

Research Report

# The role of cultural communication norms in social exclusion effects

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## Abstract

Previous research suggests that when social exclusion is communicated in an explicit manner, consumers express preferences for helping, whereas when it is communicated in an implicit manner, they express preferences for conspicuous consumption. However, this may not always hold true. In the present research, we put forward a theoretical framework explaining that exclusion effects depend on the extent to which exclusion is communicated in a culturally normative or counter-normative manner, rather than whether it is communicated in an explicit or implicit manner. We show that exclusion communicated in a cultural norm-congruent manner produces preferences for helping, whereas exclusion communicated in a cultural norm-incongruent manner produces preferences for conspicuous consumption. We further show that the differential needs—self-esteem and power threatened by normative and counter-normative exclusion explain these distinct preferences.

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People may encounter various consumption situations in which they feel excluded. For example, people may be turned down for a car loan, ignored by salespeople at luxury retailers, or denied access to exclusive airline lounges. In such situations, some types of exclusion are communicated with explicit signals such as direct words, whereas others are communicated with implicit signals such as silence. Research suggests that these different types of exclusion determine motivational and behavioral outcomes. Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, and Knowles (2009) demonstrated that being rejected as an explicit form and being ignored as an implicit form activated different motivations concerned with prevention-focus and promotion-focus, respectively. Central to

the present research that focuses on consumer contexts, Lee and Shrum (2012) showed that when rejected, participants engaged in helping as a means to compensate for self-esteem threats, but when ignored, they engaged in conspicuous consumption as a means to compensate for power threats.

However, there is reason to believe that these responses to explicit and implicit exclusion may differ across cultures. Cultures provide broad guidelines about others' or society's expectations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and influence communication norms (Briley, Wyer, & Li, 2014; Hall, 1976). For example, North Americans emphasize social recognition and communicate in an explicit, direct manner because the thoughts of individuals are considered unknowable unless they are explicitly expressed (Würtl, 2005). Conversely, East Asians emphasize social harmony and communicate in an implicit, indirect manner because assertive self-expression is considered immature (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Cultures also influence how people respond to social exclusion. For example, when excluded, people with independent self-concepts perceive

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exclusion as more threatening (Pfundmair, Aydin, et al., 2015) and exhibit more antisocial responses (Pfundmair, Graupmann, Frey, & Aydin, 2015) than those with interdependent self-concepts.

In the present research, we put forward a theoretical framework explaining that compensatory responses to explicit and implicit types of exclusion differ across cultures and that a cultural factor driving this difference is the manner in which exclusion is communicated. Specifically, we predict that exclusion communicated in a normative manner results in relationship-enhancing responses (e.g., helping), whereas exclusion communicated in a counter-normative manner results in attention-getting responses (e.g., conspicuous consumption).

To support our prediction, we integrate Hall's (1976) notion of cultural differences in communication norms. In some cultures (e.g., the U.S., Germany, Switzerland), the normative way of communication occurs predominantly through verbally explicit, direct statements, and is relatively context-free. Accordingly, they are referred to as low-context cultures. People in low-context cultures place a premium on the expression of personal rights over relational communication constraints (Bresnahan et al., 2002) and tend to express themselves in ways that are direct and consistent with their feelings and interests (Hall, 1976). Even criticism is communicated directly and recorded formally in low-context cultures (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998), and being silent on issues that are in disagreement contradicts communication norms in low-context cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996). For example, Americans view verbal communication as desirable and rewarding, and view the avoidance of communication or a lack of verbal assertiveness as a social deficiency (Kim, Kim, Aune, Kim, & Hunter, 2001). Thus, explicit communication (e.g., being rejected) should be congruent with the norms of low-context cultures, whereas implicit communication (e.g., being ignored) should be counter-normative in low-context cultures.

In other cultures (e.g., Korea, Japan, China), however, the normative way of communication occurs predominantly through implicit, nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body postures, and silence, and people often draw true meaning from social contexts. Accordingly, they are referred to as high-context cultures. People in high-context cultures strive to avoid direct confrontation, and repress self-feelings and interests to maintain social relations (Kim et al., 1998). They often express themselves in an ambiguous way to conceal true intentions (Gudykunst et al., 1996), especially on issues that are in disagreement. For example, Koreans tend to avoid confrontation in conflict resolution (Kim et al., 1998). Similarly, the Japanese often present silence, usually accompanied by facial expressions, to indicate anger or disagreement (Lebra, 1987) because saying negative words directly to others causes a loss of face (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987). Thus, implicit communication (e.g., being ignored) should be congruent with the norms of high-context cultures, whereas explicit communication (e.g., being rejected) should be counter-normative in high-context cultures.

