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**Nation-level moderators of the extent to which self-efficacy and relationship harmony predict students' depression and life satisfaction: Evidence from ten cultures**

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**Abstract**

Previous two-nation comparisons have provided evidence that self-efficacy may be a protective factor against depression in individualist cultures, whereas relationship harmony may be a stronger protective factor in collectivist cultures. However, wider sampling and more specific measures of cultural difference are required to test these conclusions. Student ratings of depression and life satisfaction were surveyed in ten samples drawn from nine nations. Culture-level individualism positively moderated the relationship of self-efficacy to low depression. However, culture-level collectivism negatively moderated the linkage of relationship harmony to depression. To better understand these effects, four separate nation-level predictors derived from dimensions of self-construal were employed. Effects of self-efficacy were strongest where cultural models of selfhood emphasized self-direction (vs. receptiveness to influence); effects of relationship harmony were strongest where cultural models of selfhood emphasized dependence on others (vs. self-reliance). These results indicate the value of unpackaging the diffusely defined concept of individualism-collectivism.

### **Nation-level moderators of the extent to which self-efficacy and relationship harmony predict students' depression and life satisfaction: Evidence from ten cultures**

Research by cross-cultural psychologists has been strongly influenced by the concept of nation-level individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995) and has frequently drawn upon this concept in interpreting differing results obtained from two-nation comparisons. In the present investigation, we take one such published study and seek to show how a fuller understanding of the issues upon which it focused can be obtained by wider sampling and through the use of measures that decompose the diffuse and multilayered concept of individualism-collectivism. The study in question compared predictors of adolescent depression within Hong Kong and the United States (Chen, Chan, Bond & Stewart, 2006).

Chen et al. (2006) predicted that within the individualistic culture of the United States persons with high self-efficacy would be less prone to depression, whereas in collectivistic Hong Kong persons with high relationship harmony would be less vulnerable to depression. They found that high self-efficacy and high relationship harmony were both significant predictors of low depression in both samples. As predicted, self-efficacy was a stronger predictor in the US, but the prediction that relationship harmony would be a stronger predictor of low depression in Hong Kong was not supported. Chen et al.'s hypotheses were based on discussion of Hofstede's (2001) dimension of individualism and the expectation that members of individualistic and collectivistic cultures will differ in their propensity to be characterized by different levels of independent and interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, no measures of these concepts were included. Thus, the study yielded no evidence as to whether the differences that were found were attributable to these dimensions of culture or to other ways in which the cultural contexts of Hong Kong and US

adolescents differ. For instance, as Chen et al. noted, samples from Hong Kong and the US differ in terms of relevant dimensions of the values surveyed by Schwartz (1994). Another possibility is that depressive symptoms may differ between the two groups. To gain a fuller picture of cultural factors associated with depression, wider sampling is required. It is also desirable to include measures that tap individualism-collectivism and its hypothesized components, as well as alternative indicators of well-being.

### **Culture and depression**

Discussion of the comparative incidence of depression across cultures has been focused around the likelihood that cultural norms will influence the ways in which it is likely that symptoms will be expressed (Kleinman, 2004). In East Asian cultures, emotional display rules favor expression of harmony and disfavor strong expressions of emotion (Matsumoto, Hoo, Fontaine et al., 2008). Consequently, it has been found in early studies that there is a stronger tendency for depression to be expressed by way of complaints about somatic symptoms rather than through overt emotion, particularly in China (Marsella, Sartorius, Jablensky, & Fenton, 1985). However, these conclusions are based on reported symptom frequencies within single-nation samples. In one of the few published comparative studies that have tested for scalar measurement invariance, Zhang, Fokkema, Kuijpers et al., (2011) found no tendency for a Chinese elderly sample to report somatic symptoms more frequently than a Dutch elderly sample. The Dutch scored higher on all four of the subscales of the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D) scale. Further studies support the view that CES-D scores can be validly compared across cultures. For instance, an 8-item version of the CES-D showed partial scalar invariance across representative samples in 23 European nations (Van de Velde, Bracke, & Levecque, 2010; van de Velde, Bracke,

Levecque & Meuleman, 2010). Mak, Bond, Simpson, & Rholes (2010) found metric equivalence of CES-D items between Hong Kong and US respondents to the CES-D.

