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Unpacking East-West Differences in the Extent of Self-Enhancement from the Perspective of Face versus Dignity Culture

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Abstract

The question of whether or not the need for self-enhancement is culturally universal has been a controversial issue in cultural psychology. Though there have been numerous studies arguing that East Asians also have the need for self-enhancement, the controversy remained. We contend that the field is ready to see a cohesive theory that integrates and explains when and why East Asians do and do not manifest their need for self-enhancement. In this paper, we provide the theoretical logics of and rationales behind face and dignity cultures as the new theoretical proxies that integrate and explain East Asians' self-enhancing behaviors, supplementing the former approach that uses the individualism-collectivism dichotomy. In particular, four representative properties of face culture — humility, public (versus private) concern, prevention regulatory focus, and harmony — are discussed to explain cross-cultural differences in the extent and ways of manifestations of self-enhancement motivation between European Americans and East Asians. Theoretical corroborations and empirical findings supporting this approach are also discussed.

Self-enhancement has long been regarded as the most fundamental human motivation, since the epoch of the Cyrenaic and Epicurean schools (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). Also called positive self-regard, self-enhancement refers to the tendency for an individual to hold favorable self-evaluations (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Commonly manifested in the form of self-serving bias, better-than-average effect (BTAE), and selective self-memory, self-enhancement has been known to improve both physical and psychological functions. Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, and McDowell (2003a) found that high self-enhancers not only had better cardiovascular responses and more rapid cardiovascular recovery when coping with stress but also had a lower base level of cortisol. Researchers also reported that self-enhancement leads to increased mental health and that those tactics for self-enhancement, such as the BTAE or self-serving bias, are positively related to psychological strong points, including positive affect, happiness, self-esteem, and social bonding (Marshall & Brown, 2008; McFarland & Ross, 1982; Paulhus, 1998; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Taylor et al., 2003a; Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003b). In short, when exploring self-concept, positive self-regard has been considered among its most basic features, and consequently, people's need for positive self-regard has been deemed essential for everyone regardless of their culture.

Controversy: Inconsistency in Empirical Findings

Heine, Lehman, Markus, and Kitayama (1999), however, argued that the need for self-enhancement is not universal; it only manifests in Western cultures, such as in North America. The authors found that the distribution of self-esteem scores among European Canadians,

unlike East Asians, was negatively skewed in such a way that 93% of the participants rated their self-esteem as higher than the theoretical midpoint of the self-esteem scale. They also found that European American participants held a set of diverse self-serving biases and engaged in many self-deceptive behaviors to protect their positive self-regard. According to their meta-analysis, 88 of 91 cross-cultural comparisons found that Westerners are more likely to self-enhance than East Asians. Within-culture investigations found that Westerners show evidence for self-enhancement in 44 out of 48 studies, whereas East Asians show evidence for self-criticism in 20 studies and self-enhancement in 19 studies, out of 46 studies. Since the researchers challenged the universality of self-enhancement motivation, which no one had earlier casted doubt on, their assertion prompted numerous studies that rebutted the claim (Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Cai, Brown, Deng, & Oakes, 2007; Gaertner, Sedikides, & Chang, 2008; Kim, Chiu, Peng, Cai, & Tov, 2010; Kim, Peng, & Chiu, 2008; Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman, 2001; Leung, Kim, Zhang, Tam, & Chiu, 2012; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Takata, 2003; Tam et al., 2012).

Alongside the study of cultural differences in the tendency to self-enhance, past studies examined the variety of culturally relevant tactics that East Asians adopt to fulfill their need for self-enhancement. What is particularly informational is that whether a study finds evidence for self-enhancement or not depends on how self-enhancement is operationally defined and methodologically measured (see Heine & Hamamura, 2007, for different methodologies used to detect self-enhancement for Westerners and Easterners). For instance, East Asians evaluate themselves more favorably in comparison to other average students (Brown & Kobayashi, 2002), strongly endorse collectivistic, rather than individualistic attributes (Sedikides et al., 2003), perceive that negative events would be less likely to occur to them as opposed to perceiving that positive events would be more likely to occur to them (Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001), evaluate themselves more favorably in competitive situations (Takata, 2003), perceive their relationships with others, such as those with their close friends and family members, as more positive than those of their peers (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000), deny possession of negative traits as opposed to affirming possession of positive traits (Kim et al., 2008), manifest their positive self-regard only when being measured by Implicit Association Tests (IAT), but not by explicit measures (Cai et al., 2011; Kitayama & Uchida, 2003), and self-enhance when the confidentiality of their responses is assured (Kudo & Numazaki, 2003). More importantly, a number of studies found that even though East Asians manifest their need for self-enhancement in culturally specific ways as aforementioned, their culturally specific manifestations of self-enhancement relate to corresponding psychological well-being measures (e.g., happiness, depression) to the same extent as Westerners do (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim, & Sheldon, 2001; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997).

