

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

The Paradox of Constraints –

When and Why People in Tighter Cultures Engage in More Deviant Behaviors

By

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Date : 16 Dec 2025 (Tue)

Time : 2:30 pm – 4 pm

Venue : M802, PolyU

Abstract

Cultures vary in the strength of their social norms and the severity of sanctions for violations. Tight cultures enforce strong norms with strict penalties, whereas loose cultures have weaker norms and lighter sanctions. This research adopts a cross-level perspective of culture tightness-looseness to hypothesize that in weak situations individuals from tight cultures are actually more likely to engage in deviant behaviors than individuals from loose cultures in the same weak situation, driven by heightened psychological reactance from living under constant constraints. Across six studies using archival, survey, and experimental data from a total of 30+ countries, we find consistent support for our hypothesis. In an era of tightening cultural environments and rising authoritarianism, our findings serve as a timely reminder that strict rules may inadvertently fuel the very behaviors they are intended to suppress.

Prof. Xiao-Ping Chen (PhD, University of Illinois) is Philip M. Condit Endowed Chair and Professor of Management in the Michael G. Foster School of Business, University of Washington. Prof. Chen has served as Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs (2016-2020) and Chair of the Department of Management and Organization (2009-2015) at Foster. She is an elected Fellow in Academy of Management (AOM), American Psychological Association (APA), and Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Prof. Chen is Editor-in-Chief for *Management and Organization Review*, the flagship journal of International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR). She is also the founding editor and Executive Editor for *Management Insights*, a bilingual (Chinese and English) magazine for business educators and practitioners. Prof. Chen also served as Editor-in-Chief for *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (2010-2016).

Prof. Chen's research interests include cooperation and competition in social dilemmas, teamwork and leadership, entrepreneur passion, Chinese *guanxi*, and cross-cultural communication and management. She is on the list of top 2% most cited scientists in the world. Prof. Chen has published many research papers in top-tier journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Management Science*, and *Journal of International Business Studies*. She was a faculty previously at Indiana University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. She was also a distinguished visiting professor at University of Cambridge, INSEAD, Fudan University, Peking University, Zhejiang University, Kobe University, Indian School of Business, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, and China Europe International Business School.

Prof. Chen is highly involved in Chinese management research and business community. She served as President for International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR). She has published three books in English: *What Isn't Said – Culture and Communication at Work* (Springer), *Leadership of Chinese Private Enterprises: Insights and Interviews* (Palgrave McMillan) and *A Journey toward Influential Scholarship: Insights from Leading Management Scholars* (Oxford University Press). She also published more than a dozen books in Chinese, among which *The Empirical Methods in Organization and Management Research* (4th edition) has been the best seller in China since 2008. As the editor of *Management Insights*, she has conducted in-depth interviews with distinguished CEOs and founders of Chinese companies such as Liu Chuanzhi of Lenovo, Jack Ma of Alibaba, Pony Ma of Tencent, Wang Shi of Vanke, Ma Weihua of China Merchant Bank, Michael Yu of New Oriental Group, Richard Liu of JD.Com, Yong Zhang of Haidilao, and Ning Gaoning, former CEO of China Resources, COFCO, and ChinaChem.

Prof. Chen receives the honor of People of UW (<https://thewholeu.uw.edu/2024/05/24/people-of-uw-xiao-ping-chen/>) in 2024. She is also the recipient of numerous teaching and research awards, including Scholarly Impact Award by *Journal of Management* (2019), Best Paper of Chinese Management Research Award by Peking University Press (2018), Dean's Leadership Award (2017), Distinguished Scholarly Contribution Award by IACMR (2016), Andrew Smith Faculty Development Award, Outstanding University of Washington Woman Award, Outstanding Ph.D. Mentor Award (twice), Dean's International Research Award, and Charles E. Summer Teaching Award.

All interested are welcome.