These cultural differences in communication norms have implications for how people respond to the manner in which exclusion is communicated. When exclusion is communicated in a culturally normative manner, people are likely to perceive

such a manner as socially approved and accept the information as evidence that they have failed to gain social acceptance, which makes them feel a lack of fondness and attachment (communal qualities; Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009). Feeling low in communal qualities is a characteristic of low self-esteem (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), and low self-esteem is linked to behavior that increases interconnection (Murray et al., 2009). Thus, normative exclusion should make individuals highly sensitive to their perceived exclusionary status and primarily threaten self-esteem, which in turn should result in relationship-enhancing responses (e.g., helping).

Conversely, when exclusion is communicated in a counter-normative manner, people are likely to perceive such a manner as socially unacceptable and inappropriate, which makes them feel a lack of respect and status (agentic qualities; Wojciszke et al., 2009). Feeling low in agentic qualities is a characteristic of low power over others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), and a low sense of power is linked to behavior that increases conspicuousness (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009). Thus, counter-normative exclusion should make individuals highly sensitive to their perceived unfair treatment and primarily threaten psychological power, which in turn should result in attention-getting responses (e.g., conspicuous consumption).

In three experiments, we provide evidence that responses to social exclusion depend on whether exclusion is communicated in a normative or counter-normative manner (Fig. 1). We operationalize communication norms using both cross-cultural samples (Experiment 1) and priming manipulations (Experiment 2) and show the differential effects of normative and counter-normative exclusion on preferences for helping and conspicuous consumption. We further show that these distinct effects on preferences are attributed to the differential needs threatened by normative and counter-normative exclusion (Experiment 3).

## Experiment 1

The purpose of Experiment 1 is to investigate the differences in compensatory responses to normative versus counter-normative exclusion between low- and high-context cultures. To accomplish this, we contrast responses to explicit (being rejected) versus implicit (being ignored) exclusion between Americans and Koreans. We predict that Americans and Koreans will exhibit opposite responses to being rejected and ignored. For Americans, whose communication norms are explicit, being rejected will produce preferences for helping, whereas being ignored will produce preferences for conspicuous consumption. However, for Koreans, whose communication norms are implicit, being ignored will produce preferences for helping, whereas being rejected will produce preferences for conspicuous consumption.

## Method

Participants were 81 students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 22.55$ ,  $SD = 3.13$ ) from a large American university and 101 students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 24.64$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ) from a large Korean university. We removed

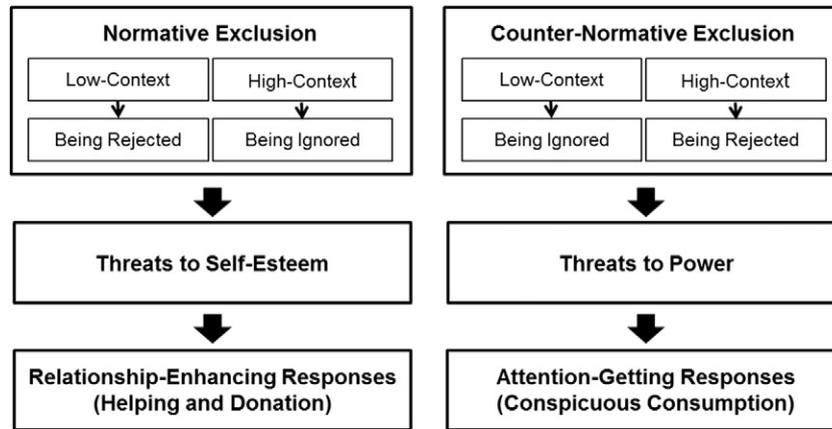


Fig. 1. A theoretical framework for the relations among social exclusion, threatened needs, and compensatory responses.

one American participant and four Korean participants who failed to follow instructions for a writing task.<sup>1</sup> Participants completed the study written in their native language on a computer in a lab and received either course credit (Americans) or ₩5000 (Koreans; approximately \$5 U.S.) for their participation.

