Doi (1986). Doi suggests that in the United States it is extremely important for these two selves to remain consistent. When the public self deviates from the private self an individual is considered a hypocrite. In Japan, being polite and maintaining harmony is what is important. An individual’s actual feelings about an action are unimportant (Doi, 1986; Triandis, 1989). Hence, in collectivist cultures, there is not as strong an emphasis on maintaining consistency between what one feels and what is said. In individualist cultures consistency between thoughts and actions is essential. This is not to say, however, that individualists always maintain consistency between thoughts and actions, but that there is greater emphasis placed on consistency by those from individualistic cultures.

Imai (1981) assesses how Japanese businessmen respond to requests that they cannot or will not fulfill. Imai (1981) suggests a number of the alternatives to the explicit word “no,” including answers which sound fairly similar to those deemed deceptive by Information Manipulation Theory (McCornack, 1992). One example would be to say “yes” and follow with a long explanation, which may be equated to violating the maxims of quality and quantity. Other possible responses include using a vague or ambiguous reply (a violation of manner), avoiding the question, and changing the subject (a violation of relevance).

Thus, the works of several authors (e.g., Aune & Waters, 1993; Doi, 1986; Imai, 1981; Nishiyama, 1994) examining deception in and across cultures suggests that what is considered deceptive varies from culture to culture. While these studies allow us to gain some insight into the nature of deceptive messages in different cultures, it is necessary to examine deceptive messages in a more systematic manner. One way to examine deception across cultures is through the assessment of individuals’ differing construals of self.

Culture and the Self

Collectivism-individualism is one of the means for differentiating among cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Collectivism emphasizes placing individual goals below the goals of the ingroup. Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific Island region have generally been considered collectivist cultures. Personal goals are emphasized in individualistic cultures. Those cultures which are characterized by individualism include Australia, Northern and Western Europe, and the United States.

While the individualism-collectivism dimensions have been employed extensively to examine cultural variability (see Triandis, 1990, for a review), a number of scholars have suggested these dimensions are too broad and lack explanatory power (Gudykunst et al., 1994; Schwartz, 1990; Singelis, 1994b). These authors suggest that individual level concepts equivalent to the cultural level dimensions are necessary to understand how and why cultural differences occur. Thus, several scholars have suggested the need for a mediating variable to explain cultural differences in communication behavior (Singelis, 1994b). Markus and Kitayama (1991) provide a link between culture and individual behavior by identifying two types of self-construal.

Markus and Kitayama (1991), summarize a broad range of prior research and place an emphasis on the individual rather than abstract world views or cultural dimensions. They discuss independent and interdependent construals of self. These contrasting views of self co-exist to varying degrees in individuals (see also Sampson, 1985; 1988).

An independent self-construal, which predominates mainly in individuals from
the United States and Western Europe (more individualistic cultures), is typified by independence from others and by expression of one’s unique attributes. Essential to this notion of self, is that each individual is seen as an autonomous, independent person, whose behavior stems from internal feelings, thoughts, and actions. These individuals are likely to promote their own goals, and be direct in their communication (Singelis & Sharkey, 1995).

In the contrasting construal of self, there is a focus on the connectedness of people. One with an interdependent self-construal, predominant in collectivist non-Western cultures, recognizes that one’s behavior is contingent upon the feelings, thoughts and behavior of others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Interdependents emphasize public features such as status, roles and relationships and belongingness. Those with interdependent self-construals tend to be less direct, and are concerned with engaging in appropriate actions (Singelis, 1994a).

The concepts of independent and interdependent self-construal have been proposed to serve as individual-level manifestations of cultural-level variables. Within a given culture, one type of self-construal will be predominant (Singelis, 1994b). Many of the characteristics of the cultural level concepts are consistent with those at the individual-level. The concept of face is especially salient when considering individuals with a strong interdependent construal of self.

**Face and Directness of Communication**

Face is the positive social value a person claims for themselves through the line they take for themselves (Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson (1978) note that all cultures have methods for minimizing face threats that are balanced with a need for message efficiency. Positive face involves the need to have oneself and one’s resources viewed in a positive light or approved of by others (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Ting-Toomey's (1988) Face Negotiation Theory suggests that individuals in cultures which are collectivist place more value on the positive-face needs of themselves and others than those in individualistic cultures. In many East Asian cultures, the concern for other’s face stems from the impact of Confucianism. Confucianism emphasizes concern for others and for “proper” human relations (Yum, 1988). This concern leads to a greater emphasis on maintaining another's face. In the Chinese culture, for example, the self is “maintained and codified” strictly through facework (Ting-Toomey, 1988). In collectivist cultures there are more rules than in individualist cultures concerning public face saving and maintaining harmonious relations in groups (Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka, & Contarello, 1986). Typically, greater interdependence leads to greater concern for others face needs (Wilson et al., 1992).

