

In Pursuit of Happiness: the Cultural Psychological Study of SWB

Luo Lu

Department of Psychology, Fu-Jen Catholic University, Taiwan

MS No.: 04036 ; Received: September 26, 2004; Revised: December 11, 2004; Accepted: December 21, 2004

Correspondence Author: Dr. Luo Lu, Department of Psychology, Fu-Jen Catholic University, 510 Chong-Cheng Road, Hsing-Chuang, Taipei Hsien 242, Taiwan, ROC. (E-mail : luolu@mails.fju.edu.tw)

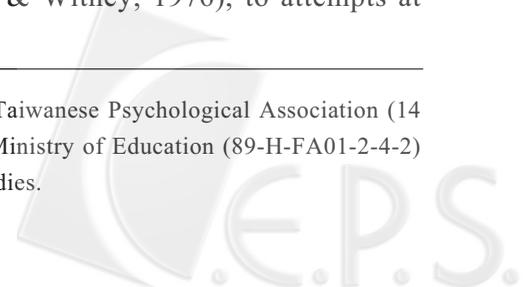
In the present paper, we took the position that cultural conceptions of happiness are critical aspects of SWB, which has largely been neglected thus far. We argued that culture and SWB are most productively analyzed together as a dynamic of mutual constitution. Adopting a cultural psychological approach, we selectively reviewed our own indigenous Chinese research to illuminate on two evolving themes regarding SWB: (1) conceptions of happiness, and (2) cultural correlates of happiness. We have shown that distinct characteristics of the conception of happiness are prevalent in Chinese and Western cultures, which can be systematically analyzed, discerned, and measured. The individual-oriented Euro-American cultural conception of SWB is composed of two distinct characteristics: personal accountability and explicit pursuit. In contrast, the social-oriented East Asian cultural conception of SWB is composed of two distinct characteristics: role obligations and dialectical balance.

We have also demonstrated that culture can impact on the SWB process through diverse self conceptions and their consonant beliefs. These self-regulatory mechanisms then determine how people think, feel and

behave in the pursuit of SWB. Finally, we have underlined the emerging coexistence of contrasting cultural rudiments in the case of SWB.

Keywords: *happiness, SWB, cultural psychology*

Happiness or subjective well-being (SWB) has been studied in a large number of disciplines over many centuries, and has been defined in ethical, theological, political, economic, and psychological terms (see Argyle, 2001; Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1984 for excellent reviews). SWB is now one of the most important fields in the emerging “positive psychology” (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000). Over nearly four decades of concerted scientific efforts, certain consensus has been formed among researchers. First, happiness is now generally defined as a predominance of positive over negative affect, and as satisfaction with life as a whole (Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989; Diener, 1984). Second, happiness is better conceptualized as a trait rather than a transient emotional state (Veenhoven, 1994). Third, SWB research has progressed from early social surveys looking for “objective” external indicators (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, 1976) or scale development (Andrews & Withey, 1976), to attempts at



explaining psychological mechanisms of happiness (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Headey & Wearing, 1989), largely helped by the advancement in multivariate techniques. Finally, the issue of “*Culture*” is now moving to the center stage, inspired and provoked by intriguing though puzzling findings from recent large scale cross-cultural comparisons (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Veenhoven, 1995).

Despite encouraging progresses, one thorny issue remains: that is psychological research as typically practiced tends to be Western in origin, ideas and instrumentation. On the one hand, research based in the West may well be culture bound in significant ways; and where there are cross-cultural studies, they usually involve applying measures derived from Western cultural traditions and comparing results from different nations within *a priori* Western theoretical frameworks. There is a danger, therefore, of twisting non-Western cultures to create psychological equivalence (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). This concern is all the more pressing for the study of SWB. The word Happiness (“*xing fu*”, 幸福) did not appear in the Chinese language until recently, and Chinese students were less familiar with the concept of happiness than their American counterparts (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995). We believe that a truly balanced psychology of SWB should be informed by multiple cultural vantage points, Christian, Confucian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and others. Our series of research in the past decade has focused on contrasting the Chinese against the Western (Euro-North American) cultural traditions as they construct the conception of happiness and consequently constrict its subjective experiences. This paper does not attempt a comprehensive review of the field, which has been accomplished by various seasoned scholars; rather we will use our own indigenous Chinese research to illuminate on two evolving themes regarding SWB: (1) conceptions of happiness, and (2) cultural correlates of happiness. “*Culture*” will be underlined throughout.

