Content and Style of Advice in Iran and Canada
Le Contenu et la style de conseil en Iran et Canada

Mahin Tavakoli
Carleton University

ABSTRACT

The content and nature of nonprofessional advice in Iran, a hierarchical and collectivist culture, was compared to the same type of advice in Canada, an egalitarian and individualist culture. A researcher developed a questionnaire that consisted of 10 letters, each describing a writer's problem and asking for advice. The responses of participants to those letters were content-analyzed, which showed how advice varies between the two cultures. Implications of findings for developing multicultural techniques of counselling and psychotherapy are discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Le contenu et le style de conseil non professionnel en Iran, une culture hiérarchique et collectiviste, a été comparé au même type de conseil au Canada, une culture égalitaire et individualiste. On a utilisé un questionnaire qui consiste en 10 lettres, chacune décrivant le problème de l'écrivain et son demande de conseil. Le contenu des réponses des participants à ces lettres a été analysé, démontrant comment les conseils varient entre les deux cultures. On discute des implications des résultats pour le développement de techniques de counseling et de psychothérapie multiculturels.

The social context of advice can immensely influence how it is both sought and given. Social context can be as small and specific as the regional location or social structure (Rogers, Hassell, Noyce, & Harris, 1998), or as large and general as the country and culture where advice is exchanged (Bauer & Wright, 1996; Green & Roberts, 1974). The purpose of the present study is to examine how country and culture affect the kinds of advice about human relationships given and received.

Components of culture such as beliefs, morals, laws, and habits (Cashmore, 1984) influence the meanings of social concepts, values, and behaviours, including concepts of advice and the behaviours that lead to or flow from these concepts. For example, American culture values autonomous and independent behaviours of infants and views directiveness and control attempts as indicators of parental mistrust and insensitivity. In contrast, in Korea, directive parenting is the norm, and infants are brought up to be passive and dependent (Choi, 1995). Such differences in cultural values are likely to produce cultural differences in advice and in how people experience advice. For example, parents who believe that children should be compliant and rely on external assistance to learn are likely to be more directive than parents who believe children should be independent (Johnston & Wong, 2002). A cross-cultural study of advice showed Canadians requested less

advice than did Iranians, but Canadians felt more pressure from advice that they had not requested (Tavakoli & Tavakoli, 2010). If people from different cultures experience advice differently, does advice across a variety of social settings (e.g., schools, workplace, and counselling centres) in multicultural societies need to be tailored to the cultural backgrounds of those people? This article attempts to illustrate cultural differences in advice, and the important implications of such cultural differences for delivery of advice.

A study of cultural difference in giving advice among general practitioners working in Scotland showed that those who were trained in India differed than those trained in the UK in providing advice about contraceptives for the women under 16 years of age (Sengupta & Smith, 1998). Practitioners trained in India were reluctant to give advice about contraceptives and were less likely to offer contraceptives even when they gave advice on contraceptive use (Sengupta & Smith, 1998). Similarly, British and Polish nurses differed in their advice, as Polish nurses offered fewer referrals to a doctor than did the British ones (Whyte, Motyka, Motyka, Wsolek, & Tune, 1997). These differences are regarded (see Whyte et al., 1997) as a consequence of the close professional relationship among the British nurses and doctors, or of the fact that boundaries of professional responsibilities in Britain are well defined.

A study of cultural difference in receiving advice among people in the Soviet Union who had immigrated to the United States showed that both long-term immigrants and newcomers expected direct advice from the therapist. However, unlike the newcomers, long-term immigrants expected the therapist to be facilitative, tolerant, or accepting (Bol, 1989).

Research on advice is widely scattered among different areas of psychology such as clinical, counselling, decision making, developmental, social, and educational psychology, and among associated areas such as nursing, medicine, and sociology. Studies of cultural differences in the content of advice are very limited, but what is reported suggests that the differences would be significant. The present research explored these differences.