Work by Kim, Sharkey, and Singelis (1994) clarifies the link between self-construal and face. They examined the relationship between self-construal and the perceived importance of Kim’s (1993, 1994) interactive constraints. The interactive constraints are the fundamental concerns individuals have which influence message choices (e.g., concern for clarity, concern for other’s feelings etc; see Kim & Wilson, 1994, for a detailed description). Kim et al. (1994) found that participants with a strong interdependent construal were most concerned with the importance of not hurting the hearer’s feelings. They also found that the strength of independent self-construal is highly correlated with a concern for clarity as an interactive constraint. “Clarity” in conversations concerns the likelihood that the speaker’s intentions are clearly and directly stated (Kim, 1994).

There is extensive research documenting the difference between individualists’
and collectivists’ preferences for directness in communication (e.g., Fitch & Sanders, 1994, Imai, 1981; Kim, 1994; Kim & Wilson, 1994; Okabe, 1983; Yum, 1988). Brown and Levinson (1978) maintain indirect speech acts are considered universal due to the polite nature of such acts. Collectivists, however, are typically more indirect in their communication because indirectness helps to maintain harmony and social relationships. Indirect communication is essential for those in cultures that are more interdependent, because it functions to maintain face for all participants in an interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1988). In East Asian cultures, for example, indirect communication is “pervasive” and frequently “deliberate” (Yum, 1988). Conversely, individualists prefer directly asserting their needs and expect others to do the same (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

For those who are more independent, there is an emphasis on communicating in a clear and explicit manner (Kim et al., 1994). While face needs and relational maintenance are not the central focus of those who are independent, they are still important. The clarity or directness of the message, however, may take precedence over other concerns to guide communication. Thus, when a communicator is not being clear or direct, this person is often seen as deceptive (Bavelas et al., 1990; McCormack et al., 1992).

**Hypotheses**

This study examines the extent to which McCormack et al.’s (1992) findings hold for a more culturally diverse sample. An experiment was designed to replicate McCormack et al.’s study with different situations and an ethnically and culturally diverse sample. Self-construal was assessed and locus of benefit was manipulated. Our predictions are detailed below.

The research examining varying conceptions of self, as well as the limited amount of research on deception in various cultures, may have implications for how individuals view deceptive messages. Given the characteristics of those with interdependent and independent construals of self, what is considered deceptive and how individuals deceive may vary cross-culturally.

Persons in cultures that are more individualistic typically have a stronger independent construal of self and are generally more direct in their communication than those with an interdependent self-construal.Independents view themselves as separate from others and emphasize expression of their own abilities, thoughts and feelings (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Those who are more interdependent view themselves as connected with others and emphasize public roles and relationships. Those who have a strong interdependent construal of self have an overwhelming concern for maintenance of face and politeness and as a result prefer indirect communication.

Given interdependents’ emphasis on indirect communication, those with a strong interdependent construal should not consider indirect messages to be deceptive, but instead consider them to be consistent with normal, truthful communication. Consistent with this notion, Yeung et al. (1999) report that Hong Kong Chinese did not rate violations of quantity and manner (both indirect) as less honest than a more direct control message. Indirect messages, that maintain positive face and promote harmonious relations are expected by those who are more interdependent. Thus, violations of quantity, manner, and relevance may be considered by those who are interdependent as simply less direct, polite methods for expressing oneself. As Yum (1988) suggested, Grice’s maxims “would not be accepted as a norm” in East Asia. Thus, communication behaviors that are seen as deceptive in the United States may appear to be normative in
some East Asian cultures. That is, those in some East Asian cultures may not adhere to the same cooperative principles that persons from Western cultures observe. Specifically, those messages which violate the maxims of quantity, manner, and relevance may be viewed as simply face-maintaining, indirect messages by those with higher interdependent self-construal.

Persons with strong independent self-construal are more accustomed to direct communication, value clarity and explicitness, and should see messages which are indirect as more deceptive than those who have a stronger interdependent construal of self. This is consistent with previous tests of IMT with samples from the typically more independent mainland United States culture (e.g. McCormack et al., 1992).

Hence, self-construal will moderate the effects of violation type on ratings of message deceptiveness such that scores on interdependent self-construal will be positively associated with honesty message ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner. Alternatively, scores on independent self-construal will be negatively associated with honesty ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner.

