

《心理学报》审稿意见与作者回应

题目：Understanding the Rise of Unique Names: The Emphasis on Uniqueness Matters

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第一轮

审稿人 1 意见：

This paper addresses the question why increasing tendency toward giving children unique/unusual names. It is an interesting idea. However, there are several characteristics merit special attention and further development. Some suggestions to improve it.

回应：

Thanks for your valuable comments. Your suggestions are constructive to enhance the quality and clarity of our article. We have carefully considered your suggestions and hope that the revised version has now addressed these issues. We highlight our revisions in the manuscript in **dark red**.

意见 1：In paragraph 1, the author written Over the past decades, both individualist and collectivist cultures have demonstrated an increasing tendency toward giving children unique/unusual names (i.e., unique naming). The author should provide more evidence about this conclusion.

回应：

Thanks for suggesting this, which is important for readers to quickly understand the background. Now we have added all key references to the first sentence to support this conclusion:

“Over the past decades, both individualistic and collectivistic cultures have witnessed an increasing tendency to give children unique/unusual names (i.e., unique naming), **as observed in the United States (Grossmann & Varnum, 2015; Twenge et al., 2010, 2016), the United Kingdom (Bush et al., 2018), France (Mignot, 2022), Germany (Gerhards & Hackenbroch, 2000), Japan (Ogihara, 2021; Ogihara et al., 2015), and China (Bao et al., 2021; Cai et al., 2018; Su et al., 2016).**”

意见 2：In part 1.2, individualism is a cultural phenomenon involving diverse cultural values, beliefs, and practices (e.g., being unique, being independent, and being competitive). Why you propose the increasing emphasis on uniqueness explain the increasing prevalence of unique names? You do not present a clear theoretical rationale for uniqueness, why not being competitive? In part 1.3, both of them, however, are also related to uniqueness in some way: being unique may be beneficial for being independent and getting ahead. Nevertheless, being independent and competitive do not necessarily require being unique, therefore, might not contribute to the change in name uniqueness. Why? Do not necessarily require... therefore,

might not contribute? This is illogical.

回应：

Thank you for this suggestion on improving the clarity of our arguments. As to the two questions “Why you propose the increasing emphasis on uniqueness explain the increasing prevalence of unique names? You do not present a clear theoretical rationale for uniqueness, why not being competitive?”, our answer is because “emphasis on uniqueness” is conceptually similar and relevant to increasing prevalence of unique names. We did not choose “being competitive” or “being independent” because they are not conceptually similar or relevant to increasing prevalence of unique names. We now have highlighted this reason in the introduction: “we argue that not all facets of individualistic cultural values could explain the increase in unique-naming practices; instead, it was the increasing emphasis on uniqueness, manifested at both the macro/societal and micro/individual levels, that could explain the increasing prevalence of unique names due to conceptual similarity and relevance.”

As to the logic for us to test being independent and being competitive, we acknowledge that our original explanation was not sufficient. Now we provide a simpler and direct explanation in the main text as below:

“Doing this enabled us to directly show that not all facets of individualistic cultural values can account for the increase in unique-naming practices, and that the explanatory power of emphasis on uniqueness was not spurious due to its overlap with other values or constructs. To do this, we chose competing constructs that are distinct from but also related to uniqueness. If these constructs could not predict unique-naming practices, other totally distinct constructs would be more unlikely to be predictive.” (see Introduction, Section 1.3)

意见 3: There is always a high correlation between need for uniqueness and unique names (prevalence or preference). The need for uniqueness predicts unique behaviors, this relationship will always exist in any field. This research has no innovative value.

回应：

We agree that there is a correlation between need for uniqueness and unique naming (prevalence or preference). However, this does not mean that our research is not novel. Actually, this is not the novel point of our three studies. The main contribution of our research is to demonstrate that “not all facets of individualistic cultural values could explain the increase in unique-naming practices; instead, it was the increasing emphasis on uniqueness, manifested at both the macro/societal and micro/individual levels, that explains the increasing prevalence of unique names.” (see Introduction, Section 1.3)

We have given more reasons about why we need to conduct the current studies:

