Cultural Values and Happiness: An East–West Dialogue

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ABSTRACT. Happiness as a state of mind may be universal, but its meaning is complex and ambiguous. The authors directly examined the relationships between cultural values and experiences of happiness in 2 samples, by using a measurement of values derived from Chinese culture and a measurement of subjective well-being balanced for sources of happiness salient in both the East and the West. The participants were university students—439 from an Eastern culture (Taiwan) and 344 from a Western culture (the United Kingdom). Although general patterns were similar in the 2 samples, the relationships between values and happiness were stronger in the Taiwanese sample than in the British sample. The values social integration and human-heartedness had culture-dependent effects on happiness, whereas the value Confucian work dynamism had a culture-general effect on happiness.

Key words: British university students, Eastern cultural values, happiness, Taiwanese university students, Western cultural values

FOR CENTURIES, scholars in many disciplines have studied happiness, or subjective well-being (SWB), and have defined it in ethical, theological, political, economic, and psychological terms (Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1984). Happiness is currently defined (a) as a predominance of positive over negative affect and (b) as satisfaction with life as a whole (Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989; Diener).

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In addition, happiness is conceptualized better as a trait than as a transient emotional state (Veenhoven, 1994). SWB researchers have progressed from early survey searches for “objective” external indicators (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, 1976) and scale development (Andrews & Withey; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) to explanations of psychological mechanisms of happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990a, 1990b; Headey & Wearing, 1989; Lu & Lin, 1998; Lu & Shih, 1997a; Lu, Shih, Lin, & Ju, 1997) and even to large-scale cross-cultural comparisons (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Veenhoven, 1995).

One central issue, however, is that typical psychological research tends to be Western in origin, ideas, and instrumentation. Research in the West may well be culture bound in significant ways: Cross-cultural studies usually involve (a) applying measures derived from Western cultural traditions and (b) 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).

The word happiness did not appear in the Chinese language until recently. Fu, or fu-qi, is perhaps the closest equivalent of happiness in Chinese ancient writings. However, its definition, which is extremely vague, usually means “anything positive and good in life.” Wu (1991) pointed out that longevity, prosperity, health, peace, virtue, and a comfortable death are among the best values in life (i.e., fu-qi). Thus, according to folklore, Chinese people’s conception of happiness roughly includes material abundance, physical health, a virtuous and peaceful life, and relief of anxiety about death.

In the Book of Change, one of the oldest and most influential philosophical works in China, everything from the cosmos to human life is viewed as a never-ending and cyclic process of change—between good and bad, happiness and misery, well-being and ill-being. According to the ancient Yin–Yang theory, the universe consists of two basic opposing principles or natures, Yin and Yang. The change of relationships between those two forces formed all creations, which are still constantly changing. The ultimate aspiration of the Chinese conception of well-being is a state of homeostasis in nature, human societies, and individual human beings, brought about by the harmonious relationships between Yin and Yang. The ancient Chinese thinking of Taoism echoed such a philosophy of submission to, rather than control over, over the environment. Lao Tzu warned against the endless striving for material accumulation and worldly hedonism and pointed out that good things are inevitably followed by bad things; similarly, misfortune is replaced by blessing. Instead, he preached the natural way of life, which is simple, spontaneous, tranquil, weak, and—most important—inactive (wu-wei)—that is, taking no action that is contrary to nature. In other words, one should let nature take its own course.

However, ancient Chinese philosophy is marked by dualism. Two systems represent the wisdom of the laboring masses and the wisdom of the educated elite (i.e., ethics for ordinary people vs. ethics for scholars). The aforementioned folk-
lore about *fu*, or *fu-qi*, exemplifies the former system (i.e., ethics for ordinary people), whereas the Taoism founded by Lao Tzu belongs to the latter system (i.e., ethics for the educated elite), which assumes a cultural and moral higher ground over the former. Adherents of Taoism regard goals and principles such as inactivity (*wu-wei*) as ideals in human life that only a worthy few can achieve through endless introspection and self-cultivation. In contrast, ideals like *fu*, or *fu-qi*, are guidelines for the masses in everyday life. Because researchers of happiness aim to understand the subjective experiences of the general population, the wisdom of the masses and the ethics of ordinary people should be at the forefront, whereas the ethics of the elite and scholars should be regarded as background.

