

Goals, Culture, and Subjective Well-Being

Shigehiro Oishi and Ed Diener

Abstract The present studies examined the role of independent and interdependent goal pursuits in the subjective well-being (SWB) of Asian and European American college students. In Study 1, the authors found that independent goal pursuit (i.e., goal pursuit for fun and enjoyment) increased the benefit of goal attainment on SWB among European Americans but not among Asian Americans. In Study 2, the authors found that interdependent goal pursuit (i.e., goal pursuit to please parents and friends) increased the benefit of goal attainment on the SWB of Asian Americans, whereas it did not increase the benefit of goal attainment on the SWB of European Americans. In Study 3, the authors found that whereas interdependent goal pursuit increased the benefit of goal attainment, independent goal pursuit did not increase the benefit of goal attainment among Japanese college students. Altogether, the present findings suggest that independent and interdependent goal pursuits result in divergent affective consequences across cultures.

From daily experiences, all of us must recognize the pervasive role of goals in our lives, because achieving a goal or failing to do so makes our everyday lives enjoyable or miserable. For example, breaking one's personal record in a 5K race, receiving a rejection letter from a journal editor, hosting a successful cocktail party, and giving a horrible lecture are all likely to, at least temporally, influence a person's sense of well-being. Indeed, there is ample evidence that goal attainment is associated with positive emotional experience (Brunstein, 1993) and life satisfaction (Emmons, 1986; see Cantor & Blanton, 1996; Emmons, 1996, for review). But is goal attainment equally good for anyone? Recently, researchers found that the effect of goal attainment on well-being varies depending on individuals' motives (e.g., Brunstein, Schultheiss, & Graessman, 1998; Emmons, 1991; Oishi, Diener, Suh, & Lucas, 1999; Sagiv & Schwarz, 2000; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). For instance, Sheldon and Kasser (1998) found that goal attainment had a very positive effect for those who pursued their goals for intrinsic reasons (i.e., for the fun and enjoyment they provide)

S. Oishi (✉)

Department of Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904, USA
e-mail: soishi@virginia.edu

but did not have any positive effect for those who pursued their goals for extrinsic reasons. The question regarding the effect of goal attainment on well-being takes on additional importance in light of cultural variation in goal motivation (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Triandis, 1995). That is, is the type of person who benefits most from goal attainment the same or different across cultures? The present article tackles this question from the cultural psychological perspective (e.g., Heine et al., 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Miller, 1999) and examines the role of culture in the link between goal attainment and well-being.

Goals and Culture

Goals have been central constructs in cross-cultural and cultural psychology (e.g., Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 1995). Most notably, Triandis (1995) distinguished individualist cultures from collectivist cultures by the type of goals that people pursue. He argued that people in individualist cultures tend to pursue personal goals that reflect personal desires, wishes, and needs, whereas people in collectivist cultures tend to pursue communal goals that reflect the desires, wishes, and needs of ingroup members (see also Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000, for the link between values and daily concerns). In their seminal *Psychological Review* article, Markus and Kitayama (1991) also emphasized the interconnected nature of goals in the interdependent culture and noted that “the goals of others may become so focal in consciousness that the goals of others may be experienced as personal goals” (p. 229). Consistent with this thesis, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) have recently discovered that Asian American schoolchildren enjoyed and performed anagram and math problems better in an imposed condition (i.e., when they were told that the task was chosen by their mother or classmates) than in a free-choice condition. In contrast, European American schoolchildren enjoyed and performed the same problems better in a free-choice condition than in a chosen condition.

Based on the cultural variation in the type of salient goals, Markus and Kitayama (1994) proposed the culture-specific genesis of emotional well-being. These researchers posited that the attainment of culturally prescribed goals, or engagement in culturally appropriate behavior, should feel “good.” To the extent that culturally prescribed goals in an independent culture are to stand out, feelings of separation and pride should lead to good feelings in an independent culture. On the other hand, to the extent that culturally prescribed goals in an interdependent culture are to fit in and have harmonious relationships, feelings of connection should lead to good feelings in an interdependent culture. Consistent with these hypotheses, Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa (2000) found that the frequency of good feelings was most closely associated with the frequency of friendly feelings in Japan, whereas it was most highly correlated with the frequency of pride in the United States. Also, consistent with the basic idea of Markus and Kitayama (1994), self-esteem (E. Diener & M. Diener, 1995) and freedom (Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh,

1999) were significantly stronger predictors of life satisfaction in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures. Similarly, relationship harmony had a predictive power of life satisfaction above and beyond self-esteem among Hong Kong students but not among American students (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997). In addition, the perception of a person's life by important others played a prominent role in predicting Asians' life satisfaction but played only a minor role in predicting European Americans' life satisfaction (Radhakrishnan & Chan, 1997; Suh, 1999). These findings suggest that the well-being of Asians may depend not only on how they view themselves but also on how they are viewed by important others (Heine et al., 1999; Triandis, 1995). Furthermore, the salience of the external perspective among Asians (Suh, 1999) suggests that the type of goal progress conducive to Asians' well-being might be different in an important way from European Americans'.

