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Cross-Cultural Differences in Supportive Responses to Positive Event Disclosure

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Abstract

Perceived reactions to sharing of good news (*capitalization)*, can have important implications for romantic relationships. Typically, when European Americans perceive that their partners respond in an active constructive (versus passive and/or destructive,) manner, they tend to perceive their partners as more responsive and report higher relationship quality. However, cross-cultural differ- ences in norms can influence peoples' preference for different capitalization responses and whether different capitalization responses convey partner responsiveness. In a combined sample of European Americans, East, and South Asians (N = 915), we investigated whether links among capitalization responses, perceived partner responsiveness, and relationship quality differed by culture. People who perceived active constructive and passive destructive responses reported higher and lower levels of partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction, respectively. Further, European Americans who perceived active destructive, and European Americans and East Asians who perceived passive constructive, responses, reported less partners responsiveness and relationship satisfaction. South Asians who perceived passive constructive responses reported greater partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction. East and South Asians who perceived active destructive responses did not differ in relationship satisfaction. Our findings provide a cross- cultural perspective on the study of romantic couples' positive event disclosure and expand capitalization research to an understudied sample of South Asians.

Keywords: perceived responses to capitalization attempts, good news sharing, cross-cultural, close relationships

Cross-Cultural Differences in Supportive Responses to Positive Event Disclosure

Good things happen to us in our everyday lives. When people disclose positive events to their partners, they hope to receive support, amplify positive emotions (Gable et al., 2004), and develop stronger relationships with their partners. Whereas previous research has typically focused on examining partner responses during times of stress (e.g., bad news or conflict discussions), researchers have more recently expanded examinations of partner disclosure to include both positive and negative events (Feeney & Collins, 2015). In this context, social support can not only mitigate negative consequences of an adverse situation (i.e., a return to homeostasis), but can also provide opportunity for dyadic growth in the absence of adversity (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

Capitalization, or the act of disclosing good news to romantic partners, can be one avenue for growth in relationships. Capitalization can enhance relationship quality above and beyond the benefits related to the good news itself (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994). Perceived responses to capitalization attempts (PRCA), or disclosers' perceptions of partners' responses to disclosers sharing of good news, can also affect relationship quality. Specifically, when disclosers perceive their partners' responses as supportive and enthusiastic, they may also perceive their partners as more responsive and their relationship as higher in quality. Conversely, when disclosers perceive their partners' responses as non-supportive or dispassionate, disclosers' perceptions of their partners' responsiveness and relational quality may be lower (Gable et al., 2006).

Research on capitalization focuses primarily on Western or European American participants (Choi et al., 2019), neglecting cross-cultural variations in communication norms and preferences that could influence interaction patterns in romantic relationships and links between PRCAs and relationship outcomes (see Demir et al., 2013 for exceptions; Donato et al., 2014).

For instance, although people in Western cultures typically prefer individual expression and direct communication styles, people in Asian cultures tend to prefer a more passive and indirect communication style that enhances group harmony (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Thus, associations between different types of PRCA and relationship outcomes may differ across cultures in terms of (1) how frequently people display and perceive different types of PRCA, and (2) which variants of PRCA best convey partner responsiveness. To address these possibilities, we examined whether people from Western and Asian cultures differ in terms of 1) frequency in perceiving the four types of PRCA; and 2) how PRCAs are associated with perceived partner responsiveness and relationship quality.

Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts

Perceived responses to capitalization attempts are thought to vary along two orthogonal dimensions: active versus passive capitalization, and constructive versus destructive capitalization. These orthogonal dimensions are originally drawn from previous work examining negative forms of communication in workplace and romantic relationships (Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult et al., 1982). Recently, these dimensions have also been applied to positive event disclosure. The first dimension (i.e., active/passive) captures the extent to which disclosers are actively engaged in behaviors to affect the relationship rather being passive and disengaged. The second dimension (i.e., constructive/destructive) captures the degree to which partners' responses are perceived as attempts to maintain and/or grow the relationship rather than attempts to undermine the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1982).

In capitalization research, the combination of the two dimensions yields four categories of disclosers' perceptions of partners' responses to the sharing of good news: active constructive, active destructive, passive constructive, and passive destructive (Gable et al., 2004). For

example, imagine a discloser who shares good news of a job promotion to their partner. A*ctive-constructive* responses are characterized by support and enthusiasm, such as 'Good job! I am so happy for you! Let's celebrate!' *Active-destructive* responses are characterized by more disparaging and critical responses, such as 'Are you sure you can handle this? This promotion sounds like a lot of work.' *Passive-constructive* responses are characterized by subdued or silent responses (i.e., quiet support), such as 'That's nice' followed by a gentle smile. *Passive-destructive* responses are characterized by disregard of the good news and deflecting the conversion to a different topic, such as such as, 'Where are my keys?' without addressing the disclosers' promotion.

When people perceive active constructive responses, they tend to report higher levels of relationship quality, daily positive affect, and well-being; when they perceive active destructive, passive constructive, or passive destructive responses, they tend to report worse relationship quality over time (Donato et al., 2014; Gable & Reis, 2010; Logan & Cobb, 2013). Some gender differences have also been noted: Women are more likely than men to perceive partners as engaging in passive constructive and passive destructive responses, while men are more likely to perceive their partners as engaging in active constructive responses (Pagani et al., 2013). Additionally, women are more likely than men to report higher levels of relationship quality when they perceive their partners as providing active constructive responses (Gable et al., 2004). However, other researchers have noted no gender differences in the association between capitalization responses and relationship quality (Logan & Cobb, 2013).

Of importance, disclosers' perceptions of their partners' responsiveness are thought to mediate links between different PRCAs and relationship quality (Demir et al., 2013; Gable & Reis, 2010). Active constructive responses are thought to convey components of perceived

partner responsiveness, such as understanding, validation, and care, which in turn, promote disclosers' perceptions of relationship quality (Peters et al., 2018). On the other hand, passive constructive, active destructive, and passive destructive responses are thought to downplay the positivity and importance of the positive event, which can reduce disclosers' perceptions of partner's responsiveness and relationship quality (Gable et al., 2006). Drawing from this work, we examined whether perceived partner responsiveness mediates the association between different PRCAs and relationship quality among individuals in Western and non-Western cultures.

