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Gender and Sources of Subjective Well-Being

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The literature on national differences in sources of well-being (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997) was used to generate predictions about gender differences in sources of well-being. This linkage was made possible by parallels between national and gender differences in individualism, collectivism, and selfhood (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Respondents completed measures of self-construal, self-esteem, relationship harmony, and well-being (positive and negative affect). As anticipated, men's well-being was predicted better by self-esteem than by relationship harmony, whereas women's well-being was predicted similarly (though more moderately) by self-esteem and relationship harmony. A mediated pathway from independent self-construal to well-being through self-esteem was predicted and supported. Conceptual fit of this study with previous cross-national and gender research is discussed.

KEY WORDS: gender; well-being; self-construal.

What makes for a happy and satisfying life? The cultural norms of individualism and collectivism have important implications for how well-being is defined and evaluated (Diener & Diener, 1995; Suh, 2000). In individualistic cultures, positive self-evaluation is vital for global judgments of well-being; in collective cultures, well-being depends on the social context and on relationships as much as it does on evaluations of self (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997; Suh, 2002; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). Suh (2000) proposed that the self-concept is a primary mechanism through which culture shapes judgments of well-being (see also, Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994). Individualistic cultures promote an independent construal of self, which directs people to attend to inner qualities and attributes when they evaluate well-being, whereas collective cultures promote an interdependent construal of self, which directs people to consider qualities of their groups and relationships when they evaluate well-being.

Research on culture and well-being is based largely on cross-national comparisons. Nations, though, are not homogeneous with regard to individualism and collectivism; individuals and groups within the larger nation-state also differ in the extent to which they are governed by these norms (Triandis, 1995). Thus, the nature and basis of well-being may differ within nations as well. In the present study, this hypothesis was examined in the context of US gender groups. Gender differences in socialization, norms, power, and training promote independence for men but promote interdependence for women (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). Consequently, men should consider positive evaluations of self to be critical for well-being, but women's well-being should depend on qualities of their relationships as well as positive evaluations of self.

Culture, Self, and Well-Being

Subjective well-being refers to a person's evaluation of their life as good or bad (Diener, 1984). Emotional components include the presence of positive outcomes (e.g., positive affect and happiness) coupled with the absence of negative outcomes (e.g., negative affect and loneliness). Cognitive components consist of judgments of satisfaction with life in general or with particular aspects of life, such as work, family, or health. Well-being can be

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derived from a variety of sources, including what have been loosely classified as *internal* and *external* sources (Suh, 2000). Internal sources are perceptions and qualities of the self, such as self-esteem, self-consistency, and internal emotional states. External sources are perceptions and qualities of groups and relationships, such as fulfilling social obligations, upholding cultural norms, and maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships.

The relative importance of internal sources and external sources for well-being depends on individualism and collectivism (Suh, 2000). Comparisons between nations suggest that internal sources are more predictive of well-being when individualism, rather than collectivism, is the defining norm. In a study of 31 nations, Diener and Diener (1995) found that the extent to which self-esteem predicted life satisfaction was, itself, predicted by the nation's level individualism; the more individualistic the nation, the stronger the relationship between self-esteem and well-being. Similar results have been reported for self-consistency (Suh, 2002) and emotional states (Suh et al., 1998), both of which predict well-being better in individualistic nations than in collective nations.

Comparisons *within* nations suggest that internal sources are more important than external sources for well-being in individualistic nations, but that internal sources and external sources are similarly important for well-being in collective nations. Suh et al. (1998, study 2) compared the relevance of emotional states (an internal factor) and the normative desirability of life satisfaction (an external factor) for well-being across 40 nations. In individualistic nations, well-being was predicted by emotions far better than it was predicted by norms; in collective nations, well-being was predicted similarly (though more moderately) by emotions and norms. Kwan et al. (1997) explored the relative contribution of self-esteem (an internal factor) and relationship harmony (an external factor) to well-being in the United States and Hong Kong. As anticipated, the US respondents' life satisfaction was predicted better by self-esteem ($\beta = .65$) than by relationship harmony ($\beta = .23$). For Hong Kong respondents, though, self-esteem ($\beta = .45$) and relationship harmony ($\beta = .44$) were similarly predictive of well-being.

How do individualism and collectivism shape judgments of well-being? Several researchers have suggested that the self-concept is a primary mechanism through which culture exerts its influence (Kwan et al., 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Suh, 2000). Individualism promotes an independent view of self in which the self is seen as bounded and distinct. This self-construal encourages people to attend to and express attributes, abilities, and emotions that are internal to the self and that distinguish the self from others. Given an independent self-construal, it makes sense that how people feel about their lives in general will depend on how they feel about themselves. In contrast, collectivism promotes an interdependent view of self in which the self is seen as permeable and interconnected with others. This self-construal encourages people to attend to, maintain relationships with, and fulfill social obligations to others and groups. Given an interdependent construal of self, then, how people feel about their groups and relationships should be relevant to their overall well-being.