In their study, Chen et al. (2006) used the Beck Depression Inventory, finding high reliability for the overall scale in both Hong Kong and the US. No mean subscale scores were given by them or by another report drawing on the same data (Stewart, Kennard, Lee et al., 2005). Although sparse, the evidence suggests that it is appropriate to survey depression across cultures using a single overall index. In his initial report on the CES-D scale within the US, Radloff (1977) noted that while the scale can yield four separate factors, these together yield a single second order factor, and he suggested using a single total score.

### **Culture and life satisfaction**

In order to test the generality of results beyond an exclusive focus on depression, an alternative measure of well-being was included in the present study. Life satisfaction was selected because there is an extensive literature indicating that variations in life satisfaction are associated with nation-level differences in individualism-collectivism. Initial studies found a significant correlation between individualism and nation-level means for life satisfaction in 55 nations (Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener, Diener & Diener, 1995). A more recent meta-analysis of numerous studies has indicated that individualism remains a significant predictor of nation-level life satisfaction and related measures of subjective well-being even when the effect of other variables such as wealth that also correlate with life satisfaction are partialled out (Fischer & Boer, 2011). While Diener and his colleagues used Hofstede's (2001) scores and country estimates provided by Triandis for individualism-collectivism as their predictor, Fischer and Boer constructed a conglomerate index from existing cross-national data sources.

Studies have also shown that nation-level individualism acts as moderator of the relationship between individual-level attributes such as self-esteem and life satisfaction (Oishi, Diener, Lucas & Suh, 1999). On this perspective, a nation's culture provides individuals with greater or lesser opportunities to satisfy specific types of needs. Across 39 nations, Oishi et al found self-esteem to be a stronger predictor of the five-item satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) in more individualist nations. This perspective was extended by Kwan, Bond and Singelis (1997), who proposed that relationship harmony would be a stronger source of life satisfaction in collectivist cultural contexts than in individualist contexts, while self-esteem would show the reverse pattern. These predictions were supported using student samples in Hong Kong and the US. Kwan et al. also showed that the relationship between independent self-construal and SWLS was mediated by self-efficacy, whereas the relationship between interdependent self-construal and SWLS was mediated by relationship harmony, using Singelis' (1994) measure of self-construal. There was no significant difference between the strength of these mediation effects in Hong Kong and the US. Thus, we have some evidence of an individual-level linkage between self-construal and SWLS, but wider sampling is required to test for any nation-level moderation effect of the type proposed by Oishi et al.

### **Unpackaging individualism-collectivism**

In the studies reviewed in the preceding sections, individualism-collectivism has been treated as a unitary dimension of cultural difference. However, researchers have defined the concept in a multiplicity of ways, and it is better thought of as a syndrome entailing the variations in beliefs, attitudes, values, goals and norms that prevail within a given context (Triandis, 1995). The related concepts of independent and interdependent conceptions of self advanced by Markus and Kitayama (1991) offer greater precision and have been widely seen

as encapsulating a key aspect of cultural differences, particularly those between North America and East Asia. However, the most widely employed individual-level measure of their concepts (Singelis, 1994) has also included items referring to self-construal, values, goals and behaviors. In more recent publications, Kitayama, Park, Sevincer, Karasawa, and Uskul (2009) and Markus and Kitayama (2010) have emphasized that they understand independence and interdependence not simply as attributes of individuals, but as implicit aspects of cultures, to which specific individuals may be expected to react in diverse ways (see also Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Smith et al., 2013). Indeed, these authors anticipate that a person's cultural context will be a stronger predictor of psychological functioning than will be their individual-level orientations toward independence or interdependence. Thus, we suggest that it is the differential adaptiveness of self-efficacy and relationship harmony to different kinds of cultural context, rather than their consistency or otherwise with individuals' personal ways of construing themselves, that should moderate their importance as predictors of psychological well-being.

This conceptualization of culture is consistent with the perspective adopted in the previously discussed studies by Chen et al. (2006) and Kwan et al. (1997) and also forms the basis of the present study. A project using this perspective requires culture-level measures reflecting the predominant local modes of self-construal. Since the self-concept is an individual-level construct, the notion of characterizing cultures along self-construal dimensions may seem foreign. Nonetheless, we consider that individuals' self-construals are grounded in social constructions of selfhood. These partially-shared representations of the self and its relation to others are created and maintained through ongoing interactions and within any particular cultural context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Moscovici, 1988). Representations of the self will not be uniform within cultures, as they may be internalized or resisted by individuals, generating substantial



variance within any given cultural context. Nonetheless, we suggest that partial agreement exists within a culture, and that this partial agreement will have meaningful consequences.

