
Culture and Teasing: The Relational Benefits of Reduced Desire for Positive Self-Differentiation

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The authors hypothesized that teasing, a social interaction that benefits relational bonds at the expense of the self, should be viewed as more affiliative, and experienced as more pleasurable, by members of cultures that deemphasize positive self-differentiation. In four multimethod studies, Asian Americans attributed more affiliative intent to teasers and reported more positive target experience than did European Americans. Teaser behavior, attribution biases, and personality did not account for culture-related differences in teasing experience. Rather, childhood teasing may better prepare Asian American children to overlook a tease's affront to the self in favor of its relational rewards. Implications of deemphasizing positive self-differentiation in social interaction are discussed.

Keywords: *culture; teasing; self; positive emotion*

Cooperative social living often requires prioritizing others' welfare above individual self-interest. At times, this may require foregoing the pleasure of positive self-differentiation, which we define as social attention that highlights the positive, unique aspects of the self, in

the service of relationships. Teasing, a provoking yet playful practice that calls attention to imperfections of another's self, is one social interaction that imperils positive self-differentiation to the benefit of relational bonds (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001; Kowalski, 2001). Culture is relevant to this dynamic

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because positive self-differentiation is less sought after in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures (Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kwan, Bond, Boucher, Maslach, & Gan, 2002; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997). The present research reports four studies that test the hypothesis that members of collectivist cultures will enjoy teasing and see its prosocial ends more readily than will members of individualist cultures.

SELF-CONSTRUAL, POSITIVE DIFFERENCE, AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

The interdependent self is embedded within social relationships, roles, and duties (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Within this self-construal, differentiation from others is not a central motive and may even be undesirable (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In contrast, within independent self-construal, autonomy is prioritized, and striving for a sense of uniqueness and positive self-regard are central motives. It follows that members of collectivist cultures, where interdependent selves predominate, should be more willing to subordinate personal desires to benefit relationships (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Kagitcibasi, 1996).

Various findings support this claim. Asian American children, for example, embrace choices made on their behalf by significant others more than their European American counterparts (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). To promote relationship harmony, members of Asian cultures are less inclined toward self-enhancement, more willing to receive criticism, and respond to failure feedback by striving for self-improvement to meet socially desirable goals more than do members of individualistic cultures, who are more likely to discount negative information about the self (Heine et al., 1999, 2001; Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000). In a related vein, members of Asian cultures place less importance on the active pursuit of positive emotional experience than do European Americans and are more willing to delay positive emotion in the service of long-term goals (Eid & Diener, 2001; Heine et al., 1999; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002; Oishi, 2002). As evidence of sensitivity to others, Asians value self-critical emotions such as embarrassment and shame and attend more to nonverbal elements of communication, such as affective tone, than do European Americans (Ishii, Reyes, & Kitayama, 2003; Singelis & Sharkey, 1995).

Members of individualist cultures, in contrast, act in ways that maximize personal desire and positive self-regard (Fiske et al., 1998). Culturally independent individuals affirm positive self-perceptions by disassociating themselves from areas of poor performance and may sabotage close others to preserve or enhance a positive

self-evaluation (Heine et al., 2001; Tesser, 1988; Tesser & Collins, 1988). Members of individualist cultures actively seek positive emotion experience but regard self-critical emotions, such as shame and embarrassment, with aversion (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002; Singelis & Sharkey, 1995; Tsai & Levenson, 1997).

This pattern of findings connects a constellation of cultural differences to the value assigned to standing out positively vis-à-vis others versus the willingness to subordinate self-interest to benefit relationships. They also suggest differences in the enjoyment associated with being teased, where negative attention is called to the self in ways that often enhance relationships. Members of collectivist cultures should be less threatened by negative attention to the self and more attuned to the lighter, relationship-enhancing aspects of teasing; members of individualist cultures should find the costs to the self more salient and teasing more aversive. These predictions are brought into focus by a discussion of the nature of teasing and its relational consequences.

TEASING AS PLAYFUL PROVOCATION

Teasing is seen in most or all cultures (Brown, 1991; Shiefflin & Ochs, 1986) and encompasses diverse social practices ranging from affectionate nicknames to hostile bullying. This heterogeneous category of behaviors is brought to order by a definition that captures teasing's common elements: a playful provocation that comments on something of relevance to the target (Keltner et al., 2001). The provocation can be verbal (e.g., an insult or comment on deviant behavior) or nonverbal (e.g., a poke in the ribs) but is commonly a nonliteral verbal communication that calls negative attention to another as part of play (Keltner et al., 2001; Wyer & Collins, 1992). To communicate the playful intentions of a tease, teasers use "off-record" markers that convey affiliative intent and reduce the hostility of the provocation. Playful off-record markers include verbal comments (e.g., "just kidding"), facial displays (e.g., funny faces), grammatical devices (e.g., repetition, exaggeration), and prosodic cues (e.g., sing-song voice)—signals that a tease is not intended as a direct communication. Teases, then, are ambiguous communications that convey both negative and affiliative intent: The provocation conveys intent to call negative attention to another; off-record markers convey playful and affectionate intent. Given this ambiguity, the relational consequences of a tease depend on the extent to which the target interprets the tease as an affiliative gesture that highlights the bonds between people or as a hostile gesture that is an affront to the self (Kowalski, 2001; Wyer & Collins, 1992). For example, highly neurotic individuals, who are sensitive to negative

self-implications, find teasing quite aversive (Georgeson, Harris, Milich, & Young, 1999).

Although cultural differences in teasing experience have not been studied in the laboratory, ethnographies of collectivist cultures find that seemingly hostile teasing brings about affiliative consequences (Shiefflin & Ochs, 1986). For example, in Eisenberg's (1986) ethnography of teasing in a Latino family, teasing is common and what seems to be hostile teasing (e.g., an uncle calling his little niece *fea*, or ugly) actually increases closeness. Similarly, the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea report teasing where parents refer to their small children as "dog" or "retard" in ways that increase intimacy (Shiefflin & Ochs, 1986). Cultures that value social interaction that highlights uniquely positive features of the self are likely to view this type of teasing in more aversive terms (Kowalski, 2000, 2001).