Upon agreeing to participate, participants were randomly assigned to write about a time in which they were either rejected or ignored (Molden et al., 2009; see Appendix A for manipulations and measures of all experiments). Participants then indicated how much they felt rejected or ignored on a 7-point scale (1 = *ignored*, 7 = *rejected*).<sup>2</sup> As expected, participants felt more rejected in the rejected condition than in the ignored condition, whereas they felt more ignored in the ignored condition than in the rejected condition for both Korean ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 1.62$  vs.  $M_{\text{ignored}} = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $F(1, 95) = 82.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and American ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 2.29$  vs.  $M_{\text{ignored}} = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ;  $F(1, 78) = 28.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) samples.<sup>3</sup>

Next, participants read two scenarios designed to assess their preferences for helping and conspicuous consumption with the order being counterbalanced. For the measure of helping, participants were asked to imagine that they received a \$50 gift

card at their disposal and indicate the amount that they would donate to a charity and the amount that they would keep for themselves on a 6-point scale (1 = \$50 donation and no gift card, 6 = no donation and the \$50 gift card; reverse-coded with higher values indicating intentions to donate more). For the measure of conspicuous consumption, participants were shown five different sizes of a Ralph Lauren logo and indicated the one that they liked.

Finally, participants completed a communication norms measure (Richardson & Smith, 2007) using a 14-item 7-point scale ( $\alpha_{\text{U.S.}} = .76$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Korea}} = .73$ ) with higher (lower) values indicating higher levels of using high- (low-) context communication. As expected, Koreans scored significantly higher on the scale than Americans ( $M_{\text{Korean}} = 4.37$ ,  $SD = .49$ ;  $M_{\text{American}} = 4.13$ ,  $SD = .71$ ;  $F(1, 175) = 6.92$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### Results and discussion

We conducted a 2 (exclusion: rejected, ignored)  $\times$  2 (culture: American, Korean)  $\times$  2 (preference: donation, conspicuous logo) mixed-model ANOVA with preference as a within-subjects factor (see Appendix B for cell sizes of all experiments). To directly compare across conditions, we  $z$ -standardized preferences for donation and conspicuous logos. The three-way interaction was significant ( $F(1, 173) = 33.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ). To decompose the interaction, we conducted a 2 (exclusion)  $\times$  2 (preference) mixed-model ANOVA for each culture (Fig. 2). The interaction was significant for Americans ( $F(1, 78) = 20.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Koreans ( $F(1, 95) = 12.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ). For Americans, planned contrasts revealed that the rejected condition, relative to the ignored condition, increased preferences for donation ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = .80$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ;  $M_{\text{ignored}} = .14$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ;  $F(1, 78) = 6.84$ ,  $p < .05$ ), whereas the ignored condition, relative to the rejected condition, increased preferences for conspicuous logos ( $M_{\text{ignored}} = .11$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ;  $M_{\text{rejected}} = -.54$ ,  $SD = .81$ ;  $F(1, 78) = 9.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, these effects were reversed for Koreans; the rejected condition, relative to the ignored condition, increased preferences for conspicuous logos ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = .44$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ;  $M_{\text{ignored}} = -.11$ ,  $SD = .82$ ;  $F(1, 95) = 8.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas the ignored condition, relative to the rejected condition, increased preferences for donation

<sup>1</sup> For all experiments, prior to any data analysis, we content-analyzed the writing tasks and removed those who wrote nothing, those who wrote something irrelevant to the writing tasks, and those who indicated they could not recall experiences related to the writing tasks (we had one writing task for Experiments 1 and 2 and two writing tasks for Experiment 3). Separate from the content-analysis on the writing tasks, a measure of attention check (e.g., Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009; see Appendix A) was used. Participants' failure rates on the attention check across experiments ranged from 17% to 30%. These failure rates, although seemingly high, are consistent with those of prior studies using a similar attention check (e.g., the Oppenheimer et al. study had a failure rate of 46%). However, our results remained significant regardless of whether we removed participants who failed to pass the attention check. Thus, we retained those who did not pass the attention check for analyses.

<sup>2</sup> Although this single-item for the manipulation check fails to reflect those who felt both rejected and ignored, subsequent experiments use two items to measure feeling both rejected and ignored for the manipulation check.

