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Young-Hoon Kim¹ and [Dov Cohen](#)¹

Abstract

People's judgments about their own moral status and well-being were made differently by those from a Dignity culture (Anglo-Americans) and by those from a Face culture (Asian Americans). Face culture participants were more influenced by information processed from a third-person (compared with first-person) perspective, with information about the self having a powerful effect only when seen through another's eyes. Thus, (a) Asian Americans felt the greatest need for moral cleansing when thinking about how others would judge their many (vs. few) transgressions, but this effect did not hold when others were not invoked, and (b) Asian Americans defined themselves as having a rich social network and worthwhile life when thinking about how others would evaluate their many (vs. few) friendships, but again, effects did not hold when others were not invoked. In contrast, Anglo-Americans responded to information about their transgressions or friendships, but effects were pronounced only when other people were *not* invoked.

Keywords

the self, face and dignity cultures, cross-cultural, perspective, judgments, Asian Americans vs. Anglo-Americans

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People see themselves through their own eyes and through the eyes of others. They decide whether they are good or bad, competent or incompetent, successful or unsuccessful by considering their own behavior and surveying it from their own perspective or by considering how this behavior looks in the eyes of others, viewing it from a third-person perspective as an outsider would. People in all cultures define themselves using first-person and third-person perspectives. However, there are likely to be strong cultural differences in whether the self is primarily defined in a first-person versus a third-person fashion. In this study, we explore this issue by examining how people from a Face culture versus a Dignity culture think about themselves when evaluating their transgressions and successes or failures, considering them through their own eyes or through the eyes of others. In the two experiments described below, we look at how people's judgments about their own morality or the quality of their lives may be driven differently in different cultures by considerations of "What do I know about myself?" versus "What would others think of me?"

Face Versus Dignity Cultures

In both experiments, we compare Americans whose ancestors came from East Asia and Americans whose ancestors

came from Europe. East Asia is known as a *Face* culture, in which an individual's worth is in large part defined by what others think of him or her (Hamamura & Heine, 2008; [Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999](#); [Heine, Takemoto, Moskaleiko, Lasaleta, & Henrich, 2008](#); Ho, 1976; [Ho, Fu, & Ng, 2004](#); Zane & Yeh, 2002). For example, Ho (1976; also Heine, 2005, p. 96) defines face as "the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself [or herself] from others by virtue of [his or her] relative position" (p. 883) in a hierarchy and the proper fulfillment of his or her role. In a Face culture, it is important to not overreach on status claims; thus, it is necessary to take a third-person or outsider's perspective on the self, because it is *others* who must ultimately judge the adequacy of one's performance ([Heine et al., 1999](#); [Kitayama & Markus, 1999](#); [Lee, Kam, & Bond, 2007](#)). For people from a Face culture, "success" or "failure" must be seen through other people's eyes in order to count: In a Face culture, my worth is *social* worth, and my estimate of myself must align with the worth that others

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would recognize in me. Evaluating myself without these constraints would be, as Robert Frost might say, like “playing tennis without a net.”

In contrast, Anglo-Americans are described as having a *Dignity* culture, in which an individual’s worth is intrinsic and is explicitly *not* supposed to be defined by others’ evaluation of him or her. Dignity is defined as “the conviction that each individual at birth possessed an intrinsic value at least theoretically equal to that of every other person” (Ayers, 1984, p. 19). Personal worth is inalienable in the sense that it is not conferred by others, and it cannot be taken away by others. In practice, this gives the individual a considerable amount of autonomy in defining himself or herself. To the extent that individuals want to preserve this autonomy, they may jealously guard it, sometimes ignoring other people’s perceptions of them or sometimes defining themselves in a certain way *in spite of* rather than because of others’ perceptions (see Kim, Cohen, & Au, in press).

Information and Perspective in Face and Dignity Cultures

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify our argument. In an ambiguous world, people necessarily judge themselves against standards that are socially constructed, rather than absolute. (What does it mean to have talked about someone behind his or her back four times last year? Is this a lot or a little? What does it mean to have four close friends? Is this more or less than “normal?”) Thus, in the experiments below, people from both Face and Dignity cultures should be influenced by a high- versus low-frequency scale manipulation that suggests that they are high or low on some dimension (Schwarz, Bless, Bohner, Harlacher, & Kellerbenz, 1991; Schwarz, Hippler, Deutsch, & Strack, 1985; Schwarz & Scheuring, 1988). In Experiment 1, we use a frequency scale manipulation to subtly provide information that a participant has either transgressed much more or much less than might be expected. In Experiment 2, we use this type of manipulation to suggest that the participant has many more or many fewer friends than is normal.

The scale manipulation informs the participant of the implicit standard defining success or failure; however, the difference for people from Face and Dignity cultures is expected to come as a function of whether they see their “success” or “failure” through their own eyes or through the eyes of others. Half of the participants are given a questionnaire that simply asks about their behaviors; the other half are given a questionnaire that asks them to complete the survey as if they were a close other answering the questions about the participant. This manipulation is expected to be especially important for Face culture participants. When others are not invoked, information about success or failure is entirely private and not refracted through another’s perspective. Such information, not being processed through a

third-person perspective, is expected to have little effect on Face culture participants’ self-conceptions and behavior. On the other hand, when others are invoked, the information is processed in terms of “What would [my close other] think?” The information is still private—in the sense that no close other is actually filling out the questionnaire—but now the information is being processed from a third-person perspective. And this information—seen through the other’s perspective—takes on a weight for Face culture participants and is now expected to influence their judgments.

In other research, we have shown that for Face culture participants, it matters whether information about the self is known to other people or known only to the self. In the former case, this information gets absorbed into Face culture participants’ self-definitions. In the latter case, it does not (Kim et al., in press). In the present experiments, all the information is private in the sense that no others are there to actually learn information about the participant. However, we expect that simply imagining the other and processing the information from this person’s perspective will be enough to influence Face participants. (For a striking demonstration of a similar effect, see Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004, showing that Japanese participants show no postdecision rationalization for private choices—unless under the gaze of schematic faces or unless the opinions of other people have been invoked. See also Heine & Lehman, 1997; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005, demonstrating that Asian participants show dissonance effects when making choices for friends—but show no dissonance effect when making choices for themselves.)

