Research Article

Who I Am Depends on How I Feel

The Role of Affect in the Expression of Culture

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ABSTRACT—We present a novel role of affect in the expression of culture. Four experiments tested whether individuals' affective states moderate the expression of culturally normative cognitions and behaviors. We consistently found that value expressions, self-construals, and behaviors were less consistent with cultural norms when individuals were experiencing positive rather than negative affect. Positive affect allowed individuals to explore novel thoughts and behaviors that departed from cultural constraints, whereas negative affect bound people to cultural norms. As a result, when Westerners experienced positive rather than negative affect, they valued self-expression less, showed a greater preference for objects that reflected conformity, viewed the self in more interdependent terms, and sat closer to other people. East Asians showed the reverse pattern for each of these measures, valuing and expressing individuality and independence more when experiencing positive than when experiencing negative affect. The results suggest that affect serves an important functional purpose of attuning individuals more or less closely to their cultural heritage.

Who people are often depends on how they feel: A confluence of research suggests that diffuse positive and negative affective states significantly influence attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. For example, feeling good is associated with more positive evaluations, more creative thought, and more novelty-seeking behavior, whereas feeling bad is associated with more negative evaluations, more rigorous or systematic thinking, and more cautious behavior (for a review, see Schwarz & Clore, 2007). In this article, we build from and extend these previous investigations by exploring whether affective states influence the expression of individuals' core self as constructed by their culture. Taking a social functionalist perspective of affective states, we hypothesized that diffuse positive and negative feelings can

significantly influence those values, thoughts, and behaviors normally anchored in the deep fabric of one's cultural heritage.

THE ROLE OF AFFECT IN COGNITION AND BEHAVIOR

Overall, research suggests that diffuse positive and negative affective states, including moods, feelings, and temperament (Frijda, 1986), play an important social function, alerting people to the adaptive value of their current thinking and behavior (Schwarz, 1990). For example, positive affect seems to serve as a psychological and physiological marker of well-being, security, and progress toward one's goals (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Fredrickson, 2001; Higgins, 1996; Kahneman, 1999; Schwarz & Clore, 2007). In contrast, negative affect tends to signal that one's current mode of thinking and behaving is maladaptive or that something in one's immediate environment is problematic and requires one to search for restorative solutions (e.g., Schwarz, 1990).

These broad and diffuse affective states direct subsequent cognition and behavior in predictable ways. For example, positive affect leads individuals to become more open to new experiences, and more willing to approach and explore novel objects, people, thoughts, and behaviors (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999; Fredrickson, 2001). By contrast, negative affect leads individuals to be more cautious when assessing risk (Johnson & Tversky, 1983), to be more prevention focused (Higgins, 1997), and to prefer familiar people, situations, and objects over novel ones (Raghunathan & Pham, 1999).

AFFECT AND THE EXPRESSION OF CULTURE

Taken together, these results suggest that positive affect increases the likelihood of unfamiliar or nonnormative responses, whereas negative affect produces an enhanced propensity for familiar or normative actions (cf. Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008). However, the behaviors that are considered typical or normative vary significantly across cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). In Western cultures, independence and individuality are highly valued and consistently reinforced as predominant social goals, and behaviors that assert indepen-

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dence and individuality are considered normative in Western cultural contexts. By contrast, the predominant social goals in Eastern cultures are interdependence and maintenance of interpersonal harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and interdependence-promoting behaviors are considered normative and appropriate in Eastern cultural contexts. Thus, different behavioral repertoires are socially reinforced as normative or appropriate in different cultures.

Given such cultural influences, we tested the hypothesis that positive and negative affective states produce divergent behavioral responses that depend on the individual's cultural background. In particular, because positive affect encourages individuals to explore what is novel and adopt alternative behaviors and cognitions and negative affect increases reliance on the familiar and normative, we predicted that, on the one hand, individuals from Western cultural backgrounds would value the expression of individuality less and show an increased preference for conformity with other individuals when experiencing positive (relative to negative) affect. On the other hand, we hypothesized that individuals from East Asian cultural backgrounds would value the expression of individuality more and show a decreased preference for conformity when experiencing positive (relative to negative) affect.[1]

Thus, the research reported in this article investigated for the first time whether affective states influence the expression of culturally consistent thoughts, behaviors, and self-expressions. Experiments 1 and 2 explored whether affect moderates the expression of culturally consistent values and behaviors. Experiments 3 and 4 tested whether affect moderates Western and Eastern participants' self-construals both explicitly (Experiment 3) and implicitly (Experiment 4). Across the experiments, we manipulated affect using four different procedures and measured the expression of culturally consistent values and behaviors in four different paradigms, with the hope of demonstrating the robustness of the link from affect to the expression of culture. Specifically, we predicted that participants would express more culturally inconsistent values, behaviors, and self-construals when experiencing positive, as compared with negative, affective states.

EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 investigated the impact of affect and culture on the value that people place on self-expression. Such values vary significantly across cultures (Kim & Sherman, 2007), with people from Western cultural backgrounds tending to value the expression of their internal beliefs and attributes more than people from East Asian backgrounds (Kim & Markus, 2002). We

hypothesized that Westerners (Europeans and European Canadians) in a positive affective state would value self-expression less than Westerners in a negative affective state, but that East Asians (Asians and Asian Canadians) in a positive affective state would value self-expression more than East Asians in a negative affective state.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred forty-six students from the University of British Columbia (74 Asian and Asian Canadian students, 72 European and European Canadian students) volunteered to participate. The participants were either Canadians from European or East Asian backgrounds or international students from European (i.e., Germany, Ireland, England) or East Asian (i.e., Taiwan, Korea, China, Japan) nations. Experiment 1 had a 3 (affect: positive vs. neutral vs. negative) × 2 (culture: Western vs. East Asian) between-subjects design.

Procedure

Students were approached on campus and were asked to participate in a study on "feelings and beliefs." Participants first completed an autobiographical memory task designed to induce positive, neutral, or negative affect. In the positive-affect condition, participants recalled a life experience that made them feel extremely positive, uplifted, or happy. In the negative-affect condition, participants recalled a time they felt extremely negative, down, or sad. Participants in the neutral-affect condition were asked to recall their actions of the current day. In all conditions, participants were then asked to describe the image that was most vivid about the experience, to list five feelings that they felt at the time, and to rate the intensity of the emotion that they felt at the time on a 10-point scale (1 = *not at all intense*, 10 = *extremely intense*).

Participants then completed the Value of Expression Questionnaire (VEQ; Kim & Sherman, 2007), which measures the extent to which one values self-expression (e.g., "Freedom of expression is one of the most important rights that people should have"). Participants responded to the items using a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Finally, participants completed an affect manipulation check and reported their gender, race or ethnicity, and nationality.

Results

Manipulation Check

The manipulation was effective. Participants who recalled a positive life event reported the most positive affect ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 1.70$), followed by participants in the neutral-affect condition ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.40$); participants in the negative-affect condition expressed the least positive affect ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.39$), $F(2, 139) = 7.32$, $p = .001$.

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[1]In the present research, we made hypotheses about, and experimentally manipulated, diffuse positive and negative affective states (e.g., feelings or moods; Frijda, 1986; Schwarz & Clore, 2007), rather than more specific emotions such as joy, surprise, anger, or fear (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008; Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

Self-Expression

The VEQ scores were submitted to a 3 (affect: positive, neutral, or negative) × 2 (culture: Western or East Asian) analysis of variance. Results were consistent with Kim and Sherman's (2007) findings in that there was a significant main effect of culture, with Western participants scoring significantly higher ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 0.94$) than East Asian participants ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 0.83$), $F(1, 144) = 10.531$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$. This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between affect and culture, $F(2, 144) = 16.142$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .186$ (see Fig. 1).

As predicted, Western participants' scores on the VEQ were lower (i.e., less endorsement of individual expression) in the positive-affect condition than in the negative-affect condition, $F(1, 49) = 19.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .294$, and the neutral-affect condition, $F(1, 45) = 4.769$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .098$. In contrast, Western participants affirmed self-expression to a greater extent in the negative-affect condition than in the neutral-affect condition, $F(1, 47) = 5.204$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .102$.

Also as predicted, East Asians' VEQ scores were higher (i.e., less culturally consistent) in the positive-affect condition compared with the negative-affect condition, $F(1, 53) = 12.36$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .194$. Although the VEQ scores of East Asians in the neutral-affect condition were not significantly different from the VEQ scores of East Asians in the positive-affect ($p = .21$) or negative-affect ($p = .07$) condition, a significant linear trend confirmed that East Asians experiencing positive affect obtained the highest VEQ scores (reported the least culturally consistent beliefs), followed by East Asians in the neutral-affect condition, and then by those in the negative-affect condition, $t(71) = 3.45$, $p = .001$ (see Fig. 1).

