



## MPHIL

### **Cultural Differences in the Effects of Workspace Personalisation on Individual and Organisational Outcomes**

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**Cultural Differences in the Effects of Workspace Personalisation on Individual and  
Organisational Outcomes**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Psychology

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## Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Literature review</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Personalisation and Culture</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Personalisation.....	11
Levels of Culture.....	12
<b>Culture and the Antecedents of Personalisation</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Culture and the Outcomes of Personalisation</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Culture and the Processes of Personalisation</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Autonomy and control.....	26
The social identity approach.....	34
<b>The current thesis</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Chapter 2 National and Organisational Culture in Workspace Personalisation: A Cross- Cultural Examination in China and the UK</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>42</b>
The social identity approach to personalisation.....	43
The role of national culture in personalisation.....	44
The role of organisational culture in personalisation.....	47
<b>Method</b> .....	<b>52</b>
Participants.....	52
Materials and Procedure.....	54
Analytic Strategy.....	59
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>60</b>
Differences between UK and Chinese participants.....	60
Test of hypothesised model: Two-level mixture models.....	61

Test of hypothesised model: Tests of Indirect Effects .....	67
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>71</b>
Culture as an antecedent of personalisation .....	71
Culture as a moderator for effects of personalisation.....	73
Limitations and recommendations for future research.....	78
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Cultural Differences in the Psychology of Workspace Personalisation in the UK and China: The Group-Based Personalisation Phenomenon.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Culture and antecedents and forms of personalisation.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Culture and the effects of personalisation.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>The present study.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Method.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Context.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Participants.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Procedure.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Data analysis.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Workspace observation checklist.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Thematic Analysis for interviews.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Perceived effects of personalisation.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Antecedents of personalisation.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Attitudes towards personalisation.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Limitations and recommendations for future research.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Practical implications.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>131</b>

<b>Chapter 4 General Discussion .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Theoretical implications of the main findings.....</b>	<b>137</b>
Cultural similarities and differences in factors affecting personalisation.....	137
Cultural differences in the forms and perceived effects of personalisation.....	144
The role of culture in the processes of personalisation .....	147
<b>Practical implications.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Future research and development.....</b>	<b>154</b>
Limitations and recommendations for further research.....	154
Further recommendations for future research .....	157
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Appendix 2.1 .....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Appendix 2.2 .....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Appendix 2.3 .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>Appendix 3.1 .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Appendix 3.2 .....</b>	<b>221</b>

## Abstract

*Workspace personalisation* is the deliberate decoration/modification of an office environment by its occupants. Prior research has examined what prompts personalisation, how employees personalise, and demonstrated its positive effects. However, whilst there are significant cultural differences between countries that may affect the foundational psychological processes involved in personalisation, no research has considered how the psychology of personalisation may differ for employees in different cultures. This research examines the role of culture in antecedents, processes and outcomes of personalisation.

This thesis includes two empirical chapters. Study 1 (Chapter 2) was a survey of 620 office workers, including 312 participants from 16 organisations in China and 308 participants from 11 organisations in the UK, was conducted. Study 2 (Chapter 3) was an interview and observation study of 15 employees from a college in China and 16 employees from a university in England.

In Study 1, national and organisational culture (specifically, power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance) affected personalisation. Furthermore, there were positive indirect relationships between personalisation and individual outcomes (job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing) through personal control, work autonomy, and organisational identification. Therefore, Study 1 provides evidence for the impact of culture on personalisation and the processes by which personalisation has effects. A follow-up qualitative study (Study 2) then explored these patterns in more depth. The results indicated that cultural differences in attitudes towards policies that would restrict personalisation. Furthermore, Chinese participants (but not UK participants) engaged in group-level personalisation and leader designed personalisation. Participants in both samples indicated that job characteristics affected the extent to which they personalised, and that they perceived positive effects of personalisation.

Taken together, the two studies in this thesis suggest that cultural factors have a significant impact on the extent to which employees personalise their workspace and on the processes by which personalisation affects individual outcomes. This is significant, because it implies that organisations should take cultural diversity into account when developing and implementing their workspace management policies, or risk their policies backfiring (in terms of reducing employees' job satisfaction, for example). This thesis shows the importance of taking a culture-specific approach to workspace management and personalisation policies.

## Chapter 1 Literature review

### Introduction

In Japan in the 1980s, the Toyota Motor Corporation introduced the notion of 'lean production', based on their highly productive, profitable production systems (Pruijt, 2003; Tapping & Shuker, 2003). This 'lean' notion of Toyota was inspired by Ford Motor's production system, in which various elements have been applied by Toyota (Holweg, 2007). Furthermore, the roots of the 'lean' can be traced back from the first elements of lean in F.W. Taylor's scientific management, which was proposed in the early 20th century (Hasle, 2014). The key idea of the 'lean' philosophy was to streamline the manufacturing process by identifying and eliminating 'waste' (J. C. Chen & Cox, 2012; Holloway & Hall, 1997). 'Waste' in car manufacturing included transportation, inventory, waiting, defects, over-processing, excessive motion, and over-production (Ohno, 1988). Although 'lean' is a philosophy without empirical demonstration of its benefits, the lean philosophy has been extended and used in various industries and organisations, and it has led to improvements in decreasing waste while adding value to productions and services (J. C. Chen & Cox, 2012).

The 'lean' concept has also been adapted to the management of office environments. By adopting 'lean' principles in office space management, an organisation aims to focus on their key priorities through cutting waste and thereby minimising distraction in the workspace, standardising working methods, and keeping strict control of the working environment. In lean offices, to streamline business operations and maximise productivity, workspaces are cleared of anything not directly required for work (Nieuwenhuis, Knight, Postmes, & Haslam, 2014). The assumption of this approach is that in order to increase profitability, employees should relinquish control over their workspaces. However, there is tension between this lean office approach and the broad array of research which suggests that

*workspace personalisation*, (which is the deliberate decoration or modification of an office environment by its occupants; Byron & Laurence, 2015; Wells, 2000), has (for the most part) positive effects on both organisational and employee outcomes (Wells, 2000). This is because personalisation can positively enhance employees' perceptions of autonomy and control in the workplace. Therefore, in this thesis we problematise the notion that 'lean offices', which minimise the number of personal items allowed in the workplace and remove employees' control over their environment, maximise productivity.

While lean offices were introduced in Japan, which is (compared to the UK and US) considered an Eastern collectivist culture, all existing research investigating the effects of personalisation has been conducted exclusively in Western individualistic cultures (e.g. Knight & Haslam, 2010b), such as in the UK or US, which means that cross-cultural variations in the effects of personalisation (and lean offices) have not been explored. And yet there is reason to believe that there may be cultural differences in the key processes that personalisation is believed to affect: employees' needs for autonomy and control (e.g. Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Therefore, we suggest that the employees' cultural context may impact on the effects of workspace personalisation, and similarly on the impact of lean offices.

Although there are some pioneering studies that demonstrate the positive effects of office personalisation on individual outcomes, such as wellbeing (e.g. Laurence, Fried, & Slowik, 2013), job satisfaction (e.g. Knight & Haslam, 2010b), satisfaction with the working environment (e.g., Wells, 2000), productivity (e.g., Knight & Haslam, 2010a), and group cohesiveness (e.g., Lee & Brand, 2005), to my knowledge none of these existing studies have considered the impact of culture on the relationship between office personalisation and wellbeing or productivity. Moreover, no research on the effects of workspace personalisation has ever examined the workspace experiences of individuals from Eastern cultures or been

conducted in an Eastern cultural context. Therefore, the universality and generalisability of the effects and forms of personalisation are still unknown. It is important for business and human resource managers to understand the applicability of these strategies, because the workplace environment and the management of it could affect employees' wellbeing and job performance. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the process by which culture moderates the antecedents and effects of workspace personalisation on individual and organisational outcomes.

## **Background**

Offices are regarded as the stereotypical workplace for the post-industrial era (Davis, Leach, & Clegg, 2011). Prior research has demonstrated the importance of the office environment to employees' job satisfaction. For example, a survey conducted by the British Council for Offices in 2004 found that 45% of respondents would choose to change their jobs for one with a better office environment, even if the role, salary and benefits were the same. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Management Today in 2003 showed that 94% of employees thought their workplace was a symbol of whether they were valued by employers; however, only 39% of them felt that their offices had been designed with people in mind (Myerson, 2003). Therefore, office design is becoming an increasingly popular topic in human resource and workplace management. However, the office space management literature tends to consider the service and maintenance costs, architecture, interior design, facility management, corporate real estate, and modern management theories, rather than the psychology of the environment (L. M. Cohen, 2007; Knight & Haslam, 2010a). Organisations tend to utilise psychological factors only as an adjunct of business interests (Statt, 1994), even though in fact psychological factors have a significant influence on employee and organisational outcomes (Arnold & Silvester, 2005; Furnham, 2005; Luthans, 2002;

McKenna, 2000; Mullins, 2007; Rollinson, 2008; Staw, 1995).

Approximately 70% of employees are not given the freedom to personalise their workspace, or at least discouraged from workspace personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010a; Wells, 2000; Wells & Thelen, 2002). However, based on considerations of cost savings and facility management, some companies restrict workspace personalisation (Wells, 2000). This is because of a perception that personalisation fosters disorder; thus they prefer not to allow employees to personalise their workspace, especially in new facilities (Donald, 1994). As a result, they adopt formal and clear policies against employees' personalisation of their workspaces. These organisations allow only limited personalisation in certain locations or completely prevent it (Wells & Thelen, 2002). The policies usually restrict the degree to which employees may personalise, the kinds of items they can display, and the location of their personal displays (Donald, 1994). At one extreme, a 'lean office' policy completely restricts workstation displays (Knight & Haslam, 2010a).

Womack and Jones (1997) proposed five principles of lean manufacturing, as follows: identify value, map the value stream, create flow, establish pull, and seek perfection. Based on these principles, the concept of lean office was developed with several features: first, everything on the workstation should be removed except the necessary materials of doing job at hand; second, managers retain tight control of the workspace; third, managerial practice and workspace design are standardised (Knight & Haslam, 2010a). These features can be summarised as three main policies for lean offices: clean, depersonalised, and uniform. The third feature - workplace standardisation - was the focus of this thesis. The policy of lean offices requires that only essential items for the job are permitted on the desk; comforting items such as food and hot drinks, or personal decorative items such as photographs and plants are not allowed, because they are seen as space wasting and distracting. The assumption of this approach is that lean offices are efficient because they can manage

employees in the workspace by minimising distractions and diversions from employees themselves, and then maximise their productivity. Therefore, many employers choose to apply lean office policy to their offices (Knight & Haslam, 2010a). However, problems of lean offices in decreasing employee involvement, wellbeing, and satisfaction have been found in the research of office personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2014).

The idea of lean offices is pertinent to the research questions of this thesis for two key reasons: First, through its fundamental philosophy, lean office management negates the process by which the display of personal items affects individuals. In other words, it only sees personal displays as a distraction without considering their possible psychological functions (e.g., self-expression) and associated positive effects. Second, the lean philosophy was widely applied by Japanese corporations. However, nearly all research demonstrating positive effects of personalisation or negative effects of lean offices were conducted in Western cultural contexts. Therefore, the extent to which lean offices are advantageous in Western contexts is an empirical question, yet to be explored. In the next sections, we explain how culture may impact on processes (and outcomes) of personalisation, include a rationale for the different levels of culture that we explore in this thesis.

## **Personalisation and Culture**

### **Personalisation**

Before examining the implications of culture in workspace personalisation, it is necessary to elaborate on the concept and definition of personalisation and culture. Personalisation is generally regarded as a form of territorial behaviour; specifically, personalisation is categorised as identity-oriented territory-marking behaviour that involves the modification of space to better represent the owner's identity (Brown, 2009; Brown,

Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005; Wells, 2000). Edney and Buda (1976) distinguish territoriality from the concept of privacy, and specify territoriality as attributing behaviour to their own personality rather than to the influence of others. They also indicated that territoriality could have more influence on the psychological aspect of identity than privacy has. Employees working in offices can be territorial over physical spaces in organisations, and they utilize territorial behaviours to construct, communicate, maintain and restore territories (Brown et al., 2005). Territorial behaviour in organisations can be achieved by using personal belongings to mark territories and adjust relationships with others (Wells, 2000). In line with this understanding, some scholars argue that personalisation is the behavioural expression of the psychological ownership of an object, based on the need for identity and having a place of one's own (Laurence, Fried, & Slowik, 2013; Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). In other words, through the display of items indicating their individual identities, employees construct their workspaces as territories by negotiating the boundaries of these territories; and thus distinguish themselves from others in the organisation (Altman, 1975, 1977; Brown, 2009; Laurence et al., 2013). In the current research, we will mainly focus on individuals' personalisation of their workspaces, and define personalisation as the deliberate decoration or modification of an office environment by its occupants (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Wells, 2000).

### **Levels of Culture**

The concept of culture refers to a shared knowledge system with perceived consensus that is co-constructed with fellows and reconstructed continuously by the effect of communications (Zou et al., 2009). It acts as a program to a computer (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 1991). Accordingly, individuals establish cultures; at the same time, cultures also affect individuals. When discussing cultural differences, it is necessary to specify the cultural

level of abstraction to which we are referring, and also the processes by which each cultural level(s) (or an interaction between them) drives the effects of personalisation. To do this, we adopt a social identity approach. The social identity approach comprises both social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987). This approach recognises that when an individual self-categorises themselves as a group member, identifies with that group, and that group is salient in any given context, they will adhere to the cultural norms of that group.

By adopting a social identity approach, we assume that there may be any number of different groups (with idiosyncratic cultural norms) that may drive the nature and impact of personalisation. However, for the purposes of this thesis, we focus on two specific levels of cultural abstraction: the ‘macro’ national level, and ‘micro’ organisational level. Below, we explain why this level of abstraction is pertinent to the research questions of this thesis, and how each level in turn could affect the impact of workspace personalisation on both organisational and employee outcomes.

The macro level that we wish to consider is that of national cultures. This level assumes that there are measurable and psychologically meaningful cultural differences between people from ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ countries, such as the UK and China. In cross-cultural psychology, Hofstede’s cultural framework has been widely used to explain differences in national cultures. It includes five dimensions: individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and long/short-term orientation (Hofstede, 1980, 1997, 2003; Hofstede et al., 1991). Hofstede’s cultural framework was developed using data from surveys on more than 88,000 respondents from 72 countries between the 1960s and 1970s (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Although this framework has been criticised for its oversimplification of conceptualising cultures by five dimensions and for its lack of malleability of cultures over

time (Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001), Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson (2006) reviewed 180 empirical studies incorporating Hofstede's framework published between 1980s and 2002, and show that the national cultural differences in most studies predicted by Hofstede's framework were supported. In other words, the validity of Hofstede's framework has been amplified rather than contradicted by recent research.

In Hofstede's cultural framework, every country has an index for each dimension that represents one aspect of cultural values in this society. Specifically, the dimensions of power distance (which refers to the different levels of acceptance of inequality in the distribution of power in a society or an organisation) and individualism-collectivism (which refers to the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups) are likely to be relevant to the process of workspace personalisation. This is because power distance in the workplace relates to the degree of equality of power distribution between employer and employees, which is relevant to employees' attitudes about whether they are able to control their workspaces; and individualism-collectivism captures the relative emphasis placed on, and importance of, the individual versus the group, which is related to whether an employee attaches importance to personal self-expression. Therefore, the degree to which countries vary on power distance and individualism-collectivism may affect the impact of personalisation and the processes by which it has an effect on employees.

At the same time of being situated within a national culture, employees will be acting within a nested, more micro level of abstraction: their organisational culture. Organisational culture is defined as the values, beliefs and assumptions that characterise an organisation and its members (Cameron & Quinn, 2005). These aspects of organisational culture tend to change slowly; and new employees learn them via socialisation processes (Wilson, 2001). The concept of organisational culture is different from organisational climate, which refers to more short-term and temporary attitudes and perceptions on the part of individuals (Cameron

& Quinn, 2005). Hofstede's framework has also been applied to organisational cultures. For instance, the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) Organisational Culture Scale adopts Hofstede's cultural dimensions to measure organisational cultural practices and values, which includes nine dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, human orientation, assertiveness, future orientation and performance orientation (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Therefore, mirroring the dimensions in national cultures, power distance and individualism-collectivism in organisational cultures might also impact on the process of workspace personalisation and its effects on employees. In the present research, we investigate both national and organisational cultures and their respective roles in workspace personalisation, and we also explore the degree to which each 'level' of culture is related to personalisation, respectively.

### **Culture and the Antecedents of Personalisation**

Even though there is existing research showing positive effects of personalisation (Wells & Thelen, 2002), employees' choices for whether they personalise or not and the extent of personalisation they choose to make might vary. In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between culture and personalisation, it is important to understand which factors promote or inhibit personalisation in different organisations and different countries, and the role that culture plays in determining these antecedents.

Several factors are determining the extent of employees' workspace personalisation. The first factor is the culture of the organisation in which a person works. As personalisation is relevant to providing choices to employees, some organisational cultures, for example, those that highlight authority or goal-orientation, might not encourage or allow employees to personalise, while others that highlight employee support might do. Research by Wells,

Thelen, and Ruark (2007) has demonstrated an indirect association between organisational culture and employees' personalisation. They found organisational culture is a significant predictor of personalisation policies, and personalisation policies are positively related to employees' workspace personalisation. Specifically, Wells et al. (2007) used the Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2005) to measure organisational cultures. It has four categories:

- hierarchy (characterised by having a hierarchical structure and clear lines of responsibility and authority);
- adhocracy (characterised by a dynamic, creative, results-oriented and challenging environment);
- clan (characterised by encouraging, harmonious, relationship-oriented and collaborative environment);
- market culture (characterised by achieving goals, productivity and hard-driving leaders).

Wells et al. (2007) demonstrated that organisations with clan culture tend to allow more personalisation than other culture organisations.

The second factor that relates to an employee's choice about personalisation is the nature of their work. Individuals with different types of jobs might engage in different personalisation behaviours. For example, some occupations require high quality of workspace, and individuals working in these occupations might personalise their workspaces more than other occupations do. Nasar and Devlin (2011) demonstrated that the extent of perceived comfort and the extent of personalisation of a psychotherapist's office is positively related to clients' perceptions of the quality and friendliness of the therapist, the experience of the therapy, and the likelihood that they would choose the therapist. Further research by Devlin, Nasar, and Cubukcu (2013), which is the only research that investigates the role of

culture in personalisation in the literature, examined the relationship between psychotherapists' office personalisation and assessments of the psychologists across three cultures (United States, Turkey, and Vietnam), and found cultural similarities in the role of personalisation in clients' evaluation of the quality of care. This research shows cross-cultural popularity and importance of office personalisation for psychotherapists. Therefore, the nature and characteristics of the job people work in might play an important role in the extent of workspace personalisation.

Tenure and the length of time an employee spends in the workspace may also alter employees' personalisation behaviours. Employees who have longer tenure or spend longer time in their offices might want to personalise their workspace more, while employees with shorter employments and higher mobility might treat their workplaces as more temporary, and do not modify or decorate their workspaces as much. This might be because employees who have stayed in their organisations longer are likely to feel committed to their organisations. Employees with longer tenure tend to feel more comfortable with the organisation, and build more psychological attachment to their workplace (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sommer, Bae, & Luthans, 1996); consequently they are more likely to feel settled, and therefore decide to personalise their workspace. Indeed, research demonstrates the positive relationship between tenure and organisational commitment (A. Cohen, 1993; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Ritzer & Trice, 1969; Welsch & LaVan, 1981), and this relationship holds cross-culturally. Sommer et al. (1996) investigated American and Korean employees and found a positive relationship between the employee's tenure and organisational commitment in both groups of employees. Therefore, tenure might be positively related to the extent of personalisation for employees regardless of cultures.

The fourth factor that affects the extent to which an employee personalises their workspace is the type of the office in which the individual works. Individuals working in

private offices are likely to have more freedom to personalise their workspaces as they choose. On the other hand, individuals working in shared or open offices may need to consider the (lack of) privacy their office affords when choosing personal items to display. Thus, perceptions of privacy influence the extent to which and how an individual personalises their workspace.

Existing cross-cultural research has revealed cultural differences in perceptions of privacy. According to Hall (1966), using measures of preferences of social distance, cultures can be categorised as contact cultures and noncontact cultures. In comparison with noncontact cultures (e.g., Northern Europe), contact cultures (e.g., the Mediterranean countries and Asia) prefer to have closer social interaction and maintain smaller interpersonal distances (Hall, 1966). More recent research confirms that the amount of personal space individuals need varies with cultures (Beaulieu, 2004). Furthermore, research demonstrates that people from contact cultures tend to perceive spaces as less crowded and have more tolerance for crowded spaces (Evans, Lepore, & Allen, 2000; Kaya & Weber, 2003), because they have fewer privacy needs (Kaya & Weber, 2003). Therefore, in an office environment, individuals from contact cultures may have a lower desire for privacy and territory than people from non-contact cultures, and thus may be less inhibited in their personalisation efforts. Because culture significantly relates to perceptions of privacy, individuals from cultures with lower privacy needs might be more likely to decorate their workspace using personal items, such as photos about personal relationships, whereas individuals from cultures with a higher desire for privacy might have more consideration about privacy and be less likely to display personal items in a shared office environment.

Workspace personalisation is also determined by the externally-facing images individuals wish to construct of themselves. Individuals' personalisation is seen as a way to reflect their identities (Wells, 2000). As mentioned earlier, for example, the quality and

personalisation of psychotherapists' offices is relevant to clients' appraisals of the psychotherapists (Nasar & Devlin, 2011). Thus, personalisation by psychotherapists is a way in which they can construct the first impression of themselves to clients, because the office environment is a physical cue to predict the characteristics of the occupant (Devlin et al., 2013). Indeed, Byron and Laurence (2015) have revealed that employees personalise their workspaces to symbolically communicate their identity to others and to themselves, and the personalisation is seen as a symbolic representation of self and is related to the social construction of self.

While an individual's workspace personalisation reflects their identity, that identity is itself a product of the culture and society in which he or she lives (Hofstede et al., 1991). Thus, how employees choose to represent themselves through personalisation (and the extent to which they choose to do so) will be affected by their (different levels of) cultures. Indeed, the very concepts of self and identity vary according to cultures: Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that different cultures emphasise different aspects of the self. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), there are two aspects of the self: the independent self and interdependent self. The independent self highlights cognitions about personal self, and the instrumental use of social others as source of comparison or target of self-expression, which is broadly emphasised in the self-concept of people in Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). On the other hand, the interdependent self highlights cognitions about social others, and symbolic participation of others in the functioning of the self, which is more important in the self-concept of Eastern people (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This division between the independent individual and the dependent social being is echoed in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which argues that people have a personal identity and a social identity. When personal identity is salient, people act and interact according to their idiosyncratic personal attributes, and when social identity is salient, people act and interact

according to their group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to Hofstede's (1980) framework of cultural differences, highly individualist cultures are characterised by the emphasis of independent self, while highly collectivistic cultures are characterised by highlighting the interdependent self. As mentioned before, the objects employees personalise can be understood as symbols of self-construction, and as culture plays an vital role in self-concept, it is possible that the motives of personalisation and the types of objects they choose to represent themselves might vary across cultures due to the cultural differences in the self-concept.

In summary, organisational culture, job characteristics, organisational tenure, the length of time spent in the workspace, office type, and self-representation may influence the extent to which employees' personalise their workspaces. In the next section, we will examine and review the existing research on the *outcomes* of personalisation.

### **Culture and the Outcomes of Personalisation**

In order to identify the extent to which the outcomes of workspace personalisation are similar for people in different countries and organisations with different organisational cultures, this section includes a systematic review of the current literature on workspace personalisation. In line with our definition of workspace personalisation in this thesis, we delimited the relevant research in two ways. We were concerned with workspace personalisation by employees as the workspace's users, thus we only reviewed studies that measured the effects of employees' modification and control over their own workspaces. Also, because we focused on office work environments, we excluded studies conducted in other types of work environments. Given the definition of personalisation and the delimitation of relevant research, we used standard search methods (e.g., using key words, relevant

categories, and relevant source titles) to search databases including Web of Science, PsycNET and PubMed. All of the selected studies were published in academic journals. Other document types such as proceedings papers were excluded. According to these constraints, our search generated 16 articles for review. Details of the studies are in Table 1. On the other hand, we also used the same search methods, but used translated keywords in Chinese instead (including “工作空间个性化/个人化” [workspace personalisation], “办公室个性化/个人化” [office personalisation], and “办公空间个性化/个人化” [office space personalisation]), to search the main research database in China (CNKI, China National Knowledge Infrastructure). However, no Chinese articles matching the criteria were found.

Table 1.1

Authors	Research method	Subjects, country of origin, and setting	Measures of personalisation	Effects of personalisation
<b>Bringslimark, Hartig, and Patil (2011)</b>	Survey	385 Norwegian office workers	Whether participants could see plants/pictures of nature from work position	(Nature surrogates) serves as a compensation for windowless office workers
<b>Byron and Laurence (2015)</b>	Semi-structured interviews	13 employees at a retail marketing firm or a medical software firm	Interviewed about participants' experiences of personalisation	Helped and harmed workplace relationships and self-regulation; helped to form a sense of self
<b>Devlin et al. (2013)</b>	Survey	192 students from US, Turkey and Vietnam	30 photos of psychotherapists' offices with different degrees of personalisation	Perceived quality of care and comfort of psychotherapy improved
<b>Dinç (2009)</b>	Survey	210 academics at a university in Turkey	Items of personal display; temporary and permanent changes; desk placement	(Predictor of personalisation) Men and women are different in using personal display items, and having attitudes in making temporary changes
<b>Elsbach (2003)</b>	Qualitative interviews and observation	34 Goldtech managers	Interviewed about participants' experiences in the non-territorial work environment	(Effects of non-territorial environment) threatened some employees' workplace identities
<b>Huang, Robertson, and Chang (2004)</b>	Quasi-field experiment	89 knowledge workers from telecommunications and publishing industries	(Environmental control) the number of adjustable features/features that employees knew how to adjust/whether they had adjusted in the last 3 months	Improved satisfaction with work environment, and the degree to which the environment supported communication
<b>Knight and Haslam (2010a)</b>	Laboratory experiment and survey	112 students/47 office workers	Survey: managerial control of space (the lack of involvement and worker autonomy) Experiment: Compared among lean, decorated, and self-decorated lab offices	Improved wellbeing and productivity
<b>Knight and Haslam (2010b)</b>	Survey	288 office workers from separate white-collar organisations	Managerial control of space (the lack of involvement and worker autonomy)	Improved job satisfaction and wellbeing
<b>Laurence et al. (2013)</b>	Survey	87 employees at a US university	The number of items decorating the subject's workspace	Moderating adverse effects of low privacy on emotional exhaustion
<b>Lee and Brand (2005)</b>	Survey	228 employees from 5 different organisations	Perceptions of personal control over the physical work environment	Improved satisfaction with the physical environment, job satisfaction, and group cohesiveness

<b>Lee and Brand (2010)</b>	Survey	384 employees in the corporate offices of 3 manufacturing companies in the US	A sense of personal control over the physical work environment	Moderating effects of distractions on performance
<b>Nasar and Devlin (2011)</b>	Survey	104/102 students at a US university	30 photos of psychotherapists' offices with different degrees of personalisation	Improved quality of care, comfort, therapist boldness, qualification of the therapist.
<b>Nieuwenhuis et al. (2014)</b>	Field experiments	166/172/33 employees; large commercial offices in the Netherlands and UK	Enriched laboratory office with plants (compared with lean office)	Enhanced workplace satisfaction, concentration, and perceived air quality
<b>Wells (2000)</b>	Survey and case studies with structured interviews and observation	338 office workers at 20 companies in the US; 23 employees for case study	The number/types of personal items; the degree to which they would like to display but not allowed; the extent of workspace rearrangement; reasons for (not) personalising; the extent of personalisation of team spaces	Improved satisfaction with the physical environment and job satisfaction (direct); improved wellbeing (indirect)
<b>Wells and Thelen (2002)</b>	Survey	243 employees from 33 companies in the US	The same as Wells (2000)	(Predictor of personalisation) indirect effect of personality on personalisation through employee characteristics
<b>Wells et al. (2007)</b>	Survey	172 office employees from 19 businesses in the US	The same as Wells (2000)	(Predictor of personalisation) Indirect effect of organisational culture on personalisation, via personalisation policies and employee status

Thirteen of the research papers in Table 1.1 involved employees in workplaces as the sample and measured their experience of workspace personalisation in their working settings (e.g., Wells, 2000); two papers used university students as the sample and employed laboratory settings (Devlin et al., 2013; Nasar & Devlin, 2011); the remaining one involved both students in laboratory settings and office workers as participants (Knight & Haslam, 2010a). Fourteen studies had samples in Western cultural contexts, while only two research studies (Devlin et al., 2013; Nasar & Devlin, 2011) involved participants in Turkey, which is broadly considered a more collectivistic culture than Western European countries and the US. Moreover, only one of the two papers conducted with Turkish participants (Devlin et al., 2013) considered the role of culture in the effects of personalisation, although it did not find any significant differences between the three culture groups of samples. In addition, the participants of these two studies were occupation-specific, in which one examined the office personalisation of psychotherapists (Nasar & Devlin, 2011), and another study focused on the personalisation of windowless office users (Bringslimark et al., 2011). Other than the two studies conducted in Turkey, all the research studies in Table 1 investigated personalisation on office workers without consideration of occupations.

The measures of personalisation also varied among the selected research papers. Six studies measured the number and/or type of personalisation items (Dinç, 2009; Huang et al., 2004; Laurence et al., 2013; Wells, 2000; Wells & Thelen, 2002; Wells et al., 2007); two studies compared results from settings of non-personalisation with results from settings of personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010a; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2014); two studies showed pictures of offices with different extents of personalisation (Devlin et al., 2013; Nasar & Devlin, 2011); two studies measured participants' sense of control over their work environment (Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010), while another two measured participants' perceptions of managerial control over it (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b); one

study specifically measured whether participants were able to have views of nature in their workspace (Bringslimark et al., 2011); two studies employed interviewing to explore the participants' perceptions of personalisation (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Elsbach, 2003).

Regarding the findings, twelve research papers found positive effects of personalisation (e.g., Lee and Brand, 2005), including effects on workplace satisfaction, job satisfaction, wellbeing, job performance, workplace relationships, group cohesiveness, and workplace identities, as well as moderating adverse effects of environment; while one paper indicated both positive and negative effects of personalisation (Byron & Laurence, 2015). Another three research papers found that gender, organisational culture, and personality were predictors of personalisation: females personalised more than males did (Dinç, 2009); clan cultures tend to allow more personalisation than nonclan cultures (Wells et al., 2007); extraversion in personality was indirectly and positively related to personalisation through employee characteristics (status and type of workspace) (Wells & Thelen, 2002).

In short, based on this systematic review, it can be seen that most research studies found positive effects of personalisation on individuals; however, most of them were conducted in Western countries, and only one of them considered and investigated the role of culture in the effects of personalisation. Therefore, this literature cannot answer the question of how personalisation is perceived in Eastern countries, but also if and how the processes of personalisation vary cross-culturally. Below, we will examine the process of how personalisation affects the individual outcomes.

### **Culture and the Processes of Personalisation**

Research has demonstrated positive effects of personalisation on employees' wellbeing, satisfaction with their job and work environment and performance (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b; Laurence et al., 2013; Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). Previous

research suggests that there are two approaches to understanding the processes by which personalisation affects individuals. One approach suggests that allowing employees to personalise their workspace provides them with a sense of personal control (Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010). Research in this vein demonstrated that the sense of control provided by personalisation results in positive outcomes such as enhanced wellbeing and productivity (Laurence et al., 2013; Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). An alternative approach to understanding the impact of personalisation adopts a social identity perspective, which applies social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to further explain the process that how personalisation leads to positive individual outcomes (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b). Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) suggest that personalisation is a way in which employers can provide employees with control of their workspaces as well as a sense of work autonomy, and work autonomy can enhance employees' organisational identification. In turn, organisational identification can have a positive impact on individual outcomes. Personalisation thus leads to positive outcomes for employees via organisational identification (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b).

Although (according to both approaches) workspace personalisation generally enhances employees' individual outcomes, it is possible that the relationship between personalisation, autonomy/control, and social identification may vary for employees who reside within different cultures. In the section below, we critically review both approaches to understanding personalisation processes, and explore how the effects of personalisation might vary according to employees' cultures.

### **Autonomy and control**

*Self-determination theory.* Research has demonstrated that allowing employees to personalise their office workspace has positive effects on their wellbeing and performance.