We argue that cultural ideologies and knowledge systems come into play in the ways self-enhancement are manifested. We attempt to classify these findings on the typical East Asian ways of self-enhancement into four meaningful and representative categories. On average, East Asians tend to manifest self-enhancing behaviors (a) when the cultural need for modesty becomes weak (Cai et al., 2007; Kurman, 2001; Kurman & Sriram, 1997, 2002; Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006; Takata, 2003), (b) when privacy is assured with anonymity or confidentiality (Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003), (c) in prevention-focused ways than in promotion-focused ways as a self-regulatory strategy (Chang et al., 2001; Heine & Lehman, 1995; Ji, Zhang, Osborne, & Guan, 2004; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000), and (d) in the domain of interpersonal relationships or toward the groups to which they belong (Endo et al., 2000; Leung et al., 2012; Muramoto & Yamaguchi, 1997, 2003).

Despite the extensive literature investigating the universality of the self-enhancement motive, researchers have not yet reached a conclusion on whether East Asians do have the need for self-enhancement. We argue that one possible reason why the controversy remains is that an integrative and cohesive theory has not been proposed to explain when and why East Asians do self-enhance or do not. To fill this important theoretical gap, we, in the current article, explain the logics of and rationales behind face and dignity cultures and propose the face/dignity cultural logic as a new theoretical proxy that (a) consolidates research results on self-enhancing behaviors of both East Asians and European Americans, (b) provides parsimonious explanations on when and how East Asians self-enhance, and (c) helps to explore and generate new predictions. Face logic is more predominant in East Asian cultures, whereas dignity logic is more predominant in Western cultures (Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011). The theoretical framework of face and dignity cultures consists of several key properties, which may explain former empirical findings on self-enhancement among East Asians and European Americans in a more integrative way (Kim & Cohen, 2010). In other words, face logic might provide an integrative analysis of the culturally relevant factors that influence East Asians' self-enhancing behaviors.

We contend that this approach based on the logics of face and dignity cultures, as compared to previous approaches, such as the individualism versus collectivism dimension, can contribute to a better understanding of East Asians' and European Americans' self-enhancing behaviors. Although the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism has thus far explained the cultural differences of self-enhancement (Chang, 2008; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Kurman, 2001, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2003), and has surely broadened our understanding of the cultural differences in the extent of self-enhancement, it has been criticized for simplistically deeming East Asian culture to be collectivistic and European American culture individualistic (Hong & Chiu, 2001; Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Notably, however, collectivism and individualism do not precisely "define" East Asian culture and European American culture, respectively (Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, & Au, 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Individualism and collectivism can be manifested in vastly different patterns both within and between countries, indicating that a typological individualism–collectivism approach has certain shortcomings (Bond, 2002; Green, Deschamps, & Páez, 2005; Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Oyserman and her colleagues (2002) argued that the cultural variation framework of individualism and collectivism should no longer be taken for granted. In their meta-analysis of cross-national differences in individualism and collectivism, European Americans were not found to be less collectivistic than Koreans but were found to be more collectivistic than Japanese. More importantly, they summed up that individualism and collectivism should not be considered as the psychological mechanism underlying East–West differences in self-concept, subjective well-being, relationality, and attribution and cognitive styles. They concluded with a remark that "sweeping theoretical assumptions about the ways individualism influences basic psychological functioning are built on a rather weak empirical foundation" (p. 44). Rather, as Kim and Cohen (2010) argued, East Asian culture represents a specific kind of collectivistic or interdependent culture, while European American culture represents a specific kind of individualistic or independent culture (for more information, refer to Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010).