The more worldly Confucian philosophy has teachings for both the scholars and lay people and, hence, is undoubtedly the dominant value system in Chinese societies. It has been the most powerful influence shaping the Chinese culture and the conceptions of Chinese people for thousands of years. Confucian philosophy presupposes that the life of each individual is only a link in that person’s family lineage and that each individual is a continuation of his or her ancestors. One can apply the same reasoning to the person’s offspring. Although such teaching does not necessarily take the form of belief in reincarnation, it puts the family or clan in the center of one’s entire life. Unlike Western cultures dominated by Christianity, Chinese culture does not proclaim the pursuit of salvation in the next life as the ultimate concern; rather, it advocates striving to expand and preserve the prosperity and vitality of one’s family: A person must work hard and be frugal to accumulate material resources, to obtain respectable social status, to suppress selfish desires, to lead a virtuous life, and to fulfill social duties. Emphasizing the importance of social interaction, Wu (1992) asserted that one can achieve Confucian-style happiness through “knowledge, benevolence, and harmony of the group” (p. 37). Confucian philosophy stresses the collective welfare of the family or clan (extending to society and the entire human race) more than individual welfare; it emphasizes integration and harmony among man, society, and nature. Confucianism thus provides the most comprehensive framework for understanding the Chinese conception of happiness.

Yang and Cheng (1987) conceptualized the Confucian values preserved in Taiwan as four groups. *Family variables* include family and clan responsibilities and obedience to one’s elders. *Group variables* include acceptance of the hierarchical structure of society; trust in and obedience to authority; and a commitment to the solidarity, harmony, and norms of the group. *Job-orientation variables* include education, skills, hard work, and frugality. *Disposition variables* include austerity, calmness, humility, and self-control.

In a similar vein, a group of scholars (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) developed the Chinese Value Survey (CVS), which consists of four dimensions of cultural values: *social integration, human-heartedness, Confucian work dynamism,* and *moral discipline.* These not only were akin to the Chinese culture but also proved valid in subsequent large-scale cross-cultural studies (Bond,
People in non-Chinese societies also experienced those salient Chinese cultural values. Thus, conceiving and developing such an instrument outside a Western cultural tradition has opened up new theoretical possibilities. At the very least, cross-cultural researchers can benefit substantially from the triangulation offered by the simultaneous use of instruments, perspectives, or both from different cultures.

As scholars have observed, the Chinese philosophies have a theme parallel to the underlying theme in Western philosophies. The major issues of concern for Western philosophers are “knowledge” and “truth,” whereas those for Chinese philosophers are “action” and “practice” (Hwang, 1995). Chinese philosophy is, in fact, a practical philosophy—the “philosophy of happiness” (Chiang, 1996, p. 1). Of course, happiness here does not mean narrow sensual hedonism; rather, it refers to a tranquil state of mind achieved through harmony with other people, with society, and with nature. As implied in the foregoing review of Chinese philosophical thought, philosophers of every school have prescribed and preached paths to happiness, although they have not clearly defined happiness. In short, the way to happiness is to practice various important cultural values advocated by the philosophers, especially by Confucian philosophers; practicing those values should, then, lead to happiness in life.

Cultural values can be a major force in determining the conception of happiness and, consequently, in constricting its subjective experiences. In a qualitative study of sources of happiness among Chinese in Taiwan, researchers found evidence of the distinctive features of the Chinese conception of happiness described earlier—in particular, harmony of interpersonal relationships, achievement at work, and contentment with life (Lu & Shih, 1997b).