By extensive revision of earlier measures, Vignoles, Owe, Becker et al. (2015) have developed and validated individual and culture-level measures of this kind, distinguishing seven dimensions of self-construal, each of which represents an aspect of the overarching distinction between independence and interdependence. Each of these scales includes reverse-keyed items, eliminating the problem of acquiescent responding that has been a substantial threat to the validity of prior scales such as that of Singelis (1994). Vignoles et al. tested their model in a fresh sample comprising 63 cultural groups from 35 nations. Multi-level modeling showed that their seven factor solution was largely isomorphic across individual and culture-level analyses. Thus it becomes possible to characterize the prevailing models of selfhood in different cultures using the same seven dimensions. Furthermore, they presented evidence that this culture-level characterization cannot be reduced to a simple second-order two-factor contrast between independence and interdependence. The seven factors should therefore be considered as separate constructs.

In the present study, four of these dimensions were selected for inclusion on the basis that they refer to interpersonal models of selfhood that are likely to have greater relevance to the incidence of depression. These were: self-direction versus receptiveness to others, self-reliance versus dependence on others, self-containment versus connection to others and self-interest versus commitment to others. Availability of specific measures makes it possible to test whether they can account better than individualism-collectivism for variations in the extent to which self-efficacy and relationship harmony can predict incidence of depression and life satisfaction. Conceptually, the first-named pole of each scale listed above falls within the range of attributes defining independence, while the second-named pole falls within the range of attributes defining interdependence.

In the larger set of samples now available, the individual-level hypotheses first formulated by Chen et al. (2006) can be retested at the culture-level, first in terms of global individualism-collectivism and then in terms of the more specific cultural models of selfhood:

*Hypothesis 1: The individual-level correlation of self-efficacy with low depression will be moderated positively by (a) high individualism, (b) high self-direction, (c) high self-reliance, (d) high self-containment, and (e) high self-interest.*

*Hypothesis 2: The individual-level correlation of relationship harmony with low depression will be moderated positively by (a) high collectivism, (b) high receptiveness to influence, (c) high dependence on others, (d) high connection to others, and (e) high commitment to others.*

In a similar way, the individual-level hypotheses first tested by Kwan et al. (1997) can be reformulated at the nation level as follows:

*Hypothesis 3: The individual-level correlation of self-efficacy with high life satisfaction will be moderated positively by (a) high individualism, (b) high self-direction, (c) high self-reliance, (d) high self-containment, and (e) high self-interest.*

*Hypothesis 4: The individual-level correlation of relationship harmony with high life satisfaction will be moderated positively by (a) high collectivism, (b) high receptiveness to influence, (c) high dependence on others, (d) high connection to others, and (e) high commitment to others.*

## **Method**

### *Sample*

Data were collected from 10 samples, two of which are typically considered to be individualistic and eight of which are considered to be collectivistic. The broader sampling of collectivistic samples reflects the greater diversity of collectivistic nations (e.g., House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004), featuring samples from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Table 1 shows details of the respondents, who were students majoring in a variety of subjects. In most cases, they were enrolled in universities in the cities where the authors are located, but the Turkish data were from two universities in Izmir, while the Finnish data were from Turku University. The questionnaire was created in English and then translated into the language of instruction in the sampled universities, using back-translation (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997) to maximize accuracy.

Responses from non-nationals and those born outside the country were discarded. The Malay Chinese and Finnish samples were substantially smaller than the remaining samples, but were well within the limits shown by simulation studies (Wolf, Harrington, Clark & Miller, 2013) to be required for valid conduct of the confirmatory factor analyses that are reported below.

- Table 1 about here -

### *Measures*

In order to test the hypotheses validly, metric equivalence is desirable for the measures used to test within-sample relationships, namely depression, life satisfaction, relationship harmony and self-efficacy. Scalar invariance is desirable for the predicted between-sample moderators of the within-sample relationships, namely the models of selfhood measures. For each scale, model fit was assessed using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standard Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). Values of SRMR < .08 (or < .10), RMSEA < .06 (or < .08), and CFI > .95 (or > .90) have been proposed as criteria for “good” (or “acceptable”) fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). Following Little (2000), metric or scalar invariance were

considered to be supported if a model that assumes that level of invariance showed adequate fit. Analyses were conducted in Mplus Version 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010).