Thus, to complement and remodel this approach, recent studies (e.g., Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011) have suggested a new theoretical proxy, face versus dignity culture, for delineating various cross-cultural differences observed among East Asians and European Americans. The logics of face and dignity cultures tend to

be more specific to East Asian culture and European American culture, respectively. Therefore, they can more accurately account for the characteristics of the two cultures and explain cultural differences that traditional individualistic versus collectivistic reasoning does not cover. For example, the logics of face and dignity cultures predict differences in how the self is defined, particularly as to how evaluations and judgments of others affect individuals' self-definition, which has important implications to account for cultural variations in emotion, cognition, and behavior between European American and East Asian individuals (Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011). With the aid of this new proxy, we submit that the inconsistent cross-cultural findings on self-enhancement can be better unpacked and understood.

Face and Dignity Cultures and Their Relations to Self-Enhancement

"Face," a term first used to describe facets of Chinese culture, refers to "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of the self delineated by approved social attributes" (Goffman, 2005, p. 5). Indigenous work on Chinese psychology defined face with a similar essence; Ho (1976) talked about face as "the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim...by virtue of [his or her] relative position" (p. 883) in a hierarchy upon proper fulfillment of the individual's role. The amount of face one can claim depends on one's hierarchical position within his or her given culture, and if one exceeds the allotted amount, he or she is socially penalized because the act is considered a violation of the designated societal harmony or hierarchy. Members of face cultures can actively gain face, for example, by having personal connections with prestigious others and earning a degree from a highly respectable university. However, they are more cautious in not losing face, rather than gaining face. This prevention-oriented concern is well reflected in the expression "saving face," which came into English from British expatriates residing in China ("Face," 2009; see also Leung & Cohen, 2011).

As a counterpart to face, "dignity" refers to "the conviction that each individual at birth possesses an *intrinsic* value at least theoretically equal to that of every other person" (Ayers, 1984, p. 19). Dignity culture can be understood as a culture in which every individual is considered to possess inherent value, and that value is not supposed to be judged by others (Kim & Cohen, 2010).

Several rationales elucidate how differently individuals from face and dignity cultures define and regulate the self. First, a humility bias is internalized among individuals in face cultures. Face, which is a crucial value in East Asian cultures, is determined by others and assigned in fixed amounts based on implicit status within the group (Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010). Therefore, East Asians tend not to over-claim the amount of face already conferred by others as doing so will lead them to be socially penalized according to the norms of the existing group hierarchy. East Asians are thus likely to hold a humility bias to avoid this social penalty.

Second, the way in which the self is defined and evaluated in face cultures is through the eyes of others. That is, as Kim and Cohen argued, "information generated from a third-person perspective comes to define the self for people from a face culture, because face is accorded by others on the basis of others' consensus judgments about the self" (Kim & Cohen, 2010, p. 539; see also Leung & Cohen, 2007). Given the nature of face cultures, in which the "self" is defined and evaluated by individuals' perceptions of how they are viewed by others, individuals behave, feel, and think differently as a function of whether they are observed or not by others. In dignity cultures, on the contrary, the self is considered to be holding intrinsic value

that is not supposed to be judged by other people (Kim & Cohen, 2010). In other words, individuals from a dignity (versus face) culture have less concern about how they are viewed by others and, therefore, whether the situation is private or public is less likely to affect them.

Third, regulatory focus theory further expands our understanding of face and dignity cultures (Elliot et al., 2001; Hamamura, Meijer, Heine, Kamaya, & Hori, 2009; Heine & Lehman, 1995; Higgins, 1997; Lee et al., 2000). Individuals in face cultures are more prevention-focused, whereas individuals in dignity cultures are more promotion-focused. Although *losing* face is quite easy, gaining face is not, because it is given by others based on how well one serves his or her hierarchically structured role assigned within society. Therefore, in face cultures, a prevention-focused orientation that regulates the avoidance of losses is more salient and prevalent than a promotion-focused orientation that regulates the attainment of gains as a self-regulatory strategy (Elliot et al., 2001; Hamamura et al., 2009; Higgins, 1997; Lee et al., 2000). Unlike face, dignity is not given by others, and one can claim dignity as a personal endeavor without the involvement of and evaluations by others. Hence, individuals can be more approach-oriented in earning their dignity.

Fourth, harmony is a communal goal in face cultures. As face can only be gained by others' recognition of the self, having good relationships with other people and further maintaining harmony within one's in-group is critical for individuals from face cultures (Earley, 1997; Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Lee, & Gim, 2011; Kwan et al., 1997). In dignity cultures, however, given that the autonomy and one's inherent uniqueness are much more valued than others' judgments, the emphasis on preserving harmony of the group is less integral to dignity (versus face) culture (Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010).

