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Relating Self-Concept Consistency to Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Eight Cultures

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Abstract

Western theories suggest that self-concept consistency is important for well-being, but cultural psychologists have proposed that this relationship may be weaker in collectivistic or dialectical cultures. Hypotheses regarding the ability of self-concept (cross-role) consistency and short-term stability to predict hedonic and eudaimonic well-being across cultures were tested. College students in the United States, Australia, Mexico, Venezuela, Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Japan rated their traits in various roles at test and retest and completed measures of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. In all cultures, cross-role consistency and short-term stability were inversely associated with negative affect, an aspect of hedonic well-being, and positively associated with Big Five Emotional Stability. In contrast, cross-role consistency and short-term stability were related to eudaimonic well-being more reliably in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures, although the results in China only partially conformed to this pattern. We concluded that cross-role variability and short-term instability of self-concepts have a significant temperamental or affective basis and this temperamental basis is a cultural universal. In addition, cultural psychology predictions of a weaker relationship between self-concept consistency and well-being in collectivistic cultures, as compared to individualistic cultures, was largely supported for eudaimonic well-being.

*Keywords*: culture, cross-role consistency, short-term stability, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, individualism-collectivism, dialecticism
Self-concept consistency has been defined in a variety of ways and different consistency constructs may relate differently to well-being (Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003). In the present study, we define self-concept consistency as the consistency of individuals’ trait ratings across different roles, and refer to this construct as cross-role consistency (see also Boucher, 2011; Church, Anderson-Harumi et al., 2008). Others have labeled this construct identity consistency (Suh, 2002), self-concept unity (Campbell et al., 2003), or, inversely, self-concept differentiation (Roberts & Donahue, 1994), cross-role variation (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997), or intraindividual personality variability (Baird, Le, & Lucas, 2006). In addition, following Church, Alvarez et al. (2012) and English and Chen (2007), we define stability of self-concepts in terms of absolute differences in trait ratings in various roles across time.

According to theory (e.g., Jahoda, 1958; Jourard, 1965) and empirical findings (Campbell et al., 2003; Church, Anderson-Harumi et al., 2008; Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Sheldon et al., 1997), a consistent and stable self-concept is important for adjustment or well-being, at least in Western or individualistic cultures. However, cultural psychologists have hypothesized that the relationship between consistency and well-being may be weaker or nonexistent in collectivistic cultures, where self-concept flexibility and adaptability to situational contexts are valued (Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Suh, 2002). Indeed, Suh (2002), in a comparison of cross-role consistency in Americans and Koreans, found support for this hypothesis, and attributed the cultural differences to differences in self-construals.

Alternatively, English and Chen (2007) and Boucher (2011) attributed the hypothesized weaker relationship between cross-role consistency and well-being in East Asian cultures to dialecticism, a system of thought rooted in Eastern philosophical traditions and characterized by acceptance of contradiction, expectations of complexity and change, and holistic thinking (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Because of their dialecticism, East Asians are thought to be more able and
willing than Westerners to store inconsistent information about the self and to view these contrasting elements as complimentary aspects of the whole (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). In support of this perspective, English and Chen (2011) found that cross-role variability in trait ratings was associated with lower perceived authenticity and relationship quality in European Americans but not in Asian Americans. Similarly, in a sample of American and Chinese students, Boucher (2011) found that cross-role consistency was positively associated with life satisfaction, self-concept clarity, and felt authenticity and that the relationships were stronger for participants who were low in dialecticism.

In terms of the number of cultures investigated, Church, Anderson-Harumi et al. (2008) conducted the most comprehensive study relating cross-role consistency and adjustment. They found that indices of cross-role variability predicted one or more adjustment variables in all six cultures studied (the United States, Australia, Mexico, Philippines, Malaysia, and Japan), although variability indices were generally more strongly and reliably related to adjustment in the American sample than in the presumed collectivistic cultures (Mexico, Philippines, Malaysia, and Japan), especially Japan. In the present study, we wished to extend Church, Anderson-Harumi et al.’s findings in several ways.