Conceptions of happiness

With a staunch conviction of scientific methods, Western psychologists have generally left the question of “what is happiness” to philosophers for debate, and gone on to study the perceived happiness and its correlates. As stated at the beginning of this paper, a general consensus to operationalize happiness in terms of (1) positive affect; (2) life satisfaction; and (3) absence of negative affect has been achieved. However, such a working definition is at most an attempt to identify components/elements of the happiness experience, which unravels little about the nature and meanings of happiness, or about beliefs people hold regarding happiness embedded in diverse cultural traditions. Some researchers have criticized the lack of theoretical sophistication and psychological depth entailed in the current mainstream SWB research (Ryff, 1989). Although empirical study on happiness has won its legitimacy and recognition in the mainstream scientific psychology, and flourished over the past four decades, the accumulation of data has failed to push up the level of theoretical construction. Comparing the two extensive reviews 15 years apart (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999), we now know more, with more confidence, about correlates of SWB, but we are no closer to the heart of this ultimate human experience. The hard question of “what is happiness” is unavoidable, if we are to further our understandings of human happiness. Breaking this deadlock can also hopefully enable us to direct our scientific efforts more effectively. To this end, we have conducted two series of studies from somewhat different yet complimentary perspectives: (1) the folk psychological analysis of lay people’s definitions of happiness, and (2) the cultural analysis of views of happiness molded in the Chinese and Western cultural traditions.

What is happiness? The folk psychological approach

Because meanings and concepts are molded by culture (Bruner, 1990), it seems necessary to

explore what people think about happiness as embedded in the world of meanings and values construed by a unique cultural tradition. As we mentioned earlier that the word Happiness (“*xing fu*”, 幸福) did not appear in the Chinese language until recently, “*Fu*” (福) or “*fu qi*” (福氣) is perhaps the closest equivalent of happiness in Chinese ancient thoughts. “*Fu*” appeared as early as in bone inscriptions from *Shang* Dynasty, expressing human desires and prayers to a worshiped god (Bauer, 1976). What were these desires and prayers, then? The interpretation of bone inscriptions and the excavated luxurious burial gifts point to a twofold fundamental conception of happiness at the very beginning of the Chinese civilization: blessings from the supernatural, and pleasures in human society.

Later, in the “*Shang Shu*”, the word “*fu*” was more clearly defined in mundane existence to include “longevity, prosperity, health, peace, virtue, and a comfortable death” (Wu, 1991). Another important ancient work, “*Classic of ritual*” gave “*fu*” yet another amendment. “*Fu*” was “fortunate, lucky, smooth and free of obstacles”. Roughly, the Chinese people’s conception of happiness can be traced back to the early days of civilization, and has kept some of its core ideas while evolving with the great culture. In folk wisdom, Chinese happiness seems to include material abundance, physical health, virtuous and peaceful life, and relief from death anxiety.

The ancient Chinese society was a dual existence. At the top of the societal pyramid, the social elite presided power and prestige, whose ideals were recorded and carried down through the writings and teachings of great philosophers and scholars; the vast majority of working people were ruled according to, and preached with those ideals, but conveyed them in folklores as described above. Nonetheless, there is no denying that schools of great philosophy have profoundly shaped the Chinese culture and the mentality of Chinese people for thousands of years. The Tripartite of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism form the backbone of the orthodox Chinese culture, and

each has distinct views on human happiness. Our systematic efforts in exploring the philosophical thinking of Confucian, Taoism, and Buddhism regarding human happiness have already been detailed in various journal publications (Lu, 1998; Lu, 2001; Lu, Gilmour, & Kao, 2001; Lu & Shih, 1997), however, in the interest of depicting a cultural background for our later presentation of the Chinese folk psychology on happiness, we will sketch a brief summary below.

The Confucian happiness is achieved through “knowledge, benevolence, and harmony of the group” (Wu, 1992, p. 31). Confucian philosophy stresses the collective welfare of the family, or clan (extending to the society and the entire human race) more than individual welfare. Under this collectivist or social orientation, Chinese culture emphasizes sharing the fruits of individual success with the group. Contributing to the society is the ultimate happiness, whereas hedonistic striving for happiness is regarded as unworthy and even shameful. In a nutshell, for Confucians, happiness is no longer a set of living conditions, it is the psychological state or spiritual world of a living individual. Happiness is not transient, shallow sensual pleasures, it is an eternal, deeply meaningful world of reason. Confucians regarded happiness as spiritual, not material; as moral, not circumstantial; as self-identified, not other-judged.