<sup>3</sup> We ran an ANOVA on the manipulation check item with social exclusion, country, and their interaction as independent variables. As expected, there was no significant interaction ( $F(1, 173) = .53$ ,  $p = .47$ ). Only the main effect of social exclusion was significant ( $F(1, 173) = 95.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

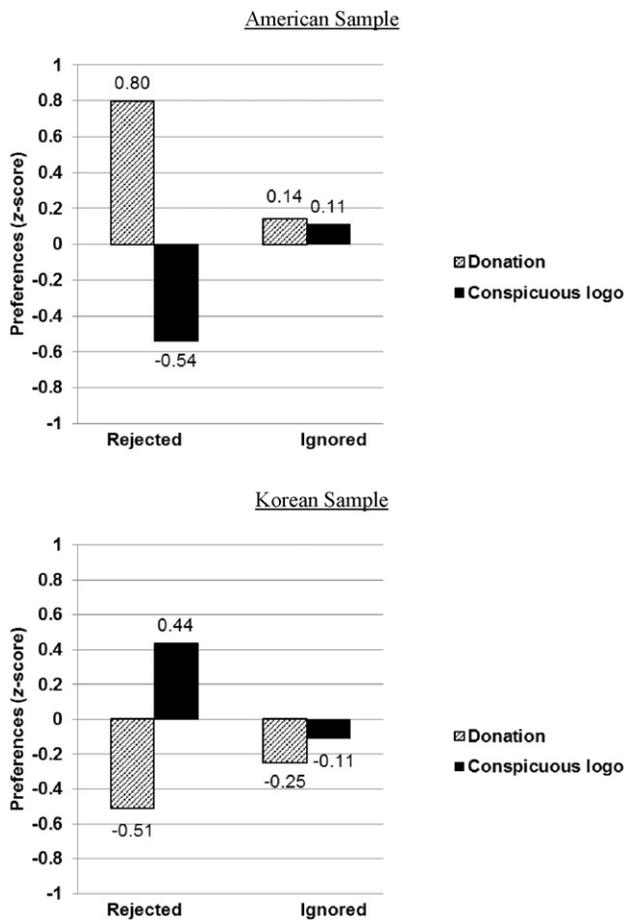


Fig. 2. Social exclusion effects as a function of culture (Experiment 1).

( $M_{\text{ignored}} = -.25, SD = .74; M_{\text{rejected}} = -.51, SD = .50; F(1, 95) = 4.27, p < .05$ ).

Our findings indicate that responses to social exclusion depend on how exclusion is communicated. Using cross-cultural samples, we show that cultural norm-congruent exclusion (being rejected for Americans; being ignored for Koreans) produced preferences for helping, whereas cultural norm-incongruent exclusion (being ignored for Americans; being rejected for Koreans) produced preferences for conspicuous consumption.

## Experiment 2

We extend our investigation in two ways. First, using an American sample, we manipulate low- and high-context communication norms to rule out the possibility that the effects were driven by other cultural factors. Second, to establish generalizability, we use different scenarios for conspicuous consumption and helping measures.

### Method

Participants were 146 students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 21.50, SD = 2.81$ ) from a large American university. We removed four participants who failed to follow instructions for the writing task.

Participants completed the study on a computer in a lab and received course credit.

We first primed either low- or high-context communication norms. Participants were asked to read a fictitious report describing American preferences for either direct communication (low-context condition) or indirect communication (high-context condition) and write a statement that supported the position.<sup>4</sup>

Following this task, participants completed the exclusion manipulation task used in Experiment 1 and indicated how much they felt rejected and ignored on a 7-point scale. As expected, participants in the rejected condition felt more rejected than those in the ignored condition ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = 5.66, SD = 1.55; M_{\text{ignored}} = 3.94, SD = 1.98; F(1, 140) = 32.71, p < .001$ ), whereas those in the ignored condition felt more ignored than those in the rejected condition ( $M_{\text{ignored}} = 5.65, SD = 1.48; M_{\text{rejected}} = 4.79, SD = 1.89; F(1, 140) = 9.29, p < .01$ ).

