


Do Happy Events Love Company? Cultural Variations in Sharing Positive Events With Others

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Abstract

The present study examined cultural differences in the act of sharing positive events with others, called capitalization attempts. The first three studies tested whether capitalization attempts differ between two cultures using multiple methods: self-reports (Study 1), children's storybooks (Study 2), and Facebook (Study 3). We found that Koreans are less likely to share their positive events with others than European Americans. Study 4 further examined the antecedents and consequences of capitalization attempts. We replicated the earlier findings that Koreans are hesitant to share their positive events and demonstrated that this is because Koreans are more concerned about the potential negative consequences for social relationships. Moreover, we found that the cultural differences in capitalization attempts partly account for mean-level differences in well-being between cultures. Implications for capitalization, culture, and well-being are discussed.

Keywords

culture, capitalization, well-being, relational concerns

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Introduction

Positive events happen to us. Those events can be either life-changing or daily ones. Among the many ways of reacting to positive events, sharing the events with others is a key process in relational contexts (see Gable & Reis, 2010, for a review). The social sharing of positive events has several implications. It not only increases disclosers' personal well-being but also enhances relational well-being between disclosers and listeners more than the positive event itself (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Langston, 1994; Reis et al., 2010). That is, sharing the event with others is an effective way to get the most out of positive events. This is why researchers refer to it as *capitalization*.

Although previous research has drawn a big picture of capitalization processes in terms of mechanisms and consequences, several pieces are still missing. One missing piece is the lack of understanding whether and how cultural factors are involved. This is because research on capitalization processes has been mostly conducted in Western countries. To date, there are virtually no studies of cultural differences in capitalization attempts. As discussed later, culture differently governs relationships between the self and others and prescribes situational scripts in interpersonal contexts (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Mesquita & Leu, 2007). Some of these cultural differences may facilitate or hinder capitalization processes.

In four studies, we examined cultural differences in capitalization attempts by comparing European Americans and Koreans. Specifically, we aimed to address three research questions:

Research Question 1: Are there cultural differences in capitalization attempts?

Research Question 2: What is the process underlying these cultural differences?

Research Question 3: Do these differences in capitalization attempts explain the different levels of well-being between cultures?

Capitalization Processes

Capitalization attempts are a common strategy in the context of positive events. Studies on the social sharing of emotion in European countries showed that 60% of positive events were shared with others on average (Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998). Similarly, Gable et al. (2004)

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found that Americans disclose their good news at least 60% of the time throughout the day. These studies suggest that capitalization attempts frequently happen in everyday life at least in European and North American countries.

Another finding is that capitalization attempts are linked to personal and relational well-being. Langston (1994) found that individuals who expressively reacted to positive events (e.g., social contacts, marking) reported higher life satisfaction and positive affect above and beyond the impact of the positive event. Gable et al. (2004) and Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman (2006) extended Langston's work. First, Gable et al. (2006) and Gable et al. (2004) revealed through diary studies that people reported higher life satisfaction on the days they shared positive events than on the days they did not. This pattern persisted even after controlling for confounding variables such as the importance of the event and the number of positive and negative events that happened during that day. Second, they found that capitalization attempts promoted interpersonal benefits such as higher relationship satisfaction and intimacy.

Finally, Gable et al. (2004) and Gable et al. (2006) demonstrated that the success of capitalization attempts depends on perceived responses. Personal and relational well-being were amplified only if the discloser perceived that the listener responded to his or her positive event actively and constructively (Gable et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2006). Similarly, Reis et al. (2010) showed in an experimental design that capitalization attempts followed by a listener's enthusiastic response led to the increased significance of the event and greater trust in others. In short, capitalization attempts have beneficial outcomes for building personal and social resources if the discloser perceives active, constructive responses from others.

What has been overlooked is that the capitalization process does not take place in a cultural vacuum but in distinct cultural landscapes. These cultural landscapes are structured in a way that maintains and reinforces particular norms and practices (Triandis, 1989). Individuals often decide their behavior based on these cultural norms or expected reactions by other people (Yamagishi, 2011). This resonates with the findings that the perceived responses to capitalization attempts serve as a determinant of whether to engage in capitalization again (Gable & Reis, 2010). In this respect, the capitalization process needs to be examined in a cultural framework. By examining European Americans and Koreans, our research focuses on whether capitalization attempts' frequency and association to well-being are generalizable to different cultures.

Culture and Capitalization Attempts

Examples for how culture may shape capitalization attempts might be found at multiple levels of analysis from self-views to social ecologies to situational scripts in social interactions. First, divergent views about the self are observed in two

cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). In North American cultures, a model of the self as autonomous and independent has been cultivated. People in these cultures strive to identify and express their idiosyncratic attributes in private and in public. Thus, disclosing their personal attributes and accomplishments to others may be encouraged. In East Asian cultures, on the contrary, a model of the self as interdependent has been emphasized. East Asians pay attention to the thoughts and feelings of others and try to blend in. In these cultures, capitalization attempts may often be discouraged because they could threaten interpersonal harmony.

Also, the socio-ecological constructions of social relationships differ between cultures (Oishi, Schug, Yuki, & Axt, 2015; Yuki & Schug, 2012). The social environment in North American cultures is characterized by high relational mobility, whereby people have wide latitude in choosing and leaving interaction partners. In contrast, for East Asians, finding new and leaving old relationships is more difficult in their low-mobile social environment. For this reason, East Asians tend to behave more cautiously and try not to offend others to retain their existing social network (Li, Adams, Kurtiş, & Hamamura, 2015). In this respect, self-disclosure has a higher stake for East Asians because it may elicit negative reputations.

Indeed, research has shown that East Asians tend to disclose personal issues to others less than European Americans (Chen, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1991). This tendency persisted across conversation topics, relationship types, the number of people with whom they shared, and the percentage of events being shared. Schug, Yuki, and Maddux (2010) replicated this finding and confirmed that the cultural difference in self-disclosure is explained by cultural differences in relational mobility. Relatedly, East Asians tend to seek less social support from others than European Americans, and this is because East Asians are more concerned about the detrimental consequences of social support seeking on social relationships (H. S. Kim, Sherman, Ko, & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2004).