Taoism opposes to the idea of happiness as a product of material satisfaction, it also opposes the Confucian idea of happiness as a constant self-cultivation to achieve moral greatness. Happiness in Taoism is the personal liberation from all human desires, through following the Natural force, not doing anything, accepting fate calmly, and facing life with a peaceful mind. In so doing, one may reach the ultimate happiness of merging with the universe, termed “*tian ren he yi*” (天人合一). Happiness in Taoism, therefore, is not an emotional feeling of joy, rather, it is a cognitive insight and transcendence.

Although not an indigenous Chinese philosophy, Buddhism has incorporated many of the Chinese philosophical thoughts and cultural tradi-

tions since its first introduction from India in *Tang* Dynasty. Buddhism asserts that there is no such thing as absolute, lasting happiness in life, all existence on earth was poisoned by unhappiness from the very start, and only “*nirvana*” can offer salvation (Chiang, 1996). Happiness in Buddhism can only be found in the “Paradise of the west” after *nirvana*, which promises eternal bliss beyond everyday misery of this world. Physical exercises, meditation, doing charitable deeds, eliminating all human desires are all ways to lift up the soul to reach *nirvana* and eternal happiness.

For scholars, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are three entirely different, even contradictory philosophical systems. For ordinary people, however, they have been ingeniously merged and utilized to promote a good life. People may act in accordance with Confucianism when they are interacting with other people, with Taoism when they are encountering the nature, and with Buddhism when they are confronted with the life and death. This is the ultimate achievement of “Chinese pragmatism” (Quah, 1995). It may be fair to conclude that, influenced by Confucian teachings, the Chinese conception of happiness is more of a “happiness of the society” emphasizing collective welfare rather than a “happiness of the individual”, deemphasizing personal hedonistic pursuits. In addition, influenced by Taoism and Buddhism teachings, the Chinese conception of happiness emphasizes more on mental cultivation and spiritual enlightenment rather than on material abundance and worldly successes. With such an understanding of the Chinese “great traditions” including Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, as well as the “bourgeois traditions” of folklores, we proceeded with a thematic analysis of Chinese students’ spontaneous accounts of happiness (Lu, 2001). Such a Chinese vantage point is in distinct contrast to the predominant Western cultural perspective in most SWB research. This endeavour was also among the first attempts to bridge the gap between scholarly theories of SWB and ordinary people’s lived experiences and deeply held beliefs about human happiness. Although exploratory in nature,

the result is a clear map of the psychological space of the Chinese happiness. Later, we continued this line of enquiry and analyzed conceptions of happiness as embedded in the Euro-American culture and American students’ spontaneous accounts of their happiness, to be contrasted with our previously collected Chinese data (Lu & Gilmour, 2004a).

A sketch of the empirical findings is presented below for the purpose of later comparisons between the Chinese and American folk theories, readers please refer to the publications for more details. One hundred and forty-two undergraduate Chinese students wrote free-format essays in response to a simple question, “What is happiness?” Using thematic analysis, happiness was defined in four aspects: as (a) a mental state of satisfaction and contentment; (b) positive feelings/emotions; (c) a harmonious homeostasis; (d) achievement and hope; and (e) freedom from ill-being.

In addition, Chinese students generally regarded happiness as a harmonious state of existence, emphasizing the following conditions: (a) the individual is satisfied or content; (b) the individual is the agent of his own happiness; (c) spiritual enrichment is emphasized more than material satisfaction; and (d) the individual maintains a positive outlook for the future.

Another distinct feature of the Chinese accounts is the emphasis on the dialectical relationship between happiness and unhappiness. These two distinct entities are viewed as locked in a never-ending relationship of interdependence: each depends on the other for contrast and meaning. Moreover this relationship between the two opposites is also dynamic and constantly changing.

Chinese students also had their preferred ways of achieving happiness, centering on the following abilities: (a) the wisdom of discovery; (b) the wisdom of contentment and gratitude; (c) the wisdom of giving; and (d) the wisdom of self-cultivation.

Ninety-seven white Caucasian American students wrote free-format essays in response to the same question, “What is happiness?” Using thematic analysis, happiness was defined in seven

aspects: as (a) a mental state of satisfaction and contentment; (b) positive feelings/emotions; (c) achievement and control; (d) self-autonomy; (e) freedom from ill-being; (f) relating to people; and (g) the ultimate value in life.