Based on these rationales, we postulate that these four important properties of face cultures — humility, public (versus private) concerns, prevention-focused self-regulation, and harmony — help us understand culturally different manifestations of self-enhancement motivation among individuals in face cultures as compared to those in dignity cultures. Notably, we do not argue that these four properties are the *only* characteristics of face cultures and play no part in dignity cultures. Rather, it is our intention to identify the major components that can reasonably well distinguish face cultures from dignity cultures if we consider culturally typical general tendencies. We should keep in mind that there is a certain degree of within-cultural heterogeneity in the way self-enhancing behaviors are displayed in face and dignity cultures. Below, we review and discuss the empirical evidence supporting that these major components that are more predominant in face (versus dignity) cultures could underlie the display of self-enhancing behaviors in East Asian societies. We believe that this approach will contribute to the reorganization of issues relevant to self-enhancement, offering an overarching view that synthesizes past findings.

Humility

Humility, which functions as one of the most dominant cultural norms in face cultures, affects how self-enhancement motivation is manifested among East Asians (Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1982; Cai et al., 2007, 2011; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010; Kurman & Sriram, 1997; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Trying not to over-claim status within the given social ranking, individuals in face cultures habitually hold humility biases such that they behave in a way not to exceed the socially granted face in order to keep hierarchy and harmony intact (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Lalwani et al., 2006). Claiming more face than one is granted by others is considered a violation of the hierarchical system, and therefore, a disruption of harmony (Earley, 1997; Kim & Cohen, 2010; Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010; Kwan et al., 1997; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Individuals who do not comply with the norm of

modesty are implicitly criticized by others, and those who do are evaluated favorably (Bond et al., 1982; Yoshida, Kojo, & Kaku, 1982). According to Yoshida and colleagues (1982), for instance, even Japanese second-graders evaluated the target who displayed a modest attitude more favorably than the one who displayed self-enhancing behavior. This finding implies that modest behaviors are socialized and encouraged at a young age in East Asian cultures (Bond et al., 1982). In contrast, given that achieving uniqueness and positive distinctiveness is considered an ideal value in dignity cultures, being modest is less a concern to individuals from dignity cultures, compared to those in face cultures. Thus, the need for modesty is less likely to affect individuals from dignity (versus face) cultures when manifesting their need for positive self-regard. Some empirical findings confirm the premise that humility bias affects the ways and extent to which self-enhancement motivation is manifested among individuals from face cultures.

First, this humility bias tends to restrict East Asians from manifesting their need for self-enhancement (Cai et al., 2011; Kurman, 2001; Kurman & Sriram, 1997, 2002; Lalwani et al., 2006). For instance, Cai and his colleagues (2007) found that American participants scored higher on cognitively based self-evaluations, which is the domain of self-evaluations more subjected to modesty concerns, than Chinese participants did. However, no difference was found when affectively based self-evaluations were compared. More importantly, it was found that the cross-cultural difference in cognitively based self-evaluations was significantly reduced when modesty was statistically controlled for. Kurman (2001) also found that for Chinese students, the extent of self-enhancement was moderated by the degree to which they endorsed the tenets of the modesty norm. Similarly, Kurman and Sriram (2002) found modesty to be the strongest predictor of self-criticism.

Second, the salience or strength of modesty concern influences the way self-enhancement motivation is manifested among East Asians. When modesty concern is made salient or strong, East Asians can either restrict their self-enhancement motivation or even self-efface to appear modest. In contrast, when modesty concern is made weak or self-enhancement motivation is made salient, East Asians can as well manifest their self-enhancement motivation. For example, in a study by Takata (2003), Japanese participants were randomly assigned to either succeed or fail in a task in a competition condition or a noncompetition condition. In the competition condition, participants had to compete with other participants for a prize. Subsequently, participants were asked to make judgments about their own performance, relative to other participants. In the competition–success condition, Japanese participants readily and confidently judged that their performance was better than that of their competitors. In the competition–failure condition, however, they hesitated to conclude that their performance was poorer than that of their competitors. In contrast, when the situation did not involve competition, the opposite pattern was observed: participants readily accepted their inferiority in the failure condition and hesitated to admit their superiority in the success condition.