Next, participants read two scenarios designed to assess their preferences for helping and conspicuous consumption. For the measure of helping, participants were asked to imagine that they noticed a donation campaign poster of Feeding America at a grocery store and indicate their preferences for donation on a 2-item 9-point scale ( $r = .68$ ). For the measure of conspicuous consumption (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009), participants were asked to imagine that they were buying a piece of high-end clothing and indicate their preferences for conspicuous logos on a 4-item 9-point scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

## Results and discussion

We conducted a 2 (context: low, high)  $\times$  2 (exclusion: rejected, ignored)  $\times$  2 (preference: donation, conspicuous logo) mixed-model ANOVA with preference as a within-subjects factor. We z-standardized preferences for donation and conspicuous logos. The three-way interaction was significant ( $F(1, 138) = 20.32, p < .001$ ). To decompose the interaction, we conducted a 2 (exclusion)  $\times$  2 (preference) mixed-model ANOVA for each context (Fig. 3). The interaction was significant for the low-context ( $F(1, 68) = 8.07, p < .01$ ) and high-context ( $F(1, 70) = 12.44, p < .01$ ) conditions. In the low-context condition, the rejected condition, relative to the ignored condition, marginally increased preferences for helping ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = .36, SD = .97; M_{\text{ignored}} = -.09, SD = 1.05; F(1, 138) = 3.76, p = .054$ ), whereas the ignored condition, relative to the rejected condition, marginally increased preferences for conspicuous logos ( $M_{\text{ignored}} = .20, SD = 1.19; M_{\text{rejected}} = -.23, SD = .91; F(1, 138) = 3.37, p = .069$ ).

<sup>4</sup> To ascertain the effectiveness of the manipulation, we conducted a pretest using a separate sample ( $n = 99$ ) recruited from Amazon MTurk. Following the main study procedure, we first primed participants with either low- or high-context communication norms and then asked them to complete the same communication norms measure (Richardson & Smith, 2007) as in Experiment 1 on a 14-item 7-point scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ). As expected, participants in the high-context condition, relative to those in the low-context condition, scored significantly higher on the scale ( $M_{\text{high-context}} = 4.75, SD = .95$  vs.  $M_{\text{low-context}} = 3.88, SD = .84; F(1, 97) = 23.06, p < .001$ ), showing that the manipulation was successful.

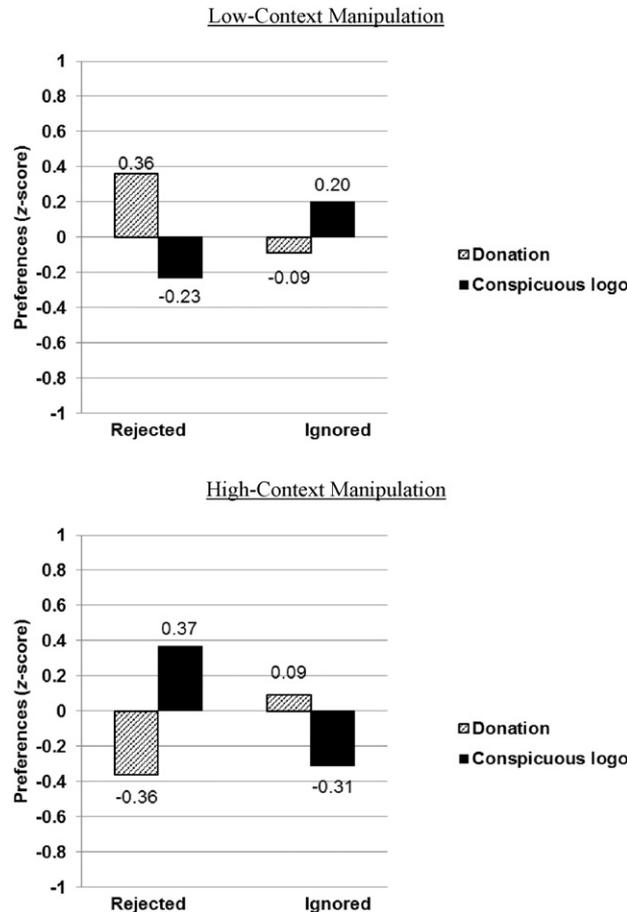


Fig. 3. Social exclusion effects as a function of low- versus high-context communication norms (Experiment 2).