An alternative approach to the East–West connection (or disconnection) is to examine directly the relationships between cultural values and happiness in different nations. Existing cross-cultural comparisons suggest that individualism is the only persistent correlate of SWB when other predictors are controlled (Diener, Diener, et al., 1995). However, the measures of both cultural values and SWB were, once again, culture bound and Western; not surprisingly, therefore, Western happiness was correlated consistently with the Western value of individualism. To counter this cultural bias, one must incorporate Eastern as well as Western perspectives into cross-cultural studies.

Most existing quantitative comparisons of happiness across nations have used materials in two world databases compiled by Veenhoven (1993) and Micholas (1991). The former (Veenhoven, 1993) consists of nationwide surveys conducted in various countries with various measures, mostly single items. Therefore, researchers had to transform the data into a uniform 0–10 rating scale, which may have introduced subjectivity and affected internal validity. The sample in the latter database (Micholas) comprised college students in 39 countries, and the researcher used a uniform battery of instruments. In addition to the concern about cultural nonequivalence expressed earlier, most of those students had back-
grounds in the social sciences. Therefore, they were not necessarily representative of even the general student populations in their respective countries; furthermore, the sample size in some countries was very small (Ns = 91 for Colombia and 149 for the then Soviet Union, respectively). One problem common to both databases was the overrepresentation of developed Western countries and the underrepresentation of poorer Eastern, African, and South American nations.

Despite such methodological concerns, evidence from those databases (Micholás, 1991; Veenhoven, 1993) showed substantial national differences in happiness, especially across the East (Asian)–West (European/North American) divide. Those differences were not due to language problems, familiarity with the happiness concept, or social desirability influences (Veenhoven, 1987). In addition, the happiness differentials among Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and U.S. students were not attributable to Asian modesty, the tendency to appear average, fear of fate, social desirability, or social norms for emotional expressiveness (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995). What, then, might explain those cross-cultural differences in happiness? Veenhoven (1995) suggested livability as a macro-level social indicator of national happiness, whereas Diener and others (Diener, Diener, et al., 1995) asserted that individualism was the only reliable predictor of happiness after they controlled for statistical errors. Unfortunately, those researchers measured individualism as a national average on a single rating scale. An individual measure of culture (e.g., values) may be more appropriate and fruitful for psychological inquiry. Furthermore, researchers should attempt a more direct comparison of the East and the West with equal representation.

In light of the foregoing critiques about possible cultural biases in SWB research, we compared a typical Eastern culture with a typical Western one in the present study. Our primary purpose was twofold: (a) to examine the pattern of relationships between cultural values and SWB across the East–West divide and (b) to determine the culture-dependent or culture-general effects of values on experiences of happiness. Our secondary purpose was also twofold: (a) to explore quantitative East–West differences in happiness and (b) to explore whether there are gender differences in happiness within and across cultures (Francis, Brown, Lester, & Philipchalk, 1998). In short, we examined how a Western sample experienced Chinese cultural values and the relationship of those values to happiness in the East and the West.

In the present study, we chose Taiwanese and British samples as representatives of the East and the West, respectively, because they have occupied almost polar positions along dimensions of values (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede, 1980).

The most convenient cultural informants are university students, because they are highly literate, self-aware, and capable of articulating inner psychological states as well as fundamental beliefs (e.g., SWB and cultural values). In addition, students may not be very different from their fellow citizens in terms of happiness (Veenhoven, 1995); hence, one may regard students’ levels of happiness
as representative of those in their respective countries (Diener, Diener, et al., 1995). We recruited both male and female students from different class levels and from the widest possible range of undergraduate majors. In both countries, we chose institutions and departments with similar admission rates, to ensure a basic level of sample comparability. Because Taiwan is ethnically homogeneous with more than 90% of its population Han Chinese, we included only Anglo-Saxon Whites in the British sample.