First, we investigated the relationship between cross-role consistency and well-being in new samples in eight diverse cultures, including the United States, Australia, Mexico, Venezuela, Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Japan. In particular, inclusion of a Chinese sample was viewed as important in order to determine whether our previous findings in Japan would replicate in another East Asian and presumably dialectical culture.

Second, we examined the relationship between well-being and both cross-role consistency and short-term stability over time. As noted by English and Chen (2007), previous studies have focused on the consistency of trait ratings across different contexts but not the
temporal stability of trait self-perceptions within contexts. English and Chen hypothesized that Westerners define the self in relatively stable, global terms, leading to consistency across both contexts and time. In contrast, they argued that East Asians define the self in stable, if-then terms, leading to reduced consistency across contexts, but levels of temporal stability within contexts that are comparable to those in Western cultures. From this perspective, it is important to relate well-being to both consistency across roles and stability within roles over time.

Third, we extended previous studies by relating cross-role consistency and short-term stability to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. A limitation of previous studies has been the emphasis on hedonic forms of well-being such as positive and negative affect, rather than self-actualization and meaning in life, which some researchers refer to as eudaimonic well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Ryff and colleagues have made a similar distinction between subjective well-being and psychological well-being (PWB) and proposed six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). Recent research in Western psychology suggests that hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are correlated, but distinct (King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2001) and that some variables relate differently to measures of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Keyes et al., 2002). However, most cross-cultural research studies have addressed subjective or hedonic well-being (Diener & Suh, 2003) and there is little cross-cultural research on the determinants of eudaimonic well-being.

Finally, as La Guardia and Ryan (2007) have observed, most researchers have not disentangled the impact of within-individual variability and trait levels on well-being. Indeed, when La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, and Deci (2000) regressed well-being onto mean attachment levels and attachment variability, the latter generally did not emerge as significantly
related to well-being. Making a similar point, Baird et al. (2006) have recommended that mean trait levels be partialled out of cross-role consistency indices. However, there is a disadvantage of this approach. If trait levels and trait consistency are substantively related, then partialling out mean trait levels a priori might eliminate valid predictive variance in the consistency variable. Instead, we adopted the approach used by La Guardia et al. by examining the incremental validity of cross-role consistency and short-term stability in predicting well-being beyond the Big Five traits.

In summary, although Western theories have proposed that a consistent self-concept is important for well-being, only a few studies have tested this relationship across cultures. We sought to improve on these studies by (a) sampling a greater variety of cultures, (b) relating both cross-role consistency and short-term stability to well-being, (c) incorporating measures of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, and (d) examining the incremental validity of cross-role consistency and short-term stability in predicting well-being beyond the Big Five traits.

Overview of the Present Study

The data analyzed for this study were collected as part of a larger study (Church et al., 2012, 2013) in which we (a) compared the extent of cross-role consistency and short-term stability in these cultures, and (b) examined cultural differences in mean levels of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in a cross-cultural test of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Neither of these previous articles related cross-role consistency and short-term stability to well-being, which is our focus here. In the present study, we examined whether the individual differences in cross-role variability and short-term stability observed by Church et al. (2012) are related to hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

In Hypothesis 1, we predicted that cross-role variability and short-term instability will be negatively associated with both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in all cultures. In Hypothesis
2, drawing on cultural psychology perspectives, we predicted that both cross-role variability and short-term instability will be more negatively related to well-being in individualistic cultures, as compared to collectivistic cultures, and in non-dialectical cultures, as compared to dialectical cultures. Finally, we examined (a) the relationship of cross-role variability and short-term instability to the Big Five traits, and (b) the ability of cross-role variability and short-term instability to provide incremental prediction of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being beyond the Big Five traits.