The Present Studies

Although the previous cross-cultural studies (E. Diener & M. Diener, 1995; Heine & Lehman, 1999; Kwan et al., 1997; Oishi et al., 1999; Suh, 1999; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1997) found important cultural variations in correlates of well-being, they were limited in two ways. First, because the previous studies relied entirely on global self-reports at one point in time, knowledge of specific processes and causal chains involving subjective well-being (SWB) was notably missing. What predicts changes in well-being? And how do these predictors differ across cultures? Second, despite the fact that goals have been an integral part of the cultural theory of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and individualism–collectivism (Triandis, 1995), they have not been directly measured and tested in the context of SWB in the previous research. Therefore, the role of goal attainment in SWB has never been examined in the cross-cultural context.

We conducted three studies to address these limitations from the previous research. In these studies, we tested the role of goal attainment and motivation in temporal changes in the well-being of Asians and European Americans. In all studies, participants first evaluated their recent life satisfaction at Time 1. Next, the participants listed the five most important goals for the next month (Study 1) or week (Studies 2 and 3) and rated the degree to which they pursued these goals for independent (Studies 1 and 3) or interdependent (Studies 2 and 3) reasons. Following Sheldon and Kasser (1998), we defined independent goal pursuit as pursuing a goal for the enjoyment and fun that it provides to them. We defined interdependent goal pursuit as pursuing a goal to make parents and friends happy. At Time 2 (i.e., 1 month later in Study 1 and 1 week later in Studies 2 and 3), the participants rated their well-being and their degree of goal attainment. Based on cultural variation in the function of motivation (Heine et al., 1999; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), we hypothesized that progress toward goals pursued for interdependent reasons would lead to positive changes in well-being among Asians, whereas progress toward goals pursued for independent reasons would lead to positive changes in well-being among European Americans. The present studies extend the previous

research by (a) providing more direct information on process and causal chains of SWB and (b) examining culture-specific functions of goals and motivation in SWB.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Participants were 87 European Americans (28 men, 57 women, 2 unknown) and 19 Asian Americans (7 men, 12 women) in a semester-long course on personality and well-being at the University of Illinois. The median age for European Americans was 20 years (range from 18 to 25 and older), whereas the median age for Asian Americans was 21 years (range from 18 to 23 years old). Eight of the 19 Asian American participants were born in the United States, and all but 3 participants have lived in the United States for at least 6 years.

Measures and Procedure

Monthly life satisfaction was measured by a 5-item scale based on the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Sample items include, "In most ways my life during the past month was close to ideal," "The conditions of my life during the past month were excellent," and "During the past month, I was satisfied with my life." Participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *slightly disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *slightly agree*, 6 = *agree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The mean Time 1 monthly satisfaction was 24.24 ($SD = 5.81$) for European Americans and 21.42 ($SD = 6.69$) for Asian Americans, $t = 1.86$, $p = 0.06$. Cronbach's alpha for the Time 1 monthly satisfaction scale was 0.89 for European Americans and 0.90 for Asian Americans. At Time 1, after completing the monthly life satisfaction scale, the participants listed their five most important goals in the coming month on a separate sheet of the paper. We assessed independent goal pursuit by using the scale developed by Sheldon and Kasser (1998); that is, for each goal, participants indicated their agreement on the statement, "I pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment that it provides me" using the 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 7 = *absolutely true*). The index of independent goal pursuit was computed by taking the average of the ratings for this statement across the five goals. The mean independent goal pursuit was 3.93 ($SD = 1.22$) for European Americans and 3.67 ($SD = 1.56$) for Asian Americans, $t = 0.82$, *ns*. At Time 2 (exactly 1 month after the first assessment), the participants first rated their monthly satisfaction using the scale described above. The mean Time 2 monthly life satisfaction was 24.88 ($SD = 5.23$) for European Americans and 22.79 ($SD = 6.17$) for Asian Americans, $t = 1.52$, $p = 0.13$. Cronbach's alpha for the Time 2 monthly satisfaction scale was 0.86 for European Americans and 0.91 for Asian Americans.