For people from a Dignity culture, predictions are different. For Dignity culture participants, when others are not invoked, the frequency scale manipulation should have an effect consistent with prior research by Schwarz and colleagues, providing information about the standard of judgment and thus leading a participant to define himself or herself as either successful or unsuccessful or as morally virtuous or morally tainted. When others *are* invoked, the prediction is more open ended.

On one hand, “success” must be seen through one’s own eyes, and others’ judgments of one’s successes or failings are explicitly not supposed to be the basis of self-evaluation. In our other research, we have even found a “pushback” effect, such that Dignity participants define themselves *against* what others know about them, either seeming to show a studied indifference to other people’s judgments or defining themselves to be the *opposite* of what others perceive them to be (Kim et al., in press). If this “pushback” effect is found here, we might expect that the frequency scale manipulation would backfire once others are invoked.

On the other hand, the stimulus in the present experiments—imagining what another person would think—is considerably weaker than the stimulus in Kim et al.’s (in press) research, in which the studies involved another person actually being there

to judge or witness the participant's success or failure. The stimulus in the experiments below just asks participants to imagine how another might fill out the questionnaire about them, and this simply might not be strong enough to provoke a pushback effect (see Kitayama, Snibbe, et al., 2004).

For Dignity culture participants, the prediction we can make with the most certainty is that invoking the other should not give the information (provided by the high vs. low scale manipulation) any *additional* "kick" in the way it does for Face culture participants. Stated in the converse, for Dignity culture participants—unlike their Face culture counterparts—the effect of information in the condition in which others are *not* invoked should be *at least as big* as the effect in the condition in which others are invoked.

A Note on Manipulating Versus Measuring Perspective

Other research has *measured* the extent to which Asian Americans (compared to Anglo-Americans) take a third-person versus a first-person perspective on themselves in their memories and in their processing and constructing of narratives that involve social situations (Cohen & Gunz, 2002; Cohen, Hoshino-Browne, & Leung, 2007; Leung & Cohen, 2007; Wu & Keysar, 2007). Here, we *manipulate* third-person versus first-person perspective by invoking others or not. Given the measured data about the likelihood of Asian Americans' taking a third-person perspective in social situations, we expect the present research to dovetail with these previous findings. That is, we expect to show that information processed from a third-person (vs. a first-person) perspective is also more influential for Asian Americans than it is for their Anglo-American counterparts.^{1,2}

Face and Dignity or Independence/Interdependence?

Rather than talk about a Face culture or a Dignity culture, it might be tempting to simply label Asian American culture as "interdependent" or "collectivistic" and Anglo-American culture as "independent" or "individualistic." However, for the present purposes, we think doing so would be a mistake. Because of cultural and cross-cultural psychology's heavy reliance on East Asian and Anglo-American populations, a logical error has implicitly developed in our field. Namely, whereas it is true that Asian American cultures are interdependent/collectivistic, it is not true that Asian or Asian American culture *defines* interdependence/collectivism. Asian or Asian American culture reflects a particular kind of interdependent/collectivist culture. Similarly, whereas it is true that Anglo-American culture is independent/individualistic, it is not true that Anglo-American culture defines independence/individualism. Anglo-American culture reflects a particular kind of independent/individualistic culture.

Face

In the present study, we predict that 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 et al., in press). One does one's best, but ultimately one must not overreach on status claims and must accept the judgments of others with a certain amount of resignation.

This is not true in many interdependent cultures. Israel is one example. It is a relatively interdependent culture (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002, p. 19). However, one probably would not characterize Israelis as resigned to accept others' judgments and willing to let others define them (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; see also Almog's [2000] description of *davka*, an Israeli word for which "there is no precise parallel in other languages. . . . The *davka* spirit is one of defiance, disobedience, standing one's ground . . . all founded on an awareness of one's own worth" [pp. 113-114]; *davka* stands in opposition to the emphasis on harmony and humility in Face cultures).

Furthermore, there is an entire class of collectivistic cultures—collectivistic Honor cultures—that offer a useful contrast to Face cultures. Honor must be claimed from others. As Julian Pitt-Rivers (1968)—an ethnographer of the Honor cultures of the Mediterranean—noted, honor is

the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his right to pride. (p. 510)

A person who claims honor but is not accorded honor by others does not have honor.

Face cultures tend to develop in settled hierarchies. Honor cultures, on the other hand, tend to develop within a competitive environment of rough equals within a status group (Miller, 1993). And thus, honor is always in flux—lost and gained through competition and through cycles of insult and riposte (Bourdieu, 1977). In such an environment, men have to show a certain amount of assertiveness, and there develops a dynamic tension between the acceptance of others' judgments and the defiance of them. Maintaining or enhancing one's "claim to pride" in a competitive environment of challenge and riposte (as opposed to a settled hierarchy) means men must be concerned with others' perceptions of them and must actively work to shape those perceptions, rather than accept them for the sake of harmony or with resignation. (See also, e.g., Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996, in which participants from a culture of honor who were insulted in front of others believed that others judged them as less masculine. However, these judgments were not internalized, and the insulted honor participants showed subsequent

increases in their aggressive and domineering behavior, and also showed increases in their testosterone levels, suggesting that they were preparing for competition.)

Face cultures—in contrast to collectivistic Honor cultures—tend to emphasize harmony over conflict, humility over assertiveness, and acceptance rather than defiance. The predictions we make in this study about information from a third-person perspective being absorbed by Asian Americans thus derive from the culture's emphasis on Face (rather than "interdependence").

Dignity

Just as research has often confounded what is East Asian with what is collectivistic, research has also tended to confound what is North American with what is individualist. However, this too seems a mistake, because North America's Dignity culture represents a *particular kind of* individualism, and again, other individualistic cultures offer an interesting contrast.

Under a Dignity ideal, one's worth is inalienable and is not defined by other people. The concept of human "worth" in a Dignity culture reflects its attempts to balance liberty (one's worth is independent of others) and equality (everyone has inherent worth and this is theoretically equal at birth). More particularly, a Dignity culture's conception of worth reflects the type of liberty it tends to be concerned with. That liberty is *primarily* liberty defined by *freedom from* external constraints rather than *freedom to* exert my will, even upon others (see Berlin, 1990, on negative vs. positive liberty).