Conversely, in the high-context condition, the rejected condition, relative to the ignored condition, increased preferences for conspicuous logos ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = .37$ ,  $SD = .84$ ;  $M_{\text{ignored}} = -.31$ ,  $SD = .90$ ;  $F(1, 138) = 8.90$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas the ignored condition, relative to the rejected condition, increased preferences for helping ( $M_{\text{ignored}} = .09$ ,  $SD = .91$ ;  $M_{\text{rejected}} = -.36$ ,  $SD = .96$ ;  $F(1, 138) = 3.94$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Using a priming task and different measures, Experiment 2 provides converging evidence that responses to social exclusion depend on whether exclusion is communicated normatively or counter-normatively. Participants primed with explicit communication norms showed preferences for helping when rejected, but conspicuous consumption when ignored. Conversely, those primed with implicit communication norms showed preferences for helping when ignored, but conspicuous consumption when rejected.

### Experiment 3

As previously noted, we argue that distinct preferences are attributed to the differential needs threatened by normative and counter-normative exclusion. Normative exclusion threatens self-esteem rather than power and thus produces preferences for helping, whereas counter-normative exclusion threatens power rather than self-esteem and thus produces preferences for conspicuous consumption. If this argument is correct, then

boosting self-esteem (vs. power) should attenuate the effect of normative exclusion on helping, whereas boosting power (vs. self-esteem) should attenuate the effect of counter-normative exclusion on conspicuous consumption. In Experiment 3, we investigate this possibility using a Korean sample. We predict that, for Koreans who emphasize high-context communication, boosting self-esteem will attenuate the effect of being ignored (normative exclusion) on helping, whereas boosting power will attenuate the effect of being rejected (counter-normative exclusion) on conspicuous consumption.

### Method

Participants were 303 students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 22.94$ ,  $SD = 2.61$ ) from a large Korean university. We removed 29 participants who failed to follow instructions for two different writing tasks. Participants completed the study on a computer in a lab and received ₩5000 (approximately \$5 U.S.).

Participants first completed the same exclusion manipulation task as in previous experiments and indicated how much they felt rejected and ignored on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). Participants in the rejected condition felt more rejected than those in the ignored condition ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = 5.65$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ;  $M_{\text{ignored}} = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ;  $F(1, 272) = 24.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas participants in the ignored condition felt more ignored than those in the rejected condition ( $M_{\text{ignored}} =$

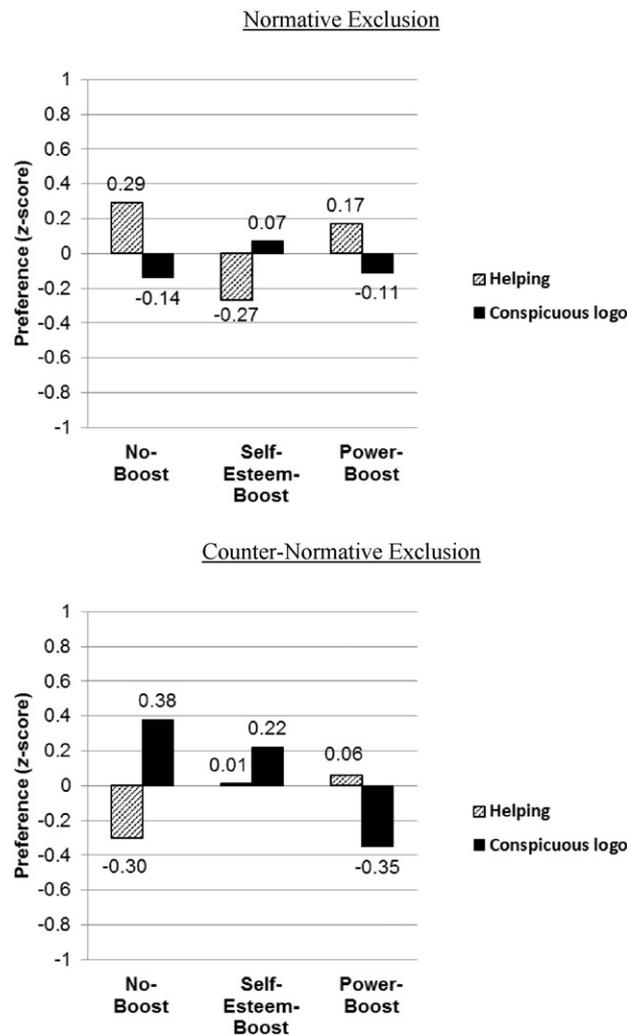


Fig. 4. Social exclusion effects under boost conditions (Experiment 3).