Then, the goal list was given back individually and the participants rated the degree of goal progress on each goal (i.e., How much did you achieve this goal?) on the 7-point scale (1 = 0%, 4 = about 50%, 7 = 100%). The index of goal progress was computed by averaging the ratings for the five goals. The mean goal progress was 4.80 ($SD = 1.02$) for European Americans and 4.51 ($SD = 1.32$) for Asian Americans, $t = 0.98$, *ns*. We did not find any gender difference regarding weekly satisfaction. Also, the key interaction between goal progress and goal motives did not differ across gender in all three studies. Thus, we did not include gender in our analyses below.

Results and Discussion

Time 2 monthly life satisfaction was predicted from Time 1 monthly life satisfaction, independent goal pursuit, goal progress, and the interaction between independent goal pursuit and goal progress for each cultural group using a regression analysis with the centering procedure outlined by Aiken and West (1991). This analysis allowed us to examine the degree to which changes in monthly life satisfaction were predicted from independent goal pursuit, goal progress, and the interaction between independent goal pursuit and goal progress (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983, for details). Replicating the findings of Sheldon and Kasser (1998), we found a significant two-way interaction between goal progress and independent goal pursuit among European Americans ($B = 1.27$, $\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$). As shown by the dotted lines in Fig. 1, the degree of goal progress was, on average, positively associated with an increase in monthly life satisfaction. Furthermore, for European Americans, this tendency was significantly stronger for those who pursued the goals for independent reasons; that is, goal attainment was particularly beneficial to those who pursued their goals for independent reasons among European Americans. On the other hand, the interaction between independent goal pursuit and goal progress was not only nonsignificant but also negative among Asian Americans ($B = -0.24$, $\beta = -0.07$, *ns*). In other words, the benefit of goal progress was not greater for those Asian Americans who pursued their goals for independent reasons. In fact, the benefit of goal progress for those who pursued their goals for independent reasons was slightly smaller than those who pursued their goals for interdependent reasons (see solid lines in Fig. 1). Thus, Study 1 indicates that whereas independent goal pursuit increases the positive effect of goal attainment on the well-being of European Americans, the positive function of independent goal pursuit does not seem to operate among Asian Americans.

Study 2

We conducted Study 2 to extend Study 1 in several ways. First, because of the small sample size of Asians, the estimates in Study 1 might not be as reliable as desired.

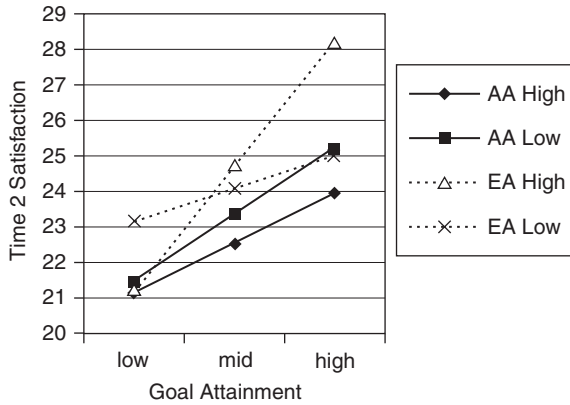


Fig. 1 Adjusted Time 2 monthly satisfaction as a function of goal attainment for Asian Americans with high independent goal pursuit (AA High), Asian Americans with low independent goal pursuit (AA Low), European Americans with high independent goal pursuit (EA High), and European Americans with low independent goal pursuit (EA Low).

Note. The estimated regression equations for European Americans and Asian Americans are as follows: EA : $LS2 = 20.04 + 0.18 LS1 + 2.20 GA + 0.30IGP + 1.27GA*IGP$; AA : $LS2 = 13.73 + 0.43 LS1 + 1.63 GA - 0.41IGP - 0.24GA*IGP$, where $LS2 =$ Time 2 monthly satisfaction, $LS1 =$ Time 1 monthly satisfaction, $GA =$ standardized goal attainment, and $IGP =$ standardized independent goal pursuit. Following Aiken and West (1991), goal attainment and independent goal pursuit were standardized around the mean before forming the interaction term. The regression lines described above were computed using the mean Time 1 monthly satisfaction and 1 SD above (high) or below (low) the mean independent goal pursuit