Experiment 1 provided the first evidence that affect can influence culturally normative beliefs. The values expressed by Westerners and East Asians were less consistent with their cultural norms when participants were in a positive affective state (relative to a neutral affective state) and were more consistent with their cultural norms when participants were in a negative affective state (relative to a neutral affective state).

EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 2 examined the impact of positive and negative affect on the cultural consistency of actual behavior, rather than self-reported beliefs. Previous research has shown that Westerners and East Asians show distinct preferences for choosing objects that reflect uniqueness versus conformity (Kim & Markus, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2007).[2] For example, Kim and Markus (1999) demonstrated that when asked to choose a single pen from a group of five, one or two of which were a different color from the rest, Westerners tended to choose the pen with the uncommon color, whereas East Asians tended to choose the pen with the common color. In Experiment 2, we adopted this procedure to examine the impact of affect on the tendency to show culturally normative choice behavior. We predicted that participants would show less culturally normative behavior in the positive-affect condition than in the negative-affect condition.

Method

Participants and Design

Sixty-three participants from the University of British Columbia (33 Asians and Asian Canadians, 30 Europeans and European Canadians) volunteered to participate in the study in return for a ballpoint pen. Experiment 2 had a 2 (affect: positive vs. negative) × 2 (culture: Western vs. East Asian) between-subjects design.

Procedure

Participants completed a survey on "Music and Feelings." For this survey, they used headphones to listen to approximately 3 min of classical music chosen to induce either positive (Mozart's Serenade in G Major, K. 525, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" 1. Allegro) or negative (Rachmaninov's Vocalise in E Minor, Opus 34, No. 14) affect and then were asked to write down what they were feeling as they listened, using two 7-point rating scales (happy, sad; 1 = not at all, 7 = extremely). Next, participants reported their gender, nationality, and race or ethnicity.

After participants returned the completed questionnaire, a pen was offered as payment. Pens were always presented in a set of five, with one or two pens (counterbalanced) a different color from the rest (blue or black, counterbalanced). Our main dependent measure was whether participants chose the pen that had an uncommon color.
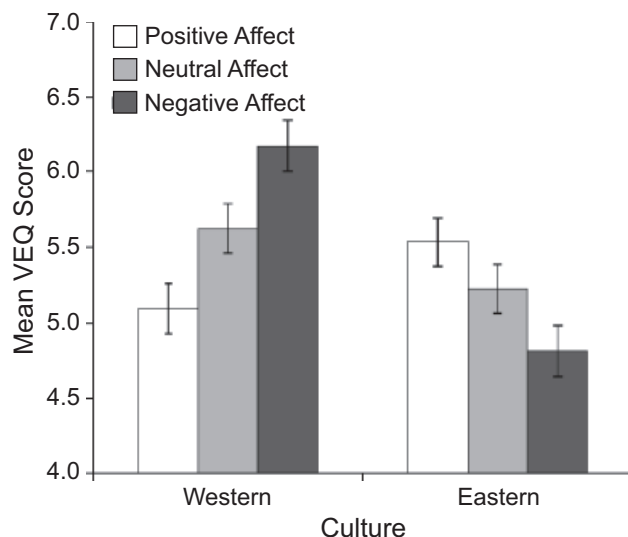

Fig. 1. Mean Value of Expression Questionnaire (VEQ) score as a function of culture and affect (Experiment 1). Error bars represent ±1 *SEM*.

[2] An alternative explanation for this finding (Yamagishi, Hashimoto, & Schug, 2008) is that cultural norms, rather than preferences, drive this effect. However, this interpretation is also consistent with our overall hypothesis that affective states moderate culturally normative behaviors and cognitions.

Results

Manipulation Check

Participants in the positive-affect condition felt more positive ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.05$) than participants in the negative-affect condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.97$), $F(1, 61) = 28.686$, $p < .001$.