Although highly suggestive, most studies mentioned above only examined negative events or valence-free topics. Would there be the same cultural differences in sharing positive events? Indirect evidence can be found in divergent cultural scripts and norms of social interactions between two cultures (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Yamagishi, 2011). European Americans have accrued default cultural scripts in which a discloser conveys his or her positive attributes, and a listener shows praise and admiration toward the discloser (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Wierzbicka, 1994). These cultural scripts are operated so strongly that suppressing or hiding emotions is viewed negatively by others (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007; Mauss et al., 2011). In this cultural atmosphere, capitalization attempts may be in line with the default scripts, and more likely to be affirmed by others.

In contrast, East Asians have accumulated default cultural scripts in which a discloser should not offend others by

displaying his or her positive attributes, and a listener responds negatively to the show-off (Yamagishi, 2011). Consistent with this notion, East Asians are more likely to dampen their positive emotions than European Americans (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). Moreover, East Asians perceive the experience and expression of positive emotions, especially pride, as inappropriate and undesirable (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995; Eid & Diener, 2001), and the person doing so is depicted as immature and shallow (Sung, 2007). In this cultural atmosphere, capitalization attempts may not be employed and could sometimes backfire.

Taken together, the tendency to capitalize on positive events may vary between cultures. Due to different cultural circumstances, capitalization attempts may be beneficial and even encouraged for social functioning among European Americans, whereas it may be costly for East Asians. Specifically, we predicted that East Asians would be less likely to share their positive events with others than European Americans, and one potential reason is that East Asians believe it to be detrimental to their social standing.

Capitalization and Well-Being

Although capitalization attempts are found to be associated with personal and relational well-being among North Americans (Gable et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2006; Reis et al., 2010), it is unclear whether this pattern applies to East Asians. Still, given that being understood and validated by others is a central element of interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1994), supportive reactions following capitalization may matter for East Asians. For example, one study found that the more East Asians perceive emotional support from others, the greater well-being and health they report (Uchida, Kitayama, Mesquita, Reyes, & Morling, 2008). Hence, it is plausible that capitalization attempts might give East Asians additional well-being as long as they do not disrupt interpersonal harmony.

If capitalization attempts predict well-being in both cultures, the frequency of capitalization attempts may play a mediating role in cultural differences in well-being. East Asians report feeling less happy than European Americans (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). Although whether cultural differences in self-reported well-being reflect true feelings or self-presentations remains an unsettled issue (Oishi, 2018), researchers attempted to rule out alternative explanations such as response styles (Diener, Suh, et al., 1995) and measurement inequivalence (Oishi, 2006). Based on these findings, we hypothesized that East Asians' lower reported well-being may be in part because they lose an opportunity to benefit from a positive event by withholding it. Given that seemingly routine but iterative social interactions could give rise to cross-national differences in well-being, as an exemplar of such behavior, we examined whether differences in capitalization attempts would partly explain differences in well-being between the two cultures.

Overview of the Present Research

The present study examined whether sharing positive events with others differs between cultures. In Study 1, we used a survey in which European Americans and Koreans completed global and concrete reports of capitalization attempts. In Studies 2 and 3, we used children's storybooks and information on participants' Facebook posts, respectively.

Furthermore, we sought to identify why cultural differences in capitalization attempts occur and explored whether this difference in capitalization attempts would explain the cultural differences in well-being. Specifically, Study 4 tested whether relational concerns could explain cultural differences in capitalization attempts. In addition, we examined whether the link between capitalization attempts and well-being would hold in both cultures, and whether this difference in capitalization attempts would partly account for mean-level differences in well-being between two cultures. All data and analyses can be found at <https://osf.io/2qb7k>.

Study 1

Study 1 examined whether there are cultural differences in capitalization attempts. We looked into global and episodic reports of capitalization attempts. We predicted that Koreans would report sharing their positive events with others less than Americans. Moreover, as personality traits and gender substantially regulate behavior in social interactions (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2003; Tobin, Graziano, Vanman, & Tassinary, 2000), these factors were controlled in our analyses.

Method

Participants. The data came from a cross-cultural longitudinal project that tracked the same participants each year from 2012 to 2014. Americans were recruited from University of California, Santa Barbara, and University of Virginia, and Koreans were from Yonsei University and Chung-Ang University in Korea through flyers, class announcements, or participant pools. For the present research, we restricted our American sample to European Americans for a clear interpretation of the results. We used the first and third waves that contain global and concrete reports on capitalization attempts, respectively. For the global reports, 279 European Americans (177 women, 99 men, three unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.43$ years, $SD = 4.49$) and 299 Koreans (147 women, 152 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.77$ years, $SD = 0.90$) were analyzed. For the concrete reports, 124 European Americans (86 women, 38 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.22$ years, $SD = 3.79$) and 187 Koreans (123 women, 64 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.75$ years, $SD = 0.95$) were analyzed. Participants received either 10,000 won (US\$10) or partial credit for their participation in each wave.

Measures. For the global reports on capitalization attempts, there was a single item ("I let others know about my positive

events and celebrate with them”) on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 7 = *very true*) in the first wave. For the concrete reports on capitalization attempts, there were two related items in the third wave. Participants were asked to describe a positive event that occurred within the past month and to indicate the number of people they told about the event. The number of people was used as a dependent variable for the concrete reports. Participants were told that the capitalization attempts only included in-person conversation, text messaging, and online messenger, but not public posts such as Facebook. Global reports of capitalization were positively associated with concrete reports of capitalization, $r(309) = .237, p < .001$; European Americans: $r(122) = .152, p = .092$; Koreans: $r(185) = .254, p < .001$.

Gender, age, and personality traits were used as control variables. The Big Five personality traits were assessed with the 60-item NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992), with 12 statements for each trait on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 7 = *very true*). We averaged the 12 items for each trait based on the acceptable reliability: extraversion (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$ for European Americans; $\alpha = .85$ for Koreans), neuroticism ($\alpha = .85$; $\alpha = .89$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .81$; $\alpha = .69$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .85$; $\alpha = .84$), and openness to experience ($\alpha = .72$; $\alpha = .68$). All questionnaires were created in Korean, translated into English, and back-translated into Korean to ensure equivalence.