Thus, we obtained more Asian participants in Study 2. Second, Study 1 did not provide any information as to factors that could contribute to positive changes in the well-being of Asians. Finally, retrospective judgment of life satisfaction and goal attainment over 1 month might have led participants to use their general levels of life satisfaction and goal attainment. To reduce such a memory bias in assessment of goal progress and life satisfaction, we shortened the interval from 1 month to 1 week. This time frame should allow for more reality-based judgment of life satisfaction and goal progress in Study 2 than Study 1. Based on Iyengar and Lepper’s (1999) findings on Asian Americans, we predicted that interdependent goal pursuit, or goal pursuit to make parents and friends happy, would enhance the positive effect of goal attainment on the well-being of Asian Americans.

Method

Participants

Participants were 67 European Americans (34 men, 27 women, 6 unknown) and 64 Asian Americans (29 men, 30 women, 5 unknown) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Illinois.

Measures and Procedure

Weekly satisfaction was assessed by a three-item scale based on the SWLS. The items include, "I am satisfied with the past 1 week of my life" and "The conditions of my life during the last week were excellent." Participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The index of weekly satisfaction was computed by taking the average of the ratings for three statements. The mean weekly satisfaction was 4.14 ($SD = 1.22$) for European Americans and 4.12 ($SD = 1.38$) for Asian Americans, $t = 0.09$, *ns*. Cronbach's alpha of the Week 1 satisfaction scale was 0.88 for European Americans and 0.87 for Asian Americans. At Time 1, participants listed the five most important goals for the next 7 days. Then, for each goal, they indicated their agreement with the statement, "I pursue this goal because I want to make my parents and friends happy" on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 4 = *somewhat true*, 7 = *absolutely true*). The mean interdependent goal pursuit was 3.70 ($SD = 1.57$) for European Americans and 3.71 ($SD = 1.34$) for Asian Americans, $t = 0.01$, *ns*. At Time 2 (1 week later), the participants returned to the same experimental laboratory and completed the weekly satisfaction scale. The mean Week 2 satisfaction was 4.38 ($SD = 1.35$) for European Americans and 4.57 ($SD = 1.36$) for Asian Americans, $t = -0.70$, *ns*. Cronbach's alpha for the Week 2 satisfaction scale was 0.92 for European Americans and 0.91 for Asian Americans. Next, participants were provided with their own goal lists from Time 1 and rated their progress on each goal ("How much did you achieve this goal?") on the 7-point scale (1 = 0%, 4 = about 50%, 7 = 100%). The index of goal progress was computed by taking the average of the ratings for these five items. The mean goal progress was 4.83 ($SD = 1.16$) for European Americans and 4.75 ($SD = 0.95$) for Asian Americans, $t = -0.40$, *ns*.

Results and Discussion

As in Study 1, Week 2 satisfaction was predicted from Week 1 satisfaction, interdependent goal pursuit, goal progress, and the interaction between interdependent goal pursuit and goal progress for each group. Consistent with Sheldon and Kasser's (1998) findings, there was a significantly negative interaction between interdependent goal pursuit and goal progress among European Americans ($B = -0.32$, $\beta = -0.26$, $t = 2.29$, $p < 0.05$). Among European Americans, the degree to which goal attainment was associated with positive changes in weekly satisfaction was significantly less for those who pursued their goals to make parents and friends happy than for those who did not pursue the goals for interdependent reasons (see dotted lines in Fig. 2). On the other hand, the interaction between interdependent goal pursuit and goal progress was positive and nearly significant among Asian Americans ($B = 0.35$, $\beta = 0.20$, $t = 1.46$, $p = 0.15$) (see solid lines in Fig. 2). The 95% confidence interval for the unstandardized regression coefficient for the interaction term obtained in the Asian sample ranged from -0.13 to 0.82 , which excludes the unstandardized regression coefficient for the interaction term

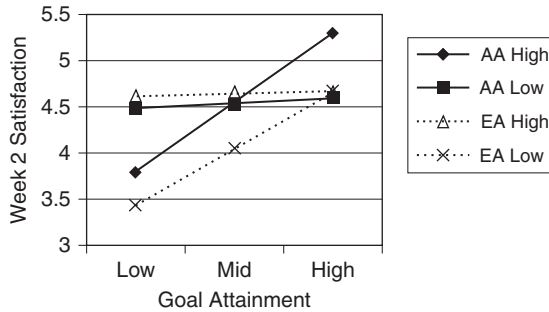


Fig. 2 Adjusted Week 2 satisfaction as a function of goal attainment for Asian Americans with high interdependent goal pursuit (AA High), Asian Americans with low interdependent goal pursuit (AA Low), European Americans with high interdependent goal pursuit (EA High), and European Americans with low interdependent goal pursuit (EA Low).