The individualism of a Dignity culture is thus different from several other types of individualism. It is different from the ruthless, "amoral" individualism found in cultures in which people live on the edge of survival, struggling for simple self-preservation (see, e.g., Turnbull's [1987] disputed and controversial account of the supposedly "amoral" famine-plagued Ik people of Uganda; see also Kristof, 2003; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Furthermore, it is different from the individualism that is "a fundamental value which ethnography consistently attributes to hunters and gatherers" (Ingold, 2000, p. 406). For hunters and gatherers, autonomy and agency are not personal but "relational," developed through one's interactions with other people. In Bird-David's (1994) analogy, an individual is

like a drop of oil floating on the surface of a pool of water. When these drops come together, they coalesce into larger drops. But drops can also split up into smaller ones that may then coalesce with others. Likewise persons, "throughout their lives . . . perpetually coalesce with, and depart from, each other." (Bird-David, 1994, p. 597; Ingold, 2000, p. 405)

Dignity is also different from an individualism of "hegemonic liberty," in which freedom is the freedom to dominate others (Berlin, 1990, on the abuses of "positive liberty"; Fischer, 1988; see also Triandis's [1994] suggestion that ancient Greece might be a "classic case" of an individualist culture, based in part on the "narcissistic individualism" found in Homer's epics).

Relatedly, Dworkin (1996) draws a contrast between "aristocratic individualism" and "Tocquevillian individualism." The former combines a "love of liberty with a desire for admiration and praise" (p. 175). The latter

conveys the opposite experience—a kind of inertness, or detachment from others—with the individualist less affected by judgments arising from another person's imagination. . . . In becoming self-centered, he or she moved away from a dependence on worldly praise and a concern for another's social position. The thrust of Tocquevillian individualism was in the opposite direction of aristocratic individualism. (p. 175)

Dignity cultures are more congenial to Tocquevillian individualism rather than aristocratic individualism.

The predictions we make about Anglo-Americans' absorbing information processed from a first-person perspective at least as much as that from a third-person perspective derive from Anglo-American conceptions of Dignity rather than from "individualism." (In addition to these theoretical arguments, see also Oyserman et al.'s [2002] tentative conclusion that predictions about a person's knowledge of self cannot be derived from the existing research on independence/interdependence theory: Of the 27 independence/interdependence scales they examined, only a third had even a single item about self-knowledge. After examining results for those scales, Oyserman et al. tentatively concluded that "self-knowledge [does] not necessarily load with individualism—and [appears] not to do so in the American context," pp. 10, 25).

The predictions of the present study thus derive from the Face versus Dignity distinction rather than the individualism/collectivism or independence/interdependence distinction. To be clear, the independence/interdependence and individualism/collectivism distinction is extremely important for the field—one that has helped it organize a tremendous number of empirical findings. Such research is foundational for the field. However, for the present purposes, the Face versus Dignity distinction seems more relevant and appropriate. (For other work illustrating the point that the features of East Asian culture do not define collectivism, see work by Diener & Suh, 1999; Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2004, 2005; Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2002, on emotion and subjective well-being, showing very different patterns of results for Asians

and Asian Americans vs. those from other collectivist/interdependent cultures.)

Experiment 1: Moral Transgressions From a First-Person Versus a Third-Person Perspective and the Need for Moral Cleansing

In Experiment 1, we induce participants to think they have committed either a relatively small number or a relatively large number of moral transgressions. Or we induce participants to think about the way *other people* would believe they have committed either a relatively small or relatively large number of moral transgressions.

The prediction is that, for people from a Face culture (Asian Americans), thinking about how other people would view their transgressions—as either large or small in number—should affect their felt need for moral cleansing. On the other hand, merely reflecting on the large or small number of their moral transgressions (without reference to what others would think) should have little weight and not influence their need for moral cleansing. In contrast, for those from a Dignity culture (Anglo-Americans), being induced to believe that one had committed a large (vs. small) number of moral transgressions should create a greater need for moral cleansing; and being induced to believe that others would view their transgressions as large or small should not produce any additional “kick.”

Method

Participants were 205 Anglo-Americans (109 women) and 181 Asian Americans (102 women) who were approached in various public places on campus to complete a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate the number of times in the past year that “I have lied to my parents about something I did or did not do,” “have lied in order to avoid helping someone,” “have talked about a friend behind his or her back in a negative way,” “have taken someone else’s belongings without permission,” and “have made a promise that I did not keep.”

To induce participants to think that they had committed a relatively large or relatively small number of transgressions, we used Schwarz’s clever manipulation of response scales (Schwarz et al., 1985, 1991; Schwarz & Scheuring, 1988). The low-frequency scale asked participants whether they had committed each transgression 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 or more times. The high-frequency scale asked participants whether they had committed each transgression fewer than 12 times, 13 to 16, 17 to 20, 21 to 24, 25 to 28, or more than 28 times. Participants using the low-frequency scale should find themselves marking the high end of the scale and believe that the number of their transgressions was large.

Participants using the high-frequency scale should find themselves marking the low end and believe that the number of their transgressions was small.³

To manipulate perspective, participants were either asked to complete the questionnaire or were asked to complete the questionnaire as if significant others “were filling out the questionnaire below about you.” In the latter case, questions were asked as “Significant others think that, in the past year, I have lied in order to avoid helping someone (___) times” or “Significant others think that, in the past year, I have taken someone else’s belongings without permission (___) times.”

Our dependent measure examining the felt need for moral cleansing was taken from Zhong and Liljenquist (2006), who found that participants were more likely to choose an antiseptic hand wipe (rather than a pencil) as a gift for participating in a study if they had written about their previous unethical behavior (compared with previous ethical behavior). This “Lady Macbeth” effect demonstrated that the urge to cleanse moral transgressions manifested itself as a desire for physical decontamination as well (Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, & Imada, 1997; Rozin, Lowery, & Ebert, 1994; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1993; also see Cohen & Leung, 2009). After completing the questionnaire in our current experiment, participants were offered the choice of a hand wipe or a pencil for their participation, with their choice being the dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

A Culture (Anglo- vs. Asian American) \times Perspective (own vs. significant others) \times Scale Manipulation (high- vs. low-frequency scale) analysis was performed on participants’ choice, using a contrast on proportions (see Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008, pp. 615-617). The expected three-way interaction was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 373) = 5.09, p < .05$, Cohen’s effect size $f = .12$ (Figure 1). We decompose the interaction as follows: For Asian Americans, the predicted two-way interaction of Perspective \times Scale Manipulation was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 178) = 6.04, p = .01$, Cohen’s effect size $f = .19$. Thus, for Asian Americans, those who imagined that other people saw them as relatively blameless were less likely to pick the hand wipe (34.8%) compared with those who imagined that other people saw them as relatively morally tainted (54.8%), $\chi^2(1, N = 87) = 3.55, p = .058$, Cohen’s effect size $f = .20$. In contrast, when Asian Americans were not induced to imagine how others would view their behavior, there was a nonsignificant reversal of the pattern (percentage choosing hand wipe = 63.6% vs. 47.8%, $\chi^2 = 2.37, ns$, Cohen’s effect size $f = .17$).