Results

Global reports on capitalization attempts. We conducted a 2 (culture: Koreans vs. European Americans) \times 2 (gender: men vs. women) ANOVA to see whether there were cultural differences in global reports on capitalization attempts. The main effect of Culture was significant, $F(1, 570) = 18.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .031$, 90% confidence interval (CI) = [.012, .057].¹ That is, Koreans ($M = 5.14, SD = 1.38$) shared their positive events with others less often than European Americans ($M = 5.66, SD = 1.20$). The main effect of Gender was significant, $F(1, 570) = 13.17, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .023$ [.007, .047]. Women ($M = 5.59, SD = 1.22$) told others about their positive events more than men ($M = 5.13, SD = 1.39$). The interaction effect between Culture and Gender was not significant, $F(1, 570) = 0.01, p = .930, \eta_p^2 = .000$ [.000, .001]. After controlling for gender, age, and personality traits, the effect of culture on capitalization attempts remained significant, $F(1, 565) = 13.90, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .024$ [.008, .049].

Concrete reports on capitalization attempts

Type of events. Two coders for each country, blind to the hypothesis, categorized the domain of positive events written by participants. For the American sample, the events concerned social relationships (55%), school- or job-related achievement (29%), and others (16%). For the Korean sample, the events concerned social relationships (58%), school- or job-related achievement (22%), and others (20%). The

reliability between the American coders ($\kappa = .81, p < .001$) and the Korean coders ($\kappa = .76, p < .001$) was high (Landis & Koch, 1977). There was no significant cultural difference in the type of events, $\chi^2(2, N = 311) = 2.34, p = .311$, Cramer's $V = .087$.

Capitalization attempts. The number of capitalization attempts was severely skewed ranging from 0 to 1,150 ($M = 11.78, SD = 66.38$; Skewness = 16.45, Kurtosis = 281.46). Therefore, we capped responses at 11, which reduced the impact of outliers ($M = 5.58, SD = 3.73$; Skewness = 0.16, Kurtosis = -1.25).

As with the global reports, we conducted a 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVA for concrete reports on capitalization attempts. The main effect of Culture was significant, $F(1, 307) = 9.55, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .030$, 90% CI = [.007, .068]. This shows that Koreans ($M = 5.15, SD = 3.78$) told fewer people about their positive events than European Americans ($M = 6.22, SD = 3.56$). The main effect of Gender was not significant, $F(1, 307) = 1.57, p = .212, \eta_p^2 = .005$ [.000, .026]. The interaction effect between Culture and Gender was significant, $F(1, 307) = 4.97, p = .026, \eta_p^2 = .016$ [.001, .046]. Pairwise comparisons using Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) showed that Korean females ($M = 5.69, SD = 3.79$) reported making more capitalization attempts than Korean males ($M = 4.11, SD = 3.56$), $F(1, 307) = 7.87, p = .005$. By contrast, there was no gender difference between European American females ($M = 6.08, SD = 3.31$) and males ($M = 6.53, SD = 4.10$), $F(1, 307) = 0.39, p = .533$. Between-culture pairwise comparisons showed that Korean men shared their positive events with fewer people than European American men, $F(1, 307) = 10.41, p < .001$, whereas there was no significant difference between Korean women and European American women, $F(1, 307) = 0.58, p = .448$. Also, consistent with global reports, the effect of culture on capitalization attempts held after controlling for personality and demographic factors, $F(1, 302) = 4.13, p = .043, \eta_p^2 = .013$ [.000, .043].

We found an interaction effect between culture and gender for concrete reports, but not for global reports. This pattern of results was mainly driven by the fact that Korean men reported far fewer capitalization attempts than the other three groups for the concrete reports. However, we did not find the gender-by-culture interaction in Study 4. Thus, we believe this particular finding is likely to be a chance finding and we should be cautious of over-interpreting it.

Discussion

Study 1 provides initial evidence that East Asians share their positive events less than Americans. This cultural difference was detected even when ruling out other sources of variation such as personality and demographics in both global and concrete reports of capitalization attempts. However, self-reports that reflect subjective attitudes and values “in an

individual's head" may be half the story. If cultural practices and meanings are constituted through both individuals and sociocultural reality, they should be also manifest "out of the head" such as in institutions and cultural products (Adams & Markus, 2004). To test this possibility, Study 2 used one of the cultural products: children's storybooks.

Study 2

In Study 2, we attempted to conceptually replicate the results of Study 1 with children's storybooks. Children's storybooks are popular cultural products that are important for socialization. As cultural values are embedded in plots and illustrations of the children's books, children come to learn how they should think, feel, and behave in the social world while reading the books. Previous studies found that children's storybooks and folktales reflect cultural differences in values such as achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961) and ideal affect (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007). Thus, we tested whether the number of capitalization attempts in children's storybooks would vary between cultures. We predicted that Korean children's books would contain fewer capitalization attempts than American children's books.

Method

Book selection. In June 2015, we pulled a list of the 140 best-selling books for children aged between 3 and 8 years in each country through Amazon (amazon.com) for American books and KyoboMungo (kyobobook.co.kr) for Korean books. Amazon and KyoboMungo are popular websites where Americans and Koreans buy books, respectively. Inclusion criteria for books were twofold. One was that books should be storybooks, and thus, other kinds of books such as coloring books and activity books were removed from the list. The other was that books should be less than 75 pages for the sake of coding time. Because the initial list for American children's books included books that were too long, were repeated, or were not storybooks, we added an additional 71 books to the list, which amounted to 211. After removing books that did not meet the inclusion criteria, 53 American books were analyzed. Out of 140 Korean best-selling books, 65 Korean books were analyzed (see Supplemental Materials for the full list of children's storybooks).

Coding procedure. Coders in each country read each book and counted the number of capitalization attempts in it. It was counted as a capitalization attempt only when characters (e.g., people, animals) shared their own positive events with other characters. Each capitalization attempt got one point in each book. For example, if Book A has five capitalization attempts, the book gets a score of five. In this study, each book's scores ranged from 0 to 11.