Method

Participants

The 439 Taiwanese students (230 men, 209 women; mean age = 21.49 years, SD = 4.83) came from three universities in the city of Koahshiung. Their majors were medicine, nursing, literature, management, mechanics, sociology, and environmental sciences. The 344 British students (161 men, 183 women; mean age = 20.44 years, SD = 3.99) came from two universities in the cities of Lancaster and Oxford and were enrolled in 147 degree programs.

Measurements

Happiness. We used the 48-item Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI; Lu & Shih, 1997a), which contains 20 “Eastern” items from a qualitative study conducted in Taiwan (Lu & Shih, 1997b), and 28 “Western” dimensions from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle et al., 1989). From the Eastern items, we formed six subscales: (a) Harmony of Interpersonal Relationships, (b) Praise and Respect From Others, (c) Satisfaction of Material Needs, (d) Achievement at Work, (e) Downward Social Comparisons, and (f) Peace of Mind. From the Western items, we formed seven subscales: (a) Optimism, (b) Social Commitment, (c) Positive Affect, (d) Contentment, (e) Fitness, (f) Self-Satisfaction, and (g) Mental Alertness (one sample item is given for each of the 13 subscales in the Appendix).

Every item in the CHI has a group of four statements from which the respondents choose. Each statement represents a different level of subjective experience of happiness, which is then coded as 0, 1, 2, or 3. Such an unusual format of response is modeled (in reverse) after the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Ward, Mendelsohn, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961) to measure the positive skewed nature of the happiness construct (Lu & Shih, 1997a). Thus, the CHI taps subjective experiences pertaining to a variety of life domains and situations, as suggested by the brief titles of its 13 subscales. The CHI has good reliability and validity (Lu & Lin, 1998; Lu & Shih, 1997a; Lu et al., 1997). In the present study, the internal consistency alpha coefficients for the total scale were .94 for the Taiwanese students and .93 for the British students.
Values. We used the 40-item CVS (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), which measures four dimensions of values on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = of very little importance, 5 = of ultimate importance). The corresponding subscales are (a) Social Integration, (b) Human-Heartedness, (c) Confucian Work Dynamism, and (d) Moral Discipline. The CVS has good psychometric properties in cross-cultural studies (Bond, 1988; The Chinese Culture Connection). In the present study, the internal consistency alpha coefficients for the total scale were .93 for the Taiwanese students and .86 for the British students (one sample item is given of each of the 4 subscales in the Appendix).

The CVS (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) has both Chinese and English versions, as does the Western portion of the CHI (Lu & Shih, 1997a). For the Eastern portion of the CHI, we followed a standardized back-translation process to produce an equivalent English version for use with the British students.

For all subscales, higher scores indicate higher endorsement of the measured construct.

Results

We conducted Pearson correlation analysis between cultural values and happiness (see Table 1).

In comparing the correlation matrices for the Taiwanese and British samples, we found that the general patterns were similar and mostly consistent with theoretical predictions. However, there were more pairs of significant correlations in the matrix of the Taiwanese sample. Overall, cultural values were correlated positively with nearly all dimensions of happiness for the Taiwanese students and with a few dimensions for the British students.

Subsequent regression analyses provided more support for the pattern of relations between values and happiness for both the Taiwanese and the British samples. Cultural values were generally more predictive of happiness dimensions among the Taiwanese students: Social integration predicted 3, human-heartedness predicted 10, and Confucian work dynamism predicted 3 of the 13 happiness dimensions (average $\beta = .22$). Among the British students, social integration predicted 4, human-heartedness predicted 1, and Confucian work dynamism predicted 1 of the 13 happiness dimensions (average $\beta = .21$). Human-heartedness also predicted overall happiness among the Taiwanese students ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$).