“However, there are also good reasons to challenge individualism as a general cause for the rise in name uniqueness. First, the observed cultural-level covariation might be spurious due to confounding variables and might not apply to the individual level (Na et al., 2010). More importantly, individualism is a cultural phenomenon involving diverse cultural values, beliefs, and practices (e.g., being unique, being independent, and being competitive). These facets may not always covary with each other or naming behavior (Ogihara et al., 2015; Oyserman et al., 2002). Probably, cultural emphasis on uniqueness is the only factor that could predict unique

naming behavior, because they are conceptually similar. Therefore, rigorous empirical evidence is needed to identify which specific cultural value(s) can explain the increase in unique names.” (see Introduction, Section 1.2)

More generally, we give more discussions about the contribution of our work in General Discussion as below:

“Besides providing novel evidence for the rising prevalence of unique names in China and identifying specific mechanisms underlying this shift, our research also has implications for understanding the mechanisms underlying psychological and social changes in general. Many studies have targeted the rising individualism as the main cause for the massive social, cultural, and psychological changes around the world (for reviews, see Cai et al., 2019; Kashima et al., 2019). As an overarching account, this focus seems parsimonious. When it comes to specific changes, this explanation falls short of addressing the complexity of global shifts. Individualism is a cultural orientation consisting of numerous components that are distinct from each other (Oyserman et al., 2002; Vignoles et al., 2016). A specific change may be driven by one (or a few) specific cultural component(s) but not others. Just as illustrated in our present research, not all individualistic components contribute to the shift toward unique name selection; what matters more fundamentally is the culture and psychology associated with uniqueness. Additionally, many studies have also used a uniqueness-related index as an objective measure of individualism, particularly in studying cultural changes (Bazzi et al., 2020; Bianchi, 2016; Grossmann & Varnum, 2015; Ogihara et al., 2015). Is it an appropriate approach? We may agree because unique naming reflects a core value of individualism, that is, being unique. However, we may disapprove because unique naming does not encompass all components of individualism (Vignoles et al., 2016). At least, we must be cautious when attempting to draw generalized conclusions.” (see General Discussion)

Overall, our research is the first work to show that (1) it is not appropriate to use individualism as a general cause of many psychological and behavioral shifts; and (2) specific mechanisms may underly specific cultural and psychological changes, with change in naming practices as an illustration. Hence, our work is indeed important and makes a big contribution to research on cultural and psychological changes.

意见 4: The need for uniqueness is always exists in naming behavior. Name is an individual characteristic, people always try their effort to be different from those in the past or around them. So, it is possible that global increase of giving babies unique names just because people do not want to use old name.

回应:

Thanks for raising this concern. We agree it is important to rule out the alternative explanation that the increasing unique-naming practices might only be due to the avoidance of using old-fashioned names. In fact, across all of our three studies, we have tried our best to partial out this alternative possibility.

In Study 1, we computed name uniqueness *within* the birth cohort of each individual, which could effectively control for the shift in preference from “old” to “new” names across cohorts. In doing this, the unique and common names were specific to, measured for, and also compared

within each birth cohort. Thus, the name uniqueness index in Study 1 actually indicated the degree to which their names were different from their *peers*, but not from their *older cohorts*.

In Study 2, we directly controlled for name modernity in the name characters we selected. Specifically, in designing the baby-naming task, we distinguished between “modern” and “neutral” names and avoided including those “old-fashioned” names, based on an objective index of name modernity calculated by the relative character frequency across different cohorts (see Table S2). This is because the participants were born from 1955 to 2001, making it more appropriate for them to choose baby names from non-old ones. Thus, Study 2 has addressed this concern as well.

In Study 3, we also directly disentangled the demand for “uniqueness” from the demand for “modernity” by demarcating the words we selected. In particular, we used “独特, 独一无二, 与众不同, 特别, 别致, 特色, [不]重名, [不]常见” to indicate *uniqueness* but “现代, 时尚, 新颖, 流行, 潮流, 前卫, 洋气, 老气” to represent *modernity* (see Table S3). Notably, the results clearly showed that the parents increasingly emphasized the uniqueness, but not the modernity, of baby names in actual naming practices (see Table 4). Therefore, Study 3 has indeed successfully ruled out this alternative explanation.

To highlight these strengths of our studies, we added a paragraph of discussion of this issue in General Discussion (see p. 16).

意见 5: Besides education, at the macro level, people’s cultural knowledge is increasing with society development. For example, parents who have bachelor’ degree ten years ago have different cultural knowledge with these today. How to rule out the effect of the amount of cultural knowledge people have, after all, China has undergone unprecedented social change and modernization over the past decades, besides a pronounced rise in individualism, the amount of cultural knowledge people have is increasing all the time.