For American books, the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) between the American coders was .70. For Korean

books, the first coder coded all 65 books, the second coder coded 58 books, and the third coder coded the remaining seven books. After combining the ratings of the last two coders, the ICC of the Korean coders was .88. Discrepancies between the coders in each country were resolved by another coder. Examples for capitalization attempts include "Hooray, I say, I did it! I'm really glad I tried!" (Capucilli & Stott, 2000, p. 21) and "Today I built a lego helicopter by myself!" (J. Kim, 2015, p. 30).

Results and Discussion

We tested whether there were cultural differences in the number of capitalization attempts in children's storybooks. Consistent with our hypothesis, Korean best-selling children's books ($M = 0.18$, $SD = 0.63$) contained fewer capitalization attempts than American books ($M = 0.66$, $SD = 1.75$), $t(116) = -2.03$, $p = .044$, $d = 0.38$, 95% CI = [0.008, 0.740].

Study 2 supports our hypothesis that American and Korean books differ in the frequency of capitalization attempts. This suggests that Korean books do not put an emphasis on capitalization in their cultural products compared with American books. Moreover, Study 2 shows that this cultural difference not only resides in an individual's mind but also manifests itself in social reality in the form of cultural products.

Study 3

In Study 3, we used Facebook to examine cultural variations in capitalization attempts for the following reasons. First, contemporary social life occurs not only in face-to-face interactions but also on online social networks. Facebook has 1.65 billion active users monthly as of March 2016 (Facebook, 2016). More importantly, utilizing Facebook in research has some advantages over surveys as social interactions unfold in a more naturalistic setting (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). "Behavioral residues" displayed on Facebook may provide more observable and tangible snapshots of capitalization processes and should increase the ecological validity of the findings.

In Studies 1 and 2, the measure of capitalization attempts was how *frequently* participants or characters told about an event. On Facebook, however, this measure may not be effective for capturing capitalization attempts because posted status updates indiscriminately reach most Facebook friends. For this reason, in Study 3, we assessed the degree of capitalization attempts in terms of how *recently* participants posted their positive event. Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) proposed that recency of past behavior could be operationalized as the degree of past behavior and predict subsequent behavior independent of frequency. In support of their argument, Bagozzi and Kimmel (1995) found that recent exercising and dieting not only constitute the past behavior but also explain

the significant variance of the targeted behavior for exercising and dieting.

Specifically, we asked participants to locate the latest posting on a *personal positive event* on Facebook and indicate the date when they posted it. Also, as participants may differ in Facebook usage, they were asked to find the latest posting concerning a *general event* and indicate the date when they posted it to represent the relative recency of posting for an individual. In other words, the general event served as each individual's reference point. In line with Studies 1 and 2, we predicted that Koreans would post their positive event less recently than European Americans.

Method

Participants. A power analysis based on the effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .03$ in Study 1 indicated that at least 256 participants would be needed to achieve 80% power. A total of 384 undergraduates (166 European Americans at University of Virginia, 100 Koreans at Yonsei University, 118 Koreans at Chung-Ang University) participated in this study. The participants received partial course credit or 5,000 won (US\$5) for their participation. Of 384 participants, 51 participants (13 Americans and 38 Koreans) were removed from the analysis because they either had no Facebook account or failed to report primary dependent variables. This resulted in 153 European Americans (83 women, 69 men, one unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.52$ years, $SD = 0.94$) and 180 Koreans (97 women, 80 men, three unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.59$ years, $SD = 2.24$).

Procedure and materials. Participants were asked to log into Facebook and find one most recent status update on a positive event and one on a general event. The *positive event* was defined as "something that is happening now, something that happened in the past that made you happy, or something you anticipate happening in the future" (adapted from Gable et al., 2004, p. 238). Participants were informed that positive events should be one's own events that were posted by themselves. Thus, the posts that they shared, liked, or left a comment on did not count as a positive event. The *general event* was defined as anything other than a positive event that participants posted.

As a measure of capitalization attempts, participants indicated the respective dates when they posted the positive and general events on Facebook (YY/MM/DD). They then reported how positive and important the events were, respectively, using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all positive*, 7 = *very positive*; 1 = *not very important*, 7 = *very important*). Capitalization attempts were measured as how recently participants posted their positive events relative to their general events. Thus, it was calculated by subtracting the date of posting a positive event from the date of posting a general event. More days reflect a more recent post of a positive event. For example, if a participant posted a general event a

week ago, and a positive event yesterday, the participant would score 6 days.

Finally, participants reported on the number of Facebook friends, Facebook use per day (1 = *less than 10 min*, 6 = *more than 3 hr*), age, gender, extraversion, and neuroticism. Extraversion and neuroticism were measured with the two five-item subscales of the Big Five personality scale (Brody & Ehrlichman, 1997, extraversion: $\alpha = .78$ for European Americans, $\alpha = .83$ for Koreans; neuroticism: $\alpha = .83$, $\alpha = .86$). The respective five items were averaged to create extraversion and neuroticism.

Results

Descriptive statistics of key variables are shown in Table 1. We conducted a 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVA. The main effect of Culture was marginally significant, $F(1, 325) = 2.93$, $p = .088$, $\eta_p^2 = .009$ [.000, .033] (Table 1). The main effect of Gender was not significant, $F(1, 325) = 0.75$, $p = .387$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$ [.000, .033]. The interaction effect between Culture and Gender was marginally significant, $F(1, 325) = 3.28$, $p = .071$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$ [.000, .035]. Pairwise comparisons with Fisher's LSD showed that American males ($M = 120.57$, $SD = 375.78$) posted their positive events more recently than American females ($M = 43.11$, $SD = 157.83$), which was marginally significant, $F(1, 325) = 3.34$, $p = .069$. Koreans did not significantly differ by gender ($M = 18.64$, $SD = 244.55$ for males; $M = 45.98$, $SD = 242.68$ for females), $F(1, 325) = 0.48$, $p = .487$. However, when controlling for age, gender, the number of Facebook friends, Facebook use, extraversion, neuroticism, and the positivity and importance of positive and general events, the effect of culture on capitalization attempts on Facebook became nonsignificant, $F(1, 314) = 0.01$, $p = .917$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$ [.000, .002].

