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## Two ways to achieve happiness: when the East meets the West

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### Abstract

The independent/interdependent self-construals were proposed to be the culture-general determinants of happiness, acting through the mediating variables of control belief/harmony belief, and further through subjective experiences in social interactions. Data collected from 550 Taiwanese and 196 British community residents supported the above two ways of achieving happiness. The value of adding interdependent self-construal and harmony belief to the study of subjective well-being to reflect an alternative collectivistic cultural perspective was highlighted.

In addition, the seemingly contrasting views of self and beliefs about social interaction were found to coexist among Taiwanese. This evidence offered valuable support for the coexistence modernity model.

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*Keywords:* Independent/interdependent self-construals; Harmony belief; Control belief; Social interactions; Happiness; Coexistence modernity model

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### 1. Introduction

Happiness or subjective well-being (SWB) as a positive inner experience, as ‘the highest good’ and ‘the ultimate motivator’ for all human behaviors has attracted ever increasing attention from psychologists over the past two decades (see Argyle, 1987; Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1993 for reviews). The empirical definition of happiness refers to a predominance of positive over negative

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affect, and satisfaction with life as a whole (Argyle, Martin & Crossland, 1989; Diener, 1984), thus encompassing both affective and cognitive aspects.

However, cross-cultural evidence on this universally important construct is slim. Studies of happiness from alternative cultural vantage points are even scarcer. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to explore happiness from the cross-cultural perspective with a culture-sensitive approach.

### *1.1. Predictors for happiness: cross cultural evidence*

Culture has been proposed to be a major force in constructing the conception of happiness (Lu & Shih, 1997), and consequently constricting its subjective experiences (Chiasson, Dube & Blondin, 1996; Lu, Gilmour & Kao, in press). Most existing comparative studies demonstrated quite substantial national differences in happiness, especially across the East (Asian)–West (European/North American) divide. Diener and his associates asserted that individualism is the only reliable predictor of happiness after controlling for statistical errors. They also found that self-esteem was a more powerful predictor of life satisfaction in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995). However, using a nation-level measure of Individualism, the above researchers may have committed an ‘ecological fallacy’ (Kim, Triandis, Kegitcibasi, Choi & Yoon, 1994). An individual-level measure of culture may be more appropriate and fruitful for psychological inquiries.

Using such an approach, Lu et al., in press conducted a direct comparison of the East against the West with equivalent samples, and unravelled culture-dependent as well as culture-general effects of values on happiness. Values such as ‘social integration’ and ‘human-heartedness’ led to happiness for the Chinese but not for the British, whereas work-related values were equally important to happiness in both cultures. It is possible, therefore, that there are powerful variables other than individualism and self-esteem exerting influence on happiness in collectivist culture systems.

### *1.2. Contrasting cultures, self-construal and beliefs about interaction*

Similarly, from a cross-cultural perspective, Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1994) have challenged the universal importance of the self-esteem construct in the West (e.g. Rosenberg, 1965). Their central thesis is that people of different cultures can hold remarkably different construals of the self, of others, and of the relation between the self and others in society. They further conceptualize the variations on what individuals believe about the self-others relation into two contrasting self-construals: independent and interdependent views of self.

An independent view of self derives from a belief in the wholeness and separateness of each individual’s configuration of internal attributes. This construal places emphases on ‘self-actualization’, ‘realizing oneself’, ‘expressing one’s unique configuration of needs, rights and capacities’, and ‘developing one’s distinct potential’. This is the prototypical Western characterization of the self, which locates crucial self-representations *within the individual*.

In contrast, an interdependent view of self derives from a belief in the individual’s connectedness and interdependence to others. This construal places emphases on ‘fitting in’, ‘belonging to’, ‘fulfilling and creating obligations’ and ‘becoming part of various of social units’. This is the

prototypical Eastern characterization of the self, which locates crucial self-representations not within the unique individual attributes, but within his/her social *relationships*.