In support of this theory, Kwan et al. (1997) identified pathways from self-construal to well-being that were mediated by self-esteem and relationship harmony. For both the US and Hong Kong respondents, (a) the relationship between independent self-construal and life satisfaction was mediated by self-esteem and (b) the relationship between interdependent self-construal and life satisfaction was mediated by relationship harmony. In other words, both types of self-construal led to greater well-being, but did so through different pathways; greater independence led to well-being by promoting self-esteem, whereas greater interdependence led to well-being by promoting relationship harmony.

Gender and Well-Being

Although individualism prevails over collectivism as the dominant norm of the United States (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995), many groups within the United States differ in the extent to which they can be characterized by these ideologies. Among the groups documented to differ on these dimensions are those based on ethnicity (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002), politics, religion (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995), and geography (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002). Masculine and feminine gender norms also differentially emphasize individualism and collectivism. Agency, the core characteristic of masculinity, is defined as a focus on the self and an orientation that emphasizes separation of self from others, whereas communion, the core characteristic of femininity, is defined as a focus on the other and an orientation that emphasizes

connection of self with others (Bakan, 1966; Helgeson, 1994; Spence, 1984).

Explanations of gender differences in independence and interdependence vary from biological (Bakan, 1966) to social and experiential (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). For example, Chodorow (1978) and Surrey (1993) focused on the child–mother relationship. They believe that, owing to the gender congruity of daughters and mothers, girls develop a fundamental sense of sameness and interconnection. In contrast, a boy's gender incongruity with his mother leads to a fundamental sense of difference and disconnection. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) suggests that these orientations are established through the roles that men and women typically fulfill. Because women are more likely to occupy caretaker roles, such as mother or nurse, they become skilled at attending to the needs of others. Men, in contrast, tend to occupy roles that emphasize independence and self-promotion, and so they develop expertise in these areas. Miller (1986) and Fiske (1993) explained the difference in terms of social power. As subordinate members of society, women must become adept at reading more powerful others. Men have less need to develop these skills owing to their membership in a dominant group.

Given gender differences in independence and interdependence, internal sources and external sources should be differentially important for men's and women's well-being, in much the same way that they differ in importance in individualistic and collective nations. Women, whose interdependent orientation resembles that characteristic of collective cultures, should take both internal sources and external sources into account when they judge well-being. Men, whose independent orientation is characteristic of individualistic nations, should emphasize internal sources over external sources when they judge well-being.

Although none of the cross-national studies reviewed for this article (i.e., Kwan et al., 1997; Suh, 2002; Suh et al., 1998) tested for gender differences, research on gender and well-being provides indirect support for these predictions. Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) found that the basis of men's and women's self-esteem was different and dependent on culturally mandated gender roles; men's self-esteem was more strongly linked with personal achievement, and women's self-esteem was more strongly linked with interpersonal achievement. Whitley (1983, 1988) tested associations among masculinity, femininity, self-esteem, and depression, and he found that self-esteem and masculinity (characterized by agency or independence) were highly correlated constructs, both of which were predictive of depression. Whitley and Gridley (1993) later concluded that masculinity and depression were linked in mediation through self-esteem—masculinity was associated with higher self-esteem, which, in turn, was associated with lower depression—but femininity (characterized by communion or interdependence) was unrelated to either self-esteem or depression.

Research on interpersonal relationships also supports the predictions. Compared to married men, married women are happier and more satisfied with their lives, but they are also at greater risk for depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990; Wood, Rhodes, & Whelan, 1989). Wood et al. (1989) explained these findings by suggesting that women are more sensitive than men are to the emotional highs and lows associated with marriage. Indeed, women's well-being does appear to be affected by the quality of interpersonal relationships to a greater extent than men's well-being does (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Remen and Chambless (2001) found that marital dissatisfaction predicted future depression in women but not in men. Disruptions in the broader social network (e.g., family and friends) also affect women more than men (Kessler & McLeod, 1984). Similar results are found when the spouses' temperament and behavior are considered. Brummett et al. (2000) found that spouse's hostility predicted the wife's depressive symptomotology but not the husband's. This difference is found even at a physical level, as women display more intense and more enduring physiological reactions than do men in response to marital conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

Gender and Selfhood

Men and women are also thought to differ in the way they define the self. Men are more likely to develop a *separated self-schema* (Markus & Oyserman, 1989) or *independent self-construal* (Cross & Madson, 1997), of which the central principle is "separate from others" and the primary components are traits, skills, and attributes that reside within the individual. Women, in contrast, are more likely to develop a *connected self-schema* (Markus & Oyserman, 1989) or *interdependent self-construal* (Cross & Madson, 1997), of which "connected with others" is the central principle and relationships are primary components.

Although by no means identical, differences between men's and women's self-construal roughly parallel those found between individualistic and collective nations, respectively (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). On the basis of these similarities, it was predicted that the cross-national pathways identified by Kwan et al. (1997) would generalize across gender groups within the United States. Specifically, for both men and women, self-esteem was expected to mediate the relationship between independent self-construal and well-being, whereas relationship harmony was expected to mediate the relationship between interdependent self-construal and well-being.

Overview of Research and Predictions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the generality the of the model by Kwan et al. (1997) across US men and women. The first goal was to compare the relative importance of self-esteem and relationship harmony for men's and women's well-being. Kwan and colleagues' finding regarding the greater importance of self-esteem than relationship harmony for well-being in the United States was expected to replicate for men, but not for women, who, like members of collective nations, were expected to consider both sources similarly (though more moderately) when they evaluated their well-being. Four predictions were made.