Previous examinations of Information Manipulation Theory have indicated that violations of quality are considered significantly more deceptive than other message violations (Jacobs, Dawson, & Brashears, 1994; McCormack et al., 1992, Yeung et al., 1999). Violations of quality involve the presentation of information that the conversational participant knows to be false. These violations have been considered a bald “lie” by deception researchers as opposed to the other violations that involve more subtle information manipulation. Further, violations of the maxim of quality have not been found to be typical of genuine conversation in either collectivist or individualistic cultures. Thus, the classic “lie” may be universally seen as deceptive. That is, although in collectivist cultures indirect communication is acceptable in that it serves to adhere to politeness norms and to maintain face, there is little reason to believe that direct falsification should be acceptable in these cultures. Similarly, the discovery of a quality violation involves a particularly face-threatening situation—one that might seem particularly risky for those from collectivist cultures in which face is an extremely salient concern. Hypothesis two therefore posits that the IMT findings for quality will generalize across cultural orientations. Specifically, there will be a main effect for violation such that violations of quality will be seen as more deceptive than other messages.

Face maintenance is a salient concern, but not equally so, for those with both independent and interdependent self-construal. Still, who stands to benefit from a lie may determine the degree to which a message is considered deceptive. People may be reluctant to label altruistically motivated communication as deceptive, because messages that benefit others have positive connotations while deceptive messages carry negative connotations. Thus, people may rationalize that objectively deceptive messages that deceive for others’ benefit are not deceptive (Bok, 1989). DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer and Epstein (1996) found that people reported that their everyday lies tended to be more for self benefit than other’s benefit. One explanation for this finding is that small lies told for other’s benefit were not considered to be deceptive and hence were underreported. Therefore, we predict that there will be a main effect for benefit such that messages that manipulate information in order to protect another’s face will be viewed as less deceptive than those which serve to protect self-face.

The effects for benefit, however, may vary depending on an individual’s self-construal. Aune & Waters (1994) found that people admit to deception if it serves to avoid hurting another person’s feelings, a concern that is paramount for those with an
interdependent self-construal (Kim, Sharkey, & Singelis, 1994). Because saving others' face is thought to be a greater concern for those with an interdependent self-construal, it is reasonable to predict that people with highly interdependent self-construals, in particular, will not label other benefiting messages as deceptive. Therefore, we predict that self-construal will moderate the effects of benefit such that those with highly interdependent self-construal, more than those with high independent self-construal, will view other-benefiting violations as less deceptive than violations for self-benefit.

Thus, the following hypotheses are predicted for the current investigation:

H1: Self-construal will moderate the effects of violation type on ratings of message deceptiveness such that:

H1A: Interdependent self-construal will be positively associated with honesty ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner
H1B: Independent self-construal will be negatively associated with honesty ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner.

H2: A main effect for violation such that violations of quality will be seen as more deceptive than other messages.

H3: A main effect for benefit such that messages that manipulate information in order to protect another's face will be viewed as less deceptive than those which serve to protect self-face.

H4: Self-construal will moderate the effects of benefit such that those with highly interdependent self-construal, more than those with high independent self-construal, will view other-benefiting violations as less deceptive than violations for self-benefit.

A 2 × 5 independent groups factorial design was employed to test these hypotheses. Situations were designed in which self-other benefit and violations of the conversational maxims were manipulated. The following sections describe the participants, design and procedures for the experiment.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 323 undergraduates enrolled in courses at the University of Hawaii. The University of Hawaii is an excellent place to examine the communication patterns of individuals from various cultures because it has an ethnically diverse population with no ethnic majority. Previous research indicates that in those settings where one culture dominates, those from other cultures will de-emphasize their own culture. In those socio-cultural settings where there is no clear majority, however, individuals are more likely to retain and emphasize their own cultural orientations (Miller, Reynolds, & Cambra, 1987; Shaw, 1985).