Reading through students' rich and vivid accounts of happiness, we could easily spot both similarities and differences. Direct comparisons were thus made between the Chinese and American lay theories of happiness on each theme, especially subtle distinctions in terms of both the substances of, and approaches to, SWB, as mandated by cultural traditions in the East and the West. Again limited by space, we will present only summaries below.

First, for the Chinese, happiness was prominently conceptualized as a harmonious homeostasis within the individual as well as between the individual and his surroundings. However, words such as "harmony", "balance" and "fit" were nowhere to be found in the Americans' accounts. While the American accounts were emotionally-charged, upbeat, and unmistakably positive, the Chinese ones were solemn, reserved, and balanced. The Chinese concept of harmonious homeostasis seems to capture the core implication of happiness being a dynamic process of achieving and maintaining a good fit from within to outward. One Chinese student's view was rather representative: **"Happiness is the inner well-being and contentment, as well as the feeling of harmony with the external world. It is also trust, safety and stability."**

The Chinese concept of homeostasis has a philosophical depth, firmly rooted in the ancient *Yin-Yang* philosophy which stresses a state of homeostasis in the human mind and body, in the individual and his social, spiritual and natural environment. Harmony between Heaven, Earth and People is also the ultimate happiness aspired by Taoism. In short, conceptualizing happiness as a harmonious homeostasis seems a distinctly Chinese view, deeply embedded in the cultural milieu, and sharply contrasting with a Western view of linearly pursuing positivity to reach happiness.

Secondly, perhaps related to the first point, the Chinese conception of happiness clearly emphasized spiritual enrichment over hedonistic satisfaction, whereas the spiritual element of happiness was only mentioned by two American students in the context of religion. While the Americans generally emphasized concrete achievement, self-autonomy, and positive evaluations of the self, the Chinese generally emphasized mind work, self-cultivation, and positive evaluations of the self by others. The Chinese emphasis on spiritual enrichment underlines the view that happiness is not a mere reflection of the objective world. Striking demonstrations of mind power as a passport to eternal happiness are prevalent in both Buddhism and Taoism. Confucian philosophy too stresses mind work to suppress selfish desires and irrational demands in order to be virtuous and serve the collective. All these Chinese traditional teachings place great emphasis on spiritual enrichment, and play down, even deny, the role of material gratification, physical comfort, and hedonic pleasures in the experience of happiness. One Chinese student expressed this solemn view of happiness: **"Only when the spirit is rich, the mind is peaceful and steady, happiness is then possible. Happiness is an inner feeling, not resides in the external material world."** Although this conceptualization of happiness as an individual mental state and spiritually-focused is not limited to the Chinese cultural tradition, it has not been stressed in the West in recent times. In the West, rather, the focus has been more on a conception of happiness in terms of striving for material gratification and personal achievement.

Third, the Chinese conceptions of happiness clearly reflect a dialectical view, whereas the relationship between happiness and unhappiness was only lightly touched on by a very few of the American students. For the Chinese, happiness and unhappiness are ever-present as the background to each other, whereas for the Americans, their relationship only comes to notice when one is currently unhappy. As briefly discussed earlier, the *Yin-Yang* philosophy takes a clear dialectical view of the

happiness-unhappiness relationship. The cosmological view that everything from the cosmos to human life is a never-ending, cyclic process of change, between good and bad, happiness and misery, well-being and ill-being, is best expressed in a Chinese proverb: “Happiness is dependent on unhappiness, while unhappiness is hidden in happiness” (Lu, 1998). It seems that the dialectical view of happiness is a distinctive feature of Eastern conceptions of SWB, as our research on Chinese culture shows, and as can be seen elsewhere - for example, in the Japanese “habit of hesitation” towards happiness (Minami, 1971).

Overall, our empirical evidence pertaining to both the Chinese and American lay theories of happiness supports our theoretical stance that culture molds meanings and concepts of psychological significance such as SWB. Both similarities and differences we observed in the data provide testimony to the cultural psychological claim of “one mind, many mentalities” (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998, p. 87). In the current case of SWB, the empirical evidence generally supports our assertion that distinct characteristics of the conception of happiness are prevalent in Chinese and Western cultures. For the Chinese, lay theories of happiness emphasize role obligations and dialectical balance; for the Americans, lay theories of happiness emphasize personal accountability and explicit pursuit. Basing upon such rich textual materials of the Chinese and Americans’ lay theories of happiness, a more systematic and comprehensive theoretical analysis of cultural conceptions of SWB can then be attempted and a generic cultural theory of SWB developed to guide and consolidate further empirical research.