*Depression.* Depression was measured with the 20-item version of the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977). These items have 4-point response scales keyed in terms of frequency of symptom occurrence. Four items describing positive symptoms are reverse keyed. The scale has been used among many cultural groups, and partial scalar invariance across samples has been established in some studies (e.g., Zhang, Fokkema, Kuijpers et al., 2011). The average Cronbach alpha for CES-D by nation was 0.88, with no sample scoring below 0.84. Preliminary analysis indicated that it was desirable to omit three items. Item 7 ('I felt that everything that I did was an effort') was discarded because effort has distinctive positive value in East Asian cultures (Hau & Ho, 2010). Item 15 ('People were unfriendly') was discarded because it refers to others rather than to the respondent). Item 20 ('I could not get 'going') was discarded because of the difficulty of obtaining adequate translation of idiomatic phrases. As this scale includes reversed items it was possible to compute a separate method factor modeling acquiescence, which loaded onto every indicator at a fixed value of 1 and was not allowed to correlate with the substantive factor (Welkenhuysen-Gybels et al., 2003). The substantive factor was scaled by fixing one item loading to 1. After adding a covariance between two adjacent similarly worded items, multi-group CFA with free intercepts and fixed loadings had acceptable fit:  $\chi^2(1360) = 15592.462, p < .001, CFI = .898, RMSEA = .065$  and  $SRMR = .078$ . Thus, metric equivalence was supported. Factor scores were saved from this model for use in our analyses.

*Satisfaction with Life.* Satisfaction with Life was measured with the five-item scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). A sample item is 'I am satisfied with life'. These items have 7-point response scales keyed from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. There are no reversed items. The scale has been shown to have predictive validity

when used cross-culturally (Diener, Inglehart & Tay, 2013), but does not always factor unidimensionally (Slocum-Gori, Michalos & Diener, 2009). The average of Cronbach alphas for Satisfaction with Life by nation was 0.81 with the lowest score being 0.68. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated the desirability of dropping item 2 ('The conditions of my life are excellent'). Supporting metric invariance, a multi-group CFA with the remaining four items with free intercepts and fixed loadings, showed acceptable fit:  $\chi^2(60) = 2995.597, p < .001$ , CFI = .973, RMSEA = .080, SRMR = .068. Factor scores were saved from this model for use in our analyses.

*Self-Efficacy.* The 10-item General Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) was used to assess perceived beliefs about the ability to achieve goals and manage the environment. A sample item is 'I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. Items have 4-point response scales keyed from 'not at all true to 'exactly true'. The scale has been frequently found valid when used cross-culturally (e.g., Luszczynska, Scholz & Schwarzer, 2005; Chen et al., 2006). The average of Cronbach alphas by nation was 0.85, with the lowest score being 0.79. Preliminary analysis indicated that two adjacent items with similar meaning should be permitted to covary. Supporting metric invariance, a multi-group CFA with otherwise free intercepts and fixed loadings showed acceptable fit:  $\chi^2(450) = 8978.894, p < .001$ , CFI = .912, RMSEA = .082, SRMR = .086. Factor scores were saved from this model for use in our analyses.

*Relationship Harmony.* Relationship Harmony was measured with the items developed by Kwan et al. (1995). Respondents are asked to select the five most important current relationships in their life. The degree of harmony in each relationship is rated on 7-point scales keyed from 'very low' to 'very high'. The average Cronbach alpha for relationship harmony by nation was 0.65, ranging from 0.46 (Hong Kong) to 0.79 (Malay Chinese). The average alpha value is similar to that obtained by Chen et al. (2006). Despite this indication

of some variation in levels of harmony between relationships, after within-group standardization a pan-cultural factor analysis did yield a single factor, which explained 42% of variance. Supporting metric invariance, a multi-group CFA with free intercepts and fixed loadings showed acceptable fit:  $\chi^2(100) = 1952.22, p < .001, CFI = .970, RMSEA = .068, SRMR = .058$ . In this model, covariances were permitted between adjacent items in order to allow for order effects among the relationships that participants had listed. Factor scores were saved from this model for use in our analyses.

*Self-construal.* The self-construal data from UK, Romania and Thailand was the same as that analyzed by Owe (2012), but her analysis was focused solely on the development of adequate measures, extending those previously developed and validated by Vignoles, Owe, Becker, et al. (2015), based upon data derived from 63 cultural groups in 35 nations. In the present study, 19 items defining the four most relevant dimensions from Owe's (2012) extended scale were included. These were self-direction versus receptiveness to others (sample item 'You prefer to do what you want without letting your family influence you'); self-reliance versus dependence on others (sample item 'You try to avoid being reliant on others'); self-containment versus connection to others (sample item 'If someone in your family is sad, you feel the sadness as if it were your own'); self-interest versus commitment to others (sample item 'you value relations with the people close to you more than your personal achievements'). Each scale contains some items keyed toward one end of the scale and other items keyed toward the alternate end of the scale. Items have 9-point response scales keyed from 'Not at all' to 'Exactly'.

