

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the influence of cultural factors, such as self-construal, and social beliefs, on coping for U.S. and Chinese college students. Data from 325 U.S. and 321 Chinese college students were used for the analyses. It was found that independent self-construal, beliefs in reward for application and social complexity predicted task-oriented coping and self-regulation for both the U.S. and Chinese students. It was also found that beliefs in both fate control and social cynicism were associated with avoidance and emotion-focused coping in both groups. These two patterns of relationships were also observed across gender in each sample. Differences were also noted between the two countries. For the U.S. students, independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal contributed equally to task-oriented coping and self regulation, whereas for the Chinese students, only independent self-construal predicted these coping strategies. Moreover, religiosity was associated with emotion-focused coping and self regulation for the Chinese participants, while this pattern was not found in the U.S. student sample.

The results of this study support the transactional model of coping. Consistent with previous findings, significant associations were found between three of the cultural variables (independent self-construal, beliefs in social complexity, and reward in application) and task-oriented coping. In contrast to prior research, the current study indicates that both independent and interdependent self-construal predicted task-oriented coping for the U.S. students. This contradicts Lam and Zane's (2004) findings which suggested that these two dimensions of self-construal affect coping differently. Moreover, the current study found associations in the U.S. sample between self-construal, social beliefs, and coping dimensions which were originally identified in Chinese populations (i.e., self-regulation and help seeking). Similarly, the current

research illuminated relationships in the Chinese sample between self-construal, social beliefs, and coping dimensions which were originally identified in the West (i.e., task-oriented and emotion-oriented coping). These findings suggest that current conceptualizations of coping in the West and China may not fully capture important aspects of coping in these two cultures. These results were discussed in relation to past findings in the literature, as well as the cultural contexts of the U.S. and China.