In the foregoing regression analyses, we noticed that the role of values was varied, although the pattern across happiness dimensions was quite consistent across the two samples. For the Taiwanese sample, most significant relations between values and happiness were positive (81.25%), and only 3 of 16 (18.75%) were negative. In contrast, 50% of the significant relations between values and happiness were negative for the British sample. Could the role of values be culture dependent? Following Bond’s (1998) suggested flow-chart procedure for unpackaging culture at the individual level, we performed another series of hier-
### TABLE 1
Correlations Between Scores for Values and Scores for Happiness for the Taiwanese and British Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Taiwanese sample</th>
<th>British sample</th>
<th>Taiwanese sample</th>
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<th>British sample</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social integration</td>
<td>Human-heartedness</td>
<td>Confucian work dynamic</td>
<td>Moral discipline</td>
<td>Social integration</td>
<td>Human-heartedness</td>
<td>Confucian work dynamic</td>
<td>Moral discipline</td>
<td>Social integration</td>
<td>Human-heartedness</td>
<td>Confucian work dynamic</td>
<td>Moral discipline</td>
<td>Social integration</td>
<td>Human-heartedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>.26**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>Positive affect</td>
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<td>.20**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
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<td>.17**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
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<td>.14**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>.16**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-satisfaction</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>.07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.19**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.11*</td>
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<td>.17**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downward social comparisons</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace of mind</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.15**</td>
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*p < .05. **p < .01.
architectural multiple regressions. For this purpose, we pooled the Taiwanese and the British samples. At Step 1, we regressed a particular value against happiness in the pooled sample; at Step 2, we dummy coded the culture variable (1 = Taiwanese, 2 = British) and regressed it against happiness; finally, at Step 3, we regressed the Value $\times$ Culture interaction against the residual. The behavior of these interactive terms could offer clues about the culture dependence or culture generality of the effects of values on happiness. If the Value $\times$ Culture interaction was statistically significant, the relationship between values and happiness would be culture dependent. If the Value $\times$ Culture interaction was not statistically significant, the relationship between values and happiness would be culture general. Because moral discipline was not related to overall happiness or to any of its dimensions in the previous regression analyses, we repeated the procedure for social integration, human-heartedness, and Confucian work dynamism only (for details of the regression analyses along with zero-order correlations, see Table 2).

The results revealed significant Social Integration $\times$ Culture ($B = -1.65, p < .05$) and Human-Heartedness $\times$ Culture interactions ($B = -1.91, p < .01$). However, the Confucian Work Dynamism $\times$ Culture interaction was not significant. We revealed the nature of those two significant interactions by plotting the mean scores of different subgroups (Figures 1 and 2). For the British students, there was no difference in happiness between the groups with low and high scores for social integration and human-heartedness, whereas for the Taiwanese students, there were significant differences in happiness between the groups with the low

| TABLE 2 Predicting Happiness: Unpackaging the Effects of Culture |
|------------------|---------|-------|---------|--------|------------------|
| Variable         | $R^2$  | $\Delta R^2$ | $B$     | $F$    | $df$  | Zero-order correlation |
| Social integration | .04    | .04*** | .64*** |       |      | .19***           |
| Culture          | .06    | .02*** | 5.72*** |       |      | .16***           |
| Social Integration $\times$ Culture | .07    | .01*   | -1.65* | 16.27*** | 1, 668 | -.10**          |
| Human-heartedness | .04    | .04*** | 1.23*** |       |      | .20***           |
| Culture          | .06    | .02*** | 5.74*** |       |      | .16***           |
| Human-Heartedness $\times$ Culture | .08    | .02**  | -1.91** | 18.32*** | 1, 674 | -.11**          |
| Confucian work dynamism | .01    | .01**  | .50**  |       |      | .10**            |
| Culture          | .04    | .03*** | 6.26*** |       |      | .16***           |
| Confucian Work Dynamism $\times$ Culture | .04    | .00    | -1.27  | 10.15*** | 1, 670 | -.07            |

Note. Each variable indicates a new step in hierarchical regression. B and Fs were from the final equations. For culture, we coded Taiwanese as 1 and British as 2.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
and high scores, $t(386) = 3.58, p < .001$, for social integration and $t(390) = 5.16, p < .001$, for human-heartedness. The effects of social integration and human-heartedness seemed culture dependent: Higher endorsement for both values led to higher scores for happiness among the Taiwanese students but not among the British students. In contrast, the effect of Confucian work dynamism on happiness seemed culture general; higher endorsement of that value led to higher scores for happiness in both samples.