Choice Behavior

A log-linear analysis of pen choice revealed a significant interaction between affect and culture, $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = 8.247$, $p = .004$. As we hypothesized, Western participants were less likely to choose the uncommon pen in the positive-affect condition (13%) than in the negative-affect condition (60%), $\chi^2(1, N = 30) = 7.033$, $p = .008$. In contrast, East Asian participants showed a trend in the opposite direction, with those in the positive-affect condition more likely to choose the uncommon pen (33%) than those in the negative-affect condition (13%), $\chi^2(1, N = 33) = 1.782$, $p = .18$.

Experiment 2 found that Westerners were less likely to choose an uncommon pen when they felt positive than when they felt negative, whereas East Asians' behavior exhibited a trend in the opposite direction, that is, a greater preference for uncommon pens in the positive- than in the negative-affect condition.

EXPERIMENT 3

The purpose of Experiment 3 was twofold. First, we wanted to examine the impact of affective cues on self-construal, one of the most fundamental manifestations of culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Second, we wanted to demonstrate the automaticity of this process by examining the impact of implicit affect on the cultural consistency of self-construals. To this end, we manipulated affective state (positive vs. negative) through a facial feedback paradigm (Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988) and then had participants complete a measure of self-construal. On the basis of research demonstrating that Westerners tend to construe the self in independent terms, whereas East Asians have a predominantly interdependent self-construal (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), we predicted that Westerners experiencing positive affect via implicit facial feedback would express a more interdependent self-construal than Westerners experiencing negative affect via implicit facial feedback, and that East Asians experiencing positive affect via implicit facial feedback would express a more independent self-construal than East Asians experiencing negative affect via implicit facial feedback.

Method

Participants and Design

Ninety-one undergraduate students (44 female, 47 male) from Duke University were paid $7 for their participation. Sixty-six percent of the participants ($n = 60$) identified themselves as being from a Western cultural background, and 34% ($n = 31$) of the sample identified themselves as being from an East Asian cultural background.[3] The experiment had a 2 (facial feedback: smiling vs. frowning) × 2 (culture: Western vs. East Asian) between-subjects design.

Procedure

Following Strack et al. (1988), we told participants that they would be participating in a study on "psychomotoric coordination." Participants were randomly assigned to a facial feedback condition (positive or negative) and asked to hold a pen between their teeth or lips while they completed the Twenty Statements Test (TST; Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). In the positive-affect condition, participants were instructed to hold the pen between their teeth, which activates the zygomatic muscles involved in smiling. In the negative-affect condition, participants were instructed to hold the pen between their lips, which activates the corrugator facial muscles associated with frowning.

The TST (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954) is a measure of self-construal in which participants are presented with an open-ended probe question, "Who am I?" They respond to this question 20 times with reference to themselves (e.g., Cousins, 1989; Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999). Following Gardner et al. (1999), two raters (blind to hypotheses and experimental conditions) coded a response as representing an independent self-construal if it described a personal attribute (trait, ability, physical attribute, or attitude: e.g., "I am intelligent"; "I am athletic") and as representing an interdependent self-construal if it described a social role, relationship, or group membership ("I am a team captain"; "I am a sister"). Coders were instructed to exclude responses that were neither independent nor interdependent (e.g., "I am hungry"). Interrater reliability was acceptable ($\alpha = .79$). Given that the proportions of independent and interdependent self-construals were almost perfectly complementary, we used the proportion of independent self-construals as the dependent variable.

Results

The proportion of independent self-construals was submitted to a 2 (facial feedback: smiling vs. frowning) × 2 (culture: Western vs. East Asian) analysis of variance. A significant two-way interaction emerged, $F(1, 87) = 15.55$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .152$. As predicted, Western participants in a positive affective state (i.e., smiling) listed proportionately fewer independent self-construals compared with Western participants in a negative affective state (i.e., frowning), $F(1, 87) = 4.58$, $p = .035$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Furthermore, East Asian participants experiencing positive facial feedback expressed proportionately more independent self-construals than those experiencing negative facial feedback, $F(1, 87) = 11.001$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .112$ (see Fig. 2).