1. Men's well-being would be predicted better by self-esteem than by relationship harmony.
2. Women's well-being would be predicted similarly by self-esteem and relationship harmony.
3. Self-esteem would predict men's well-being better than women's.
4. Relationship harmony would predict women's well-being better than men's.

The second goal was to assess the role of self-construal in judgments of well-being. For both men and women, the following predictions were derived and tested.

5. Self-esteem would mediate the relationship between independent self-construal and well-being.
6. Relationship harmony would mediate the relationship between interdependent self-construal and well-being.

This study differs from that of Kwan et al. (1997) in two important ways. First, Kwan et al. assessed predictors of life satisfaction, a cognitive component of well-being; in the present study, emotional components of well-being, positive and negative affect, were considered. Second, Kwan et al.'s US sample was 74% White; the institution at which the current research was conducted is predominantly Hispanic (46%) and Black (38%; CUNY Website, 2000). Thus, before testing the predicted gender differences, it was desirable to evaluate the model by Kwan et al. with data from all respondents combined in order to assess how well their results generalize to different measures and to different racial and ethnic groups, also in the United States but with possibly different cultural experiences. By establishing a baseline of comparability with the study by Kwan et al., any gender differences obtained in the present study could be more easily interpreted.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 206 participants were drawn from the subject pool of Lehman College of the City University of New York. Two participants were dropped because they did not indicate their sex, and five were dropped owing to other missing data. The working sample consisted of 108 women and 91 men, of whom 42% were Hispanic/Latina/o ($n = 84$), 40% were Black/African American/West Indian ($n = 79$), 9% were White/European American ($n = 18$), 6% were Asian American ($n = 12$), and 3% were other or unknown ($n = 6$). The mean age of participants was 21.49 years ($SD = 6.62$).

Instruments

Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being was measured with Bradburn's (1969) Affect Balance Scale (ABS). The ABS was initially developed and validated with five large samples that were diverse with respect to age, ethnicity, SES, and sex (Bradburn, 1969). Since then, it has been used in at least 40 nations, which makes it one of the most widely used measures of well-being (e.g., Suh et al., 1998). Respondents estimated the frequency with which they had experienced positive

affect (e.g., excitement) and negative affect (e.g., depression) during the previous 2-week-period (1 = *never* to 4 = *very often*). Three scores were computed for each respondent. A *positive affect score* was computed by averaging the five positive affect items ($\alpha = .60$). A *negative affect score* was computed by averaging the five negative affect items ($\alpha = .67$). For an index of global well-being that combines positive and negative outcomes, an *affect balance score* was computed by subtracting respondents' negative affect score from their positive affect score. Affect balance scores above zero indicate the greater occurrence of positive affect relative to negative affect, whereas affect balance scores below zero indicate the greater occurrence of negative affect relative to positive affect. Though the reliability coefficients obtained in this study are below the conventional .70, they are comparable to those reported elsewhere (see Diener, 1984; Watson, 1988).

Self-Esteem

Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to assess global self-worth and self-regard ($\alpha = .86$, this study). Respondents indicated their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) with five positively worded items, e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities," and five negatively worded items, e.g., "I certainly feel useless at times." Responses were coded and averaged so that high scores correspond to high self-esteem.

Relationship Harmony

Relationship harmony refers to the "balance achieved in relationships" rather than "the satisfaction of its constituent individuals or support derived by an individual from that relationship" (Kwan et al., 1997, p. 1039). Kwan and colleagues argued that this construct is truly interpersonal, as it focuses on a quality of the relationship itself, rather than on personal (and thus internal) evaluations of the relationship. This construct was assessed with a task based on the Interpersonal Relationship Harmony Inventory (Kwan et al., 1997). Participants listed their five most important relationships and then indicated the extent to which each relationship was harmonious and lacking in conflict (0 = *not at all harmonious* to 3 = *completely harmonious*). For each respondent, the five relationship harmony scores were averaged for an overall index of social network harmony; higher scores indicate more harmonious relationships.

Self-Construal

Singelis' (1994) Self-construal Scale was designed for cross-cultural comparisons of self-construal. The measure was initially developed with ethnically diverse samples (Singelis, 1994), and it is regularly used to study differences in self-definition among nations and among ethnic groups within the United States (see Oyserman et al., 2002). Items collapse into orthogonal subscales of independent self-construal (12 items) and interdependent self-construal (12 items). Independent self-construal subscale items included statements such as "My personal identity independent of others is very important to me." Interdependent self-construal subscale items included statements such as "It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group." Agreement with statements was indicated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The reliability coefficients for the independent self-construal scale ($\alpha = .69$) and the interdependent self-construal scale ($\alpha = .74$) obtained in the present study are similar to the reliability coefficients of .70 and .74, respectively, reported in the original study by Singelis (1994).

Procedure

Participants completed questionnaires in groups of 5–25. Respondents were told that the instruments were designed to measure attitudes related to their self-concept and their satisfaction with life and that all responses were confidential. After they completed the study, participants received an explanation of the research and were invited to ask questions. Respondents received credit toward their introductory psychology course in exchange for their participation.