We directly compared scores for happiness across cultures by using a $2 \times 2$ (Culture $\times$ Gender) analysis of variance. Results revealed a rather stable main effect

![FIGURE 1. The culture-dependent effects of social integration on happiness among Taiwanese and British university students.](image1)

![FIGURE 2. The culture-dependent effects of human-heartedness on happiness among Taiwanese and British university students.](image2)
of culture on overall happiness and 6 of its 13 dimensions: With only one exception, the British students had higher scores for happiness than did the Taiwanese students (all \( p < .001 \), two-tailed). There was also a stable main effect of gender on 8 of the happiness dimensions: The women were happier than the men (all \( p s < .05 \)); however, there was no gender difference in scores for overall happiness.

Additional analyses revealed no gender difference in values dimensions for the British sample. However, in the Taiwanese sample, the men scored higher (\( M = 38.35, SD = 5.25 \)) than the women (\( M = 36.94, SD = 5.36 \)) on social integration, \( t(425) = 2.74, p < .01 \); on Confucian work dynamism (\( Ms = 26.35 \) and \( 25.41, S Ds = 4.26 \) and 4.41 for men and women, respectively), \( t(431) = 2.34, p < .05 \); and on moral discipline (\( Ms = 17.27 \) and \( 16.56, S Ds = 2.90 \) and \( 2.90 \) for men and women, respectively), \( t(432) = 2.56, p < .05 \). However, there was no gender difference in scores for human-heartedness among the Taiwanese students.

**Discussion**

Although one can regard happiness as a positive state of mind, its specific meaning is unclear and ambiguous. As suggested earlier, Chinese culture offers rich possibilities to those seeking an alternative approach to exploring and understanding human happiness outside a Western cultural tradition. In the present study, we found that four fundamental dimensions of values consistent with Chinese cultural traditions were connected with happiness among the Taiwanese sample; that finding empirically supports the theoretical position that culture molds meanings and concepts (Bruner, 1990). Three dimensions of the Chinese values—social integration, human-heartedness, and Confucian work dynamism—were also connected to some aspects of happiness among the British students. In responding to the CVS (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), the British students had to “cut their feet to fit the shoes,” as an old Chinese proverb puts it. Therefore, when we used that Eastern instrument, cross-cultural evidence of convergence revealed robust dimensions of human happiness. Given that previous cross-cultural studies within a Western cultural tradition identified self-esteem (Diener & Diener, 1995) and individualism (Diener, Diener, et al., 1995) as strong predictors of SWB, a synergistic view of diversity would greatly benefit happiness research. More generally, such an approach would have significant implications for the development of social science beyond the limitations of its predominantly Western cultural origins.

In general, cultural values had stronger effects on happiness for the Taiwanese sample than for the British sample. Because the CHI (Lu & Shih, 1997a) has a mixture of both Eastern and Western subscales, a detailed inspection of patterns of relations between values and the Eastern–Western happiness may be informative. In fact, the Western items are individual and internal, whereas the Eastern items are much more relational and, indeed, closer to the wording of values in the CVS. Could this similarity partly explain the results? A closer inspec-
tion revealed that scores for the Taiwanese values significantly predicted scores for 5 of the 6 Eastern subscales (83.33%) and for 6 of the 7 Western subscales of happiness (85.71%). For the British sample, scores for values significantly predicted scores for 2 of the 6 Eastern subscales (33.33%) and for 2 of the 7 Western subscales of happiness (42.86%). Consequently, we observed no congruence pattern linking the cultural origin of values to the cultural origin of happiness conception. Hence, the emic contributions of Chinese cultural values to happiness research were not restricted to its Chinese aspects.