Consistent with the traditional view of the countries included in this study, we treated the United States and Australia as individualistic and Mexico, Venezuela, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Japan as relatively collectivistic (Church, 1987; Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Hofstede, 2001). For example, Hofstede ranked 53 countries and regions on individualism based on a cross-national study of values. The U.S. ranked 1st; Australia, 2nd; Japan, 22nd; the Philippines, 31st; Mexico, 32nd; Malaysia, 36th; and Venezuela, 50th. China was not included but other Chinese countries (Taiwan, 43rd; Singapore, 40th) were ranked as relatively collectivistic. Dialecticism has been linked primarily to Asian countries, particularly those in East Asia (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Indeed, Church et al. (2012) examined cultural mean differences on these dimensions in the present samples and found that the four Asian cultures averaged higher than the four non-Asian cultures on a self-report measure of dialecticism, with the Chinese and Japanese averaging higher than the Filipinos and Malaysians. Scores on measures of independent and collective self-construals were partially supportive of expectations. The American and Australian samples were relatively individualistic and the Filipino, Malaysian, and Chinese samples relatively collectivistic, while the results for the Mexican, Venezuelan, and Japanese samples were less consistent with the view of these cultures as collectivistic. However, scores on self-report measures of individualism-collectivism frequently depart from expectations.
(Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002), probably due, in part, to participants’ use of different reference groups when rating themselves on Likert scales (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002).

Method

Participants

United States. The U.S. sample included 153 college students (58 men, 95 women) from the University of Idaho. Mean age was 19.95 years ($SD = 2.91$). Self-reported ethnic backgrounds were as follows: White/Caucasian ($n = 131$), Latino ($n = 6$), Asian ($n = 3$), African American ($n = 2$), Native American ($n = 1$), Native Hawaiian ($n = 1$), multiracial ($n = 3$), and other or not reporting ($n = 6$). The retest assessment (see Procedure section) was completed by 131 (85.6%) of these participants.

Australia. The Australian sample included 122 college students (20 men, 102 women) from Murdoch University in Perth. Mean age was 26.09 ($SD = 9.41$). Participants reported the following ethnic backgrounds: Anglo-Celtic or European ($n = 92$), Asian ($n = 8$), multiracial ($n = 6$), African ($n = 5$), Middle Eastern ($n = 1$), and other or not reporting ($n = 10$). The retest was completed by 105 (86.1%) of these participants.

Mexico. The Mexican sample included 158 Mexican college students (74 men, 84 women) from the National Autonomous University of Mexico at Iztacala. Mean age was 20.03 years ($SD = 2.46$). Participants reported the following ethnic backgrounds: Mestizo ($n = 145$), Central American ($n = 6$), Spanish ($n = 2$), South American ($n = 2$), and not reporting ($n = 3$). The retest was completed by 150 (94.9%) of these participants.

Venezuela. The Venezuelan sample included 102 college students (45 men, 53 women, 4 not reporting) from the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas ($n = 57$), the University Institute of Management Technology in Los Teques ($n = 24$), and the National University of
Experimental Polytechnics of the Armed Forces in Los Teques ($n = 21$). Mean age was 24.34 ($SD = 6.41$). Self-reported ethnicities were as follows: Criole ($n = 72$), European ($n = 18$), Indigenous ($n = 1$), African ($n = 1$), and other or not reporting ($n = 10$). Retest data was not collected in the Venezuelan sample.

**Philippines.** The Philippine sample included 167 college students (76 men, 91 women) from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. Mean age was 18.15 ($SD = 1.37$). Self-reported ethnic backgrounds were Filipino ($n = 136$), multiracial ($n = 2$), and not reporting ($n = 29$). The retest was completed by 162 (95.9%) of these participants.

**Malaysia.** The Malaysian sample included 268 college students (107 men, 159 women, 2 not reporting) from the National University of Malaysia in Bangi. Mean age was 20.31 years ($SD = 1.61$). Ethnic backgrounds were as follows: Malay ($n = 131$), Chinese ($n = 123$), Indian ($n = 6$), and other or not reporting ($n = 8$). The retest was completed by 250 (93.3%) of these participants.

**China.** The Chinese sample included 223 college students (107 men, 116 women) from Beijing Normal University ($n = 98$), Beihang University ($n = 48$), and Tsinghua University ($n = 28$), all in Beijing, and Henan University ($n = 49$) in Kaifeng. Mean age was 21.06 years ($SD = 1.15$). Most participants reported their ethnicity as Han Chinese ($n = 207$); several additional ethnic groups were represented by 1 to 4 participants. The retest was completed by all participants.