Culture and Interpersonal Communication Patterns

The current paper examines cultural heterogeneity in PRCAs between European American and two Asian samples. Recent research on capitalization among European Americans and East Asians reveals that Asian participants are less likely to share good news with their partners compared to European Americans, and that less good news sharing is associated with lower levels of well-being. (Choi et al., 2019) This is consistent with work demonstrating norms about which feelings are appropriate vary across cultures (Matsumoto et al., 2008; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). However, few studies have examined cross-cultural variability in responses to sharing of good news among romantic couples. As we argue below, how frequently people perceive various responses to good news from their partners, and their preferences for different types of responses to good news, may vary across cultures. Further, cross-cultural differences in romantic communication preferences may attenuate or dampen the perceived effects of different kinds of PRCA. To address these cross-cultural differences, the current study examines the cultural specificity of links between different PRCAs and relationship outcomes.

Perceived Active Constructive Responses

Although there is consensus that active constructive responses may be beneficial for relationship quality, these benefits may not translate to non-Western samples (Peters et al., 2018). European Americans tend to place greater emphasis on hedonism compared to Asians, which might lead them to prioritize and reward couple interactions that evoke positive emotions (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). For instance, European Americans tend to prefer excitatory states and positive emotions (e.g., enthusiastic, elation), while Asians prefer calmer and more peaceful states (i.e., serenity, tranquility) (Tsai, 2017). As such, active constructive responses may be less effective for promoting relationship quality among Asians (Tsai, 2017). Consistent with this idea, a recent study found that Asians, compared to European Americans, are less likely to share good news with their partners (Choi et al., 2019), supporting the notion that Asians are more likely to dampen their positive emotions.

Perceived Active Destructive Responses

People in different cultures may also perceive active destructive responses differently. As Asians are more likely to hold the view that the self is malleable and amenable to improvement, they are more likely to engage in self-criticism and rumination than their Western counterparts (Kitayama et al., 1997). Active destructive responses reinforce these values, as they encourage individuals to focus on weaknesses rather than strengths (Kitayama et al., 1997; Ng et al., 2007). As such, Asian disclosers of good news may perceive their partners' active destructive responses favorably as Asians are more likely to engage in dialectical thinking and engage in indirect expressions of care and concern (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011; Shiota et al., 2010).

Although the research summarized above typically focused on East Asians, similar cross-cultural differences have been observed among South Asians: Compared to European Americans, the quality of South Asians' marital communication is less highly correlated with

marital satisfaction. For example, although South Asian marriages tend to be characterized by more frequent conflicts, marital disagreements often dissipate quickly and ultimately culminate in positive behaviors such as laughter (Sandhya, 2009). Thus, criticisms may not necessarily be harmful for relationship quality among East and South Asians. Hence, Asian disclosers of good news may perceive more active destructive responses from their partners, and active destructive responses may not necessarily relate to poorer relationship quality among Asian couples.

Perceived Passive Constructive Responses

People in different cultures might also perceive passive constructive responses to good news sharing differently. As mentioned, European Americans tend to emphasize directness, whereas Asians tend to adopt more indirect forms of communication (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996). As a result, Asians are more likely than their European American counterparts to attend to unspoken cues in their daily communications. During stressful events, for example, Asians are less likely than European Americans to directly request advice and emotional comfort from close others because Asians generally expect partners to understand implicit expressions of affect. As such, disclosing problems directly can be seen as a threat to their relationships (Kim et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2004). When it comes to sharing good news, Asians are also often worried that communicating good news may be perceived as being prideful, self-absorbed, shallow, or showing off (Eid & Diener, 2009; Yamagishi, 2010). In short, Asians may prefer more passive and less overt ways of sharing and responding to good news, and in turn perceive passive constructive responses as more normative, weakening links to relationship quality.

Perceived Passive Destructive Responses

Perceiving passive destructive responses may be associated with poorer relationship quality across cultures. Passive destructive responses convey that the event disclosed is of little

or no value (Gable & Reis, 2010). Ignoring disclosers' good news reduces opportunities for subsequent positive interactions between partners and can diminish disclosers' perceptions of partner responsiveness. Thus, perceiving passive destructive responses is likely to relate to lower relationship quality in both European American and Asian cultures.

Comparisons of Sub-Asian Samples

Besides East-West comparisons, we also compared the frequencies and associations between perceived partner capitalization responses with relationship quality for two sub-Asian samples. Cross-cultural researchers have noted varying communication styles and distinct emotion regulation strategies even among various sub-Asian populations (e.g., Kuo et al., 2006), which may translate to differences in how couples from different sub-Asian samples navigate positive event disclosure. For instance, Reis et al. (2022) observed important differences in associations between PRCAs and relationship quality among three different East Asian subgroups: active destructive and passive constructive responses were positively related to relationship quality for Mainland Chinese participants, while the associations between active destructive and passive constructive responses with relationship quality was not significant for Hong Kong Chinese, and negative for Taiwanese Chinese.

Specifically in this paper, we focus on cultural heterogeneity between East Asians (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) and South Asians (i.e., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi). There is evidence of cross-cultural differences in general communication styles between East and South Asians: East Asians (as compared to South Asians) tend to adopt more modest, reserved communication styles. Also, East Asians generally exhibit less body language and are more likely to think in silence (Lu et al., 2020). In contrast, South Asians tend to adopt a more forceful and lively communication style. They also tend to exhibit more overt body language and are

more likely to think aloud (Lu et al., 2020). Given these cross-cultural differences in general communication styles, it may be important to go beyond examinations of only East Asians and also examine capitalization in South Asians.