THEORIES OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The cross-cultural literature presents many theories of differences among cultures, but none address cultural differences in advice. This report attempts to uncover a link between features of advice and two distinctions found in prominent cross-cultural theories of Triandis (1994, 1995), Schwartz (1994), and Hofstede (2001): *individualism-collectivism* and *hierarchy-egalitarianism.*

Individualism-collectivism is a consequence of independence versus interdependence of selves (Vinken, Soeters, & Ester, 2004), and is strongly linked to a view of the self as autonomous rather than connected or inseparable from others. Schwartz (1994) uses similar terminology—*independent* versus *dependent*—meaning voluntary relationships versus feeling part of a community and a lack of autonomy.

In individualistic cultures people have loose social attachments and emphasize the autonomous self; behaviour is motivated by self-gratification and personal gain. Americans are known as classic examples of individualists (e.g., Hofstede, 2001).

In collectivist cultures, people are strongly attached and loyal to support groups such as extended families; they emphasize the views, needs, and values of the in-group; meaning in life comes through social relationships; and parent-child relationships take priority over peer relationships (Hynie, n.d.). A meta-analysis of replications of Asch's (1956) studies reveals a stronger conformity in collectivist cultures (Bond & Smith, 1996). People in collectivist cultures are more likely to learn, cultivate, and reproduce collectivist themes such as popular expressions or sayings (Triandis, 1994). Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East have many features of collectivist cultures.

Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) suggested that *primary* and *secondary control* are outcomes of individualism-collectivism. Primary control, which is common in individualist cultures, is defined as changing one's situation to fit one's wishes. Secondary control, which is common in collectivist cultures, is defined as changing the self to fit the situation, typically by controlling the psychological consequences of the situation.

In Rothbaum et al.'s (1982) study, Japanese showed secondary control more often than Americans. Americans not only showed primary control more often than Japanese, but also disliked secondary control-related behaviours. Rothbaum concluded that Americans construct their sense of self through social influence, while Asians do so through social adjustment. Tavakoli's (2012) study of cultural differences in decision-making among Iranians and Canadians supported the idea that Iranians, more than Canadians, relied on secondary control. This study found that a lower percentage of Iranians than Canadians reported making decisions about changing the decision maker's situation (e.g., decisions about changing one's job, continuing or ending education, living independently of parents, and breaking up or not with one's partner).

Other authors have introduced concepts similar to primary and secondary control. Primary control is equivalent to *intellectual autonomy* in Schwartz's (1994) list of cultural values, and is negatively related to social characteristics he calls *preservation* and *fitting in*. Triandis (2004) introduced a similar concept called *active-passive* cultures. In active cultures, people take initiative, are competitive and action-oriented, emphasize self-fulfillment and, as with primary control, try to change their environment to fit themselves. In passive cultures, people are more cooperative and concerned with getting along, and change themselves to fit their social environment.

Research has documented the predominance of collectivism in Iran and individualism in Canada (e.g., Hatami, 2007; Hofstede, 1999, 2001), but Iran and Canada have undergone many social changes in the past decades. This study examined if Canada is still more individualistic than is Iran, and if Iran is more collectivist than is Canada.

Hierarchy-egalitarianism or *inequality-equality* is the second dimension of culture relevant to advice giving (Schwarz, 1994). A roughly equivalent term is *power difference* or *distance* (Triandis, 2004). This dimension emphasizes status differences in roles, resources, power, and achievement. In hierarchical cultures, power is distributed unequally in families and society, including teacher-student and elderly-young relationships, and language systems (for example, *vous* versus *tu* in French, *shoma* versus *tu* in Farsi). In these cultures, children are socialized to depend on their parents as unquestioned authorities (Hofstede, 2001). An egalitarian culture, low in power distance, has the opposite characteristics.

Researchers have noted the existence of hierarchical institutions (e.g., families and organizations) in Iran (Mortazavi, 2006; Yeganeh & Su, 2007). Hofstede (1999, 2001) found that the Iranian average level of power distance (M = 58) was somewhat higher than the world average of 55, while Canada's was noticeably lower (M = 39).

IMPLICATIONS OF THEORIES OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES FOR ADVICE

Can differences in cultural dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism and hierarchy-egalitarianism, produce differences in the advice given? Research shows that parents from a culture believing that children should be compliant and rely on external assistance to learn are likely to be more directive than parents who believe children should be independent and learn on their own (Johnston & Wong, 2002). Hierarchy in cultures can be manifested in people's language (Schwartz, 1994), too, and consequently in the content and style of advice given.