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

We reasoned that the reduced emphasis on positive self-differentiation should make the relationship-enhancing aspects of teasing salient and, thus, more pleasurable for targets who are members of Asian cultures. In contrast, teasing should be less pleasurable for European American targets because relational bonds are affirmed at the expense of a positively different self. This analysis translated into three hypotheses. First, we expected Asian Americans to attribute more affiliative motives to teasers than did European Americans, who were expected to attribute more hostile motives to teasers. Second, we expected Asian Americans to report more positive emotion as the target of a tease than did European Americans, who were expected to regard teasing in more emotionally negative terms. Finally, as evidence that positive self-differentiation concerns contribute to cultural differences in teasing, we expected European Americans to find teasing more pleasing when lessened hostility and off-record markers reduced the negativity of a tease.

We tested these predictions by studying the behaviors, attributions, and emotions of U.S. Asian Americans and European Americans. Past research has shown that individuals of Asian descent in the United States remain more interdependent than do individuals of European descent (Gardner, Shira, & Lee, 1999; Singelis, 1994). To begin, we used a daily experience method that captured the rich variety of teasing experience in the course of everyday social interaction.

STUDY 1: TEASING IN EVERYDAY SOCIAL LIFE

Study 1 used daily experience sampling to capture the teasing experiences of Asian Americans and European Americans. This method had the advantage of capturing a

wide range of self-defined, self-generated teasing that is most representative of everyday experience. We predicted that Asian American targets would attribute more affiliative motives and report more emotionally positive experience than would European Americans. Previous research has not examined cultural differences in teaser behavior but does suggest that the relational consequences of teasing depend on target interpretation. Thus, we had no basis for expecting, and did not predict, teasing behavior to differ among Asian Americans and European Americans.

Method

Participants

Two hundred twenty-seven participants (163 women, 64 men) at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, participated in return for partial course credit. Of this initial sample, 177 individuals self-reported an Asian American (74 women, 29 men) or European American (51 women, 23 men) ethnic background and cultural identity and were retained for analyses.

Procedure

As part of a 3-day study of teasing, participants monitored their social interactions during 3 nonconsecutive days of a week (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday). At the end of each day, they used an online questionnaire to record all interactions in which they teased or were teased. To reduce the likelihood of capturing culturally specific types of teasing or constraining reportable behavior, teasing was broadly defined as "a common way that people joke and play around when they are with others" that could include "physical contact, practical jokes, rough and tumble play, nicknames, humorous banter, playful name-calling, poking fun, or sarcasm." To reduce the likelihood that participants would automatically construe teasing as exclusively hostile or affiliative in nature, the instructions stressed that teases could be "purely fun or hostile and antisocial."

Cultural identification. Prior to the study, all participants reported their ethnicity using one of 12 options common in California, and 61% filled out the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994). This 24-item scale measures the extent to which an individual's self-construal is independent or interdependent ($\alpha = .70$). Importantly, positive self-differentiation is part of an independent self-construal and the scale includes items that tap this desire (e.g., "I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards").

Tease experience. For each tease, participants self-reported (a) their role as teaser or target, (b) the duration of the tease, (c) the occurrence of teaser hostile behavior

and off-record markers, and (d) teaser and target laughter. Hostile teaser behavior was defined as aggressive, hostile, and sarcastic behavior. Off-record markers included unusual language and prosody, such as exaggerations, understatements, metaphors, emphatic stresses, and loud, rapid, delivery.

Attribution of teaser motives and tease outcome. Participants used 7-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) to rate the extent to which a teaser was motivated by one affiliative motive, emphasizing the closeness of the relationship, and two hostile motives, express criticism and express anger. These latter ratings were used to create a composite of teaser *hostility motives* (M of criticism and anger; $\alpha = .71$). On a similar scale, participants rated the extent to which the tease interaction positively affected the relationship and produced stress. A measure of *affiliative outcome* was created from mean ratings of (a) positive relationship impact, (b) stress (reverse-scored), (c) teaser's affiliation, and (d) teaser's hostility (reverse-scored; $\alpha = .65$).

Narrative tease reports. For each tease reported, participants described the persons involved, the setting, and the tease's delivery. Below are two examples:

I was at work making jokes about another employee, Robert, who was there at the time. I always tease Robert. He claims that he works out a lot but he has a huge belly. I poked his belly and asked why he did not laugh. I was hinting to the fact that he was the Pillsbury Dough Boy. We all laughed. I tease him all the time.

My sister and two friends had just finished watching a movie at a friend's house. We were joking around about passing gas and my sister gave us names of musical instruments based on how we each pass gas. Everyone thought it was hilarious.

Narrative coding. All narratives except those containing too little information or incomprehensible writing were coded (91% coded). Three pairs of assistants each coded one-third of the teases. From transcribed narratives, coders determined the relationship of the target to the teaser (e.g., friends, romantic partners, family, coworkers, strangers; $\alpha = .76$) and the setting of the tease (e.g., home, social event, work, school; $\alpha = .98$). For both groups, the majority of teases occurred in relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners (teaser episodes = 73%; target episodes = 82%) in a range of social settings.

Results

Data-Analytic Approaches

Asian Americans ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.38$) and European Americans ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.46$) reported comparable

numbers of teases across the 3-day study, $F(1, 163) = .08$, *ns*. Of these teases, an average of one interaction per day described an experience where the participant was either a teaser (31%) or target of a tease (26%).¹ To capture overall experience, composite indices were created by averaging the first teaser and target experience reported per day. The correlation structure among behavior, motive, and outcome variables was then examined and revealed the expected moderate negative relations between teaser hostility and target perception of affiliation motivation and outcome ($r_s = -.14$ and $-.29$, $p < .05$) and positive relations between teaser off-record markers and target perception of affiliation motivation and outcome ($r_s = .15$ and $.17$, $p < .05$). Hypotheses were then examined using 2 (culture: Asian American, European American) \times 2 (gender: male, female) ANOVAs unless otherwise noted.

Cultural identification. As expected, European Americans were higher on independent self-construal ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .45$) than were Asian Americans ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .39$), $F(1, 104) = 5.18$, $p < .05$, whereas Asian Americans were higher on interdependent self-construal ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .51$) than European Americans ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .48$), $F(1, 104) = 5.94$, $p < .05$. There were no gender differences for independent self-construal, but women were higher on interdependent self-construal ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .49$) than men ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .53$), $F(1, 104) = 4.93$, $p < .05$. Correlational analyses between the measures of self-construal and teasing yielded one significant correlation: independent self-construal was positively correlated with target perception of teaser hostility ($r = .20$, $p < .05$).