The ethnic/racial make-up of the participants of this study reflects the diversity of the population. Participants included 87 Japanese (26.9%), 82 Chinese (25.4%), 36 Caucasians (11%), 33 Filipinos (10.2%), 28 Hawaiian or part Hawaiian (8.7%), 27 Mixed race, without Hawaiian (8.4%), 7 Koreans (2.2%), 4 Hispanics (1.2%), 2 Blacks (0.6%), and 2 Samoans (0.6%). Fifteen subjects designated the category “other” to best describe their background (4.6%). Subjects were asked to identify the extent to which they identified with their ethnic or racial background on a 7-point scale (M = 4.87, SD = 1.67). Blacks, Hawaiians, Samoans, Chinese and Hispanics tended to identify with their cultures more than the Caucasians, Japanese or Korean participants, although these differences were not significant. The mean age of the respondents was 22.41 (SD = 4.49). Females comprised 59.1% of the sample.
**Design**

Hypothetical situations were constructed to create a $2 \times 5$ independent groups factorial design with two levels of benefit and five levels of maxim violation. The scenarios each involved a message that benefited either the sender’s face or another’s face. Each message also involved either a baseline truthful message or a violation of quality, quantity, manner, or relevance. Additionally, independent and interdependent self-construal were measured moderator variables, and ratings of message honesty served as the dependent measure.

**Situation and message construction.** In previous examinations of Information Manipulation Theory (see McCornack et al., 1992) three scenarios involving dating relationships were used as the potential deception inducing situations. These scenarios were not considered to be applicable in all cultures. In many cultures, especially those in which arranged marriages are common, individuals do not “date” as many do in the United States. Therefore it was necessary to construct situations that would be more applicable across cultures. A scenario was adapted from one previously used to examine cross-cultural issues (see Kim et al., 1994).

The subject took the role of an outside observer of the situation. The scenario involved a group presentation in which “Terrible Terry” gave a poor presentation. In the first scenario Terry asks a classmate, Chris, for feedback and Chris either provides a message violating one of the maxims or a fully disclosive message. In the other-benefit condition, Chris’ deception protects Terry’s face. That is, Terry has just done poorly on a presentation and asks Chris “How did I do, do you think I did poorly?”. And Chris responds with either a fully disclosive message or with a message designed to save Terry’s face by violating one of the four maxims described in IMT. For example, the fully disclosive message for this condition was: “Yes, you really didn’t do very well. You looked unprepared and you made a number of mistakes,” as opposed to the message violating the maxim of quality which stated, “No, you did fine.”.

In the second scenario Chris asks Terry “what happened” during the presentation and Terry either deceives or tells the truth. In this case, Terry’s deception functions to protect her/his own face (self-benefit condition). In this case, the fully disclosive message stated “I’m sorry, I didn’t take this as seriously as I should have. In fact, I went out dancing last night when I shouldn’t have. I know I didn’t do well.” The other messages violated one of conversational maxims (e.g., “What did you think of the other group’s presentation?” violating the maxim of relevance). The scenarios and messages are presented in Appendix A. In each of these situations, the status of the participants remained equal, and the individuals in the situations had gender-neutral names.

**Pilot test.** In an effort to ensure the scenarios were “lie provoking” and to obtain sample messages, an informal pretest was conducted. Respondents ($N = 30$) were given three scenarios (without the messages) and asked how they would respond to this situation. Each message was examined by the first author and determined to be either completely disclosive or as violating one or more maxim. Of the 85 messages produced by respondents, 83% involved one, or a combination of the violations. Hence, the situations apparently were lie provoking.

The messages generated by participants were then used as the basis for constructing the messages in the scenarios. This allowed for a closer approximation to natural messages and should enhance external validity. The 5 messages for each situation (self/other benefit) were crossed with each scenario resulting in a total of ten possible situations. The messages for each scenario are also presented in Appendix A.
### TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND RELIABILITIES FOR EACH SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.75</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
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<td>4.96</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<td>Manner</td>
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<td>6.41</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>6.87</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>8.99</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependent</td>
<td>68.48</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measurement**

Perceptions of message honesty/deceptiveness were measured using the four-item semantic differential scale with a seven-point response (7 = most honest) format developed by McCornack et al., (1992). Four similar scales were used as manipulation checks for each of the message forms. McCornack et al., (1992) provide evidence for the reliability, validity, and dimensionality of the scales measuring respondents’ perceptions of messages.

The Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (Gudykunst et al., 1994) is a Likert-type scale with a seven-point response format and “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” as the anchors. The 15 items measured each dimension: interdependent and independent self-construal. Gudykunst et al., (1994) provide preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of this scale.

**Procedures**

Each respondent was randomly assigned to read and evaluate one of the ten scenarios. The subjects participated on a voluntary basis during regular class time and received course credit for their participation. Subjects were given instructions to read the questionnaire carefully and assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Following completion of the survey, participants were debriefed.