Discussion

Study 3 did not support our hypothesis that Koreans share their personal positive events less recently than European Americans on Facebook, when controlling for confounding variables. Especially, age acted as a covariate that overrode the effect of culture; older students posted their positive events on Facebook less recently than younger students did. In Study 3, we attempted to demonstrate that cultural differences in capitalization attempts can be observed in behavioral residue on Facebook, but we could not completely rule out the effect of confounding variables. As such, we conducted a mini meta-analysis to alleviate concerns with the age effect (see "Meta-Analysis" section below).

Study 4

The purpose of Study 4 was to address three issues. In addition to replicating the findings from earlier studies,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables in Study 3.

Variable	Koreans	European Americans
Capitalization attempts (general-positive)	30.47 (243.57)	77.73 (279.54)
Positive event positivity	5.66 (1.33)	6.11 (1.19)
Positive event importance	4.87 (1.78)	5.49 (1.62)
General event positivity	4.17 (1.63)	4.61 (1.67)
General event importance	3.88 (1.67)	4.37 (1.75)
Facebook friends	421.34 (221.79)	715.65 (439.45)
Facebook usage	3.12 (1.54)	2.27 (1.10)
Extraversion	3.62 (0.76)	3.44 (0.74)
Neuroticism	2.99 (0.91)	2.56 (0.81)

we examined whether relational concerns mediate cultural differences in capitalization attempts, and whether this cultural difference in capitalization partly explains the cultural difference in well-being. We took a mediation approach rather than a moderation approach because we were more interested in *how and why* there are cultural differences in capitalization attempts rather than *when* (see Supplemental Materials for results from a moderation approach). Also, this decision is based on previous research treating relational concerns as a mediator to explain why East Asians tend to seek social support less than European Americans (H. S. Kim et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 2004). We predicted that Koreans, being more concerned about relational consequences, would convey their positive events to others less than European Americans. Moreover, we hypothesized that the suppression of capitalization attempts would be one of the reasons why Koreans score lower well-being than European Americans.

Method

Participants. To achieve 80% power, at least 256 participants were needed. One hundred eighty-one European American undergraduates (99 women, 79 men, three unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.19$ years, $SD = 1.19$) at University of Virginia and 183 Korean undergraduates at Yonsei University (52 women, 117 men, 14 unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 22.45$ years, $SD = 2.56$) participated in this study for partial course credit. Four Korean participants were excluded because of incomplete responses.

Procedure and materials. As in Study 1, participants described a personal positive event that they experienced within the last month. However, as Study 1 had some outliers in capitalization attempts, a couple of changes were made to collect more accurate responses for the frequency of capitalization attempts. First, we specified the recipients of the capitalization attempts into five groups: romantic partner/spouse, family, friends, acquaintance, and strangers. Second, participants reported how many people in each group they had told about their event in a close-ended format: They used a yes or no (1 or 0) format for romantic partner/spouse and an 11-point scale (from 0 to more than 10) for the other four groups. The

five items by group were summed to yield a single score of capitalization attempts (possible range: 0-41, observed range: 0-34). Participants then rated how positive and important the event was using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all positive*, 7 = *very positive*; 1 = *not very important*, 7 = *very important*).

Next, as a mediator, relational concerns were assessed with nine statements on *relational* reasons for not telling others about positive events on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 7 = *very true*; Derlega, Anderson, Winstead, & Greene, 2011). The nine items were created or adapted from prior studies examining cultural differences in social support seeking (H. S. Kim et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 2004). As social support seeking usually occurs in the face of stressful events, the original items were modified to fit the context of positive events. Sample items include "I don't want to disrupt my social relationship by sharing it," and "I am afraid that other people would feel jealous or envious of me." We summed the items to create an index of relational concerns, so that higher scores indicate higher relational concerns about capitalization attempts ($\alpha = .84$ for European Americans, $\alpha = .79$ for Koreans).

Finally, participants completed three components of well-being: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Life satisfaction was assessed with the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .86$ for European Americans, $\alpha = .86$ for Koreans). Positive affect and negative affect were assessed with the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE; Diener et al., 2010). Participants indicated how they have been experiencing each of the six positive feelings (e.g., positive, happy) and six negative feelings (e.g., negative, sad) over the past 4 weeks on a 5-point scale (1 = *very rarely or never*, 5 = *very often or always*; positive affect: $\alpha = .88$ for European Americans, $\alpha = .90$ for Koreans; negative affect: $\alpha = .82$, $\alpha = .79$).

Results

Type of events. As in Study 1, two coders for each country coded the domain of positive events. For the American

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of and Correlations Between Key Variables in Study 4.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M (SD)
Koreans								
1. Capitalization	—	.17*	.15*	-.17*	.24**	.23**	-.18*	8.93 (6.98)
2. Event positivity	—	—	.47**	-.09	.31**	.33**	-.20**	6.07 (1.01)
3. Event importance	—	—	—	-.10	.34**	.30**	-.14 [†]	5.58 (1.29)
4. Relation concern	—	—	—	—	-.12	-.10	.29**	31.34 (10.22)
5. Life satisfaction	—	—	—	—	—	.69**	-.46**	4.47 (1.15)
6. Positive affect	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.52**	3.65 (0.70)
7. Negative affect	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.70 (0.77)
European Americans								
1. Capitalization	—	.27**	.26**	-.11	.27**	.22**	-.13 [†]	10.65 (7.37)
2. Event positivity	—	—	.58**	-.16*	.17*	.31**	-.05	6.23 (0.91)
3. Event importance	—	—	—	-.05	.23**	.35**	-.08	5.74 (1.28)
4. Relation concern	—	—	—	—	-.12	-.13 [†]	.10	23.36 (10.24)
5. Life satisfaction	—	—	—	—	—	.58**	-.41**	4.98 (1.15)
6. Positive affect	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.41**	3.91 (0.59)
7. Negative affect	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.69 (0.65)

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

sample, the events concerned social relationships (57%), school- or job-related achievement (31%), and others (12%). For the Korean sample, the events concerned social relationships (65%), school- or job-related achievement (24%), and others (11%). The reliability between the American coders ($\kappa = .85$, $p < .001$) and the Korean coders ($\kappa = .97$, $p < .001$) was high (Landis & Koch, 1977). There was no cultural difference in the type of events, $\chi^2(2, N = 360) = 2.56$, $p = .278$, Cramer's $V = .084$.