Note. The estimated regression equations for European Americans and Asian Americans are as follows: EA : $LS2 = 2.36 + 0.48 LS1 + 0.29GA + 0.29DGP - 0.32GA * DGP$; AA : $LS2 = 3.63 + 0.22LS1 + 0.40GA + 0.00DGP + 0.35GA * DGP$, where $LS2 =$ Week 2 satisfaction, $LS1 =$ Week 1 satisfaction, $GA =$ goal attainment, and $DGP =$ interdependent goal pursuit. The regression lines described above were obtained using the same procedure as in Study 1

obtained in the European American sample ($B = -0.32$). Furthermore, a regression analysis including both Asian and European Americans (i.e., predicting Week 2 satisfaction from Week 1 satisfaction, culture, goal progress, interdependent goal pursuit, and all the interaction terms) revealed a significant three-way interaction among culture (European vs. Asian Americans), interdependent goal pursuit, and goal progress ($B = -0.33$, $\beta = -0.23$, $t = 2.50$, $p = 0.01$). The three-way interaction indicates the contrasting role of interdependent goal pursuit on the effect of goal attainment on the well-being of Asian and European Americans. As seen in Fig. 2, among Asians, goal progress was more conducive to weekly satisfaction for those who pursued their goals for interdependent reasons, whereas among European Americans, goal progress was less conducive to weekly satisfaction for those who pursued their goals for interdependent reasons. In short, although it replicated the previous research (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) among European Americans, Study 2 revealed that interdependent goal pursuit, which was considered to be detrimental to well-being, could have a beneficial role in the well-being of Asian Americans.

Study 3

We conducted Study 3 to address three remaining issues from the first two studies. First, although the first two studies provided support for our hypothesis, we did not examine independent and interdependent goal pursuits in the same study. Second, although we followed the previous studies (e.g., Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) in measuring intrinsic goal pursuit (“because of fun and enjoyment that it provides me”), the item we used in Study 1 might not convey the concept of independent goal pursuit well. Also, the item we used for measuring interdependent goal pursuit in

Study 2 (“because I want to make my friends and family happy”) might not entirely represent the traditional definition of extrinsic motivation. Third, although we found the expected three-way interaction in Study 2, the two-way interaction between goal attainment and interdependent goal pursuit was not statistically significant among Asian Americans. This could be due to the fact that Asians in Study 2 lived in the United States. Indeed, previous research shows that Asians living in North America tend to show patterns of self-esteem and self-descriptions more individualistic than Asians living in Asia (e.g., Heine et al., 1999; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995). To address these issues, in Study 3, we examined both independent and interdependent goal pursuits, included two more items capturing the independent and interdependent nature of goal pursuit, and collected data from Japanese college students living in Japan.

Method

Participants

Participants were 70 Japanese students (20 men, 50 women) at Meisei University in Tokyo, Japan, who were enrolled in a research method course in psychology.

Measures and Procedure

All the materials were prepared in Japanese by the first author and administered in Japanese. Weekly satisfaction was measured by the same three-item scale used in Study 2. The mean weekly satisfaction was 4.44 ($SD = 1.64$) at Time 1. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .89 at Time 1. As in Study 2, participants listed the five most important goals for the next 7 days at Time 1. Then, for each goal, they indicated their agreement with the following two statements used in Studies 1 and 2 (i.e., “I pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment that it provides me,” “I pursue this goal because I want to make my parents and friends happy”) on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 4 = *somewhat true*, 7 = *absolutely true*). In addition, for each goal, they indicated their agreement with two additional statements: “I pursue this goal for myself, not for others” and “I pursue this goal to meet expectations of others,” again on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 4 = *somewhat true*, 7 = *absolutely true*). The descriptive statistics and correlations among four types of goal pursuit (i.e., the mean goal pursuit score across five goals) are shown in Table 1.