5.27,  $SD = 1.57$ ;  $M_{\text{rejected}} = 4.86$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ;  $F(1, 272) = 4.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Next, to examine the underlying threatened needs, we employed the moderation-of-process design (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005) in which we boosted either power or self-esteem. In the power-boost condition, participants wrote about an incident in which they had power over others (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). In the self-esteem-boost condition, participants wrote about an incident that made themselves proud (Lee & Shrum, 2012). We also added a no-boost condition, in which participants were not given any writing task, to demonstrate the differential effects of the boosting conditions, relative to the baseline, and to replicate our previous findings.

For the measure of helping (DeWall, Baumeister, Gailliot, & Maner, 2008), participants read six scenarios and indicated their likelihood to help in each situation on a 9-point scale ( $\alpha = .56$ ).<sup>5</sup> For the measure of conspicuous consumption (Lee

& Shrum, 2012), participants were shown two images of a Calvin Klein T-shirt (one with a logo and another with no logo) and asked to indicate their preferences for conspicuous logos on a 4-item 9-point scale ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

### Results and discussion

We conducted a 2 (exclusion: ignored, rejected)  $\times$  3 (boost: no-boost, self-esteem-boost, power-boost)  $\times$  2 (preference: helping, conspicuous logo) mixed-model ANOVA with preference as a within-subjects factor (Fig. 4). We z-standardized preferences for helping and conspicuous logos. The three-way interaction was significant ( $F(2, 268) = 5.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We decomposed the interaction in three ways. First, to replicate our previous findings, we conducted a 2 (exclusion)  $\times$  2 (preference) mixed-model ANOVA under the no-boost condition only, and the interaction was significant ( $F(1, 82) = 13.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that the ignored (normative exclusion) condition, relative to the rejected (counter-normative exclusion) condition, increased preferences for helping ( $M_{\text{ignored}} = .29$ ,  $SD = .94$ ;  $M_{\text{rejected}} = -.30$ ,  $SD = .99$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 7.65$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas the rejected condition,

<sup>5</sup> Although the alpha for this composite measure was low, it is based on the formative indicator model, which does not yield meaningful measures of reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012), and item analyses indicated that no particular items were problematic. Thus, we retained all items for analyses.

relative to the ignored condition, increased preferences for conspicuous logos ( $M_{\text{rejected}} = .38$ ,  $SD = .66$ ;  $M_{\text{ignored}} = -.14$ ,  $SD = .99$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 5.73$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Next, to test our prediction that normative exclusion threatens self-esteem (vs. power), we examined the effects of being ignored (normative exclusion) under the three boost conditions. We conducted a 3 (boost)  $\times$  2 (preference) mixed-model ANOVA, and the interaction was significant ( $F(2, 133) = 4.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As expected, the self-esteem-boost condition ( $M_{\text{self-esteem}} = -.27$ ,  $SD = .98$ ) reduced preferences for helping, relative to the no-boost ( $M_{\text{no-boost}} = .29$ ,  $SD = .94$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 7.88$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and power-boost ( $M_{\text{power}} = .17$ ,  $SD = .89$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 5.55$ ,  $p < .05$ ) conditions, whereas the self-esteem-boost and power-boost conditions had no effect on preferences for conspicuous logos ( $ps > .33$ ).

Finally, to test our prediction that counter-normative exclusion threatens power (vs. self-esteem), we examined the effects of being rejected (counter-normative exclusion) under the three boost conditions. We conducted a 3 (boost)  $\times$  2 (preference) mixed-model ANOVA, and the interaction was significant ( $F(2, 135) = 6.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As expected, the power-boost condition ( $M_{\text{power}} = -.35$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) reduced preferences for conspicuous logos, relative to the no-boost ( $M_{\text{no-boost}} = .38$ ,  $SD = .66$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 12.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and self-esteem-boost ( $M_{\text{self-esteem}} = .22$ ,  $SD = .75$ ;  $F(1, 268) = 8.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ) conditions. Unexpectedly, however, the power-boost condition, relative to the no-boost condition, marginally increased preferences for helping ( $M_{\text{power}} = .06$ ,  $SD = .93$ ;  $M_{\text{no-boost}} = -.30$ ,  $SD = .99$ ;  $F(1, 135) = 2.79$ ,  $p = .097$ ). Although we expected no effect, the results are consistent with our assumption that counter-normative exclusion does not threaten self-esteem. If it threatened self-esteem, then boosting self-esteem would reduce preferences for helping.