RESULTS

Correlations

Table I displays the correlations among research variables for the overall sample (top panel), the men's sample (middle panel), and the women's sample (bottom panel). As expected, independent

Table I. Correlations Among Research Variables for the Overall Sample, for Men, and for Women

Variable	AB	PA	NA	SE	RH	IND	INT
Overall sample ($n = 199$)							
Affect balance (AB)	—	.78***	−.83***	.62***	.31***	.33***	.06
Positive affect (PA)		—	−.29***	.45***	.28***	.26***	.07
Negative affect (NA)			—	−.54***	−.21**	−.27***	−.04
Self-esteem (SE)				—	.26***	.34***	−.16*
Relationship harmony (RH)					—	.10	.11
Independent self (IND)						—	.12
Interdependent self (INT)							—
Men ($n = 91$)							
Affect balance (AB)	—	.79***	−.83***	.70***	.08	.41***	.01
Positive affect (PA)		—	−.30**	.56***	.07	.35**	.01
Negative affect (NA)			—	−.57***	−.06	−.31**	−.01
Self-esteem (SE)				—	.22*	.40***	−.14
Relationship harmony (RH)					—	.16	.19
Independent self (IND)						—	.11
Interdependent self (INT)							—
Women ($n = 108$)							
Affect balance (AB)	—	.77***	−.83***	.56***	.50***	.25*	.10
Positive affect (PA)		—	−.28**	.36***	.47***	.16	.10
Negative affect (NA)			—	−.52***	−.34***	−.23**	−.06
Self-esteem (SE)				—	.29**	.27**	−.20*
Relationship harmony (RH)					—	.02	.00
Independent self (IND)						—	.12
Interdependent self (INT)							—

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

self-construal predicted self-esteem for the overall sample, $r(197) = .34$, for men, $r(89) = .40$, and for women, $r(106) = .27$, all $p < .01$. Contrary to expectations, interdependent self-construal did not predict relationship harmony for the overall sample, $r(197) = .11$, for men, $r(89) = .19$, or for women, $r(106) = .002$, all $p > .05$.

Bivariate relationships between self-esteem, relationship harmony, and well-being were consistent with expectations. For the overall sample, both self-esteem, $r(197) = .62$, and relationship harmony, $r(197) = .31$, were positively related to affect balance, both $p < .001$. These correlations are quite similar to those of Kwan et al. (1997), who reported correlations of .54 for self-esteem and life satisfaction and .27 for relationship harmony and life satisfaction for their US sample.

As anticipated by predictions 1–4, though, correlates of well-being differed for men and women. Men's well-being was predicted by self-esteem but not by relationship harmony. Men's self-esteem predicted their affect balance, $r(89) = .70$, positive affect, $r(89) = .56$, and negative affect, $r(89) = -.57$, all $p < .001$, but men's relationship harmony did not predict their affect balance, $r(89) = .08$, positive affect, $r(89) = .07$, or negative affect, $r(89) = -.06$, all $p > .05$.[2] In contrast, women's well-being was predicted by self-esteem and by relationship harmony. Women's self-esteem predicted their affect balance, $r(106) = .56$, positive affect, $r(106) = .36$, and negative affect, $r(106) = -.52$, all $p < .001$, and women's relationship harmony predicted their affect balance, $r(106) = .50$, positive affect, $r(106) = .47$, and negative affect, $r(106) = -.34$, all $p < .001$.

Overview of Model Testing

Three models were evaluated with AMOS 4.01 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). Model 1 replicated the self-construal model of Kwan et al. (1997) with a different sample and with affect balance as the index of well-being. In Model 2, Model 1 was examined separately for men and women, and the predicted gender differences in sources of well-being were tested.

[2]The possibility that these correlations failed to reach significance because of attenuation must be considered given the less than ideal reliabilities of the well-being scales. The correlations were corrected for attenuation and then reevaluated for significance. In all cases, the correlations remained nonsignificant. Thus, the conclusion that relationship harmony does not predict well-being for men an artifact of low reliability.

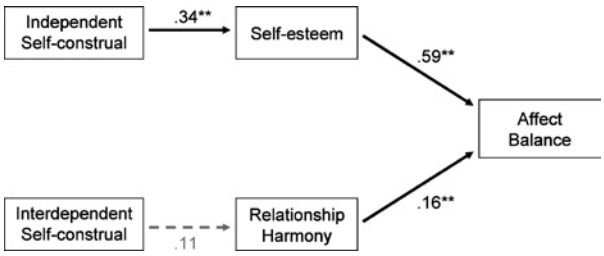

Fig. 1. Diagram for Model 1, in which the outcome variable is affect balance and path coefficients were estimated with data from the overall sample. Standardized path coefficients are shown: Solid black arrows represent significant paths ($^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$); dashed-gray arrows represent nonsignificant paths. Measurement errors are omitted for the sake of clarity.

In Model 3, Model 2 was altered by decomposing affect balance into positive affect and negative affect to allow for the possibility of different paths to these outcomes. For all models, the significance of individual regression weights was tested with bootstrap percentile confidence intervals (1,000 samples, 95% CI; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The relative strength of regression weights was assessed with the critical ratio of difference (CR), for which values greater than +1.96 or less than −1.96 indicate that the two regression weights differ significantly in magnitude (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996).