Among Anglo-Americans, there was a marginally significant main effect of scale manipulation, such that those induced to believe they had committed a large number of moral transgressions chose the hand wipes more than those induced to believe they had committed a small number of transgressions (60% vs. 48.5%), $\chi^2(1, N = 195) = 2.69, Z = 1.64, p = .10$, Cohen’s effect size $f = .12$. Among participants in the

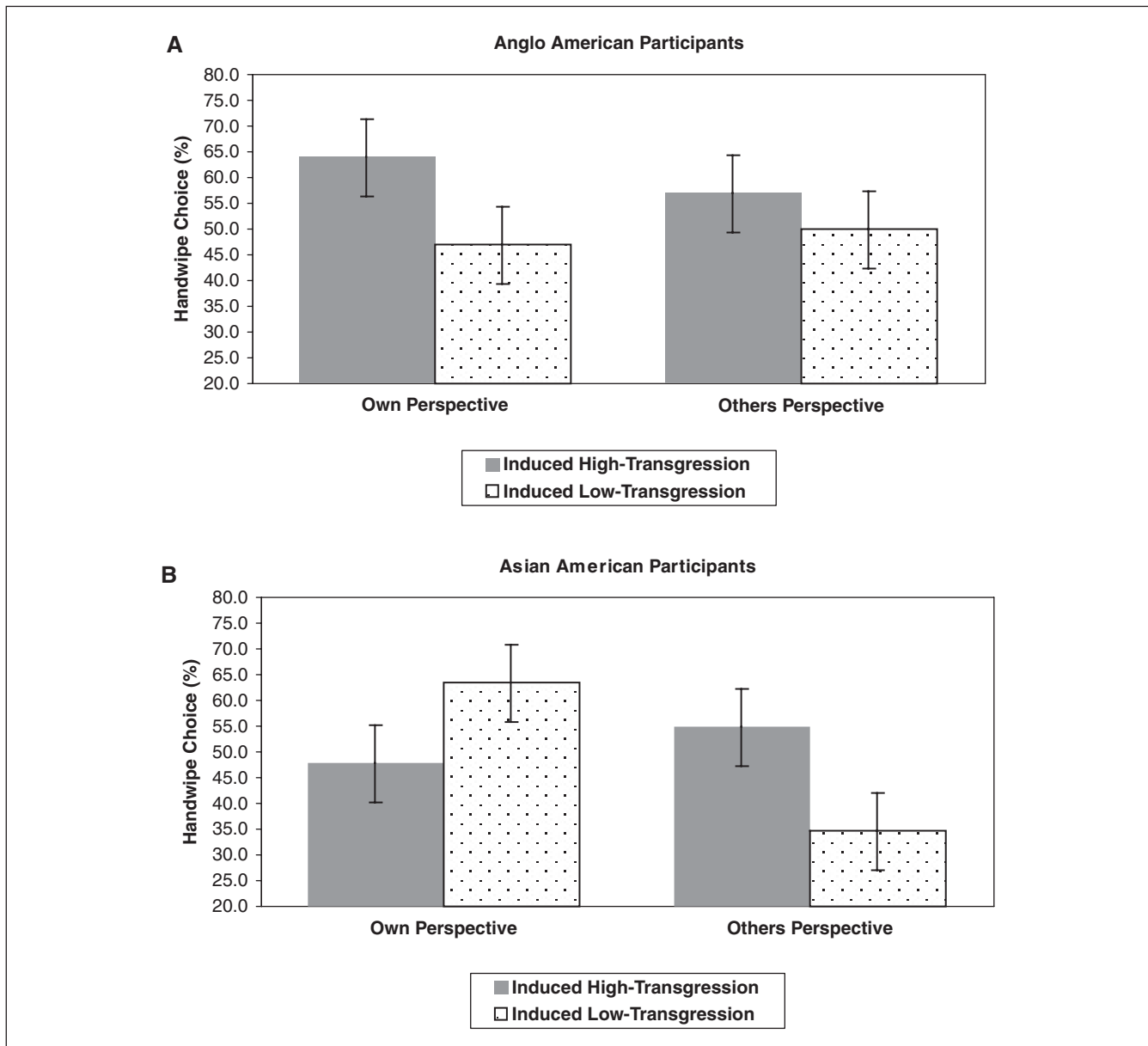


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents choosing the antiseptic hand wipe as a function of self versus other perspective manipulation, information (provided by the scale manipulation) that the participant's number of transgressions was either large or small, and culture. Note: A high-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually marked a relatively small number of transgressions, and a low-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually marked a relatively large number of transgressions. Error bars correspond to ± 1 standard error.

condition in which others were not invoked, this effect was marginally significant for Anglos (percentage choosing hand wipe among those induced to believe they had committed a large vs. a small number of transgressions = 63.6% vs. 46.8%, respectively), $\chi^2(1, N = 89) = 2.69, p = .10$, Cohen's effect size $f = .17$. When others were invoked, the effect was in the same direction but was less than half the size and was not significant (percentage choosing hand wipe = 56.9% vs. 50.0%), $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 0.50, ns$. Among the Anglo-Americans, the two-way interaction of Perspective \times Scale Manipulation was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 195) = 0.49, ns$.

Summary

In sum, the high- vs. low-frequency scale manipulation gave Anglo-Americans the information that they had committed either a large or a small number of transgressions and (marginally significantly) influenced their felt need for moral cleansing in the predicted fashion. However, inducing Anglo-Americans to view their transgressions through others' eyes gave this information no additional kick (and, if anything, produced a trivially smaller effect on hand wipe choice).