**Japan.** The Japanese sample included 191 college students (111 men, 80 women) from Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya. Mean age was 20.32 ($SD = 1.34$). Because of the anticipated ethnic homogeneity of the sample we did not ask about ethnicity, but did verify that none were international students. The retest was completed by 179 (93.7%) of these participants.
Instruments

Translation. All instruments were translated from English into Spanish, Filipino (Tagalog), Malaysian, Chinese, and Japanese using the backtranslation method. Minor modifications to the translations were made based on the backtranslation process.

Trait-Role Questionnaire and indices of variability and instability. Researchers who have investigated cross-role consistency have generally done so by quantifying the amount of variability in participants’ ratings of their traits across various roles or relationships (Baird et al., 2006; English & Chen, 2007; Roberts & Donahue, 1994; Sheldon et al., 1997; Suh, 2002). Consistent with this approach, we adapted the Trait-Role Questionnaire (Church, Anderson-Harumi et al., 2008) to measure the consistency of 30 traits across roles. Each of the Big Five dimensions was assessed with six trait adjectives, including some reverse-keyed (r) traits: for Extraversion, talkative, extraverted, energetic, cheerful, shy(r), and quiet(r); for Agreeableness, sympathetic, kind, helpful, respectful, selfish(r), and boastful(r); for Conscientiousness, organized, disciplined, industrious, careless(r), wasteful(r), and lazy(r); for Emotional Stability, relaxed, calm, moody(r), jealous(r), nervous(r), and irritable(r); and for Openness to Experience, creative, imaginative, intelligent, artistic, open-minded, and shallow(r). Using a 5-point scale (1 = not at all descriptive of me to 5 = extremely descriptive of me), participants rated their traits in general and when interacting with close friends, parents, professors, younger siblings or relatives, and strangers. Participants completed the instrument twice, with an interval of about one month between test and retest. Validity evidence for this instrument was reported by Church, Anderson-Harumi et al. (2008) and Church et al. (2012), who found, for example, meaningful cultural differences in cross-role consistency, sensible correlates of individual differences in consistency (e.g., independent self-construals, self-concept clarity), and expected correlations with well-being measures (e.g., self-esteem, social anxiety, and life satisfaction).
To measure cross-role variability we computed the standard deviation of each participant’s ratings for each trait across the five roles, then averaged these 30 standard deviations across traits. This SD index has face validity and has been used previously to investigate intraindividual variability in affect (Oishi, Diener, Scollon, & Biswas-Diener, 2004), traits (Baird et al., 2006; English & Chen, 2011), self-esteem (Kernis, 2005), and behaviors (Church, Katigbak, et al., 2008). Reliability estimates for this index were high and similar across cultures in both the test ($\alpha = .86$ to .91) and retest ($\alpha = .85$ to .93) data. The index was also quite stable across the test and retest data ($r = .66$ to .80).

Following English and Chen (2011), we quantified short-term instability over time for each participant by (a) computing the absolute value of the differences between their ratings at test versus retest for each of the 30 traits within each role (e.g., the absolute difference between their talkative ratings with friends at test versus retest), (b) averaging these absolute differences across all 30 traits within each role, and (c) averaging these indices across the five roles. Alpha reliability estimates ranged from .88 to .95 across cultures.

Finally, we used the ratings in the general trait condition to derive Big Five trait scores, which were used to predict cross-role variability and short-term instability. The $\alpha$ reliabilities, which were fairly good for short (six-item) scales, ranged from .54 to .83 in the United States, .54 to .80 in Australia, .51 to .65 in Mexico, .62 to .76 in Venezuela, .55 to .80 in the Philippines, .55 to .74 in Malaysia, .65 to .78 in China, and .56 to .89 in Japan. Because some reliability values were marginal, we used multigroup structural equations modeling (SEM) to test for cross-cultural measurement invariance and to estimate the relationships between the Big Five traits and the cross-role variability and short-term instability indices (see Results). SEM provides some correction for measurement error, although appropriate caution is applied in the presentation of results for this analysis.
Measure of hedonic well-being.

*Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form (PANAS-X)* (Watson & Clark, 1994). We selected 20 items from this measure, including 6 from the Negative Affect scale, 6 from the Positive Affect scale, 4 from the Joviality subscale, and 4 from the Sadness subscale. Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely*) to indicate how they generally or usually feel. In each culture, principal-axis factor analyses yielded clear two-factor solutions defined by the positive and negative emotion items. Therefore, we computed two scores by averaging all positive emotion terms (hereafter referred to as Positive Affect) and all negative emotion terms (Negative Affect). Across the eight countries, $\alpha$ estimates ranged from .77 to .88 for Positive Affect and from .80 to .88 for Negative Affect.

Measures of eudaimonic well-being.

*Meaning in Life Questionnaire* (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). This 10-item scale is comprised of two subscales. The 5-item Presence subscale (MLQ-P) measures the extent to which one has a sense of meaning in one’s life. The 5-item MLQ-Search scale was excluded from the analyses because it measures the search for, rather than presence of, meaning in life. Ratings are made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *absolutely untrue* to 7 = *absolutely true*. Alpha reliability estimates ranged from .77 to .91 for the Presence subscale.

*Scales of Psychological Well-being* (PWB; Ryff, 1989). We administered a 39-item version of Ryff’s (1989) measure that has shown acceptable factorial validity and internal consistency reliability in Dutch, Spanish, and Columbian samples (Van Dierendonck, Díaz, Rodríguez-Carvajal, Blanco, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2008). The instrument contains six to eight items for each of the following scales: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Purpose in Life, Positive Relations with Others, and Self-acceptance. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a six-point scale that ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly*
agree. Alpha reliability estimates for the six scales ranged from .71 to .85 in the U.S., .79 to .88 in Australia, .64 to .82 in Mexico, .56 to .82 in Venezuela, .38 to .78 in the Philippines, .61 to .75 in Malaysia, .56 to .82 in China, and .62 to .85 in Japan. In our SEM analyses, these scales were used as multiple indicators of latent constructs and cross-cultural measurement equivalence was formally tested (see Results).

**Procedure**

Participants completed all of the instruments during the initial assessment, and only the Trait-Role Questionnaire during the retest, which took place about one month later. Results for self-construal and dialecticism measures, which were also completed during the initial testing, were reported by Church et al. (2012) and summarized earlier. In the United States, Australia, and Venezuela, participants were recruited in classes or research participant pools and completed the questionnaires outside class. In Mexico, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Japan, the questionnaires were filled out by volunteers during regular classes.

**Results**

**Relating Cross-role Variability and Short-term Instability to Well-being across Cultures**

In Hypothesis 1 we predicted that cross-role variability and short-term instability would be negatively associated with both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in all cultures. Table 1 and Table 2, respectively, show the relevant correlations for cross-role variability and short-term instability. For the American and Australian samples, we report the correlations for the students who self-identified as White/Caucasian in the United States and Anglo-Celtic/European in Australia. The pattern of correlations is similar in Tables 1 and 2, probably because in all cultures participants who reported greater cross-role variability also tended to report greater short-term instability (range of \( r \)'s = .44 to .63). As seen in the tables, both variability indices were most consistently related to negative affect. Both indices also predicted one or more aspects
of eudaimonic well-being in most cultures, with the weakest relationships found in Mexico, the Philippines, and Japan.