Interpersonal beliefs about interaction can be regarded as a consequence of self-systems. Markus and Kitayama (1991) described five tasks for people with an independent self-construal. These are: being unique, expressing self, realizing internal attributes, promoting one's own goal, and being direct in social interactions. To fulfill these tasks, the individual is expected to actively exercise his/her agency, to seek control over the external environment, to change or influence other people, things and objects in adaptation encounters to further one's goal. The preoccupation with this kind of active control is quite evident in the sizable and undiminishing attention accorded to the topic of control in the West (see Furnham & Steele, 1993). Furthermore, sense of control has been repeatedly linked to a wide variety of indices of adaptation (see Steptoe & Appels, 1989).

There are five tasks for people with an interdependent self-construal too (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These are: belonging and fitting in, occupying one's proper place, engaging in appropriate action, promoting others' goal, and being indirect in social interactions. To fulfill these tasks, the individual is expected to build and maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships. Instead of controlling the environment, many Eastern cultures advocate adapting to the environment. Instead of asserting one's own needs and rigorously pursuing one's own goals, many Eastern cultures value interpersonal harmony and encourage "sacrificing the Small self to accomplish the Great self". In Chinese culture, a state of homeostasis between the self and others, groups, society and Nature is viewed as the ultimate achievement in human adaptation (Chiang, 1996).

Against such a cultural backdrop, the effect of relationship harmony in collectivist cultures may be just as important as the effect of control (Myers & Diener, 1995) in individualist cultures. Relationship harmony is a concept borrowed from Confucian philosophy, which is arguably the most significant force shaping the mentality of the Chinese people. Harmony refers to the balance achieved in relationships. The major focus of this concept is *on the relationship*, rather than on the satisfaction of its constituent individuals or support derived by an individual from that relationship (Ho, 1993). Previous studies have demonstrated that aspects of relationships do contribute to happiness (Argyle, 1987; Diener & Diener, 1995; Lu, Shih, Lin & Ju, 1997). The current study took a step further to be more culturally sensitive in tapping interpersonal aspects of the relationship, namely the harmony belief.

### 1.3. *Theoretical framework for the study*

In the search for possible predictors of happiness, culture is proposed to exert a critical influence in mapping out two ways of achieving well-being. At first, culture selects, activates, elaborates, maintains and strengthens one distinct self system over another. Independent/interdependent self-construals as self-schemas then shape and direct the individual's behaviors to reflect the core underlying cultural concerns. In the interpersonal realm, people with independent self-construal tend to believe in active control, whereas people with interdependent self-construal tend to emphasize more on relationship harmony. These beliefs about social interaction should then guide people's everyday practices of social behaviors and the resultant feelings about these interactions will contribute to their overall happiness.

In sum, two pan-cultural ways of achieving happiness were proposed and depicted in Fig. 1. In addition, we further hypothesized that interdependent self-construal and harmony belief would

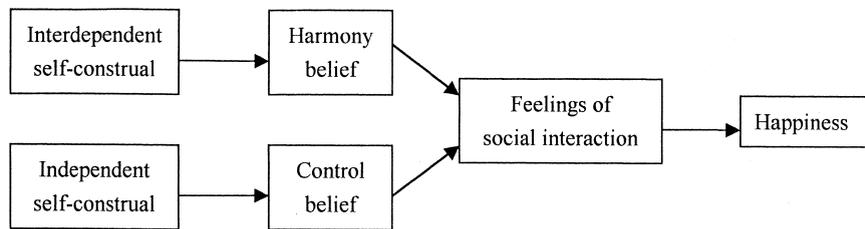


Fig. 1. Two ways to achieve happiness: a theoretical framework for the study.

exert a relatively greater impact on happiness for collectivist Taiwanese (Chinese) respondents than for individualistic British.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

#### 2.1.1. Taiwan

A variety of data collection methods were adopted to survey community residents with structured questionnaires. A total of 574 questionnaires were sent out, and 550 returned, yielding an overall response rate of 95%. A detailed breakdown of sample composition in terms of data collection methods is given below.