Main effect of culture on capitalization attempts. Descriptive statistics and correlations between key variables are presented in Table 2. A 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVA showed that the main effect of Culture was significant, meaning that Koreans shared their positive event less often than European Americans, $F(1, 343) = 4.70$, $p = .031$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$ [.001, .041]. Both the main effect of Gender, $F(1, 343) = 0.28$, $p = .595$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$ [.000, .013], and the interaction effect between Culture and Gender, $F(1, 343) = 0.42$, $p = .515$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$ [.000, .015], were not significant. After adding age, gender, and the positivity and importance of the event as covariates, the cultural influence remained significant, $F(1, 339) = 5.73$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$ [.002, .046].

Relational concerns as a mechanism. As expected, Koreans were more relationally concerned with telling others about their positive event than European Americans, $t(349) = 7.45$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.79$, 95% CI = [0.58, 1.01] (see Table 2). Next, we tested whether the link between culture and capitalization attempts is mediated by relational concerns. To this end, we conducted a mediation analysis using Mplus 7.31 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015), a bias-corrected bootstrapping method with 10,000 resampling. The results showed that relational concerns mediated the cultural differences in

capitalization attempts, indirect effect = 0.774, $SE = 0.330$, 95% CI = [0.198, 1.503], $z = 2.35$, $p = .019$. Once relational concern was entered as a mediator, the direct effect of culture on capitalization decreased (see Figure 1). When age, gender, and the positivity and importance of the event were entered as control variables, the model fit was excellent, $\chi^2(6, N = 346) = 8.10$, $p = .231$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .973, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .032, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .033. The effect of culture on capitalization was partially mediated by relational concerns, indirect effect = 0.579, $SE = 0.327$, 95% CI = [0.012, 1.293], $z = 1.77$, $p = .077$.²

Path to happiness. As shown in Table 2, capitalization attempts were significantly associated with all three components of well-being for both Koreans and European Americans. Moreover, when we created a latent well-being variable with life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect³ and compared path coefficients for the effect of capitalization attempts on the latent well-being in two cultures, the path coefficient is invariant between cultures, $\Delta\chi_1^2 = 0.17$, $p > .05$. Based on the significant link and measurement invariance between capitalization and well-being, we examined whether cultural differences in capitalization attempts might explain mean-level differences in well-being. Koreans reported significantly lower life satisfaction and positive affect than European Americans, but not negative affect (Table 2). We conducted a mediation analysis with 10,000 bootstrap samples using Mplus to explore whether capitalization attempts mediate the relationship between culture and well-being. The model fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(4, N = 360) = 9.93$, $p = .042$, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .064, SRMR = .029. The mediation analysis revealed that the effect of culture on well-being was mediated by capitalization attempts, indirect

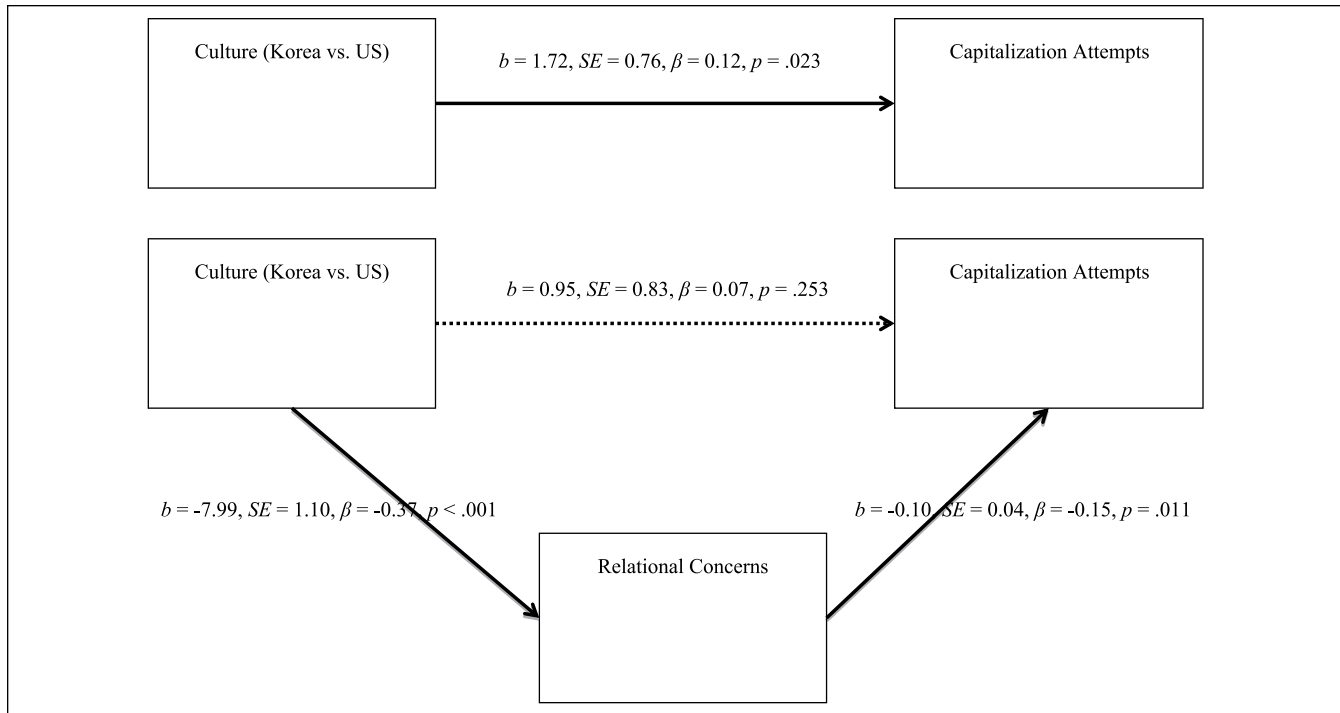


Figure 1. The mediation analysis.

Note. b = unstandardized regression coefficients; β = standardized regression coefficients.