At Time 2 (1 week later), the participants returned to the same experimental laboratory and completed the weekly satisfaction scale. The mean Week 2 satisfaction was 4.28 ($SD = 1.57$) at Time 2. Cronbach’s alpha for the Week 2 satisfaction scale was 0.93. Next, participants were provided with their own goal lists from Time 1 and rated their attainment on each goal (“How much did you achieve this goal?”) on the 100-point scale, ranging from 0 to 100%. To make the rating easier, we changed the goal attainment scale from the artificially devised 7-point scale used in Study 2 to the more natural, 100% scale in this study. The index of goal attainment was computed by taking the average of the ratings for the five goals. The mean goal attainment

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations among four goal motives among Japanese participants in Study 3

Goal motives	1	2	3	4
1. For fun and enjoyment	—	-0.16	0.29*	0.24*
2. For self		—	-0.36**	-0.11
3. For family and friends			—	0.67**
4. For expectations of others				—
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.38 (1.41)	6.49 (0.65)	2.86 (1.27)	2.85 (1.39)

Note. $N = 70$. Goal motives are reasons why they pursued their goals.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

was 54.93% ($SD = 20.96$). As recommended by Judd and McClelland (1989, p. 526), we transformed the percentage ratings provided by the participants using a logit transformation to normalize the distribution and the psychological meaning of intervals in percentages. The logit-transformed goal attainment score was used in the following analyses.

Results and Discussion

Goal motives. As seen in Table 1, Japanese participants pursued their goals for themselves to a greater extent than to make friends and family happy, $t(69) = 18.76$, $p < 0.01$, to meet the expectations of others, $t(69) = 19.05$, $p < 0.01$, or for fun and enjoyment, $t(69) = 15.86$, $p < 0.01$. As expected, goal pursuit for self was negatively correlated with goal pursuit to make friends and family happy. Also, as expected, goal pursuit to make friends and family happy was highly correlated with goal pursuit to meet the expectations of others. Interestingly, intrinsic goal pursuit (i.e., for fun and enjoyment) was positively correlated with goal pursuit to make friends and family happy and to meet the expectations of others. Thus, the descriptive statistics and patterns of correlations among goal motives reveal an interesting picture of the Japanese participants. On one hand, these Japanese showed that they pursued their goals for independent reasons. On the other hand, the goals they pursued to make friends and family happy and to meet the expectations of others were the goals that were fun and enjoyable. Here, one can see that so-called extrinsic goal motives (e.g., Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) are highly internalized among the Japanese participants.

Hypothesis testing. As in Studies 1 and 2, Week 2 satisfaction was predicted from Week 1 satisfaction, goal pursuit, goal progress, and the interaction between goal pursuit and goal progress. We repeated this multiple regression analysis for each goal pursuit separately. Consistent with Study 1, the interaction between goal progress and intrinsic goal pursuit (i.e., goal pursuit for fun and enjoyment) was non-significant among Japanese college students ($B = 0.02$, $\beta = 0.01$, $t = 0.11$, *ns*); that is, goal progress was no more beneficial for the Japanese who pursued their goals for fun and enjoyment than for those who did not. Similarly, the interaction between goal progress and independent goal pursuit (i.e., goal pursuit for self, not

for others) was also nonsignificant ($B = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.06$, $t = 0.41$). Therefore, goal progress was no more beneficial for the Japanese who pursued their goals for themselves than for those who did not. In other words, the previous findings on the positive benefit of intrinsic goal pursuit (e.g., Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) were not replicated with the Japanese.

On the other hand, consistent with Study 2, the interaction between goal progress and goal pursuit to make friends and family happy was marginally positive ($B = 0.37$, $\beta = 0.19$, $t = 1.73$, $p = 0.09$). A simple slope analysis (Aiken and West, 1991) revealed that for the Japanese who pursued their goals to make friends and family happy (1 *SD* above the mean), goal attainment was associated with a positive change in well-being (e.g., 1 *SD* increase in goal progress corresponded to 0.52 increase in Week 2 satisfaction). On the other hand, for the Japanese who did not pursue their goals to make their friends and family happy, 1 *SD* increase in goal attainment corresponded to 0.21 decrease in Week 2 satisfaction. Indeed, the obtained regression equation indicates that when goal attainment was average, those low in this goal pursuit reported slightly higher Week 2 satisfaction than those high in this goal pursuit (4.44 vs. 4.10). Nevertheless, when goal attainment was high, those high in family/friends' goal pursuit reported substantially higher Week 2 satisfaction than those low in parental goal pursuit (4.62 vs. 4.23). Consistent with Study 2, therefore, goal progress translated into a positive change in weekly satisfaction for the Japanese who pursued their goals to make their friends and family happy, whereas it did not bring more satisfaction for the Japanese who did not pursue their goals to this end.