This is possibly because allowing employees to personalise their workspace is a way to empower them and gives them increased perceptions of control over their work (e.g., Lee & Brand, 2005). This is important because, according to self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2006), autonomy is a universal need for self-governance and self-endorsement of behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Thus, according to SDT the satisfaction of this need, e.g., through allowing office personalisation, should be important to individuals from all cultural backgrounds. Supporting autonomy and providing employees with a sense of control should facilitate increased performance and creativity, increased quality of relationships, and increased wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2006). According to the assumptions of SDT; therefore, if office personalization satisfies the need for autonomy, it should have the same positive effect on all individuals regardless of their cultural backgrounds / contexts.

However, research using the SDT approach has not examined the role of culture in the effects of personalisation. The lack of examination of culture in the research on personalisation is a significant omission, as cross-cultural research has revealed that culture affects the relevance and importance of autonomy and control to individuals.

Even though self-determination theory defines autonomy as a universal need (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), some research challenges this idea, suggesting that autonomy is only important in individualistic contexts (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). For example, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) measured the effect of providing personal choice on intrinsic motivation and performance for Asian American children and Anglo American children, and found that personal choice increased motivation and performance more for Anglo American children.

However, later research has critiqued this argument (E. L. Deci et al., 2001), and, consistent with self-determination theory, has demonstrated the cross-cultural relevance of the

need for autonomy (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003; Chirkov, Ryan, & Willness, 2005; E. L. Deci et al., 2001; Ferguson, Kasser, & Jahng, 2011; Yeh, Bedford, & Yang, 2009). For instance, Chirkov et al. (2003) suggested that the reason previous research found cultural differences in the need for autonomy was that autonomy was being defined as independence or separateness. However, self-determination theory does not conceptualise independence as a part of the need for autonomy. Instead, autonomy is more related to volition. Being autonomous means that people's behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted, and they fully endorse the behaviour, and the behaviour is the value expressed by them; on the other hand, being independent is not relying on others' support or help (Chirkov et al., 2003). Later research by Chirkov et al. (2005) also confirms the cross-cultural application of self-determination theory. Moreover, in research by Ferguson et al. (2011), although some cultural differences were found among Danish, American and Korean adolescents (Danish adolescents had higher school satisfaction than American and Korean), these differences were mediated by their perceptions of autonomy support from parents and teachers. It is also consistent with self-determination theory's emphasis on the cross-cultural impact of autonomy on wellbeing.

Therefore, according to the cross-cultural research above, and SDT, it seems that if office personalisation satisfies employees' needs for autonomy, it should have the same positive effect on all employees regardless of their cultural background. However, alternative theories indicate that culture may play a moderating role in the relationship between personalisation and employee wellbeing and satisfaction because of cultural differences in the importance of control and empowerment. It is noted that in the current research, autonomy refers to the right granted by the authority to make independent decisions at work, while control means more practical, specific and direct power over an activity or object, such as a workspace.

***Locus of Control.*** Definitions of personalisation often (e.g., Lee & Brand, 2005) refer

to *control*. Control over the physical work environment is a relatively broad concept, which could refer to the impact individuals can make on the overall physical environment and could include the adjustment of the level of temperature, noise or lighting, as well as the items on desks. Early research, such as Hawthorne studies (Franke & Kaul, 1978; Hart, 1943), has demonstrated the positive effects of having control over the environment on job satisfaction and productivity.

Research on personalisation applies the concept of locus of control to explain the effects of personalisation (Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010). Locus of control refers to the degree to which a person's belief in personal control over the outcomes of events in life (Spector et al., 2002). Research suggests that a sense of direct personal control can result from the opportunity to affect aspects of one's environment (such as that provided by workspace personalisation), and control has positive impacts on wellbeing and performance (Lee & Brand, 2005). However, cross-cultural research has identified that different cultures place different emphases on locus of control (Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Individualists value primary control more, which means that they prefer to have a direct control over environments through their independent actions. On the other hand, collectivists place more value on secondary control, which means that they perceive control by aligning themselves with powerful others or by modifying interpretation of a situation (Weisz et al., 1984). For example, collectivists might prefer their powerful members or the authority in the group making decisions for them; in the context of workspace personalisation, they might prefer their manager deciding the organisation and decoration of their workspaces. This might be because individualist cultures encourage pursuing personal goals and develop autonomy, while collectivist cultures encourage fitting personal needs to the group's goals and social norms (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000). In short, individualists may prefer to have primary control over personalisation and collectivists may prefer to have line managers

to have primary control over personalisation. When this principle is applied to the workspace personalisation, collectivists may be inclined to let their leaders or managers to design or guide their workspace decorations.

Cultural differences in the locus of control have been demonstrated in past empirical research. Spector et al. (2001) investigated locus of control in various countries and demonstrated a significant relationship between individualism-collectivism and locus of control at work. They specifically found that individuals from individualist cultures had much more internal work control beliefs, while individuals from collectivist cultures were more likely to care about group harmony and to subordinate their own control to the group or to the senior instead of having direct control. This finding was also demonstrated in later research by Spector et al. (2002); Spector, Sanchez, Siu, Salgado, and Ma (2004). Therefore, the importance of a sense of perceived personal control might not be the same for all cultures.

Indeed, cross-cultural research has suggested that the effects of personal control on individual outcomes might vary according to different cultures. Ji et al. (2000) compared American and Eastern Asian participants on the perception of control, and found that American participants' performance improved when personal control was provided, but Eastern Asian participants' performance did not. Moreover, research by Sastry and Ross (1998) found that increases in personal control were related to decreases in psychological distress; however, this effect was more for non-Asians rather than for Asians. Consequently, in line with the research on culture and locus of control, giving direct control over workspace might not be effective for employees in all cultures in terms of improving individual outcomes of employees.

To summarise, the literature on autonomy using self-determination theory suggests that the effect of autonomy is universal regardless of cultures, whereas research on locus of

control suggests that the effects of control vary according to different cultures. This difference in findings may be due to subtle differences in the psychological meaning of autonomy and control, whereby autonomy means the right and independence that empowered by the authority, and control means more practical, specific and direct power over an activity or object. Below, we will present a review of literature relating autonomy/control to power distance, in order to further examine the role of culture in autonomy/control.

***Power distance in Hofstede's framework of cultural differences.*** According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1997; p.27). In cultures with high power distance (e.g., China), being controlled (e.g., through lean office policies, or other restrictions to workspace personalisation) might be perceived less negatively than in cultures with low power distance (e.g., the UK), especially in terms of '*controlling support*'. Controlling support refers to the external strategies that are used to motivate individuals, such as rewards or punishments (Chua, Wong, & Koestner, 2014). Chua et al. (2014) conducted research with Malaysian participants (large power distance culture) and with North American participants (small power distance culture), and found that Malaysians rated controlling strategies as more acceptable in comparison with North Americans. Also, there was a positive relationship between Malaysian's endorsement of support for autonomy and their endorsement of controlling support, while no such relationship was found for the North Americans. In other words, only Malaysians perceived controlling support as motivation because Malaysians had higher power distance cultures than North American had. Therefore, autonomy and controlling support are not necessarily contradictory for individuals from cultures with high power distance. Linking to the effects of personalisation, high power distance cultures might regard managerial control of workspace as a form of controlling support, and the effects of

managerial control of workspace on individuals from high power distance cultures might not be as negative as the effects on individuals from low power distance cultures.

### **Consistency between national culture and organisational culture**

According to research in the domain of power distance, empowerment might be valued differently and have different impacts on individuals across cultures. Research by Eylon and Au (1999) has partly demonstrated this view. They found that participants from high power distance cultures performed significantly better in the disempowered conditions compared to participants in the empowered condition, although participants from both high and low power distance cultures had higher job satisfaction (than baseline) when empowered.

One possible reason for this different effect of empowerment on performance and satisfaction in different cultures is that there are different levels of congruence between management practices and local cultures. In other words, when the management of an organisation is consistent with the employees' local culture, employees' performance and satisfaction would be better. On the other hand, if the management practice contradicts with their local culture, they might perform relatively poorer and be less satisfied at work. By using the national culture dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980), Newman and Nollen (1996) have demonstrated that, participants in work units with high power distance cultures had higher performance when they were less participative, while participants from low power distance cultures performed better when they were more participative and empowered. Moreover, they found that performance was higher when managers highlighted individual employee's contributions less for collectivists, while individualists had better performance when managers attached importance to individual's contributions (Newman & Nollen, 1996). More specifically, in terms of empowerment, individuals from high power distance cultures fit in the less empowered environment and did not have positive attitudes towards

empowerment or participation management practices, but preferred hierarchical practices instead, because empowerment practices were not consistent with their national cultures.

Findings from research by Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Dragow, and Lawler (2000) supported the explanation that empowerment practices need to be consistent with national cultures to have a positive effect. Robert et al. (2000) examined the fit of empowerment practices with national cultures by investigating people from United States, Mexico, Poland and India, and the results showed that only Indian participants, the culture with the highest level of power distance among these four countries, showed a negative relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction, but others had positive relationships. Therefore, the consistency between local culture and organisational cultures influences the effect of autonomy and control on employees' individual outcomes. From this point, it is very possible that organisational culture plays a role in the effects of providing autonomy and control on employees, especially the level of power distance in the organisational culture. Some research compares the effects of power distance in organisational cultures on employees from different cultures. For example, Lok and Crawford (2004) conducted research on the effects of organisational culture on job satisfaction and organisational commitment by comparing Australian and Hong Kong's participants. The research showed that Australian participants, who have a smaller power distance culture, scored higher in innovative and supportive organisational cultures than did participants from Hong Kong, who have a larger power distance culture, because both categories of organisational cultures are characterised by equalitarianism and empowerment rather than hierarchy. Therefore, the effect of empowerment on employees might vary according to organisational cultures. In line with this research, organisational cultures might moderate the effects of personalisation, as personalisation is relevant to empowerment.

**Interim summary.** In this section, we have reviewed three domains of research that investigated the role of culture in the effects of autonomy and control. Self-determination theory suggests that there are no cross-cultural differences in the need for autonomy. In contrast, research on locus of control suggests that there are cultural differences in the impact of the provision of personal control. Additionally, research on power distance indicates that empowerment is valued differently and has different impacts on individuals across cultures, and the reason might be the different extent of consistency between organisational culture and employees' national culture. Because workspace personalisation is related to the provision of autonomy and control over their workspaces, the inconsistency in the current literature about the role of culture in autonomy and control still needs to be further examined in order to uncover the relationship between culture and personalisation.

Overall, this section has focused on the effects of autonomy/control on individual outcomes (e.g. productivity and wellbeing) and the role of culture in these effects. However, research in this perspective has not clearly revealed the process by which autonomy and control leads to those outcomes. Thus, in the following section we explain the process by which the social identity approach proposes that increased perceptions of autonomy and control affects individuals.

### **The social identity approach**

Research within the social identity approach to workspace personalisation explains the impact of personalisation by applying social identity theory. This approach suggests that personalisation has a positive effect on individual outcomes because it is a way to involve employees in decision-making and to give them a sense of ownership and voice in the workplace, and in turn, these processes foster organisational identification. According to Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) (Figure 1.1, below), when employees are able to control

of their workspaces and have the sense of work autonomy, employees are given a feeling of voice in the organisation. Having voice can improve the extent to which employees define themselves as members of the organisation (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Knight & Haslam, 2010b), and thus, their organisational identification would be enhanced through personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010b). More specifically, in the control-comfort-identification (CCI) model (Figure 1) proposed by Knight and Haslam (2010b), the lack of autonomy and control of space is expected to decrease organisational identification by reducing psychological comfort, and job satisfaction and wellbeing is expected to be in turn decreased.

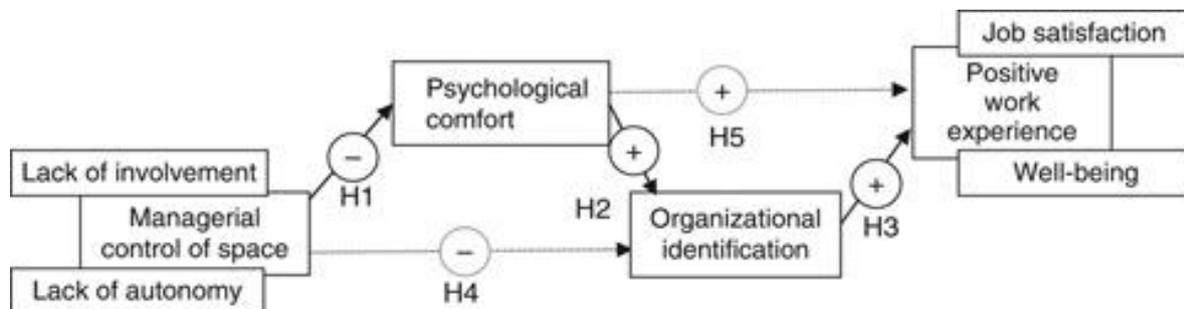


Figure 1.1 The control-comfort-identification model proposed by Knight and Haslam (2010b)

Overall, the social identity approach to workspace management highlights the importance of involving employees in managing their own spaces, and the relationship between having autonomy and control and employees' organisational identification (Knight & Haslam, 2010b). Thus, it stands in opposition to the dominant managerial-control approach to workspace management. As per Figure 1.1, Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) argue that managers who too tightly restrict and control workspaces risk causing their employees' organisational identification to decline due to reduced psychological comfort; and employees' work experience is in turn negatively affected. Thus, increased managerial control is related to decreased organisational identification. Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) explain that when employees are able to have a voice and involvement in decisions (like workspace

personalisation), they tend to define themselves as a member of the organisation, and their identification with the organisation is then enhanced. However, cross-cultural research suggests that different cultures might have different attitudes towards their involvement in workplace decisions, which raises questions about the cross-cultural applicability of the social identity approach to personalisation.

***Culture and organisational identification.*** Involving individual employees in workplace decisions might not be equally important to people in different cultures for two key reasons. First, because people from collectivist cultures might not attach as much importance to the expression of an individual's uniqueness as people from individualist cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Second, the path between control/autonomy and organisational identification in the control-comfort-identification model (Figure 1.1) might differ according to cultures because of cultural differences in the psychological impact of the provision of autonomy and control. It is important to note that having a voice here refers to the feeling of being involved in the decision-making that personalisation provides, while autonomy and control is provided via having a voice through being able to personalise.

Regarding the first reason, cultural variations in self-esteem and self-enhancement suggest that people place different emphases on the self across cultures, and this difference might be related to variations in organisational identification. Falk, Heine, Yuki, and Takemura (2009) investigated self-esteem by comparing Japanese and Canadian participants. They found that Japanese and Asian Canadians were more self-critical than Euro-Canadians, because of cultural differences in self-presentation norms between Asian and European cultures. Thus, compared with individuals from cultures with more self-enhancement, individuals from self-critical cultures might view expression of the self differently. Therefore,

not encouraging employees to express their uniqueness might not negatively impact collectivist employees' organisational identification or comfort.

*Cultural Differences in Social Identity Processes.* To further examine the role of culture in organisational identification, it is necessary to examine the cross-cultural applicability of social identity theory for group behaviours and identification, because social identity theory has been widely used for explaining employees' organisational identification. Social identity theory has largely been tested in individualistic Western contexts. However, Yuki (2003) has explored social identity theory across cultures, and suggests that the assumptions of social identity theory are not equally applicable to all cultures. Postmes, Spears, Lee, and Novak (2005) proposed two routes to social identity formation. Via the top-down/deductive route, group identification is premised on cognitive self-categorisation as a group member. Via the bottom-up/inductive route, people develop social identification through social interaction. It is possible that Western individualists more often develop identification through the more individualistically-based top-down route, while East Asian collectivists tend to use the bottom-up route. This is because East Asian collectivists emphasise the importance of intragroup relations, maintenance of relational harmony within ingroups, being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, and being aware of the relationship structure within the group (Yuki, 2003; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2005). The bottom-up process can be powerful for collectivists who value interaction within the groups, but because they also value power distances, they are likely to be pleased with being directed by authorities. Therefore, when East Asian collectivists feel a stronger sense of personal connectedness within their organisation, they would have greater loyalty to and identification with the organisation (Yuki, 2003). In contrast, when individualists feel their personal or group identity-based need is fulfilled, they would identify more with the organisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010b).

Knight and Haslam's (2010b) research applies the social identity process to explain the influences of workspace personalisation. According Knight and Haslam (2010b), individuals' organisational identification would be increased when their identity-based needs are recognised and considered (as having a voice enhances their self-categorisation that leads to the recognition of identity-based needs); allowing employees to personalise their workspaces, and have a voice in their workspace management, to satisfy their identity-based needs. Their identification with the organisation would be thus enhanced by personalisation. However, according to Yuki's (2003) theory, East Asian collectivists' identification is more relevant to ingroup relationships, and the goal of their group behaviours is based on the self as a relational unit, therefore having a voice in workspace management might not be significantly related to their organisational identification.

As personalisation is about displaying personal items in the workspace, it may impact on other users of the workspace to some extent, such as co-workers, if it is a shared workspace. Because collectivists attach importance to ingroup members' feelings, they might care less about individual personalisation of their workspaces. Collectivists might regard having depersonalised offices or offices with collective input, as a way to maintain harmony within the group environment. Moreover, maintaining of group harmony is crucially important to group behaviours of collectivists, according to Yuki's (2003) theory, thus having depersonalised workspaces might be positively related to collectivists' identification with the group.

**Interim summary.** The social identity approach to workspace personalisation suggests that being able to control and personalise workspaces provides employees with a feeling that they are involved in decisions, which fosters organisational identification. However, workspace personalisation may be less related to organisational identification in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures, because collectivists tend to place less

importance on their involvement in decisions, and because their group identification is more relevant to ingroup harmony and connectedness. Thus, the association between workspace personalisation and positive outcomes for employees in collectivist cultures would be subsequently weaker than for employees in individualist cultures.

### **The current thesis**

In summary, while personalisation can have positive effects for employees and organisations, this may vary according to both national and organisational culture. Research suggests that allowing employees to personalise workspaces provides one of the ways to empower employees (while there are other available methods of empowerment, such as demonstrating employer's trust, encouraging self-improvement and providing growth paths), and through empowerment, personalisation positively affects employees' wellbeing, satisfaction and productivity. However, theories of locus of control and Hofstede's cultural framework suggest that there are cultural differences in the importance of empowerment to individuals. If there are such cultural differences, then the impact of personalisation on those outcomes may be attenuated in cultures that place less importance on empowerment. Furthermore, the social identity perspective to personalisation specifies how personalisation affects individuals via improving social/organisational identification. However, evidence suggests that social identity processes may differ in Eastern Asian and Western cultures. Thus, personalisation may not improve individuals' outcomes through increases in social (organisational) identification equally across cultures.

Given the above synthesis, the main aims of this thesis were: 1) to investigate the processes by which personalisation affects key individual outcomes (including job satisfaction, job performance, and wellbeing) for individuals within organisations; and 2) to

examine if and how culture moderates the effects of workspace personalisation on these individual outcomes.

To achieve these aims, we conducted two field studies (one qualitative, one quantitative) that enabled me to explore the following research questions:

- 1) How does workspace personalisation affect individuals?
- 2) What are the cultural similarities and differences in the attitudes, antecedents, and effects of workspace personalisation?
- 3) What is the impact of different levels of culture (i.e., national and organisational) on personalisation?

It is noted that the impact of personalisation on groups is explored in relation to both research questions, but the focus of the research questions is on how group processes affect individual's personalisation and the outcomes of it. The research questions that each study addressed are described in Table 1.2. In Study 1 (Chapter 2), we aimed to investigate the process by which national and organisational culture affects personalisation by using cross-cultural surveys. The subsequent qualitative phase (Study 2; Chapter 3) then built on the findings from the Study 1 by exploring and comparing employees' workspace personalisation experiences through interviews and workspace observations.

**Table 1.2. Research Questions and Studies in this Thesis**

Study	RQs:
1: Multi-organisation survey in both China ( $n=312$ ) and the UK ( $n=308$ )	How does workspace personalisation affect individuals?  What level (i.e., national or organisational) of culture moderates the effect of personalisation?
2: Interview study	What are the cultural similarities and differences in the attitudes,

with UK ( $n=16$ ) and Chinese ( $n=15$ ) samples	antecedents, and effects of workspace personalisation?
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## **Chapter 2 National and Organisational Culture in Workspace Personalisation: A Cross-Cultural Examination in China and the UK**

### **Introduction**

Workspace personalisation refers to the deliberate decoration or modification of an office environment by its occupants (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Wells, 2000). Past research has demonstrated positive effects of office personalisation on employees' wellbeing, satisfaction with their job and work environment, and performance (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b; Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). This may be because personalisation provides employees with increased control over the workspaces and with a sense of autonomy at work, and that control and autonomy results in positive outcomes (Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). However, cross-cultural research has identified that different cultures place different emphasises on the locus of control (Weisz et al., 1984), which suggests that personalisation (to the extent that its effect is due to increased perceptions of control and autonomy) may have different impacts in different cultures. Moreover, Hofstede's cultural framework suggests that cultures with large power distance expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede et al., 2010). Therefore, while individualist and small power distance cultures may benefit from the boost in control and autonomy provided by the freedom to personalise their workspace, collectivist and large power distance cultures may not derive the same benefit.

The overall purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of culture on the antecedents of personalisation, and its effects on employees. However, employees work within more than one cultural context: whilst each organisation is nested within a national context, and that national context will vary on the extent to which it is individualistic – collectivistic, each organisation also has its own idiosyncratic culture, with norms that shape

personalisation behaviours. Therefore, we investigated the extent to which national culture (collectivistic: China, versus individualistic: UK) moderated the effect of personalisation on job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing at work of employees, and also whether organisational culture impacted on the extent to which employees personalised their workspace.

Below, we explain the reasons why these different ‘levels’ of culture may affect personalisation. In short, we propose that the extent to which employees personalise their workspace is likely to be negatively related to the cultural dimensions of power distance and collectivism, and be positively related to uncertainty avoidance, with employees from more collectivistic cultures with higher power distance and low uncertainty avoidance orientation obtaining relatively less benefit from the freedom to personalise their workspace than employees from more individualistic cultures with lower power distance and high uncertainty avoidance orientation. Broadly, we situate this examination of the cultural differences in personalisation within the perspective of the social identity approach to personalisation proposed by Knight and Haslam’s (2010a, 2010b), because this perspective systematically examines and explains the process by which personalisation affects employees, as described below.

### **The social identity approach to personalisation**

According to Knight and Haslam’s (2010a, 2010b) social identity approach to personalisation, personalisation is seen as a way to have autonomy at work and to have control of workspace. When employees’ autonomy and control is not restricted by standardised working conditions, personalisation gives employees a feeling of voice in the organisation. Having voice can improve the extent to which employees define themselves as members of the organisation (Haslam et al., 2000; Knight & Haslam, 2010b), and thus, their

organisational identification would be enhanced through personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010b). This model therefore suggests that there is a negative causal relationship between restricting personalisation (managerial control of space) and organisational identification.

According to this approach, employees expect to have a voice in the decisions influencing their workspaces; therefore, dominant workspace management reduces employees' organisational identification and comfort at work (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b). Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) argue that if managers are too dominant over workspace management, this leads to a feeling of discomfort amongst employees, because they use their workspaces to express their group identity. Conversely, allowing employees to express their group identity and to have a voice in decisions is the process by which workspace personalisation increases employees' organisational identification. In the interest of directly testing the hypothetical relationship between personalisation and control/autonomy from this previous research, we hypothesised that:

H1: There would be positive relationships between personalisation and personal control (a), and between personalisation and autonomy (b) in both samples.

However, as explained above, cross-cultural work suggests that employees in different cultures might have different attitudes towards expressing uniqueness and having control over decisions in the workplace. Below, we explain the theory underlying these assumptions.

### **The role of national culture in personalisation**

Hofstede's cultural framework applies five dimensions (individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and long/short-term orientation) to explain the differences between national cultures. This framework was developed using data from surveys on more than 88,000 respondents from 72 countries between 1960s and 1970s (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede et al., 2010). Although this framework

has been criticised for its oversimplification of conceptualising cultures by five dimensions and for its lack of malleability of cultures over time (Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001), Kirkman et al. (2006) reviewed 180 empirical studies incorporating Hofstede's framework published between 1980s and 2002, and show that the national cultural differences in most studies predicted by Hofstede's framework were supported. In other words, the validity of Hofstede's framework has been amplified rather than contradicted by more recent research.

Hofstede et al. define power distance as, "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11). Subordinates expect to be told what to do in large power distance societies, while subordinates expect to be consulted in small power distance societies (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, individuals from these cultures might expect and accept the powerful others make decisions for them. This is also consistent with the research on cultural differences in locus of control, which argues that people within some cultures prefer direct control while some prefer powerful in-group members to make decisions (Weisz et al., 1984). Research suggests that autonomy and control might be emphasised less and have different impacts on individuals within large power distance cultures than small power distance cultures. For example, Eylon and Au (1999) found that people within high power distance cultures performed significantly better in a disempowered conditions compared to those in an empowered condition, although both cultural groups had higher job satisfaction when empowered. Furthermore, Newman and Nollen (1996) found that work units with high power distance cultures had higher performance when they were required to be less participative, while low power distance cultures performed better when they were more participative.

This research by Newman and Nollen (1996) also examined the fit between national cultures and management practices in terms of the dimension of individualism-collectivism,

and found that performance of collectivists was better when managers highlighted individual employee's contributions less, while the opposite occurred for individualists. Individualism-collectivism is defined as, "the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11). Collectivistic societies emphasise the maintenance of in-group harmony, while individualistic societies encourage individuals to speak their minds (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, individualists might value personal control more, because their individual views are more likely to be appreciated. In contrast, collectivists might not attach as much importance to the expression of an individual's uniqueness as individualists. This is also because the independent self is emphasised less than interdependent self in collectivistic cultures, while individualistic cultures emphasise the independent self more (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, in contrast to the predictions of Knight and Haslam's model, not encouraging employees to express their uniqueness through personalisation might not negatively impact collectivist employees' organisational identification or other individual outcomes. Put simply, the association between workspace personalisation and positive outcomes for collectivistic cultures should be weaker than it is for employees in individualistic cultures. According to Hofstede's examination of national cultures, China's power distance index value is 80, while UK's is 35; China's individualism index value is 20, while UK's is 89 (Hofstede et al., 2010). Given that China is a higher power-distance and more collectivistic culture than the UK, we therefore had the hypothesis below:

H2: The extent of personalisation would be greater in the UK sample than in the Chinese sample.

Due to the different levels of power distance and collectivism, Chinese participants may not benefit to the same extent as UK participants from the increased work autonomy ('empowerment') and personal control over the workspace provided by personalisation, (i.e., personalisation may not be positively related to self-reported job performance/job

satisfaction/wellbeing at work for Chinese employees). Conversely, UK employees may appreciate the autonomy and control provided by the freedom to personalise and therefore it may improve their work experience. For instance, Newman and Nollen (1996) demonstrated that participants from large power distance cultures had higher performance when they were less participative, while participants from small power distance cultures performed better when they were more participative and empowered. In a similar vein, Sastry and Ross (1998) found that culture moderated the negative relationship between personal control and psychological stress: the negative relationship was stronger for non-Asians than for Asians. Therefore, in line with the research on locus of control, providing direct control over workspace for employees in collectivistic and large power distance cultures might not be as effective for increasing performance, satisfaction and wellbeing, as it is for employees in individualistic and small power distance cultures. In line with these previous findings, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: There would be indirect relationships between increases in personal control and self-reported job performance (a), job satisfaction (b), and wellbeing (c) at work through increases in organisational identification in the UK sample but not the Chinese sample.

H4: There would be indirect relationships between increases in work autonomy and self-reported job performance (a), job satisfaction (b), and wellbeing (c) at work through increases in organisational identification in the UK sample but not the Chinese sample.

### **The role of organisational culture in personalisation**

As well as cultural variation between nations, there is within-nation variation between organisations. That is, organisations each have their own culture. Organisational culture is defined as employees' shared visible and less visible norms, values and behaviours in an organisation. These aspects of organisational culture tend to change slowly; and new

employees learn them via socialisation processes (Wilson, 2001). Each organisation's culture will vary on similar dimensions to those discussed above in relation to national culture, and each of those dimensions might also impact on the extent of employees' personalisation.

There is only very little research investigating the role of organisational culture on the extent of employees' workspace personalisation. Wells et al. (2007) found that organisational culture was a significant predictor of personalisation policies, and personalisation policies allowing more personalisation were positively related to employees' workspace personalisation. Further, Wells et al. (2007) found that organisations with 'clan' organisational culture (encouraging, harmonious, relationship-oriented and collaborative cultures; akin to collectivistic cultures) allowed more personalisation than non-'clan' culture organisations. However, this research did not consider the association between organisational culture and the psychological impact of personalisation on employees. And yet, the impact of that workspace personalisation on employees may depend on the extent to which workspace personalisation aligns with organisational culture, as per the arguments above in relation to the role of national culture. In line with the research on power distance and collectivism, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Power distance (a) and collectivism (b) in organisational culture would be negatively related to the extent of employees' personalisation.

Furthermore, we suggest that an additional organisational culture dimension may affect personalisation within organisations: uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which people feel uncomfortable in unstructured circumstances (Hofstede, 2011). Byron and Laurence (2015) revealed that displaying personalisation items could decrease uncertainty of employees' identities for the employees themselves and others, because personalisation items, as symbols of individuals, can trigger sensemaking regarding role prescriptions of the individuals, and can be a way to communicate role information of the

individuals to others. Thus, personalisation contributes to maintain their stable self-views and views towards others in the workplace. This is because lack of disclosure between colleagues may lead employees to feel uncertainty and distrust towards colleagues, and personalisation can reveal aspects of employees' identities and can facilitate disclosure and rapport between colleagues (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Macintosh, 2009). In line with this research, individuals from organisational cultures with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance might personalise workspaces more in order to reduce the uncertainty in the relationships with colleagues, because these individuals are more likely to feel uncomfortable with the unknown situations. According to Hofstede's examination of culture, China's uncertainty avoidance index is similar with UK's (China: 30; UK: 35) (Hofstede et al., 2010), however uncertainty avoidance may vary between organisations (rather than between countries in this study). In light of this possibility, the hypothesis was proposed below:

H5c: Uncertainty avoidance in organisational culture would be positively related to the extent of employees' personalisation.

Given the paucity of research on organisational culture and personalisation, a key aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which organisational culture impact on the degree to which individual employees personalised their workspace; and on the impact of that personalisation. To investigate the impact of national and organisational culture on personalisation, we recruited participants at multiple different organisations in both the UK and China. By exploring both the role of national culture and organisational culture, we could investigate the extent to which each 'level' of culture was associated with the extent of, and effects of, employees' personalisation of their workspace.

### **The Current Study: Hypothesised Model**

In line with Hofstede's national culture's index, in the present study we assumed that UK had a lower level of power distance and collectivism than China. Based on this

assumption and the considerations above, the hypothesised model (see Figure 2.1) was as follows

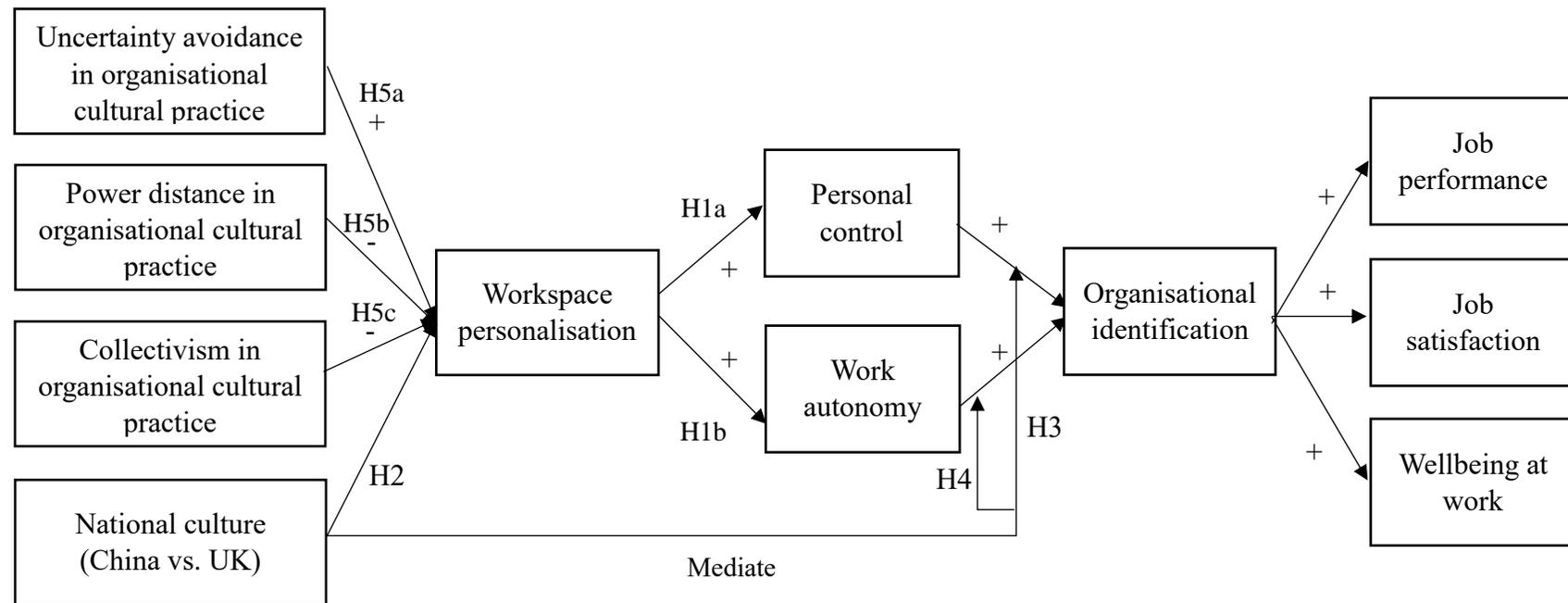


Figure 2.1. Hypothesised Roles of Organisational and National Culture in Workspace Personalisation

## Method

### Participants

The sample included 620 respondents who volunteered to take part in the online self-report survey; 308 from the UK and 312 from China. UK participants were from 11 different public-sector organisations, with *n*'s ranging from 1 to 33. Chinese participants were from 16 different public-sector organisations, with *n*'s ranging from 1 to 60.