Third, modesty not only moderates self-enhancing behaviors among East Asians but also functions as a means for self-enhancement in East Asian cultures. In face (versus dignity) cultures, humility is more likely to operate as a distinctive social norm, and complying with this norm of humility increases positive self-regard, whereas violating it decreases positive self-regard. For example, Cai and his colleagues (2011) found that Chinese participants reported increased implicit self-esteem when they were instructed to be as modest as possible, but not when they were instructed to self-enhance. American participants did not show this tendency, suggesting that holding a modest attitude increases one's positive self-regard only in East Asian cultures. The result suggests that being modest is instrumental for achieving self-enhancement in East Asian cultures, but not in European American cultures.

Public (versus Private) Concerns

Given that the self is evaluated through the eyes of others in face cultures, others' perspectives are relatively more crucial to those in face cultures than to those in dignity cultures (Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010). And since judgment or evaluation of the self by others is critical in face cultures, whether the situation is considered public or private results in different self-enhancement manifestations. Notably, when concern for public judgment is highly accessible and salient in face cultures, it is plausible that individuals will not freely express their self-enhancement motive even under covert conditions. This was supported by past research that East Asians were often found not to self-enhance even when placed in private situations in which concern for self-presentation is reduced (Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001; Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000). In dignity cultures, however, since individuals' personal value is neither given by nor taken away by others, individuals are able to exercise a considerable amount of autonomy in defining the self (Kim & Cohen, 2010). With this autonomy, the presence of others and others' perceptions about the self are less likely to affect how individuals from dignity (versus face) cultures behave or process information.

There have been some empirical studies supporting the importance of public (versus private) concerns in expressing East Asians' need for self-enhancement. For instance, Kudo and Numazaki (2003) found that when privacy of responses was well assured, East Asians did self-enhance, since the possibility of being appraised by others was low. In their study, Japanese participants were given either failure or success performance feedback and asked to make attributions about the given feedback. Participants' responses were made anonymous by distributing and collecting report cards based on random numbers. As a result, participants attributed their task success internally, which can be regarded as a manifestation of the self-serving bias. Further, Kim, Chiu, et al. (2010) found that when asked privately, Chinese participants made more favorable performance forecasts than when asked publicly, whereas European American participants were not affected by whether the situation was private or public. In addition, East Asians' self- and other-evaluation tendencies varied, depending on whether the measure was implicit or explicit. When IAT (Implicit Association Test) is used to detect self-enhancing behaviors, East Asians manifest positive bias because their public concern becomes low and their responses become more automatic and uncontrollable. For instance, Kobayashi and Greenwald (2003) found that when explicitly measured, Japanese participants evaluated their best friends more positively than the self. When being measured by IAT, however, they showed almost no difference in the extent to which they positively evaluated themselves and their best friends, indicating that they did not display positive bias toward others in the private context. Kitayama and Uchida (2003) also found that when IAT was used to assess how positively participants viewed the self, Japanese participants viewed themselves as positively as American participants did.

Prevention versus Promotion Orientation

Regulatory focus, which distinguishes the attitude of focusing on either promotion or prevention orientation in goal pursuit situations, also moderates the display of positive self-regard of East Asians (Chang et al., 2001; Higgins, 1997; Ji et al., 2004; Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010; Lalwani, Shrum, & Chiu, 2009). Promotion-focused individuals concentrate on seeking gains rather than avoiding losses and aspire to achieve one's ideals, whereas prevention-focused individuals concentrate on avoiding losses rather than seeking gains and endeavor to fulfill their obligations (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Scholer & Higgins, 2011). Given that the amount of face one can get is limited, promoting face is not always easy, and face already gained can be lost if it is not well safeguarded (Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010),

East Asians are more likely to manifest self-enhancement in preventive ways. On the contrary, in dignity cultures, where pursuing uniqueness and one's inborn value is an ideal, individuals are more prone to approach these aspirations with promotion-related strategies. Thus, European Americans are more likely to manifest self-enhancement in promotive ways, such as believing that the likelihood of good things occurring to themselves is higher than that to others. Some empirical findings confirm this premise.