1. Mailing questionnaires to community adults who took part in various evening classes offered by the local government ( $N=78$ ).
2. Group administering questionnaires to students of one senior high school ( $N=152$ ), one vocational school ( $N=98$ ), and one university ( $N=46$ ).
3. Asking senior high school and vocational school students to take questionnaires back home for their mothers or fathers to fill in ( $N=176$ ).

Initial analysis using ANOVA procedure found no systematic and meaningful differences on major research variables between subsamples recruited through different methods. Consequently, these subsamples were pooled in further analyses.

#### 2.1.2. UK

A broad cross-section of the community adults was targeted. A total of 250 questionnaires were sent out for participants to fill out at their own leisure, and 196 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 78.4%.

### 2.2. Instruments

#### 2.2.1. Self-construals

The 24-item 'Independent and Interdependent Self-construals Scale' (Singelis, 1994) was used. Respondents rated each statement on a 7-point Likert Scale. Two scores were then computed

representing independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal respectively. High scores indicated high endorsement of a particular view of self.

#### 2.2.2. *Control belief*

To reflect the current focus on social interactions, the ‘Interpersonal Control’ subscale from the ‘Sphere of Control Inventory’ (Paulhus & Christie, 1981) was used. Respondents rated their agreement with the eight statements on 7-point Likert Scales. A total score was then computed. High scores indicated higher endorsement of beliefs in internal control in the interpersonal sphere.

#### 2.2.3. *Harmony belief*

Chinese idioms depicting interpersonal harmony were sampled from the ‘Chinese Value Survey’ (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) and the ‘Traditional Values Scale’ (Yang & Cheng, 1989). Respondents rated their agreement with the 20 idioms on 7-point Likert Scales. High scores indicated high endorsement of beliefs in the interpersonal harmony.

#### 2.2.4. *Social interaction*

The 16-item newly constructed Social Interaction Inventory was aimed at assessing an individual’s subjective experiences generated through his/her important social relationships. Borrowing a concept from Confucian philosophy, the five cardinal relations are the key significant relations in one’s social world (Goodwin & Tang, 1996). These dyadic relations include the relations between emperor and minister, father and son, husband and wife, brother and brother, and friend and friend. In the present study, its modern proxy: relation between authority/supervisor and subordinate replaced relation between emperor and minister. Relations between father and son, and brother and brother were combined to cover relations with one’s family members, excluding one’s spouse. Relation between husband and wife was retained. Relation between friend and friend was again extended to include relation with one’s work colleagues. Thus, respondents rated their subjective experiences using 5-point scales in the above four types of key social relations. For each type of relation, ratings were done on four major experiential dimensions: positive, negative, harmonious, and conflictual. Scores were computed for each dimension through aggregating ratings for all four types of relations. High scores indicated higher positive, *lower* negative, higher harmonious, and *lower* conflictual experiences. Aggregating the above four dimensional scores then created a social interaction index. A high index indicated greater ‘good’ experiences in one’s significant social interactions.

#### 2.2.5. *Happiness*

The 20-item brief version of the Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI; Lu, 1996) was used. The response format for the CHI is the reverse of that used for the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), to best capture the positive skewed nature of the happiness construct (Diener, 1984). As such, the CHI taps subjective experiences pertaining to a preponderance of positive affect over negative affect as well as global life satisfaction across a variety of domains. A high total score indicated higher happiness.