Individual-oriented and social-oriented conceptions of SWB: The cultural psychological approach

To reiterate, we take the position that cultural conceptions of happiness are critical aspects of SWB, which has largely been neglected thus far. Our views of culture and human behavior are con-

sonant with the cultural psychological approach, whose goal is to examine the ways in which culture and the psyche intersect and interact (Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Shweder, 1991). The cultural perspective assumes that psychological processes - in this case the nature and experiences of SWB - are thoroughly culturally constituted. Thus, culture and SWB are most productively analyzed together as a dynamic of mutual constitution (Kitayama & Markus, 2000).

Taking the cultural psychological stance, we should not superimpose the Western conception of SWB onto other cultures; instead, indigenous conceptions of SWB bred in particular cultural contexts should be unraveled and systematically mapped out. In the Chinese case, this is exactly what we accomplished in our systematic examination of SWB-related concepts and ideas embedded in the classic Tripartite of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Lu, 1998, 2001), those conveyed in folklore and practiced as social customs (Lu, 2001), as well as those reflected in people’s free accounts of causes (Lu & Shih, 1997) and definitions of happiness (Lu, 2001).

Nonetheless, the predominant Western conception of SWB is itself one of the indigenous cultural conceptions. Its cultural contexts, tacit understandings, implicit assumptions, invisible commitments, as well as its lived experiences for ordinary people need to be explored and contrasted with other indigenous cultural conceptions such as those of the Chinese. Our recent effort (Lu & Gilmour, 2004a) mentioned above revealed interesting cultural discourses manifested in American students’ free accounts of definitions of happiness. As Kitayama and Markus (2000) point out, well-being is a “collaborative project”, in the sense that the very nature of what it means to be well or to experience well-being takes culture-specific forms (Shweder, 1998). Borrowing Suh’s (2000, p. 63) metaphor of “self as the hyphen between culture and subjective well-being”, the construction of self, the participation of self in social institutions and the daily lived world may hold the key to our understanding of the meaning of happiness in vari-

ous culture systems. Below we will contrast two such cultural systems of SWB: Euro-American individual-oriented and East Asian social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB. Again as full texts can be found in published literature (Lu, 2003a; Lu & Gilmour, in press), only brief summaries are presented here. It is to be noted that our analysis was conducted at the theoretical level, taking a cultural contrast perspective, under the premise that the pursuit of well-being emanates from the self which carries cultural mandates. However, empirical findings generated from the previously presented folk psychological approach served to support, validate, enrich, and elaborate our theoretical statements. It also needs to be clearly stated that we believe our work on delineating components of the Chinese cultural conceptions of happiness can be generalized to a large extent to people living in other East Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore. People in these East Asian countries share similar collectivist culture and are all fundamentally influenced by the Confucian tradition, like the Chinese, to have earned the name of the “Confucian circle” (Berger, 1988). “Bourgeois Confucianism”, a deeply held and diligently practiced web of values and beliefs synthesizing Confucian and Taoist thoughts characterizes the worldly mentality of these East Asians and set them diametrically apart from Euro-American people. East Asian Buddhism is likely another common thread holding these people together, though this line of influence is very much under studied.

Western Euro-American theories of SWB are firmly based on a highly individualistic conception of the self, which views the person as a bounded, coherent, stable, autonomous, free entity, setting contrastively against the social environment. Furthermore, social customs, institutions and the media in the West all conspire to foster the agentic way of being, emphasizing free will and individual reason (Markus & Kitayama, 1998).

Embedded in such a historical and cultural milieu, one distinct characteristic of the Euro-American cultural conceptions of SWB is personal accountability, which essentially claims that happi-

ness is everyone’s natural and inalienable right; furthermore, one should be responsible for his own happiness. Being happy is seen as a personal accomplishment, and the Western culture is obsessed with achieving personal happiness.

Another distinct characteristic of the Euro-American cultural conceptions of SWB is explicit pursuit, which essentially claims that people should actively strive for happiness, and the pursuit of happiness should not be jeopardized in any ways. On the one hand, the active and explicit pursuit of happiness is one of the best ways of living out an independent personhood, which masters and controls the external environment, identifies and realizes potentials, creates and achieves goals. On the other hand, with an infrastructure of democracy and social equality, a constitution that upholds individual rights, social customs that encourage personal striving and reward achievement, the opportunities and freedom to pursuit happiness in the West are abundant.