Teaser behavior, motives, emotional experience, and perceived outcome. The teaser behavior and experience of our two cultural groups were examined first. As Table 1 shows, our 2 \times 2 ANOVAs found no differences in teaser behavior, motives, laughter, or perceived tease outcome across cultural groups and gender.

Target perceptions of teaser behavior and motives. Asian American and European American teasers reported similar behaviors, and Table 1 shows that, as targets, they continued to perceive teasers to show similar levels of hostility and off-record markers. As expected, however, the two groups did differ in their interpretation of teaser behavior. A main effect for ethnicity showed Asian American targets ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.35$) attributed greater affiliative motives to teasers than did European Americans ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.57$), $F(1, 163) = 6.76$, $p < .05$. European Americans did not, however, attribute more hostile motives to teasers (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Study 1: Mean Ratings of Tease/Target Behavior, Teaser Motives, Self-Reported Laughter, and Tease Outcome

	Asian Americans				European Americans				Significance
	Men (n = 29)		Women (n = 74)		Men (n = 23)		Women (n = 51)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
<i>Teaser and Target Experience</i>									
Teaser experience									
Teaser hostile behavior	.42	.46	.53	.47	.41	.38	.52	.47	$F(1, 163) = .00, ns$
Teaser off-record markers	.42	.35	.30	.27	.38	.30	.41	.26	$F(1, 163) = 1.20, ns$
Teaser self-report affiliation motives	4.61	1.83	4.91	2.26	3.87	1.70	4.20	2.04	$F(1, 163) = .67, ns$
Teaser self-report hostile motives	1.66	.93	1.61	.94	1.47	.66	1.84	1.01	$F(1, 163) = .95, ns$
Teaser self-report laughter	.97	.12	.96	.14	.96	.14	.93	.22	$F(1, 163) = .04, ns$
Teaser affiliative tease outcome	3.52	.74	3.60	.78	3.50	.67	3.44	.61	$F(1, 163) = .21, ns$
Target experience									
Hostile behavior attributed to teaser	.55	.46	.50	.43	.72	.42	.57	.44	$F(1, 163) = .16, ns$
Off-record markers attributed to teaser	.42	.37	.34	.25	.41	.31	.25	.30	$F(1, 163) = .32, ns$
Affiliation motives attributed to teaser	5.49	1.10	5.06	1.43	4.42	1.62	4.48	1.54	$F(1, 163) = 6.76, p < .05$
Hostile motives attributed to teaser	1.85	1.14	1.74	1.04	2.24	1.51	1.95	1.09	$F(1, 163) = 3.01, ns$
Target self-reported laughter	.85	.34	.95	.15	.57	.50	.96	.20	$F(1, 163) = 4.76, p < .03$
Target affiliative tease outcome	3.35	.63	3.43	.79	3.07	.92	2.92	.73	$F(1, 163) = 5.32, p < .05$
Teases characteristics									
Tease duration	7.42	9.07	11.04	15.06	9.03	8.71	5.67	9.39	$F(1, 163) = 3.03, ns$
Number of people present	3.03	2.48	2.78	2.20	3.84	5.82	2.83	1.44	$F(1, 163) = .66, ns$

NOTE: $N = 177$. Cultural differences where $p < .05$ are highlighted in bold.

Target emotional experience and perception of tease outcome. As expected, target perception differences also extended to emotional experience and affiliative outcome. An ANOVA analysis of target laughter, a sign of positive emotion, revealed main effects for ethnicity and gender qualified by a significant higher order interaction. As Table 1 shows, European American male targets were the least likely to report experiencing laughter. In terms of affiliative outcome, a main effect for ethnicity showed that Asian American targets rated their teasing experiences as having a more affiliative outcome ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .79$) than European American targets ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .83$), $F(1, 163) = 5.32, p < .05$.

Tease characteristics. It was possible that situational characteristics influenced participant teasing experience, but our analysis of tease duration and number of people involved indicated no differences across cultural groups and gender (see Table 1).

Discussion

Consistent with hypotheses, Asian American targets attributed greater affiliative intent to teasers, reported more laughing, and perceived more affiliative outcomes than did European Americans. These cultural differences in the perceived meaning of teasing could not be attributed to culture-related differences in teasing frequency, teaser behavior, or facets of the context in which the tease occurred. Importantly, European American men,

our most independent participants, and the group most likely to value positive self-differentiation (Cross & Madson, 1997), enjoyed being teased the least, as indexed by their less frequent reports of target laughter. We interpret these differences as stemming from the tendency for members of individualist cultures to prioritize positive self-differentiation, which is threatened by teasing. Another alternative, however, is that these differing perceptions arise from culture-related differences in teaser behavior that the self-report nature of Study 1 did not capture. In Study 2, therefore, we examined the spontaneous teasing of Asian Americans and European Americans.

STUDY 2: TEASING BEHAVIOR OF ROMANTIC COUPLES

Study 2 examined the spontaneous nickname teasing of Asian American and European American romantic couples. Nicknames are a popular form of teasing and a reliable, controlled method for triggering teasing in the laboratory (e.g., Keltner, Young, Heery, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998). As in Study 1, we expected Asian American targets to attribute more affiliative intent to teasers and experience more positive emotion in response to behaviorally similar teasing. This close-up analysis of actual teasing behavior also allowed a test of our third hypothesis: European Americans would report more positive target experience when less hostility and

more off-record markers reduced the threat to positive self-differentiation presented by more negative teasing.

Method

Participants

Fifty heterosexual, same-ethnicity couples who had been in a romantic relationship for an average of 17 months were recruited at UC Berkeley. Couples were recruited via flyers posted on campus; announcements to fraternities, sororities, and ethnic studies classes; and recruiting calls to the UC Berkeley participation pool. To qualify for participation, both partners had to identify as primarily having either an Asian American ($n = 24$) or European American ($n = 26$) ethnic identity. Each couple received \$30 to \$50 or partial class credit in return for participation.²

Procedure

Couples took part in one laboratory session lasting approximately 90 min. During the session, participants completed self-report measures and engaged in four semi-structured, videotaped interactions. Self-report measures of personality, relationship satisfaction, ethnicity, and cultural background were completed in separate rooms. Participants were then returned to the videotaping room and seated in chairs facing each other. The experimenter guided the interactions via video monitor and intercom from a separate room. The first interaction was the teasing task. The next three, which are not reported here, were discussions of current concerns, past partners, and the couple's first date. Interactions were videotaped using two semiconcealed cameras placed inside bookshelves that faced participant chairs. A total of six experimenters (3 women, 1 man blind to hypotheses, and the first and fourth authors) conducted sessions.