Overall, we understand very little about PRCAs among South Asians. As such, we do not propose specific hypotheses as to how East and South Asians differ in capitalization and leave that as an open question. For example, East Asians may prefer passive constructive responses more than South Asians as they are more in line with their culture's communication norms. However, South Asians may instead prefer passive constructive responses compared to East Asians because these responses are less confrontational than typical communication patterns. Also, there is evidence that conflicts and criticism are common in marital interactions among South Asians (Sandhya, 2009). Thus, South Asians may be even more likely to prefer active destructive responses than East Asians, and the positive association between these responses to good news sharing and relationship quality will be stronger among South Asians than East Asians. Again, we will examine these sub-group differences as open research questions.

Current Study

The current research examines cultural differences in the four PRCA types by examining their perceived normativity, their association with perceived partner responsiveness, and their relation to relationship quality among European Americans, East Asians, and South Asians. We first examined whether frequency of perceiving different types of PRCA differed across cultures. We hypothesized that, compared to East and South Asians, European Americans would be more likely to perceive responses to capitalization as active constructive, and less likely to perceive responses to capitalization as active destructive or passive constructive. We further hypothesized

that European Americans, East Asians, and South Asians would not differ in likelihood of perceiving responses to capitalization as passive destructive.

We further examined whether perceived partner responsiveness mediated the association between different PRCAs and relationship quality across cultures. Specifically, we hypothesized that in all three cultures, people who perceived responses to capitalization as active constructive would show higher levels of relationship quality, and this association would be mediated by higher levels of perceived partner responsiveness. In contrast, we expected that people in all 3 cultures who perceive responses to capitalization as passive destructive would report lower relationship quality, and this association would be mediated by lower levels of perceived partner responsiveness. Additionally, we hypothesized that European Americans, but not East Asian or South Asians, who perceive responses to capitalization as active destructive would show lower levels of relationship quality, and this association would be mediated by lower perceived partner responsiveness. We hypothesized similar associations for passive constructive responses. Additionally, we predicted that compared to East Asians, South Asians who perceive responses to capitalization as active destructive would be more likely to report higher relationship quality, and that this association would be mediated by higher perceived partner responsiveness.

Methods

We assessed participants' perceived responses to positive event disclosures by combining three datasets that included heterosexual European Americans (Samples A, B, and C), East Asians (Samples A and C) and South Asians (Samples B and C) who were currently, or had been, in a relationship for at least a month. We had a total analytical sample of 915 participants, which was sufficient to detect effects as small as Cohen $f^2 = .02$. In Samples B and C, participants also completed a perceived partner responsiveness measure. Surveys were

administered online and only in English for standardization across cultures. All studies were approved by the university Institutional Review Board.

Participants in all three samples reported their age, gender (female, male, other), education level (less than high-school, high-school or GED, some college, 2-year college degree, 4-year college degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, professional degree), relationship status (casual dating, committed relationship, engaged, married, divorced, separated, widowed, none of the above; except in Sample A, participants were presented with only the option of listing whether they were currently in a relationship and if not, whether they were ever involved in a romantic relationship), and relationship length. In Sample A, participants chose their age range from seven options: 18-21, 22-25, 26-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61 and above. Participants in Samples B and C entered their age, which was then recoded according to the age groups measured in Sample A in order to have the same measure. Participants entered the length of their relationship in months and years.

Samples A and B

For Samples A and B, participants were recruited via undergraduate subject pools in a mid-Western US university, flyers, and advertisements on social networking websites (i.e., Facebook and Craigslist). As is common in relationships research (Candel & Turliuc, 2019), participants who were in a relationship (63.2%) were asked to report about their current relationship; those who were not currently in a romantic relationship were asked to report about their last romantic relationship[1].

[1] Participants who answered questions about their last relationship reported less frequent active constructive, passive constructive, and active destructive responses (*p*s < .05), but more frequent passive destructive responses ($p < .05$), as well as lower perceived responsiveness ($p < .001$).

For Sample A, we recruited 286 participants: 227 European Americans (153 women) and 59 East Asians (30 women). Median age was between 22 and 25 (ranging from 18-21 to 61 and older). Participants were mostly in committed relationships (e.g., committed, engaged, married; 89.2% for European Americans; 91.9% for East Asians), and the remaining participants were casually dating or had a different relationship status (e.g., separated, divorced, widowed). Relationship length ranged from one and 520 months (M = 46.86).

For Sample B, we collected data from 191 individuals and the analytical sample consisted of 187 eligible individuals: 104 European Americans (75 female) and 83 South Asians (56 female). Excluded participants (N = 4) reported relationship lengths less than one month. For eligible participants, relationship length ranged between one and 72 months (M = 15.89). Median age was between 18 and 21 (Range:18-28).

Sample C

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for a study on experiences in romantic relationships. Data collected on MTurk have been shown to be demographically more diverse than college-student or typical Internet samples (Buhrmester et al., 2018). To increase the validity of the data, the study was only visible to users who had completed at least 95% of their previous tasks satisfactorily. For the purposes of the current study, we only included the subset of European American, East or South Asian participants who completed the survey.

We collected data from 621 individuals and the analytical sample consisted of 442 eligible individuals: 117 European Americans (75 female), 134 East Asians (71 female), and 191 South Asians (66 female). Data from the remaining participants were excluded because their self-reported race/ethnicity and IP address did not match eligibility requirements (i.e., not

European American, East or South Asian). For instance, an Indian participant would qualify for participation if they also had an IP address in the US (i.e., Indian American), or China or India; they would fail to qualify if they had an IP address from, for example, France, Egypt, or Australia. Median age was between 31 and 40 for European Americans, and between 26 and 30 for East Asians and South Asians (Overall range:18-67). Participants were mostly in committed relationships (e.g., committed, engaged, married; 93.4% for East Asians; 93.1% for European Americans; 89.9% for South Asians), and the remaining participants were casually dating or had a different relationship status (e.g., separated, divorced, widowed). Relationship length ranged between one and 68 months (M = 27.15).

