

**Emotional suppression and interpersonal factors (Harmony, Ren
Qing, Face): A comparison between Hong Kong Chinese and
Chinese American in the United States**

(A mix comparative study)

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Abstract

The study was conducted to explore the association between emotional suppression and interpersonal factors, including harmony, Ren Qing, Face, which would be moderated by cultural group (i.e., Chinese living in Hong Kong versus Chinese Americans living in the U.S.). Prior literature (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Mesquita & Leu, 2007) revealed that Western cultural exposure might make Chinese less likely to engage in emotional suppression to maintain interpersonal harmony as well as keep their face in front of others. To test this hypothesis, a quantitative survey was conducted. Results suggest that there is not much effect of acculturation on the associations of interpersonal harmony on suppressing emotions. Both Chinese and Chinese American showed an association between concerns on maintenance of face in front of others and suppression of their emotions. I further conducted qualitative interviews for a subsample of the survey and found that Hong Kong Chinese seemed to be more likely than their Chinese-American counterparts to cite concerns on maintaining face in explaining why they choose to suppress their emotions. In addition, both parts of the study revealed that, males intended to suppress their emotions more than did females in both cultures, suggesting that the two genders might have different reasons for suppression.

Keywords: Chinese, Chinese American, emotional suppression, harmony, Ren Qing, Face.