Nickname teasing task. Each participant was assigned one of two randomly generated pairs of initials, A. D. and L. I. (assignment was balanced by gender). Following Keltner et al. (1998), couples were instructed to use the initials to generate a nickname for their partner and a brief story justifying the nickname based on actual or hypothetical events. Participants were encouraged to say whatever they liked without worrying about profanity or lewdness. Once nicknames were generated, participants were directed to take turns sharing the nickname and story with their partner (e.g., "ass detective" for a female partner prone to observations about others' size; "little-bit annoying" for a male partner who rises too early for his partner's taste).

Coding of tease behavior. Teaser behavior was coded by four research assistants (two women, two men of

varying ethnicity) who were blind to hypotheses. To measure the behavioral provocation of the tease, coders rated how dominant, aggressive, humiliating, and hostile the teaser was toward the target (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *definitely*; $\alpha = .81$). These four codes were used to create a composite index of the teaser's *hostile provocation* ($\alpha = .82$). To capture the affiliative, playful content of the tease, coders recorded the presence and frequency of the following off-record markers: exaggeration; understatement; metaphors; emphatic stress; a loud, rapid delivery; and flattery or praise (coder reliability, $\kappa = .49$). Exaggeration was defined as "use of detail, profanity, and characterizations about behavior described as deviating beyond reality or possibility"; understatement as "underplaying behavior by describing it as below reality or possibility, similar to sarcasm"; metaphor as "using a concept or idea to stand in for another concept or idea"; loud, rapid delivery as "a sudden increase in speed of talking and unusual shifts in volume"; and flattery/praise as "praising or making references to partner's accomplishments." An *off-record marker* index was created by aggregating the frequency of all off-record markers ($\alpha = .60$).

Attribution of teaser motives. Following each nickname exchange, participants used 8-point Likert scales (0 = *not a motive at all*, 7 = *a very strong motive*) to rate the extent to which their partner's teasing was motivated by one affiliative motive, emphasize the closeness of the relationship, and two hostile motives, expressing criticism and expressing anger or hostility. These latter two were averaged into a *hostility motives* composite ($\alpha = .70$).

Emotional experience. Immediately after each partner shared a teasing nickname, participants reported their target emotions by rating how much amusement, anger, contempt, disgust, and happiness they felt during the interaction using 9-point Likert scales (0 = *no emotion*, 8 = *extreme emotion*). Ratings of amusement and happiness were averaged to create a *positive emotion* index ($\alpha = .72$); ratings of anger, contempt, and disgust were averaged to create a *hostile emotion* index ($\alpha = .70$).

Cultural identification, relationship satisfaction, and personality. Participants reported their ethnic background and cultural identity via open-ended response to the question, "What culture do you identify most with?" Asian American couples self-identified as East Asian, South Asian, or Pacific Islander; European American couples largely self-identified as Western European or unknown European ethnic and cultural background. Participants also completed the 16 scenarios measure of individualism-collectivism (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990).

To measure relationship satisfaction and personality, participants completed a version of the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) modified for dating relationships (Locke & Wallace, 1959) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI), a self-report measure of the five-factor model of personality (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The 22-item MAT has previously been used to measure relationship satisfaction in dating couples (Keltner et al., 1998) and the 44-item BFI has good psychometric properties (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Results

Because data derived from each participant were dependent on his or her partner, hypotheses were tested using gender as a repeated measure unless otherwise noted.

Cultural identification. Independent-sample *t* tests were performed on the sum of individualist and collectivist answers selected as first-choice responses to the scenarios by European Americans and Asian Americans. As expected, European Americans were more individualistic ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 1.38$) than were Asian Americans ($M = 9.21$, $SD = 1.55$), $t(96) = 3.67$, $p < .05$, and Asian Americans ($M = 6.72$, $SD = 1.48$) were more collectivistic than European Americans ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.37$), $t(96) = -3.93$, $p < .05$. An examination of the relationship between individualist/collectivist answers and teaser/target experience revealed one significant relation: Individualism was correlated with couple hostile behavior among European Americans ($r = .41$, $p < .05$) but not Asian Americans ($r = .05$, *ns*).

Tease behavior. The correlation structure among behavior, motives, and emotional experience variables was first examined. Again, teaser hostility showed moderate negative relationships with target affiliative motive attribution and positive emotion (r s from $-.24$ to $-.26$, $p < .05$). Teaser off-record markers, however, did not relate to target perception of affiliation motivation and positive emotion (r range from $-.04$ to $.12$, *ns*)—a point we return to in the moderator regression analyses described below. To test for differences in teaser behavior, we conducted 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs with gender as a repeated measure on teaser hostile provocation and off-record markers. As Table 2 shows, Asian Americans and European Americans did not differ in provocation, $F(1, 47) = .01$, *ns*, or the use of playful, off-record markers, $F(1, 47) = 1.49$, *ns*.

Attribution of teaser motives. A paired samples *t* test showed that targets viewed their partner's tease as more motivated by the desire to express closeness ($M = 4.16$,

$SD = 1.69$) than *hostility* ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .89$), $t(49) = 9.59$, $p < .001$. Two (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs with gender as a repeated measure found one Culture \times Gender interaction for the closeness motive. As Table 2 shows, Asian American men were more likely than European American men to attribute emphasizing closeness to their partner's teases, $F(1, 47) = 3.55$, $p = .07$. There were no culture or gender differences in target perception of teaser hostility motives.

Emotional experience. Paired *t* tests showed that targets reported experiencing more positive emotion ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.26$) than hostile emotion ($M = 0.39$, $SD = .77$), $t(49) = 21.26$, $p < .001$. As expected, however, 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs with gender as a repeated measure showed Asian American targets reported significantly more positive emotion ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 1.00$) than did European American targets ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 48) = 9.21$, $p < .05$. There were no ethnic or gender differences in target experience of hostile emotion, $F(1, 48) = .28$, *ns* (see Table 2).