Participants in China were recruited through the researcher's existing contacts at the participating organisations. Invitation emails with a URL to the online questionnaire were sent to the existing contacts, and then the contacts invited their organisation's employees to participate in this online survey. In terms of recruitment of participants in the UK, potential participating organisations' gatekeepers (human resource managers and heads of departments) were contacted via email. Consenting gatekeepers invited their organisation's employees to participate in this online survey via an email that they distributed containing a URL to the study. Table 2.1 shows the demographic information of UK and Chinese participants. There were specific dimensions on which the UK and Chinese samples significantly differed (such as the proportion of participants with each office type; as indicated via subscripts in Table 2.1) that may have consequences for personalisation and the key explanatory variables – personal control and work autonomy. We controlled for these differences by including office type in the statistical model, and we discuss the implications of this later on in this chapter.

Table 2.1 Demographics of participants

	Groups of participants	
	UK	Chinese
Size	308	312
Gender	Women: 143 (46.4%) <sub>a</sub>	Women: 163 (52.2%) <sub>a</sub>

	Men: 99 (32.1%) <sub>a</sub>	Men: 122 (39.1%) <sub>a</sub>
	No response: 66 (21.4%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 27 (8.7%) <sub>a</sub>
Age	18 to 24: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	18 to 24: 32 (10.3%) <sub>b</sub>
	25 to 34: 40 (13.0%) <sub>a</sub>	25 to 34: 131 (42.0%) <sub>b</sub>
	35 to 44: 72 (23.4%) <sub>a</sub>	35 to 44: 67 (21.5%) <sub>b</sub>
	45 to 54: 65 (21.1%) <sub>a</sub>	45 to 54: 45 (14.4%) <sub>b</sub>
	55 to 64: 59 (19.2%) <sub>a</sub>	55 to 64: 8 (2.6%) <sub>b</sub>
	65 or older: 5 (1.6%) <sub>a</sub>	65 or older: 1 (0.3%) <sub>b</sub>
	No response: 66 (21.4%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 28 (9.0%) <sub>b</sub>
Ethnicity	White: 228 (74.0%) <sub>a</sub>	Asian: 283 (90.7%) <sub>b</sub>
	Black or African American: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 29 (9.4%) <sub>b</sub>
	Asian: 2 (0.6%) <sub>a</sub>	
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	
	Other: 10 (3.2%) <sub>a</sub>	
	No response: 66 (21.4%) <sub>a</sub>	
Employment	Full-time: 219 (71.1%) <sub>a</sub>	Full-time: 273 (87.5%) <sub>a</sub>
	Part-time: 23 (7.5%) <sub>a</sub>	Part-time: 7 (2.2%) <sub>a</sub>
	Student: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	Student: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>
	No response: 65 (21.1%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 28 (9.0%) <sub>a</sub>
Education	Doctorate: 135 (43.8%) <sub>a</sub>	Doctorate: 4 (1.3%) <sub>b</sub>
	Post-graduate degree: 70 (22.7%) <sub>a</sub>	Post-graduate degree: 18 (5.8%) <sub>b</sub>
	Undergraduate: 21 (6.8%) <sub>a</sub>	Undergraduate: 137 (43.9%) <sub>b</sub>
	Vocational qualification: 5 (1.6%) <sub>a</sub>	Vocational qualification: 102 (32.7%) <sub>b</sub>
	Post-secondary education: 9 (2.9%) <sub>a</sub>	Post-secondary education: 21 (6.7%) <sub>b</sub>
	Secondary education: 3 (1.0%) <sub>a</sub>	Secondary education: 2 (0.6%) <sub>b</sub>
	No response: 65 (21.1%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 28 (9.0%) <sub>b</sub>
Tenure in the current organisation	Less than one year: 24 (7.8%) <sub>a</sub>	Less than one year: 47 (15.1%) <sub>a</sub>
	1 to 5 years: 90 (29.2%) <sub>a</sub>	1 to 5 years: 88 (28.2%) <sub>a</sub>
	6 to 10 years: 51 (16.6%) <sub>a</sub>	6 to 10 years: 38 (12.2%) <sub>a</sub>
	11 to 15 years: 32 (10.4%) <sub>a</sub>	11 to 15 years: 33 (10.6%) <sub>a</sub>

	16 to 20 years: 20 (6.5%) <sub>a</sub>	16 to 20 years: 26 (8.3%) <sub>a</sub>
	21 and 25 years: 10 (3.2%) <sub>a</sub>	21 and 25 years: 16 (5.1%) <sub>a</sub>
	Over 25 years: 16 (5.2%) <sub>a</sub>	Over 25 years: 34 (10.9%) <sub>a</sub>
	Not respond: 65 (21.1%) <sub>a</sub>	Not respond: 30 (9.6%) <sub>a</sub>
Tenure in the current workspace	Less than one year: 40 (13.0%) <sub>a</sub>	Less than one year: 61 (19.6%) <sub>a</sub>
	1 to 5 years: 150 (48.7%) <sub>a</sub>	1 to 5 years: 122 (39.1%) <sub>a</sub>
	6 to 10 years: 30 (9.7%) <sub>a</sub>	6 to 10 years: 49 (15.7%) <sub>a</sub>
	11 to 15 years: 13 (4.2%) <sub>a</sub>	11 to 15 years: 23 (7.4%) <sub>a</sub>
	16 to 20 years: 3 (1.0%) <sub>a</sub>	16 to 20 years: 12 (3.8%) <sub>a</sub>
	21 and 25 years: 3 (1.0%) <sub>a</sub>	21 and 25 years: 9 (2.9%) <sub>a</sub>
	Over 25 years: 3 (1.0%) <sub>a</sub>	Over 25 years: 6 (1.9%) <sub>a</sub>
	No response: 66 (21.4%) <sub>a</sub>	No response: 30 (9.6%) <sub>a</sub>
Office type	Cell office: 133 (43.2%) <sub>a</sub>	Cell office: 16 (5.1%) <sub>b</sub>
	Shared room office: 87 (28.2%) <sub>a</sub>	Shared room office: 98 (31.4%) <sub>b</sub>
	Small open plan office: 44 (14.3%) <sub>a</sub>	Small open plan office: 143 (45.8%) <sub>b</sub>
	Medium-sized open plan office: 18 (5.8%) <sub>a</sub>	Medium-sized open plan office: 24 (7.7%) <sub>b</sub>
	Large open plan office: 24 (7.8%) <sub>a</sub>	Large open plan office: 11 (3.5%) <sub>b</sub>
	Flex office: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	Flex office: 13 (4.2%) <sub>b</sub>
	Unknown: 1 (0.3%) <sub>a</sub>	Combi office: 5 (1.6%) <sub>b</sub>
		Unknown: 2 (0.6%) <sub>b</sub>

*Notes.* Numbers on rows with different subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .05$ . Differences in these characteristics between participants across countries and organisations were controlled for in the analyses.

## Materials and Procedure

All participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire comprised of standardised scales and demographic questions. There were two versions of this online questionnaire: the original English version and the translated Chinese version. The Chinese

version was translated from the original version by the bilingual researcher, and the translations were verified by another bilingual individual as an independent translator. In the online questionnaire, participants were provided with an information page at the start of the questionnaire before they agreed to take part. On this page, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the survey at any point. In order to assure the confidentiality and anonymity, participants were also told on this page that no identifying information would be recorded in the research data, and that individual participants' data would not be shared with their employers (rather, they were informed that participating organisations might receive summaries of the findings aggregated at the group level). After this, they were asked to confirm a consent statement. Following this, participants completed the questionnaire.

**Organisational culture.** Participants' perceptions of their organisation's cultural practices were measured using three subscales (uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism) of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) Organisational Culture Scale (House et al., 2004).

Participants were asked to respond to the items in line with their own observations of their organisation (House et al., 2004). Three items measured uncertainty avoidance, which were "In this organisation, orderliness and consistency are stressed, even at the expense of experimentation and innovation", "In this organisation, most work is highly structured lives with few unexpected events", and "In this organisation, job requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail, so employees know what they are expected to do". Participants responded to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1= Strongly agree and 7 = Strong disagree ( $\alpha = .65$ ). Power distance was also assessed with three items, which were "In this organisation, a person's influence is based primarily on" (*PDI*), answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1= one's ability and contribution to the organisation, to 7= the authority of one's position; "In this organisation, subordinates are expected to" (*PD2*),

answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1= obey their boss without question, to 7= question their boss when in disagreement; “In this organisation, people in positions of power try to” (*PD3*), answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1=increase their social distance from less powerful individuals, to 7=decrease their social distance from less powerful people.

It is noted that the different Likert scales of the GLOBE Culture Scale were applied to this study in order to maintain the construct reliability of the original scale. According to Hanges and Dickson (2004), the correlations between the GLOBE scales with independent sources, such as Hofstede’s culture dimensions and World Values Survey, have been investigated for demonstrating the construct validity of the GLOBE scales. Specifically, the average  $r_w g(J)$  for cultural practices was .85 and for cultural values was .80, which indicates the appropriate polymerisation of individual responses to the organisational level; the average of Cronbach alpha for the cultural practices scales was .77 and for cultural values was .75 (Tjosvold & Leung, 2004).

Because Cronbach’s alpha for the three items was low ( $\alpha = .36$ ), and *PD2* and *PD3* appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The one exception to this was *PDI*, the omission of which would increase Cronbach’s alpha, *PDI* was thus removed. The two remaining items were significantly correlated,  $r = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ . A factor analysis using principal axis factoring and oblique rotation extracted one factor that explained 41% of the variance,  $\lambda = 0.83$ , suggesting that the two items captured power distance reliably.

Eight items measured collectivism in organisational practices ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Of these eight items, three measured institutional collectivism organisational practices, which were “In this organisation, managers encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer”, with responses on a Likert-type scale from 1= Strongly agree, to 7= Strongly disagree; “The pay and bonus system in this organisation is designed to maximise”, with responses on a Likert-type scale from 1= individual interests, to 7= collective interests; “In this organisation” with

responses on a Likert-type scale from 1= group cohesion is more valued than individualism, to 7= individualism is more valued than group cohesion. The other five items assessed in-group collectivism organisational practices (e.g., “In this organisation, group members take pride in the individual accomplishments of their group manager”), with responses on a 7-point scale from 1= Strongly agree to 7= Strongly disagree.

**Personalisation.** Two measures captured the extent to which participants personalised their workspace (Wells, 2000). The first measure assessed the total number of personalisation items used within the participants’ workspace. This measure is hereafter referred to as ‘sum of personalisation items’. Participants were asked to count the number of personal items displayed on their workspace in each of the following categories (based on Well’s (2000) categories of personalisation): 1) work-related items (e.g., calendar, documents); 2) relationships with family; 3) relationships with friends; 4) relationship with romantic partner; 5) relationships with colleagues; 6) relationships with others; 7) pets; 8) trinkets/knick-knacks/mementos, souvenirs; 9) art (e.g., paintings, sculptures, posters); 10) values (e.g., religion, politics, mottos); 11) hobbies (e.g., music or sports related items); 12) entertainment items (e.g., radios, books); 13) achievements (e.g., diplomas, awards); 14) plants; and 15) others. The second question in this section measured personalisation by asking participants to respond to, ‘To what extent have you personalised your workspace?’ on a 5-point scale from 1=None to 5=Very much. This measure is hereafter referred to as ‘personalisation extent’.

**Personal control over workspace.** We measured participants’ perceived personal control of their workspace using the 6-item control scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) by Lee and Brand (2005). It included items such as “I determine the organisation/appearance of my work area”, and “I can hold small impromptu meetings in my office or work area as needed”. Participants responded to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

**Job autonomy.** Job autonomy was assessed using a 6-item autonomy subscale from the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction at Work Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Edward L. Deci et al., 2001; Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, Davey, & Ryan, 1992). Items included, “I feel like I can make a lot of input to deciding how my job gets done”, and “There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to go about my work”. Item 2 of the original 7-item subscale (“I feel pressured at work.”), was not included in the final measure to bring the reliability of the scale to an acceptable level (upon deletion of item 2, Cronbach’s alpha increased from  $\alpha = .66$  to  $\alpha = .72$ ). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

**Organisational identification.** Participants’ identification with their organisations ( $\alpha = .90$ ) was assessed using the social identification scale by Leach et al. (2008). This scale had 14-items, such as “I think that my organisation has a lot to be proud of”, “Being an employee of my organisation is an important part of how I see myself”, and “My organisation’s employees have a lot in common with each other”. Participants responded to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree. The full version of the scale was applied in order to ensure the validity of the instrument.

**Work performance.** Self-reported work performance was measured using a 7-item performance scale ( $\alpha = .80$ ) by Williams and Anderson (1991). Participants were asked, “How often do you engage in the following behaviours at work?” Example items were, “Adequately complete assigned duties”, and “Engage in activities that will directly affect your performance evaluation”. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1=Never to 5=Always.

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction ( $\alpha = .90$ ) was measured using a 6-item scale (Agho, Price, & Mueller, 1992) with items such as, “I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job”, and “I like my job better than the average worker does”. Participants responded on a 7-point

Likert-type scale that ranged from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

**Wellbeing.** Participants' wellbeing at work ( $\alpha = .90$ ) was assessed using an 8-item scale by Laurence et al. (2013). Items included, "I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job", and "Working all day with people in really a strain for me". Participants responded on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

### **Analytic Strategy**

Mplus Version 8 software was used to conduct a two-level mixture model, in which individual-level variance was accounted for at level one and organisational-level variance at level two, with two groups: China versus UK. The two-level mixture model assessed the associations between national and organisational culture and workspace personalisation, and the relationship between workspace personalisation and job satisfaction, wellbeing at work, and work performance, through processes of personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification (controlling for type of office). Level 1 units were individual participants ( $n = 620$ ). Level 2 units were the organisations at which the participants were employed ( $n = 28$ ). We examined whether the within-subject (Level 1) effects varied across classes (China versus UK), controlling for between-organisational (Level 2) variance. All analyses were conducted twice: once including the single-item self-report measure for the extent of personalisation, and once including the measure for the sum of personalisation items. Model fit was assessed by the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian information criterion (BIC). The AIC and BIC can be used in structural equation modelling to compare models estimated with the same data; specifically, lower values of the AIC and BIC indicate better model fit (Kline, 2005). We then conducted two separate models to examine indirect effects for the two groups of participants (UK vs. China; as tests of indirect effects

cannot be conducted within mixture models). Missing data (ranging from 0.2% to 8.9% across the variables) were estimated and replaced using the estimation-maximisation function in SPSS.

## Results

### Differences between UK and Chinese participants

In order to compare means of cultural factors and personalisation across UK and Chinese participants within the two-level mixture model, we created latent cluster means that referred to the average for the respective measure across organisations within samples and then compared the cluster mean across two groups. Results indicated that the personalisation extent of UK participants ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SE = .01$ ) was significantly greater than the personalisation extent of Chinese participants ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SE = .02$ ),  $\chi^2(1) = 1627.23$ ,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, the sum of personalisation items of UK participants ( $M = 21.67$ ,  $SE = .62$ ) was also significantly greater than the sum of personalisation items of Chinese participants ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SE = .12$ ),  $\chi^2(1) = 895.20$ ,  $p < .001$ . In terms of organisational culture, UK participants ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SE = .01$ ) reported significantly lower uncertainty avoidance than Chinese participants ( $M = 5.02$ ,  $SE = .02$ ),  $\chi^2(1) = 4063.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ; UK participants ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SE = .02$ ) reported significantly lower power distance than Chinese participants ( $M = 4.70$ ,  $SE = .03$ ),  $\chi^2(1) = 725.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ; UK participants ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SE = .01$ ) had significantly lower collectivism than Chinese participants ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SE = .02$ ),  $\chi^2(1) = 1537.23$ ,  $p < .001$ . Therefore, there were significant differences both in how much participants personalised their workspaces in China and the UK, and in the organisational cultures within organisations in the two countries.

Next, we present results from a two-level mixture model for the two groups of participants (China and UK) for the two measures of personalisation (extent and sum of

items, respectively), in which relevant regression data is presented within the text below. The purpose of the two-level mixture models was to test the direct relationships between variables in our model. In the subsequent section, we present the results of the tests of indirect effects separately for the two groups of participants (China and UK).

### **Test of hypothesised model: Two-level mixture models**

We ran two-level mixture models twice by using personalisation extent and using the number of personalisation items as the measurement of personalisation respectively.

Comparing these two mixture models, the *AIC* and the *BIC* were smaller for the personalisation extent model ( $AIC = 11857.07$ ,  $BIC = 12145.00$ ) than for the personalisation items model ( $AIC = 16322.85$ ,  $BIC = 16610.78$ ). These indicators suggested that the personalisation extent model was a better fitting model.

***Extent of personalisation.*** The full results of this two-level mixture model are shown in the Table 2.2.1 and Table 2.2.2 in Appendix 2.2. Please refer to Figures 2.2 and 2.3 for the UK and Chinese samples' results, respectively.

**UK.** For the UK participants, in terms of the association between organisational culture and workspace personalisation, we found that uncertainty avoidance ( $\gamma = .12$ ,  $p = .04$ ) had a significant positive relationship with personalisation, while power distance ( $\gamma = -.15$ ,  $p = .06$ ) and collectivism ( $\gamma = -.16$ ,  $p = .01$ ) had significant negative relationships with personalisation.

Personalisation was positively associated with personal control ( $\gamma = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ); but not significantly associated with work autonomy ( $\gamma = .07$ ,  $p = .20$ ). There was a positive relationship between personalisation and wellbeing ( $\gamma = .13$ ,  $p = .01$ ), but not between personalisation and: organisational identification ( $\gamma = .07$ ,  $p = .19$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = -.03$ ,  $p = .42$ ), or job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .07$ ,  $p = .10$ ).

Work autonomy had significant positive relationships with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .37, p < .001$ ), with job performance ( $\gamma = .13, p = .03$ ), with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .43, p < .001$ ), and with wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .51, p < .001$ ). In terms of personal control, results showed that it had a significant and positive association with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .12, p = .05$ ). On the other hand, personal control did not have a significant relationship with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .07, p = .22$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = .06, p = .51$ ), or wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .05, p = .34$ ). Additionally, we found that organisational identification was significantly related to job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .18, p = .01$ ), but was not significantly related to job performance ( $\gamma = .02, p = .71$ ), and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .09, p = .22$ ).

**China.** In contrast to the results for the UK participants, none of the organisational cultural variables were significantly related to the extent of Chinese participants' workspace personalisation (uncertainty avoidance,  $\gamma = -.05, p = .48$ ; power distance,  $\gamma = .03, p = .62$ ; collectivism,  $\gamma = .07, p = .29$ ).

Workspace personalisation was significantly and positively related to personal control ( $\gamma = .19, p < .001$ ), and work autonomy ( $\gamma = .09, p = .03$ ). However, the relationship between personalisation and job performance was negative ( $\gamma = -.16, p = .02$ ). We also found that personalisation was not associated with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .10, p = .13$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .02, p = .57$ ), or wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .06, p = .32$ ).

Work autonomy had significant positive relationships with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .45, p < .001$ ), with job performance ( $\gamma = .19, p < .01$ ), with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .23, p < .001$ ), and with wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .21, p < .001$ ). Moreover, we found that personal control was significantly related to organisational identification ( $\gamma = .26, p < .001$ ), and job performance ( $\gamma = .12, p = .07$ ). On the other hand, the relationships between personal control and job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .02, p = .77$ ), and between personal control and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = -.01, p = .94$ ) were not significant. In addition, we found that organisational

identification was significantly and positively associated with job performance ( $\gamma = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .57$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Number of personalisation items.** We ran another two-level mixture model using the sum of personalisation items as the measurement of personalisation (Figures 2.2 and 2.3, for UK and China results respectively). Full results of this two-level mixture model are shown in Table 2.2.3 and Table 2.2.4 in Appendix 2.2.

**UK.** For the UK participants, in terms of organisational culture, uncertainty avoidance was significantly and positively related to the number of personalisation items ( $\gamma = .12$ ,  $p = .10$ ). On the other hand, power distance ( $\gamma = -.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and collectivism ( $\gamma = -.22$ ,  $p = .01$ ) were significantly and negatively related to personalisation.

For the associations with personalisation, we found that personalisation was significantly related to personal control ( $\gamma = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but not significantly related to work autonomy ( $\gamma = .02$ ,  $p = .45$ ). Moreover, personalisation had a significant positive association with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .02$ ,  $p = .49$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = -.01$ ,  $p = .31$ ), and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = -.05$ ,  $p = .26$ ).

Work autonomy was positively associated with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = .13$ ,  $p = .02$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were all significant. Additionally, personal control had significant positive relationships with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .13$ ,  $p = .03$ ), while its relationships with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .09$ ,  $p = .12$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = .05$ ,  $p = .54$ ), and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .03$ ,  $p = .55$ ) was not significant. In addition, organisational identification was significantly related to job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not significantly related to job performance ( $\gamma = .01$ ,  $p = .75$ ) or wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .08$ ,  $p = .25$ ).

**China.** In terms organisational culture, none of the variables, uncertainty avoidance ( $\gamma$

= .03,  $p = .18$ ), power distance ( $\gamma = .01, p = .49$ ), and collectivism ( $\gamma = -.01, p = .09$ ) were significantly related to personalisation.

With regards to the associations with workspace personalisation, personalisation did not have a significant association with personal control ( $\gamma = -.08, p = .59$ ) or work autonomy ( $\gamma = .16, p = .15$ ). We found that personalisation had a significant positive relationship with wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .53, p < .01$ ), while the relationships with job performance ( $\gamma = -.27, p = .38$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .33, p = .27$ ), and organisational identification ( $\gamma = -.37, p = .37$ ) were not significant.

In terms of the associations with work autonomy, results show that it had significant positive relationships with organisational identification ( $\gamma = .41, p < .001$ ), job performance ( $\gamma = .18, p = .01$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .24, p < .001$ ) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .19, p < .001$ ). Moreover, personal control was significantly and positively related to organisational identification ( $\gamma = .24, p < .01$ ), but was not significantly related to job performance ( $\gamma = .09, p = .14$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .02, p = .75$ ), or wellbeing at work ( $\gamma > -.01, p = .96$ ). Additionally, we found that organisational identification was positively and significantly associated with job performance ( $\gamma = .22, p < .01$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .65, p < .001$ ), and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .23, p < .01$ ).

1

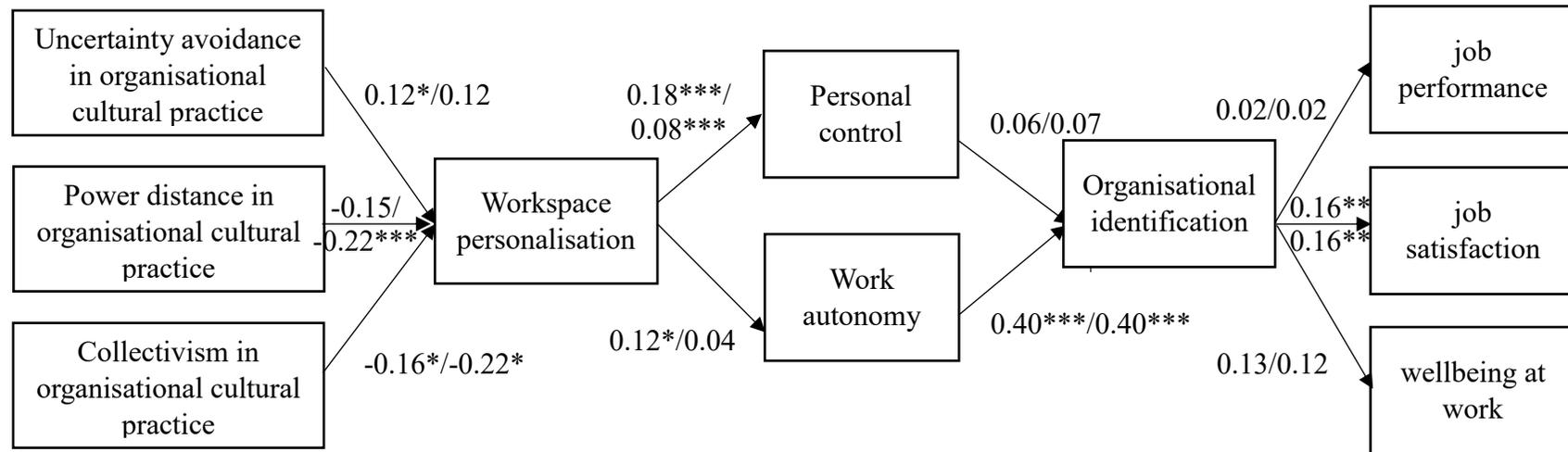


Figure 2.2. Two-level mixture model of the relationships between cultures, workspace personalisation and outcomes for UK participants

<sup>1</sup> Note: Standardised parameter estimates from the model using personalisation extent measure/from the model using sum of items measure shown. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

2

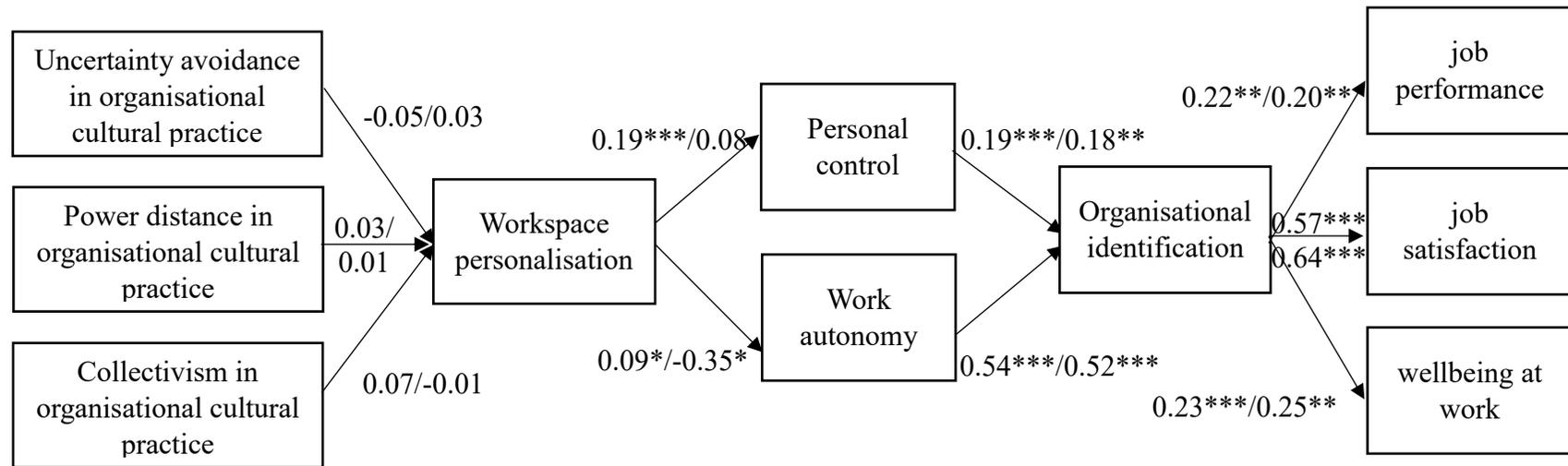


Figure 2.3. Two-level mixture model of the relationships between cultures, workspace personalisation and outcomes for Chinese participants

<sup>2</sup>Note: Standardised parameter estimates from the model using personalisation extent measure/from the model using sum of items measure shown. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### Test of hypothesised model: Tests of Indirect Effects

In order to examine the indirect relationships, we used the bootstrap approach for testing the indirect effects in Mplus Version 8. We ran the tests of indirect effects separately for the UK and China samples as the bootstrapping function is not available in two-level mixture modelling. Thus, each model was a two-level multi-level model with tests of indirect effects. Comparing the model fit of these tests, when using personalisation extent as the measure, the *AIC* and the *BIC* were smaller for the model of UK sample (*AIC* = 5729.49, *BIC* = 5867.51) than for the model of Chinese sample (*AIC* = 6048.06, *BIC* = 6186.56), suggesting that the UK model was a better fitting model. On the other hand, when using number of personalisation items as the measure, the *AIC* and the *BIC* was higher for the model of UK sample (*AIC* = 8105.01, *BIC* = 8243.03) than for the model of Chinese sample (*AIC* = 7378.60, *BIC* = 7517.09), indicating that the Chinese model had a better model fit when using personalisation items as the measure.

***Extent of personalisation.*** Table 2.3.1 and Table 2.3.2 in Appendix 2.3 show the results for the tests of indirect effects for UK participants, including the measure for personalisation extent rather than the sum of personalisation items. Table 2.3.1 refers to the results of the relationships for the organisational culture variables, and Table 2.3.2 indicates the results of the remaining relationships. As shown in Table 2.3.1, uncertainty avoidance had significant positive indirect effects on personal control ( $\gamma = .03$ ; 95% CIs 0.001, 0.058) and work autonomy ( $\gamma = .01$ ; 95% CIs 0.002, 0.023) through increases in personalisation for UK participants; Moreover, power distance had significant negative indirect effects on personal control ( $\gamma = -.03$ ; 95% CIs -0.053, -0.006) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = -.02$ ; 95% CIs 0.001, 0.041) through decreases in personalisation. Similarly, collectivism had significant negative indirect effects on personal control ( $\gamma = -.05$ ; 95% CIs -0.077, -0.019) and wellbeing at work

( $\gamma = -.03$ ; 95% CIs 0.001, 0.066) through decreases in personalisation.

Table 2.3.2 shows several notable significant indirect effects for UK participants. Overall, personalisation had a significant positive indirect effect on organisational identification through increases in personal control and work autonomy, taken together ( $\gamma = .06$ ; 95% CIs 0.011, 0.111); and through increases in work autonomy specifically ( $\gamma = .05$ ; 95% CIs 0.007, 0.092), but not specifically through increases in personal control ( $\gamma = .01$ ; 95% CIs -0.008, 0.031). Moreover, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on job performance through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together was significant ( $\gamma = .01$ ; 95% CIs 0.004, 0.023), although no specific indirect effect on job performance was significant when each mediator was treated separately.

In addition, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on job satisfaction through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together was significant ( $\gamma = .09$ ; 95% CIs 0.042, 0.135), and the specific indirect effects of personalisation through personal control ( $\gamma = .02$ ; 95% CIs 0.002, 0.043), and through work autonomy ( $\gamma = .06$ ; 95% CIs 0.003, 0.110) on job satisfaction were also significant, although there was no significant specific indirect effect through increases in organisational identification. Additionally, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on wellbeing at work through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together ( $\gamma = .09$ ; 95% CIs 0.027, 0.155) was significant. The specific indirect effect of personalisation on increases in wellbeing through increases in work autonomy ( $\gamma = .06$ ; 95% CIs 0.003, 0.121) was also significant, while the specific indirect effect on job performance through increases in work autonomy or organisational identification was not significant. In turn, there were significant indirect effects of work autonomy on job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .08$ ; 95% CIs 0.031, 0.126) and on wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .07$ ; 95% CIs 0.007, 0.140) through organisational identification.