**RESULTS**

**Measurement Analysis**

Item retention decisions were made by assessing item contribution to scale reliability, corrected item-total correlations, and confirmatory factor analysis. One item from the quantity scale and one item from the relevance scale were excluded from the scales because they detracted from the overall scale reliability. Consistent with McCornack et al., (1992), all scales exhibited fairly high reliabilities, and the distribution of each scale did not deviate substantially from normality. The mean, standard deviation and alpha for each scale are reported in Table 1. Consistent with the findings of Levine (1998) and Yeung et al. (1999) and Grice’s (1989) cooperative principle, a hierarchical confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the ratings of the four Gricean maxims were consistent with a second-order factor model. The first order factors were used for the manipulation checks.

The interdependent self-construal scale yielded an alpha of .79 after two items were removed from the scale because they detracted from the overall reliability of the scale. Similarly, one item was deleted from the independent self-construal scale. The resulting alpha was .78. The retained items for all scales were summed as measures of
their respective constructs. The distributions of the total scores for each approximated normality.

**Manipulation and Validity Check**

To insure the messages were perceived as violations of the intended maxims, respondents' evaluations of those messages in which information was manipulated were compared with evaluations of truthful/baseline messages. All of the manipulations were successful.

Manipulations of quality \( (M = 8.17, \ SD = 3.74) \) were seen as differing significantly in terms of distortion \( t(127) = 17.84, \ p < .0001, \ r = .71 \) from baseline messages, \( M = 21.45, \ SD = 4.67 \). Manipulations of quantity \( (M = 9.83, \ SD = 4.22) \) and baseline messages \( (M = 14.95, \ SD = 3.34) \) were seen as significantly different in terms of informativeness, \( t(128) = 7.66, \ p < .0001, \ r = .39 \). Those messages which involved manipulations of manner \( (M = 9.35, \ SD = 4.53) \) and baseline disclosive messages \( (M = 20.19, \ SD = 5.09) \) differed significantly in terms of clarity, \( t(128) = 12.85, \ p < .0001, \ r = .58 \), and messages which involved manipulations of relevance \( (M = 10.11, \ SD = 5.71) \) and baseline messages were viewed as differing significantly \( t(123) = 6.17, \ p < .0001, \ r = .33 \) in terms of relevance.

As a validity check of the self-construal measures, ethnic differences in self-construal were tested. Consistent with the conceptualization of the self-construal construct as an individual-level measure of cultural orientation, Caucasians scored higher on independent self-construal \( (M = 85.43 \text{ of a possible score of } 91) \) than did the subjects from Asia and the Pacific Rim \( (\text{Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos Hawaiian, and Koreans; } M = 80.21); \ t(270) = 3.18, \ p < .002 \). Alternatively, Caucasians scored lower on interdependent self-construal \( (M = 62.14 \text{ of a possible } 98) \) than did the subjects from Asia and the Pacific Rim \( (\text{Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos Hawaiian, and Koreans; } M = 69.70); \ t(271) = -5.16, \ p < .001 \). These means are similar to the Hawaii means reported in Park & Levine (1999), and fall approximately half way in between the scores obtained on the mainland U.S. and Korea (cf. Park & Levine).

**Summary of Results**

To test for main effects and interactions for violation and benefit, a 2 (self, other benefit) \( \times 5 \) (baseline, quality, quantity, manner, relevance) analysis of variance was performed with respondents' perceptions of message honesty as the dependent measure. The ANOVA was followed by planned \( t \)-tests to test the differences between cell means. All main effects and interactions involving interdependent and independent self-construal were tested with correlations. Fisher's \( r \) to \( z \) transformations were used to test differences in association between self-construal and honesty in different violation types and benefit conditions. That is, \( z \)-scores test whether correlations differ as a function of experimental condition.

The results of the ANOVA indicated a large and significant main effect for violation type upon respondents' ratings of message honesty, \( F(4, 322) = 89.16, \ p < .0001, \eta^2 = .51 \). Comparisons of cell means were done by performing pre-planned \( t \)-tests. All five means differed significantly from each other. These results are presented as marginal means in Table 2.

The main effect for benefit was non-significant, \( F(1, 322) = 1.25, \ p < ns \), but the interaction between violation type and benefit, \( F(4, 322) = 8.85, \ p < .0001, \eta^2 = .05 \), was significant. Manipulations of quantity which were enacted to save one's own face (self-benefit) were seen as significantly more deceptive than those for the benefit of
TABLE 2
CELL MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR RATINGS OF EACH VIOLATION TYPE SCALE
BY BENEFIT ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit Marg.</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>Rel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>15.39</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>15.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>22.34**</td>
<td>7.92**</td>
<td>18.05**</td>
<td>12.71*</td>
<td>14.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scheffe post hoc analysis indicates mean differences at the \( p < .05 \) level.
*LSD planned comparison analysis indicates significant differences at the \( p < .05 \) level.
Note: The results for both the LSD and Scheffe tests have been included here because the results differ depending on the type of post hoc test employed.

another's face \([t(64) = -5.31, p < .0001]\). The data also indicated that for violations of manner, those which benefited the other person were considered more deceptive than those which benefited the self, \( t(64) = 3.24, p < .002\). No differences for benefit were found in the quality and relevance conditions. The cell means and standard deviations for the self and other conditions are reported in Table 2.