Model 1: Self-Construal and Affect Balance (Overall Sample)

The purpose of the first model was to replicate Kwan et al. (1997) and to establish a baseline of comparability between the current study and theirs. In this model, well-being was defined as affect balance and relationships between variables were estimated with data from all respondents combined. Independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal were exogenous (explanatory) variables, self-esteem and relationship harmony were mediator variables, and affect balance was the endogenous (outcome) variable. Two pathways were specified: One from independent self-construal, through self-esteem, to well-being and one from interdependent self-construal, through relationship harmony, to well-being (see Fig. 1). This model explained a significant amount of the variance in affect balance, $R^2 = .38$, $p = .002$. As anticipated, independent self-construal predicted self-esteem, $\beta = .34$, $p = .002$, which predicted affect balance, $\beta = .59$, $p = .002$. Relationship harmony also predicted affect balance, $\beta = .16$, $p = .005$, but, contrary to expectations, was not predicted by interdependent self-construal, $\beta = .11$, $p > .05$.

First, the contributions of self-esteem and relationship harmony to well-being were compared. As anticipated, affect balance was predicted better by self-esteem ($.48 < \beta < .69$) than by relationship harmony ($.04 < \beta < .28$), CR = 2.13, $p < .05$. This replicates the results of Kwan et al. (1997, part 1), who found significant (and significantly different) standardized regression coefficients of .65 for the path from self-esteem to life satisfaction and .23 for the path from relationship harmony to life satisfaction in their US sample.

Next, direct paths from self-construal to well-being were added to the model. For independent self-construal, this tests whether the variable's relationship with well-being is mediated by self-esteem. The fact that the direct path from independent self-construal to affect balance was not significant, $\beta = .11$, $p > .05$, supports the conclusion by Kwan et al. (1997, part 2) that self-esteem mediates the relationship between independent self-construal and well-being. Adding a direct path from interdependent self-construal to well-being does not test mediation, as prerequisite conditions of mediation are absent (see Shrout & Bolger, 2002). That the direct path from interdependent self-construal to affect balance was significant, $\beta = .13$, $p = .04$, means that interdependence was associated with greater well-being but, contrary to Kwan et al. (1997, part 2), not through its impact on relationship harmony.

Model 2: Self-Construal and Affect Balance (by Sex of Participant)

The purpose of the second model was to test the moderating effect of sex of participant on the relationships identified in Model 1. Multiple group procedures were used to estimate the relationships between variables separately for men and women. Overall, the model explained a significant amount of variance in affect balance for the men, $R^2 = .51$, and for the women, $R^2 = .38$, both $p < .005$. Figure 2 displays the standardized regression weights obtained for men (top model) and women (bottom model).

Gender Differences

The relative contribution of self-esteem and relationship harmony to well-being was compared

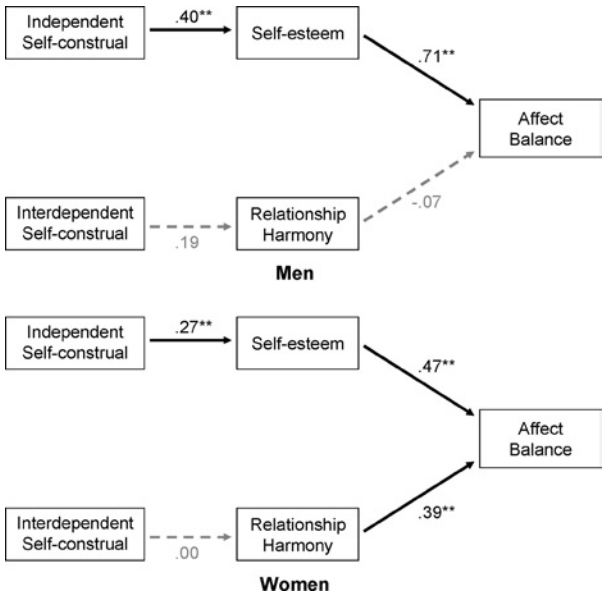

Fig. 2. Diagrams for Model 2, in which the outcome variable is affect balance and path coefficients were estimated freely and separately for men (top diagram) and for women (bottom diagram). Standardized path coefficients are shown: Solid-black arrows represent significant paths ($^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$); dashed-gray arrows represent nonsignificant paths. Measurement error terms are omitted for the sake of clarity.

within and *between* the sample of men and the sample of women. Consistent with prediction 1, men's affect balance was predicted by self-esteem, $\beta = .71$, $p = .002$, but not by relationship harmony, $\beta = -.07$, $p > .05$. Consistent with prediction 2, women's affect balance was predicted similarly (though more moderately) by self-esteem, $\beta = .47$, and by relationship harmony, $\beta = .39$, both $p < .003$. Consistent with prediction 3, self-esteem was a better predictor of affect balance for men ($.60 < \beta < .79$) than it was for women ($.30 < \beta < .62$), CR = 2.71, $p < .05$. Consistent with prediction 4, relationship harmony was a better predictor of affect balance for women ($.24 < \beta < .54$) than it was for men ($-.23 < \beta < .09$), CR = -4.40, $p < .01$.