Measures

Demographic Variables

Perceived Response to Positive Event Disclosure

The Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts Scale (Gable et al., 2004) is a 12-item scale measuring perceptions of partner responses during positive event disclosure. Participants rated their perceived partner responses when they shared about a positive event, using the stem 'When I tell my partner about something good that has happened to me...' on a 6-point Likert scale, from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 6 (*Very true*). The scale includes 4 subscales (3 items each): 1) active constructive responses (e.g., 'My (previous) partner usually reacts to my good fortune enthusiastically'), 2) active destructive responses (e.g., 'My (previous) partner reminds me that most good things have their bad aspects as well'), 3) passive constructive responses (e.g., 'My (previous) partner is usually silently supportive of the good things that occur to me', and 4) passive destructive responses (e.g., 'Sometimes I get the impression that he/she doesn't care much'). These subscales were measured in all three samples (α = .65 to .93).

Perceived Partner Responsiveness

Participants completed the 12-item Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (Reis et al., 2011). Participants rated their perceptions of partner responsiveness on items such as 'understands me', 'seems interested in what I am thinking and feeling' and 'is responsive to my needs' ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 7 (*Very true*). Perceived partner responsiveness was measured in samples B and C (α = .95 to .97).

Relationship Satisfaction

To assess relationship quality, participants completed a seven-item satisfaction measure (Hendrick et al., 1988). Participants rated items such as 'In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?' on a scale ranging from 1 (*Low*) to 6 (*High*). Relationship satisfaction was measured in all three samples (α = .88 and .95).

Analytic Approach

Prior to analyses, we imputed missing data using the Expectancy Maximization algorithm to maximize available data[2]. Little's MCAR test (Little, 1988) showed that the data were missing at random (for each sample, *p*s > .05). Missing values for relationship length (*N* = 17), age (*N* = 34), active-constructive (*N* = 5), passive-constructive (*N* = 6), active-destructive (*N* = 9), and passive-destructive responses (*N* = 10) were imputed. Given that expectancy maximization does not impute data for categorical variables, missing gender values were replaced with the mode (*N* = 4).

Preliminary analyses examined the zero-order correlations between responses to capitalization attempts (i.e., active constructive, active destructive, passive constructive, and

[2] The results were virtually the same when we ran the analyses using the raw (non-imputed) data.

passive destructive), perceived partner responsiveness, and relationship satisfaction separately by culture (i.e., European American, East Asian, South Asian).

To test our first hypothesis, we examined whether the three culture groups differed significantly in the perceived prevalence of the four types of PRCA by running a MANCOVA with relationship length, gender, and age as controls. Next, we conducted post-hoc comparisons with Tukey's corrections on each type of PRCA.

To test our second hypothesis concerning the culturally specific associations between different PRCAs, perceived partner responsiveness, and relationship quality, we used the Process macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2012). It is important to point out that we ran a moderation model first (instead of a mediation model), before including our mediator because we had more complete data for the moderation model (our mediation analyses only included Samples B and C). First, we examined the association between different PRCA's and relationship satisfaction and the two-way interactions between PRCA and culture (3 levels: European American, East Asian, South Asian), and relationship satisfaction using all samples (Model 1)[3]. Then, we examined moderated mediation models that additionally examined whether the associations between PRCA and relationship satisfaction were mediated by perceived partner responsiveness in Samples B and C (Model 2). We conducted four sets of analyses: one for each type of PRCA. For each model, we controlled for relationship length, gender, and age, and we estimated bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples. Our conceptual model can be seen in Figure 1.

[3] Because of previous mixed findings concerning the moderating role of gender in the association between PRCA and relationship quality, we also tested models including the three-way interaction between PRCA, culture, and gender. There were no significant three-way interactions in any of the four models; therefore, we included gender as a covariate and report analyses with two-way interactions only.

Results

First, we examined Pearson correlations among study variables by culture groups (Table 1). European Americans and East Asians showed a similar pattern of correlations among study variables, such that active-constructive responses were negatively correlated with all other types of responses. However, for South Asians, active-constructive responses were negatively correlated only with passive-destructive responses. Moreover, passive-constructive responses were negatively correlated with perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction among European Americans and East Asians, but positively correlated among South Asians.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Frequency of PRCA

To test whether culture groups differed significantly on the perceived frequency of the four types of PRCA, we ran a MANCOVA controlling for relationship length, gender and age. Results revealed that people in different cultures reported significantly different levels of PRCA (*Wilks' Λ* = .81, F (8,1832) = 25.09, $p < .001$). As a follow-up test, we examined post-hoc comparisons with Tukey correction. Results suggested that the perceived prevalence of all types of responses was significantly greater among South Asians compared to East Asians and European Americans (Table 2, ps < .001). East Asians reported more active destructive responses than European Americans; however, these two groups showed no other differences.

Cross-Cultural Differences in PRCA and Relationship Satisfaction

Does the association between PRCA and relationship satisfaction differ across cultures?

In Model 1, we tested whether culture moderated the association between PRCAs and relationship satisfaction using all samples. Relationship length, gender, and age were significantly associated with relationship satisfaction in all models except for passive constructive responses (see Figure 2).

Perceived Active Constructive Responses were positively associated with relationship satisfaction (b = .47, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [.40, .54]). There were no cultural differences in this association (p > .05). This suggests that, across the three cultures, people who perceived active constructive responses reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Perceived Active Destructive Responses were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (b = -.36, SE = .05, p < .001, 95% CI [-.45, -.27]). The interaction with culture (b = .33, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [.21, .45]) suggested that only European Americans (b = -.36, SE = -.05, p < .001, 95% CI [-.45, -.27]) and East Asians (b = -.30, SE = -.06, p < .001, 95% CI [-.42, -.19]) who perceived active destructive responses reported lower relationship satisfaction. For South Asians, active destructive responses were not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction (b = -.03, SE = .04, p = .463, 95% CI [-.11, .05]).

Perceived Passive Constructive Responses were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (b = -.20, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [-.28, -.12]). The interaction with culture (b = .38, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [.26, .50]) suggested that only European Americans (b = -.20, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [-.28, -.12]) and East Asians (b = -.34, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [-.34, -.11]) who perceived passive constructive responses reported lower relationship satisfaction. In fact, South Asians who perceived passive constructive responses showed *higher* levels of relationship satisfaction (b = .18, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .27]).