The content of advice people give varies in many ways, but no content analysis scheme has yet been created to classify or analyze this variety. I therefore developed my own, relying on ideas from various areas of psychology. One comes from Elster (2007) and makes a distinction between solving problems by (a) situational adaptation (changing the situation to suit one's wants), or (b) personal adaptation (changing one's wants to suit the situation). A third kind of problem solving, prevalent in Iran and among Muslims, is toleration—enduring or tolerating a problem that is viewed as unsolvable or needs time to be solved. A fourth type comes from research on conflict resolution (see Kheel, 1999; Leitch, 1986; Moore, 1985), which indicates that conflicts are often resolved by compromise; a combination of situational and personal adaptation; changing one's wants to suit the wants of another and vice versa.

In order to assess informally the utility of situational adaptation, personal adaptation, toleration, and compromise as advice categories, I examined the contents of two websites containing advice for people requesting solutions to various life problems (www.dearmrsweb.com/Teens.htm & www.elderwisdomcircle.org). These two websites were chosen because they addressed a wide range of problems—minor to important—presented by different age groups, including adults and adolescents. Almost all the contents of advice posted on those websites fell into the four categories. Here are some examples of advice content from these websites:

1. "Don't choose this job you want, as it is counterfeiting, illegal and a felony." (Change the self)
2. "There is nothing you can do; you should accept it; sometime she will herself have to pay for it." (Tolerate)
3. "Talk to your husband about the distance you feel in the relationship, and about how he can change to help you cope with different stresses in your marriage." (Change the situation)
4. "Do a deal with your parent." (Compromise)

I predicted that, because collectivism in Iran is higher than in Canada (e.g., Hatami, 2007; Hofstede, 1999), Iranians would give more advice related to "fitting in" or conforming to social expectations of others than would Canadians. By contrast, because individualism in Canada is higher, I predicted that Canadians would give more advice to change an advisee's situation to suit the advisee and more advice to compromise. These predictions led to the following hypotheses:

1. Iranians will more often give advice to change the self to suit the situation than will Canadians.
2. Iranians will more often give advice to tolerate the situation than will Canadians.
3. Canadians will more often give advice to change the situation to suit the self than will Iranians.
4. Canadians will more often give advice to reach a compromise than will Iranians.

Cultures may also differ in the *directiveness* of advice, that is, the extent to which advice is imperative, like a powerful boss telling a powerless employee what to do ("You must do X") rather than suggestive ("You might consider X or think about Y"). I predicted that the directiveness of advice would vary with the extent to which a culture is hierarchical. The greater hierarchy in Iran (Hofstede, 2001; Yeganeh & Su, 2007) inspired the following hypothesis:

5. Iranians will be more directive in giving advice than will Canadians.

While testing the above five hypotheses, I also tested for gender differences in receiving advice about the above five categories and in directiveness of advice received. Because of the small sample sizes of male advisors (7 Canadians and 4 Iranians), testing for a gender difference in advisors was not possible.

METHOD

Participants

Sixty three Canadian and Iranian university students participated in this study. The Iranian participants (32 females and 4 males) were aged 18–40 years (*Mdn* = 21.7) and were enrolled at the University of Tehran. All were born in Iran, lived in Tehran, and spoke Farsi as their first language. The Canadian participants (20 females and 7 males) were aged 18–38 years (*Mdn* = 19) and were enrolled at

Carleton University. They were all born in Canada, lived in Ottawa, and spoke English as their first language.

Questionnaires

All participants answered a background questionnaire (BQ) and an advice-giving questionnaire (AGQ) that I developed. The BQ included questions about socio-demographics of participants such as age, gender, country of birth, and spoken language at home.

The AGQ contained 10 letters from young people—5 written by Canadians, 5 written by Iranians—each describing a life problem and requesting advice from experts. The Iranian letters, handwritten in Farsi, were sent by teenagers and young adults to the producer and psychological consultants of a national TV show for Iranian youth. The writers later received advice either on television or by a private reply. Canadian letters were obtained from two online advice columns (www.dearmrsweb.com/Teens.htm and www.elderwisdomcircle.org). I changed the names and identifying pronouns of the authors of all the letters to maintain anonymity and to control for gender of the writer.