Analysis of the 19 self-construal items included a separate method factor modeling acquiescence, which loaded onto every indicator at a fixed value of 1 and was allowed to correlate with the four substantive factors (Welkenhuysen-Gybels et al., 2003). The remaining factors were scaled by fixing one item loading to 1. Since sample mean values on

the four cultural models of self scales are to be tested as cross-sample moderators, evidence of scalar invariance is desirable. However, even in single samples, CFAs of commonly used self-construal scales typically show unacceptable model fit: for example, CFAs of the Singelis (1994) scale by Levine et al. (2003) and Hardin et al. (2004) showed values of CFI ranging from .25 to .65 and RMSEA ranging from .076 to .268. The current measure performed considerably better than this. After dropping one item and adding covariances between four pairs of items that had similar wordings, a multi-group CFA supported full metric invariance and partial scalar invariance of the four substantive factors:  $\chi^2 (1530) = 16116.890, p < .001$ , CFI 0.90, RMSEA 0.062 and SRMR 0.074. In this model, all loadings and a majority of intercepts were fixed and 26 (out of a possible 126) intercepts were freed for specific samples. The freed intercepts were approximately evenly distributed between the four scales. Factor scores were saved from this model and adjusted sample means were computed for our main analyses, controlling for age and gender.

*Individualism-Collectivism.* The scores provided by Hofstede (2001) were used. His score for Malaysia was assigned to both Malaysian samples in the present study.

## Results

Sample means for the dependent measures are shown in Table 1, while those for the predictor variables are given in Table 2. Correlations between all measures at the individual and cultural levels are provided in Table 3. In order to compute valid pan-cultural individual-level correlations, items were standardized relative to their sample mean. However, this form of standardization was not required for our main analyses. As the table shows, the predictors are not wholly independent of one another at the cultural level. Among the present samples, cultures characterized by self-direction are also high on self-containment. Cultures characterized by self-reliance are also high on self-interest. In addition, there is a tendency for

samples high on Hofstede's (2001) measure of individualism to be high on self-direction and self-containment.

- Tables 2 and 3 about here -

Table 4 shows individual-level correlations within each sample between self-efficacy and relationship harmony as predictors and depression and life satisfaction as dependent measures. High self-efficacy is significantly associated with low depression in nine of the ten samples and with high life satisfaction in all ten samples. High relationship harmony is significantly associated with low depression in nine samples and with high life satisfaction in all ten samples.

- Table 4 about here -

The issue in question is whether measures of the culture of the ten samples are found to moderate the strength of these effects. The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical linear modelling (HLM version 6: Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2007) , with individuals (Level 1: N = 2,598) clustered within cultures (Level 2: N = 10). Currently available simulation studies focused upon sample sizes of 30 and more (e.g., Maas & Hox, 2005) provide no firm basis upon which to judge the magnitude of the limitations due to our relatively small number of level 2 samples. Given the sampling constraints of cross-cultural research, the results from ten samples can provide important indications (Nezlek, 2008, 2011) relative to the bicultural contrasts typical of the prior literature.

ICC, here plus reiteration that we are looking for moderation not main effects.

Given the small sample size at Level 2, we tested each potential culture-level moderator in a separate model; thus, we tested five models predicting depression scores and five models predicting life-satisfaction scores. In each of these models, we predicted the relevant outcome as a function of individual differences in both self-efficacy and relationship harmony (group-mean centered), and we introduced one of the culture-level variables (grand



mean centered) as a main effect and as a moderator of the two within-culture effects. In all 10 models, the main effects of both self-efficacy and relationship harmony were significant (all  $p < .001$ ), when estimated at the mean level of the relevant culture-level moderator.

Table 5 reports the cross-level interaction effects from the five models predicting depression scores. As shown in the table, Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1d and 1e are supported, but not 1c. The association of self-efficacy with low depression is significantly stronger in samples characterized by individualism, self-direction, self-containment and self-interest, but not in samples characterized by self-reliance. In contrast, there is no evidence for Hypothesis 2a which predicted that the association between low depression and relationship harmony would be stronger in collectivist cultures. Indeed, the effect is significant in the reverse direction. This finding extends the conclusions drawn by Chen et al. (2006), who found no difference between their US and Hong Kong samples in the link between relationship harmony and depression. However, supporting Hypotheses 2c and 2d, the link between low depression and relationship harmony is significantly weaker in samples characterized by high self-reliance and high self-containment. In other words, the negative effect of relationship harmony on depression is stronger in samples scoring toward the other pole of these scales, namely high dependence on others and high connection with others. Hypothesis 2 is thus supported when tested with the more fine-grained self-construal measures.