Finally, consistent with our hypothesis, the interaction between goal progress and goal pursuit to meet others' expectations was significantly positive ($B = 0.46$, $\beta = 0.27$, $t = 2.31$, $p = 0.02$). A simple slope analysis revealed that, as can be seen in Fig. 3, 1 *SD* increase in goal attainment corresponded to 0.70 increase in Week 2 satisfaction for the Japanese high in this goal pursuit. On the other hand, 1 *SD* increase in goal attainment corresponded to 0.22 decrease in Week 2 satisfaction for the Japanese low in the goal pursuit for others' expectations. More specifically, when goal attainment was high (1 *SD* above the mean), the Japanese high in this goal pursuit reported much higher satisfaction than those low in this goal pursuit (4.75 vs. 4.25), although when goal attainment was average, the Japanese high in the extrinsic goal pursuit were not as satisfied as those low in the extrinsic goal pursuit (4.08 vs. 4.47). Therefore, goal progress had a more positive benefit for the Japanese who pursue their goals to meet the expectations of others than for those who do not.

General Discussion

In three studies, we examined the role of independent and interdependent goal pursuit on the well-being of Asians and European Americans. Based on recent cross-cultural findings on motivation (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) and self-construals (Heine et al., 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), we predicted that the function of

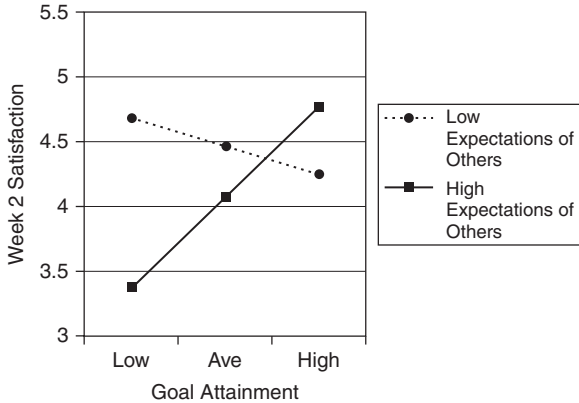


Fig. 3 Adjusted Week 2 satisfaction as a function of goal attainment for Japanese high in goal pursuit to meet expectations of others and low in goal pursuit to meet expectations of others in Study 3.

Note. The estimated regression equation was as follows: $LS2 = 2.34 + 0.436LS1 + 0.244GA - 0.20GPE + 0.46GA * GPE$, where $LS2 =$ Week 2 satisfaction, $LS1 =$ Week 1 satisfaction, $GA =$ standardized goal attainment, and $GPE =$ standardized goal pursuit to meet others' expectations. With the mean Week 1 satisfaction = 4.44 in the equation, simple slopes for high and low in goal pursuit to meet the expectations of others (1 SD above or below mean) are as follows: High: $LS2 = 4.08 + 0.70 GA$; Low: $LS2 = 4.48 - 0.216GA$

independent and interdependent goal pursuit on well-being would differ between Asians and European Americans. Consistent with our predictions, Study 1 showed that independent goal pursuit did not enhance the positive effect of goal attainment on the well-being of Asians while amplifying the benefit of goal attainment on the well-being of European Americans. Furthermore, Study 2 demonstrated that interdependent goal pursuit tended to increase the benefit of goal progress among Asians while diminishing the effect of goal progress among European Americans. Finally, Study 3 showed that goal progress was particularly beneficial for the well-being of the Japanese who pursued their goals to make their friends and family happy and to meet the expectations of others. Altogether, the present findings provide evidence that processes through which Asians and European Americans attain their well-being are different. European Americans appear to gain and maintain their well-being by achieving goals that they pursue for their own enjoyment and fun. On the other hand, Asian Americans seem to attain and maintain their well-being by achieving goals that they pursue to make important others happy and meet the expectations of others.

In American psychology, personal choice independent of others has been the sine qua non of spontaneous behavior (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973) and mental health (Maslow, 1947; Rogers, 1961). To the extent that individuals pursue and achieve self-chosen goals, and to the extent that individuals feel that they are the driving forces of their lives, they feel good (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). This theory perfectly captures American icons such as Michael Jordan and Bill Gates.