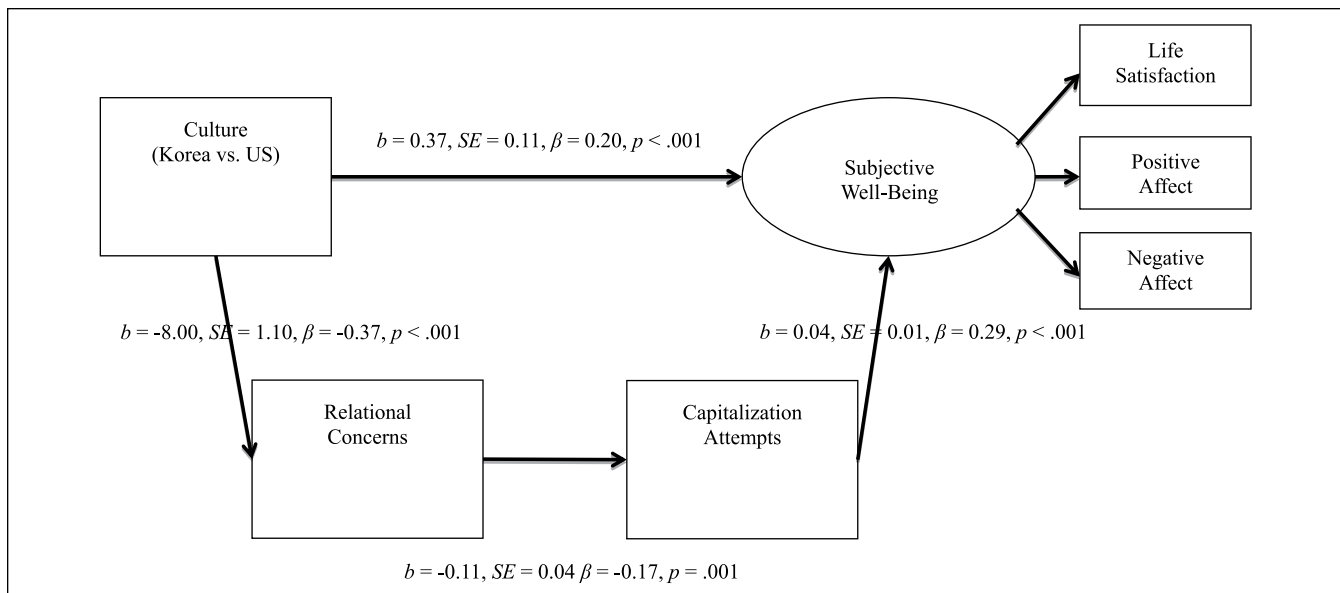


Figure 2. The path analysis.

Note. b = unstandardized regression coefficients; β = standardized regression coefficients.

effect = 0.064, $SE = 0.032$, 95% CI = [0.011, 0.140], $z = 1.97$, $p = .048$.

Next, we tested a path model in which we included relational concerns and capitalization attempts as mediators linking culture and well-being. The model fit was good, $\chi^2(8, N = 360) = 23.36, p = .003$, CFI = .961, RMSEA = .073,

SRMR = .044. As presented in Figure 2, Koreans were higher than European Americans on relational concerns, which led to fewer capitalization attempts, which in turn were tied to lower well-being, indirect effect = 0.034, $SE = 0.015$, 95% CI = [0.012, 0.071], $z = 2.31, p = .021$. These results showed that cultural differences in well-being were partially explained by

cultural differences in relational concerns about capitalization attempts. Even when gender, age, and the positivity and importance of the event were entered as control variables, the model fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(22, N = 346) = 48.64, p < .001$, CFI = .941, RMSEA = .059, SRMR = .044, and the mediating role of relational concerns and capitalization attempts in explaining cultural differences in well-being remained, indirect effect = 0.018, $SE = 0.010$, 95% CI = [0.004, 0.047], $z = 1.77, p = .078$.

Finally, because the variables were measured cross-sectionally, the direction of causal chains between capitalization attempts and relational concerns could be reversed. Thus, we tested the two reverse mediation models in which capitalization attempts precede relational concerns (i.e., culture \rightarrow capitalization \rightarrow relational concerns; culture \rightarrow capitalization \rightarrow relational concerns \rightarrow well-being). The two models were not significant, indirect effect = -0.363 [$-1.011, -0.017$], $z = -1.48, p = .138$ for the first model; indirect effect = 0.005 [$0.000, 0.022$], $z = 1.10, p = .271$ for the second model. Thus, although the direction of causality cannot be determined by our data, our proposed mediation models appear to fit better than the reverse models.

Discussion

In Study 4, we replicated the findings from Studies 1 through 3, showing that Koreans made capitalization attempts less often than European Americans. Also, we found that relational concerns are one potential mechanism underlying cultural differences in capitalization attempts. Compared with European Americans, Koreans are less likely to engage in capitalization attempts because they are more worried about negative relational outcomes. Moreover, we demonstrated that although capitalization attempts are positively tied to well-being across cultures to the same degree, relational concerns keep Koreans from sharing their positive events, leading to lower well-being.

Meta-Analysis

We performed a meta-analysis across the four studies of the present study to examine the overall effect of culture on capitalization attempts. We fitted a random-effects model for five Cohen's d s from Studies 1 to 4, using the R package metafor (Viechtbauer, 2010). Our meta-analysis produced a mean effect size of $d = 0.30$, 95% CI = [0.208, 0.403]. There was no significant heterogeneity between studies, $Q(4) = 3.37, p = .498$. Because the cultural influence became non-significant after controlling for age in Study 3, we next conducted meta-regression in which age was added as a study-level covariate (moderator) across Studies 1, 3, and 4. The age effect was not significant, $Q_M(1) = 1.72, p = .189$, meaning that culture effect is robust across the studies. This synthesized result lends support to our hypothesis that Koreans are less likely to share their positive events with others than European Americans.

General Discussion

In four studies, we examined whether capitalization attempts depend on cultural contexts. Overall, we found converging evidence on cultural differences in capitalization attempts across various methods. In Studies 1 and 4, Koreans reported telling others about their positive events less than European Americans. In Study 2, we found that Korean children's books include fewer capitalization attempts than Americans children's books. In Study 3, we demonstrated that Koreans tend to post their positive events relative to general events less recently than European Americans. In addition, in Study 4, we further revealed that Koreans are more worried about potential repercussions of sharing positive events than European Americans, which mediated the effect of culture on capitalization attempts. We also found that although capitalization attempts are linked to well-being in both cultures, relational concerns inhibit Koreans from making capitalization attempts, which in turn lowers their well-being.