- Table 5 about here -

Table 5 also reports the cross-level interaction effects from the five models predicting life satisfaction scores. Hypothesis 3a is supported using the individualism score as moderator, and Hypothesis 3b is supported using self-direction as the moderator. In samples higher on self-direction, the link between self-efficacy and SWLS is stronger. When individualism is used as moderator, Hypothesis 4a is again significantly reversed. The association of relationship harmony and SWLS is stronger in individualist samples rather

than in collectivist samples. However, when self-construals are used as moderators, support is obtained for Hypotheses 4c and 4e. Relationship harmony and SWLS are more strongly associated in samples characterized by high dependence on others and high commitment to others.

Our hypotheses focused on the moderating effects of living in cultural contexts with different prevailing models of selfhood, rather than any possible moderating effects of personally endorsing different forms of self-construal. Nonetheless, we conducted additional analyses to test for individual-level moderation effects. We tested a parallel set of models to those reported above, adding individual differences in the relevant self-construal dimensions (group mean centered) and their interactions with self-efficacy and relationship harmony as Level 1 predictors. If the cross-level interaction effects observed above were driven by individuals' personal self-construals, then we should expect to see a parallel pattern of within-level interaction effects at the individual level. However, just two individual-level interaction effects were significant, and these did not match the cross-level interaction effects reported above. Among individuals high in self-direction, the association of self-efficacy with low depression was significantly weaker ( $\gamma=.067$ ,  $t=2.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, although H1b was supported at the culture level, it is rejected at the individual level. In a similar way, among individuals high in self-reliance, the association of self-efficacy with low depression was significantly weaker ( $\gamma=.069$ ,  $t=3.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, while H1c was unsupported at the culture-level, it is significantly reversed at individual level.

?? model regression lines self-direction as a moderator of SE and depression and self-reliance as a moderator of RH and depression

## Discussion

In terms of the substantive issues on which this project has focused, it appears that the linkages previously reported between high self-efficacy and high relationship harmony as predictors of low depression can be considered replicable across a broad range of cultures. Similarly high self-efficacy and high relationship harmony consistently predict high SWLS. These effects are correlational, and it is equally plausible that those who are depressed or dissatisfied will feel less efficacious and less satisfied with their relationships. Indeed, in the part of Chen et al.'s (2006) Hong Kong study that was reported by Stewart et al. (2005), longitudinal data were collected, which showed changes in relations between depression and these two predictors between Time 1 and Time 2 in both directions.

The present findings provide clear support for the value of testing hypotheses across a broader range of cultures and for the unpacking of global measures of cultural dimensions. We discuss these aspects in turn. Our analysis is based on a small and non-representative sample of the world's cultures. In particular, we lacked cultures that score high on self-containment but low on self-direction, or vice versa, as well as cultures that score high on self-interest but low on self-reliance, or vice versa. This limited our ability to pick apart the roles of these dimensions from each other. The ten cultural groups that were sampled included only two that would be considered individualistic in terms of Hofstede's (2001) dimension, and the remainder were heavily weighted toward Asian cultures. Still broader sampling is advisable in order to test the replicability of the moderation effects that were obtained.

The characterization of nations and other large collectivities in terms of scores such as those derived from Hofstede's (2001) project has been rather frequently criticized on the basis that there is considerable variability of values and beliefs within any given nation (Fischer & Schwartz, 2011). It is more likely that culture members' feelings and actions are guided by their perceptions of their more immediate cultural context. It could therefore be the

case that the present results were enhanced by the fact that the nation-level predictors were derived from participants' sampled peer group rather than from their nation as a whole.

The use of self-construal data to characterize cultures is innovative. Indices of self-construal have most frequently been seen as useful in examining individual-level mediations of cultural effects. Their use in this way has rarely proved fruitful (Smith, Fischer, Vignoles & Bond, 2013), and this scientific shortcoming may be partly due to the psychometric deficiencies of the measures that have most frequently been used (Levine, et al., 2003).