The letters were chosen according to three criteria: (a) the Canadian writers' ages would approximate those of the selected Iranian writers; (b) the topic would be understandable to both cultures; and (c) the topics would be gender neutral (so, for example, letters asking advice about makeup were excluded). Letters written by elderly advice seekers, or those seeking advice about such culture-dependent topics as tattooing or Wal-Mart employment, were also excluded. Problems mentioned in the chosen letters focused on interpersonal relations and included difficulties with parents, friends, siblings, partner, and the parents of a fiancé. One page of blank space was provided after each letter for each participant to write his or her advice.

Procedure

Each Canadian participant read all 10 advice-seeking letters in English on a computer monitor. After reading each letter, they typed their advice onto the computer. For the purpose of this research, advice was defined as "any type of solution participants gave to the problems described in the AGQ." Iranian participants were given Farsi back-translated versions of the questionnaires and wrote their advice in Farsi using paper and pencil. (I translated all 10 questions from English to Farsi and an Iranian colleague back-translated the Farsi version of the questionnaire. We resolved the few minor translation disagreements before administering the questionnaires. I later translated all the Farsi replies into English.)

In order to study differences in advisors' reactions to males and females requesting advice, approximately half of the participants (n = 32) were randomly assigned to respond to the letters attributed to females and the other half (n = 31) responded to the same letters attributed to males. Half of the participants gave advice to the scenarios in the order 1 through 10, and the second half gave advice to the scenarios in reverse order to control for order and fatigue effects. It took participants 45–80 minutes to complete the study.

In order to test Hypotheses 1–4 regarding cultural differences in the content of advice, I first coded the answers into my four previously mentioned categories and then checked my work for consensual validity by asking a colleague to read and categorize a random selection of 100 pieces of advice. We then resolved our disagreements about the content of each category, reaching almost 98% rater agreement. Examples of categorized data are shown below.

1. *Change self to suit the situation*: "Obey your parents"; "Change your attitudes towards your fiancé's parents."
2. *Tolerate the situation*: "Wait and study well so that in future you can leave your parents' home"; "Tolerate what your fiancé's parents say to you."
3. *Change situation to suit the self*: "Move out of your parents' home"; "Talk to your parents or your fiancé's parents and change their attitude towards yourself."
4. *Compromise*: "Do a deal with your parents"; "Balance between what you have to do and what you like to do."
5. *Other*: "Consult professionals"; "speak to your friends."

Ninety-four percent of advice in the *other* category were related to a fifth theme: *seek further advice*. In this category, participants advised the letter writers to seek advice from professionals or other people.

A piece of advice could consist of a phrase, a sentence, or an entire essay that conveyed an independent idea or suggestion. Participants frequently gave more than one piece of advice in response to a single letter. Each piece was counted, but no category was counted twice. To analyze the results, I first counted how many pieces of advice that fell into each of the above five content categories were given to letters attributed to women versus advice to men, then how many pieces of advice were given by Iranian versus Canadian participants. For example, if Sara gave a total of 32 pieces of advice to the 10 scenarios in letters attributed to 10 female advisees, then Sara's advice might be categorized and counted as *change yourself* (6 pieces), *tolerate* (9), *change situation* (10), *compromise* (5), and *seek further advice* (2). I then averaged the frequencies of each category of advice given by Iranian and Canadian participants to female and male advisees.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

Content of Advice

Before performing my analysis on frequency differences in the above five categories of content of advice, I tested whether there was a cultural difference in the number of pieces of advice given by Iranians or Canadians, to female or male advisees. I summed the frequencies of five categories of advice given by each Iranian and Canadian participant to female and male advisee. Then I conducted a 2 x 2 (culture of advisors x gender of advisees) ANOVA on the average pieces of advice given by each participant in four groups.