To sum, a free individual unceasingly pursuing happiness with the blessings of the society thus best portrays the Euro-American cultural conceptions of the individual-oriented SWB, composed of two distinct characteristics: personal accountability and explicit pursuit.

The East Asian view of the self, in sharp contrast to the Western view, is of a connected, fluid, flexible, and committed being who is bound to others. Furthermore, social customs, institutions and the media in the Asia all conspire to foster the *relational* way of being, emphasizing roles, statuses and in-group membership (Markus & Kitayama, 1998).

Within this particular historical and cultural milieu, East Asian cultural conceptions of SWB has a distinct characteristic of role obligations, which state that happiness should be based upon the fulfillment of social role obligations, and accomplished through self-cultivation. In so doing, group welfare and social harmony can be ensured. Consequently, in the East Asian social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB, the fulfillment of role obligations in interdependent social relation-

ships, the creation and maintenance of interpersonal harmony, the striving to promote the welfare and prosperity of the collective (e.g. family), even at a cost to one's personal welfare, are the core issues. Such a view of SWB is consonant with a Confucian obligation-based moral discourse, in contrast to a Euro-American right-based one (Hwang, 2001).

Another defining characteristic of Asian social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB is a view of dialectical balance. "Happiness" and "unhappiness" are viewed as two sides of a coin. People should not pursue happiness in excess, rather they should search for deeper internal homeostasis and external fusion. This characteristic oriental reservation may be traced back to the ancient *Yin-Yang* philosophy which takes a cosmological view that everything from the cosmos to human life is a never-ending cyclic process of change, between good and bad, happiness and misery, well-being and ill-being. To exemplify in the case of happiness/unhappiness: "Happiness is dependent on unhappiness, while unhappiness is hidden in happiness" (Lu, 1998).

To sum, a self-cultivated person diligently carrying out his moral duties to pursue happiness for the society with the cooperation of others thus best captures the essence of the East Asian cultural conceptions of SWB. We termed this view the social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB, composed of two distinct characteristics: role obligations and dialectical balance.

We have so far clearly demonstrated that happiness is constructed very differently in East Asian and Western cultures. Constructing a cross-culturally fair and balanced measurement for the conceptions of SWB is now the next logical step to go. Adopting both inductive and deductive approaches, the "Individual-oriented and Social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB Scales" (ISSWB) was thus developed and evaluated in a series of two studies involving Chinese and American participants (Lu, 2003a; Lu & Gilmour, 2004a). The 51-item measure showed good internal consistency reliability, temporal reliability, convergent and divergent

validity. Further analysis showed that the Chinese possessed stronger social-oriented SWB than the Americans, while the Americans possessed stronger individual-oriented SWB than the Chinese. There were also intra-cultural differences among the Chinese people. Overall, evidence was supportive for the utility of ISSWB scales in future mono-cultural and cross-cultural studies. Most importantly, our ability to measure individual-oriented and social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB as dimensions of culture at the psychological level thus provides a basis to launch a concerted research effort looking at the intricate relation between psychology and culture.

The central thesis of our generic cultural theory of SWB is as follows. Culture can be a major force constructing the conception of happiness and consequently shaping its subjective experiences. In particular, members of different cultures may hold diverse views of happiness, covering definitions, nature, meanings and ways to strive for SWB. Culture also constrains preferences for different conceptions of SWB (i.e. individual-oriented vs. social-oriented), and thus prescribes different sources and conditions of SWB for its members (Chiasson, Dube, & Blondin, 1996; Furnham & Cheng, 2000; Lu & Shih, 1997). Beyond such direct impact on SWB, culture also influences SWB in the way it gives shape and form to the self. Different self views (e.g. independent self vs. interdependent self) function as regulatory mechanisms when the individual attempts to judge his or her well-being. These self-regulatory mechanisms guide the individual to attend to and process information pertaining to certain aspects of the environment emphasized by the culture (Diener & Diener, 1995; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997; Lu & Gilmour, 2004b). Such mechanisms also determine how people think, feel and behave in the pursuit of SWB (Suh, 2000). Below we will summarize our empirical findings pertaining to psychological mechanisms or pathways to achieve happiness adopting an individual differences approach. Informed by the above outlined generic cultural theory, our recent studies have a clear focus on cul-

tural, in contrast to the prevailing focus on personality and attributional correlates in the mainstream Western SWB research.