First, in line with a prevention-focused orientation, East Asians perceive that negative events are less likely to occur to them than to others, which is one type of optimism bias (Chang et al., 2001; Heine & Lehman, 1995; Ji et al., 2004). On the other hand, in line with a promotion-focused orientation, European Americans perceive that positive events are more likely to occur to them than to others. Thus, East Asians display an optimism bias — one form of self-enhancement — in a preventive way, whereas European Americans display it in a promotive way. In yet another study, Heine and Lehman (1995) found that Japanese participants manifested unrealistic optimism only for negative events, but not for positive ones. Ji et al. (2004) also showed that when it comes to estimating the probability of real-life negative events to occur, Chinese participants exhibited even higher levels of unrealistic optimism than did Canadian participants.

Second, the self-serving bias is manifested when the goal, either promotive or preventive, of the given situation corresponds to one's culturally prevalent self-regulatory focus (Leung et al., 2012). With one of the regulatory orientations (promotion versus prevention) functioning as the more predominant cultural norm, individuals are more likely to self-enhance if the promotion- or prevention-related regulatory goal in the situation is congruent with the regulatory norm endorsed by the individuals. For instance, in a recent study by Leung and her colleagues (2012), Chinese and European American participants performed in a money allocation task. Participants, as a team, could either gain points by answering questions correctly, or lose points by answering questions incorrectly. Then they were asked to decide how to distribute money amongst themselves and other team members. Results showed that both European American and Chinese participants displayed a self-serving bias by allocating relatively more money to themselves than to other team members, but in different task contexts: European American participants did so when their team gained additional money whereas Chinese participants did so when their team prevented losing money. Consequently, both Chinese and European American participants displayed a self-serving bias depending on whether they were successful in attaining either a prevention- or promotion-related goal, respectively.

Third, East Asians manifest self-enhancement by denying the possession of negative traits whereas European Americans do so by adopting positive traits (Kim, Chiu, et al., 2010), which correspond to a prevention and a promotion regulatory orientation, respectively. For example, Kim and his colleagues (2010) contended that, although both unrealistic adoption of positive traits and unrealistic denial of negative traits are examples of positive self-regard, East Asians would tend toward denying negative traits. Similarly, as shown in another study (Kim et al., 2008), although American participants' average self-esteem scores were higher than those of Chinese participants, this cross-cultural difference was found to be more pronounced for the positive items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with my life."), as compared to the negative items (e.g., "At times, I think I am no good at all."). In other words, Chinese participants were more likely to self-enhance by strongly disagreeing with the negative items as opposed to strongly agreeing with the positive items.

Harmony

Harmony restricts the way or the degree to which individuals in face cultures endorse positive self-regard, so as not to impinge on the norms of the existing social hierarchy. Achieving

harmony is fundamental to face cultures. Since the notion of the self is informed and defined by others' judgments in face cultures, building good relationships with others, especially with members of one's in-group, and fostering harmony within the group are more critical tasks for members in face cultures (Earley, 1997; Kim et al., 2011; Kwan et al., 1997). A prominent value in dignity cultures, however, is the maintenance of a sturdy internal integrity that is not determined by others (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Since virtues such as uniqueness and autonomy are more emphasized in dignity cultures, the individual self exerts a higher importance than the collective self or the group itself (Kim, Cohen, et al., 2010; Kim & Markus, 1999).

In face cultures, displaying a self-serving bias in an un tactful way is likely to make oneself stand out and thus, disrupt harmony. In order to both maintain positive self-regard and preserve harmony, individuals in face cultures could take an indirect way to manifest self-enhancement through displaying a *group-serving bias*. It is not surprising that European Americans also self-enhance through perceiving the groups to which they belong in positive ways (Brown & Han, 2012; Heine & Lehman, 1997; see also Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Taylor et al., 2004). However, if we consider the average tendency, dignity cultures do not put preservation of within-group harmony high up on their list of cultural ideals. In short, although disrupting harmony by holding a positive impression of oneself is implicitly renounced in face cultures, a group-serving bias functions as a bypass through which East Asians can self-enhance in various ways (Endo et al., 2000; Muramoto & Yamaguchi, 1997, 2003). Considerable empirical findings confirm that East Asians manifest self-enhancement by attributing the positive results more to their in-group and perceiving their in-group relationship as more favorable than others'.