Correlational analysis showed a small but significant main effect for interdependent self-construal on honesty ratings, \( r(321) = .10, p < .04\). The higher an individual's interdependent self-construal, the more honest they rated messages. The correlation for independent self-construal, however, was not significant, \( r(321) = - .09, p < .061\). It should be noted, however, that these correlations are both relatively small and that the correlation between interdependence and honesty ratings may have reached significance only as a function of the large sample size in the present investigation.

Tests for interactions between self-construal and violation type revealed two significant two-way interactions. Independent self-construal was more highly associated ratings of deceptiveness \([r(65) = -.34, p < .003]\) in the quality condition than the baseline, quantity or manner conditions. Interdependent self-construal was more highly associated with honesty ratings in the relevance condition, \([r(60) = .44, p < .0001]\) than the quality, quantity or manner conditions. Interdependence was also more highly associated with honesty ratings in the baseline condition than the quality, quantity, or manner conditions. Thus, effects of self-construal on ratings of honesty vary as a function of violation type. The correlations and z-scores are reported in Table 3.

Tests for an interaction between independent self-construal and benefit, and interdependent self-construal with benefit revealed no significant differences. Correlational analysis for 3-way interactions also revealed no significant differences.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1A predicted that scores on interdependent self-construal would be positively associated with honesty message ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner. Although the data did indicate a 2-way interaction for interdependent self-construal with violation type, only those messages manipulating relevance were
seen as significantly less deceptive by those with high interdependent self-construal, \( r(60) = .44, p < .0001 \). Thus, the data were only partially consistent with Hypothesis 1A.

Hypothesis 1B predicted that scores on independent self-construal would be negatively associated with honesty message ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner. The data were not consistent with this hypothesis (See Table 3).

The data were consistent with Hypothesis 2. Violations of quality were viewed by respondents as being significantly more deceptive than other message manipulations. All manipulations of quality, quantity, manner and relevance were viewed as significantly different in ratings of perceived honesty at \( p < .001 \), with the exception of manner and relevance which differed significantly at \( p < .04 \).

The data were not consistent with Hypothesis 3. There was not a main effect for benefit on ratings of message honesty. The data were in the right direction for manipulations of quantity which were rated as more deceptive when enacted for self-benefit than those for the benefit of another’s face. Wrong direction effects were observed for manner; those violations that benefited the other person were considered more deceptive than those which benefited the self. Other effects were not significant.

The data were not consistent with Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 predicted that self-construal would interact with benefit to affect honesty ratings. No significant interactions between self-construal and benefit were observed.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined how those with differing self-construal view deceptive messages. The results indicated a strong main effect for violation type on ratings of the honesty of messages. Manipulations of quantity, quality, manner and relevance were all seen as significantly more deceptive than completely disclosive messages. Manipulations of quality were rated significantly more deceptive than other message manipulations and baseline disclosive messages.

These findings are consistent with previous tests of Information Manipulation Theory (cf. Jacobs et al., 1996, McCornack et al., 1992). Previous empirical examinations of IMT examined ratings of messages in predominately Caucasian, mainland United States samples in dating situations (i.e., Jacobs et al., 1994, McCornack et al., 1992). Although the sample in the current study was predominately Asian and the scenarios involved academic situations, the means of this study are strikingly similar to those of previous examinations of IMT in the U.S. This lends support for the applicability of this theory across at least some cultural orientations and situations. That is, these three studies were conducted with different samples, using different scenarios, by different researchers, and found similar results. The mean ratings for each violation type are very similar, some with sampling error from each other. The means from the Jacobs et al. (1994), McCornack et al. (1992) and the current study are presented in Table 4. Certainly, these investigations need to be replicated with data collected from
members of other cultural groups (e.g. South American or European cultures) to provide further evidence for the external validity of these findings.