Sensitivity to positive self-differentiation. We expected European Americans would report more positive target experience when less hostility and more off-record markers reduced the threat to positive self-differentiation presented by more negative teasing. To test this prediction, we conducted moderator regression analyses on the hostile provocation and off-record marker variables. As Figure 1 shows, European American targets felt more positive emotion as their partner teased with less hostility ($r = -.46$, $p < .05$), but this was not true of Asian Americans ($r = -.09$, *ns*), although the interaction did not reach conventional levels of significance ($\beta = -.29$, *ns*), a result likely due to our small sample size. As Figure 2 shows, European American targets' positive experience was positively correlated with partner use of off-record markers ($r = .29$, $p = .14$), whereas this relationship was negative among Asian Americans ($r = -.50$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .26$, $p < .05$). Asian American and European American teaser behavior was similar, but these subtle behaviors led to different emotional outcomes for members of the two cultures.

Alternative explanations: Relationship satisfaction and personality. Satisfied romantic partners and agreeable individuals enjoy teasing more (Keltner et al., 1998, 2001). Were our Asian American couples more satisfied or agreeable and therefore enjoyed teasing more? Two (culture) \times 2 (gender) between-subjects ANOVAs on relationship satisfaction and BFI Agreeableness found no culture-related differences, $F(1, 96) = .05$, *ns*; $F(1, 96) = 2.05$, *ns*, respectively. In addition, agreeableness and relationship satisfaction did not

TABLE 2: Study 2: Teaser Behavior, Attributed Teaser Motives, and Target Emotional Experience for Asian American and European American Romantic Couples

	Asian Americans (n = 24)		European Americans (n = 26)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Teaser behavior				
Hostile provocation	1.85 (.96)	2.04 (.98)	2.04 (1.20)	2.02 (1.21)
Off-record markers	2.38 (2.53)	3.13 (4.05)	2.76 (3.50)	2.68 (3.02)
Attributed teaser motives				
Emphasize closeness	4.71 (1.94)	4.54 (2.00)	3.20 (2.12)	4.23 (1.90)
Express hostility	1.86 (1.37)	1.52 (1.25)	2.49 (1.87)	2.08 (1.53)
Target emotional experience				
Positive emotion	6.17 (1.57)	5.79 (1.69)	5.18 (1.56)	4.84 (1.98)
Hostile emotion	.35 (.81)	.24 (.59)	.39 (.68)	.45 (.88)

NOTE: N = 100. Cultural differences where $p < .05$ are highlighted in bold.

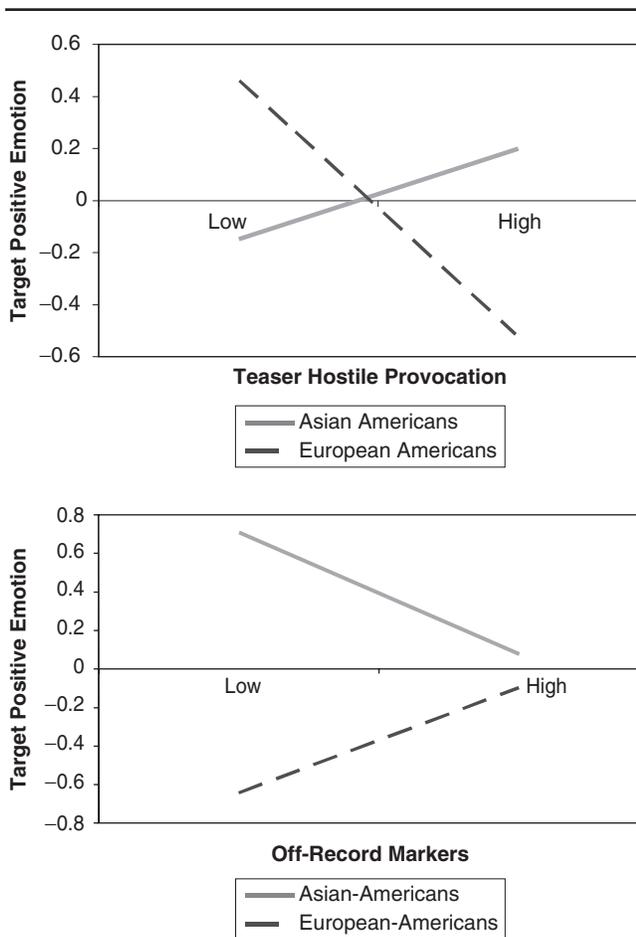


Figure 1 The influence of less hostile provocation and more off-record markers on Asian American and European American target positive emotional experience in Study 2

relate to any of the teaser behavior or target experience variables ($r_s = -.04$ to $.22$, ns ; $r_s = .03$ to $.23$, ns , respectively).

Discussion

Romantic partners tease to express affection and negotiate conflicts (Keltner et al., 2001) and the teasing interactions of our dating couples were largely positive experiences. Despite the overtly positive context, however, couples from Asian American and European American cultural backgrounds did not report equally positive experiences. Asian Americans attributed more affiliative intentions to teasers than did European American men but not European American women, and Asian Americans experienced more positive emotion than did European Americans. In short, European Americans, particularly men, continued to perceive teasing in more negative terms. These differences in target experience could not be attributed to cultural differences in teasing behavior, relationship satisfaction, or personality, which were not observed. Instead, we suggest that these differences follow from the value that European Americans place on positive self-differentiation, a claim that was partially supported by the moderator regression analyses showing that European American targets experienced more positive emotion when teased with behaviors—reduced hostility and increased off-record markers—that are attuned to protecting the positive self of the target of the tease. In contrast, Asian American targets actually experienced less positive emotion when their partners used more off-record markers. Asian American targets may have perceived their partner’s pronounced efforts to go off-record as a sign of reduced intimacy, a possibility that is consistent with analyses of off-record communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). We hasten to note, however, that these interactions were weaker than expected and should be replicated in future work.

Our first two studies suggest that positive-difference concerns, not teaser behavior or personality, account for culture-related differences in teasing. However,

these differences may reflect a more general bias for Asian Americans to view teasing in more positive ways or European Americans to view teasing in more negative ways. To examine this possibility, Study 3 used tease vignettes to examine how the social context and content of a tease influence Asian American and European American perceptions of target experience.