For example, in a study by Muramoto and Yamaguchi (1997), Japanese participants were first randomly assigned to either an individual or a group condition to perform a task. Then, they were induced to either fail or succeed in the task. In the group condition, participants attributed their success internally to the group members and their failure externally. However, participants in the individual condition made external attributions for success and internal attributions for failure. This implies that the Japanese self-enhance through a group-serving bias rather than a self-serving bias. Similarly, Endo et al. (2000) found that Japanese participants perceived their relationships with their best friend, closest family member, and romantic partner more positively than those of average others, to the same extent as both European Canadian and Asian Canadian participants did.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Notwithstanding its essentialness, the cultural universality of the need for self-enhancement has been consistently threatened since Heine and colleagues' (1999) initiation. Though numerous studies rebutting such empirical findings have been published, the question of whether the need for positive self-regard is cross-culturally universal remains controversial. In this paper, we seek to introduce a new theoretical proxy to shed light on the research inconsistencies in regards to the display of self-enhancement motive. From the perspective of face cultures, four critical properties were proposed to explain East Asians' self-enhancing behaviors: humility, privacy concerns, prevention regulatory orientation, and harmony. These properties are discussed and elaborated upon through the lens of how the self in face cultures is defined and regulated. First, a humility bias affects East Asians' self-enhancing behaviors. Members of face cultures hold a humility bias because claiming more face than they are assigned disrupts the cultural ideologies of harmony and hierarchy. Second, public concern affects individuals' self-enhancing behaviors in face cultures since the self is largely

evaluated by others' opinions, impressions, and acceptance. Third, prevention-oriented self-regulatory focus of East Asians affects the way East Asians manifest self-enhancement; that is, they do so in a way to protect their face. Lastly, the cultural importance of harmony explains why East Asians self-enhance through perceiving the groups to which they belong in a positive light. It is because the group-serving bias helps them maintain lasting relationships with others, whereas the self-serving bias might risk the stability and quality of their relationships.

In the current paper, we propose face and dignity cultures as the overarching theoretical proxy for organizing and understanding previous findings on East Asians' and European Americans' self-enhancing behaviors. We submit that the overarching theoretical proxy is constituted by four component constructs pertaining to the degree to which individuals focus on humility, public (versus private) concerns, prevention- (versus promotion-) focused self-regulation, and harmony. With this theoretical account, it is reasonable to argue and predict that activation of a given property of the face or dignity cultural logic may in turn activate other component properties that bundle together with the corresponding logic. This will shed novel insights when considering two or more component constructs to predict self-enhancement tendencies.

Let us illustrate with a research finding we previously reviewed. In Leung and colleagues' (2012) study, it was found that when deciding how to allocate money among team members after a competition, Chinese participants did not display a self-serving bias following promotion success (i.e., when the team gained additional money during the competition) — they preferred distributing relatively more money to other team members than to themselves. Besides the possibility that promotion success is not in line with the face logic of adopting a preventive regulatory focus, it is reasonable to argue that allowing a self-serving way of money allocation would also violate other face-related logics such as upholding humility, maintaining harmony, and concerns for (negative) public evaluations. In other words, looking at face/dignity logic as a superordinate theoretical proxy might suggest that the activation of one component logic also makes other accompanying component logics salient. In this light, the activation of all relevant component logics will together offer individuals a strong motivational drive to self-enhance or not to self-enhance in accordance to the predominating face or dignity logic. Thus, if the importance or salience of some component logics is suppressed (e.g., the team is highly cohesive to the extent that it will not disrupt group harmony by showing a self-serving bias in money allocation), it is plausible that the motivating force of the predominating logic can be weakened. This might give rise to within-culture heterogeneity in the way self-enhancement is displayed.

To conclude, this article presents an integrative theoretical account of face and dignity logics to see existing self-enhancement research from a new perspective. Given the high generality of this theoretical perspective, we challenge cultural researchers to test and extend the theoretical boundaries of this approach by applying it to other culturally related topics.

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Young-Hoon Kim received his PhD in social psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana and Champaign in 2010. He is currently an assistant professor of Psychology at Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea. He seeks to examine both within- and between-culture differences in how people perceive and define the self. Three specific research questions he addresses are the following: (1) Do unrealistic beliefs about the self and the cultural practices that support these beliefs (e.g., providing unrealistically positive performance feedback) benefit or harm intellectual performance and motivation and mental health and well-being? (2) Do East Asians need positive self-regard less; and if not, how do East Asians express their positive self? and (3) What are the different routes to self-understanding in European American and East Asian contexts, and what are the implications of these cultural differences for the construction of the self as a competent, moral, successful person? He has authored and co-authored numerous papers for the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *Emotion, Self & Identity*, *Journal of Social Psychology*, and *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*.

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