On the surface, the results differed in some ways from Yeung et al.’s (1999) test of IMT in Hong Kong. Yeung et al. found that only messages violating quality and relevance differed significantly from the baseline message, and violations of quantity and manner were not rated differently from the fully disclosive message control. This study, however, found all types of violations were rated as more deceptive than the baseline message. Alternatively, both Yeung, et al. and the present study found that ratings of perceived violations were second-order unidimensional, and that perceived violations of each dimension were significantly associated with perceived deceit. The second order unidimensional nature of these scales implies that these dimensions may be measures of an overarching factor (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Given the correlations of these violations with deceit, the dimensions are underlying factors of a general deception factor. These data are then consistent with McCornack’s (1992) original conceptualization of IMT. Hence, while several key predictions of IMT have been replicated both in Hawaii and Hong Kong, the current findings from Hawaii are more similar to those found in the mainland U.S. than those from Hong Kong.

Although there was no significant main effect for benefit, the analysis indicated an interaction between violation type and benefit. That is, violations were rated as differentially honest depending on the benefit condition. Manipulations of quantity that were employed for self-face needs were seen as significantly more deceptive than those for the benefit of others. Those messages which leave out or add information may be considered the polite and face-saving way to give someone feedback following a negative event. In the case of self benefit, however, quantity violations may be seen as more devious and conniving.

The results also indicated that for violations of manner, messages which benefited the other person were considered more deceptive than those which benefited the self. Messages which are unclear may be considered by subjects as lacking sincerity and being too obviously equivocal. That is, while the person who is being deceived may not realize someone is attempting to deceive them, they probably realize that they are not getting the answer to their question. To respondents, this type of violation may be more offensive than those message violations that are not as apparent, and for which there is less risk of detection. This indicates that in certain violation conditions it makes a difference whose face stands to benefit from a deceptive attempt, but there were no differences for face-benefit in the baseline, quality, or relevance conditions.

There was a small but significant main effect for interdependent self-construal on honesty ratings across conditions. This indicates that the higher an individual’s interdependent self-construal, the more generally honest they viewed messages. Al-
though the effect is rather small, this suggests that those with different cultural orientations view the veracity of messages in different ways. This may be due to interdependent's emphasis on indirect communication. Indirect messages, which maintain face and promote harmonious relations are expected by those who are more interdependent, hence are not considered deceptive. They are simply considered to be typical, polite messages.

Tests for interactions between self-construal and violation type revealed significant interactions. The effects of self-construal on ratings of honesty vary as a function of violation type. Scores on the independent self-construal measure were more highly associated with ratings of deceptiveness in the quality condition than the baseline, quantity or manner conditions. This is consistent with previous examinations of Information Manipulation Theory (Mcgormack et al., 1992) in which samples were collected in areas where independent self-construal predominates (Markus & Kitayama, 1989). This could be due in part to the fact that individuals' locus of control is considered to exist either internally or externally depending on an individual's self-construal (Aune & Waters, 1994). Persons who are more independent tend to place the locus of control internally; individuals are solely responsible for their behaviors. Those with a more interdependent self-construal view their actions as contingent upon those around them and the context. One with an independent self-construal then, will view a violation of quality as a bald, intentional lie. One with an interdependent self-construal will still consider the message deceptive, but consider it a product of the context or the interaction.

Interdependent self-construal was more positively associated with honesty ratings in the relevance condition, than in the quality, quantity or manner conditions. This could be because irrelevance is not considered deceptive by those with a strong interdependent self-construal. This explanation, however, is inconsistent with Yeung et al. (1999) findings that Hong Kong Chinese rated relevance violations as deceptive. Another explanation could be that those with a highly interdependent self-construal saw messages as more relevant (than irrelevant) in general, and hence viewed them as less deceptive. Correlations in the relevance condition indicated that perceptions of relevance are significantly correlated with interdependence \[ r(61) = .33, \ p < .01 \] and honesty, \[ r(61) = .62, \ p < .001 \]. This is consistent with IMT in that what is seen as irrelevant is considered deceptive. Those with an interdependent self-construal saw relevance violations as more relevant than those with an independent self-construal and therefore less deceptive. Interdependence was also more highly associated with honesty ratings in the baseline condition than the quality, quantity, or manner conditions. Those who were more interdependent saw the baseline disclosive messages as more honest than those with an independent self-construal.

In regard to the relationship between self-construal and violation type, it was predicted that scores on the independent self-construal measure would be correlated with deception ratings for violations of quantity, relevance, and manner, scores on interdependence would be associated with honesty ratings in these conditions. The data were consistent with the predictions regarding manipulations of relevance. Those with high interdependent self-construal did see violations of relevance as less deceptive than those with high independent self construal. This is consistent with the literature on communication patterns in different cultures. Changing the subject or talking about something irrelevant is one way to avoid being impolite (Imai, 1981) and is not considered inherently deceptive. This did not hold true for manipulations of quantity
or manner. There was no significant difference in respondents' ratings of these manipulations.