In contrast, for Asian Americans, considering whether others would think they had committed a large or a small number of transgressions influenced their felt need for moral cleansing, whereas this effect was absent when others were not invoked. (These results, of course, do *not* imply that for Asian Americans, a transgression is okay as long as no one sees it. Rather, they imply that knowledge about the self must first be refracted through the lens of *how others would see us* in order to be most psychologically meaningful.)

Experiment 2: A Life Well Lived

Experiment 2 builds on Experiment 1 in three ways. First, whereas Experiment 1 examined people's felt need for moral cleansing, Experiment 2 examined the effect on participants' summary judgments of whether they have had a life well lived. Second, whereas Experiment 1 asked about moral transgressions, Experiment 2 asked about people's social relationships, which seem to be an extremely important determinant of people's judgments about their lives (Diener & Oishi, 2005; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997; Oishi & Koo, 2008; Oishi, Koo, & Akimoto, 2008). And third, we included measures to examine the extent to which (a) Asian Americans might internalize the judgments other people would make about them and (b) Anglo-Americans might externalize their own judgments, projecting their own beliefs about themselves onto other people.

Method

Participants were 239 Anglo-Americans (158 women) and 99 Asian Americans (60 women). They first received the manipulation questionnaire that asked about their social relationships, with items such as "How many friends do you think you can spontaneously call to have lunch?" "How many hours per week do you spend with close friends?" "How many friends will simply drop by your house without prior notice?" and so on.

Perceptions about the extent to which the participant had close relationships were manipulated as in Experiment 1, with the low-frequency scale ranging from 0 to more than 4 and the high-frequency scale ranging from less than 5 to more than 14. Again, approximately half the participants answered the questions for themselves, whereas the other half imagined that they were close others answering these questions about the participants (e.g., "Significant others think that I have [___] friends who I could spontaneously call up to have lunch").

The main dependent variable was the participant's judgment of his or her life as well lived, operationalized through the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS has items such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal," "I am satisfied with my life," and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing." (Regardless of whether they took the self or

the other perspective during the manipulation questionnaire, participants were to take their own perspectives when answering the SWLS.) The α coefficients of the scale were .88 for Anglo-American participants and .87 for Asian American participants.

Finally, to examine whether participants might internalize the presumed judgments of close others, we asked participants who took the others' perspectives during the manipulation questionnaire to make their own summary judgments about their social relationships. These judgments included five positively valenced items (such as "I have a lot of really great friends") and five negatively valenced items (such as "Sometimes I feel lonely"). The α coefficients of the scale were .85 for Anglo-American participants and .83 for Asian American participants. To examine whether participants might externalize their own judgments and project them onto others, we asked participants who took their own perspectives during the manipulation questionnaire to make summary judgments about what close others would think about them (e.g., "Significant others think that I am a really good friend," "Significant others think that sometimes I feel lonely") The α coefficients of the scale were .85 for Anglo-American participants and .77 for Asian American participants.

Results and Discussion

Judgments of a life well lived. A Culture (Anglo- vs. Asian American) \times Perspective (self vs. others) \times Scale Manipulation (high- vs. low-frequency scale) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on respondents' life satisfaction judgments. The expected three-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 330) = 6.13, p = .01$, Cohen's effect size $f = .14$ (see Figure 2). We decompose the interaction as follows: For Asian Americans, the predicted two-way interaction of Perspective \times Scale Manipulation was significant, $F(1, 95) = 5.56, p < .05$, Cohen's effect size $f = .24$. Thus, for Asian Americans, those who imagined that other people saw them as having relatively rich social relationships judged their lives as more fulfilling ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.04$), compared with those who imagined that others saw them as having impoverished social relationships ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.16$), $F(1, 57) = 4.49, p < .05, d = .56$. In contrast, when Asian Americans were not induced to imagine how others would view them, those who found themselves with relatively large numbers of good friends were not more satisfied with their lives ($M = 4.06, SD = 1.51$) than those who found themselves with relatively small numbers of good friends ($M = 4.55, SD = 1.40$), $F(1, 38) = 1.76, ns, d = .43$.

For Anglo-Americans, a pattern similar to that of Experiment 1 was found. There was a marginally significant main effect of scale manipulation such that those induced to think they had large numbers of good friends were more satisfied with their lives than those induced to think they had small numbers of good friends ($M = 5.16, SD = 0.98$ vs. $M = 4.88$,