Perceived Passive Destructive Responses were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (b = -.53, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [-.60, -.46]). The negative association between perceived passive destructive responses and relationship satisfaction was present for all groups (ps < .001); however, the interaction with culture (b = .25, SE = .05, p < .001, 95% CI [.14, .35]) suggested that the effects were smaller in magnitude for South Asians (b = -.28, SE = .04, p <

.001, 95% CI [-.36, -.21]) compared to European Americans (b = -.53, SE = .04, p < .001, 95% CI [-.60, -.46]) and East Asians (b = -.49, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [-.60, -.38]).

Does partner responsiveness mediate the association between PRCA and relationship satisfaction across cultures?

In Model 2, we examined whether associations between PRCA and relationship satisfaction were mediated by perceived partner responsiveness (measured in Samples B and C) by examining the indirect effects of PRCA to perceived partner responsiveness to relationship satisfaction. As before, we tested the interaction between each PRCA and culture, while controlling for relationship length, gender, and age.

Perceived Active Constructive Responses were positively associated with perceived partner responsiveness (b = .48, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [.37, .59]), and in turn, with relationship satisfaction (b = .53, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI [.46, .60]). The interaction with culture (b = .23, SE = .08, p = .005, 95% CI [.07, .38]) suggested that, across the three cultures, people who perceived active constructive responses viewed their partners as more responsive; however, compared to European Americans (b = .48, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [.37, .59]) and East Asians (b = .47, SE = .07, p < .001, 95% CI [.32, .61]), South Asians (b = .71, SE = .06, p < .001, 95% CI [.60, .82]) were more likely to view their partners as responsive.

The conditional indirect effects revealed significant positive indirect effects for all cultures (European Americans: b = .26, SE = .04, 95% CI [.18, .35], East Asians: b = .28, SE = .05, 95% CI [.19, .39], South Asians: b = .40, SE = .04, 95% CI [.33, .49]). This suggests that, across samples, people who perceived active constructive responses viewed their partners as more responsive and reported higher relationship satisfaction.

Perceived Active Destructive Responses were negatively associated with perceived partner responsiveness (b = -.26, SE = .08, p < .01, 95% CI [-.43, -.10]), and in turn, with relationship satisfaction (b = .55, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI [.49, .61]). The interaction with culture (b = .20, SE = .10, p = .049, 95% CI [.00, .39]) suggested that European Americans (b = -.26, SE = .08, p < .01, 95% CI [-.43, -.10]) who perceived active destructive responses viewed their partners as less responsive, whereas there was no association between active destructive responses and perceived responsiveness among East Asians (b = -.14, SE = .09, p = .12, 95% CI [-.32, .04]) and South Asians (b = -.07, SE = .05, p = .23, 95% CI [-.17, .04]).

There was a negative indirect effect of perceived active destructive responses on relationship satisfaction through perceived partner responsiveness for European Americans (b = -.14, SE = .05, 95% CI [-.25, -.05]); there were no significant indirect effects for East Asians (b = -.09, SE = .06, 95% CI [-.23, .02]) or South Asians (b = -.04, SE = .03, 95% CI [-.10, .02]). This suggests that only European Americans, and not East Asians or South Asians, who perceived active destructive responses viewed their partners as less responsive and reported lower relationship satisfaction.

Perceived Passive Constructive Responses were negatively associated with perceived partner responsiveness (b = -.17, SE = .07, p < .01, 95% CI [-.30, -.04]), and in turn, with relationship satisfaction (b = .55, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI [.49, .61]). The interaction with culture (b = .35, SE = .09, p < .001, 95% CI [.18, .52]) suggested that South Asians who perceived passive constructive responses viewed their partners as more responsive (b = .18, SE = .06, p = .001, 95% CI [.07, .28]), but European Americans (b = -.17, SE = .07, p < .01, 95% CI [-.30, -.04]) and East Asians (b = -.18, SE = .08, p < .01, 95% CI [-.40, -.08]) who perceived passive constructive responses viewed their partners as less responsive.

There was also a negative indirect effect of perceived passive constructive responses on relationship satisfaction through perceived partner responsiveness for European Americans (b = -.10, SE = .04, 95% CI [-.17, -.03]) and East Asians (b = -.15, SE = .06, 95% CI [-.27, -.05]). In contrast, there was a positive indirect effect for South Asians (b = .10, SE = .03, 95% CI [.04, .16]). This suggests that European Americans and East Asians who perceived passive constructive responses viewed their partners as less responsive and reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction; however, South Asians who perceived passive constructive responses viewed their partners as more responsive and reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Perceived Passive Destructive Responses were negatively associated with perceived partner responsiveness (b = -.49, SE = .08, p < .001, 95% CI [-.64, -.34]), and in turn, with relationship satisfaction (b = .50, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI [.44, .56]). There were significant negative conditional indirect effects for all cultures (European Americans: b = -.24, SE = .05, 95% CI [-.34, -.15], East Asians: b = -.27, SE = .11, 95% CI [-.48, -.08], South Asians: b = -.19, SE = .03, 95% CI [-.26, -.13]. This suggests that, across cultures, people who perceived passive destructive responses viewed their partners as less responsive and reported lower relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

The current research examined the role of culture in communication of good news among intimate couples. Specifically, we focused on how culture moderates perceived responses to capitalization attempts (PRCA), or disclosers' perceptions of their partners' responses to their disclosure of good news (Gable et al., 2006; Peters et al., 2018). In our study, we showed that people from European American, East Asian, and South Asian cultures varied in perceived frequency of different PRCAs. We also showed that the associations between PRCA and

relationship quality differ across the three cultures. An important contribution of our study is our distinction between different subgroups of Asians (i.e., East and South Asians) when exploring the associations between different PRCAs and relationship quality. Although Asians are often collectively studied as a group – and often only in East Asian samples – a handful of studies have demonstrated heterogeneity among East and South Asian participants (e.g., Kuo et al., 2006). Overall, our findings extend prior research on cross-cultural differences in communication norms to the context of capitalization.