As evidenced by the idealization of the self-made billionaire, the founder of the Softbank Masayoshi Son in Japan, self-determination has recently become a popular ideology in Asia as well. Indeed, Study 3 showed that on average, Japanese college students pursued their goals for themselves (6.49) much more frequently than to make family and friends happy (2.86) or to meet the expectations of others (2.85). Also, on average, the degree to which Asian participants in Studies 1 and 2 pursued their goals for intrinsic reasons or to make friends and family happy was very similar to European American counterparts. In other words, Japanese participants in Study 3 as well as Asian participants in Studies 1 and 2 are not as “collectivist” or “interdependent” as cultural theorists (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Triandis, 1995) might assume in terms of goal motives. What is interesting, however, is that despite the similar levels of independent and interdependent goal motives across cultures, the very function of goal motives differed considerably across cultures. That is, although both Japanese and European Americans pursue their goals for themselves, such independent goal pursuit does not generate as positive an outcome for Japanese as for European Americans.

Why does independent goal pursuit not work for Asians? One possibility is that because of the traditional value of conformity and deference to authority figures among Asians (e.g., Bond, 1988; Schwartz, 1994), Asians who subscribe to independent goal pursuit are more prone to psychological conflict than European Americans. This conflict, in turn, results in the lack of positive consequence of independent goal pursuit among Asian Americans. Although this explains the cultural difference in the function of independent goal pursuit, this does not fully explain the positive function of interdependent goal pursuit among Asians. Given the ubiquity of the idealization of independence in American culture (Wolfe, 2000), Asians who hold traditional Confucian values may be prone to psychological conflict between conformity and self-determination as much as Asians who prefer the mainstream American values. Thus, the value conflict hypothesis does not seem to fully account for the positive function of interdependent motivation among Asians. Alternatively, a more viable explanation for the current findings can be offered from the cultural theory of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994). According to this theory, Asians’ self-concepts are so intertwined with expectations and perceptions by important others that expectations from important others could become their own goals among Asians’ interdependent selves. To the extent that their goals overlap with expectations from important others, making their parents and friends happy becomes a key to their own sense of satisfaction. The flip side of this reasoning is that even if Asians achieved the goal they set for themselves, they would not feel satisfied if their parents or friends were not happy about their goals.

Different processes governing the well-being of Asians and European Americans also have an implication for cultural differences in mean levels of SWB. For years, researchers found that people in East Asia were less satisfied with their lives than European and North Americans (e.g., E. Diener, M. Diener, & C. Diener, 1995; Veenhoven, 1993). Whereas the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness for European Americans appears to be to make themselves happy by achieving their self-chosen goals, there seem to be more conditions for Asians. That is, for Asians

to be happy they must not only satisfy themselves but also satisfy their parents and friends. To the extent that meeting one condition is easier than multiple ones, European Americans on the average can feel good about their lives more readily than Asians. Although this possibility must be examined more fully in the future, it seems evident that the processes through which people with different self-construals attain their well-being have an immense implication for the mean level of well-being.

Future Directions

In the past, intrinsic motivation was viewed as fundamental and as innate as biological needs such as thirst and hunger (Maslow, 1947; Rogers, 1961). While evidence for the paramount importance of intrinsic motivation among European Americans continues to accumulate, the current findings suggest that intrinsic motivation may not be as biological or fundamental as once thought. Instead, the present findings suggest that the function of motivation is tailored in an important way by culture. Independent goal pursuit appears to be instilled early in life and positively reinforced by the mainstream American culture, whereas consideration for important others seems to be desirable and sometimes demanded in Asian American communities. As a result, expectations from important others seem to be deeply internalized and become integral parts of the self among Asians, which in turn provide standards for evaluating their own life experiences.

It should be noted, however, that the present explanation from the cultural theory of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) remains incomplete in two respects. First, we did not measure self-concepts of Asians and European Americans. Thus, the above explanation is based on the assumption that the interdependent aspect of the self was salient for Asian Americans, whereas the independent aspect of the self was salient for European Americans in the present studies. Second, it is difficult to pinpoint a crucial factor responsible for cultural differences obtained in the present studies. Is it the salience of “I” versus “We”? Is it the value of conformity versus hedonism? Or is it the familiarity of personal choice and independent decision making? These questions still remain. It is critical, therefore, that future research identify the parsimonious conditions for these cultural differences by examining specific factors, such as accessibility of key concepts (e.g., Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999; Oishi, Wyer, & Colcombe, 2000) and thinking styles (Peng & Nisbett, 1999) in the context of goal progress, motivation, and SWB.

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