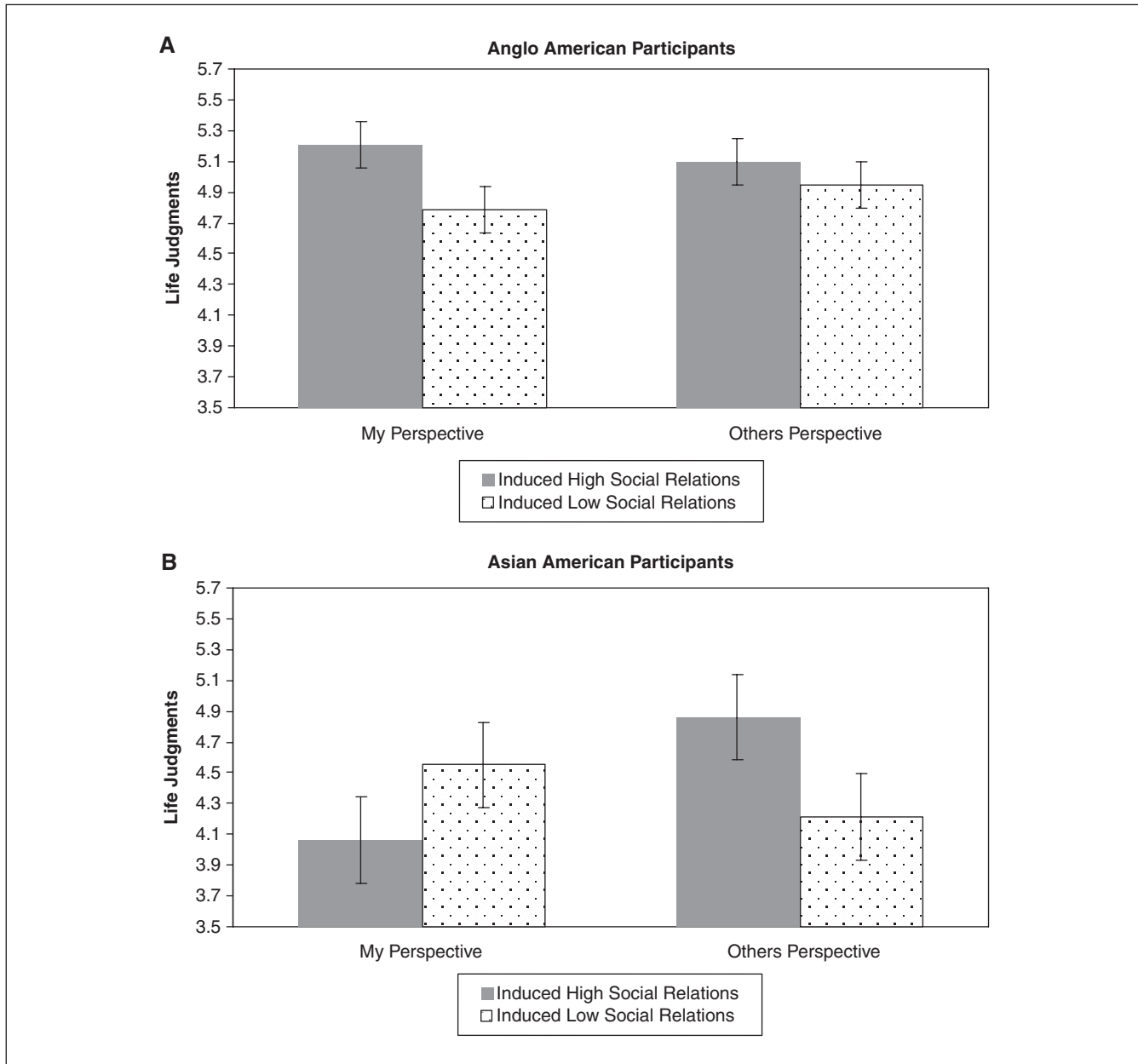


Figure 2. Life judgments as a function of self versus other perspective manipulation, information (provided by the scale manipulation) that the participant had many versus few friends, and culture.

Note: A high-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually indicated they had relatively small numbers of friends, and a low-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually indicated they had relatively large numbers of friends. Error bars correspond to ± 1 standard error.

$SD = 1.26$), $F(1, 237) = 3.46$, $p = .06$, Cohen's $f = .12$. Again, this effect was found in the condition in which participants answered for themselves (and others were not invoked) ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.05$ vs. $M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 114) = 3.76$, $p = .05$, $d = .36$. And again in the condition in which others were invoked, the effect was in the same direction but was less than half the size and was not significant ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.90$ vs. $M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.31$, $F = 0.51$, ns). Again, the two-way interaction of Perspective \times Scale Manipulation was not significant for the Anglo-Americans, $F(1, 235) = .81$, ns .

A relatively safe conclusion for the Anglo-Americans seems to be that the high- versus low-frequency scale manipulation gave Anglo-Americans the information that they had either large or small numbers of friends, and this influenced whether they thought their lives were successful or not. However, inducing Anglo-Americans to view this information through others' eyes gave this information no additional impact.

Internalization of others' judgments and externalization of one's own judgments. In terms of internalization, the predicted two-way interaction effect in a Culture \times Scale Manipulation

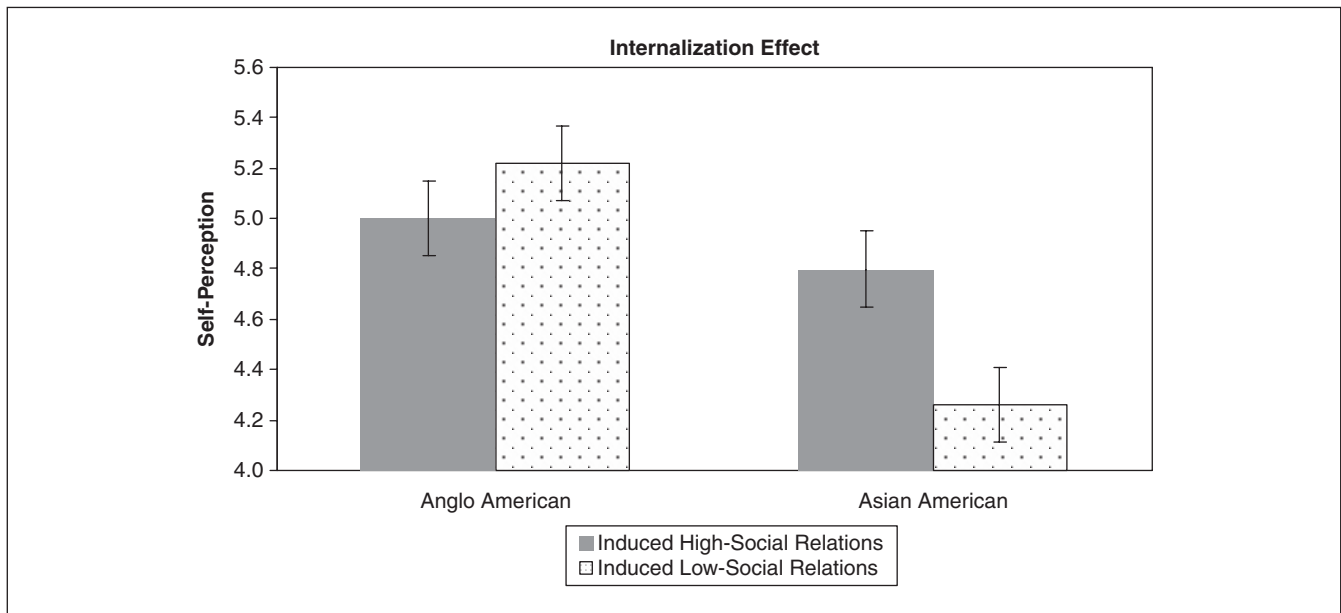


Figure 3. Internalized self-judgments as a function of culture and information (provided by the scale manipulation) that a participant had many versus few friends.

Note: A high-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually indicated they had relatively small numbers of friends, and a low-frequency scale manipulation meant that respondents usually indicated that they had relatively large numbers of friends. Error bars correspond to ± 1 standard error.

ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 178) = 5.71, p < .05$, Cohen's $f = .18$ (Figure 3). When Asian Americans took a close other's perspective during the manipulation questionnaire, they seemed to internalize these presumed judgments. Thus, those led to believe that others would view them as having many good friends rated themselves as having better social lives ($M = 4.86, SD = 0.86$), compared with those led to believe that others would view them as having few good friends ($M = 4.27, SD = 1.06, F(1, 57) = 4.41, p < .05, d = .59$). In contrast, Anglo-Americans did not show this internalization effect. That is, when Anglo participants answered the manipulation questionnaire as if they were close others describing themselves, there was no difference in participants' later self-judgments between the high-frequency ($M = 5.00, SD = 1.04$) vs. low-frequency scale manipulation condition ($M = 5.22, SD = 0.96, F(1, 121) = 1.46, ns$).

Among Asian Americans, internalized self-judgments mediated the effect of the scale manipulation on life judgments (Sobel's test $z = 2.15, p < .05$, showing mediation; see Baron & Kenny, 1986). In a bivariate regression with the scale manipulation predicting SWLS, the β value for the scale manipulation was $-.31 (p < .05)$. However, in a multiple regression analysis with scale manipulation and internalized self-judgments (the mediating variable) predicting SWLS, the β value for the scale manipulation dropped to $-.15 (p = .18)$, whereas the β value for the internalized judgments was $.53 (p < .001)$.

In terms of externalization, Asian Americans showed no signs that they externalized their own perspectives by projecting them onto other people, $F(1, 113) = .02, ns$. However, contrary to predictions, Anglo-Americans also did not show

this externalization effect, $F(1, 38) = .15, ns$. In the Culture \times Scale Manipulation ANOVA, the interaction predicting externalization was not significant ($F = .05, ns$).

Summary

In judging whether their lives were successful, Asian Americans were influenced when others were invoked and information was processed from a third-person perspective, but they were not influenced when others were not invoked. Anglo-Americans did not show this effect. Just as in Experiment 1, Anglo-Americans' judgments about their lives were affected by information conveyed by the scale manipulation—but this was primarily the case when others were *not* invoked (i.e., there was a significant or marginally significant effect of the information when others were *not* invoked, but the effect shrunk to less than half its size when others were invoked).

Furthermore, Asian Americans' judgments about the success or failure of their own lives was mediated by the extent to which they internalized information processed from the third-person perspective. When the scale manipulation suggested that others would see them as having strong (or weak) social networks, they internalized this information, seeing themselves as having rich (or poor) social lives, and these judgments in turn led them to conclude that their lives had been relatively successful (or not). For Anglo-Americans, information processed from the third-person perspective did not produce a significant internalization effect: Their judgments about whether they had rich or poor social lives were

not significantly affected by the high- or low-frequency scale manipulation when others were invoked.

General Discussion

In assessing their actions and their lives, Asian Americans and Anglo-Americans seemed to be influenced by very different factors. That is, Asian Americans' felt need for moral cleansing was influenced only when they thought about how others would gauge their ethical behavior. However, inducing participants to believe they had committed either a large or small number of transgressions (without invoking what others would think about them) did not affect their need for cleansing. Anglo-Americans showed a very different pattern. Using the scale manipulation to inform Anglo-Americans that they had committed a large number (vs. a small number) of transgressions created a marginally greater felt need for moral cleansing. This marginally significant effect was found when Anglos thought about their own transgressions and others were *not* invoked. When Anglos were induced to see their behavior through the eyes of others, the effect was in the same direction but was less than half the size and was not significant.

In Experiment 2, we assessed participants' perceptions of whether they had lived a good life. Judgments about one's social relations play a massive role in these life assessments. However, in this experiment, the way judgments about social relations affected participants' assessments were quite different across ethnicities. Asian Americans internalized the judgments that other people would make about their social relations, and their satisfaction with life was affected by how others would gauge their relationships. When others were not invoked, the manipulation designed to make participants believe they had many or few friends had no significant effect on their life satisfaction judgments. Again, Anglos showed a very different pattern. Using the scale manipulation to inform Anglo-Americans that they had a large number (vs. a small number) of friends made them feel their lives were more successful. This effect was significant for Anglos in the condition in which others were *not* invoked. When others were invoked and Anglos had to take a third-person perspective on their behavior, the effect of the scale manipulation was in the same direction but was about one third the size and was not significant.

A Pushback Effect? Refusal to Judge the Self

In the present experiments, there was no significant "pushback" effect with Anglos defining themselves in opposition to what others would think of them. Future research should try to outline when such "pushback" effects will occur and when they will not (Kim et al., in press). Again, perhaps the safest conclusion about the present experiments is that Anglos were influenced by the information provided by the scale manipulation about what is a large versus a small number of friends

(or a large vs. a small number of transgressions). However, inducing them to take a third-person perspective on their behavior gave this information no additional "kick."⁴

To the extent that there was any sort of "pushback" effect, it was shown by Asian Americans in the conditions in which others were *not* invoked. That is, when others were not invoked, Asian Americans seemed to be reluctant to come to the conclusion that the scale manipulation might otherwise lead them to. As seen in Figures 1 and 2, when others were not invoked and information was not processed through the eyes of others, there was a tendency for Asian Americans to prefer the hand wipe more when the scale implied they were relatively blameless compared with when the scale implied they were relatively blameworthy ($p = .12$); similarly, when others were not invoked, there was a tendency for Asian Americans to feel that their lives were less successful when the scale implied they had stronger as opposed to weaker social networks ($p = .18$). Neither of the effects was significant; however, if combined through meta-analytic techniques, the effect would be significant at $p < .05$ (Z for the combined meta-analytic effect = 1.99 [weighted by study n] or $Z = 2.06$ [unweighted by study n]). To the extent that these effects are "real," we may be seeing a pushback, as if Asian Americans are refusing to judge themselves without considering the way others would see them. "Am I moral or immoral? Do I have a good social network or a poor network? *How can I judge? Who am I to judge?*" may be the reasoning at work. If one is to avoid solipsistic self-evaluation, how other people see the self must be considered. Further research is needed, and we think it is worth investigating whether, when, and why Asian American participants might indeed "push back," either asking, "How can I judge?" (a question about whether the self can be accurate or objective in judging the self) or "Who am I to judge?" (a question about the appropriateness of doing so) in situations in which Anglo-Americans show much less reticence. In a Dignity culture, defining and evaluating oneself without the constraints of others' opinions may be part of one's sense of autonomy; in a Face culture, working without these constraints may be like "playing tennis without a net."