The central aim of cross-cultural psychology is to analyze culture scientifically, or to unpack at the psychological level culture’s effects on human behavior (Bond, 1998). As results of the present study indicate, Chinese values such as social integration, human-heartedness, and Confucian work dynamism make emic contributions to the study of happiness and help to balance any Western theoretical egocentrism. More unpackaging of culture is necessary to shed light on the debate about cultural universality versus cultural specificity. In the present study, the effects of social integration and human-heartedness on happiness were culture dependent, whereas the effect of Confucian work dynamism on happiness was culture general.

According to the authors of the CVS (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), social integration reflects a broadly integrative, socially stabilizing emphasis; human-heartedness suggests a gentle and compassionate approach in contrast to a harsh, legalistic approach; and Confucian work dynamism reflects Confucian work ethics. Social integration and human-heartedness were correlated negatively with Hofstede’s (1980) power distance and individualism and were viewed as indicators of an underlying dimension called collectivism (The Chinese Culture Connection). Human-heartedness was also correlated with Hofstede’s masculinity–femininity dimension. Common to both dimensions is the opposition between human-centered and task-centered considerations in collective activities. Human-heartedness was then dubbed cultural compassion.

In the present study, there was no gender difference in values dimensions for the British sample. However, in the Taiwanese sample, the men scored higher than the women on social integration, Confucian work dynamism, and moral discipline; there was no gender difference in scores for human-heartedness. In a male-dominated patriarchal society, men are expected to endorse more cultural values, to transmit them more actively, and to defend them more rigorously. Those are exactly the results that we found with the present Taiwanese sample.

Taiwan, ranked 44/53 on Hofstede’s (1980) measure of individualism, is undoubtedly a highly collectivistic society, in sharp contrast to Britain (ranked 3/53). Social integration and human-heartedness reflect key themes in the Chinese cultural teachings: interpersonal benevolence and compassion, group solidarity and harmony, hierarchy and stability, holistic integration and homeostasis, and collective rather than individual welfare. Endorsement and daily practice of those values, then, indicate social fitting and undoubtedly lead to higher person-
al happiness among the Chinese, as we found in the present study. However, the same values may be different from the dominant values in Western societies, which emphasize individualistic striving and achievement, a legalistic approach, control, advancement, and egalitarian social arrangements. Thus, social integration and human-heartedness may not have been good guides to happiness for the British sample. There is corroborative evidence of the culture-dependent effects of values on happiness in a recent cross-cultural study: Kwan, Bond, and Singelis (1997) found that relationship harmony had a greater impact on life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures.

However, Confucian work dynamism demonstrated a culture-general effect on happiness across the East–West divide. Confucian work ethics have two main components: (a) the creation of dedicated, motivated, responsible, and educated individuals and (b) the enhanced sense of commitment, organizational identity, and loyalty to various institutions (Kahn, 1979). It is clear that those traits have much in common with the prevailing Protestant work ethic. Both are connected with high achievement motivation and even with national economic growth (Hick & Redding, 1983; Kahn, 1979). Because work occupies a central role in modern living everywhere, it is not surprising that endorsement and implementation of work ethics have a universally beneficial effect on happiness.

The men and the women did not differ on overall happiness, but the women scored higher than the men on several dimensions of happiness. In single-culture studies, women have sometimes had a slight advantage in terms of reporting higher happiness than men) (Argyle, 1987; Diener, 1984; Lu, 1995). In a recent study, however, researchers found no gender differences on happiness in four English-speaking nations (Francis et al., 1998). The gender difference seems an unresolved issue, and more research is necessary, both within a single culture and across cultures.