Table 2.3.3 and Table 2.3.4 in Appendix 2.3 show the results of the tests of indirect effects for Chinese participants when using the personalisation extent as the measure of personalisation. Table 2.3.3 specifically shows the results of the effects of organisational cultural variables, and Table 2.3.4 shows the results of the effects of personalisation. Table 2.3.3 reveals that, in contrast to the results for UK sample, there were no significant indirect effects of any organisational cultural variables on personal control and autonomy through personalisation. As Table 2.3.4 shows, there were significant positive indirect effects of personalisation on organisational identification through increases in personal control ( $\gamma = .04$ ; 95% CIs 0.026, 0.063) and work autonomy ( $\gamma = .06$ ; 95% CIs 0.013, 0.103) – both independently and together ( $\gamma = .10$ ; 95% CIs 0.061, 0.144). Moreover, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on job performance through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together ( $\gamma = .04$ ; 95% CIs 0.014, 0.055) was significant. The specific indirect effect of personalisation on increases in job performance through increases in work autonomy ( $\gamma = .01$ ; 95% CIs 0.003, 0.019) was also significant, while the specific indirect effect on job performance through increases in work autonomy or organisational identification was not significant. Similarly, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on job satisfaction through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together ( $\gamma = .10$ ; 95% CIs 0.029, 0.176) was significant, and the specific effect of personalisation through work autonomy on job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .03$ ; 95% CIs 0.005, 0.045) was also significant, although there was no significant specific indirect effect through increases in work autonomy or organisational identification. Additionally, the sum of indirect effects of personalisation on wellbeing at work through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification together ( $\gamma = .04$ ; 95% CIs 0.004, 0.077) was significant. In turn, personal control was significantly related to increases in job performance ( $\gamma = .02$ ; 95% CIs 0.007, 0.027), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .10$ ; 95% CIs 0.065, 0.141) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .04$ ;

95% CIs 0.023, 0.052) through increases in organisational identification. Similarly, work autonomy had significant effects on increases in job performance ( $\gamma = .07$ ; 95% CIs 0.038, 0.110), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .45$ ; 95% CIs 0.408, 0.490) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .16$ ; 95% CIs 0.098, 0.229) through increases in organisational identification.

***Number of personalisation items.*** Table 2.3.5 and Table 2.3.6 in Appendix 2.3 show the results for the indirect effects for UK participants from the analysis using the number of personalisation items. Table 2.3.5 indicates the results of the indirect effects of variables in organisational cultural practice for UK participants, and Table 2.3.6 indicates the results of the indirect effects of personalisation. According to the results on the Table 2.3.5, power distance in organisational culture had significant negative indirect effects on personal control ( $\gamma = -.02$ ; 95% CIs -0.031, -0.008) and job satisfaction ( $\gamma = -.01$ ; 95% CIs -0.014, -0.005) through decreases in personalisation. Similarly, collectivism also had significant negative indirect effects on personal control ( $\gamma = -.03$ ; 95% CIs -0.055, -0.006) and job satisfaction ( $\gamma = -.02$ ; 95% CIs -0.023, -0.006) through decreases in personalisation. Table 2.6 reveals that work autonomy was positively related to increases in job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .08$ ; 95% CIs 0.033, 0.127) and wellbeing ( $\gamma = .07$ ; 95% CIs 0.003, 0.135) through increases in organisational identification.

Table 2.3.7 and Table 2.3.8 in Appendix 2.3 indicate the results of the tests of indirect effects for Chinese participants when using the number of personalisation items as the measure. Table 2.3.7 refers to the indirect effects of organisational cultural variables for Chinese participants, and Table 2.3.8 refers to the indirect effects of personalisation. The results on the Table 2.3.7 show no significant indirect effects of any cultural variables, which was the same as the results when using personalisation extent as measure. Table 2.3.8 shows that the specific indirect effect of personalisation on decreases in organisational identification through increases in work autonomy ( $\gamma = -.01$ ; 95% CIs -0.013, -0.001) was significant.

Unexpectedly, personalisation had significant negative indirect effects on job satisfaction ( $\gamma = -.003$ ; 95% Cis  $-0.005, -0.001$ ) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = -.002$ ; 95% Cis  $-0.003, -0.001$ ) through decreases in work autonomy. In contrast, personal control was positively related to job performance ( $\gamma = .02$ ; 95% Cis  $0.005, 0.028$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .11$ ; 95% Cis  $0.073, 0.150$ ) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .04$ ; 95% Cis  $0.029, 0.057$ ) through increases in organisational identification. Similarly, work autonomy had positive effects on increases in job performance ( $\gamma = .07$ ; 95% Cis  $0.029, 0.103$ ), job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .45$ ; 95% Cis  $0.416, 0.491$ ) and wellbeing at work ( $\gamma = .18$ ; 95% Cis  $0.116, 0.233$ ) through increases in organisational identification.

### **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to examine the role of both national and organisational culture in the effects of personalisation on employees' outcomes. More specifically, the purpose was to investigate whether the effects of personalisation on employees' job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing at work vary according to culture. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first quantitative study examining the relationship between culture and workspace personalisation, and the processes underlying that relationship.

#### **Culture as an antecedent of personalisation**

Findings revealed that power distance and collectivism in organisational cultures were lower in the UK sample compared with the Chinese sample, which was consistent with previous research indicating that UK has a lower degree of these cultural dimensions than China has (Hofstede, 1997, 2003; Hofstede et al., 2010). On the other hand, the UK sample's levels of uncertainty avoidance were also significantly lower than Chinese sample's, which was different from Hofstede's findings suggesting UK's uncertainty avoidance index (35) was slightly higher than China's (30) (Hofstede, 1997, 2003; Hofstede et al., 2010). On

explanation might be that the definition of uncertainty avoidance in GLOBE cultural framework is different from Hofstede's to some extent. House, Javidan, Hanges, and Dorfman (2002) defines uncertainty avoidance in GLOBE as "the extent to which members of an organisation or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events" (p. 5). On the other hand, Hofstede (2011) defines it as the "extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations" (p. 10), and it is related to "a society's tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 10). The GLOBE highlights avoidance of uncertainty by reliance on norms and practices, while Hofstede emphasised feelings of comfort (or lack thereof). Therefore, our results pertaining to uncertainty avoidance indicated that Chinese sample were more likely to have norms and practices to reduce uncertain situations than UK participants.

In term of the effects of organisational cultures on personalisation, we found that personalisation had a positive relationship with uncertainty avoidance and negative relationships with power distance and collectivism, which was consistent with H5a, H5b and H5c. However, this was only supported by results of the UK sample, not the Chinese sample. Therefore, whilst Chinese participants reported higher power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance in their organisations (as expected, and in line with Hofstede's framework), variance in these cultural dimensions for Chinese participants did not appear to be driving personalisation nor the effects of personalisation on perceptions of control or autonomy. Yet, these dimensions did appear to be important for UK participants' personalisation and related perceptions of control and autonomy.

These findings contribute to cross-cultural literature by revealing the relationships between specific organisational cultural dimensions in Hofstede's framework (uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and individualism-collectivism) and the extent of personalisation.

These UK-based findings are in line with previous research conducted in the West by Wells et al. (2007), which suggested that organisational culture affects personalisation, and provides further explanation to what specific dimensions of organisational culture are related to employees' extent of personalisation. Having said that, our findings add nuance to this research and raise questions about the universality of the effects of organisational cultures on personalisation. Put simply, organisational culture appeared to be more influential on personalisation processes in the UK than in China. To explain the weaker impacts of organisational cultures on Chinese participants, it is possible that organisational cultures of some Chinese participants did not have a great extent of consistency with their local cultures. For instance, Newman and Nollen (1996) have demonstrated that when the management practice was consistent with the employees' local culture, employees' performance and satisfaction would be better. On the other hand, if the management practice contradicts with their local culture, they might perform relatively poorer and be less satisfied at work. However, this study did not measure the consistency level between organisational culture and national culture of participants. Future research could thus measure this consistency and explore if it is related to the influence of organisational cultures on personalisation.

### **Culture as a moderator for effects of personalisation**

Overall, the extent of personalisation was greater in the UK sample than in the Chinese sample, which supported H2. This may be because of the reported different levels of power distance and collectivism in the two national cultures (as per Hofstede et al., 2010). The tests of indirect effects revealed the process of personalisation was related to individual outcomes in similar ways for both samples: there were indirect effects of personalisation on all three individual 'outcomes' (job performance, job satisfaction, and wellbeing at work; these are outcomes in a conceptual sense but not in an empirical sense, as this is cross-

sectional data) through personal control, work autonomy, and organisational identification taken together as mediators for both the UK and Chinese samples. The mediating roles of these three variables in our model were thus demonstrated. As our findings found that the relationship between personalisation and employees' outcomes was significant for both groups of participants, our research contributes to the research on the effects of personalisation by demonstrating the cross-cultural equivalence of these relationships across two national cultures. The ways in which these variables mediated the process and how the two participant groups differed in the process is discussed below.

### ***Personal control and organisational identification as mediating processes***

There were indirect relationships between personalisation and individual outcomes through personal control and organisational identification for the Chinese sample, but not the UK sample. I hypothesised that the extent of personalisation would be positively related to perceived levels of personal control (H1a). This was supported by the results of both samples. However, findings revealed that the positive relationship between personal control and organisational identification was only present for Chinese participants, and not UK participants. The results for the Chinese participants showed that organisational identification was positively related to all three individual outcomes, opposite to H3 in which we suggested that these relationships would only be present for UK participants. Therefore, the paths indicating that personalisation had associations with individual outcomes via personal control plus organisational identification was supported only in the Chinese sample.

The specific validity of these paths for Chinese sample was further supported by the tests of indirect effects. The tests for the Chinese sample revealed that personalisation had a positive indirect effect on organisational identification through increases in personal control, and that personal control had positive indirect effects on all three individual outcomes through increases in organisational identification (H3). In contrast, the tests of indirect effects

for UK participants did not show any evidence for the mediating role of organisational identification in the relationships between personal control and outcomes. As a consequence, this research provides evidence for personal control and organisational identification mediating the relationships between workspace personalisation and individual outcomes only for Chinese sample.

Results supported H1a, in that personalisation was positively associated with personal control for both samples. This is consistent with the previous research indicating that personalisation benefits employees by providing a sense of personal control (Laurence et al., 2013; Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). Moreover, the findings of both samples that improving organisational identification is related to the enhance employees' performance, satisfaction and wellbeing is consistent with the previous research indicating the positive effects of organisational identification (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Van Dick, 2004; Worchel, Rothgerber, Day, Hart, & Butemeyer, 1998).

In contrast, the relationship between personal control and organisational identification was significant for the Chinese sample, but not the UK sample. This unexpected finding was opposite to H3. This result problematizes the universality of the relationship between personal control and organisational identification, and was inconsistent with the research of Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b), which proposed that providing employees with control over space increased levels of organisational identification. While the present results from Chinese participants were consistent with Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b), our results from UK participants did not concur. This finding might be explained by the different expectations of power of these two countries. Chinese participants, who have high power distance cultures, expect less empowerment and control in the workplace, thus being able to personalise their workspaces might be a 'bonus' for them. Consequently, controlling over workspaces provides more positive effects on their impressions of the organisation, and leads to a feeling of being

valued. Therefore, their identification with the organisation is enhanced. On the other hand, the expectation of UK participants, who have low power distance cultures, towards control is relatively higher. They might regard being able to control of workspaces as an ordinary behaviour in the workplace (i.e., they 'take it for granted'), and having personal control of their workspaces therefore has less influence on their perceptions of their organisation.

To sum up, the relationships between personalisation and individual outcomes through both personal control plus organisational identification as mediation were only present for the Chinese sample, and not the UK sample, because of the insignificant relationship between personal control and organisational identification for the UK sample.

#### ***Work autonomy and organisational identification as mediators***

Regarding findings for UK participants, the hypothesis that the extent of personalisation would be positively related to perceived levels of work autonomy (H1b) was supported. Additionally, findings revealed that work autonomy was significantly related to organisational identification, and that organisational identification was positively related to job satisfaction and wellbeing at work (H4b&H4c). Therefore, the hypotheses (H1b, H4b&H4c) that personalisation is related to satisfaction and wellbeing via work autonomy and organisational identification was supported for UK sample. The validity of these hypotheses was further supported by the tests of indirect effects. Results showed that work autonomy mediated the positive relationship between personalisation and organisational identification, and that organisational identification mediated the positive relationships between autonomy and job satisfaction and wellbeing (H4b&H4c). Thus, the paths suggesting that personalisation has positive effects on individual outcomes (except job performance) via work autonomy and organisational identification were supported for UK sample (H1b, H4b&H4c). This is consistent with Knight and Haslam's (2010a, 2010b) suggestions that personalisation provides employees with a sense of work autonomy, work autonomy

enhances organisational identification, and organisational identification in turn can improve individual outcomes. In terms of the effects of personalisation on job performance for UK participants, the tests of indirect effects showed that personalisation was positively related to performance when personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification acted together as mediators, as stated before. However, the results did not provide evidence for indirect effects of personalisation on performance through autonomy or control when treated separately, nor for indirect effects of autonomy or control on performance through organisational identification. In other words, the positive effect of personalisation on performance through the three mediators for UK sample was found, but the process of how it relates to performance was not in accordance with our model.

Regarding Chinese participants, results revealed that work autonomy was positively related to organisational identification, and that organisational identification was positively related to all three outcomes (H4a, H4b&H4c). As stated above, UK-based findings also indicated these positive relationships, this research thus has successfully replicates the findings of an expanding literature on the relationships between work autonomy, organisational identification and individual outcomes including job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). However, the relationship between personalisation and autonomy (H1b) for Chinese remains unknown, because one model for the Chinese sample showed a positive relationship between these two variables and the other model showed a negative relationship between them. Similarly, the tests of indirect effects revealed that work autonomy was positively related to the three individual outcomes through organisational identification; however, one test of indirect effects indicated that personalisation had positive relationships with outcomes through work autonomy, while the

other indicated that personalisation had negative relationships with outcomes through work autonomy. Therefore, these contradictory findings indicated that, the path that personalisation has positive effects on individual outcomes via work autonomy and organisational identification was still not confirmed for Chinese sample.

### **Limitations and recommendations for future research**

There were four limitations to the present study that merit discussion. First, because the relationships tested in our models were correlational, they might not be interpreted as causal. Thus, the paths may run in the opposite direction and/or be reciprocal. Further research using experimental or longitudinal methods is needed, in order to establish the causal relationships between personalisation, mechanisms, and individual outcomes.

Second, there were a number of significant differences in demographics between UK and Chinese participants, such as education level and age. Although past research on personalisation did not relate these factors to the extent of personalisation, it is still possible that these differences affected the results of the comparison in personalisation between two samples. Moreover, there was also a significant difference in office types between two samples, although we controlled for office type within the statistical model, and the analyses did not show that this variable affected the pathways in the model. Future research could attempt to match the office type of participants across national samples.

Third, this study included participants from only two countries, UK and China for measuring national-level cultures. Although these two countries' cultures are from the West and the East respectively, and there are validated cultural differences in cultural dimensions between them (Hofstede, 1980, 1997, 2003; House et al., 2004), the small number of participating countries might limit the generalisability of the findings across national backgrounds. Thus, the findings of this research may not be generalizable to other national-

level cultures. Future research could include a larger number of countries, which could further examine the impacts of national cultures on workspace personalisation and its effects.

Additionally, one sampling country in this study, China, is a large country involving multiple large regions that have various subcultures. Research has revealed that the Hofstede's cultural values vary by subcultures of regions in China, and this variance might be greater than the ones between China and other countries (Huo & Randall, 1991). Therefore, exploring subcultural differences within China in workspace personalisation may provide additional insights to the literature.

Fourth, although we recruited 28 different organisations in this study, there were less than 30 respondents in each of most participating organisations (21 out of 28 organisations) in the usable sample, which is relatively few to investigate differences between the organisations. Future research could recruit different organisations with a larger number of employees, in order to directly compare the effect of organisational differences on workspace personalisation and compare the employees' attitudes towards personalisation among different organisations.

Fifth, the current study recruited participants from only one sector (public sector organisations), thus the findings may be limited to the participating sector. Research suggests that there are differences between public and private sectors in terms of various aspects of work cultures, such as locus of control, autonomy, empowerment and participation in decision-making (Mathur, Aycan, & Kanungo, 1996). Thus, it would be worthwhile investigating the effects of personalisation across different sectors and exploring whether the effects vary according to their differences in work cultures.

In addition, the Hofstede's cultural framework we applied to investigate the national and organisational culture originally includes another two dimensions apart from the three we discussed: masculinity-femininity, and long/short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2011). Further

research thus could investigate whether these dimensions in organisational culture impact on the extent of personalisation.

### **Practical Implications**

According to the results of the current study, workspace personalisation has positive effects on employees from different cultures. Therefore, business managers and office designers need to consider the importance of personalisation regardless of cultural backgrounds or locations of the organisations. Business managers should take the workspace personalisation into account when they make decisions on management policies and regulations. More specifically, managers in the organisations with small power distance need to try to have more lenient policies of workspace management, so that office workspaces can be utilized to create a positive impact on employees' productivity and satisfaction in the workplace. Moreover, as levels of collectivism were negatively related to personalisation, organisations with individualistic cultures also need to consider the lenient policies for workspace personalisation. On the other hand, organisations with collectivistic cultures should consider involving employees in the group-level decisions when decorating or renovating offices, such as involving employees' opinions in the views about the wall's colours and arrangements of furniture in the shared offices. In addition, as personalisation was demonstrated as a way to reducing uncertainty of role information of individuals, office designers should consider the need to have space and scope for personalisation when designing the office workspaces, in order to provide better workspace experiences to the office users.

### **Conclusion**

This is the first quantitative study to investigate the role of national and organisational cultures in the psychology of workspace personalisation. This study represents a major effort at measuring and comparing the role of cultures in workspace personalisation across a

number of organisations in the UK and China. Our study thus both problematizes and confirms the cross-cultural applicability of certain findings of past research on personalisation in equal measure: findings revealed that culture plays a determining role in the extent that employees personalise their workspace. More specifically, national- and organisational-level cultural differences guide the degree of personalisation and the processes by which personalisation has an impact on employees. In the next chapter, we build upon this work by examining in more depth the perceptions of employees from different cultures on about their personalisation behaviours and experiences.

## **Chapter 3 Cultural Differences in the Psychology of Workspace Personalisation in the**

### **UK and China: The Group-Based Personalisation Phenomenon**

#### **Introduction**

Workspace personalisation refers to the deliberate decoration or modification of an office environment (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Wells, 2000). Employees personalise their workspaces (at least in part) to symbolically communicate their identity to others and themselves (Byron & Laurence, 2015), and an individual's identity and self-concept are a product of the culture and society in which he or she lives (Hofstede et al., 1991). As the concepts of the self and identity vary according to cultures, by extrapolation the psychology of workspace personalisation may also vary accordingly. The quantitative study in the previous chapter demonstrated that both UK and Chinese samples indicated similar positive effects of personalisation, yet different extents of personalisation. Based on these findings, this study aimed to explore in more depth the culturally-based understandings that shape employees' forms and practices of workspace personalisation.

#### **Culture and antecedents and forms of personalisation**

Personalisation is seen as a symbolic representation of self and is related to the social construction of self (Byron & Laurence, 2015). However, people within different cultures put emphases on different aspects of the self and understandings about the self. Furthermore, the psychological processes by which they are governed can potentially manifest differently in different cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is because, for example, people from different cultures vary on the dimension of individualism-collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). This refers to how personal goals and needs are prioritised. Individualism values personal independence over group membership, while collectivism is the opposite. The individualism-

collectivism index is linked to the concept of independence-interdependence of the self: highly individualist cultures are characterised by the emphasis of independent self, while highly collectivistic cultures are characterised by highlighting the interdependent self. People in Western cultures tend to place more emphasis on the independent self and thus highlight cognitions about personal self and the instrumental use of social others as a source of comparison or target of self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). On the other hand, Eastern people tend to emphasise the interdependent self, and thus place more importance on cognitions about social others, and the symbolic participation of others in the functioning of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Given these differences in self-construction across cultures, this study aimed to explore the proposition that there are cultural differences in the motives for personalisation. Individuals from individualistic cultures might mainly consider personal needs and the expression of their independent self when they personalise, whereas individuals from collectivistic cultures might give priority to the needs of the organisation or their colleagues, in other words: their social and interdependent self.

The division between the independent individual and the interdependent social being is echoed in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which argues that people have a personal identity and multiple social identities within their self-concepts. When personal identity is salient, people act and interact according to their idiosyncratic personal attributes, and when social identity is salient, people act and interact according to their group memberships. Cross-cultural research suggests that the assumptions of social identity theory are not equally applicable across cultures (Yuki, 2003). Yuki (2003) indicates that East Asian collectivists emphasise the importance of intragroup relations, maintenance of relational harmony within ingroups, being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, and being aware of the relationship structure within the group, because their group behaviours are based on the self as a relational unit. For East Asian collectivists, loyalty to and identification with the

group increase with increases in personal connectedness within ingroups (Yuki, 2003; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2005). Therefore, our exploring proposition was that, in comparison with individualists' personalisation, collectivists' personalisation might reflect their group identity more than their personal identity. Employees from individualistic cultures may use more personalisation items and prefer to personalise using items that relate to their idiosyncratic personal identity.

### **Culture and the effects of personalisation**

Previous research suggests that allowing employees to personalise their workspace provides them with a sense of personal control, and this sense of control can directly result in positive outcomes such as enhanced wellbeing and productivity (Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). However, in addition to the possibility that there are cultural differences in the nature of personalisation as an expression of the self, there are cultural differences in processes of control, suggesting that personalisation might have different effects – through processes of control – in different cultures. For example, Sastry and Ross (1998) found a negative relationship between personal control and psychological distress, but also that this relationship was more salient to non-Asian participants than for Asian participants. This may be because, as Hofstede (1980) explained in his cultural framework, cultures with large power distance (which refers to the different levels of acceptance of inequality in distribution on power in a society or an organisation) accept and expect the unequal distribution of power, while cultures with small power distance are more comfortable with the equally distributed power. Leveraging this idea, a similar body of research uses the concept of power distance to investigate the effects of empowerment. For example, Eylon and Au (1999) conducted a study with a 3 (treatment: empowered, control, disempowered) x 2 (power distance: high, low) between-subjects factorial design, which demonstrated that participants from low power

distance cultures performed better when empowered, while participants from high power distance cultures performed less well when empowered. It follows that individuals from low power distance cultures might make sense of their personalisation in terms of the feeling of empowerment it provides, in contrast to individuals from high power distance cultures.

### **Cultural differences between China and UK**

The present study explored how employees understand personalisation and its effects, in two different cultural contexts: China and the UK. The reason these two countries were chosen is that they have very different cultures - China is one of the Eastern/collectivist cultures, whereas UK is one of the Western/individualist cultures. According to Hofstede's examination of national cultures, China has a higher level of power distance and collectivism than the UK (Hofstede et al., 2010). These Hofstede's dimensions were used for supporting our assumptions about the role of culture in personalisation by comparing employees from UK and Chinese cultures that have different levels of power distance and collectivism.

### **The present study**

As Study 1 demonstrated that both UK and Chinese participants experienced positive effects of personalisation yet personalised to different extents, this study aimed to explore employees' perceptions of the forms and nature of personalisation. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of cultural differences in how employees understand the forms and practices in workspace personalisation. Thus, the research questions (RQs) were as follows:

RQ1: How do the forms of workspace personalisation vary across UK and Chinese cultures?

RQ2: How do employees make sense of the forms and practices of personalisation?

To address these two RQs, we used workspace observations and semi-structured interviews, respectively.

## **Method**

### **Context**

I am a Chinese researcher studying at a UK university, and am fluent in both English and Chinese. I thus have a sufficient understanding of Chinese cultures and also have good knowledge of UK cultures. This study was conducted in a Health College in China and a University in the UK. The Health College was a secondary vocational school with a speciality in medicine and nursing, located in the south of Guangdong Province in China, with approximately 300 employees and 9200 students from four departments (medicine, nursing, medical examination, and clinical health). The University was a public university located in the South West of England, with 3,156 employees and 17,308 enrolled students from 19 departments in four faculties (Engineering and Design, Humanities and Social Science, Management, and Science). These two organisations were chosen because both provide the staff with offices and they have similar regulations for the staff working locations according to the nature of their jobs: teaching/academic staff are not required to work in their offices on daily basis; instead, they have freedom to choose to work from home or work in the offices. On the other hand, administrative staff is generally required to work in the offices during their working hours. Additionally, neither organisation has specific policies for restricting employees' personalisation over their own office workspaces. As the two work contexts are similar to these relevant dimensions, the data from the two cases are broadly comparable.

## Participants

Participants in China were recruited through the researcher's existing contacts at Zhanjiang Health College. Participants at the UK were contacted via university email lists. Initial emails with a brief introduction about the study were sent to prospective participants in order to ask for expressions of interest in participating.

The sample included fifteen employees from the Chinese institution and sixteen employees at from the UK institution. The Chinese sub-sample<sup>3</sup> consisted of eight women and seven men, ranging in age from 32 to 54 years ( $M = 42.13$ ,  $SD = 7.74$ ). Their organisational tenure ranged from 8 to 36 years ( $M = 19.53$ ,  $SD = 9.07$ ). All participants were based in either a private or shared office: five of the Chinese participants worked in private offices, three worked in shared offices (2 to 3 people share a single room), and seven worked in small open plan offices (4 to 9 persons per room). In addition, four participants indicated that their offices were rarely visited by those other than their co-workers, two indicated that they were visited sometimes, seven indicated that they were visited often, and two indicated 'frequently'. In terms of UK participants, the sample consisted of fourteen women and two men, ranging in age from 28 to 62 years ( $M = 39.87$ ,  $SD = 9.86$ ). Their organisational tenure was from 1 to 15 years ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 5.41$ ). Seven of the UK participants worked in private offices, four of them worked in a shared office, and five worked in small open plan offices. Seven participants indicated they 'sometimes' had visitors, seven 'often' had visitors, and two 'frequently' had visitors.

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<sup>3</sup>In this study, "Chinese/UK participants" refer to the participating employees working in the sample Chinese/UK institution. The nationalities of participants were not recorded.

While the two work contexts of the participants were broadly comparable, there were some demographic variations. In particular, the UK sample included more female participants than the Chinese sample; and the average tenure of Chinese participants was higher than UK participants. Therefore, the results must be understood with the limitations associated with these differences in mind. These limitations are considered in depth in the Discussion section of this chapter.

## **Procedure**

*Workspace observation.* I photographed participants' workspaces to observe the extent to which they had engaged in personalisation (see Figure 3.1 for examples). To analyse these photographs, I used an observation checklist (Wells, 2000) (see Appendix 2.2). The checklist consisted of 1) a single item that assessed the extent of personalisation, (hereafter referred to as the 'extent of personalisation', as rated from the photograph of the participant's workspace, answered on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 = 'none' to 5 = 'very much'); 2) a single item rating the aesthetic quality of the workspace ('Aesthetic quality of workspace (without considering personalization)' as rated from the photograph, answered on a scale from 1 – 5, where 1 = 'very poor' to 5 = 'very good'); 3) a list of personalisation categories based on Wells (2000). The categories of personalisation were: 1) work-related items; 2) food/drink/related items; 3) personal relationships with others (including sub-categories: family, friends, romantic partner, pets, others); 4) trinkets/knick-knacks/mementos, souvenirs; 5) art (e.g. paintings, sculptures, posters); 6) values (e.g. religion, politics, mottos); 7) hobbies (e.g. music, sports); 8) achievements (e.g. diploma, awards); 9) plants; and 10) 'others'. The photographs were used to count the items in each category for each participant in his/her workspace. For the participants in shared offices, I counted the items included in their individual workspace as their individual personalisation. Items categorised as 'others'

consisted of items such as wallpaper, white board, cushion, name badge, beaker, and name cards.



Figure 3.1a. Photo of a UK participant's workspace



Figure 3.1b. Photo of a Chinese participant's workspace



Figure 3.1c. Photo of a UK participant's workspace



Figure 3.1d. Photo of a Chinese participant's workspace

**Interviews.** The interviews at the Health College in China were conducted in December 2015. The interviews at the UK university were conducted between March and May 2016. The procedure followed the established methodology of Wells (2000): I first conducted a semi-structured interview with the participating employee (see Appendix 2.1 for interview protocol). I used an interview protocol that included seven sections: 1) participants' background and demographic information, 2) general feelings about their workspace, 3) personal items in their workspace, 4) reasons for personalisation, 5) policies about

personalisation, 6) effects of their own personalisation, and 7) the effects of other employees' personalisation. Sections 1 and 2 aimed to explore whether participants' perceived that their background, such as job status and the length of working in the organisation, and their general feelings about their workspace, related to how much they decided to personalise their workspace. Sections 3 and 4 aimed to explore participants' perception of antecedents of personalisation through asking participants what items they displayed in their workspace and why they displayed those items. In Section 5, I included the questions "Does your organisation have any policies for restricting workspace personalisation? (If not,) How do you feel about them?" and "How would you feel if you were not allowed to display personal items at your workspace?". Through setting the latter question about a hypothetical policy, I aimed to explore participants' opinions about restriction of personalisation, in order to investigate participants' attitudes towards the freedom of personalisation. Section 6 planned to examine the perceived effects of personalisation by asking participants whether they felt that personalisation affected different aspects of their work life (such as work performance and wellbeing). Finally, I also explored the perceived effects of other employees' personalisation on the participants. This interview protocol was used as a reference and reminder during the interviews, and the questions asked in the interviews remained flexible in order to follow interviewees' responses and interest.

Interviews lasted between 20 and 55 minutes and were transcribed by the researcher into the original spoken language in which the interview was conducted (either English or Mandarin Chinese). Additionally, the transcriptions of the 15 interviews conducted in China were also translated from Chinese to English by the bilingual researcher. The translations were checked and verified by an independent translator. Participants were anonymised in all audio-recordings and transcripts. All identifying items were blurred in the digital images so that the images remained anonymous.

## Data analysis

**Workspace observation.** To determine the percentage of participants who displayed each category of personal items at their workspaces, and to reveal the differences in the types of items displayed by the two cultural groups of participants, the observation checklists were analysed using chi-square tests. Because the study focused on the personalisation items (defined as decorations instead of practical work-related items), ‘work-related’ and ‘food/drink-related’ items were excluded in the analysis of observation data.

**Interviews.** I used both deductive and inductive thematic analysis to analyse the interview data as per Braun and Clarke (2013). This was appropriate because this study was deductive in that it was informed by theories about cultural differences, and inductive with respect to the fact that the data were interrogated for new insights. QSR NVivo software was used as a tool to organise and manage the interview data. In terms of coding the data, by following the steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2013), I began by generating an initial list of codes from the interview transcripts. I then sorted different codes into second order themes. After that, I reviewed and refined those themes, and then defined and named themes that I would present for my analysis. Finally, I developed a conceptual model.

## Results

### Workspace observation checklist

A MANOVA was performed with the country as the independent variable, and responses to the ‘extent of personalisation’ (single item measure), the total number of personalisation items, and number of items in each individual category, as dependent variables. There was no significant main effect of culture on the extent of personalisation  $F(1, 31) = 1.35, p = .26$ , the total number of personalisation items  $F(1, 31) = 3.09, p = .09$ , the

number of items about relationships  $F(1, 31) = .53, p = .47$ , trinkets  $F(1, 31) = 1.29, p = .27$ , art  $F(1, 31) = 1.47, p = .24$ , values  $F(1, 31) = 2.30, p = .14$ , hobbies  $F(1, 31) = 1.56, p = .22$ , achievement  $F(1, 31) = .61, p = .44$ , or the number of plants  $F(1, 31) = 2.31, p = .14$ . In sum, there were no significant differences between two groups of participants in the extent of personalisation, the total number of personalisation items, or any specific category of personalisation items.

There were a majority of women in the UK sample but not in the Chinese sample. In addition, the average tenure of Chinese participants ( $M = 19.53, SD = 9.07$ , in years) was longer than UK participants' ( $M = 5.56, SD = 5.41$ ). As Chapter 1 suggests, gender and tenure might be factors affecting the extent of personalisation. Thus, it was necessary to assess whether any differences on personalisation between participants from the two cultures may be due to differences in sex or tenure rather than cultural differences. A chi-square test of independence was performed to investigate the relationship between participants' country of employment and sex. The relationship was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.39, p = .04$ ., showing that there were significant differences in the distribution of male and female participants across the two samples. An independent sample t-test was performed and showed that Chinese participants had statistically significantly longer tenure ( $M=19.53, SD=9.07$ ) than UK participants ( $M=5.56, SD=5.41$ ),  $t(29) = 5.25, p < .001$ . Therefore, a MANCOVA was conducted with country as independent variable, sex and tenure as covariates, and the extent of personalisation, the total number of personalisation items, and items on each individual category as dependent variables. There were no statistically significant differences between UK and Chinese participants (all  $ps > .05$ ). Neither sex,  $F(1, 31) = 1.82, p = .13$ , nor tenure,  $F(1, 31) = .82, p = .61$ , were linearly related to the dependent variables

Although no significant differences were found in these analyses, I found that many offices of Chinese participants had items that were chosen by the organisation or by the group

of employees who shared the office. More specifically, those items were either allocated by their leader or the organisation, or consensually displayed by the participant and his or her colleagues (e.g., framed photos and pictures, see Figure 3.1b). Ten out of fifteen Chinese participants had such ‘group-level’ or leader designed personalisation in their offices. Among the ten offices of participants’, one of the offices was a private office, three were shared offices, and six were small open plan offices. Thus, in order to record those personalisation items, I added extra categories for ‘group-level/leader designed personalisation’ to the observation checklists. There were seven categories of group-level/leader designed personalisation items: work-related ( $M=.20$ ,  $SD=.56$ ), relationships with others ( $M=.60$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ), art ( $M=.20$ ,  $SD=.41$ ), values ( $M=.40$ ,  $SD=.74$ ), achievements ( $M=1.00$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ), and regulation/policy-related ( $M=1.07$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ). The average number of group-level/leader designed personalisation items was 3.27 ( $SD=2.94$ ) in the Chinese sample. In contrast, none of the workspaces of UK participants in this study had this form of personalisation.