Information Processed From a First-Versus a Third-Person Perspective

The experiments above show that information about the self has different effects, depending on whether it is processed from a first-person or a third-person perspective—at least for participants from a Face culture. Information processed from a third-person perspective affected Asian Americans' judgments of whether they were relatively morally tainted versus relatively morally blameless, whether they had rich social networks or poor social networks, and whether they had lived good lives or unsatisfying ones. However, information processed from a first-person perspective—unrefracted through the eyes of

another—had no such effect for Asian Americans. It may have even elicited “pushback” effects. The safest conclusion at least is that unlike Anglo-American participants—whose purely private thoughts and behaviors seem to be frequently fraught with meanings about the self—Asian American participants were able to let some purely private, unrefracted information simply wash away with no corresponding implications for the self.

Manipulation versus measurement of perspective: Eliciting situations and implications. The conclusion that it matters for Asian Americans whether the information is processed from a first-person versus a third-person perspective begs one question, however. That is, in the present studies, we forced the issue by asking participants to take another person’s perspective. The unanswered question is, What sorts of situations naturally induce people to process information from a first- or a third-person perspective? Among other possibilities, we suspect that a person will be more likely to process information from a third-person perspective if they will be held accountable for their behavior (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005), feel under scrutiny (Kitayama, Snibbe, et al., 2004), are at the center of attention in a social situation (at least for Asian Americans) (Cohen & Gunz, 2002; Leung & Cohen, 2007), are habitually practiced in doing so (Wu & Keysar, 2007; Epley, Morewedge, & Keysar, 2004), are primed to think about important others whose opinions they value (Baldwin, Carrell, & Lopez, 1990; Cohen et al., 2007; Heine et al., 1999), and perhaps even feel watched by G-d (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). Most obviously and perhaps most important, we suspect that an individual will be more likely to process information about himself or herself from a third-person perspective when he or she is aware that the information is publicly known. If information about the self is publicly known to others, an individual from a Face culture needs to process that information from a third-person perspective so he or she can properly present and position himself or herself to others higher, lower, or at the same level in the hierarchy. If information about the self is purely private, an individual from a Face culture has much more leeway in whether it is processed from a first-person or from a third-person perspective. This leeway explains why Face culture participants in Kim et al.’s (in press) studies were far more likely to absorb publicly known information about themselves and define themselves by it—and were far more likely to ignore information that was completely private and not have it affect their self-definitions, regardless of whether the information about them was negative or positive.

In sum, the present research has shown that the way information is processed—from others’ perspectives or from our own—affects judgments about our moral culpability, our social networks, and our lives as either well lived or not well lived—and does so differently for people in Face (vs. Dignity) cultures. Future research needs to explore the situational, individual difference, and structural factors that lead people to process information one way or another. As the present

experiments suggest, at least for people from Face cultures, the way information is processed—the eyes through which we evaluate that information—may be at least as important as the content the information contains.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

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Notes

1. Research by Libby, Eibach, and colleagues (Libby & Eibach, 2002; Libby, Eibach, & Gilovich, 2005; Libby, Shaeffer, Eibach, & Slemmer, 2007) suggests that taking a third-person perspective on the self promotes more abstract construals about the self and can be associated with self-perceptions of either continuity or change, depending on which the participant focuses on. To the extent that Anglo-Americans tend to have a dispositional attribution style or focus, this would also imply that Anglos should show more dispositional self-perception effects in the third-person (vs. first-person) conditions of the present study. If this reasoning holds, this works against the hypothesis we propose and should reduce our predicted effects.
2. *Asian American* and *Anglo-American* are labels that cover a huge variety of different groups and subgroups (see, e.g., Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1999; Dien, 1999; Fischer, 1988; Kitayama, Ishii, Imada, Takemura, & Ramaswamy, 2006). When we talk about Asian American culture or Anglo-American culture, we use these labels as a shorthand way of referring to the modal cultural current among Americans whose ancestors came from Asia versus among northern, non-Hispanic Americans whose ancestors came from Europe.
3. A check of participants’ responses to the manipulation questionnaire revealed the expected result. There were 6 scale points for both the high- and low-frequency scales. In Experiment 1, the average scale point checked by respondents answering the high-frequency questionnaire was 1.3, compared with 3.2 for the low-frequency scale, $F(1, 371) = 553, p < .001$. The same effect in Experiment 2 was also significant, $F(1, 330) = 435, p < .001$. Additionally, in both Experiments 1 and 2, there were no three-way interactions predicting respondents’ answers to the manipulation questions. In Experiment 1, we excluded three participants who were at least 4 standard deviations away from the appropriate mean in their response to the manipulation questionnaire. The three-way interaction remained significant if these respondents are included, $\chi^2(1, N = 376) = 5.02, Z = 2.28, p < .05$. No outliers were found in Experiment 2.
4. There were main effects of scale manipulation for Anglo-Americans, but there was no Scale Manipulation \times Perspective interaction. Could one then argue that Anglo-Americans were *automatically* viewing their behavior through the eyes of others,

even when not induced to do so, and that this accounts for there being no Scale Manipulation \times Perspective interaction? We do not think so for three reasons. First, this would be inconsistent with prior research suggesting that Anglo-Americans do not automatically take other people's perspectives (Cohen & Gunz, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007; Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004; Kruger, Epley, Parker, & Ng, 2005; Wu & Keysar, 2007). Second, in both experiments in this study, the effects in the other perspective condition were smaller than those in the self-perspective condition, suggesting that Anglo-Americans were probably not automatically and only viewing their behavior through others' eyes in the self-perspective condition. Third, in Experiment 2, there was no internalization effect for Anglo-Americans—manipulating information so that it was processed from a third-person perspective did not influence Anglo-Americans' private judgments of themselves on the specific dimension in question. Potentially, one could make a more convoluted explanation about how Anglos might automatically be seeing themselves through others' eyes; however, we suspect this explanation would fail the test of parsimony, because one would at least want to see *some* evidence that there was *some* effect of the information manipulation when others were invoked. (Both simple effects of scale manipulation were not significant for Anglos in the conditions in which others were invoked. Even combining results across experiments using meta-analytic procedures did not produce a significant effect of scale manipulation in the others' perspective condition.)

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