Mediation

Direct paths from self-construal to affect balance were added to the men's model. The path from independent self-construal to affect balance was not significant, $\beta = .14$, $p > .05$. This supports the conclusion that self-esteem mediates the relationship between independent self-construal and well-being for men. The direct path from interdependent self-construal to affect balance was also not significant, $\beta = .10$, $p > .05$. Thus, interdependence was not associated with affect balance for men in the multivariate model.

Next, direct paths from self-construal to affect balance were added to the women's model. The path from independent self-construal to affect balance was not significant, $\beta = .09$, $p > .05$. This supports the conclusion that self-esteem mediates the relationship between independent self-construal and well-being for women. The path from interdependent self-construal to affect balance was also not significant, $\beta = .19$, $p > .05$. Thus, interdependence was not associated with affect balance for women in the multivariate model.

Model 3: Self-Construal and Positive and Negative Affect

The purpose of the third model was to explore variation in the sources of men's and women's positive and negative well-being. To obtain Model 3, Model 2 was modified by splitting the affect balance outcome into its positive affect and negative affect components. Figure 3 displays the standardized regression weights obtained for the men's sample (top model) and the women's sample (bottom model). This model explained a significant amount of variance in men's positive affect, $R^2 = .32$, and negative affect, $R^2 = .34$, and in women's positive affect, $R^2 = .23$, and negative affect, $R^2 = .27$, all $p < .005$. As the regression weights for the paths from independent self-construal to self-esteem and from interdependent self-construal to relationship harmony obtained in Model 3 are identical to those obtained in Model 2, they are omitted from the figure to facilitate interpretation.

Gender Differences

As anticipated, sources of positive and negative well-being differed for men and women. Consistent with prediction 1, men with higher self-esteem reported more positive affect, $\beta = .56$, and less negative affect, $\beta = -.58$, than men with low self-esteem, both $p = .002$, but relationship harmony was unrelated to men's positive affect, $\beta = -.05$, and negative affect, $\beta = .06$, both $p > .05$. Consistent with prediction 2, self-esteem predicted women's positive affect,

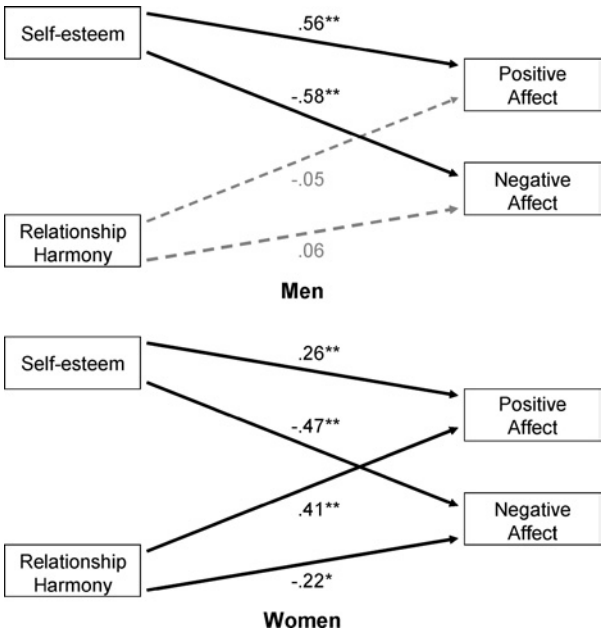

Fig. 3. Diagrams for Model 3, in which the outcome variables are positive affect and negative affect and path coefficients were estimated freely and separately for men (top diagram) and for women (bottom diagram). Standardized path coefficients are shown: Solid-black arrows represent significant paths ($^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$); dashed-gray arrows represent nonsignificant paths. Coefficients for the path from independent self-construal to self-esteem and the path from interdependent self-construal to relationship harmony are identical to those obtained in Model 2. These paths and measurement error terms are omitted for the sake of clarity.

$\beta = .26$, and negative affect, $\beta = -.47$, both $p < .005$, and relationship harmony predicted women's positive affect, $\beta = .41$, and negative affect, $\beta = -.22$, both $p < .05$.

Relationships were also compared between samples. The prediction that self-esteem would predict men's well-being better than women's (prediction 3) was partially supported. Self-esteem predicted men's positive affect ($.44 < \beta < .68$) better than women's ($.09 < \beta < .41$), CR = 2.77, $p < .05$, but did not predict men's negative affect ($-.71 < \beta - .43$) better than women's ($-.61 < \beta < -.30$), CR = −1.13, $p > .05$. The prediction that relationship harmony would predict women's well-being better than men's (prediction 4) was fully supported. Relationship harmony predicted women's positive affect ($.26 < \beta < .56$) better than men's ($-.22 < \beta < .12$), CR = −3.88, $p < .05$, and it predicted women's negative affect ($-.40 < \beta < -.05$) better than men's ($-.13 < \beta < .24$), CR = 2.42, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

For the overall sample, self-esteem was a better predictor of well-being than was relationship harmony. This finding is consistent with previous research on sources of well-being in North America. In general, these data support the growing body of evidence that factors internal to self are more relevant to US well-being than are factors external to self (e.g., Suh, 2000; Suh et al., 1998).