### **Thematic Analysis for interviews**

The results of the thematic analysis are organised into three sections: participants’ perceived effects of personalisation, factors affecting personalisation, and attitudes towards personalisation. For each of these sections, the results for the UK and Chinese samples are compared and contrasted.

#### ***The perceived effects of personalisation***

Overall, when talking about personalisation experience, participants from both the UK and Chinese participants believed that personal personalisation had positive effects, including improvements in their wellbeing, productivity and relationships between colleagues (see Figure 2.2).

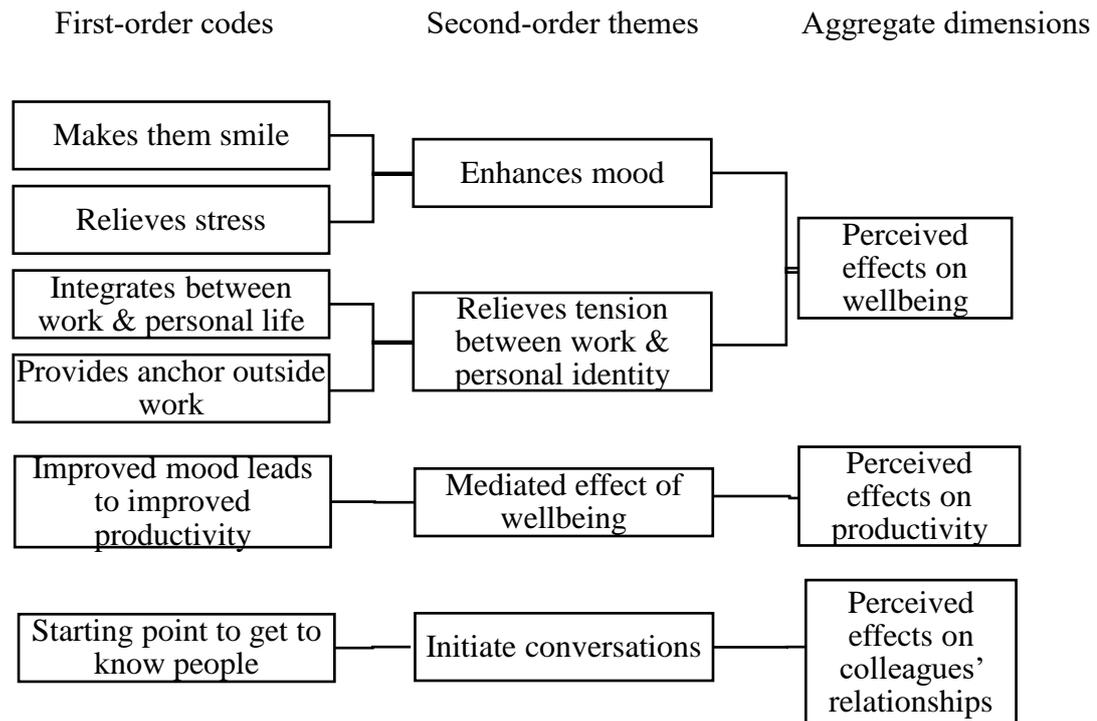


Figure 2.2. Perceived effects of personal personalisation (UK and China)

**Perceived effects on wellbeing.** Participants often discussed a perceived improvement in wellbeing as a consequence of personalisation, especially psychological wellbeing and the enhancement of mood. For example, UK participant 8 (42-year-old, male, working in a private office; tenure of 15 years) said that his photos and postcards “made him smile”:

Extract 1: “I think it would be less pleasant if you came into a blank, picture-less office every day. I think it's, yeah, I think it's probably minor but nice for wellbeing. There are quite a few things in this room that make me smile. You know, a postcard sent by friends, and there's another one over there, and we have pictures of people I've spent time with. I think it is a subtle minor thing, which is now and again I look at those things, oh that's nice.”

Similarly, participants in China such as Chinese participant 4 (54-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 35 years) described that personalisation could relieve stress and improve mood:

Extract 2: “In my view, displaying more paintings and bonsais is useful for relieving stress in the working atmosphere, I think. If not, the office is full of only documents; when I go in the office, I would feel there is endless work. It would be a bit depressing, and then I wouldn’t really want to be in the office. In this case, I might prefer to have classes, to get away from this environment.”

According to the two extracts, both participants indicated that they felt stressed or less pleasant if there was no personalisation but only work-related items in their workspaces. Therefore, the presence of their personalisation items could benefit improving their mood, and then positively influenced their wellbeing.

In terms of the process by which personalisation was perceived to improve wellbeing, both UK and Chinese participants addressed the conflict between work and personal life and perceived that personalisation could relieve this tension. For example, Chinese participant 11 (46-year-old, female, working in a small open office; tenure of for 21 years) regarded personalisation items about relationships with others as “reminders of the personal life”. Moreover, UK participant 3 (58-year-old, female, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 12 years) said that:

Extract 3: “I think that's why, it's good for your mood, but also just the integration. I don't know, I mean this tension that sometimes of strict separation of work and personal can be useful, I think that can support focus very well” [.....] “but on the other hand, quite like the integration it's nice to not be completely shutting your personal life out, because so much of one’s time is spent at work, it's nice to be

experiencing it even in that very detached sort of a minute kind of way, you know, of just a moment's thought of things, of your personal stuff.”

As the extract show, she explained that displaying personal items allowed integration of personal life and work life to some extent, which is often distinctly separated. Having personalisation could avoid being completely away from her personal life while working.

Therefore, personalisation as a reminder of personal life could enhance her wellbeing.

Similarly, UK participant 13 (34-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 2.5 years) spoke of pictures of her children being particularly important and described photos of her children as an “anchor outside work”:

Extract 4: “So, if I'm feeling ground down or too stressed or too busy, then it's nice just to see them, and think actually that's what's really important (laugh). Yeah, and it's nice when I turn my computer on the morning, you know, I just drop them off at their childcare, it's nice to see that, would see them at the end of the day, think I'm going to go and get them. So, it's nice to kind of have that continuity.”

This participant described photos of her children could provide her a break during work, and remind her of the important role of her family in her life. Thus, similar to the previous extract, this participant thought that personalisation served as a reminder of her personal life, and helped to integrate work and personal life.

***Perceived effects on productivity.*** Importantly, participants associated the positive effects of personalisation on their psychological wellbeing with their productivity. For example, Chinese participant 5 (33-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 14 years) described the personalisation items as “something pleasing”, and stated that when she could see these items that would make her “adjust her mood as soon as possible”, her productivity could be therefore improved. Thus, she perceived an indirect effect on productivity via wellbeing. UK participant 7 (33-year-old, female, working in a small open

plan office; tenure of 1.5 years) made similar statements about the indirect effect on productivity:

Extract 5: “If through personalisation, you feel better in your space, then I guess you are, you can be more productive and more creative, and more effective in your job, because you feel more comfortable and more relaxed and more familiar with your space. So yes, I would think that indirectly, it certainly effects your productivity.”

As this extract shows, this participant thought that she generally felt better via having personalisation. Then her productivity would be improved when she generally had better feelings at work. Therefore, her work productivity would be positively influenced by personalisation via enhanced wellbeing.

*Perceived effects on colleagues’ relationships.* Both UK participants and Chinese participants made reference to the effect of personalisation on relationships between colleagues. Participants tended to indicate that displaying personalisation items positively affected relationships through facilitating conversations with people especially colleagues within the same office. For example, Chinese participant 11 (46-year-old, female, working in a small open office; tenure of 21 years) said that personalisation items, such as photos, helped to “initiate small talks” about themselves and colleagues. Similarly, UK participant 8 (42-year-old, male, working in a private office; tenure of 15 years) stated that talking about the personalisation items is a useful starting point to get to know people, and that using personalisation as a conversation starter benefits the workplace environment:

Extract 6: “It (personalisation) can be something that just let me know a little bit about who they are and what they’re interested in, whether they have children, those kinds of things. It not often, but it can kind of spur conversation about personal things, which is, I think quite good. I mean it helps us to get to know our colleagues, and

maybe find out we have things in common that are not just at work, which is quite, I think, quite good thing for the overall environment of the workplace.”

As this extract indicates, personalisation items that relate to the owners’ personal life could show information about their identity and interest to colleagues. Thus, seeing these items could help the colleagues to know more about the owner, and then benefit the relationships between colleagues and the whole workplace environment.

In summary, UK and Chinese participants expressed similar views about effects of individual workspace personalisation according to their personalisation experience. Both groups of participants indicated that individual personalisation positively influenced their work life, including wellbeing, productivity, and relationships between colleagues. Specifically, participants believed that personalisation improved wellbeing through enhancing mood and relieving tensions between their work and personal life. Neither of the two groups mentioned any negative effects of personalisation.

### **Specific forms of personalisation and their perceived effects**

*Effects of group-level personalisation.* During the interviews, some participants in China made reference to specific group forms of personalisation, as observed in the analysis of their workspaces (see Figure 3.3). These participants tended to have a positive view of this type of ‘collective’ personalisation, indicating that the process of group personalisation enhanced relationships between colleagues.

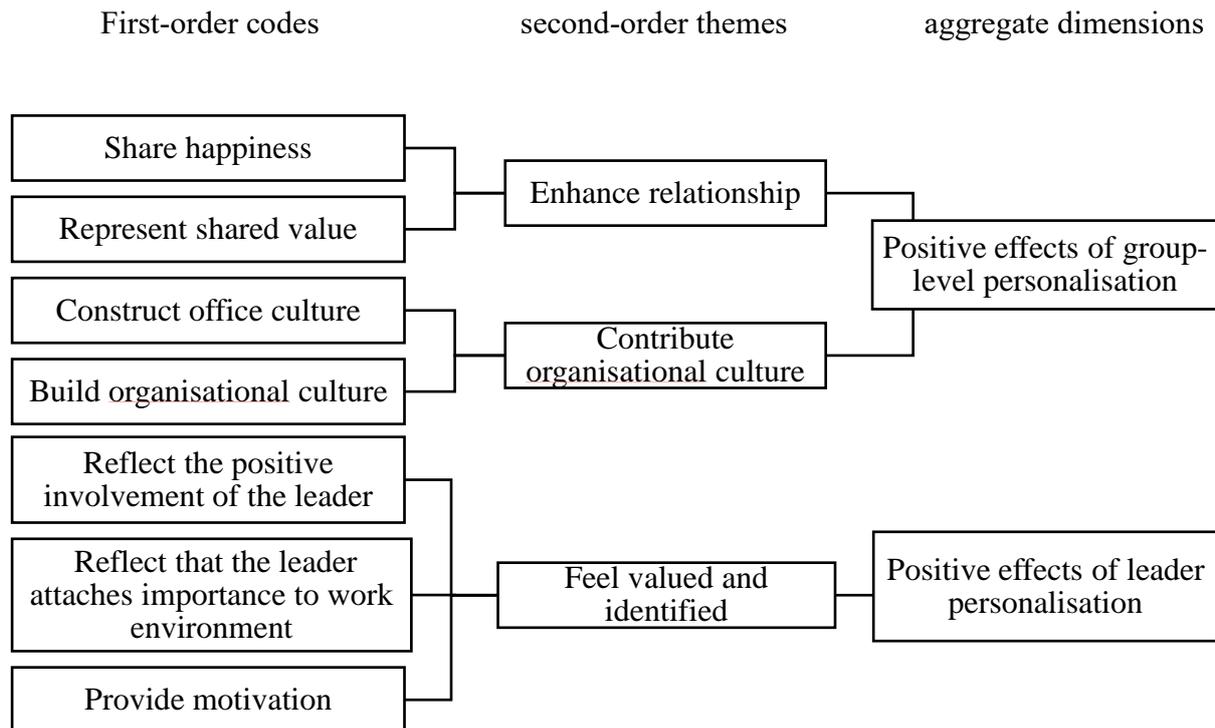


Figure 3.3. Specific forms of personalisation by Chinese participants and their effects

For example, Chinese participant 14 (51-year-old, female, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 36 years) described the framed photo of her group displayed in their shared office as a way to “share the happiness”. Moreover, when asked why she decided to display group-level personalisation items, Chinese participant 8 (47-year-old, female, working in a private office; tenure of 17 years) explained that the photo and the picture displayed by her and her colleagues represented their shared values:

Similar to individual personalisation, Chinese participants described group-personalisation in terms of creating a pleasant space. For example, Chinese participant 14 (51-year-old, female, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 36 years) described the framed photo of her group displayed in their shared office as a way to “share the happiness” and Chinese participant 8 (47-year-old, female, working in a private office; tenure of 17

years) commented on photos “mak(ing) the office nicer and more comfortable”. But, group-personalisation also appeared to play another role. Here we have Participant 8 commenting on a picture her colleagues chose prior to her arrival (see Figure 3.1b as the photo of Participant 8’s office).

Extract 7: For example, ‘confidence is the first step to the success’ (the sentence on the picture), it really suits our situation as experimentalists. It is because in our school, people might think experimentalists are inferior to other teaching staff, and other teaching staff are superior. It’s like at a lower status. If even we also think we are inferior to others and don’t have confidence, that’s not good. So the pictures they picked might have some meanings. [...] I feel the picture they picked must match some subtle thoughts of our group of people. [...] ‘Don’t say the lake is small, for the sky is reflected in it’, also has some meanings. Although our work is small, we are very important. Success depends on details. So, although our work seems to be very small and about details, we should do it well and it can contribute to big things.

According to the extract from this participant, group personalisation did not just provide positive collective affect, but also represented their shared values and their position within the school as experimentalists. Thus, she spoke of the way in which the photo celebrated attention to detail, which she saw as central to their experimentalist identity. She also spoke of the way in which experimentalists in the school were regarded as inferior and of lower status; a position challenged by the messages contained in the photo. She thought the motto in the picture was an encouragement for their group. Therefore, this suggests that group personalisation might provide and support connections between colleagues and thus enhance their intragroup relationships.

In this way, Chinese participants suggested that displaying group personalisation items could be helpful for constructing the organisational culture. Chinese participant 4 (54-year-old, male, working in a small open office) described group-level personalisation in shared offices, such as plants, as a kind of “office culture”:

Extract 8: “...sometimes we do something about office culture and school culture; we are encouraged to display some plants and bonsais, as an office culture. It makes people have a feeling of being at home when they are in the office, a cosy feeling. Some offices might still have them at the moment. [...] We can firstly start from small units, from beautifying our office environment, so that people would have a cosy feeling when people come in our office. In this case, when visitors come to our office, no matters students or their parents, they would be less stressed. This kind of office culture can be promoted to the whole school, so that the school can provide a cosy and nice image to visitors, and they would like this organisation. I think it has effects.”

This participant stated how displaying plants contributes to the office culture. More specifically, the aspect of office cultures he emphasised was the physical environment of offices. In other words, he thought that personalising with plants could benefit the physical working environment in the office cultures, and make the group feel more comfortable. Furthermore, Chinese participant 8 (47-year-old, female, working in a private office; tenure of 17 years) explained that the pictures with mottos displayed in the office were a way in which to construct organisational culture:

Extract 9: “For example, when students sometimes come here for handing in coursework or asking questions, it has a kind of implication for students. Teachers display something on the desks, students sometimes might imitate. In colleges like ours, students’ ability to imitate is quite good. Teachers display something, we might

think it is nothing special, but they would possibly imitate. In the school culture, for example, if we hang something about our school culture on the wall, and our school culture is ‘angels in white’, it might have an influence on students.”

As the extracts suggests, this participant linked group-level personalisation to the improvement of the environment of the whole organisation. He also thought the content of group personalisation would also benefit the image of the organisation and positively influence students, because students might be potentially affected by what they saw in teachers’ office environment. In this way, group personalisation contributed to the construction of their organisational culture.

Given these results, Chinese participants tended to regard group-level personalisation as a way to enhance relationships between colleagues and to create organisational culture. On the other hand, no group-level personalisation was found in the workspaces of any UK participants in this study (e.g. Figure 3.1a), and none of the UK participants had mentioned collective personalisation in the interviews. However, it is still possible that office in the UK outside this study also have organisational or group-level personalisation, which would be worthwhile exploring in the further research. Furthermore, previous research indicates that the expression of group identity is important to UK individuals (e.g. Haslam et al., 2000), yet the finding did not reveal any group personalisation among UK participants. From this perspective, another reason for not discovering personalisation among UK participants may be that group personalisation of workspaces is not the common way for UK individuals to express their group identity in the organisations.

***Effects of leader designed personalisation.*** Leaders’ personal opinions and attitudes towards personalisation were another important factor influencing Chinese participants’ workspace personalisation (see Figure 3.3). According to some participants’ statements, the previous leader of their college liked encouraging employees to display certain items such as

pictures that he had personally chosen. This behaviour was appreciated by employees, and also made employees feel valued by both the manager and the organisation. For instance, Chinese participant 12 (33-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 11 years) spoke of the important role of the leader in personalisation. He stated that “the leader’s preference is very important” to employees’ office personalisation. He also described the influence of their previous leader on employees and the organisational culture, and perceived this influence as positive. In addition, Chinese participant 16 (39-year-old, female, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 16 years) also had a positive view of this leader’s personalisation. She stated that this leader liked to allocate plants and paintings to offices to display. By responding to the question “In your view, do you think office personalisation and decoration is relevant to school leader’s personal thoughts and preferences?” she answered:

Extract 10: “Yes, yes. Because it’s relevant, when the last leader was here, many of our offices.....as he liked photography and some photos he took were very nice, many colleagues thought the photos were nice, and they took the photos to enlarge and print then mounted them upon the wall in the offices. The landscape in the photos makes us feel comfortable. There are some cultural things within it.”

Additionally, by answering to the question “In terms of your previous leader’s suggestion or influence about the office wall art and decorating plants, what do you feel and think about it?”, she said that:

“I think it’s quite good, because this means the office environment is paid much attention and emphasized, doesn’t it? When the leader values and pays attention to office environment, our work environment would be good. Then our work motivation would be improved, I think, so the work productivity would get better.”

As the participants said, she appreciated her leader's involvement in personalising her workspace. She thought that this form of personalisation reflected the fact that the leader attached importance to the office environment, and thus she believed it motivated employees. As a consequence, she thought leader designed personalisation might positively impact employees by providing a feeling of being valued by the leader.

Thus, it appeared that Chinese participants tended to feel valued and identified through leader designed personalisation. Similar with the results of group-level personalisation, leader designed personalisation was not found in the offices of UK participants, or mentioned by any UK participants. It is also possible that leader designed personalisation might exist in the office cultures in the UK. Therefore, it would be interesting to further examine if there is leader designed personalisation in the UK cultures, and how it is perceived.

### ***The factors influencing personalisation***

When talking about the factors affecting participants' actual personalisation experience, we found that both UK and Chinese participants linked their job features to whether or not they decided to personalise their workspace, and to the extent of their personalisation (see Figure 3.4).

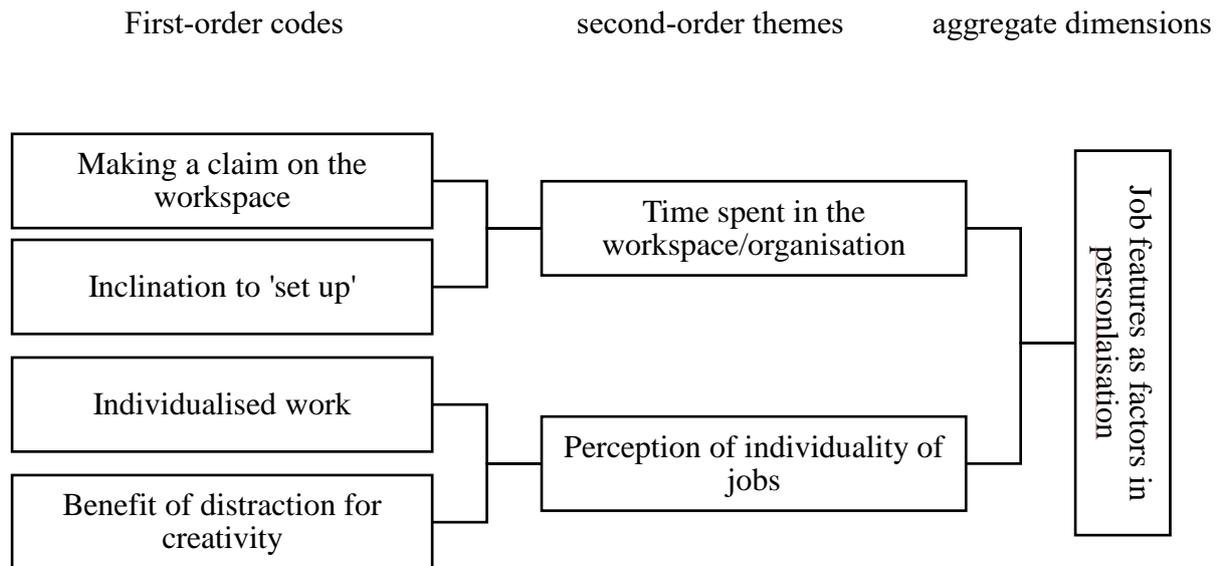


Figure 3.4 antecedents of personalisation (UK and China)

***Time spent in the workspace/organisation.*** Participants indicated that the time they spent in the office workspace was related to the extent of their personalisation. UK participant 17 (30-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 1.5 years) stated that he did not personalise his office workspace because he did not spend much time in the office, thus “it's not fair for me to stake a claim on a pc that I'm not going to use all the time”.

UK participant 2 (28-year-old, female, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 2 years) related the lack of personalisation in her workspace to the expected length of her employment. She explained that the short amount of time she would spend in the organisation made her “less inclined to set up” in the workspace:

Extract 11: “So I guess that (short tenure) makes you less inclined to set up, set yourself up in terms of bringing personal things in.” [.....] “I suppose you feel more a part of the workplace if you set yourself up somewhere. I guess like, if you're attending living in a house, if you know you're going to be there for a month, you probably only bring your suitcase of stuff, and when you feel kind of more at home if you bring, if you're there longer, you bring cushions and things like that. So, I suppose

that would be a degree of just feeling more part of the workplace, if you personalise it more but it's like a way of saying 'yes I am here, I'm here to stay'."

Similar with the previous extract, this participant also thought personalisation was a way to tell people about that who the workspace belongs to. In other words, participants regarded having personalisation as a way to mark territories in the workspace. Therefore, when they were not likely to spend long time on the workspace or have long tenure in the organisation, they tended to set up and personalise less their workspaces. On the other hand, less personalisation might lead the participants to feel less at home, and thus their organisational identification might be impacted to some extent. In this vein, past research found a positive correlation between organisational identification and personalisation extent (e.g. Knight & Haslam, 2010b). The time these individuals want to stay in the workspace/organisation may therefore be negatively affected by less personalisation. From this perspective, there might be a connection between sparse workspaces and (lower) organisational identification.

***Individuality of jobs.*** In addition, UK participants expressed the view that personalisation varies according to the workspace user's job. As the contexts of this study were educational institutions, study participants discussed the nature of their academic work as a factor affecting the extent of their personalisation. They tended to describe their work as quite individualised, thus they thought that they were supposed to be able to personalise more. For example, UK participant 8 (42-year-old, male, working in a private office; tenure of 15 years) linked personalisation to the nature of academic work:

Extract 12: "One of the things I think society as a whole is dealing with is how to switch from manufacturing things to be knowledge economy, and if your job is working in a factory, pressing a button over and over and over again, then you can be distracted from it and work less. But distraction I think for creative imaginative or scientific, then just isn't the same thing, you know. If you spend two minutes looking

at something, that in a factory that is lost productivity. Well as in my job, that might be thinking, you might be looking at some kind of shelf, but I'm solving a problem, or I'm thinking, or I'm clearing my mind and that's just as important. So, I don't think distraction is really a concept that should carry over into knowledge economies or creative industries. I think distraction might be even necessary in this imaginative, more creative world that we're working there."

As the extract shows, this participant compared the knowledge work to manufacturing work, and explained that personalisation might be a distraction for manufacturing work environment but would not distract knowledge workers from work. Instead, personalisation would be necessary for and benefit their work, because of the creative nature of the work. Interviewees in China also linked the perceptions of a job to the extent of personalisation. Chinese participants tended to perceive their jobs as less creative, which may be because of the difference between the jobs of Chinese sample (mostly teachers in a vocational college) and the jobs of UK sample (mostly lecturers/researchers at a university). Thus, Chinese participants talked about the relationship between personalisation and the lack of creativity in their work nature. For example, Chinese participant 1 (43-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 21 years) stated that:

Extract 13: "I think, for those occupations that need creativity and inspiration, it (personalisation) might have big effects. For us, our work at school is quite routine. We basically only need to follow the routine, and don't need to do much about creativity. So, in terms of personalisation, it is not a big issue. For our school, it's better to be tidy and uniform."

This participant explained that she did not need a lot of personalisation because she perceived her job as a job without lots of creativity. She also thought uniform workspaces would be better for her work and the environment of her school. Therefore, she made the assumption

that workspace regulations would be beneficial for the organisation as well as all individuals with similar jobs in the organisation. This may stem from her perceptions of the organisation's culture and her understanding of other employees. That is, during her work at the school, she might understand and feel that the organisational culture of her school and her colleagues preferred the "tidy and uniform" work environment. This explanation is supported by interviews with other Chinese participants, in which the participants also mentioned the perceived benefits of regulations for workspaces. However, it is also possible that other employees in the organisation did not share this view, as perceived positive effects of personalisation were mentioned in other Chinese participants' interviews.

In summary, the findings have revealed similarities in the antecedents of workspace personalisation between UK and Chinese participants. Both UK and Chinese participants related job features to the extent of personalisation. Specifically, they indicated that the time they spent in the workspace and the organisation was positively associated the extent of personalisation; and the more individualised they perceived their jobs were, the greater extent they personalised workspaces.

### ***Cultural differences in attitudes towards freedom of personalisation***

To summarise the above findings, UK and Chinese participants tended to express similar views towards perceived effects and antecedents of individual personalisation. In order to further explore cultural differences in how people perceive personalisation between two groups, participants were asked how they would feel about a hypothetical policy restricting personalisation. This question was designed to tap attitudes towards personal control and freedom of personalisation. In general, the findings showed the different attitudes between two groups: UK participants seemed to have a negative view towards the restriction of personalisation by the organisation, while Chinese participants tended to feel acceptable or

positive about this restriction. The conceptual frameworks developed inductively for the UK and Chinese participants' attitudes towards personalisation are shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.6, respectively.

***UK participants' attitudes.*** When participants were asked about a hypothetical policy that would restrict employees' personalisation, UK participants expressed negative feelings (Figure 2.5). UK participants described this restriction of personalisation as 'arbitrary', 'too controlling', and like an 'interference'. UK participants stated that they would feel negative about a policy that did not allow them to personalise their workspaces. For example, UK participant 10 (33-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 2 years) described it as "annoying", as she could not see any harm or anything bad of having personalisation. Moreover, UK Participant 15 (62-year-old, female, working in a private office; tenure of 13 years) indicated that she could not understand or accept this kind of restriction of personalisation:

Extract 14: "Well it would feel a bit like a sort of unnecessary and restriction, because why would it matter whether I did (personalisation) or not. I mean I would still carry on working in the same sort of way, but it would feel a bit like an interference, in what is... of course it's my space, but it is also the University space as well. So, it's both." [.....] "because I think if it's the University tried to restrict, you know, putting more personal items in your office, it would feel like they were sort of interfering, and it would feel, I think it was negative, give you a negative feeling about, why are they bothering to do that (personalisation), because it doesn't do any harm."

Both participants stated that they did not think personalisation was bad or had any harm, the restriction of personalisation thus would lead annoying and interfering feeling to them.

Extract 14 stated the recognition that the workspace belonged to both the organisation and

her, instead of belonging to the organisation only. Thus, she had a negative opinion towards the restriction of personalisation by the organisation, as this restriction deprived her of the control over her workspace. Based on the fact that all participants in this study had the freedom to personalise their workspaces, the resentment towards the hypothetical restriction to personalisation may be because they were used to having the freedom to control their workspaces. Thus, hypothetically depriving existing freedoms led to negative emotions for these participants, particularly for UK people who had a highly individualistic culture. From another perspective, those individuals with little or no freedom to personalise their spaces might have had less resentment against the hypothetical restriction of workspace personalisation, because they were used to such an organisational culture and restrictive regulations.

When being asked to explain the reasons of perceiving a restrictive policy of personalisation as negative, UK participants' responses tended to highlight the individual self rather than the organisation, and tended to regard restricting personalisation as denying the importance of the individual self within the workplace. In other words, restrictive policies of personalisation limited the freedom of expressing their individual self, they thus had negative opinions towards the hypothetical policies for restricting personalisation. For instance, UK participant 9 (47-year-old, female, working in a private office; tenure of 4.5 years) stated that:

Extract 15: "You're an individual and you bring, you bring different things to, everyone is not the same at work, even though maybe they're doing the same job, but they have their own way of doing it, and they are individual and yeah. So, I think it's, I think it's nice to be able to have some individuality in the organisation."

This participant emphasised the importance of recognising differences between individuals in a workplace, and that personalisation could provide a way to express the individual difference in the organisation. Moreover, this participant explained that allowing personalisation

provides a sense of ownership to individuals within an organisation that makes employees feel 'part of' the organisation:

Extract 16: "It probably allows a little bit of, probably encourages people to be a bit more individualistic maybe, and to see the spaces their own rather than the organisation's. So, they probably feel a bit more like this is my office, not the organisation's office, which isn't true, because it is the organisation's office (laugh). But it gives you the sense of ownership, and then I think you feel more like, 'oh then part of this organisation, oh did that make sense'. I think it probably has a different, it probably has an impact in that way that it gives people a sense of ownership."

According to the participant's view, being able to personalise the workspace could enhance the feeling of owning a space in the workplace, which gave her a sense of being a part of the organisation. She consequently thought that she identified with the organisation, in other words, her organisational identification would become more salient due to the provision of freedom to personalise her workspace. Therefore, this participant appears to relate personalisation to organisational identification through recognition of the individual within the larger group.

Some UK interviewees compared a depersonalised work environment with wearing a uniform. Similar to the attitudes towards the hypothetical policy restricting personalisation, UK interviewees tended to discuss it in a negative way. For example, UK participant 13 (34-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 2.5 years) said that:

Extract 17: "I think if I was told that I couldn't personalise my desk, I guess I would think that was saying about the organisational culture that you can't express yourself as a person, I guess that sort of saying we'd prefer you to limit how you express yourself at work. So, yeah, I guess, I guess that's what it be telling me, and I think, I think people would find that quite shocking that you couldn't, you know, it made me

think, you know, maybe the next thing that they might want to do suggest, you know, that we wear uniform or (laugh) something crazy like that.”

As the extract shows, this participant interpreted the restriction of personalisation as the restriction of expressing individual differences as a part of the organisational culture. This participant also compared a depersonalised work environment with wearing uniform, and described the wearing a uniform as a “crazy” thing. Similar to her attitudes towards uniforms, she had a negative opinion about the restriction of personalisation, because both regulations would limit the expression of the personal self.