All scales were translated from its original language and back-translated to create two equivalent versions for the Taiwanese and British respondents.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive analysis

Demographic characteristics of the Taiwan and UK samples are listed along side in Table 1 for comparisons. The two samples were comparable in terms of age and gender ratio. The UK sample was better educated with more years in formal education and higher proportions of respondents with college and above attainment. Although proportions of once-married people were comparable in Taiwan and the UK, 30% more respondents were living in nuclear families in Taiwan. It is possible, however, that treating individuals in parent–child dyads as independent respondents

Table 1  
Sample distribution in Taiwan and the UK

	Taiwan ( <i>N</i> = 550)	UK ( <i>N</i> = 196)
Age (in years)		
Mean	28.62	29.42
SD	13.10	11.23
Range	15–60	18–64
Gender		
Female	62.5%	68.4%
Male	37.5%	31.6%
Educational level		
Primary	9.5%	0.0%
Junior	8.9%	15.8%
Senior	61.8%	35.7%
College	19.1%	44.9%
Postgraduate	0.2%	3.6%
Did not answer	0.5%	0.0%
Years of education		
Mean	11.0	13.5
Marital status		
Single	47.7%	57.7%
Married	41.7%	35.2%
Others	2.0%	6.6%
Did not answer	8.6%	0.5%
Family types		
Extended	8.0%	8.7%
Stem	7.8%	2.0%
Nuclear	68.1%	46.4%
Others	6.7%	36.2%
Did not answer	9.4%	6.6%
Occupation		
Housewife	11.8%	0.0%
Student	54.5%	30.6%
Public service	9.7%	57.7%
Trade & Commerce	7.8%	6.1%
Manufacturing	13.8%	4.6%
Did not answer	2.4%	1.0%

may have inflated the frequency counts for the Taiwan sample on this variable. Finally, there were substantial differences in occupation across the two samples. There were more students among Taiwanese respondents and there were no housewives among British respondents.

Although the two samples were different in some respects, further statistical analyses ascertained that education and family types were not significantly related to the main research variables.

Table 2 lists means, standard deviations and internal consistency Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s as well as direct Taiwan/UK comparisons for scores on all scales. Overall, considering the standard deviation to mean ratio, there were slightly more variations on nearly all variables in the UK samples. Scale reliability for self-construals, control belief, harmony belief and happiness was comparable between the two samples. However,  $\alpha$  coefficients were generally lower for social interaction scales in the UK samples. In addition, all items in each scale were found to be positively correlated with the whole scale, further ensuring that the various scales were equivalent for cross-cultural comparisons. *T*-tests were then conducted which showed that Taiwanese subjects scored higher on virtually all scales than British subjects, except on positive and negative feelings about social interactions and happiness.

### 3.2. Zero-order correlation

Pearson correlation matrices for major research variables are presented separately for Taiwan and UK in Table 3. Results can be interpreted with reference to our research hypotheses depicted in Fig. 1. First, there were significant positive correlations between interdependent self-construal and harmony belief as well as independent self-construal and control belief in both samples. Furthermore, the former pair of relationship was stronger in Taiwan whereas the latter was stronger in UK. It is worth noticing that both pairs of the self-construals, and beliefs were positively correlated in Taiwan but not in the UK.

Second, both beliefs correlated significantly with the overall as well as more specific experiences in social interactions (the non-significant relation between control belief and feelings of conflict in the UK sample was the only exception to this pattern). It is also noticeable that relations between

Table 2  
Reliability of scales and comparisons of means in Taiwan and the UK<sup>a</sup>

	Taiwan			UK			<i>t</i>
	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	
Independent self	58.60	7.88	0.52	56.57	9.29	0.73	2.90***
Interdependent self	63.28	8.02	0.62	52.21	9.31	0.67	15.36***
Control belief	39.38	7.40	0.70	37.52	7.59	0.73	2.96**
Harmony belief	111.34	13.85	0.86	98.96	13.28	0.85	4.35***
Social interaction	64.08	7.82	0.86	62.35	7.41	0.62	2.54*
Positive	15.93	2.28	0.64	15.90	2.01	0.52	0.17
Negative	15.15	2.81	0.70	15.41	2.49	0.68	-1.12
Harmonious	16.52	2.22	0.67	15.53	2.01	0.45	5.26***
Conflictual	16.47	2.44	0.65	15.55	2.40	0.57	4.31***
Happiness	28.18	8.91	0.90	28.70	9.08	0.91	-0.69