The results of the 2 x 2 ANOVA showed a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 59) = 7.71$, $p = 0.01$. Iranians on average gave fewer pieces of advice ($M =$

33.7 pieces across all 10 letters) than did Canadians (M = 39.1). Neither the main effect for gender of letter writers, F (1, 59) = 0.33, p = 0.43, nor the interaction effect, F (1, 59) = 1.41, p = 0.24, were significant. The significant culture difference in average amount of advice led me to use percentages of total advice in ANOVAs of the five category frequencies, rather than the raw total of advice in each category. The next step included converting the frequencies of each group to percentages. Figure 1 shows the percentages for five categories of advice that emerged among Iranian and Canadian participants.

Five separate 2 x 2 (culture of advisors x gender of advisees) ANOVAs were conducted on the percent of each advice category to determine if there were significant main effects for culture of advisors and for gender of advisees in the predicted direction for the categories. The results of five 2 x 2 ANOVAs on the proportions of five categories of advice in each culture are reported below. No category showed a significant main effect for gender of letter writers or a gender-by-culture interaction effects.

Changing self to suit the situation. The first ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for culture of advisors, F (1, 59) = 113.1, p = 0.00. Supporting Hypothesis 1, Iranians (M = 37.2%) advised letter writers to change themselves to suit the situation significantly more often than did Canadians (M = 13.7%).

Tolerating the situation. The second ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for culture, F (1, 59) = 136.6, p = 0.00. Supporting Hypothesis 2, Iranians (M

Figure 1
Percent of five categories of advice
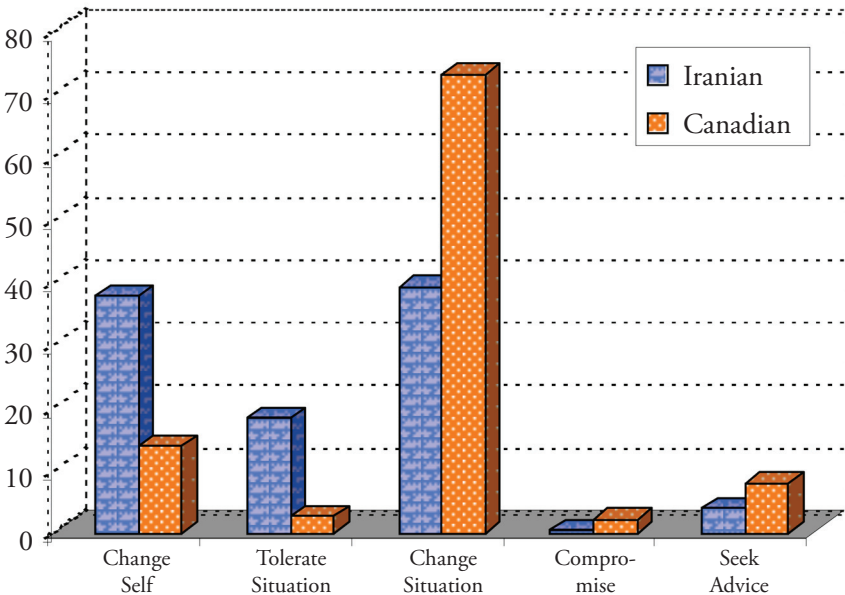
= 18.50%) counselled advisees to tolerate their situation more often than did Canadians (M = 2.74%).

Changing situation to suit the self. The third ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for culture, $F (1, 59)$ = 197.9, p = 0.00, supporting Hypothesis 3. Canadians (M = 73.6%) more proportionately advised letter writers to change their situation to suit the self than did Iranians (M = 39.9%).

Reaching a compromise. The fourth ANOVA revealed a significant culture main effect, $F (1, 59)$ = 8.79, p = 0.00, supporting Hypothesis 4 that Canadians (M = 2.11%) will give proportionately more advice to reach a compromise than will Iranians (M = 0.47%).

Seeking further advice. As mentioned, 94% of the pieces of advice in the *other* category were related to seeking further advice from professionals or other people. Though I had run out of statistical degrees of freedom by analyzing the other four content categories above, I decided to conduct a fifth 2 x 2 (culture of advisors x gender of advisees) ANOVA on the proportions of advice to seek further advice. The results showed that the main effect for culture was significant, $F (1, 59)$ = 12.32, p = 0.00. Iranians (M = 3.94%) less often advised their advisees to seek the advice of others than did Canadians (M = 7.81%).