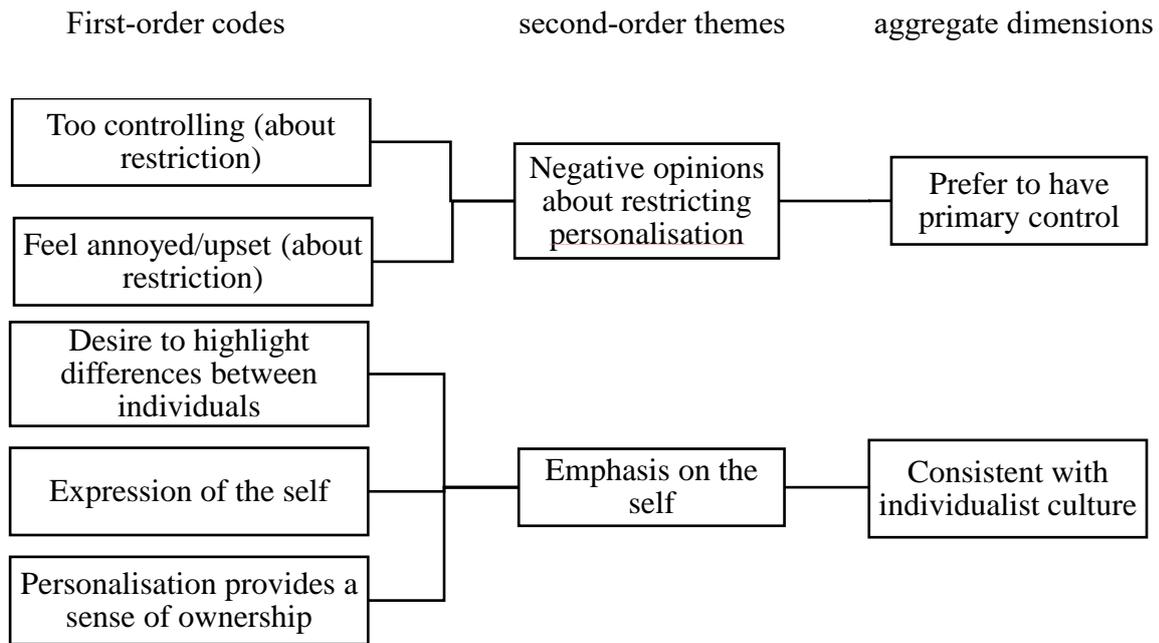


Figure 3.5 Attitudes towards restrictive personalisation policy (UK)

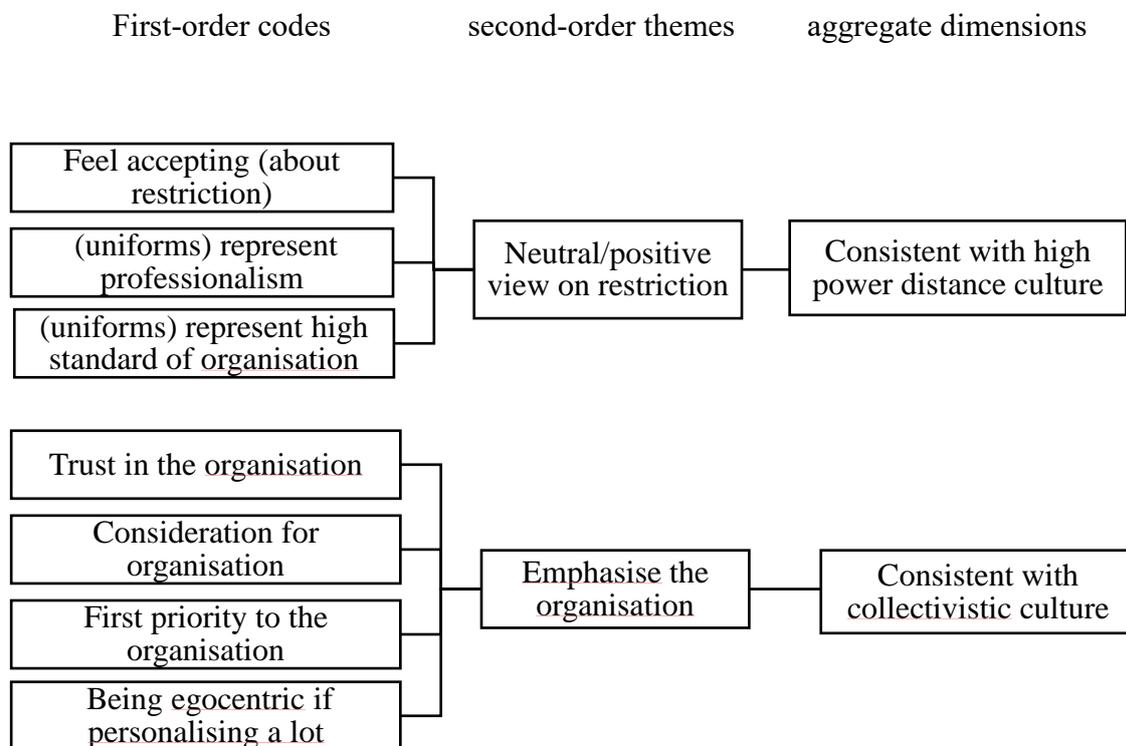


Figure 3.6 Attitudes towards a restrictive personalisation policy (China)

*Chinese participants' attitudes.* In contrast, interviewees in China (Figure 3.6) tended to express opinions that fit those that would be expected of individuals living within a high power-distance culture. In other words, as the less powerful members of an organisation (participants, as employees) they tended to show acceptance of the hypothetical policy to restrict personalisation and expected that power should be distributed unequally (and thus personalisation policy should be dictated by more powerful others). Specifically, in responses to the question “if your organisation didn’t allow you to personalise, how would you feel”, most Chinese participants saw it as acceptable, and had neutral, or even had positive feelings about it. Some interviewees stated that restricting personalisation would not really affect them. For example, Chinese participant 10 (54-year-old, female, working in a shared office; tenure of 28 years) said that:

Extract 18: “I don’t really mind it. This is acceptable. If there were a policy like this, I wouldn’t display items, without any emotion of resistance.”

Chinese participant 1 similarly thought it was acceptable and expressed empathy with the organisation:

Extract 19: “I think that’s not a big issue, because when an organisation has a policy that would be a requirement for everyone, the organisation has its consideration or position for setting the policy. Also, I think I personally can fit in the environment easily. If there are policies for restricting displaying personal items, I don’t think the issue is big. If I can’t display here, I can display at my home or other places instead (laugh).”

From the point of view of these two participants, the freedom to personalise in the workplace was not seen as important to them, and they did not regard policies restricting personalisation as a big issue. Furthermore, Extract 19 expressed the participant’s understanding of the organisation’s position for having a restrictive policy. Therefore, they thought the restriction

of personalisation would be acceptable. These two extracts are opposite to Extract 14 about UK participants' negative feelings towards the restriction. It is possible that it was partially because of cultural differences in their attitudes towards authority, as the extracts were answering the question about the hypothetical restrictive policy from the organisation. On the other hand, this difference could be explained by cultural differences in the perceived importance of having personal control, which has been demonstrated by Sastry and Ross (1998). This explanation may be more convincing because in the extracts above, Chinese participants showed more attention to benefits for the organisation, in contrast, UK participants placed more emphasis on individuality and personal control.

It is interesting that, when discussing the freedom of workspace personalisation, Chinese participants also compared a depersonalised work environment with wearing uniform. However, in contrast with the broadly negative opinions of UK participants, interviewees in China indicated positive attitudes towards uniforms, which was consistent with their opinions about restricting personalisation and a depersonalised office environment. For example, Chinese participant 9 (32-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 7 years) described uniform dressing as a "high standard" and that it reflected, "professionalism", as did a restrictive personalisation policy:

Extract 20: "I think this (restrictive policy) is normal. It's understandable, if the organisation has this kind of cultural regulations. Probably for some organisations, such as some universities or schools, that I have visited, they have high requirements about this. For example, they have regulations in uniform dress code, or in uniform office environment. They have many regulations like this, but we haven't had lots of regulations so far. Probably we need to have a look at what other schools are like and how their professionalism is."

According to this extract, this participant saw the uniform dressing and uniform workspaces as a representation of professionalism and high standards of an organisation. He not only thought the policy restricting personalisation as understandable, but also thought it is good for the organisation. Thus, this extract shows a very positive opinion towards the restrictive policy of personalisation by the organisation. Similarly, Chinese participant 2 (39-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 19 years) said that:

Extract 21: “If the school has standards for organising offices, of course this is a good thing. If it is standardised, we would be tidy and comfortable. Just like the uniforms we have, we would dress neatly in a uniform way when there are big events. It actually also represents the level of a school. If every office did this, the school would become standardised. If the work environment is standardised by the policies or regulations of the school, it is good for our work as well as for managing and educating students. It is something worthy to be looked forward to.”

This Chinese participant also described standardised workspace and dressing as advantageous for them and their work with students, and thought the standardisation could represent the high standard of an organisation. He also expressed the expectation of the standardised work environments in the whole school. Therefore, he generally had a very positive attitudes towards the restrictive policy of workspace personalisation.

Overall, UK participants’ negative opinion and Chinese participants’ positive opinions towards uniform dressing and workspaces appears to suggest that there are cultural differences between two countries in attitudes towards restrictive policies. On the other hand, it possibly reflects organisational differences between two samples. Referring back to the Extracts 13 and 14 about the individuality of jobs in the previous section, both groups of participants mentioned that the perception of individuality of jobs was an antecedent of personalisation. Moreover, the organisation the UK sample worked in was a university, while

the Chinese sample was from a vocational college. Employees working at the university, especially academic staff, might expect to have more autonomy and individuality in comparison to employees working in the vocational colleges or schools. Thus, it is possible that the different attitudes from two samples were due to the organisational differences.

When asking for explanations about why they accepted or appreciated the restrictive policy and standardised workspace/dressing, Chinese interviewees explained their views about the relationship between the organisation and the employees. Unlike UK participants, Chinese participants appeared to take a 'collectivist' perspective, and tended to attach more importance to the organisation rather than to the self. For example, Chinese participant 7 (46-year-old, male, working in a private office; tenure of 26 years) said that:

Extract 22: "It has positive effects. Some items are not necessary to display. It depends on the school's requirements, as the school's regulations usually fit the reality of the work environment. So, the regulations about what items are good to display are helpful for the work."

This participant indicated a restrictive policy could be positive, and expressed he trusted the organisation's regulations should be good for their work and fir the work environment. Given the fact that this participant had worked in the organisation for 26 years, his trust in the organisation may have come from his strong organisational identification that was established during his long tenure. Moreover, as Chinese culture is highly collectivistic, according to Hofstede et al., (1980), the participant's trust in the organisation may have been developed from the environment of the collectivistic culture. Chinese participant 6 (33-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 8 years) with a shorter tenure also emphasised collective interests when answering the question. He stated that personalising a lot is not a positive thing for the organisation, so this kind of restrictive policy is reasonable:

Extract 23: “This (the policy) is reasonable, for sure. It depends on the nature of work. The premise is not to negatively affect the work environment” [.....] “if it was too personalised, it might affect the image of the organisation. We should handle this by ourselves. In an organisation, we should give the first priority to the organisation, and consider things based on the organisation. If you have your own personalisation, you should arrange it reasonably, or display it at home.”

According to this statement, it appears that this participant thought the restrictive policy as reasonable, as he thought a great extent of personalisation would negatively affect the organisation. Moreover, he emphasised that employees should prioritise the organisation over individual self when considering personalisation. Thus, the opinion he expressed towards the restrictive policy was positive.

Chinese participant 6 (33-year-old, male, working in a small open plan office; tenure of 8 years) also described his positive attitudes towards a restrictive personalisation policy and explained as followed:

Extract 24: “They (young people/students) tend to want individuality and have more thoughts and ideas about this kind of things (personalisation). As a result, they are egocentric or are really keen on a certain thing. But after they go to work, they are more likely to fit in the reality, instead of being egocentric. At work, people are likely to be unconsciously influenced by the environment, rather than thinking about what they want to do. People tend to just follow the mainstream for things that are not about the work. It’s because following the mainstream leads to a feeling of fitting in and integrating together with others. We would unconsciously feel like a family at work rather than individuals. People would lose their individuality after going to work.”

According to this participant's view, he reasoned that personalisation could have a negative impact on how well an individual fits with an organisation, and characterised personalisation as individualistic and "egocentric", which can interfere with how well an employee "follows the mainstream" and fits into the organisation. Thus, in his opinion, fitting in the mainstream and environment of the organisation is more important. In contrast, expressing individuality, such as having a lot of personalisation, is less important. This is opposite to the Extract 15 from a UK participant.

Therefore, UK participants and Chinese participants expressed different attitudes towards the freedom of personalisation. UK participants tended to feel negatively about restrictions on personalisation, while Chinese participants tended to have either neutral or positive feelings about it. To explain their reasoning behind this reaction, UK participants emphasised the self and the importance of maintaining differences between individuals, and attached importance to the freedom to personalise. On the other hand, Chinese participants emphasised the needs and decisions of the organisation about personalisation over that of the individual employee.

Overall, there were differences in attitudes towards the freedom of personalisation between UK and Chinese groups, but similar positive perceived outcomes of individual personalisation for both groups. Chinese participants were aware of forms of personalisation that were unique to their sample – group-level and leader designed personalisation, which they perceived enhanced their organisational identification and group relationships.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore the role of culture in workspace personalisation using semi-structured interviews and workspace observations. More specifically, the purpose was to explore cultural similarities and differences in factors affecting, attitudes towards,

forms of, and perceived effects of personalisation on employees, as well as in the attitudes towards the restriction of personalisation.

### **Perceived effects of personalisation**

In terms of the effects of individual personalisation, consistent with previous studies (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Wells, 2000), our findings suggest that both groups of participants perceived positive effects of individual personalisation on wellbeing, productivity, and colleagues' relationships. Both UK and Chinese participants believed that individual personalisation enhanced their mood, which is consistent with research by Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b), and Wells (2000). Both groups of participants perceived that individual personalisation items improved wellbeing because they served as reminders of personal life and relieved tension between work and personal life. This may be because personalisation items serve as a representation of the self (Byron & Laurence, 2015), and displaying items relating to the workspace user's personal life can be the symbolically represent the personal aspect of the self, which might help to integrate between work and non-work identities.

With regard to the effect of individual personalisation on productivity, participants from both cultures indicated that individual personalisation influenced productivity via improving wellbeing. This indirect relationship has been demonstrated in Lee and Brand's (2005) research. Findings from both groups showed that participants perceived that individual personalisation had positive effects on relationships among employees because it was helpful in initialising conversations. This is consistent with a qualitative study on personalisation by Byron and Laurence (2015), in which personalisation contributes to the development of relationships between colleagues. This is because displaying individual personalisation items could provide a secure ground upon which to develop relationships by decreasing uncertainty for themselves and for others, and thus contributing to maintaining their stable self-views and

views about others in the workplace. This is because lack of disclosure between colleagues may lead employees to feel uncertainty and distrust towards colleagues, and personalisation can reveal aspects of employees' identities and can facilitate disclosure and rapport between colleagues (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Macintosh, 2009).

Two specific forms of personalisation appeared to be exclusive to the Chinese sample: group-level personalisation in the shared workspace, and personalisation by the leader. For group-level personalisation, the findings showed that Chinese employees had positive views towards the items of and the process of group personalisation, and towards its impact on themselves and the organisation. More specifically, they indicated the importance of group identification and the value of relationships in group-level personalisation, and that this personalisation enhanced relationship between colleagues and contributed to organisational environment and cultures. It might be explained as that group-level personalisation positively impacts on outcomes through facilitating the development of group identification in Chinese participants. This is consistent with Yuki's (2003) theory of group behaviours of East Asian collectivists. Yuki's theory indicates that, compared with individualists, East Asian collectivists (including Chinese people) emphasise intragroup relations and the sense of personal connectedness in the group rather than expression of the individual self, and are more sensitive to the needs and feelings of other group members (Yuki, 2003). Therefore, mutually deciding to display group items may have been a way to express or develop the sense of connectedness between colleagues, and their group identification would be in turn enhanced. As a consequence, the outcomes, such as ingroup relationships and organisational environment, would be positively influenced.

Contrary to findings from interviews with Chinese participants, no group-level workspace personalisation was found in interviews with UK participants. One explanation is that the sample for this study is small and therefore not representative of most UK office

workers. Another possible explanation is that UK participants may not use group personalisation to express their group identity, although expressing group identity is also important to them (e.g. Haslam et al., 2000). Since this study did not directly address the issue of group personalisation in the interviews of UK participants, future research is worth exploring whether there is group personalisation among employees in the UK and even in the West as well as their perceptions of it.

On the other hand, some UK participants indicated that individual personalisation provided a sense of ownership in the workplace and the feeling of being a part of the organisation, their identification with the organisation would be consequently enhanced. According to this view, their organisational identification could be enhanced by individual personalisation, in contrast with the view of some Chinese participants that group identification could be enhanced by group personalisation. Therefore, both groups of participants indicated the perceived positive effect of personalisation on identification with a group or organisation, but the forms of personalisation that related to the identification were different. This is consistent with past research by Knight and Haslam (2010b) that suggests the positive effects of personalisation on organisational identification. It is also consistent with Yuki's (2003) theory of group behaviours of East Asian collectivists, which suggests that East Asian collectivists' group identification is significantly related to intragroup relationships. Chinese participants also discussed positive effects of another unique type of personalisation: leader designed personalisation, referring to by leaders' choices of personalisation items that were displayed in employees' workspaces. The perceived positive effect of this type of personalisation may be explained by the fact that leadership styles characterised by authoritarianism are widespread in Chinese culture (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004). Thus, individuals' behaviours and decisions at work are significantly related to the manager's attitudes. This may be because Chinese culture is characterised by

high power distance, in which attitudes and decisions of more powerful people are highly appreciated and valued (Hofstede, 1997, 2003). This finding is also consistent with cultural differences in locus of control, which suggests that collectivists, like Chinese people, place more value on secondary control. This means that Chinese perceive control by aligning themselves with powerful others (Spector et al., 2001; Spector et al., 2002; Spector et al., 2004; Weisz et al., 1984). Therefore, leader designed personalisation led to perceived positive effects for Chinese participants by providing them with secondary control, and by the perception that they are valued by their leader.

### **Antecedents of personalisation**

Statistical results of workspace observation checklists indicated that there were no significant differences between UK and Chinese groups in the overall extent to which they personalised their workspace. This failure to reveal significant results might be because the size of sample was small (31 participants), and therefore this small sample might not be able to generalise or represent the two national cultural groups. However, both groups of participants indicated that, according to their personalisation experience, job characteristics, such as the length of time they spent in the workspace and in the organisation, and whether they perceived their work as individual, affected the extent of their workspace personalisation. This is consistent with previous research by Byron and Laurence (2015) indicating that the extent of personalisation varied by individual-level factors, including work roles. These results support an individual-level explanation for the degree of personalisation, rather than a group-level (cultural) explanation.

More specifically, regarding the length of time employees spent in the workspace or the organisation, both groups of participants indicated a perceived positive relationship between the length of time and extent of personalisation, because the more time they need to

spend in the workspace, the more inclined to set up their own spaces. This may be because employees with shorter tenure are likely to feel less comfortable with the organisation, and build less psychological attachment to their workplace (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sommer et al., 1996). Thus, a relatively short tenure might result in a lower level of organizational organisation and lower levels of workspace personalisation. Conversely, another possible explanation for this finding is that less personalisation leads to a lower sense of identity and belonging to the workspace and the organisation, as the relationship between personalisation extent and organisational identification has been demonstrated by the existing literature (e.g. Knight & Haslam, 2010b). In line with this perspective, it is possible that there is a two-way interaction between the length of the tenure and the degree of personalisation. This specific area has not been studied in the existing literature, so this is a direction worthy of future research.

### **Attitudes towards personalisation**

Although there were similarities in the perceived effects of and attitudes towards individual personalisation between two groups, according to their actual personalisation experience, interview results showed differences between the two groups in terms of attitudes towards the restriction of personalisation. UK participants tended to show negative attitudes towards restrictions on workspace personalisation because they attached importance to having freedom to personalise their workspaces and preferred to have direct control over it. On the other hand, Chinese participants either thought that restriction of personalisation would be acceptable or perceived it as positive. One explanation for this finding could be cultural differences in power distance, as per Hofstede's cultural framework. In this framework, people in cultures with large power distance, such as China, accept and expect that the power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980), so more powerful people are usually the decision

makers. In contrast, people in cultures with small power distance, such as UK, are more comfortable with the equal distributed power. It is noted that power distance differences do not mean that leaders are unimportant in countries with low power distance (such as UK). However, this explanation might raise the question that the difference between two groups of participants might reflect different attitudes towards authority more than different attitudes towards personalisation, as power distance refers to the acceptance and expectation towards power and authority.

This finding could be explained by the theory of cultural differences in locus of control (Ji et al., 2000; Sastry & Ross, 1998; Spector et al., 2001; Spector et al., 2002; Spector et al., 2004), in which they showed that people from individualist cultures prefer to have primary personal control, and having control is important to their wellbeing. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures tend not to emphasise direct control, and direct control is not significantly related to wellbeing for them; instead, they prefer secondary control that refers to experiencing feelings of control indirectly by aligning themselves with powerful ingroup members (Weisz et al., 1984). Therefore, UK participants preferred to have direct control over their workspaces, they thus thought the freedom to personalise workspaces as important. Chinese participants might prefer the secondary control by the group or the powerful members in the group, they thus perceived the organisation's restriction of personalisation as acceptable or positive.

In terms of the negative attitudes towards restriction of personalisation, UK participants mentioned that the restriction would deprive the control they should have over their workspaces. In addition to the explanations above, the negative sentiment of UK participants to personalisation restrictions may also be due to the fact that as knowledge workers, they have been used to having a great extent of autonomy in the work environment. As autonomy is defined as a basic psychologic need (Deci & Ryan, 2000), research has

demonstrated that the satisfaction of autonomy need leads to a crucial effect on wellbeing (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, depriving individuals' autonomy would make them feel resentful. On the other hand, since there were no participants in this study who had little autonomy in their workspace, the perception of the importance of workspace personalisation by those without autonomy has not been revealed in the study. The deprivation of autonomy need can be explained by the classic model of General Adaption Syndrome (Selye, 1946), which involve three stages of responding to a stressor: alarm reaction (fighting against the stressor), resistance stage (adapting functioning to live in the preoccupation), and exhaustion stage (no longer to be able to resist). For employees who have little autonomy for a long time, they may already be in the exhaustion stage, so they may have adapted to the lack of autonomy and thus have no such strong resistance to employer's restriction of workspace personalisation.

When explaining the reasons of perceiving restrictive policies of personalisation as negative/positive, UK participants indicated that restricting personalisation limited their need to express their individual differences within the group through workspace personalisation, while Chinese participants were likely to prioritise the organisation over the self when considering workspace personalisation. This finding is consistent with cultural differences in the dimension of individualism-collectivism (Hofstede et al., 1991), which suggests that people in individualist cultures highlight the independent self, and expect to have considerable freedom to adopt their own approach to their work (and workspace). On the other hand, collectivist cultures highlight the social self, and tend to be integrated into strong and cohesive ingroups. This finding is also consistent with findings by Markus and Kitayama (1991), who show that individualists prefer to express their uniqueness in order to maintain their independence from other people, while collectivists value interpersonal harmony and solidarity over the independent self. Therefore, removing or restricting the freedom to

personalise workspaces might cause UK employees to feel difficult to express the independence of the self from others, which is one element in their self-concept, so it leads negative emotions to them. For Chinese employees, expressing the individual self might not be as important as for UK employees; instead, considering the need of the group or organisation might be more important to Chinese, because it is a way to express the connection and interdependence with the group and the members of it, and the social self is seen as important in their self-concept.

### **Limitations and recommendations for future research**

While the findings above are novel and significant in the way that they elucidate the different psychological processes underlying the psychology of workspaces for employees from individualist and collectivist cultures, they should be understood with the following limitations in mind. There were several relevant differences between the two organisations from which participants were sampled. Although the organisations were in the same sector (education) and had key similarities in their workspaces and workspace management policies, the organisation in China was a further educational institution and the UK organisation was a higher educational institution. These differences between the organisations may have led to differences in employees between two organisations. For example, higher educational institutions involve employees with more creative work, such as researchers, and these employees might tend to personalise their workspaces more, thus these institutions might have higher level of personalisation than other institutions have. Therefore, it is possible that some differences between the two groups of participants were partly caused by the original dissimilarity between the local culture of the two organisational contexts, or the nature of the work in each organisation, rather than the national culture.

In addition, in our interviews, some Chinese participants had positive views towards uniform workspace and dressing as advantageous for them, and regarded it as representing the high standard of an organisation. Although UK participants in this study did not indicate positive views towards uniforms, some UK organisations, such as the post office and the police, have uniforms, and that may be associated with pride in the organisation. It seems that types of organisations play a big role in determining how participants feel about the restriction of personalisation and about uniform. Furthermore, the results may imply the different perceptions that uniforms create, which could be the pride (as the Chinese participants felt) or resentments (as the UK participants felt). Therefore, further research should measure the role of types of organisations, such as sectors of organisations, in the antecedents of and attitudes towards personalisation.

Another factor that could (at least in part) explain the differences between the two samples is organisational tenure. The average tenure of Chinese participants was longer than UK participants'. Employees who have longer tenure might want to personalise their workspace more, while employees with shorter employments and higher mobility might treat their workplaces as more temporary, and do not pay much attention to modify or decorate their workspaces. This might be because employees who have stayed in their organisations longer are likely to be more committed to organisations, and build more psychological attachment to their workplace (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sommer et al., 1996), consequently they are more likely to settle and personalise their workspace. Although none of the findings in this study suggested that tenure played a role in personalisation, future research could also involve the samples with similar tenure for precisely examining in personalisation between different cultural groups, and also could further investigate whether organisational tenure is related to the extent of personalisation.

In addition, this study revealed group-level personalisation only in Chinese participants' workspaces but not in any UK participants'. This might be because of cultural factors, as discussed. On the other hand, compared with UK sample, the Chinese sample had more participants who worked in shared offices. Although group-level personalisation we found in the Chinese sample was not only in the shared offices but also in some private offices, the smaller number of shared offices in the UK sample might also be one of the reasons for the absence of group-level personalisation in the findings.

Moreover, there was more female staff than male staff in the sample from the UK organisation, whereas the number of male and female staff in the participating college in China was relatively equal. In other words, one of the factors causing the differences between two groups of participants may be related to the sex differences between two samples. Research examining personalisation by Wells (2000) found a gender difference in personalisation. They demonstrated that women personalised significantly more than men did; women are more likely to personalise items with symbols of personal relationships, plants and trinkets, while men tend to personalise items related to sports or their achievements; women personalise workspaces in order to express their identities and emotions, while men personalise for showing their statuses and ownerships (Wells, 2000). Although there was no specific indication that sex or gender played a role in participants' perceptions of workspace management or personalisation in this study, future research should involve the samples with equivalent demographics, in order to precisely find out similarities and differences in personalisation between different cultural groups.

Another limitation was the nature of items that the observation checklist recorded. This checklist mainly focused on the number of personalisation items. However, it did not consider other aspects of items such as the size. For example, for some workspaces, there might be a small number of items but the size of them might be big, so it visually has a

greater impact on personalisation. But in this case, as the number of items was small, the workspace would be still measured as a lower extent of personalised in the checklist. Future research may consider both the number and size of an individual's personalisation items, in order to measure the extent of personalisation more precisely in the observation of workspaces.

Finally, this study focused on the impact of visible personalisation items as seen physical objects. However, physical objects could have other effects that are realised through other senses. For example, the feel of personalisation objects (such as cushions on the chairs) might lead comfort or discomfort to the workspace's user, and a radio station chosen by the office user might have an impact as well. In addition, electronic personalisation items might also influence on employees, such as personalising the desktop of own computers by personal photos, which could have the same impact as physical photos have. Future research could explore the role of other sensory inputs from items as well as the role of electronic items in the effects of personalisation, and whether these effects vary according to culture.

### **Practical implications**

According to these findings, personalisation has positive effects on employees' wellbeing, productivity and relationships between employees, which suggests that employers and interior designers should improve the quality of physical working environments. Employers should take into account employees' attitudes toward and the impact of personalisation when they devise the policy for managing the work environment, because an organisation's policy about personalisation is related to employees' wellbeing and satisfaction towards the organisation and management, as well as their work performance. In general, employees of both cultures appeared to appreciate the enriched offices, no matter which form of workspace enrichment. Therefore, managers of organisations should pay attention to

enriching the office spaces of the staff when managing workspaces, instead of making office spaces into lean spaces for the improvement of work efficiency. This is because research has demonstrated that the benefits of enriched office spaces for employees regardless of cultures, and that lean spaces are not able to effectively improve employee productivity.

Specifically, as the findings of this study indicate that UK participants had negative attitudes towards restrictions on personalisation, employers in the UK should devise lenient policies for office workspace management, and should give the employees autonomy and freedom to personalise their own workspaces. In terms of specific implications for Chinese employers, as this study reveals that Chinese participants valued group-level personalisation and leader designed personalisation, employers and managers in China could consider arranging or allocating a reasonable extent of decoration to employees' offices, and attach importance to employees' team office environment, in order to enhance cohesiveness between employees.

Interior designers should also consider users' personalisation as an important factor in designing workspaces. For instance, offices should involve spaces that are amenable to personalisation, rather than designing rigid offices that are not convenient for users' personalisation. Considering the importance of group-level personalisation to Chinese employees, designers in China could additionally create common spaces for office users to personalise when designing shared offices.

## **Conclusion**

This study is the first qualitative study to investigate the role of culture in the psychology of workspace personalisation, including the role of culture in driving differences in what prompts personalisation, how and why individuals personalise, and the effects of personalisation. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on the cross-cultural

psychology of the work environment, which is an area that lacks attention and empirical research and yet has implications in diversity management of office environment through indicating the profile of and effects of personalisation on different groups of employees. The findings reveal cultural differences in attitudes towards policies that would restrict personalisation. Both UK and Chinese participants indicated job characteristics as factors affecting the extent of personalisation, and suggested that individual personalisation had positive effects on their wellbeing, productivity and relationships. Furthermore, this study was the first to reveal culture specific forms of personalisation: two discreet forms were found in the Chinese sample, group-level personalisation and leader designed personalisation. Findings showed that group-level personalisation was perceived to enhance workplace relationships and contributed organisational cultures, and leader designed personalisation was perceived to positively affect organisational identification. Further research should test whether the cultural differences found in this study were caused by differences between national cultures or differences between organisational contexts.

## Chapter 4 General Discussion

This thesis began by problematising the notion that personalisation can have positive effects on individuals and organisations across cultures. While past research has suggested that positive outcomes result from allowing employees to personalise workspaces because it makes them feel empowered (Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010), no research had examined the role of culture in these effects. Yet, past research also suggested that there were differences in the importance of autonomy and control (and thus empowerment) to individuals from different cultures. Given the above synthesis, this research aimed to investigate the role of culture in the processes by which personalisation can affect individual outcomes. The results of the two cross-cultural studies reported in this thesis lead to the suggestion that three key aspects of culture at both the national and organisational level can affect workspace personalisation (Figure 4.1):

- 1) The desire to express individual uniqueness (individualism-collectivism);
- 2) The need for personal autonomy and control over workspace (power distance);
- 3) Uncertainty avoidance.

The research presented in this thesis investigated personalisation processes in both UK and Chinese samples. First, we proposed that employees in China would personalise less than employees in the UK. This is because Chinese culture has higher levels of collectivism and power distance than UK culture. Personalisation is a way to express employees' individual differences, and collectivistic cultures might not attach as much importance to the expression of an individual's uniqueness as individualists (Hofstede, 2011). Moreover, the difference in power distance might lead to the expectation for UK participants that they should make decisions and have direct control over their workspaces, while Chinese subordinates expect

and accept to be told what to do (Hofstede, 2011). Second, in the same way, we expected that collectivism and power distance in *organisational* culture would also affect the degree to which employees would personalise their workspace.

Third, we expected that uncertainty avoidance in organisational culture would be positively related personalisation. Because displaying personalisation items could decrease uncertainty of employees' identities for the employees themselves and others, employees with a higher level of uncertainty avoidance who feel uncomfortable in unstructured circumstances might personalise more.

Finally, this research examined whether personal control and autonomy were differentially related to organisational identification and individual outcomes for Chinese relative to UK employees. Due to the different levels of power distance and collectivism in China, Chinese participants may not derive the same benefit as UK participants from personalising their workspaces from the increased autonomy and control provided by personalisation. Conversely, UK employees may appreciate the autonomy and control provided by the freedom to personalise, and therefore it may increase their job performance and satisfaction. Therefore, in line with the research on locus of control, providing control over workspace and providing work autonomy for employees in collectivistic and large power distance cultures might not be as effective as it is for employees in individualistic and small power distance cultures.

This research aimed contribute to the literature by examining the role of national cultures and organisational cultures in personalisation. To achieve this aim, in the current research we used an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach that involved a quantitative and a qualitative phase. An initial quantitative study (Chapter 2) included collecting and analysing survey data in order to investigate the processes by which both

national and organisational culture can affect personalisation. The subsequent qualitative study (Chapter 3) then built on the findings from the Study 1 by exploring and comparing UK and Chinese employees' workspace personalisation experiences through interviews and workspace observations.