<sup>a</sup> Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3  
Zero-order correlation matrix for all variables in Taiwan and the UK<sup>a</sup>

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
<i>Taiwan</i>										
1. Independent self	1.00									
2. Interdependent self	0.28***	1.00								
3. Harmony belief	0.32***	0.65***	1.00							
4. Control belief	0.29***	0.18***	0.23***	1.00						
5. Social interaction	0.17***	0.27***	0.34***	0.37***	1.00					
6. Positive	0.28***	0.27***	0.34***	0.37***	0.81***	1.00				
7. Negative	0.03	0.20***	0.20***	0.26***	0.79***	0.44***	1.00			
8. Harmonious	0.29***	0.28***	0.38***	0.31***	0.82***	0.78***	0.42***	1.00		
9. Conflictual	-0.02	0.12*	0.18***	0.27***	0.79***	0.41***	0.59***	0.50***	1.00	
10. Happiness	0.30***	0.13**	0.14**	0.44***	0.36***	0.28***	0.23***	0.39***	0.15**	1.00
<i>UK</i>										
1. Independent self	1.00									
2. Interdependent self	0.05	1.00								
3. Harmony belief	0.20**	0.40***	1.00							
4. Control belief	0.47***	0.04	0.10	1.00						
5. Social interaction	0.24**	0.33***	0.28***	0.24**	1.00					
6. Positive	0.29***	0.23**	0.28**	0.26***	0.80***	1.00				
7. Negative	0.22***	0.29***	0.19*	0.20**	0.89***	0.58***	1.00			
8. Harmonious	0.20**	0.26**	0.32***	0.19**	0.81***	0.75***	0.53***	1.00		
9. Conflictual	0.14	0.31***	0.22***	0.15*	0.85***	0.14**	0.81***	0.51***	1.00	
10. Happiness	0.17*	0.06	0.14	0.27***	0.21*	0.27***	0.12	0.27***	0.06	1.00

<sup>a</sup> Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

the two beliefs and experiences of social interaction were generally stronger in Taiwan than in the UK.

Finally, overall experiences as well as positive and harmonious feelings significantly correlated with happiness. For Taiwanese, negative and conflictual feelings also significantly correlated with happiness, whereas these relations were non-significant for the British.

### 3.3. Predicting research constructs

In order to uncover significant predictors of various constructs in the present study, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were carried out. The order of entering potential predictors into the equation was based on theoretical hypotheses and empirical interests. At step 1, demographic variables were entered, if they had significant zero-order correlation with the interested construct; at step 2, fundamental views of self were entered, as they were shaped by culture relatively early in the socialization processes; at step 3, beliefs about interaction were entered, as they were viewed as derived from one's particular self-system; and at step 4, specific experiences generated through actual social interactions were entered. However, due to variations in the lists of predictors, the exact order and number of steps varied in different analyses reported below in Table 4.

For both samples, interdependent and independent self-consturals could predict stronger harmony belief. Independent self-constural was the only predictor for control belief. Interdependent