For direct comparisons of levels of happiness across cultures, we found a rather consistent difference in the present study: The British students had higher scores for happiness than did the Taiwanese students. This pattern is also consistent with previous findings that people in individualistic societies claim to be happier than their counterparts in collectivistic societies (Myers & Diener, 1995), although such studies suffer from the methodological flaws discussed earlier. Because we used a multi-item, multidimensional instrument to measure happiness across two culturally diverse nations, one cannot easily dismiss as artifacts our results of national differences on happiness. Instead, future researchers must continue to look for convincing explanations of what now appear to be real national differences in happiness.

REFERENCES


Kwan, V. S. Y., Bond, M. H., & Singelis, T. M. (1997). Pan-cultural explanations for life...


**APPENDIX**

**The Chinese Happiness Inventory (Lu & Shih, 1997a)**

**Eastern Subscales, Items, and Scale Values**

**Harmony of Interpersonal Relationships**

*Example: Item 29*

- I do not feel interested in being with family members. (0)
- I seldom feel interested in being with family members. (1)
- I often feel interested in being with family members. (2)
- I always feel interested in being with family members. (3)

**Praise and Respect From Others**

*Example: Item 34*

- I am never praised by others. (0)
- I am seldom praised by others. (1)
- I am often praised by others. (2)
- I am always praised by others. (3)
Satisfaction of Material Needs  
*Example: Item 35*  
I do not have enough money to do what I like to do. (0)  
I seldom have enough money to do what I like to do. (1)  
I often have enough money to do what I like to do. (2)  
I always have enough money to do what I like to do. (3)  

Achievement at Work  
*Example: Item 38*  
My performance is not recognized. (0)  
My performance is seldom recognized. (1)  
My performance is often recognized. (2)  
My performance is always recognized. (3)  

Downward Social Comparisons  
*Example: Item 40*  
My fortune is worse than others’. (0)  
My fortune is about the same as others’. (1)  
My fortune is good. (2)  
My fortune is excellent. (3)  

Peace of Mind  
*Example: Item 48*  
I do not understand the meaning of life. (0)  
I seldom understand the meaning of life. (1)  
I often understand the meaning of life. (2)  
I always understand the meaning of life. (3)  

Western Subscales, Items, and Scale Values  

Optimism  
*Example: Item 2*  
I am not particularly optimistic about the future. (0)  
I feel optimistic about the future. (1)  
I feel I have so much to look forward to. (2)  
I feel that the future is overflowing with hope and promise. (3)  

Social Commitment  
*Example: Item 21*  
I do not have fun with other people. (0)  
I sometimes have fun with other people. (1)  
I often have fun with other people. (2)  
I always have fun with other people. (3)  

Positive Affect  
*Example: Item 18*  
I am never in a state of joy and elation. (0)  
I sometimes experience joy and elation. (1)  
I often experience joy and elation. (2)  
I am constantly in a state of joy and elation. (3)
Contentment

*Example: Item 7*
I never have a good influence on events. (0)
I occasionally have a good influence on events. (1)
I often have a good influence on events. (2)
I always have a good influence on events. (3)

Fitness

*Example: Item 13*
I don’t feel more energetic than usual. (0)
I feel fairly energetic. (1)
I feel very energetic. (2)
I feel I have boundless energy. (3)

Self-Satisfaction

*Example: Item 19*
There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done. (0)
I have done some of the things I wanted. (1)
I have done many of the things I wanted. (2)
I have done everything I ever wanted. (3)

Mental Alertness

*Example: Item 11*
I can work as well as before. (0)
I find it easier to get started at doing things. (1)
I find it no effort at all at doing things. (2)
I feel able to take anything on. (3)

The Chinese Values Survey

*Subscales and Items*

Social Integration
  Filial piety (obedience to parents, respect for parents, honoring ancestors, financial support of parents)

Human-Heartedness
  Kindness (forgiveness, compassion)

Confucian Work Dynamism
  Thrift

Moral Discipline
  Keeping oneself disinterested and pure

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