It is worth mentioning that, across all participants, the correlations between proportions of advice to (a) tolerate the situation and (b) change the self to suit the situation were significant and positive, $r (62)$ = 0.58, p = 0.00. This suggests a factor common to both, which may reflect a personal adaptation orientation toward advising. There were very large and negative correlations (a) between proportions of advice to change the situation to suit the self and to change the self to suit the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.92, p = 0.00, and (b) between proportions of advice to tolerate the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.80, p = 0.00.

The category of compromise was correlated negatively with (a) tolerating the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.31, p = 0.01, and (b) changing self to suit the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.37, p = 0.00; and positively with (c) changing the situation to suit self, $r (62)$ = 0.31, p = 0.01. There were negative correlations between seeking further advice and (a) tolerating the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.40, p = 0.00, and (b) changing self to suit the situation, $r (62)$ = -0.33, p = 0.00. The category of seeking further advice was not correlated with (a) changing environment, $r (62)$ = 0.20, p = 0.10, or (b) reaching a compromise, $r (62)$ = -0.01, p = 0.93.

Directiveness of Advice

I tested Hypothesis 5 using two indicators of directiveness by calculating the averages of (a) numbers of pieces of advice (ideas) per participant across the 10 scenarios, and (b) different categories of advice (minimum = 1; maximum = 5) each advisor gave across the 10 scenarios. The first indicator reflected how extensive the advice was (e.g., "Talk to your parents"—1 piece of advice—is considered not extensive; "Talk to your parents, but if this did not work then think about a compromise, or consider leaving home. Meanwhile you can talk to a counsellor"—4 pieces of advice—is considered extensive). The second indicator reflected

the variety of options that advisors gave. The correlation between these indicators was r (62) = 0.37, p = 0.00.

As noted previously, a 2 x 2 ANOVA on the average number of pieces of advice given showed a significant culture main effect: Iranians gave fewer pieces of advice than did Canadians. This result supported Hypothesis 5: Iranian advice was more directive than was Canadian advice. The main effect for gender of letter writers and the interaction effect were not significant.

The results of the 2 x 2 ANOVA on the average number of different advice categories used by advisors also showed a significant culture main effect, F (1, 59) = 4.73, p = 0.03. Hypothesis 5 predicted that Iranian advice is more directive than Canadian advice, and Iranian advisors offered fewer options to the advisees (M = 3.75 of five categories) than did Canadians (M = 4.11).

<center>DISCUSSION</center>

The present study compared the content and style of advice given by nonprofessional Iranians and Canadians. The content analysis of advice given by participants showed predictable differences between the cultures. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported by the results that revealed Iranians gave advice to change oneself to suit the situation and to tolerate one's situation more than Canadians did. The result is consistent with research suggesting that Iran is more collectivist than Canada (e.g., Hatami, 2007; Hofstede, 1999), and it supports Triandis's (2004) idea that collectivist cultures are more passive than individualistic cultures such as Canada.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported by the results that revealed Canadians gave advice to change one's situation to suit the self and to reach a compromise more than Iranians did. This is consistent with the supposition that Canadian culture is more individualist than is Iranian culture (e.g., Hatami, 2007; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 2004).

The cultural differences in the above four categories are consistent with Rothbaum et al.'s (1982) and Tavakoli's (2012) claims that individualist cultures rely on primary control (i.e., changing the situation to fit one's wishes), but collectivist cultures rely on secondary control (i.e., changing the self to fit the situation). Findings that showed Iranians advised seeking further advice less than Canadians did may be related to Iranians having a strong emphasis on the family, as suggested by Mortazavi (2006), and consequently being prone to solve their problems by seeking advice from family members rather than outside the family.

Advice to change the situation was negatively correlated with advice to change the self and tolerate the situation. This finding suggests that changing self and tolerating the situation tend to be exclusive of changing the situation to suit the self. Again, the pattern of these results indicates that advice to compromise was correlated positively with changing the situation, but negatively with tolerating the situation and changing self. This supports the claim that changing the self and toleration cluster together, while changing the situation and compromise do the same.