Implications

The present study has several implications for research on capitalization processes, culture, and well-being. First, although previous studies shed light on capitalization processes, little attention has been given to when and under what conditions people relay their positive events to others (for exceptions, see Shallcross, Howland, Bemis, Simpson, & Frazier, 2011; Smith & Reis, 2012). This is perhaps because even without considering others' responses, capitalization attempts are usually successful in the United States. The present research provides evidence that decisions on sharing positive events are heavily influenced by cultural backgrounds. The cultural landscapes are constructed with disparate self-views, social ecologies, and emotion norms in interpersonal contexts, leading capitalization attempts to be interpreted as either relational rewards or costs. In short, our research helps understand the capitalization process by looking at it through a cultural lens. It will be interesting to look at other factors that could affect the capitalization processes. For example, personality traits such as agreeableness may influence how much and to whom people disclose their positive events.

Second, theory and empirical research has advanced the notion that culture shapes emotion regulation (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Mesquita & Leu, 2007). The research, however, has mainly focused on the regulation of negative emotions. As for positive events, researchers have briefly touched on whether people across cultures differ in regulating their positive event-based emotions. The present study specifically targeted capitalization attempts as a positive emotion regulation strategy and investigated the divergent patterns between cultures. However, as there are other strategies to regulate positive emotions, future work should delineate cultural variations in the positive emotion regulation strategies.

Third, well-being research has uncovered predictors of mean-level differences in well-being across cultures (Diener,

Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Diener & Suh, 2000). However, those predictors tend to be either at the national level (e.g., GDP per capita) or at the individual level (e.g., self-esteem), but not so much at the interpersonal level. This study documents that differences in capitalization processes at the interpersonal level is one reason why well-being scores diverge for European Americans and East Asians.

It is notable that Koreans' capitalization attempts are also significantly associated with well-being. This is in part because they may choose targets who would respond actively and constructively. Thus, additional research should clarify the relation between capitalization attempts and well-being across cultures to determine whether the benefits come from being selective in choosing listeners and how positive such partner responses actually are (see Supplemental Materials for preliminary analyses with the activeness and positivity of listeners' responses observed in children's storybooks in Study 2).

Limitations and Future Directions

First, because we only compared college students in the United States and Korea, the findings we observed may be limited to student samples (Sears, 1986) or two countries. Therefore, it is important to recruit participants in other populations within a culture and in other cultures.

Second, although we used multiple methods, the methods were correlational and restricted to a particular moment in one setting. Thus, experimental designs should be employed to examine causality by manipulating or priming relational concerns. Also, given that the capitalization process involves recursive and interpersonal features (Gable & Reis, 2010), it is fruitful to examine our hypotheses using daily diaries to explore the dynamic nature of capitalization processes across cultures.

Third, we found cultural differences in capitalization attempts and well-being via self-reports. However, one might argue that this self-reported cultural difference might come from display rules, or the appropriateness of expressing emotions, rather than true feelings. Friesen (1972) and Matsumoto (1990) famously showed that there are cultural differences in display rules such that Japanese tend to mask their true feelings in social situations. However, we think that display rules are more concerned with outward, spontaneous expression of emotions in presence of others than the self-report methods we used, which was nonsocial and virtually anonymous. Nevertheless, this possibility should be investigated more thoroughly in the future.

Fourth, it is important to note that the results do not necessarily mean that Koreans rarely communicate with others about personal issues. People in different cultures may differ in *how* they share their positive events. Specifically, people in collectivistic cultures tend to communicate in a more implicit and nonverbal way, whereas people in individualistic cultures tend to communicate in a more explicit and verbal way (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Indeed, previous research demonstrated that Koreans used more implicit than explicit

social support seeking, whereas the reverse was true for European Americans (H. S. Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008). It would be interesting to test whether East Asians prefer implicit forms of capitalization to explicit ones. Also, researchers found with Americans that only an active-constructive response to capitalization attempts predicts personal and relational well-being (Gable et al., 2004). If nonverbal forms are preferred among East Asians, passive-constructive (mute support) responses may also be beneficial for their well-being.

Similarly, the present study only examined the default situation where people in each culture usually encounter. However, if an individual is in a particular situation where social norms or others' expected responses are different from the default situation, his or her behavior may change accordingly. For example, although Japanese are reticent in most situations, they tend to express anger when they have higher social status than others (Park et al., 2013). In this sense, there might be some situations where East Asians tell or even brag about their positive events more than European Americans.

Finally, we focused on cross-cultural differences in personal well-being in this research, but future research should examine the relational outcomes of capitalization attempts such as felt understanding. For example, Asians report feeling understood by others less than European Americans (Oishi, Akimoto, Richards, & Suh, 2013). When one suppresses their feelings and thoughts, others may have more difficulty reading the person's needs, which leads to lower relational well-being. Future research might elucidate this possibility.

Conclusion

Just as misery loves company (Schachter, 1959), good fortune also seeks company (Gable & Reis, 2010). Our findings, however, suggest that capitalization processes are saturated with cultural practices and meanings, which determine the likelihood of positive events being shared differently in a given culture. In addition, our findings suggest that the difference in capitalization attempts is one of the explanations for cultural variations in well-being.

Authors' Note

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Notes

1. We employed 90% confidence interval (CI) to calculate the CIs for η_p^2 because it indicates statistical significance at .05 (Steiger, 2004). We used a syntax file that was originally crafted by Michael Smithson and modified by Karl Wuensch (<http://core.ecu.edu/psyc/wuenschk/SPSS/SPSS-Programs.htm>).
2. The bootstrapped distribution of the parameter takes a nonnormal form, whereas the distribution for z value follows a normal distribution. Thus, 95% CIs for the bootstrapped distribution are not necessarily symmetric around the parameter estimate and may not include zero even when z value is less than 1.96.
3. The loading invariance for the latent well-being between two cultures was supported, $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 2.38, p > .05$.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

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