Manipulating affective state via facial feedback influenced the cultural construction of the self. Results were consistent with

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[3]Nationalities of participants were not recorded in this study.
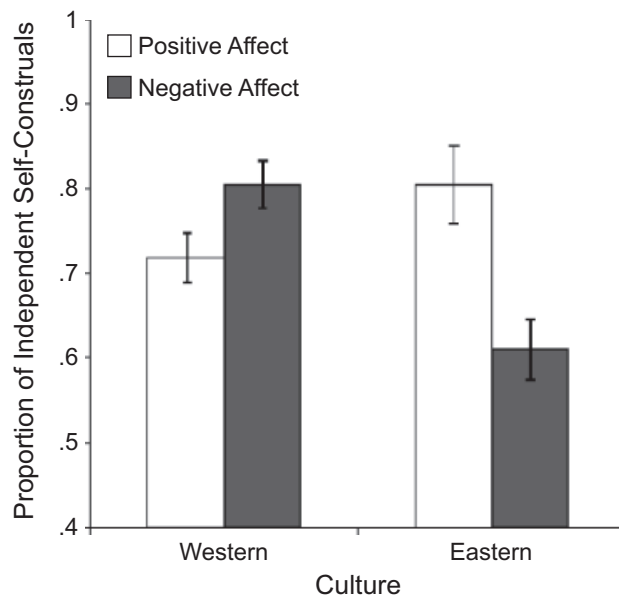
Fig. 2. Proportion of independent self-construals as a function of culture and affect (Experiment 3). Error bars represent ±1 *SEM*.

the pattern of results for values and behaviors in Experiments 1 and 2. Smiling (positive affect) participants expressed fewer culturally consistent self-construals than frowning (negative affect) participants.

EXPERIMENT 4

In Experiment 4, we examined whether the interaction between affect and culture would also affect an implicit, behavioral measure of self-construal, namely, seating distance (see Ashton-James, van Baaren, Chartrand, & Decety, 2007; Holland, Roeder, van Baaren, Brandt, & Hannover, 2004). We predicted that Western participants in a positive affective state would sit closer to other people (reflecting a more interdependent self-construal) than would Western participants in a negative affective state, whereas East Asians in a positive affective state would sit farther from other people (reflecting a more independent self-construal) than would East Asians in a negative affective state.

Method

Participants and Design
Thirty-five (13 female, 22 male) undergraduate students from Duke University (17 European Americans, 18 East Asians) participated in return for $3.

Procedure
Two experimenters, one Westerner and one East Asian, recruited participants on campus. Western participants were recruited by the East Asian experimenter, and East Asian participants were recruited by the Western experimenter. The nonactive experimenter served as a confederate, sitting at one end of a bench

(ostensibly on a break) when participants approached the experimental area.[4] Thus, the confederate was always of the same ethnic background as the participant. This served as a control for the influence of possible in-group/out-group effects (e.g., individuals may sit further from people of a different ethnicity).

Participants were told that the experiment concerned a "media survey." They were first asked to examine 10 positive or 10 negative media images (the affect manipulation). The positive images depicted popular tourist destinations, cute and friendly animals, and candies. The negative images depicted objects, places, and events such as needles, prison, a funeral, and dangerous animals.

Participants were then asked to sit down on the bench to complete a survey. We had placed a sign advertising the study directly in front of the bench, and the experimenter unobtrusively recorded the number of characters and spaces between the resting experimenter and the seated participant. The sign ("PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY FOR $3!!!") contained a total of 32 evenly spaced characters and spaces (3 in. per character or space). The questionnaire asked participants to indicate the extent to which their affective state was *positive* or *negative*, using two unipolar 9-point scales. This manipulation check was followed by demographic questions. Participants were then paid, debriefed, and thanked for their participation.

Results

Manipulation Check
On the combined affect rating scales, participants who viewed the positive media images reported feeling significantly more positive ($M = 6.0$, $SD = 1.36$) than participants who saw the negative media images ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 1.90$), $t(33) = 2.735$, $p < .01$.

Seating Distance
We conducted a 2 (affect: positive vs. negative) × 2 (culture: Western vs. East Asian) analysis of variance on seating distance and found a significant interaction between affect and culture, $F(1, 31) = 8.893$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .223$, indicating that participants' cultural background moderated the effect of affect on seating distance. The pattern of results supported our hypotheses. Western participants in a positive affective state sat closer to the confederate than Western participants in a negative affective state, $F(1, 31) = 5.26$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .145$ (see Fig. 3). However, East Asians in a positive affective state sat further from the confederate than East Asians in a negative affective state, $F(1, 31) = 3.67$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .106$.