Supporting Hypothesis 5, the Iranians' advice was more directive and succinct than the Canadians' advice: Iranians offered fewer pieces of advice and fewer options to their advisees. These data support Schwartz's (1994) suggestion that hierarchy in cultures can be detected in the language of people of that culture, and research documenting that Iranians are more hierarchical than are Canadians (e.g., Hofstede, 2001). The data are also concordant with research suggesting that collectivist parents tend to be more directive than individualists (Johnston & Wong, 2002).

Recommendations for Intervention

This research has practical implications for planning and communicating advice in multicultural societies. As the results show, Iranian and Canadian university students experience advice differently. Similar differences are likely to exist in other cultures with similar combinations of individualism-collectivism and hierarchy-egalitarianism. This implies that, to be most effective, the content and style of advice in places such as work, schools, health centres, and counselling centres in multicultural societies need to be tailored to the cultural backgrounds of employees and clients. For example, the findings show that Iranian advice is more directive than is Canadian advice. This suggests that nondirective techniques of psychotherapy such as client-centred therapy would be less effective for Iranians as it would be for Canadians. Iranians' preference for advice to tolerate their situation or to change themselves to suit their circumstances suggests that Iranians would respond better to cognitive approaches to psychotherapy, which encourage cognitive restructuring and delay of gratification. In contrast, Canadians' preference for advice to seek a compromise or to change their circumstances to suit themselves suggests that Canadians would respond better to behavioural approaches to therapy that emphasize changes in the environment.

The cultural differences in advice also have implications for conflicts that may arise between first-generation immigrants from collectivist cultures and their children. The children may adopt from their new culture individualistic strategies of seeking or responding to advice that are different than those of their parents, amplifying their conflicts. In this case, multicultural family counselling that improves awareness of cultural differences in giving and receiving advice is needed.

The cultural differences in advice also have implications for advice in social settings like workplace or school. For example, an Iranian mother seeking advice from a Western teacher about improving her son's grades likely expects the teacher to be directive: "Tell Joseph to do X." The Western teacher, however, is likely consultative and provides different options: "Do you think Ali would respond well to X or to Z?" The Iranian mother might find the second type of advice (i.e., provision of options) as weak or confusing because the teacher does not provide direction.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Being among the first studies that investigated the social and cultural context of advice, this article revealed many interesting differences in giving advice among Iranian and Canadian university students. Because of limitations of human par-

ticipants, time, and money, I had to concentrate on specific geographical regions and populations of participants. For example, this research studied advice only among middle-class, city-dwelling Iranian and Canadian university students, a restricted sample of people from a collectivist culture and an individualistic culture. It is somewhat risky to generalize these findings beyond Iran and Canada or even beyond middle-class, city-dwelling university students.

Future research should study a wider range of countries, cultures, and people—for example, people in a wider range of age groups from Arab or African countries, known to be more collectivist than Iran, and from the United States, known to be more individualist than Canada, as well as people from countries with less pronounced individualism and collectivism. In addition, it would be worthwhile to compare advice among people with different religious backgrounds and different levels of religiosity, including Jews and Buddhists, or to compare advice from different branches of a religion such as Shia versus Sunni Muslims or Catholic versus Protestant Christians.

Despite its limitations, the present research shows that the study of advice given by nonprofessionals is an appropriate way for exploring cultural differences in advice and for devising multicultural techniques of counselling and psychotherapy. There is much to be gained by future research on advice.

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About the Author

Mahin Tavakoli is a registered clinical and counselling psychologist. She completed her PhD and post-doctoral project in Social and Cross-Cultural Psychology at Carleton University. Dr. Tavakoli provides assessment, psychodiagnosis, and psychotherapy to clients with diverse cultural backgrounds. The foci of her practice are anxiety, mood, and personality disorders. She is an author of over 60 psychological articles and two books, and teaches psychology at Carleton University.

Address correspondence to Mahin Tavakoli, 430 Gilomour Street (Unit 203), Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2P 0R8; e-mail <mtkhomei@connect.carleton.ca>