Consistent with studies that have examined PRCA among only European Americans (Gable et al., 2004; Pagani et al., 2015), we found that perceived active constructive and passive destructive responses to capitalization attempts were associated with similar outcomes in all three cultures: Disclosers who perceived active constructive responses reported higher relationship satisfaction, and disclosers who perceived passive destructive responses reported lower relationship satisfaction. Cultural differences were observed when disclosers perceived active destructive and passive constructive responses to capitalization attempts. European American disclosers who perceived active destructive responses reported lower relationship satisfaction; however, there were no differences in relationship satisfaction among East and South Asians who perceived active destructive responses (through perceived responsiveness). Additionally, only European American and East Asian disclosers who perceived passive constructive responses reported lower relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, South Asian disclosers who perceived passive constructive responses reported higher relationship satisfaction.

Our study further showed that the associations between different PRCA and relationship quality is mediated by perceived partner responsiveness (Gable & Reis, 2010). As partner responses that convey partner responsiveness continue to relate to high relationship quality,

culture functions as a moderator for the associations between different PRCAs and relationship quality to the extent that it differentially shapes how cultural members interpret the four types of PRCA responses to convey partner responsiveness. Our finding is consistent with other studies that demonstrate partner responsiveness as essential for strong supportive relationships across cultures (Peters et al., 2018).

Early socialization processes may account for the cross-cultural differences in associations between active destructive and passive constructive responses and relationship quality. Asian parents tend to adopt close monitoring practices that emphasize the importance of modesty, practices that may be perceived as harsh and controlling by downplaying the importance of celebratory behaviors (Choi et al., 2013; Kurman & Sriram, 2002). In contrast, European American parents tend to favor building up a child's self-esteem by responding positively during parent-child social interactions (e.g., sharing of good news) and overtly expressing affection via hugging, kissing, and praise in those situations (Choi et al., 2013). Long-term socialization in Asian culture could shape emotion expressions (Ip et al., 2021) and may translate to less malevolent, benign, or even positive interpretations of active destructive and passive constructive responses in close relationships including romantic relationships. Overall, our findings suggest cultural specificity of active destructive and passive constructive responses to capitalization – such responses are thought to be detrimental to relationship quality based on previous research with European Americans, but their negative associations are attenuated among Asian participants.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings have implications for future research on capitalization, which would benefit from a more complex conceptualization (and measurement) of capitalization that incorporates

the cultural meanings behind couples' interaction patterns during positive event disclosure. Future research might also examine how culture colors people's preference for different PRCA based on what is normative in their cultures. For instance, researchers have tried to conceptualize different PRCAs as providing either relational rewards or costs (i.e., active constructive is a reward, but the other three variants are costs). However, this conceptualization becomes limited without considering culture. From our work, both East and South Asians in our study showed better relationship outcomes, as compared to European Americans, when they perceived passive constructive and active destructive responses, which challenges how capitalization is traditionally calculated with a composite PRCA score in which measures of active destructive, passive constructive, and passive destructive are subtracted from measures of active constructive (Gable et al., 2006). Our findings suggest that new conceptualizations of capitalization are necessary to more fully capture capitalization behaviors and experiences.

The present findings also have implications for research on coping and emotional regulation. Although it is well accepted that culture shapes interpersonal emotion regulation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Mesquita & Leu, 2007), extant research has focused primarily on the regulation of stressful situations, with scant empirical research devoted to whether and how people from different cultures differ in positive event-based emotion regulation. Research on capitalization might present one such opportunity. Indeed, our findings provide initial evidence for cultural specificity in these dynamics by showing how European Americans, East Asians, and South Asians differ in regulation of positive event-based emotions and the associated interpersonal outcomes.

Further, our findings have practical implications for interventions that could improve relationship quality among couples. For instance, our results suggest that Asian communication

norms might increase preference for passive and indirect couple communication (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996). During marital counseling, for instance, increasing quiet support responses in the romantic relationship may be effective in boosting relationship quality, particularly among South Asians. In fact, given the strong preference for more emotionally mild interactions in South Asian cultures, enacting quiet or nonverbal variants of support may be easier for couples seeking to improve their relationships (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011).

Capitalization Among Different Asian Cultures

In our study, we provide new insights on capitalization experiences of South Asians, a population that is rarely the focus of research in this area. We found that active destructive responses to capitalization attempts were not associated with relationship quality among South Asian participants. Yet, South Asians who perceived passive constructive responses reported higher relationship satisfaction. South Asian disclosers might perceive their partners' passive constructive responses as consistent with common interaction patterns among intimate couples and associate these responses with better relationship quality. Further, active destructive responses were more common among those in South Asian cultures; perhaps the ubiquity of these responses mitigates their detrimental effects on relationship quality.

In addition, we found interesting discrepancies between East and South Asians. East Asian and European American disclosers were equally likely to perceive active constructive, passive constructive, and passive destructive responses in partners' capitalization attempts. East Asians also did not seem to differ from European Americans regarding the associations between all four types of PRCA and relationship satisfaction. This finding conflicts with a recent study that noted cross-cultural differences between East Asians versus American capitalization (Reis et al., 2022). To further examine this discrepancy, we examined the nationalities of our Asian

participants, and noted that many East Asian participants in our analytical sample were Americans of East Asian heritage, and most South Asian participants were South Asians from South Asia. It appears that Asian-Americans (or those with American nationality) may be less likely to internalize Asian communication norms and instead demonstrate romantic communication patterns more similar to European Americans. We were not able to incorporate nationality of our Asian participants in our moderation analyses because of small sample sizes (e.g., for non-American East Asians). Thus, it remains unclear whether non-American East Asians are likely to benefit from active destructive and passive constructive responses as we have found for non-American South Asians. A study with larger samples that replicates the current study design could tease apart the differences between native-born and Asian-American participants and further disentangle the moderating role of culture on passive constructive and active destructive responses by participants' nationality.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our study. First, we only assessed perceived partner responsiveness in two out of three samples, which precluded our ability to make more direct assessments of links between perceived partner responsiveness, the four types of PRCA, and relationship quality. Next, we recruited participants who were either currently, or had been, in a relationship previously as is common in previous research (Candel & Turliuc, 2019); however, we noted that participants who were recollecting a past relationship reported less active constructive, active destructive, and passive constructive responses, more passive destructive responses, and lower perceived responsiveness. This might reflect some form of reporting bias that could have skewed the present results. For example, it is possible that people who have left a previous relationship are more likely to see their relationship through negatively tinted lenses.