Cultural correlates of happiness

One approach guided by our cultural theory of SWB is to look at various ways of achieving SWB for people living in individualistic and in collectivist societies. At first, culture selects, activates, elaborates, maintains and strengthens one distinct view of the self over another. The independent and interdependent self then represent culture at the individual level. They shape and direct the individual's behaviors to reflect the core underlying cultural concerns. In the interpersonal realm, people with independent self tend to believe in active, primary control, whereas people with interdependent self are more inclined to emphasize secondary control and relationship harmony. Extending Weisz, Rothbaum, and Blackburn's (1984) conceptualization of primary vs. secondary control, people with primary control beliefs will typically strive to enhance their rewards by influencing existing social realities such as increasing effort in the relationship work, whereas people with secondary control beliefs will typically seek to enhance their rewards by accommodating to existing social realities such as downgrading the importance of a failed relationship. These self-regulatory mechanisms then guide peoples' everyday social behaviors, and the resultant feelings about these interactions will contribute to their overall SWB.

This pan-cultural multiple-way SWB model was thus tested and generally supported in two cross-cultural studies involving Chinese and British as respondents (Lu, Gilmour, Kao, Wong, Hu, Chen, et al., 2001; Lu & Gilmour, 2004b). Thus, it was shown that these various ways of achieving SWB were independent and pervasive across the two markedly contrasting cultural groups. The two self views were co-determinants of SWB, acting through the mediating variables of belief systems and social relationships.

Another bi-cultural individual level analysis

also showed that values closely related to the core of cultural collectivism, such as "social integration" and "human-heartedness" led to greater happiness for the Chinese but not the British (Lu, Gilmour & Kao, 2001). All the evidence suggests that culture impacts on SWB through multiple mediators and complex mechanisms.

More recently, we have noticed that the degree of congruence between people's individual psychological culture and the larger cultural environment within which they live is also crucial for SWB, which we termed the "cultural fit" proposition (Lu, 2004). We reasoned that if the larger cultural tradition is individualistic, people with consonant independent self and active control beliefs may find it easier to achieve SWB; if, in contrast, the larger cultural tradition is collectivistic, people with consonant interdependent self and harmony beliefs may find it easier to achieve SWB. This proposition was tested with 3 diverse Chinese samples from Taiwan and Mainland China (total N = 581). We again found that independent and interdependent self, active control and harmony beliefs as individual-level culture were consistently related to SWB. Furthermore, while we found that people in accord with their societal culture were generally better off in SWB than those in discord, "getting ahead" was more advantageous than "lagging behind". We argued that what constitutes "getting ahead" or "lagging behind" and their differential effects on SWB needed to be understood in the larger cultural milieus of the contemporary Chinese world. Numerous evidence have suggested that the Chinese people are leveling with or even surpassing their Western counterparts in individualistic values and attitudes such as the independent self and active control beliefs (Lu, 2003a; Lu & Gilmour, 2004b; Lu & Yang, 2004; Yang, 1988, 1996). This "psychological modernizing" trend is particularly salient for the young, educated and urban residents (Lu & Kao, 2002). It thus seems that the current social milieu of cultural fusion and societal modernization may have provided the Chinese people with a stronger impetus to develop more assertive self-expression and active control

over the surrounding environment. It is reasonable to infer that moving with rather than against this historical and societal tide of modernity would promote personal well-being. More specifically, “moving ahead” for the contemporary Chinese means moving towards psychological modernization as a result of incorporating Western originated values and beliefs, while “lagging behind” means holding on to traditional Chinese cultural values and beliefs. In our study, “moving ahead” as manifested in endorsing higher independent self than the average person in the society held a clear advantage over “lagging behind” as manifested in the opposite pattern. Thus, “cultural fit” proposition was largely supported and the assertion to take into account the larger social milieus in examining the relationship between culture and SWB was underlined.

Postlude: The coexistence and integration of contrasting cultural rudiments

One thing keeps popping out in our cultural psychological studies of SWB is that the seemingly contrasting cultural systems coexisted at the individual level. Starting from a cross-cultural comparison perspective, such findings were at first puzzling, upsetting, and provocative, but eventually become enlightening and groundbreaking. This turn of events was brought about by the introduction of some form of bi-cultural concepts. Most recently, Lu and Yang (2004) attempted the first systematic theoretical and conceptual analysis to describe the emergence, composition and change of the traditional-modern bicultural self of the contemporary Chinese people. The cultural and social roots of such a bicultural self were explored, its constituting elements delineated and their interrelations analyzed, and the trend of its change predicted. They then selectively reviewed empirical evidence pertaining to the Chinese bicultural self, including topics on psychological traditionality and modernity, self concept, self-esteem, self-evaluation, and self-actualization. As we argued earlier that conceptions of SWB emanate directly from

conceptions of the self, and the subjective experience of SWB is an ultimate product of the self process, bi-cultural SWB is more than likely.