In particular, these results replicate the findings of Kwan et al. (1997) with regard to the greater contribution of self-esteem than of relationship harmony to well-being in the United States. This is noteworthy given two critical discrepancies between the present study and that of Kwan and colleagues. First, well-being was operationalized differently in the two studies. Kwan and colleagues measured the cognitive component of well-being (i.e., life satisfaction), whereas the emotional component of well-being (i.e., affect balance) was measured in the current study. Although life satisfaction and affect balance can be, and often are, treated as complimentary aspects of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984), they are separable constructs with potentially different origins and consequences (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996). Indeed, Wood et al. (1989) found somewhat different results for life satisfaction and affect balance when they assessed the impact of marriage on men's and women's well-being.

Further, the racial/ethnic composition of participants in the two studies differed considerably. Kwan and colleagues' US sample was primarily European American, whereas the sample in the present study was primarily African American/West Indian and Hispanic. That similar results were obtained in the two studies is somewhat surprising in light of conclusion by Oyserman et al. (2002) that US ethnic groups differ in individualism and collectivism; African Americans scored significantly higher in individualism than did European Americans, whereas Hispanics scored significantly higher in collectivism than did European Americans. It may be the case that ethnic group differences in the current study canceled each other out to converge on a common solution, in the same way that gender differences may have canceled each other out in the Kwan et al. (1997) study. Contrary to this conclusion, though, correlations obtained in the present study were rather similar for Hispanics and Blacks; self-esteem predicted affect balance for Hispanics, $r(82) = .65$,

and Blacks, $r(77) = .51$, as did relationship harmony, $r(82) = .27$ and $r(77) = .35$, respectively, all $p < .05$.

Sources of Men's and Women's Well-being

In this study, broad conclusions about the greater importance of self-esteem than relationship harmony to well-being in the United States must be qualified by what is in effect an interaction by sex of respondent. The greater importance of self-esteem over relationship harmony was obtained (in fact, magnified) for men across both positive well-being and negative well-being outcomes. Men with higher self-esteem experienced more positive affect and less negative affect than did men with lower self-esteem. In contrast, the harmony of men's important interpersonal relationships was not only less predictive than self-esteem of their well-being, but also statistically unrelated to their experience of positive and negative affect outcomes.

For women, a rather different picture emerged; relationship harmony and self-esteem were similarly predictive of women's well-being. Like men, women with higher self-esteem reported more positive affect and less negative affect than did women with lower self-esteem. Unlike men, women with harmonious relationships also reported more positive affect and less negative affect than did women with disharmonious relationships. Thus, the results for US women in the current study were similar to the results typically obtained in collective nations (e.g., Kwan et al., 1997; Suh, 2002; Suh et al., 1998).

These findings are consistent with theories about the different socialization, norms, power, and training experienced by US men and women (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). Men receive double pressure toward an independent orientation; both national norms and gender-specific norms direct them to look inward when they evaluate how well they are doing. Consequently, self-evaluation is especially relevant to men's well-being. Women, in contrast, receive dual signals; national norms direct them to look inward when they evaluate how well they are doing, but gender-specific norms direct them to look outward when they evaluate how well they are doing. Consequently, both self-evaluation and interpersonal-evaluation are relevant to women's well-being.

Self-Esteem and Relationship Harmony: Independent or Linked Constructs?

Models in which self-esteem and relationship harmony were additive predictors of well-being were explored. On the basis of similar models, Kwan et al. (1997) concluded that the two variables are independent constructs, in other words, that "the self-esteem measure is not tapping into a sense of worth derived from one's interpersonal accomplishments" (p. 1042). Although it is tempting to draw similar conclusions here, caution is advised owing to the significant correlation between self-esteem and relationship harmony obtained in the present study, $r(197) = .26$, $p < .01$, and alternative conclusions about the relationship of these variables must be explored.

One alternative is indicated by Josephs et al. (1992), who concluded that men's and women's self-esteem is based on different sources; men's self-esteem is linked to personal achievement, and women's self-esteem is linked to interpersonal achievement. This suggests that self-esteem and relationship harmony may be independent for men, but that they should be linked for women, whose self-esteem would be based, at least in part, on the harmony of their relationships. Contrary to this prediction, though, the correlation between self-esteem and relationship harmony obtained in the current study was significant for men, $r(89) = .22$, as well as for women, $r(106) = .29$, both $p < .05$ (see Table I).

Another implication of the research by Josephs et al. (1992; see also Culp & Beach, 1998) is that relationship harmony and women's well-being may be mediated through self-esteem; that is, relationship harmony may affect women's well-being indirectly through self-esteem rather than directly, as modeled in the present study. If this were true, the association between relationship harmony and women's well-being should disappear once self-esteem is taken into account. However, this did not occur; relationship harmony remained a significant predictor of women's positive and negative affect after self-esteem was controlled for (see bottom of Figs. 2 and 3).