However, using the more adequate measures presently employed, we found only two individual-level moderations, compared to 12 culture-level moderations. The two counter-intuitive individual-level moderations effects that we did obtain may have been due to suppressor effects. In general, these results emphasize that individuals' outcomes will only become explicable if the socio-cultural context within which they operate is also taken into

account (Bond, 2013). There is active current debate as to whether characterization of socio-cultural contexts is best done on the basis of aggregated data as pioneered by Hofstede (2001) or by directly tapping respondents' perception of local norms. While this latter procedure may in time prove preferable, the present results indicate that aggregation yields coherent and interpretable evidence of the strength of cultural rather than individual effects.

Characterizing cultures in terms of aggregated self-construals can capture aspects of the global dimension of individualism that are not tapped for instance by nation-level measures of values or beliefs. What the present study does show is that the original hypotheses formulated and tested by Chen et al. (2006) and Stewart et al. (2005) are not supported in broader samples when one uses Hofstede's measure, but they are supported—in a more nuanced manner—when the more precisely focused cultural models of self indices are used. Thus, their basic premise of a contrast between individualistic and collectivistic cultures is retained and refined when more specific aspects of the global concept of individualism are

identified and itemised. In particular, cultural differences in self-direction (vs. receptiveness to influence) consistently moderated the predictive effects of self-efficacy on both depression and life-satisfaction, whereas cultural differences in self-reliance (vs. dependence on others) consistently moderated the corresponding effects of relationship harmony. Cultural differences in self-containment (vs. connection to others) moderated the effects of both predictors on depression, but not on life satisfaction; whilst cultural differences in self-interest (vs. concern for others) moderated the effect of self-efficacy on depression and the effect of relationship harmony on life satisfaction.

The pattern of results differs between the two dependent variables, with stronger effects linking self-efficacy with low depression and stronger results linking relationship harmony with life satisfaction. Four of five hypotheses linking self-efficacy with low depression were supported, and three of five hypotheses linking relationship harmony with life satisfaction were supported. Only four of the remaining ten hypotheses were supported. Furthermore, the effects obtained were not simply attributable to polar opposites of the same cultural models of self. Cultures characterized by specific models of self have distinctive relevance to each outcome. It seems that personal self-efficacy may be especially protective against depression in contexts where self-direction rather than receptiveness to influence is normative. It seems also that relationship harmony may be especially beneficial for life satisfaction where dependence on others rather than self-reliance is normative.

This pattern of findings helps to explain the previous lack of support for Chen and colleagues' prediction that effects of relationship harmony would be stronger in collectivist cultures. This prediction was not supported in their two-culture comparison of Hong Kong and US participants, nor in the current study when Hofstede scores were used to define individualism-collectivism. However, the present findings show consistent support for the more precise prediction that relationship harmony would be most beneficial in cultures that

emphasize dependence on others, compared to those that emphasize self-reliance. Notably, dependence on others (vs. self-reliance) is often theorized as an important aspect of cultural collectivism (vs. individualism), but is poorly captured by Hofstede's individualism scores (Table 3; for more extensive evidence, see Vignoles et al., 2015). Thus, it is unsurprising that comparisons based on Hofstede scores do not yield the predicted effect.

A final limitation of the present study is that each of the hypotheses included parallel effects of all four cultural models of self dimensions as moderators. Eight of the 16 such predictions were supported, which substantially exceeds chance expectation. Furthermore, within a set of just 10 samples, some dimensions are not independent of one another, as shown in Table 3. The precise pattern of findings observed is interpretable, but was not predicted a priori; hence, it requires replication in subsequent research. As the nomological net of these dimensions becomes more fully known, it should become possible to generate and test more precisely formulated predictions.

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**Table 1.** Sample details with adjusted means for dependent measures

Group	N	Mean Age (SD)	% Female	Language used	SE	CES-D	RH	LS
British	177	18.8 (3.0)	71	English	2.83	1.95	5.40	4.52
Chinese	374	18.5 (0.9)	60	Chinese	2.73	1.79	5.88	3.98
Finns	118	25.5 (5.4)	75	Finnish	2.90	1.69	5.31	5.05
Hong Kongers	145	20.7 (2.1)	69	Chinese	2.61	1.78	5.47	4.24
Malay Chinese	99	22.8 (1.1)	44	Bahasa	2.90	1.93	6.09	4.76
Malay Malays	287	22.9 (1.4)	52	Bahasa	2.98	2.04	6.00	4.73
Pakistanis	250	25.4 (5.5)	48	Urdu	2.70	2.07	5.43	4.59
Romanians	418	22.0 (3.5)	71	Romanian	3.16	1.91	5.72	4.75
Thais	448	20.1 (1.3)	71	Thai	2.89	1.84	5.70	4.49
Turks	372	21.1 (2.5)	54	Turkish	2.86	1.91	5.68	4.54

Notes: SE = Self-Efficacy; RH = Relationship Harmony; CES-D = Depression; LS = Life Satisfaction; Covariates for SE, RH, CES-D and LS: Age and Gender.