Finally, self- or other-benefit was only important in honesty ratings of violations of quantity and manner. Self-construals did not moderate these effects. It may be that the issue of face is salient, but that protecting one's own face and protecting another's face are, in many cases, equally important.

Limitions

There are several limitations in this study that merit discussion. Similar to McCornack et al. (1992), only those messages that were primarily violation of each maxim were utilized. IMT, however, suggests that violations of the maxims are inherently interdependent. That is, those messages which violate one maxim typically violate another maxim. Even by using messages that violate primarily one maxim, the manipulations typically bleed into other manipulations (Jacobs et al., 1996). This issue is evidenced clearly by the manipulation check scales which are highly correlated and second-order unidimensional.

A second potential problem with the message manipulations is the degree to which each message is viewed as face-threatening or face-saving. This study did not include an induction check for the self-other benefit condition. It is impossible to know the extent to which the manipulation of benefit was perceived by participants. Thus, it is possible that the manipulation was differentially effective in the various violation conditions. This is an important limitation of the current study. Future work in this area should seek to remedy this issue.

Third, this study, like many other investigations of independent and interdependent self-construal, focused primarily on Caucasians and Asians living in the United States. Therefore, it is possible that the participants had a predominantly Western perspective and that the results are relatively uninformative with regard to cross-cultural differences. The differences in findings between Yeung et al. and the current study seem consistent with this concern. Alternatively, the self-construal scores suggest that the current sample was probably less Western than the previous IMT studies conducted on the mainland U.S., but more western than an Asian sample would have been.

Although works have examined samples from several countries in Asia, studies involving individuals in countries outside of the United States, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong could provide new insight into the understanding of culture's influence on our perceptions and behavior. Without such insights, the generalizability of any examination of interpersonal communication is questionable.

Finally, there are a number of other factors that could potentially influence judgements of the deceptiveness of messages across cultures. This study is simply a preliminary foray into a seldom examined topic. In an effort to keep the study manageable, issues such as status, biological sex, and age were not examined although they have been found to influence how individuals communicate in many cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Hofstede, 1980). Certainly future research should examine the influence of these variables on perceptions of deceptive messages.

Similarly, although this study included a pretest in which participants were asked to produce messages in response to lie-provoking scenarios, there is little research in this area. Future research should examine culturally-based differences in the types of messages produced in response to scenarios in order to provide a more rigorous test of the cross-cultural generalizability of Information Manipulation Theory.
Summary

Examining what is considered to be deceptive by those with contrasting construals of self and by those from different cultures is likely a fruitful area of examination. The results suggest some of the ways individuals view deceptive messages differ as a function of self construals and who benefits from the deceptive attempt. Yet the differences attributable to these factors appear small in comparison to the large main effect for violation type observed in all previous IMT studies. Variables such as gender, age, and status of both participants should be examined to further our understanding of culture and deception. Future research should also examine deceptive message production, and collect data in countries other than the United States to determine the generalizability of existing studies of deceptive communication.

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APPENDIX A

**Questionnaire Scenario and Messages**

**Terrible Terry**

You are taking a class at the university that requires that students form groups, and give a major group presentation in front of the class. Each member gives part of the group’s presentation, but all group members get the same grade. This presentation is worth 25% of the final grade in the class.

Your classmates Terry, Chris, and Jo are members of the same group. The night before the presentation, you heard that Terry was out dancing late. On the day of their group presentation, everyone but Terry does well. Terry was not well prepared, and made several mistakes. You think Terry’s presentation was poorly done. After class . . .

**Self-Benefit:**

Chris asks Terry “What happened?” Terry says . . .

Baseline: I’m sorry. I did not take this as seriously I should have. In fact I went out dancing last night when I shouldn’t have. I know I didn’t do well.

Quality: I didn’t practice enough because I was really sick.

Quantity: I’m sorry if I didn’t do so well.

Relevance: What did you think of the other group’s presentation?

Manner: I had things going on last night.

**Other-Benefit:**

Terry asks Chris, “How did I do? Do you think I did poorly?” Chris says . . .

Baseline: Yes, You really didn’t do very well. You looked unprepared and you made a number of mistakes.

Quality: No, you did fine.

Quantity: You didn’t do very well.

Relevance: What did you think of the other group’s presentation?

Manner: Your presentation was, um, interesting.