A second alternative is suggested by the buffer hypothesis, the essence of which is that high self-esteem makes people resilient to life stressors. Though this hypothesis has received only mixed support (Baumeister, Campbell, Kreuger, & Vohs, 2003), Longmore and Demaris (1997) found that self-esteem buffered people against self-underbenefiting inequity in intimate relationships. To apply the

buffer hypothesis to the current study, self-esteem should buffer people against relationship disharmony. Thus, the correlation between relationship harmony and negative affect should be greater for respondents low in self-esteem than for respondents high in self-esteem. Contrary to the buffer hypotheses, though, the strength of this association was similar for high self-esteem women, $r(53) = -.32$, and low self-esteem women, $r(51) = -.36$, and for high self-esteem men, $r(44) = -.03$, and low self-esteem men, $r(43) = .04$.

One difference between the present study and those described above is the nature of the interpersonal constructs. Interpersonal achievement (Josephs et al., 1992) and self-underbenefiting inequity (Longmore & Demaris, 1997) are relatively individualistic constructs that reflect personal success and skill on the one hand and personal disadvantage on the other. The present study's construct, relationship harmony, is more collective, as it focuses on a quality of the interpersonal network itself, rather than on personal abilities and consequences (Kwan et al., 1997). Thus, conclusions drawn in the present study and in those of Josephs et al. (1992) and Longmore and Demaris (1997) may compliment rather than contradict each other. Interpersonal skills and personal benefits derived from relationships may feed directly into women's and, to a lesser extent, men's self-esteem, which, in turn, has implications for more global measures of well-being. At the same time, a separate, possibly parallel, pathway to well-being may originate from communally focused evaluations, such as relationship harmony, that take the social network as the primary unit of analysis.

Positive and Negative Well-Being

Although intuition suggests that positive and negative affect are opposite ends of a single dimension, there is reason to believe that they represent distinct constructs (Diener, Larson, Levine, & Emmons, 1985). This may be especially relevant for research on gender. Compared to men, women experience both more intense negative emotions and more intense positive emotions (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991). Further, women are more likely than men to experience and express negative moods (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999) and suffer from internalizing disorders such as depression and anxiety (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987), but women are also more likely than men to express and (often) experience more positive moods and emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999).

The results of the current study suggest that the sources of men's and women's positive and negative well-being differ as well. For men, results were consistent across outcomes; self-esteem predicted men's positive affect ($\beta = .56$) and negative affect ($\beta = -.58$) to roughly the same extent, and the association between men's relationship harmony and well-being was close to zero for both positive affect ($\beta = -.05$) and negative affect ($\beta = .06$). For women, greater variation was observed, which suggests that relationship harmony may be more relevant to women's positive affect ($\beta = .41$) than to their negative affect ($\beta = -.21$), whereas self-esteem may be more relevant to women's negative affect ($\beta = -.47$) than to their positive affect ($\beta = .26$). In the future, researchers could explore the reliability of these patterns and identify the underling mechanisms.

Self-Construal

For women and men, independent self-construal was associated with higher self-esteem. Further, this relationship formed the foundation of a mediated pathway that ends in well-being; greater independence of self was associated with higher self-esteem, which was associated with more positive and less negative affect. This replicates the results of Kwan et al. (1997), and is consistent with Whitley and Gridley's (1993) conclusion that self-esteem mediates the relationship between masculinity and depression. In general, it supports the perspective that how we define ourselves has implications for the basis of our emotional experiences (Cross & Madson, 1997).

For women and men, interdependence of self was unrelated to relationship harmony and to well-being. Thus, the expected pathway from interdependent self-construal to well-being through relationship harmony was not obtained. It is surprising that having an interdependent self-construal was negatively associated with self-esteem; the correlation reached significance for the overall sample and for women and was in the same direction (but not significant) for men (see Table I). To some, this might suggest that interdependence is detrimental to the self (see Helgeson, 1994), but this conclusion is not supported once other factors are taken into account. For one, though Kwan et al. (1997) also found a negative correlation between interdependent self-construal and self-esteem in the United States, $r(181) = -.26$,

$p < .01$, interdependence and self-esteem were unrelated in Hong Kong, $r(192) = .06$, *ns*. Thus, interdependence per se may not be detrimental to self-worth, but may become so in a cultural context that values individualism.

Limitations of Research

The models explored in the present study and in Kwan et al. (1997) flow from self-construal through self-esteem and relationship harmony to well-being outcomes. However, conclusions about the causal sequence of relationships are limited by the correlational nature of the design, and alternative orders are likely. For example, a general sense of well-being, based either on affect or life satisfaction, may promote self-esteem and harmonious interpersonal relationships. In addition, boosts to self-esteem (as a result, for example, of personal achievement) may make independent aspects of self more salient. Experimental research is needed to test the causal order and connections among these relationships.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Well-being outcomes have received relatively little attention compared to mental distress outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Just as understanding the factors that lead to depression and anxiety can help reduce the occurrence of mental distress, understanding the factors that lead to happiness and satisfaction can help promote mental wellness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The research reported here suggests that men and women base judgments of well-being on different sources. Satisfaction with self is especially critical to men's well-being, but it is only half of the story for women; the other half is involvement in balanced and mutually satisfying relationships. Only by understanding the constellation of factors that contribute to the well-being of different groups (gender groups, ethnic groups, age groups, etc.) can we hope to be successful in promoting wellness for all.

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