**Table 2.** Adjusted sample means for predictor variables

Group	Individualism- Collectivism	Self- Direction	Self- Reliance	Self- Containment	Self- Interest
British	89	.03	.08	.02	.14
Chinese	20	-.56	.64	-1.83	.29
Finns	63	.61	-.16	.30	-.38
Hong Kongers	25	-.27	.31	-.67	-.05
Malay Chinese	26	-.45	.11	-.75	-.28
Malay Malays	26	-.82	.09	-1.50	-.13
Pakistanis	14	-.44	.85	-.36	.17
Romanians	30	.05	.76	-.61	.73
Thais	20	-.39	.09	-1.01	-.30
Turks	37	-.27	.77	-1.33	.16

Note: Covariates for cultural models of selfhood are age and gender.

**Table 3.** Correlations between all variables

Variable	SD	SR	SC	SI	SE	RH	D	LS
Self-Direction (SD)	-	.21	.67	.36	.09	-.24	-.09	-.11
Self-Reliance (SR)	-.27	-	-.12	.26	.26	-.02	-.22	.05
Self-Containment (SC)	.79**	-.36	-	.33	-.06	-.31	-.13	-.08
Self-Interest (SI)	-.02	.79**	-.17	-	.11	-.13	-.15	-.09
Self-Efficacy (SE)	.10	.13	-.11	.33	-	.21	-.27	.31
Relationship Harmony (RH)	-.54*	-.15	-.67*	-.17	.42	-	.07	.20
Depression (D)	-.07	-.64*	-.09	-.64*	-.43	.17	-	-.23
Life Satisfaction (LS)	.15	-.14	.36	-.18	.28	.10	-.17	-
Individualism	.67	-.47	.62	-.08	-.19	-.48	.09	.01

Notes: Culture-level correlations below the diagonal,  $n = 10$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Pan-cultural individual-level correlations above the diagonal,  $n = 2,604-2,686$ , values  $> .05$  are significant at  $p < .01$ .

**Table 4.** Individual-level correlations showing predictors of depression and life satisfaction by nation

Group	Self-Efficacy		Relationship Harmony	
	CES-D	LS	CES-D	LS
British	-.44***	.39***	-.36***	.41***
Chinese	-.29***	.28***	-.30***	.22***
Finns	-.41***	.26**	-.36***	.35***
Hong Kongers	-.23**	.26**	-.21*	.34***
Malay Chinese	-.19	.60***	-.32**	.36***
Malay Malays	-.35***	.29***	-.31***	.37***
Pakistanis	-.17**	.20**	-.11	.16*
Romanians	-.37***	.38***	-.18***	.18***
Thais	-.34***	.37***	-.26***	.23***
Turks	-.16**	.30***	-.24***	.26***

Notes: CES-D = Depression; LS = Life Satisfaction; Covariates: Age and Gender;  
 \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$



**Table 5.** Culture-level moderators of self-efficacy and relationship harmony as predictors of depression and life satisfaction

Culture-level moderator	Dependent measure	H	Self-Efficacy		Relationship Harmony		
			$\gamma$	t	H	$\gamma$	t
Individualism	CES-D	1a	-.096	3.84***	3a	-.063	3.27***
	LS	2a	.130	2.14*	4a	.226	4.81***
Self-Direction	CES-D	1b	-.025	4.11***	3b	-.083	1.63
	LS	2b	.320	2.21*	4b	.234	1.88
Self-Reliance	CES-D	1c	.074	1.28	3c	.126	2.88**
	LS	2c	-.183	1.30	4c	-.517	4.88***
Self-Containment	CES-D	1d	-.095	3.09**	3d	.057	2.13*
	LS	2d	.120	1.61	4d	-.040	0.61
Self-Interest	CES-D	1e	-.163	2.66**	3e	.040	0.70
	LS	2e	.073	0.49	4e	-.284	2.08*

Notes: H = Hypothesis number; CES-D = Depression; LS = Life Satisfaction; n = 2,598 participants within 10 cultures; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.