In the case of the self, Lu (2003b) proposed a construct of “composite self” to characterize an evolving self-system among contemporary Chinese people. This system of “composite self” intricately integrates the traditional Chinese construct of “self-in-relation” (interdependence) with the Western construct of “independent and autonomous self” (independence). For the contemporary Chinese, the neglected even suppressed independent self may be nurtured, developed, elaborated and even emphasized in certain domains of life, such as work. An attitude favoring the coexistence and integration of independent and interdependent self to help deal with the apparent conflicts between strong traditionality and requisite modernity, might well be the most favorable outcome for people in contemporary Chinese societies, and possibly other Asian societies. Such a composite self with equally strong convictions of independence and interdependence can then be seen as a way of expressing two basic human needs: uniqueness and relatedness.

In the case of SWB, we have not only consistently found a significant coexistence of the independent and interdependent self in cross-cultural analyses (Lu et al., 2001; Lu & Gilmour, 2004b), but also noticed that independent self rather than interdependent self predicted happiness sometimes (Lu et al., 2001). For both the Chinese people and American students, the individual-oriented and social-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB also coexisted (Lu, 2003a; Lu & Gilmour, 2004b). Although cross-cultural analysis still revealed a main effect of culture: the Chinese avowed stronger social-oriented SWB than the Americans, while the Americans avowed stronger individual-oriented SWB than the Chinese, mono-cultural analysis showed that the Chinese actually had equally strong conviction of individual-oriented and social-oriented SWB conceptions. This hybrid of “bicultural SWB” is very likely emanated from the Chinese composite or bicultural self.

Nonetheless, more systematic and fine grained analysis is needed to look at the exact process and dynamism of such cultural integration as well as its functional values. In view of social change and psychological transformation, as the Chinese people are becoming increasingly individual-oriented in general (Lu & Yang, 2004), we may expect that individual-oriented cultural conceptions of SWB will have an increasingly stronger hold on the Chinese mind, and individual-oriented ways to achieve happiness will more evidently manifest in the Chinese behaviors.

As a final note, we are convinced that both the cultural psychological approach and the social change perspective are called for if we are to better understand the mentality of contemporary Chinese people. The cultural psychological viewpoint helps to highlight the cultural roots of our happiness conceptions and habitual ways of pursuing happiness in life, whereas the social change perspective injects momentum into a static system to highlight the complex dynamism of any human encounter with the social environment. Specific hypotheses can be derived incorporating these two theoretical perspectives and tested within the realm of a scientific psychology. These are the challenges we will happily face. As Chinese psychologists, we firmly believe that we have a moral obligation as well as academic interests to understand how the contemporary Chinese people strive to coordinate, regulate, compromise, synthesize, and integrate the contrasting cultural rudiments, in the pursuit of a more balanced, effective, and happy life. Our request has begun and will continue to the end.

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追求幸福—主觀幸福感的文化心理學研究

陸洛

輔仁大學心理學系

「幸福觀」是主觀幸福感的重要面向，但長久以來卻一直為西方主流心理學所忽視。我們相信將文化與主觀幸福感視為動態的交互建構是最佳的研究策略。採取上述的文化心理學立場，本文選擇性地回顧了我們在台灣進行的本土化研究，以開顯主觀幸福感領域中日漸成形的兩大重要議題：（1）幸福的觀念；（2）幸福的文化性相關因子。

我們的研究指出，中華文化與西方文化中各有獨特的幸福觀念，而我們可以有系統地分析、抽離、以及測量這些觀念。歐美文化中「個人取向的

幸福觀」主要由兩大元素組成：個人負責與直接追求；東亞文化中「社會取向的幸福觀」也主要由兩大元素組成：角色責任與辯證均衡。

我們的研究還發現，文化除了直接型塑幸福觀，還會經由建構不同的自我觀來影響主觀幸福感的歷程，這些自我調控的機制進而決定了人們在追求幸福時的看法、感受、及行為。文末，我們也特別指出日漸明顯的雙文化並存現象。

關鍵詞：幸福，主觀幸福感，文化心理學