Future work may include a sample of only participants presently in a relationship to examine if our reported results still hold true. Additionally, while we focused on whether different PRCA's vary in their association with relationship quality across cultures, we did not assess constructs that might explain *why* East and South Asians varied from European Americans. For instance, the propensity to engage in dialectical thinking and direct versus indirect communication have been put forth as explanations for discrepancies in intercultural communication (Shiota et al., 2010). Future research is needed to examine the role of these variables in explaining cross cultural differences in capitalization.

It is also important to note that, although we separated 'Asians' into 'South Asians' and 'East Asians', we nevertheless grouped participants of different sub-Asian populations together (i.e., Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis as 'South Asians' and Chinese, Japanese and Koreans as 'East Asians'). It is important to be mindful about distinctions between different nationalities and heterogeneity among (national) cultures. For instance, different subgroups of East Asians may show similar patterns (with one another) in their responses to good news sharing (see Reis et al., 2022, for an example); however, Japanese couples may do so out of greater preference for indirect communication, whereas Chinese couples may do so out of greater dialectical thinking. Indeed, cross-cultural scholars have argued for even finer distinctions among different Asian cultural groups beyond East and South Asians (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

There are other methodological limitations that can be addressed with future research. For example, our surveys were administered in English so selection bias may be present in our study as only participants (including those from East and South Asia) who were able to read English were able to participate in our study. In addition, we examined only disclosers' perceptions and did not include their partners' reports. Future research should also include

independent measures of partners' perceptions and behaviors. Finally, our study is correlational in nature, so we cannot determine causality. We posit that PCRA may influence relationship quality, but it is also likely that people who are more satisfied with their relationships perceive their partners' responses more positively. Indeed, bidirectional effects may also be likely (Logan & Cobb, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper addresses a gap in the PRCA literature by examining cross-cultural differences in PRCA and relationship quality. Our findings demonstrate that, among European Americans, East Asians, and South Asians, active constructive responses are associated with greater relationship satisfaction, and passive destructive responses are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Importantly, we demonstrate the cultural specificity of different PRCA. We found that active destructive and passive constructive responses are differentially associated with relationship quality for East and South Asians. In fact, our results suggest that passive constructive responses, previously conceived to be harmful for the relationship may reap relational rewards, particularly for South Asian participants. Together, our findings highlight how culture influences interpersonal communication norms that govern the meaning and outcomes of couples' communication strategies.

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Table 1

Correlations between Study Variables

Culture		Variables				
European American	N					
		1	2	3	4	5
1. AC	449	-				
2. PC	449	-.26***	-			
3. AD	449	-.26***	.43***	-		
4. PD	449	-.48***	.44***	.64***	-	
5. PPR	222	.48***	-.18**	-.20**	-.41***	-
6. RSAT	449	.50***	-.20**	-.32***	-.57***	.73***
East Asian						
		1	2	3	4	5
1. AC	197	-				
2. PC	197	-.21**	-			
3. AD	197	-.19**	.46***	-		
4. PD	197	-.37***	.37***	.59***	-	
5. PPR	137	.47***	-.26**	-.15	-.33***	-
6. RSAT	197	.50***	-.28***	-.40***	-.56***	.84***
South Asian						
		1	2	3	4	5
1. AC	276	-				
2. PC	276	.25***	-			
3. AD	276	.17**	.58***	-		
4. PD	276	-.16**	.27***	.60***	-	
5. PPR	276	.65***	.22***	-.03	-.38***	-
6. RSAT	276	.59***	.33***	.02	-.40***	.81***

Note. AC = active constructive; PC = passive constructive; AD = active destructive; PD = passive destructive; PPR = perceived partner responsiveness; RSAT = relationship satisfaction.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

MANOVA Post-hoc Comparisons

Perceived Active Constructive Responses				
Culture 1	Culture 2	Mean Difference	SE	CI
European American	East Asian	-.07	.09	-.30, .15
European American	South Asian	-.30**	.09	-.50, -.10
South Asian	East Asian	.23+	.10	-.02, .47
Perceived Passive Constructive Responses				
Culture 1	Culture 2	Mean Difference	SE	CI
European American	East Asian	-.17	.10	-.41, .07
European American	South Asian	-1.07***	.09	-1.28, -.85
South Asian	East Asian	.89***	.11	.63, 1.15
Perceived Active Destructive Responses				
Culture 1	Culture 2	Mean Difference	SE	CI
European American	East Asian	-.31**	.10	-.54, -.08
European American	South Asian	-.88***	.09	-1.08, -.68
South Asian	East Asian	.57***	.11	.32, .82
Perceived Passive Destructive Responses				
Culture 1	Culture 2	Mean Difference	SE	CI
European American	East Asian	.10	.10	-.13, .34
European American	South Asian	-.28**	.09	-.49, -.07
South Asian	East Asian	.38**	.11	.12, .63