Table 4  
Predicting research constructs in Taiwan and the UK<sup>a</sup>

Dependent variables	Taiwan				UK			
	Predictor	$\beta$	$R^2$	$F$	Predictor	$\beta$	$R^2$	$F$
Harmony belief	Age <sup>b</sup>	0.23**						
	Cohort	0.14*						
	Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.58***			Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.35***		
Control belief	Independent self-construal	0.14***	0.46	104.49***	Independent self-construal	0.13**	0.23	7.21***
	Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.26***	0.12	16.99***	Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.49***	0.24	27.19***
Positive feelings	Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.12**			Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.17*		
					Independent self-construal	0.21*		
Negative feelings	Harmony belief <sup>b</sup>	0.21***						
	Control belief	0.27***	0.23	20.28***			0.20	7.76***
	Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.12*			Family type <sup>b</sup>	-0.22***		
Harmonious feelings	Independent self-construal	-0.11*			Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.34***		
	Control belief <sup>b</sup>	0.24***	0.11	9.67***			0.23	6.65***
	Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.13**			Interdependent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.20*		
Conflictual feelings					Independent self-construal	0.15*		
	Harmony belief <sup>b</sup>	0.29***			Harmony belief <sup>b</sup>	0.21**		
	Control belief	0.20***	0.22	19.31***			0.24	7.92***
	Sex <sup>b</sup>	-0.12*			Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.29***		
Happiness	Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	-0.15**					0.16	4.34***
	Harmony belief <sup>b</sup>	0.15*			Age <sup>b</sup>	-0.22*		
	Control belief	0.28***	0.12	11.26***				
	Independent self-construal <sup>b</sup>	0.14**			Control belief <sup>b</sup>	0.30***		
	Control belief <sup>b</sup>	0.33***					0.25	5.38***
	Harmonious feelings <sup>b</sup>	0.27***						
	Conflictual feelings	0.13*	0.30	22.25***				

<sup>a</sup> Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ . 'Cohort': 1 = adolescents (under 19 years old); 2 = adults (over 19 years old). 'Gender': 1 = female; 2 = male. 'Family type': 1 = nuclear family; 2 = non-nuclear family.

<sup>b</sup> Indicates a new step in hierarchical regression.

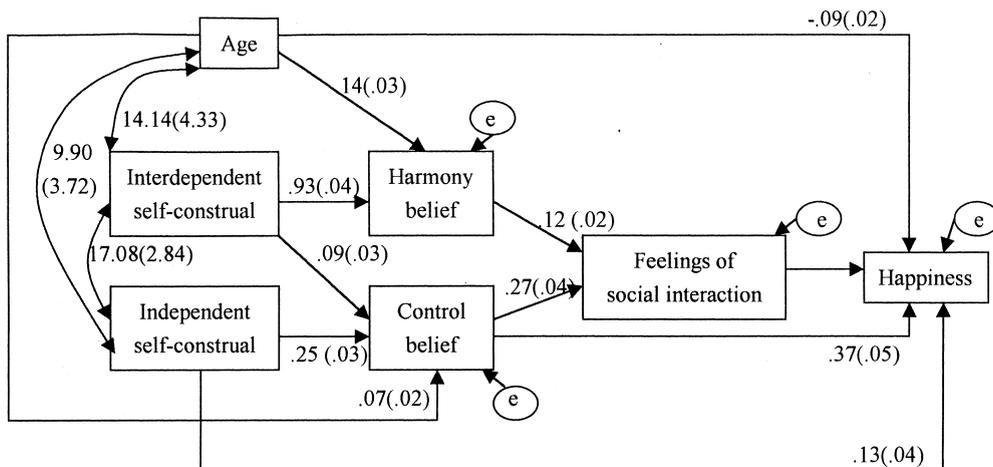
self-construal could predict greater positive and fewer negative feelings in social interactions. Independent self-construal and harmony belief could predict greater harmonious feelings. Furthermore, interdependent self-construal could predict fewer conflictual feelings. As for happiness, control belief was the strongest predictor.

In addition to these common predictors across cultures, there were specific predictors in each culture. Overall, the proportions of variance explained in the constructs were modest, ranging from 11 to 46% in Taiwan, and 16 to 25% in the UK.

3.4. Pan-cultural analysis

Supplementing the above mono-cultural analyses, a pan-cultural analysis was conducted using data from both cultural groups to test a ‘universal’ model as hypothesized in Fig. 1. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used by applying the Maximum Likelihood technique provided in AMOS 3.06. A total of 11 paths and three covariations were estimated and the model is depicted in Fig. 2. Comparing Figs. 1 and 2, age was added because of its significant influences on harmony belief, control belief and happiness (not reported here). Three other paths were added too (Interdependent self-construal→Control belief, control belief→Happiness, Independent self-construal→Happiness), because of their potential value in improving the model fit (see Tables 3 and 4). Results showed that all coefficients were significant at the level of  $p=0.05$ , and standard errors were small.