STUDY 3: JUDGMENTS OF THE TEASING OF CLOSE AND DISTANT OTHERS

In Study 3, Asian Americans and European Americans judged teasing vignettes that varied in social context (close others or strangers) and tease content (affiliative or hostile). In contrast to the more naturalistic methods of Studies 1 and 2, vignettes allowed us to hold tease content and context constant across the two groups. Because positive differentiation from close others is desirable to European Americans relative to Asian Americans, we predicted that cultural differences in the perceived intentions and outcomes of the tease would be most pronounced when judging the affiliative teasing of close others. We advanced this prediction because the lack of affiliative intent should be transparent in more hostile teasing by close others and because research has shown that members of collectivist cultures do not prioritize relational concerns over self-interest with outgroups or strangers (Fiske et al., 1998; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1994).

Method

Participants

One hundred eighty-nine participants (105 women, 84 men) attending UC Berkeley participated in exchange for partial course credit or \$5. From the initial sample, 160 participants self-reported either an Asian American (50 women, 41 men) or European American (37 women, 32 men) ethnic background and were retained for analyses.

Procedure

Participants arrived for a study on social experience that consisted of reading about four teasing interactions and making judgments. After judging the vignettes, participants completed the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) and demographic measures assessing sex, age, ethnic background, and cultural identification.

Tease vignettes. To obtain representative teases, four research assistants identified two narratives from Study 1 involving (a) affiliative teasing among close others, (b) hostile teasing among close others, (c) affiliative teasing among relative strangers, and (d) hostile teasing among

relative strangers. A second team of research assistants rated these eight teases for affiliation and hostility using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). For each category, the tease rated highest in affiliation or hostility was modified for length (3-6 lines long) while retaining the spirit of the tease. The final vignettes, shown below, were presented in partially counterbalanced order. In all cases, affiliative teases appeared before hostile teases, but half the packets presented close other teases first and the other half presented stranger teases first.³

Affiliative with close other. My brother was tickling me and testing my reaction to getting tickled. He said I have weird problems or something like that. I just laughed and said, "Of course I have weird problems, I had to live with you!"

Affiliative with stranger. One person put a piece of lettuce on another's back. Then three of us were making fun of the person with the lettuce on him saying that he was growing something out of his shoulder. We were teasing him and he did not even notice it. Everyone laughed and teased him for having something on his shoulder.

Hostile with close other. We were eating dinner (my mother, father, older sister, grandmother, cousin, aunt, and myself) and I was talking about how I was interested maybe a little later in my life to be involved in organic farming. My older sister started laughing out loud and said, "Oh my God! Talk about ruining your education!"

Hostile with stranger. I was putting on my backpack when my roommate's boyfriend asked where I was going. I said I was going climbing. He said "What?" My roommate replied, "She goes out on the weekends sometimes with this club where she is alone in the woods with a bunch of strange guys." I laughed, partly because it was true. Before I could say anything else, her boyfriend says, "You're such a little whore." I just said, "I'll see you guys later" and left.

Attribution of teaser motives and tease outcome. For teaser motives, participants used 8-point Likert scales (0 = *not a motive at all*, 7 = *a very strong motive*) to rate the extent to which the teaser was motivated to emphasize closeness or express hostility/criticism. For tease outcomes, participants used 7-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very*) to rate the affection/friendliness of the tease for positive outcome and the hostility/criticism of the tease for negative outcome.

Cultural identification. After rating the interactions, participants self-reported ethnicity and completed the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994).

Results

Cultural identification. One-way ANOVAs found that European Americans were higher on independent self-construal ($M = 4.92$, $SD = .72$) than were Asian

Americans ($M = 4.63$, $SD = .69$), $F(1, 157) = 6.68$, $p < .05$, whereas Asian Americans were higher on interdependent self-construal ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .79$) than were European Americans ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .71$), $F(1, 157) = 31.28$, $p < .05$. There were no gender differences in self-construal. Correlational analyses revealed that the measure of independent self-construal correlated with attribution of hostile motives ($r = .16$, $p < .03$) and hostile tease outcome ($r = .15$, $p < .03$) across the four vignettes.

Attribution of teaser motives. We expected culture-related differences to only be evident in the close other affiliative context, predicting that Asian Americans would attribute more affiliative intent to the teaser than would European Americans, who, sensitive to the threat to positive self-differentiation, would attribute greater hostile intent to the tease. We used planned comparison ANOVAs to test these hypotheses.

With respect to the close other teases, 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs yielded the expected effects: Asian Americans were more likely to perceive the affiliative tease by a close other as being motivated by the desire to emphasize closeness ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.34$) than were European Americans ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.49$), $F(1, 156) = 5.65$, $p < .05$. In contrast, European Americans rated the same tease as more motivated by the desire to express hostility ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.46$) than Asian Americans ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.08$), $F(1, 156) = 4.98$, $p < .05$. These differences did not appear to result from a generalized bias on the part of Asian Americans to view all close other teases positively. Both groups rated the close other's hostile tease as motivated by similar levels of closeness ($M = 2.77$ vs. $M = 2.51$), $F(1, 156) = 1.17$, *ns*, and hostility ($M = 3.15$ vs. $M = 3.65$), $F(1, 156) = 3.09$, *ns*.

With regard to the stranger teases, 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs found that both groups rated the stranger teasers in similar ways. In making attributions for the stranger's affiliative tease, Asian and European Americans attributed similar levels of desire to express closeness ($M = 2.68$ vs. $M = 2.32$), $F(1, 156) = 2.67$, *ns*, and hostility ($M = 3.70$ vs. $M = 3.83$), $F(1, 156) = .23$, *ns*. In making attributions for stranger's hostile tease, individuals from both groups also attributed similar levels of desire to express closeness ($M = 2.23$ vs. $M = 2.00$), $F(1, 156) = .98$, *ns*. Unexpectedly, however, Asian Americans rated the stranger's hostile tease as less motivated by hostility ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.51$) than did European Americans ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.64$), $F(1, 156) = 5.92$, $p < .05$.