Using the moderation-of-process design, we replicated our findings from Experiments 1 and 2 in the no-boost condition and further demonstrated that the differential needs threatened by normative and counter-normative exclusion explained distinct preferences. Boosting self-esteem, relative to power-boost and no-boost, reduced the effects of normative exclusion on preferences for helping, whereas boosting power, relative to self-esteem-boost and no-boost, reduced the effects of counter-normative exclusion on preferences for conspicuous logos.

## General discussion

Our research makes several contributions. First, we introduce cultural communication norms as an important boundary condition for previous research that has focused on explicit versus implicit exclusion. Our research reinforces the importance of testing the generalizability of findings beyond the dominant research culture (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). One may think that low- and high-context cultures dovetail with individualistic and collectivistic cultures, respectively. However, it is noteworthy that although virtually all cultures that have low-context communication norms have predominantly individualistic orientations, not all individualistic cultures (e.g., Britain, France) have low-context communication norms (Biswas, Olsen,

& Carlet, 1992; Djurssa, 1994). Moreover, we show that cultural aspects of communication norms can be situationally primed and that priming low- versus high-context communication norms produces opposite responses to explicit versus implicit exclusion.

Next, our research indicates that the manner in which exclusion is communicated yields distinct preferences. What drives preferences for helping and conspicuous consumption may not be as much about whether exclusion is implicit or explicit as previously claimed, but about whether it is conveyed normatively or counter-normatively. Our research also indicates that differentially threatened needs as an underlying mechanism are affected by whether exclusion is communicated normatively or counter-normatively rather than whether it is communicated explicitly or implicitly. Finally, combining both communication norms and exclusion types, our research sheds light on why social exclusion has been shown to produce seemingly contradictory outcomes ranging from prosocial (e.g., Mead, Baumeister, Stillman, Rawn, & Vohs, 2011) to aggressive (e.g., Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006) responses, especially toward others who are unrelated to the exclusion incident.

Our findings also suggest avenues for future research. First, DeBono and Muraven (2014) found that how people interpret exclusion predicts different responses; exclusion that communicates disrespect results in aggressive responses that are intended to regain status, but exclusion that communicates dislike does not. Thus, it is likely that counter-normative exclusion may communicate disrespect, resulting in power threats, whereas normative exclusion may communicate dislike, resulting in self-esteem threats. Second, another factor that underlies various responses to social exclusion may be capacity for self-regulation. For example, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge (2005) demonstrated that social exclusion led to a decrease in self-regulation as evidenced by more consumption of unhealthy foods and less persistence on difficult tasks; however, excluded individuals were able to self-regulate when they had a compelling justification for self-regulating. Thus, it is likely that normative exclusion, which is considered socially justified, may motivate individuals to increase self-regulation and to re-affiliate, whereas counter-normative exclusion, which is considered a violation of social promise, may lead to self-regulation failure and, in turn, produce conspicuous consumption.

Third, both American and Korean cultures are considered vertical societies, which value status and power, relative to horizontal societies (e.g., Sweden; Shavitt, Lalwani, Zhang, & Torelli, 2006). Particularly, vertical individualistic cultures (e.g., the U.S.) associate power with promoting personal status, but horizontal collectivistic cultures (e.g., the Israeli kibbutz) associate it with benefiting others (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). Accordingly, the causal link between threatened power and conspicuous consumption may differ in horizontal cultures. People from horizontal cultures differentiate themselves from others by focusing on personality and traits rather than status and superiority (Dommer, Swaminathan, & Ahluwalia, 2013) and thus are likely to engage in helping behavior rather than conspicuous consumption when feeling threats to power. Finally, materialism, which is negatively correlated with both self-esteem (Chaplin & John, 2007) and power (Kashdan &

Breen, 2007), may serve as an individual difference factor in exclusion effects. Materialists with chronically low self-esteem and low power may be particularly sensitive to exclusion situations that threaten those needs.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.05.006>.

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