Note. $^{+}$ $p < .07$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model

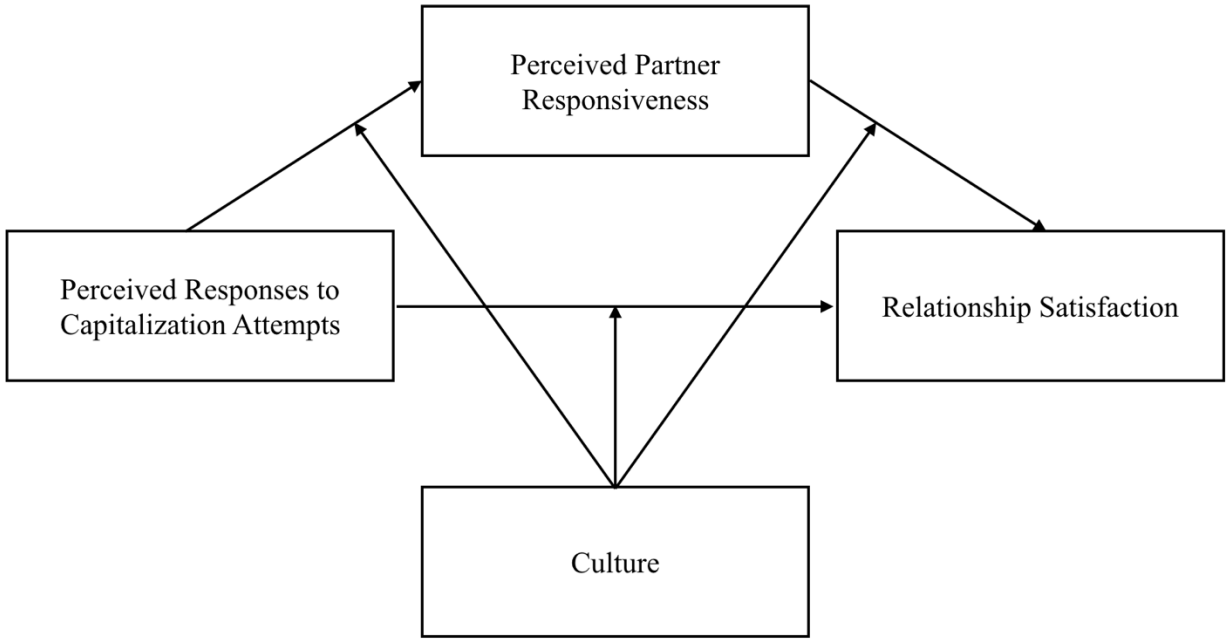
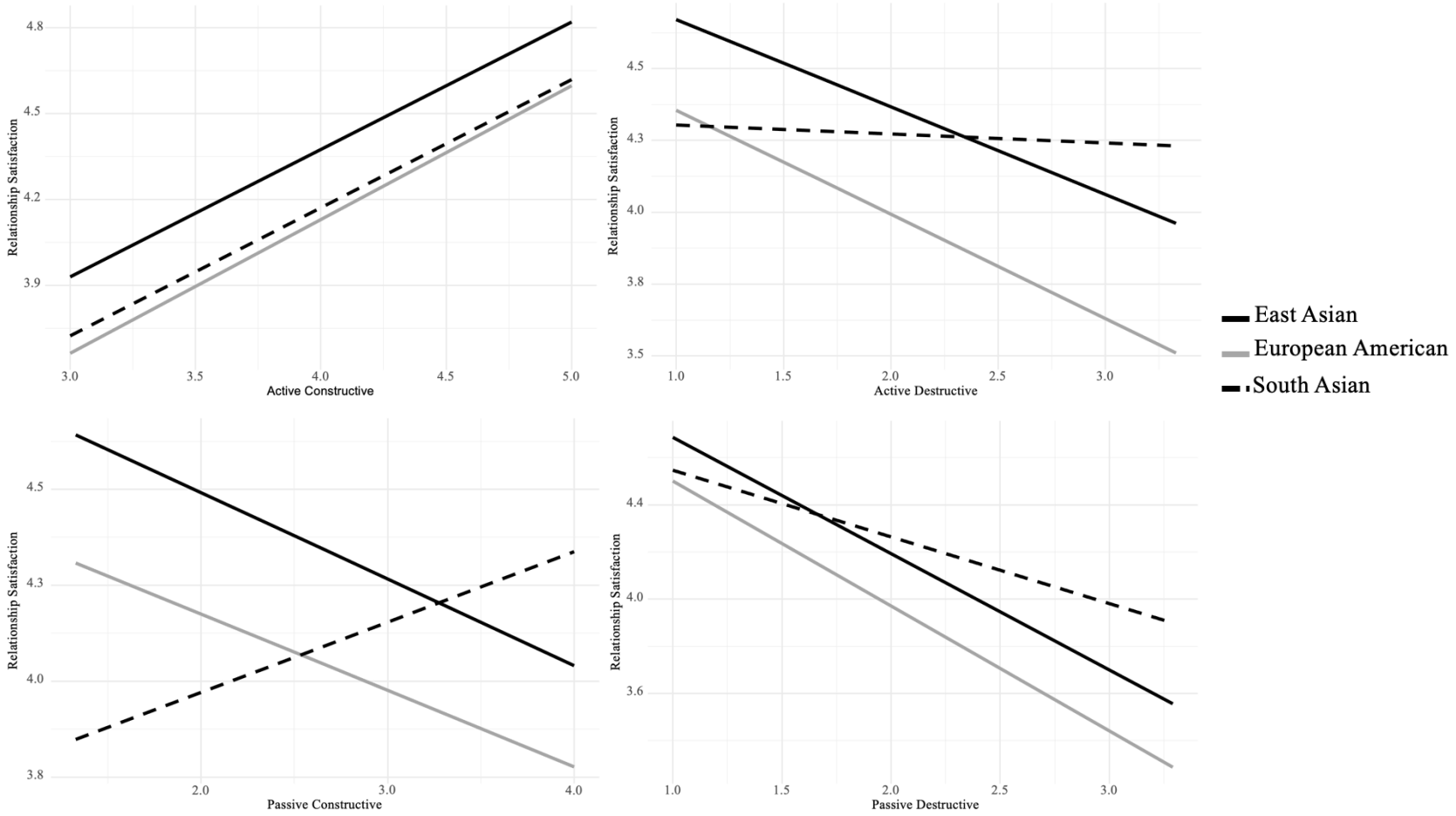


Figure 2

Interactions between PRCA and Culture



Note. Interaction between PRCA and culture, while controlling for relationship length, gender and age.