Attribution of tease outcome. Similar analyses provided partial support for the prediction that Asian Americans would perceive the close other's affiliative tease to have a more positive outcome. Two (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs showed that Asian Americans and

European Americans ($M = 5.41$ vs. $M = 5.32$) perceived the affiliative tease by a close other to have a similarly positive outcome, $F(1, 155) = .31$, *ns*. However, Asian Americans rated this tease as having a less negative outcome ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.23$) than did European Americans ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 155) = 5.63$, $p < .05$. There were no culture-related differences in the close other's hostile tease for positive outcome ($M = 2.82$ vs. $M = 2.63$), $F(1, 156) = .77$, *ns*, or in negative outcome ($M = 4.95$ vs. $M = 5.12$), $F(1, 156) = .57$, *ns*. Thus, Asian Americans were somewhat more likely to attribute positive outcomes to the close other's affiliative tease, but both groups converged in their ratings of the close other's hostile tease.

With regard to the stranger's tease, 2 (culture) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs showed that both groups again rated the teases of strangers in similar ways. Asian Americans and European Americans attributed similar positive ($M = 2.77$ vs. $M = 2.78$), $F(1, 155) = .00$, *ns*, and negative ($M = 4.03$ vs. $M = 4.22$), $F(1, 155) = .64$, *ns*, outcomes to the stranger's affiliative teasing and similar positive outcomes for the stranger's hostile teasing ($M = 2.54$ vs. $M = 2.39$), $F(1, 156) = .40$, *ns*. Unexpectedly, Asian Americans rated the stranger's hostile tease as having a less negative outcome ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.60$) than did European Americans ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.42$), $F(1, 156) = 4.46$, $p < .04$.

Discussion

Converging with the results of our first two studies, Asian Americans were more likely than European Americans to regard affiliative teases among close others as having more relationship-affirming motives and outcomes. This tendency could not be ascribed to a more general hostile or charitable attributional bias (e.g., Dodge & Coie, 1987) on the part of European Americans or Asian Americans, respectively: Individuals from both cultures made similar, hostile attributions to the hostile teasing of close others. Both groups also made largely similar attributions to the teases of strangers, although Asian Americans unexpectedly rated the hostile stranger tease as being somewhat less hostile than did their European American counterparts.

Across three studies using varying methods, Asian Americans perceived teasing that occurred predominantly with close others as more affiliative in intent, and more generative of pleasure, than did European Americans. How might these differences originate? One possibility is in the social practices of early life in which independent and interdependent selves are actively developed and where the social meaning of behaviors such as teasing are constructed (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1994). If so, we might expect Asian American and European American early teasing experience to differ in the

TABLE 3: Study 4: Examples of Family Nicknames Given to Participants

	<i>Nickname</i>	<i>Reason Given</i>	<i>Age</i>
Asian American	Cat	Behavioral characteristics similar to a cat—screeching, meowing	8
	Miss Piggy	Born year of pig	8
	Little Man	I was very small for my age	10
European American	Mr. Perfect	To make fun of my brothers whenever they made a mistake or did something wrong	12
	Jen Jen	Endearing term	7
	Pumpkin	Affection	8

extent to which teasing that pokes fun at the self is socialized as relationally positive. Whereas Asian American family teasing may teach young children that provocative teasing is fun and affectionate, the early family teasing of European Americans might more overtly emphasize positive qualities of the self. Study 4 examined this possibility in a retrospective study of childhood nicknames.

STUDY 4: FAMILY NICKNAMES AS LESSONS IN TEASING

Asian mothers have been noted to encourage children to be self-critical as a means of fostering self-improvement and connection to others (Heine et al., 1999). European American mothers, in contrast, are more likely to stress children's building a sense of positive self-difference (Chao, 1994; Fiske et al., 1998). These observations suggest that European American parents may shy away from provocative teasing that challenges a child's developing positive sense of self. To examine the origins of the culture-related differences in teasing we have observed thus far, in Study 4, participants recalled their childhood nicknames. We expected the early childhood family nicknames of Asian Americans to be critical yet affectionate and those of European Americans to be more exclusively positive.

Method

Participants

One hundred thirty-seven participants (75 women, 61 men, 1 unstated gender) attending UC Berkeley were recruited to participate in exchange for partial course credit or \$5. From the initial sample, 114 participants self-reported an Asian American (30 women, 26 men) or European American (29 women, 29 men) ethnic background and cultural identity.

Procedure

Participants who volunteered for a study on teasing in everyday life were given a study packet that included the nickname recall task and demographic questions.

Ethnic identification. Participants reported ethnicity using one of 12 options common in California and ethnicity was broken down into Asian American and European American.

Nickname task. The instructions asked participants to "think back to nicknaming experiences with family of the same cultural background" in their answers. Participants free-listed all "nicknames you've been called" on one page of the study packet. For each nickname, participants reported why the nickname was given, their relationship to the teaser, and the age when the nickname was first used. Nickname examples are shown on Table 3.

Nickname valence. Nicknames were coded by the first author, blind to participants' ethnicity and gender. The fourth author, blind to hypotheses as well as ethnicity and gender, coded one-third of the nicknames to establish reliability. Participants' nicknames and explanations for why the nickname was given were coded using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very*) to rate the extent to which the nicknames were affectionate ($\alpha = .75$), critical ($\alpha = .86$), and humorous ($\alpha = .68$).

Results

Nickname characteristics. Independent sample *t* tests found no differences in the total number of family nicknames Asian Americans ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 1.31$) and European Americans ($M = 1.16$, $SD = 1.27$) recalled, $t(112) = -.64$, *ns*.

Nickname valence. On average, participants recalled receiving family nicknames at age 9. To test our central hypothesis—that Asian Americans would recall more critical but equally affectionate family nicknames than would European Americans—we used independent samples *t* tests. As expected, Asian Americans reported more critical nicknames ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.68$) than did European Americans ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(61) = 1.96$, $p < .05$. Both groups, however, reported nicknames that were equally affectionate ($M = 4.11$ vs. $M = 4.56$) and humorous ($M = 3.78$ vs. $M = 3.63$), $t(61) = -1.07$, *ns*, and $t(61) = -.37$, *ns*, respectively.