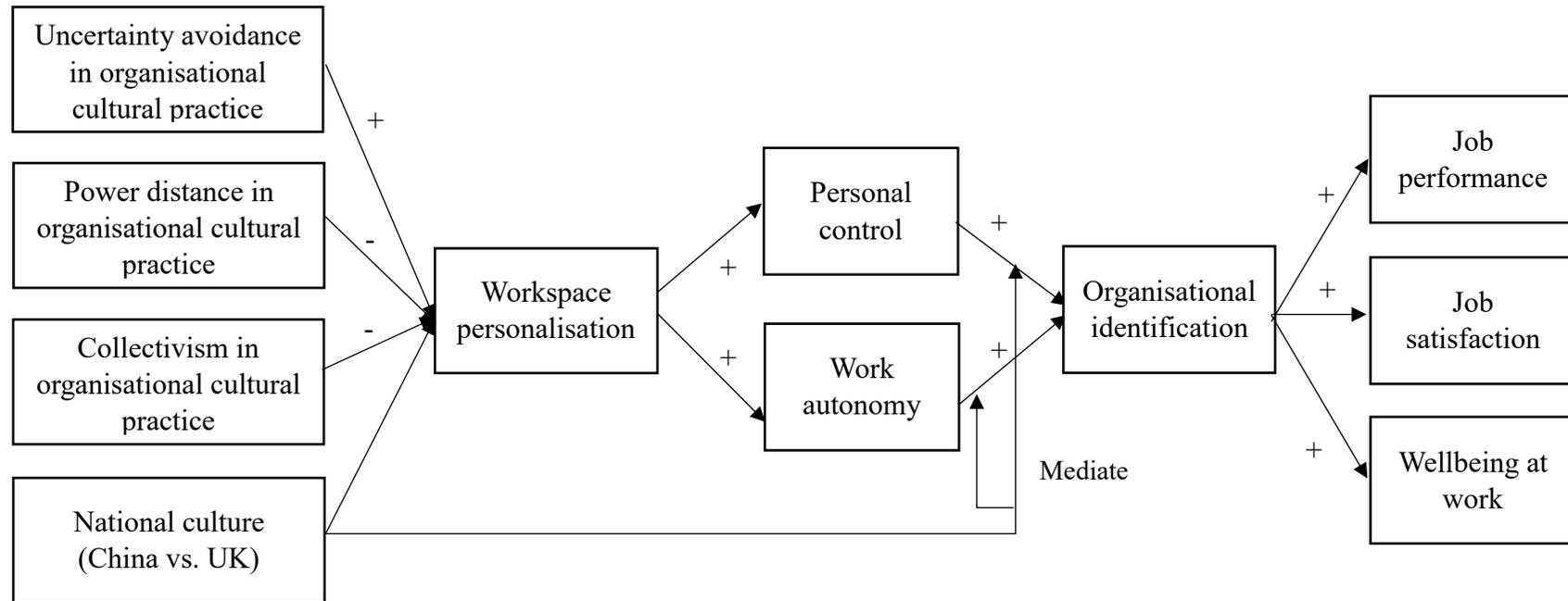


Figure 4.1. Role of Organisational and National Culture in the Social Identity Model of Workspace Personalisation

## Theoretical implications of the main findings

### Cultural similarities and differences in factors affecting personalisation

In the quantitative study (Chapter 2), we found more personalisation in the UK sample than in the Chinese sample. However, in the qualitative study (Chapter 3), we found no significant differences between UK and Chinese participants in terms of whether they chose to personalise their workspace, or the number of items they displayed. The difference in the results across the two studies might be due to the greater variety of participants and organisations sampled in the quantitative study that is more representative and more generalizable than the qualitative study. However, there are limitations associated with these studies, specifically in the differences between the samples that might create confounds (office type) and in that the organisations that were sampled may not be representative of Chinese and UK organisations, *per se*. To some extent, we were able to control for this confound in Chapter 2 and found that office type made no substantive differences to the results. Thus, whilst this research contributes to the literature on personalisation by directly comparing workspace personalisation between employees from different countries, and suggests that there may be national cultural differences in the extent of personalisation, any conclusions drawn about cultural differences must be tentative. Notwithstanding, this was the first research in the literature to indicate the national cultural difference in personalisation and it may have important implications for workspace management in the organisations, especially for the organisations in these two countries. More broadly, this work provides nuance to the literature on the influence of national cultures on the work environment.

Because Study 1 indicated different extents of personalisation between UK and Chinese samples, Study 2 used interviews to explore the reasons for differences between the

two groups. Analyses suggested that both groups of participants thought job characteristics, such as the organisational tenure and the individuality of the nature of work, rather than cultural factors, determined the extent of personalisation. The difference in the extent of personalisation in Study 1 might be because there were differences in terms of job characteristics between UK and Chinese samples (e.g. tenure and occupations). This finding is consistent with Byron and Laurence's (2015) research suggesting that the extent of personalisation varied by individual-level factors, including work roles. This also suggests that culture was not a salient factor for participants in Study 2.

The national differences in the extent of personalisation found in Study 1 might be explained by the different levels of power distance and collectivism in the UK and China. According to Hofstede's examination of cultural differences, China has a higher degree of power distance and collectivism than UK (Hofstede et al., 2010). Thus, UK participants with a lower level of power distance might expect that they should make decisions and have direct control over their workspaces, while Chinese participants with higher level of power distance might expect and accept that powerful others make decisions for them (Hofstede, 2011). In addition, Chinese culture, as a collectivistic culture, emphasises the maintenance of in-group harmony, while UK culture, as an individualistic culture, encourages individuals to speak their minds (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, individualists might be more likely to express their individual differences in the work environment through workspace personalisation. In contrast, collectivists might not attach as much importance to the expression of an individual's uniqueness as individualists, and therefore are less likely to personalise workspaces. Furthermore, in comparison with collectivistic cultures that are emphasising the interdependent self, individualistic cultures highlight cognitions about the personal self, and the instrumental use of social others as a source of comparison or target

of self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, UK participants might personalise more than Chinese participants.

Whilst these explanations are at the level of national culture, interestingly, they were supported by the relationships between the *organisational* cultural variables and personalisation for UK participants (but not Chinese participants): there was a positive correlation between uncertainty avoidance in organisational cultural practice and workspace personalisation, and negative correlations between power distance and personalisation, and between collectivism and personalisation. This pattern of results was not found for Chinese participants, however, none of the organisational cultural variables were related to workspace personalisation. Reasons for this are explored later in this chapter.

### ***Factors affecting personalisation***

Because the quantitative study described in Chapter 2 indicated different extents of personalisation between UK and Chinese samples, the qualitative study (Chapter 3) explored the reasons behind this difference between two groups by using a qualitative approach. Interviews in the qualitative study firstly examined the factors affecting personalisation, which revealed that both groups of participants thought job characteristics, such as the organisational tenure and the individuality of the nature of work, as the factors determining the extent of personalisation. This is consistent with Byron and Laurence's (2015) research suggesting that the extent of personalisation varied by individual-level factors, including work roles.

### ***Attitudes towards policies that restrict personalisation***

To explore the perceived importance of autonomy and control (for which freedom to personalise workspaces might act as a cue), the interviews (Study 2) included questions

relating to participants' attitudes towards policies that would restrict employees' freedom to personalise their workspaces. Findings revealed that UK and Chinese samples had different attitudes towards the restriction of personalisation. Overall, UK participants tended to have negative attitudes towards the restriction of workspace personalisation, attached importance to the freedom to personalise their workspaces, and preferred to have direct control over them. Moreover, UK participants were likely to emphasise the importance of recognising individual differences between employees in their organisation and the associated process of self-expression. In contrast, Chinese participants either thought that restriction of personalisation would be acceptable or perceived it as positive. Furthermore, Chinese participants tended to emphasise the importance of prioritising the needs of the organisation over the needs and feelings of individual employees. Because Chinese employees had more neutral or positive attitudes towards restrictions of personalisation, they appeared to have less aspiration for personalisation in comparison with UK employees.

These findings on attitudes towards restrictions of personalisation may also reflect the role of two cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism-collectivism. Hofstede's framework of cultural differences has shown that China's power distance index and collectivism index values are higher than UK's (Hofstede et al., 2010). People in cultures with high power distance, such as China, accept and expect that the power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980), so more powerful people are usually the decision makers. Thus, Chinese employees are likely to prioritise the organisation over the self when considering workspace personalisation, which is consistent with the previous research that states collectivists value interpersonal harmony and solidarity rather than the independent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, the different attitudes towards the

freedom to personalise might be related to the higher levels of collectivism and power distance in the Chinese sample compared with the UK sample.

### ***Organisational cultural differences in personalisation***

In Study 1, analyses revealed that there were significant differences in organisational cultures between participating organisations from the UK and China. Results indicated that organisational-level uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism in organisational cultures were lower in the UK sample compared with the Chinese sample. This means that Chinese employees tended to feel uncomfortable in unstructured circumstances, expect and accept that unequal power distribution, and individuals in Chinese society are likely to be integrated into groups. In contrast, the UK employees tended to feel comfortable in unstructured situations, perceive hierarchy as existential inequality, and have looser ties between individuals (Hofstede, 2011).

Moreover, this study revealed that each of these cultural dimensions was associated with personalisation for UK participants: there were negative relationships between power distance and personalisation, and between collectivism and personalisation, as well as a positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and personalisation. These findings are consistent with Wells et al. (2007), who suggested that there is an association between organisational culture and employees' personalisation. As personalisation relates to providing choices to employees, some organisational cultures highlighting authority or goal-orientation might be more likely to encourage or allow employees to personalise, in contrast to other cultures that highlight support to employees (Wells et al., 2007). However, past research did not specify the specific organisational cultural dimensions that are related to personalisation. These findings not only revealed the important role of organisational cultures in personalisation, but also uncovered how organisational cultures are related to

the extent of personalisation. The current research thus extends this area of literature by linking three cultural dimensions, uncertainty avoidance, power distance and individualism-collectivism, in the *organisational* culture to personalisation. More broadly, this study provides new insight into cross-domain research on cultural psychology and work environment, which is a field that is potentially important to interior design and human resource management for organisations with diverse employees.

On the other hand, our research raises questions for the cross-cultural validity (in terms of national cultures) of the effects of *organisational* cultures on personalisation. Findings of the quantitative study in Chapter 2 indicated that organisational culture was related to the extent of personalisation of UK participants, but did not have a significant relationship with personalisation of Chinese participants. On the other hand, the extent of personalisation was greater in the UK sample than in the Chinese sample, indicating that national cultures play a role in the extent of personalisation. In line with these two findings, it is possible that national culture might have had a greater influence on their personalisation than organisational culture. This may be because participants identified more with or were affected more by their national cultures than with their organisational cultures.

Of course, the extent to which organisational culture impacts on employees' personalisation might depend on the extent to which the cultural norms and values of the organisation are consistent with the employees' local cultures. In other words, we must also consider how the fit between national and organisational culture affects personalisation. Different levels of congruence between management practices and national cultures might lead to different impacts on employees' outcomes. When the management of an organisation (and its workspace) is consistent with the employees' national culture, the organisational culture would have a relatively strong influence on employees. On the other hand, if the

organisational culture contradicts with national culture, the effects of organisational culture would be relatively weak.

This explanation of the fit between organisational cultures and national cultures is consistent with past research. For example, Morris and Pavett (1992) investigated cultural differences of organisations by comparing plants from the United States and Mexico. They found that a benevolent and authoritative organisational culture worked productively in the organisations in Mexico rather than in the United States, while a consultative culture was equally productive in Mexico and the United States. This was because employees from the United States preferred to participate in decision-making and to have relevant training for making these decisions, whereas Mexican employees expected to have authority figures make decisions and assume responsibility. Moreover, research by Lok and Crawford (2004) showed that Australian participants, who have a lower power distance culture, scored higher in innovative and supportive organisational culture than did participants from Hong Kong, who have a higher power distance culture. Therefore, the consistency between organisational culture and national culture might impact on the influence of organisational culture on employees. In line with this explanation, among the Chinese sample, it is possible that some organisations' culture did not have a great level of consistency with the employees' local culture, thus in comparison with national cultures, organisational cultures had weaker impacts on the extent of personalisation in our findings. As this study did not measure the level of consistency between local culture and organisational culture of employees, future research could examine whether the level of this consistency moderates the relationships between organisational cultures and the extent of personalisation.

Furthermore, our quantitative study found that an additional cultural dimension in organisational cultures positively affected personalisation: uncertainty avoidance. Results showed a positive relationship between organisational-level uncertainty avoidance and the

extent of personalisation. This finding is consistent with research by Byron and Laurence (2015). Byron and Laurence (2015) revealed that displaying personalisation items could decrease uncertainty of employees' identities for the employees themselves and others, personalisation thus could contribute to maintain their stable self-views and views towards others in the workplace. This is because lack of disclosure between colleagues may lead the employees to feel uncertainty and distrust towards colleagues, and personalisation can reveal aspects of employees' identities and can facilitate disclosure and rapport between colleagues (Byron & Laurence, 2015; Macintosh, 2009). In line our findings, this suggests that individuals from organisational cultures with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance personalise workspaces more in order to reduce uncertainty in the relationships with colleagues, because individuals with high levels of uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to feel uncomfortable with unknown situations.

### **Cultural differences in the forms and perceived effects of personalisation**

Study 1 demonstrated that personalisation was positively related to job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing at work for both UK and Chinese samples. In Study 2, results also showed that both UK and Chinese participants perceived that workspace personalisation had positive effects. More specifically, both groups of participants indicated that personalisation enhanced their productivity and wellbeing, as well as their relationships between colleagues because it was helpful in initialising conversations. These results are consistent with past research on personalisation suggesting positive effects of personalisation on individual outcomes (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b; Laurence et al., 2013; Lee & Brand, 2005; Wells, 2000). On the other hand, previous research on personalisation was conducted only with participants from a Western cultural background. The present research thus contributes to the literature by

demonstrating the positive impacts of personalisation on employees from both Western and Eastern countries, which extends the demonstration of the applicability of personalisation's effects. Although the overall effects appear to be the same, the processes that connected personalisation and outcomes, and the forms of personalisation, differed cross-culturally.

### ***Specific forms of personalisation for Chinese sample and their effects***

As Study 1 revealed similar positive effects of personalisation in both UK and Chinese groups, Study 2 further explored if there was difference in the forms of personalisation between two groups, as well as the perceived effects of the different forms. The findings of Study 2 provided evidence for two specific forms of personalisation that appeared to be exclusive to the Chinese sample: group-level personalisation in the shared workspace, and leader designed personalisation. Past research has not revealed any culturally-specific forms of personalisation, and only focuses on personalisation by individual employees rather than by a group or by other ingroup members. Study 2 thus contributes to the literature on personalisation by showing that Chinese participants benefited from both group-level personalisation and leader designed personalisation, while no similar phenomenon was found among the UK participants in this study (It is important to note that personalisation in this research refers to the deliberate decoration or modification of an office environment by its occupants; group-level/leader designed personalisation can be categorised as a form of personalisation that is because the group members and the organisation/leaders are (at least partially) also the occupants of the workspaces of employees). On one hand, it is possible that it is a culture-specific phenomenon of Chinese employees. On the other hand, this result is not to claim that no UK employees engage in these forms of personalisation, rather, that these forms of personalisation were not raised in conversation or workspace observation with UK

participants in Study 2, as they were by Chinese participants. Future research needs to be conducted to further explore the cross-cultural differences and similarities in these forms of personalisation. Notwithstanding this caveat, these findings provide a way of understanding the forms personalisation, because the previous research mainly focuses on individual personalisation. On the other hand, the effects of group-level personalisation as well as the impact of senior employees' personalization decisions on workspaces of more junior employees lack attention in the research on the work environment. As the current research revealed the importance of these two forms of personalisation, it is important for the future research to include different forms and levels of personalisation when investigating the antecedents and effects of it, instead of only focusing on the individual level of it. Moreover, these findings provide an insight into culturally-specific forms of personalisation and then provide a thread to further research to discover specific personalisation in other cultures.

For group-level personalisation, we found that Chinese employees had positive views towards the items they mutually decided to display, and indicated the importance of peer identification and the value of relationships in this type of personalisation. They suggested that group-level personalisation could enhance their ingroup relationships and is helpful for constructing organisational culture. This positive effect may be because Chinese culture is highly collectivistic. Highly collectivistic cultures are characterised by highlighting the interdependent self (which places importance on cognitions about other social members), and the symbolic participation of others in the functioning of self, which is seen as more important in the self-concept of Eastern people than Western people (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, having group-level personalisation of a collective workspace might have been a way to improve ingroup relationships, and construct and develop the expression of the interdependent self in the workplace.

The findings of positive effects of group-level personalisation could be further explained by Yuki's (2003) theory of East Asian collectivists' social identification. Yuki's (2003) theory suggests that, compared with individualists, East Asian collectivists emphasise intragroup relations more and are more sensitive to the feelings of personal connectedness with other group members (Yuki, 2003). Therefore, mutually deciding to display personal items might have been a way to express or develop positive relationships between colleagues, and then having group-level personalisation might enhance their group identification.

With regards to leader designed personalisation of employees' workspaces, the manager's attitudes and preferences determined this specific type of personalisation. This finding could be explained by the popularity of authoritarianism leadership styles in Chinese culture due to high power distance of Chinese culture, in which leaders decide goals, procedures and policies, and tend to have control of activities of the subordinates, and the subordinates expect close supervision by the leader (Cheng et al., 2004). This is because Chinese culture is characterised by high power distance, in which attitudes and decisions of people at more powerful status are highly appreciated and valued (Hofstede, 1997, 2003).

### **The role of culture in the processes of personalisation**

In Study 1, we further examined the factors associated with personalisation by examining how culture affected the processes by which personalisation is related to key variables including job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing. Figure 4.1 shows the proposed model of the role of culture in the psychological processes underlying personalisation. This model includes two processes to explain how personalisation affects individuals. According to the first process, personalisation is related to increases in employees' sense of personal control over their workspace, and then personal control is

positively related to individual ‘outcomes’<sup>4</sup> (job performance, job satisfaction, and wellbeing at work) through increases in organisational identification. The second process suggests that personalisation is associated with increases in perceptions of work autonomy, which in turn, are associated with increases in organisational identification, and thus increases in individual ‘outcomes’. Results confirmed the processes by which personalisation was related to the individual outcomes in both samples: both UK and Chinese samples showed indirect effects of personalisation on all three individual outcomes when personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification were analysed together as mediators. These results thus provide evidence for the hypothesised mediating roles of these three variables.

More specifically, we found evidence for the first proposed process from the results of the Chinese sample. The results revealed that there was a positive relationship between personal control and organisational identification for Chinese participants but not UK participants, although both samples showed positive relationships between personalisation and personal control, and between organisational identification and the individual outcomes. Our findings suggested that the second proposed process was more relevant for the UK sample than the Chinese sample. Findings for both samples showed that work autonomy was positively related to organisational identification, and that organisational identification was positively related to all three outcomes. However, there were inconsistent results for the pathway between personalisation and autonomy for Chinese participants when using the two different personalisation measures, meaning that the results

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<sup>4</sup>‘Outcome’ is in inverted commas because they were measured cross-sectionally here, and therefore while we suggest that they are consequences of the personalisation process, we did not empirically ascertain the direction of causality.

for this path for Chinese participants are thus inconclusive. Below, we discuss each finding in turn according to three paths in the model (Figure 4.1).

### ***Personalisation and control/autonomy***

Research on the positive effects of workspace personalisation tends to rely on two broad explanations: one suggests that it is related to personal control over the workspace (Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010; Wells, 2000), while the other suggest that personalisation is related to job autonomy (Knight & Haslam, 2010a, 2010b). Study 1 of this thesis tested both approaches. The results for both UK and Chinese participants showed that personalisation was positively related to personal control over workspaces. This is consistent with the findings of past research which suggested that workspace personalisation provides employees a sense of personal control (Laurence et al., 2013; Lee & Brand, 2005; Lee & Brand, 2010; Wells, 2000). The current research contributes to this area of literature on personalisation by demonstrating that this positive relationship is valid cross-culturally, despite differences in the importance of personal control to people in high-power distance cultures. In terms of work autonomy, only the tests on UK participants show the positive relationship between personalisation and work autonomy. This finding is consistent with the research by Knight and Haslam (2010b) that is based on regarding personalisation as employees' autonomy in the workspace, and on UK participants.

### ***Cultural differences in the effects of control/autonomy***

There is inconsistency in previous research regarding the role of autonomy and control across cultures. Some research suggests that culture may play a moderating role in the relationship between personalisation and individual outcomes because of differences in the importance of personal control to individuals from different cultures, and differences in

the level of power distance. On the other hand, alternative theories, particularly that which take a self-determination theory approach, suggest that autonomy is a universal need and fulfilling it has the same positive effect on all individuals regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The present research contributes to this area of literature by comparing processes of autonomy and control across UK and Chinese participants. It is noted that in the current research, autonomy refers to the right granted by the authority to make independent decisions at work, while control means more practical, specific and direct power over an activity or object, such as a workspace. The findings of this research revealed that work autonomy was positively related to individual outcomes for both cultural groups. In other words, this research suggests that satisfying the need for autonomy has a positive impact on individuals regardless of their cultural context. This finding is consistent with self-determination theory, suggesting that the need for autonomy is applicable to individuals across cultures, and also supports the research that demonstrates the cross-cultural relevance of the need for autonomy (Chirkov et al., 2003; Chirkov et al., 2005; E. L. Deci et al., 2001; Ferguson et al., 2011; Yeh et al., 2009).

On the other hand, this research demonstrated that personal control had stronger relationships with individual outcomes for Chinese participants than UK participants. This is contrary to what would be expected if drawing on insights from theories of cultural differences in locus of control. According to cross-cultural research on locus of control, individualists value primary control more, which means that they prefer to have a direct control over environments through their independent actions, while collectivists place more value on secondary control, which means that they perceive control by aligning themselves with powerful others or by modifying interpretation of a situation (Weisz et al., 1984). Therefore, providing a sense of perceived personal control might have more positive

effects for employees in individualist cultures (e.g., the UK) than for employees in collectivist cultures (e.g., China). Cross-cultural research has provided evidence for this cultural difference in the effects of personal control on individual outcomes (Ji et al., 2000; Sastry & Ross, 1998; Spector et al., 2001; Spector et al., 2002; Spector et al., 2004).

In contrast, our study suggested that providing control was more important for Chinese participants. One possible explanation might be related to the mediator, in the relationship between control/autonomy and the individual outcomes: organisational identification. This is because, as results of Study 2 show, control was significantly related to organisational identification for the Chinese sample but not for the UK sample. This difference affected the relationship between control and outcomes. This mediator will be discussed in the section below.

### ***Cultural differences in social identity processes***

According to Knight and Haslam's (2010a, 2010b) social identity approach to personalisation, when employees' autonomy is not restricted by standardised working conditions, personalisation gives employees a feeling of voice in the organisation. Having voice can improve the extent to which employees define themselves as members of the organisation (Haslam et al., 2000; Knight & Haslam, 2010b), and thus, their organisational identification may be enhanced through personalisation (Knight & Haslam, 2010b). The current research provides a cross-cultural examination of these relationships. Results of Study 1 indicated that work autonomy was positively related to organisational identification for both UK and Chinese participants. In contrast, the positive relationship between personal control over the workspace and organisational identification was only demonstrated for the Chinese sample but not in the UK sample. Thus, the social identity model appeared to fit the data of the Chinese sample more than those of UK sample.

This result raises a question for the universality of the relationship between personal control and organisational identification, and was inconsistent with the research of Knight and Haslam (2010a, 2010b) that demonstrated the positive relationship between control over space and organisational identification. To explain this finding, it needs to refer to the different levels of power distance of two samples. Chinese participants with high power distance cultures might expect less empowerment and control in the workplace while UK participants might have higher expectations of control. Therefore, the provision of the control over workspaces might be a kind of extra reward for Chinese but not UK participants. As a result, personal control over workspaces was more positively related to organisational identification of Chinese sample rather than of UK sample.

#### ***Interaction between individual outcomes of personalisation***

In the qualitative study in Chapter 3, findings from interviews showed that both UK and Chinese groups mentioned the perceived effects of personalisation on work productivity. More specifically, both groups perceived that personalisation influenced their productivity through improving wellbeing. In other words, findings indicated an indirect relationship between personalisation and productivity via wellbeing. On the other hand, our quantitative study described in the Chapter 2 revealed the direct and positive relationships between personalisation and job performance, and between personalisation and wellbeing at work. Past quantitative research on personalisation has suggested the interaction between outcomes of personalisation. For example, Wells (2000) indicates that personalisation has an indirect effect on wellbeing through improving job satisfaction. Moreover, Lee and Brand (2005) found there is an indirect relationship between personalisation and job performance through job satisfaction. Therefore, the finding of our qualitative study provides a possibility that there might be interactions between the three outcomes of personalisation in our quantitative

study, and that one outcome might mediate the relationships between personalisation and other outcomes.

### **Practical implications**

According to the results of the current study, workspace personalisation has positive effects on employees from different cultures. Therefore, business managers should take the workspace personalisation into account when they make decisions on management policies and regulations. More specifically, managers in the organisations with small power distance should aim to have lenient policies of workspace management, so that office workspaces can be utilized to create a positive impact on employees' productivity and satisfaction in the workplace. This freedom of personalisation could be further applied to other equipment in the work environments. For example, employees could be allowed to have administrative access to their work computers in the offices, so that they could have the freedom to install their preferred wallpaper or screensavers. Moreover, as levels of collectivism were negatively related to personalisation, organisations with individualistic cultures should consider implementing lenient policies for workspace personalisation. As this research indicates that UK participants had negative attitudes towards restrictions on personalisation, lenient policies for office workspace management should be suitable for workspace management in UK organisations.

In terms of specific implications for Chinese employers, as this study reveals that Chinese participants valued group-level personalisation and leader designed personalisation, employers and managers in China should attach importance to employees' office environment, in order to enhance cohesiveness between employees and organisational identification. For example, Chinese employers should consider involving employees in the group-level decisions when decorating or renovating offices, such as involving employees'

opinions in the views about the wall's colours and arrangements of furniture in the shared offices. Employers could also consider arranging or allocating a reasonable amount of decoration to employees' offices. Alternatively, organisations could allocate specific budgets to each work group for purchasing group-level personalisation items.

Interior designers should also consider users' personalisation as an important factor in designing workspaces. For instance, offices could involve spaces that are amenable to personalisation, rather than designing rigid offices that are not convenient for users' decoration and arrangements, in order to satisfy employees' desire for personalising their workspaces. Considering the importance of group-level personalisation to Chinese employees, designers in China could additionally create common spaces for office users to personalise when designing shared offices.

### **Future research and development**

#### **Limitations and recommendations for further research**

One of the main limitations of this research is that the samples of these studies were from only two countries, UK and China, for measuring the role of national-level cultures. Although these two countries' cultures are from the West and the East respectively, and there are validated cultural differences in cultural dimensions between them (Hofstede, 1980, 1997, 2003; House et al., 2004), the small number of participating countries might limit the generalisability of the findings across nations. Thus, the findings of this research may not be generalizable to other national-level cultures. Future research could include a larger number of countries, which could further examine the impacts of national cultures on workspace personalisation and its effects.

In addition, our research has investigated uncertainty avoidance as a cultural dimension affecting the extent of personalisation. However, as the two participating countries, UK and China, have similar indices of uncertainty avoidance (China: 30; UK: 35) (Hofstede et al., 2010), we were not able to examine whether the level of this dimension in national cultures was related to the extent of personalisation, and had to only measure this dimension in organisational cultures. Future research could include countries with various levels of uncertainty avoidance for examining whether uncertainty avoidance in national cultures impacts the extent of personalisation.

In terms of the measurement of national cultures, our measurement was based on the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's framework, in which the levels of power distance and collectivism were higher in China than in the UK. Although the validity of Hofstede's framework has been supported by a large number of empirical studies over the decades (Kirkman et al., 2006), there is still a possibility that recruiting participants' perceptions of their national cultures were not consistent with their national cultures as evidenced by Hofstede et al. (2010). In order to test the effects of national cultures more accurately, future research could involve a measurement of participants' personal perceptions of their national cultures, such as adapting House et al.'s (2004) GLOBE scales of cultures with more appropriate Likert scales, which originally measured perceptions of organisational cultures and societal cultures, to measure perceptions of national cultures.

The other limitation related to national cultures was that, participants of our studies were employees working in the organisations in the UK and employees working in the organisations in China. However, the employees working in one country does not necessarily mean that they are originally from this country. In particular, the participating organisations in the UK were all higher educational institutions, which usually involve employees from a variety of nationalities. Additionally, both of our studies did not include

a question that asked participants' nationalities. Future research should include the nationality of participants as a measure in order to more accurately distinguish the national culture groups.

Additionally, our studies recruited from only one type of sector (public sector organisations), thus the findings were possible to be limited to the participating sector. Research suggests that there are differences between public and private sectors in terms of various aspects of work cultures, such as locus of control, autonomy, empowerment and participation in decision-making (Mathur et al., 1996). Thus, it would be worthwhile investigating the effects of personalisation across different sectors and exploring whether the effects vary according to their differences in work cultures. Furthermore, most of the participants in the present studies knowledge workers, who tend to largely have freedom and autonomy at work. However, the response of these office workers in our studies is not be able to represent the situations and thoughts of all office workers. Instead, most less qualified workers are likely to have much less autonomy and control over their work and workspaces. Consequently, it is worthwhile to conduct further research on office workers of different types and qualifications of occupation, in order to empirically explore whether employees with different levels of autonomy have different perceptions of the importance and effects of workspace personalisation.

Another limitation in this research is the confounding variables related to the two samples: there were significant differences in age, educational level and office types working in between samples in Study 1, and significant differences in organisational tenure and gender between samples in Study 2. Although the existing literature has not demonstrated the relationships between personalisation extent and these factors, and these variables in the present research have been controlled for in the analysis, it is still possible that these factors affected the results of the research or partially explain the difference in personalisation

between two samples rather than culture. Therefore, future research could sample participants with similar demographics between cultural groups, and also could further examine the relationships between these variables and the extent of personalisation.

### **Further recommendations for future research**

According to our findings, power distance may affect the extent of personalisation. Research suggests that job status could be a factor affecting personalisation, and employees in higher status positions tend to personalise their workspace more than employees in lower status positions do, because high-status employees are more likely to own private offices and high-quality offices (Wells et al., 2007). This may also be because employees in higher status positions are more likely to have a higher commitment to their organisation (Wells et al., 2007). Research by Sommer et al. (1996) found that a position in an organisation had a significant relationship with organisational commitment across cultures. Sommer et al. (1996) suggested that this is because people at higher levels of the hierarchy tend to internalise organisational values more than people at lower levels. Therefore, future research could measure whether the job status is related to the extent of personalisation, and that whether this relationship varies according to cultures with different levels of power distance.

Future research can also explore the impact of imposed restrictions on workspace personalisation on employees. According to the results of our interview study, UK participants were very resistant to restrictions on the workspace, while Chinese participants show less resistance. On the other hand, according to Hofstede's cultural scale, UK culture places more emphasis on autonomy than Chinese culture. Based on this clue, it seems that UK employees with more autonomy were more opposed to the imposed restrictions than Chinese employees who may have less autonomy were. Because this study did not examine the relationship between the degree of autonomy and the perception of workspace constraints,

future research can test the difference in perceptions of restrictions by examining employees from different cultures and with different levels of autonomy, as well as investigate the impacts of these perceptions.

In addition, Hofstede's cultural framework originally includes another two dimensions apart from the three we examined: masculinity-femininity, and long/short term orientation (Hofstede, 1997, 2003, 2011). Further research thus could investigate whether these dimensions in national cultures and/or in organisational cultures have impacts on the extent of personalisation. For example, masculinity-femininity might be related to personalisation, as research suggests that gender is as a factor relating to the level of workspace personalisation. The research by Wells (2000) examining office personalisation found a gender difference in personalisation, specifically in the extent of personalisation, in the type of personalised items, and in the purposes of personalising. This research demonstrated that women personalised significantly more than men did; women are more likely to personalise items with symbols of personal relationships, plants and trinkets, while men tend to personalise items related to sports or their achievements; women personalise workspaces in order to express their identities and emotions, while men personalise for showing their statuses and ownerships (Wells, 2000). Therefore, it is worthwhile examining whether the gender difference in personalisation is due to the relationship between masculinity-femininity in cultures and the extent of personalisation.

The GLOBE cultural framework we used for measuring organisational culture originally includes another scale that measures cultural dimensions of perceptions of leadership, which involves value-based, team-oriented, self-protective, participative, human-oriented, and autonomous subscales (House et al., 2004). Research suggests that the prevalence of leadership styles varies according to the local cultures. For example, transformational leadership style tends to be valued by Western organisations, because

Western organisations are likely to have a flatter structure and smaller power distance (M. Chen, 2004). In contrast, Paternalistic leadership, which is characterised by authoritarianism, benevolence, and moral leadership and involves an evident and powerful authority and strong disciplines, is more likely to be widespread in Chinese organisations (Cheng et al., 2004). Thus, leadership styles might vary according to backgrounds because cultural dimensions, such as power distance, might play a role in the leadership style. Furthermore, our qualitative study reveals the importance of leader designed personalisation to Chinese participants, which might suggest that leadership might play an important role in personalisation, at least in some cultures. Future research could measure the cultural dimensions of leadership and their effects on personalisation by using GLOBE leadership scales. More specifically, future research could examine which specific cultural dimensions of leadership are related to personalisation, and that what leadership styles would facilitate or inhibit personalisation in the context of a specific national/organisational culture.