Model evaluation is usually not a simple procedure, and no one descriptive index seems to be superior to the others and impeccable in this regard (Bentler, 1990; Raykov, Tomer & Nesselrode, 1991). Basically, evaluating a model is to strike a balance between simplicity vs complexity (reflected in the parsimony indexes), and good fit vs poor fit (reflected in the fit indexes). In the present case, our model did not reach statistical nonsignificance for these two samples,  $\chi^2=40.59$ ,



Notes: (1) All coefficients were statistically significant at  $p<.05$  level  
 (2) Standard errors were given in paratheses

Fig. 2. A pan-cultural model of happiness.

$df=7$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . However, with a large sample size ( $N=746$ ), virtually all models will be rejected in SEM analyses when the power of the statistical test is very high (Raykov et al., 1991). Hence, indexes of fit become especially important. The present model showed an acceptable level of fit to the two samples,  $GFI=0.985$ ,  $AGFI=0.940$ ,  $RMR=3.776$ . In addition, the comparative fit index (CFI) is relatively robust across sample size compared to other fit indexes (Bentler, 1990), and a value at the upper 0.90's indicates an acceptable fit (CFI=0.96 in the present model). RMSEA is a measure of discrepancy per degree of freedom, with a value below 0.05 to 0.08 indicating a close fit (RMSEA=0.080 in the present model). Finally, a value of 2–5 for  $\chi^2/df$  indicates an acceptable fit ( $\chi^2/df=5.80$  in the present model). Taken together the results of the present model showed an acceptable value of fit.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Two ways of achieving happiness

From the perspective of cultural psychology, we proposed two ways of achieving happiness for people living in an individualistic society and in a collectivist society. Both ways start from a particular self-system, through its correspondent belief about social interactions, and further through subjective experiences generated in actual interactions to lead to happiness. This pancultural two-way happiness model was largely supported in the present study (see Fig. 2). For both Taiwanese and British subjects, interdependent self-construal was a very strong determinant of harmony belief, whereas independent self-construal was a strong determinant of control belief. Furthermore, for both groups, beliefs about social interaction did impact on experiences of daily interactions, although control belief had a somewhat stronger effect than harmony belief. Finally, experiences of social interactions did contribute to happiness, although control belief had a strong direct effect on happiness too. Thus, it was shown that the two ways of achieving happiness were independent and pancultural across these two cultural groups. The two self-construals were co-determinants of happiness, acting through the mediating variables of belief systems and social interactions.

However, although the above two ways of achieving happiness were generally similar in the two cultural groups, an interesting cultural difference should also be noticed. In mono-cultural analyses, independent self-construal was predictive of *greater* negative and conflictual feelings for the Taiwanese, whereas it was not related to negative feelings and predictive of *fewer* conflictual feelings for the British (see Table 4). These differing patterns may illustrate the cultural sanction of one's belief systems and the trade-off between asserting oneself and maintaining communion.

First, culture can shape psychological processes. Although both Western and Eastern cultures recognize that independence from others and interdependence with others are essential human tendencies or needs, these needs are emphasized differently in the two cultural traditions. From a Western cultural perspective, the notion of the autonomous human agent in constant battle with the external collective to gain mastery and control is only 'natural'. Not surprisingly, Western psychology seems possessed with the concept of control and has established it as a robust predictor of people's behavior, emotion, performance, and success and failure in many domains of life (see Skinner, 1995).