Discussion

One means through which Asian Americans may come to perceive similar kinds of teasing to be more affiliative than European Americans is through childhood experiences in which the meanings of complex social behaviors are constructed through the lens of culture. In asking participants to recall their childhood nicknames, we used a method that is admittedly indirect and prone to self-report and memory biases. Nonetheless, Asian Americans reported family nicknames that were more critical of the self and, we would argue, tokens of interactions that better prepared them to enjoy the pleasures and relational benefits of provocative teasing. In contrast, European Americans recalled early family nicknames that were not as critical and more purely self-affirming. This more positive family teasing increases the likelihood that European Americans first encounter more provoking teasing outside the family context, among friends or in more overtly hostile encounters with nonfriend peers (Scambler, Harris, & Milich, 1998) and, consequently, may grow to find provoking teasing more aversive.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across four studies, Asian Americans found teasing to be more affiliative and emotionally positive than did European Americans. Consistent with research showing that Asians are less concerned with positive difference (Kim & Markus, 1999) and less threatened by negative information about the self (Heine et al., 2001), Asian Americans were more willing to overlook the negative self-implications of being teased. In doing so, they were better able to reap the relational rewards of teasing—shared laughter and enhanced closeness. European Americans, in contrast, perceived teasing to be more evocative of negative emotion and negative relational outcomes. These culture-related differences could not be attributed to differences in teasing behavior. Neither self-reported behavior in Study 1 nor our intensive coding of videotaped teasing behavior in Study 2 found cultural differences, suggesting that European Americans attributed more hostile motives and experienced less positive emotion in response to fairly similar teasing. In addition, these differences could not be attributed to culture-related differences in the context in which teasing occurred (Study 1), personality and relationship satisfaction (Study 2), or a more generalized hostile or charitable attributional bias (Studies 2 and 3). Rather, the converging pattern of evidence suggests that differing value placed on positive self-differentiation contributes to this pattern of results. Indeed, in Study 2, there was some indication that the pleasure that European Americans experienced while being teased was associated with the more positive

content of the tease—less hostility and more off-record markers.

The gender differences that we observed further support a positive self-differentiation account of variation in teasing. European American men place more value on positive self-differentiation and are less relationally oriented than women (Cross & Madson, 1997; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). In the present research, European American men reported the least frequent laughter when being teased (Study 1), and they were the least inclined to attribute their romantic partner's teasing to the desire to express closeness (Study 2). Consistent with previous work suggesting that cultural differences in sensitivity to the self-enhancing or self-critical implications of social situations are stronger among men than women (Kitayama et al., 1997), these findings suggest that culture-related differences in teasing experience may be amplified among men.

The present research advances our understanding of culture in several ways. Heine and colleagues have documented that Asians, and to some extent Asian Americans, are less threatened by criticism and more likely to respond by trying to improve the self. Here, we present evidence indicating that this reduced emphasis on positive self-differentiation can enhance the pleasure of interactions such as teasing, where the self foregoes standing out positively for the benefit of relationships. This pattern also dovetails with evidence showing that members of collectivist cultures attach a more positive valence to self-conscious emotions than do members of individualist cultures (Singelis & Sharkey, 1995). Teases frequently embarrass targets, but valuing self-conscious emotions as signals of appropriate regard for others may further allow Asian American targets to enjoy teasing more than their European American counterparts.

It is noteworthy that Asian Americans consistently reported greater positive emotion associated with being teased than did European Americans, a finding that on the surface contradicts studies showing that members of collectivist cultures experience lower levels of positive emotion relative to members of individualist cultures (Eid & Diener, 2001; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002; but see Oishi, 2002). This result, however, nicely fits the observation that in collectivist cultures, positive emotions are more likely to occur in socially engaged situations (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, in press; Mesquita, 2001). In situations that first satisfy relationship goals, members of collectivist cultures may more consistently experience elevated positive emotion and derive greater benefit from these experiences (Kagitcibasi, 1996).

Do these findings generalize to other social interactions? We suspect so. Teasing is representative of numerous social interactions where relational rewards are gained at the expense of positive self-differentiation. Low

status roles, for example, require some subordination of self-interest for the benefit of others. Ethnographic studies have found that members of collectivist cultures seem to find low-status roles more rewarding than do members of individualist cultures (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Eisenberg, 1986). Other interactions that might produce greater pleasure for members of collectivist cultures could include conflict resolution, lasting monogamy, and working toward collective goals.

Alongside the contribution of the present research, we hasten to note its limitations. Our work was short on direct measurement of positive self-differentiation, in part because of the absence of measures of this construct. We measured independence-individualism in three of four studies because positive self-differentiation is an important component of independence (Fiske et al., 1998; Kim & Markus, 1999) and, indeed, independence-individualism showed a consistent positive relationship to perception of tease hostility. However, we understand that positive difference is part of a constellation of cultural differences centering around independent-interdependent selves. Other cultural differences, such as cultural differences in norms or epistemologies, also may have contributed to variation in teasing experience. For example, Asian Americans find greater meaning and pleasure in contradictory or dialectical communications than do European Americans (Peng & Nisbett, 1999) and might enjoy teasing more for this reason. Asian Americans also appear to be more sensitive to intonational features of communication than do European Americans, which again could account for some of our findings (Ishii et al., 2003). These possibilities warrant further exploration. The creation of direct measures of positive self-differentiation would help explicate how positive self-differentiation shapes perceptions of complex social interactions such as teasing.

More systematic experimental work could balance our focus on capturing the most naturalistic and representative teasing and definitively address whether the differences we have observed are due to differences in context, content, or the collective meaning assigned to teasing itself. For example, Kitayama and colleagues have found that identical events carry different social meaning to Japanese and European Americans. Although similar self-esteem-relevant scenarios were generated by both groups, each preferred scenarios generated by their own group, which corresponded with the collective meaning assigned by each culture to self-enhancing or self-critical information. With richer descriptions of teasing experiences than those provided by our participants, one could use similar methods, presenting teases of one culture to those of another to ascertain more clearly whether it is the interpretive tendency associated with the culture, or the content of the tease, that gives rise to differences in teasing experience.

The cultural context in which most European Americans live assumes that people “strive first and foremost to feel good about the self” (Fiske et al., 1998, p. 920). Global happiness is related to positive feelings about the self and positive emotion is sought after (Diener & Diener, 1996; Oishi, 2002). Teasing has been controversial in Western society, due in part to the culture’s difficulty with reconciling the relational benefits of teasing with the negative attention to the self. When the emphasis on positive self-differentiation is reduced, however, amusement is mutual and the relationship is enhanced—in short, the interpersonal pleasures of teasing stand out.

NOTES

1. The remaining teases were more complex interactions where participants reported being teaser and target simultaneously. These are beyond the scope of the present study and are not discussed further.
2. Compensation was raised midway to advance recruitment.
3. This order was used to avoid contaminating perception of affiliative teases with more hostile teases.

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