It is also worthwhile exploring the relationships between personalisation and other factors in the work environment. For example, research reveals that the windows of an office also play a role in workspace personalisation. Bringslimark et al. (2011) demonstrated that employees working in windowless offices had roughly five times greater odds of displaying plants in their workspaces, and had more than three times greater odds of displaying pictures of nature, compared with those working in offices with a window view. This may be because plants and pictures of nature act as a form of compensation for office workers who lack a connection with nature through windows (Bringslimark et al., 2011). Therefore, in comparison with workers in offices with windows, the personalisation items displayed by windowless office workers might be more likely to be nature-related. Future research could measure the relationship between windows and the content of personalisation. In this vein,

research could also measure whether other factors in the offices are related to the content or extent of personalisation of the office users, and explore the process within these relationships.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research revealed that there were national and organisational cultural differences in the extent of personalisation. More specifically, the extent of personalisation differed according to the levels of uncertainty avoidance, power distance and collectivism in the cultures. There were also cultural differences in attitudes towards policies that would restrict personalisation, and were two specific phenomena in the Chinese sample: group-level personalisation, and leader designed personalisation. Furthermore, there were positive indirect relationships between personalisation and individual outcomes (job performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing) through personal control, work autonomy and organisational identification. This work represents a major contribution in uncovering the role of cultures in workspace personalisation, and contributes to the literature on the cross-cultural psychology of the work environment, which is an area that lacks attention and empirical research. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first research to investigate the role of culture, including national and organisational cultures, in the psychology of workspace personalisation by applying a mixed methods approach. Therefore, this research has implications for human resource and workspace management, especially for the management in the organisations with employees from diverse backgrounds, has and provides insight into the effects of personalisation on performance and wellbeing of employees from different cultures.

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## Appendix 2.1

### Questionnaire used

Q1 First, please could you tell us which type of office you work in?(Danielsson & Bodin, 2008)

- Cell office (single room office) (1)
- Shared room office (2-3 people share a single room) (2)
- Small open plan office (4-9 person/room) (3)
- Medium-sized open plan (10-24 person/room) (4)
- Large open plan (>24 person/room) (5)
- Flex office (No individual workstation) (6)
- Combi office (Employee spend >20% of their time at workstations other than their 'own'; team-based work) (7)

Q2-1 How many of each of the following personal items do you display in your workspace? (please enter the number of items in every category)(Wells, 2000)

- \_\_\_\_\_ work-related items (e.g. calendar, documents) (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with family (e.g. photos, postcards, presents) (14)
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with friends (e.g. photos, postcards, presents) (25)
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with romantic partner (e.g. photos, postcards, presents) (36)
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with colleagues (e.g. photos, postcards, presents) (37)
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with others (please specify) (39)
- \_\_\_\_\_ pets (e.g. photos) (38)
- \_\_\_\_\_ trinkets, knick-knacks, mementos, souvenirs (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ art (e.g. paintings, sculptures, posters) (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ values (e.g. religion, politics, mottos) (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ hobbies (e.g. music or sports related items) (7)
- \_\_\_\_\_ entertainment items (e.g. radios, books) (8)
- \_\_\_\_\_ achievements (e.g. diplomas, awards) (9)



under my personal control (3)							
I can adjust, re-arrange, and re-organise my furniture as needed (4)	<input type="radio"/>						
I can hold small, impromptu meetings in my office or work area as needed (5)	<input type="radio"/>						
The variety of work environments needed for my job is available to me (6)	<input type="radio"/>						

Q4 Now, we would like to examine how you perceive your performance at work. How often do you engage in the following behaviours at work?(Williams & Anderson, 1991)

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	About half the time (3)	Most of the time (4)	Always (5)
Adequately complete assigned duties (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fulfill responsibilities specified in job description (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perform tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>











that I am a staff of my organisation.							
(8)							
The fact that I am a staff of my organisation is an important part of my identity. (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being a staff of my organisation is an important part of how I see myself. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a lot in common with the average persons of my organisation. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am similar to the average persons of my	○	○	○	○	○	○	○





Q8 In this section, we are interested in your beliefs about what the norms, values, and practices are in your organisation. In other words, we are interested in the way your organisation is—not the way you think it should be. There are no right or wrong answers, and answers don't indicate goodness or badness of the organisation. Please respond to the questions by selecting the number that most closely represents your observations about your organisation. (House et al., 2004) (Organisational Cultural Practices)

Q8-1 In this organisation, orderliness and consistency are stressed, even at the expense of experimentation and innovation. (Uncertainty Avoidance1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-2 In this organisation, most work is highly structured lives with few unexpected events: (Uncertainty Avoidance2) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-3 In this organisation, job requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail so employees know what they are expected to do: (Uncertainty Avoidance3) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)

- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-4 In this organisation, a person's influence is based primarily on: (Power Distance1)

- one's ability and contribution to the organisation 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- the authority of one's position 7 (7)

Q8-5 In this organisation, subordinates are expected to: (Power Distance2) R

- obey their boss without question 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- question their boss when in disagreement 7 (7)

Q8-6 In this organisation, people in positions of power try to: (Power Distance3) R

- increase their social distance from less powerful individuals 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- decrease their social distance from less powerful people 7 (7)

Q8-7 In this organisation, managers encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer (Institutional Collectivism1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)

- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-8 The pay and bonus system in this organisation is designed to maximize (Institutional Collectivism2)

- individual interests 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (8)
- 4 (9)
- 5 (10)
- 6 (11)
- collective interests 7 (7)

Q8-9 In this organisation: (Institutional Collectivism3) R

- group cohesion is more valued than individualism 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- group cohesion and individualism are equally valued 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- individualism is more valued than group cohesion 7 (7)

Q8-10 In this organisation, group members take pride in the individual accomplishments of their group manager. (Ingroup Collectivism1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)

- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-11 In this organisation, group managers take pride in the individual accomplishments of group members. (Ingroup Collectivism2) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-12 In this organisation, employees feel loyalty to the organisation. (Ingroup Collectivism3) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q8-13 Members of this organisation: (Ingroup Collectivism4)

- take no pride in working for the organisation 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- take a moderate amount of pride in working for the organisation 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- take a great deal of pride in working for the organisation 7 (7)

Q8-14 This organisation shows loyalty towards employees. (Ingroup Collectivism5) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)

- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q9 In this section, we are interested in your beliefs about what the norms, values, and practices should be in your organisation. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, and answers don't indicate goodness or badness of the organisation. Please respond to the questions by selecting the number that most closely represents your observations about your organisation. (House et al., 2004) (Organisational Cultural Values)

Q9-1 In this organisation, orderliness and consistency should be stressed, even at the expense of experimentation and innovation. (Uncertainty Avoidance1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (1)
- Agree 2 (2)
- Somewhat agree 3 (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (4)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (5)
- Disagree 6 (6)
- Strongly disagree 7 (7)

Q9-2 In this organisation, a person whose work is highly structured with few unexpected events: (Uncertainty Avoidance2) R

- has a lot to be thankful for 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- is missing a lot of excitement 7 (7)

Q9-3 In this organisation, job requirements and instructions should be spelled out in detail so employees know what they are expected to do. (Uncertainty Avoidance3) R

- Strongly agree 1 (23)
- Agree 2 (24)
- Somewhat agree 3 (25)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (26)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (27)
- Disagree 6 (28)
- Strongly disagree 7 (29)

Q9-4 I believe that managers in this organisation should: (Uncertainty Avoidance4) R

- provide detailed instructions concerning how to achieve goals 1 (1)
- 2 (3)
- 3 (4)
- 4 (5)
- 5 (6)
- 6 (2)
- allow subordinates freedom in determining how to achieve goals 7 (7)

Q9-5 In this organisation, a person's influence should be based primarily on: (Power Distance1)

- one's ability and contribution to the organisation 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- the authority of one's position 7 (7)

Q9-6 In this organisation, subordinates should: (Power Distance2) R

- obey their boss without question 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)

- question their boss when in disagreement 7 (7)

Q9-7 When in disagreement with superiors, subordinates in this organisation should generally go along with what superiors say or want. (Power Distance3) R

- Strongly agree 1 (8)
- Agree 2 (9)
- Somewhat agree 3 (10)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (11)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (12)
- Disagree 6 (13)
- Strongly disagree 7 (14)

Q9-8 I believe that in this organisation, managers should generally encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer. (Institutional Collectivism1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (8)
- Agree 2 (9)
- Somewhat agree 3 (10)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (11)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (12)
- Disagree 6 (13)
- Strongly disagree 7 (14)

Q9-9 In this organisation, the pay and bonus system should be designed to maximise: (Institutional Collectivism2)

- individual interests 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- collective interests 7 (7)

Q9-10 In this organisation, people should work on: (Institutional Collectivism3)

- only individual projects 1 (1)

- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- some individual and some team projects 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- only team projects 7 (7)

Q9-11 In this organisation, group members should take pride in the individual accomplishments of their group manager. (Ingroup Collectivism1) R

- Strongly agree 1 (2)
- Agree 2 (3)
- Somewhat agree 3 (4)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (5)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (6)
- Disagree 6 (7)
- Strongly disagree 7 (8)

Q9-12 In this organisation, group managers should take pride in the individual accomplishments of group members. (Ingroup Collectivism2) R

- Strongly agree 1 (2)
- Agree 2 (3)
- Somewhat agree 3 (4)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (5)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (6)
- Disagree 6 (7)
- Strongly disagree 7 (8)

Q9-13 In this organisation, employees should feel loyalty to the organisation. (Ingroup Collectivism3) R

- Strongly agree 1 (2)
- Agree 2 (3)
- Somewhat agree 3 (4)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (5)
- Somewhat disagree 5 (6)

- Disagree 6 (7)
- Strongly disagree 7 (8)

Q9-14 How important should it be to members of your work organisation that your organisation is viewed positively by persons in other organisations? (Ingroup Collectivism4)

- it should not be important at all 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- it should be moderately important 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- it should be very important 7 (7)

Q9-15 How much should it bother people in your organisation if an outsider publicly made negative comments about the organisation? (Ingroup Collectivism5)

- it should not bother them at all 1 (4)
- 2 (5)
- 3 (3)
- it should bother them a moderate amount 4 (2)
- 5 (1)
- 6 (6)
- it should bother them a great deal 7 (7)

Q9-16 Members of this organisation should: (Ingroup Collectivism6)

- take no pride in working for the organisation 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- take a moderate amount of pride in working for the organisation 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- take a great deal of pride in working for the organisation 7 (7)

Q10 Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you.

Q10-1 What's your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q10-2 What's your age?

- Under 18 (1)
- 18 - 24 (2)
- 25 - 34 (3)
- 35 - 44 (4)
- 45 - 54 (5)
- 55 - 64 (6)
- 65 or older (7)

Q10-3 What's your ethnicity?

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (6)

Q10-4 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Secondary Education (GCSE/O-Levels) (12)
- Post-Secondary Education (College, A-Levels, NVQ3 or below, or similar) (11)
- Vocational Qualification (Diploma, Certificate, BTEC, NVQ 4 and above, or similar) (8)
- Undergraduate Degree (BA, BSc etc.) (9)
- Post-graduate Degree (MA, MSc etc.) (10)
- Doctorate (7)

Q10-5 What's your employment status?

- Employed full time (1)
- Employed part time (2)
- Retired (5)

- Student (6)

Q10-6 What's your job title?

Q10-7 How long have you been working in your current organisation?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1 - 5 years (2)
- 6 - 10 years (3)
- 11- 15 years (4)
- 16-20 years (5)
- 21 - 25 years (6)
- > 25 years (7)

Q10-8 How long have you been working at your current workspace?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1 - 5 years (2)
- 6 - 10 years (3)
- 11- 15 years (4)
- 16-20 years (5)
- 21 - 25 years (6)
- > 25 years (7)

Q10-9 What industry are you working in?

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing (1)
- Mining & quarrying (2)
- Manufacturing (3)
- Electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply (4)
- Water supply, sewerage, waste & remediation activities (5)
- Construction (6)
- Wholesale & retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (7)
- Transport & storage (8)
- Accommodation & food service activities (9)
- Information & communication (10)
- Financial & insurance activities (11)

- Real estate activities (12)
- Professional scientific & technical activities (13)
- Administrative & support service activities (14)
- Public admin & defence; compulsory social security (15)
- Education (16)
- Human health & social work activities (17)
- Arts, entertainment & recreation (18)
- Other service activities (19)

## Appendix 2.2

Table 2.2.1 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Two-level Mixture Model (UK; personalisation extent)

Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personalisation</i>			
OCPUA → Personalisation	0.121	0.044	0.022, 0.219
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personalisation</i>			
OCPPD → Personalisation	-0.147	0.059	-0.275, -0.019
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personalisation</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation	-0.156	0.010	-0.256, -0.057
<i>Effect from personalisation to personal control</i>			
Personalisation → Personal control	0.178	<0.001	0.131, 0.225
<i>Effect from personalisation to work autonomy</i>			
Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.116	0.041	0.022, 0.209
<i>Effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>			
Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.052	0.302	-0.031, 0.134
<i>Effect from personalisation to job performance</i>			
Personalisation → Job performance	-0.036	0.335	-0.098, 0.025
<i>Effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>			
Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.048	0.238	-0.019, 0.116
<i>Effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.132	0.005	-0.209, -0.054
<i>Effect from personal control to organisational identification</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification	0.060	0.332	-0.042, 0.163
<i>Effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Job performance	0.063	0.469	-0.080, 0.205
<i>Effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			

Personal control→ Job satisfaction	0.112	0.032	0.026, 0.197
<i>Effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personal control→ Wellbeing at work	0.086	0.145	-0.011, 0.183
<i>Effect from work autonomy to organisational identification</i>			
Work autonomy→ Organisational identification	0.400	<0.001	0.329, 0.472
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy→ Job performance	0.110	0.104	-0.001, 0.222
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy→ Job satisfaction	0.442	<0.001	0.358, 0.526
<i>Effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy→ Wellbeing at work	0.407	<0.001	0.298, 0.517
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job performance</i>			
Organisational identification→ Job performance	0.024	0.579	-0.047, 0.095
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job satisfaction</i>			
Organisational identification→ Job satisfaction	0.161	0.005	0.066, 0.256
<i>Effect from organisational identification to wellbeing at work</i>			
Organisational identification→ Wellbeing at work	0.128	0.073	0.011, 0.245

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.2.2 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Two-level Mixture Model (China; personalisation extent)**

Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personalisation</i>			
OCPUA → Personalisation	-0.051	0.475	-0.169, 0.067
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personalisation</i>			
OCPPD → Personalisation	0.029	0.617	-0.067, 0.125
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personalisation</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation	0.074	0.289	-0.041, 0.189
<i>Effect from personalisation to personal control</i>			
Personalisation → Personal control	0.188	<0.001	0.120, 0.256
<i>Effect from personalisation to work autonomy</i>			
Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.087	0.025	0.023, 0.151
<i>Effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>			
Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.098	0.107	-0.002, 0.198
<i>Effect from personalisation to job performance</i>			
Personalisation → Job performance	-0.157	0.018	-0.267, -0.048
<i>Effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>			
Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.027	0.498	-0.039, 0.094
<i>Effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.059	0.315	-0.037, 0.155
<i>Effect from personal control to organisational identification</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification	0.192	<0.001	0.130, 0.254
<i>Effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Job performance	0.104	0.095	0.001, 0.207
<i>Effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Job satisfaction	0.010	0.878	-0.095, 0.115
<i>Effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			

Personal control → Wellbeing at work	-0.005	0.949	-0.142, 0.131
<i>Effect from work autonomy to organisational identification</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification	0.541	<0.001	0.465, 0.618
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Job performance	0.214	<0.001	0.119, 0.310
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.214	<0.001	0.156, 0.272
<i>Effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.135	0.034	0.030, 0.240
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job performance</i>			
Organisational identification → Job performance	0.217	0.003	0.096, 0.338
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job satisfaction</i>			
Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.569	<0.001	0.509, 0.630
<i>Effect from organisational identification to wellbeing at work</i>			
Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.225	<0.001	0.134, 0.315

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.2.3 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Two-level Mixture Model (UK; sum of personalisation items)**

Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personalisation</i>			
OCPUA → Personalisation	0.117	0.097	0.001, 0.232
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personalisation</i>			
OCPPD → Personalisation	-0.222	<0.001	-0.312, -0.132
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personalisation</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation	-0.224	0.011	-0.370, -0.078
<i>Effect from personalisation to personal control</i>			
Personalisation → Personal control	0.079	<0.001	0.045, 0.112
<i>Effect from personalisation to work autonomy</i>			
Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.042	0.151	-0.006, 0.090
<i>Effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>			
Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.015	0.605	-0.033, 0.064
<i>Effect from personalisation to job performance</i>			
Personalisation → Job performance	-0.016	0.262	-0.040, 0.008
<i>Effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>			
Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.048	0.005	0.020, 0.076
<i>Effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.055	0.246	-0.134, 0.023
<i>Effect from personal control to organisational identification</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification	0.070	0.233	-0.026, 0.166
<i>Effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Job performance	0.057	0.499	-0.082, 0.197
<i>Effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Job satisfaction	0.115	0.025	0.030, 0.200
<i>Effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			

Personal control → Wellbeing at work	0.067	0.272	-0.033, 0.167
<i>Effect from work autonomy to organisational identification</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification	0.402	<0.001	0.333, 0.472
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Job performance	0.109	0.101	<0.001, 0.218
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.444	<0.001	0.362, 0.527
<i>Effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.405	<0.001	0.297, 0.514
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job performance</i>			
Organisational identification → Job performance	0.022	0.603	-0.047, 0.090
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job satisfaction</i>			
Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.164	0.004	0.070, 0.257
<i>Effect from organisational identification to wellbeing at work</i>			
Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.120	0.083	0.006, 0.234

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.2.4 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Two-level Mixture Model (China; sum of personalisation items)**

Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personalisation</i>			
OCPUA → Personalisation	0.031	0.176	-0.007, 0.068
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personalisation</i>			
OCPPD → Personalisation	0.007	0.487	-0.010, 0.024
<i>Effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personalisation</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation	-0.013	0.092	-0.026, <0.001
<i>Effect from personalisation to personal control</i>			
Personalisation → Personal control	-0.082	0.588	-0.330, 0.166
<i>Effect from personalisation to work autonomy</i>			
Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.345	0.028	-0.604, -0.087
<i>Effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>			
Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.262	0.514	-0.922, 0.398
<i>Effect from personalisation to job performance</i>			
Personalisation → Job performance	-0.240	0.449	-0.761, 0.282
<i>Effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>			
Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.364	0.233	-0.138, 0.865
<i>Effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.549	0.002	0.258, 0.840
<i>Effect from personal control to organisational identification</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification	0.184	0.002	0.086, 0.282
<i>Effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Job performance	0.082	0.170	-0.016, 0.181
<i>Effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Job satisfaction	0.010	0.863	-0.088, 0.108
<i>Effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			

Personal control → Wellbeing at work	-0.003	0.968	-0.124, 0.118
<i>Effect from work autonomy to organisational identification</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification	0.517	<0.001	0.341, 0.692
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Job performance	0.213	0.010	0.077, 0.349
<i>Effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.231	<0.001	0.173, 0.288
<i>Effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.135	0.016	0.043, 0.227
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job performance</i>			
Organisational identification → Job performance	0.198	0.007	0.078, 0.319
<i>Effect from organisational identification to job satisfaction</i>			
Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.644	<0.001	0.354, 0.935
<i>Effect from organisational identification to wellbeing at work</i>			
Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.247	0.004	0.107, 0.386

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Number of samples = 1000

## Appendix 2.3

Table 2.3.1 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (UK; personalisation extent)

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personal control</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Personal control	0.030	0.090	0.001, 0.058
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to work autonomy</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.013	0.051	0.002, 0.023
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to organisational identification</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.007	0.317	-0.004, 0.017
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job performance</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.002	0.404	-0.007, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job satisfaction</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.006	0.100	<0.001, 0.013
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.021	0.169	-0.045, 0.004
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personal control</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.030	0.037	-0.053, 0.006
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to work autonomy</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.013	0.185	-0.028, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to organisational identification</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.007	0.417	-0.020, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job performance</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Job performance	0.002	0.377	-0.002, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job satisfaction</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.006	0.315	-0.017, 0.004
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPPD → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.021	0.088	0.001, 0.041
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personal control</i>			

OCPC → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.048	0.006	-0.077, -0.019
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to work autonomy</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.020	0.092	-0.040, <0.001
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to organisational identification</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.011	0.349	-0.030, 0.008
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job performance</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job performance	0.004	0.405	-0.004, 0.011-
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job satisfaction</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.010	0.173	-0.023, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to wellbeing at work</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.034	0.092	0.001, 0.066

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.2 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (UK; personalisation extent)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>	0.061	0.045	0.011, 0.111
Personalisation → Personal control → Organisational identification	0.012	0.322	-0.008, 0.031
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Organisational identification	0.050	0.053	0.007, 0.092
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job performance</i>	0.013	0.023	0.004, 0.023
Personalisation → Personal control → Job performance	0.006	0.473	-0.008, 0.020
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job performance	0.007	0.296	-0.004, 0.017
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.001	0.682	-0.002, 0.003
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>	0.088	0.002	0.042, 0.135
Personalisation → Personal control → Job satisfaction	0.022	0.076	0.002, 0.043
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.057	0.080	0.003, 0.110
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.009	0.312	-0.006, 0.024
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>	0.091	0.019	0.027, 0.155
Personalisation → Personal control → Wellbeing at work	0.020	0.113	-0.001, 0.041
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.062	0.082	0.003, 0.121
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.009	0.457	-0.011, 0.028
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.001	0.655	-0.001, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.008	0.390	-0.007, 0.022
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.007	0.358	-0.006, 0.020
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.006	0.558	-0.010, 0.021
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.078	0.007	0.031, 0.126
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.074	0.067	0.007, 0.140

Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.3 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (China; personalisation extent)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personal control</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.013	0.485	-0.043, 0.017
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to work autonomy</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.004	0.536	-0.014, 0.006
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to organisational identification</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.006	0.494	-0.020, 0.008
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job performance</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job performance	0.004	0.528	-0.007, 0.016
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job satisfaction</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.002	0.523	-0.006, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.004	0.585	-0.014, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personal control</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Personal control	0.005	0.626	-0.011, 0.021
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to work autonomy</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.001	0.618	-0.003, 0.006
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to organisational identification</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.002	0.645	-0.006, 0.010
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job performance</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.002	0.569	-0.006, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job satisfaction</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.001	0.672	-0.002, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.001	0.702	-0.004, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personal control</i>			

OCPC → Personalisation → Personal control	0.023	0.329	-0.016, 0.062
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to work autonomy</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.007	0.333	-0.005, 0.019
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to organisational identification</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.010	0.405	-0.010, 0.031
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job performance</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.008	0.219	-0.018, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job satisfaction</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.003	0.561	-0.006, 0.012
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to wellbeing at work</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.006	0.546	-0.011, 0.023

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.4 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (China; personalisation extent)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>	0.103	<0.001	0.061, 0.144
Personalisation → Personal control → Organisational identification	0.044	<0.001	0.026, 0.063
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Organisational identification	0.058	0.034	0.013, 0.103
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job performance</i>	0.035	0.005	0.014, 0.055
Personalisation → Personal control → Job performance	0.011	0.099	<0.001, 0.023
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job performance	0.011	0.027	0.003, 0.019
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.012	0.198	-0.003, 0.028
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>	0.103	0.021	0.029, 0.176
Personalisation → Personal control → Job satisfaction	0.002	0.877	-0.024, 0.029
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.025	0.040	0.005, 0.045
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.075	0.114	-0.003, 0.153
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>	0.041	0.068	0.004, 0.077
Personalisation → Personal control → Wellbeing at work	-0.001	0.949	-0.033, 0.031
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.015	0.115	-0.001, 0.030
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.027	0.144	-0.003, 0.058
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.017	0.007	0.007, 0.027
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.103	<0.001	0.065, 0.141
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.038	<0.001	0.023, 0.052
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.074	0.001	0.038, 0.110
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.449	<0.001	0.408, 0.490
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.163	<0.001	0.098, 0.229

Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.5 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (UK; sum of personalisation items)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personal control</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Personal control	0.013	0.102	<0.001, 0.025
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to work autonomy</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.004	0.292	-0.002, 0.011
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to organisational identification</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.002	0.611	-0.004, 0.008
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job performance</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.001	0.255	-0.002, <0.001
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job satisfaction</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.006	0.165	-0.001, 0.013
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.008	0.192	-0.019, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personal control</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.020	0.005	-0.031, -0.008
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to work autonomy</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.007	0.216	-0.016, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to organisational identification</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.003	0.621	-0.013, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job performance</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job performance	0.002	0.244	-0.001, 0.004
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job satisfaction</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.010	<0.001	-0.014, -0.005
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.013	0.289	-0.007, 0.033
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personal control</i>			

OCPC → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.031	0.040	-0.055, -0.006
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to work autonomy</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.011	0.251	-0.026, 0.005
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to organisational identification</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.005	0.612	-0.019, 0.010
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job performance</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job performance	0.002	0.347	-0.002, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job satisfaction</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.015	0.004	-0.023, -0.006
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to wellbeing at work</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.020	0.367	-0.017, 0.057

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.6 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (UK; sum of personalisation items)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>	0.001	0.189	<0.001, 0.001
Personalisation → Personal control → Organisational identification	<0.001	0.204	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Organisational identification	<0.001	0.290	<0.001, 0.001
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job performance</i>	<0.001	0.154	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Personal control → Job performance	<0.001	0.503	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job performance	<0.001	0.287	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job performance	<0.001	0.756	<0.001, <0.001
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>	0.001	0.168	<0.001, 0.002
Personalisation → Personal control → Job satisfaction	<0.001	0.042	<0.001, 0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	0.001	0.272	<0.001, 0.001
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	<0.001	0.652	<0.001, <0.001
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>	0.001	0.238	<0.001, 0.002
Personalisation → Personal control → Wellbeing at work	<0.001	0.254	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	0.001	0.280	<0.001, 0.002
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	<0.001	0.666	<0.001, <0.001
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.001	0.663	-0.002, 0.003
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.009	0.291	-0.005, 0.023
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.008	0.296	-0.004, 0.020
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.005	0.586	-0.010, 0.021
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.080	0.005	0.033, 0.127
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.069	0.084	0.003, 0.135

Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.7 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (China; sum of personalisation items)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to personal control</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.003	0.683	-0.017, 0.010
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to work autonomy</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.010	0.333	-0.027, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to organisational identification</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.010	0.661	-0.049, 0.029
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job performance</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.004	0.622	-0.019, 0.010
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to job satisfaction</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.014	0.440	-0.016, 0.044
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Uncertainty Avoidance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPUA → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.021	0.259	-0.010, 0.053
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to personal control</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Personal control	-0.001	0.720	-0.003, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to work autonomy</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Work autonomy	-0.001	0.508	-0.005, 0.002
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to organisational identification</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Organisational identification	-0.002	0.636	-0.007, 0.004
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job performance</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job performance	-0.001	0.607	-0.003, 0.001
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to job satisfaction</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	0.002	0.476	-0.003, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Power Distance to wellbeing at work</i> OCPD → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	0.003	0.481	-0.004, 0.011

<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to personal control</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Personal control	0.002	0.652	-0.005, 0.008
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to work autonomy</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Work autonomy	0.005	0.247	-0.002, 0.013
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to organisational identification</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Organisational identification	0.006	0.633	-0.013, 0.024
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job performance</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job performance	0.002	0.583	-0.005, 0.009
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to job satisfaction</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Job satisfaction	-0.007	0.389	-0.022, 0.007
<i>Indirect effect from Organisational Cultural Practice Collectivism to wellbeing at work</i>			
OCPC → Personalisation → Wellbeing at work	-0.011	0.175	-0.025, 0.002

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Number of samples = 1000

**Table 2.3.8 Standardized Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects (China; sum of personalisation items)**

Indirect Effect	Estimate	<i>p</i> value	95% confidence interval
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to organisational identification</i>	-0.007	0.093	-0.015, <0.001
Personalisation → Personal control → Organisational identification	-0.001	0.603	-0.002, 0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Organisational identification	-0.007	0.056	-0.013, -0.001
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job performance</i>	-0.002	0.275	-0.006, 0.001
Personalisation → Personal control → Job performance	<0.001	0.642	-0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job performance	-0.001	0.064	-0.002, <0.001
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job performance	-0.001	0.561	-0.004, 0.002
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to job satisfaction</i>	-0.009	0.445	-0.030, 0.011
Personalisation → Personal control → Job satisfaction	<0.001	0.876	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Job satisfaction	-0.003	0.017	-0.005, -0.001
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	-0.006	0.569	-0.025, 0.012
<i>Sum of indirect effect from personalisation to wellbeing at work</i>	-0.004	0.369	-0.012, 0.003
Personalisation → Personal control → Wellbeing at work	<0.001	0.967	<0.001, <0.001
Personalisation → Work autonomy → Wellbeing at work	-0.002	0.006	-0.003, -0.001
Personalisation → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	-0.002	0.575	-0.010, 0.005
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job performance</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.016	0.018	0.005, 0.028
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to job satisfaction</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.112	<0.001	0.073, 0.150
<i>Indirect effect from personal control to wellbeing at work</i>			
Personal control → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.043	<0.001	0.029, 0.057
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job performance</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job performance	0.066	0.003	0.029, 0.103
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to job satisfaction</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Job satisfaction	0.453	<0.001	0.416, 0.491
<i>Indirect effect from work autonomy to wellbeing at work</i>			
Work autonomy → Organisational identification → Wellbeing at work	0.175	<0.001	0.116, 0.233

Number of samples = 1000

## **Appendix 3.1**

### **Interview Protocol**

#### **1) Background questions**

What's your age?

What are your job title and the responsibilities of your role?

How long have you been working in this organisation?

Is your office often visited by those other than co-workers? How often?

#### **2) General feelings about workspace**

How do you feel about your organisation?

What factors are most important in affecting how you feel about the organisation?

Please could you describe your workspace? How do you feel about your workspace?

What features does your workspace have in common with other employees' workspaces?

#### **3) Personal items in the workspace**

Please tell me about the items you have displayed in you workspace. Why do you display these items?

What do these items mean to you? How important are these items to you?

#### 4) Reasons for personalisation

Why do you (not) personalise your workspace?

What do the items in your workspace say about you and what you are like?

(If employee does not personalise) Why have you not displayed personal items at your workspace?

#### 5) Policies about personalization

Are there any policies of your organisation for restricting workspace personalisation? (If so)

How do you feel about it?

How would you feel if you were not allowed to display personal items at your workspace?

#### 6) Effects of personalisation

To what extent do you think that (not) being able to personalise your workspace affect your feelings about the organisation? How/why?

Do you think there are any relationship between (not) being able to personalise workspace and the organisational culture? How/why?

Do you think that personalising your workspace affects your wellbeing? How/why?

Do you think that personalising your workspace affects your satisfaction with the work environment? How/why?

Do you think that personalising your workspace affects your job satisfaction? How/why?

Do you think that personalising your workspace affects your work productivity? How/why?

Do you think that (not) being able to personalise your workspace affects the employer-employee relations? How/why?

Do you think that (not) being able to personalise your workspace affects employee relations? How/why?

### **7) Effects of other employees' personalisation**

Are you ever bothered by the items that other people display at their workspaces? If so, why?

Are there any other issues about your workspace that you think are relevant to this research topic?

## Appendix 3.2

### Observation Checklist

Extent of personalisation: (circle one)

1      2      3      4      5

None   Little   Moderate   Much   Very Much

How many items are displayed which deal with:

\_\_\_ work-related items (e.g. calendars, schedules)

\_\_\_ food/drink-related items

\_\_\_ personal relationships with others

    \_\_\_ family

    \_\_\_ friends

    \_\_\_ romantic partners

    \_\_\_ co-workers

    \_\_\_ others: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ trinkets, knick-knacks, mementos, souvenirs

\_\_\_ art (e.g. paintings, sculptures, posters)

\_\_\_ values (e.g. religion, politics, mottos)

\_\_\_ hobbies (e.g. music, sport)

\_\_\_\_ achievements (e.g. diplomas, awards)

\_\_\_\_ plants

\_\_\_\_ others: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Aesthetic quality of workspace (without considering personalisation): (circle one)

1      2      3      4      5

Very poor   poor   fair   good   very good