From an alternative Eastern cultural perspective, such a notion of personhood and the consequent emphases on active control appear somewhat contrived and unnatural. In Chinese culture, for example, the Confucian concept of *Lun Li* (social order) emphasizes interpersonal relationships, and more importantly, proper conducts to maintain a harmonious social network. The culture in its dominant ideology and philosophical texts, its patterns of social customs, norms and practices, and its societal institutions and social systems emphasizes and foregrounds interdependence with others, adopting and fitting in with the external collective. As such, in the Chinese society, people with well-developed interdependent self-construal and its consequent beliefs in harmony are expected to be well adjusted and happy. Indeed, the present study found that interdependent self-construal and harmony belief were indicative of better social adjustment, in terms of more rewarding experiences from daily interactions in key relationship domains. In a recent study, 'social integration' (an indicator of collectivism) and 'human-heartedness' (an indicator of cultural compassion) were found to promote happiness for Taiwanese but not for British (Lu et al., in press). In summary, this empirical evidence is among the first to support the theoretical reasoning that the ability to fit into one's significant social groups is a cultural imperative by those living in collective cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)

Second, the cultural sanction of separating from others or connecting with others as two basic human needs does not preclude the potential conflict between them. In a collectivist society where the mentality of 'harmony' is a highly praised virtue, and interpersonal frictions and conflicts are to be avoided at all costs, asserting oneself and striving for active control pose serious threats to the maintenance of a close-knit social network. People who think or behave in such a way may be regarded as immature and suffer from frustrating and punishing experiences in daily social interactions. On the other hand, separating from others and enhancing oneself are exactly what are expected from people in an individualistic culture, hence should induce no harmful effects, and if any, only positive rewards.

#### 4.2. *The coexistence of cultures*

As discussed above, in a collectivist culture, the relation between independent self-construal and less than rewarding experiences in social interactions is understandable. However, the relations between independent self-construal, control belief and happiness among Taiwanese are intriguing findings. These relations seem to suggest that although independent self-construal and control belief are not the dominant self and belief systems in a collectivist culture, they may nonetheless hold adjustment values for individuals in modern time.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) pointed out that the two self-systems could coexist within an individual, theoretically. Empirically, the covariation between independent and interdependent self-construals was significant in pan-cultural analyses of SEM (see Fig. 2). This coexistence of contrasting self-systems was particularly pronounced among the Taiwanese. We found that independent and interdependent self-construals had a weak but significant relationship ( $r=0.28$ ), so did control and harmony beliefs ( $r=0.23$ ) among Taiwanese. Also, their scores for interdependent self-construal were higher than those for independent self-construal. The trend was reversed among British. As such, Taiwanese subjects seem to share an interdependent view of self somewhat more strongly than an independent view of self, whereas British subjects do the reverse. The overall conclusion seems to be that for Taiwanese subjects, interdependent self-construal does

not rule out the presence of independent self-construal, albeit they have different degrees of elaboration and weight in one's entire organization of personhood.

Evidence for the existence of contrasting values has also been reported from another Eastern culture: India. Mishra (1994) found that Indians showed a disposition for both individualistic and collectivist values, and young, highly educated, and urban people tended to be less collectivist. Recall that our Taiwanese sample was young, well educated and urban-resident, so they may be the most likely section of the population to be influenced by Western culture. In the present study, we found that older age and older cohort were predicative of harmony belief. Taken together, this empirical evidence supports the coexistence model and is against the linear model of modernity (Berry, 1994; Sinha & Tripathi, 1994). In the face of the vast-scale cultural invasion from the West, and the rapid transition from an agricultural and autocratic society to an industrial and democratic society, Taiwanese people have not relinquished traditional Chinese ideology, philosophies, values and practices. Instead, they have made pragmatic use of the Western culture, learning, adopting and assimilating useful ideology, philosophies, values and practices to enhance adjustment in the modern world. In so doing, the neglected even suppressed independent self-construal and control belief may be nurtured, developed, elaborated and even emphasized in certain domains of life. The notion of an autonomous, initiating, striving, and achieving personhood fits well with the efficiency-emphasizing, achievement-orienting and competition-based urban existence. An attitude favoring the coexistence of independent and interdependent self-construals as well as control and harmony beliefs for dealing with the apparent conflicts between strong traditionality and requisite modernity seems to be the most favorable outcome for people in Taiwan. This is what this study demonstrated.

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