Experiment 4 found that affect influenced an implicit measure of self-construal, how close to a confederate participants sat. As in the previous experiments, participants acted in a less cul-

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[4]African American and Latino participants who approached the experimenter were allowed to participate, but were not included in the final analyses.
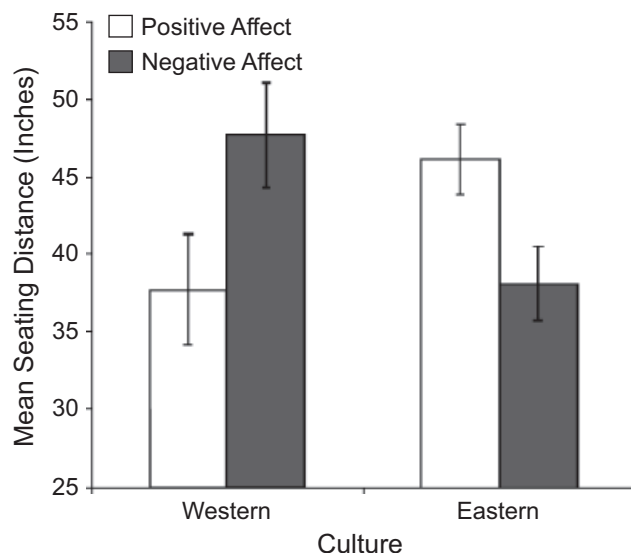
Fig. 3. Mean seating distance (in inches) from the resting experimenter as a function of culture and affect (Experiment 4). Error bars represent ±1 *SEM*.

turally consistent manner when experiencing positive affect than when experiencing negative affect.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across four experiments, we found support for the moderating influence of affect on the expression of culturally normative cognitions and behaviors. Experiments 1 and 2 found that Westerners and East Asians who were experiencing positive affect expressed values and behaviors that were less consistent with their culture than did Westerners and East Asians who were experiencing negative affect. Experiments 3 and 4 demonstrated that affect also fundamentally shifts an individual's mode of self-representation toward or away from culturally based self-construals, with Westerners expressing more interdependent self-construals when they experienced positive rather than negative affect, and Easterners expressing more independent self-construals when they experienced positive rather than negative affect. The same pattern of results occurred regardless of how affect was manipulated (music, pictures, recall task, or facial feedback) or how cultural expressions were measured. Thus, these experiments demonstrate a robust moderation of the expression of culture by affective state.

This study provides the first evidence that positive affect encourages individuals to explore ideas and behaviors that are inconsistent with those prescribed as culturally normative. These results also show that the tendency to "broaden and build" when in a positive affective state (Fredrickson, 2001) extends to the self-concept: Individuals not only expand their thought and behavior repertoires, but also demonstrate self-expansion by incorporating culture-inconsistent representations into their self-concept. Our results also contribute to research demonstrating the functional utility of negative affect as a

cue that one needs to reaffirm "tried and true" modes of relating to the social world because one's current thoughts or behaviors are not adaptive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Schwarz, 1990; Tesser, 1988, 2000). However, the present experiments go beyond previous research by demonstrating for the first time that negative affect leads to the expression of culturally consistent thoughts, behaviors, and even self-construals, suggesting that affect may serve the functional purpose of attuning individuals more or less closely to their cultural heritage.

Unanswered Questions and Future Directions

One potentially interesting future direction is to examine whether or not allowing participants a chance to express culturally consistent values or behavior actually serves to reduce the experience or intensity of negative affect. A second important direction for future research is to explore the impact of specific emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, anger, fear) on culturally normative behaviors. Although the present research showed a clear and robust effect for general positive and negative affective states, previous research has shown that inducing very specific emotions of similar valence, such as anger and fear, may produce different behavioral responses (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Thus, future research should examine how specific emotions may differentially affect culturally normative behavior.

We believe our findings also speak to the notion of the phenomenal self—the parts of the self that are viewed and experienced in the moment (Jones & Gerard, 1967). Whereas previous research has highlighted the impact of situations and motivations on the moment-to-moment construction of the self (Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986), the present research has shown that the phenomenal self is also influenced by the combination of affective state and culture. The self is not a static state but a dynamic force, constructed from the situation, from one's culture, and from one's affective state.

The Link Between Culture and Affect

Although prior research has found that culture predicts affective responses (Markus & Kitayama, 1994), the current findings have established the reverse causal direction, showing that affect can also determine the expression of culture. These reciprocal forces between affect and culture create the current self: Who one is—one's behaviors, cognitions, and self-construals—at any given point in time depends on the fundamental interplay between affect and culture.

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