回应:

Thanks for proposing this possibility. We agree that the content and amount of cultural knowledge may have changed to some extent over time in China, although, to our knowledge, little research of cultural change has successfully measured or examined the role of cultural knowledge.

Overall, we assume that cultural knowledge may be an antecedent cognitive variable of people’s cultural values and consequently cultural practices. While cultural knowledge is difficult to measure directly or accurately, below we explain how we have tried our best to address this concern in our three studies.

In Study 1, we examined people’s cultural values at the macro level in three domains: uniqueness, independence, and competition. Since these domains are all core components of individualistic values, it is plausible that cultural knowledge could have influenced all these domains in a similar way. In other words, cultural knowledge might have simultaneously affected all the three cultural values of individualism, rather than having only influenced uniqueness. If it was the case, then we would expect to observe similar Granger causal effects of these cultural values on unique naming (because all of them would be confounded with cultural knowledge). However, the results showed that only the increasing cultural value of uniqueness can explain the

increasing unique naming. Thus, this finding may help us rule out possible confounding variables, including cultural knowledge, that may serve as antecedents affecting individualistic cultural values.

In Study 2, besides controlling for the participants' education level in regression models, we also made the Chinese name characters used in the baby-naming task well matched on many confounding features that may be associated with cultural knowledge. Specifically, within each group of 12 characters (see Table S2), we tried our best to control for the valence (positivity), character complexity, and other attributes that may be influenced by cultural knowledge. In this way, we aimed to reduce the bias in results due to participants' individual difference in cultural knowledge.

In Study 3, we tested parents' demand for six features of names (uniqueness, modernity, positivity) and babies (happiness, achievement, numerology). Again, all these features, not only uniqueness, might have been influenced by and confounded with cultural knowledge. For example, parents with a larger amount of cultural knowledge may also highlight more their children's achievement in the future when considering their children's name. However, we did not find evidence supporting this possibility.

Taken together, although we were unable to directly and precisely measure and test cultural knowledge beyond education, our results are not much confounded with the effect of cultural knowledge. That said, we acknowledge that cultural knowledge can be an important variable in cultural change research that deserves special attention in the future, with both measures to be developed to assess cultural knowledge and studies to be conducted to test its influences.

审稿人 2 意见:

本文探究中国的文化变迁现象，选题具有重要的社会意义。三个研究围绕一个核心科学问题展开，结合不同研究方法，提供聚合证据。研究结论具有一定的时代性和科学性。存在的首要问题是，作者选取独特性、独立性和竞争性的理论基础论述不足，建议作者补充一些理论框架的阐述，以及讨论部分中补充一些对于人们如何更好的理解中国快速而剧烈的文化变迁现象背后的心理机制的理论启示。建议小修后发表。

回应:

非常感谢审稿专家对本研究的认可与肯定,您的宝贵意见对于提升本文质量很有帮助!针对您提出的两条建议,我们做了如下修改(正文深红色文字):

(1) 修改了 1.2 和 1.3 部分对选取独特性、独立性和竞争性的理论基础的论述(见第 3-4 页)。总体而言,独特性、独立性和竞争性是个人主义文化价值观的三个相对重要的方面,既存在一定的相互关联,也存在实质性的区别。独特性强调个体与众不同,虽然与众不同也有利于独立和竞争(Lynn & Snyder, 2002),但独立性从概念上强调不依赖他人、有清晰的人际关系边界,而竞争性则强调个人发展的成功与成就(Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2002; Vignoles et al., 2016)。同时,既往研究发现这三者在中国都存在上升趋势(Cai et al., 2018; Zeng & Greenfield, 2015),可能是共变或混淆的,所以检验独立性和竞争性有利于更严格地检验独特性的作用。因此,我们有必要将独立性和竞争性作为可能的混淆变量,希望将独特性从这两个相关但又不同的概念中剥离出来,从而探讨独特性价值观对独特起名行为的独特贡献。

(2) 在总讨论和结论中补充了关于更好理解中国文化变迁心理机制的理论启示。

第二轮

审稿人 1 意见：我对修改稿无其他意见了。

编委复审意见：同意发表该文 xb22-428。

主编终审意见：同意发表该文。