We used multigroup SEM to formally test Hypotheses 1 and 2. In these analyses, hedonic well-being was a latent variable with positive and negative affect scores as the observed indicators (to obtain three indicators, the negative affect items were divided into two item parcels). Eudaimonic well-being was also treated as a latent variable with scores for MLQ-Presence and the six PWB scales as observed indicators. Measurement models with the factor loadings constrained to be equal across cultures fit the data very well, indicating good measurement invariance (for hedonic well-being, GFI = .98, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03, RMR = .02; for eudaimonic well-being, GFI = .93, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04, RMR = .06). Thus, in all subsequent SEM models, the factor loadings were constrained to be equal across cultures. Model parameters were estimated using restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Cross-role variability and hedonic well-being. In the first SEM analysis, the SD index of cross-role variability, modeled as an observed variable, predicted the latent hedonic well-being construct. A model in which the path coefficients relating cross-role variability to hedonic well-being were freely estimated in each culture fit the data very well (GFI = .99, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03, RMR = .02). The freely estimated path coefficients (i.e., standardized regression weights) are shown in Table 1 (see SEM composite under hedonic well-being). Consistent with Hypothesis 1, all of the path coefficients were statistically significant, indicating that greater cross-role variability was associated with less hedonic well-being in every culture. When we constrained the path coefficients to be equal across all cultures, no significant loss of model fit was observed ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [7] = 5.80, p > .05$). That is, there were no significant cultural differences in the path coefficients, so we did not test models in which the path coefficients for individualistic versus collectivistic, or dialectical versus non-dialectical cultures, were compared. Thus,
Hypothesis 2 was not supported in the prediction of hedonic well-being from cross-role variability.

**Cross-role variability and eudaimonic well-being.** Greater support for cultural differences was obtained in SEM models in which cross-role variability predicted eudaimonic well-being. A model in which this path coefficient was freely estimated in each culture fit the data well (GFI = .93, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .03, RMR = .06). The freely estimated path coefficients are shown in Table 1 (see SEM composite under eudaimonic well-being). Contrary to Hypothesis 1, the freely estimated path coefficients were not statistically significant in all cultures. A model in which the path coefficients were constrained to be equal across all eight cultures yielded a significantly worse fit than the freely estimated model, indicating the presence of cultural differences ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [7] = 18.14, p < .05$).

With the exception of China, the path coefficients were larger in the individualistic cultures (the U.S. and Australia) than in the collectivistic cultures. Accordingly, we tested an individualism-collectivism model in which the path coefficients for the U.S. and Australia were constrained to be equal and the path coefficients for the remaining cultures, including China, were constrained to be equal. Importantly, this model was not significantly worse than the freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [6] = 11.58, p > .05$) and was significantly better than the model in which all cultures shared the same path coefficient (referred to here as the fully constrained model) ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = 6.57, p < .05$). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the constrained unstandardized path coefficients were more negative in the individualistic cultures ($B = -1.11$, SE = .22) than in the collectivistic cultures ($B = -.50$, SE = .08). We also tested a dialecticism model in which the path coefficients for the most dialectical cultures (i.e., the four Asian samples) were constrained to be equal and the path coefficients for the least dialectical cultures (i.e., the four non-Asian samples) were constrained to be equal. The dialecticism model was significantly worse than the
freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [6] = 17.38, p < .01$) and not significantly better than the fully constrained model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = .77, p > .05$). The AIC fit index, which allows a direct comparison of the non-nested individualism-collectivism (AIC = 636.00) and dialecticism models (AIC = 641.80), also favored the former model. The AIC index considers both model fit and parsimony, with lower values indicating better models. Thus, although the constrained (unstandardized) path coefficients in the dialectical model were, as hypothesized, somewhat more negative in the non-dialectical cultures ($B = -.67, SE = .14$) than in the dialectical cultures ($B = -.52, SE = .09$), the individualism-collectivism model did a better job of accounting for cultural differences in the relationship between cross-role variability and eudaimonic well-being.

**Short-term instability and hedonic well-being.** A model in which the path coefficients relating short-term instability to hedonic well-being were freely estimated in each culture fit the data well (GFI = .97, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .04, RMR = .02). The freely estimated path coefficients are shown in Table 2 (see SEM composite under hedonic well-being). Consistent with Hypothesis 1, all of the path coefficients were statistically significant (marginally so in Japan), indicating that greater instability was associated with less hedonic well-being in every culture. The fully constrained model, in which the path coefficients were constrained to be equal across all seven cultures (recall that no retest was done in Venezuela), yielded a significantly worse fit than the freely estimated model, indicating the presence of cultural differences ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [6] = 18.52, p < .01$). Accordingly, we again tested the individualism-collectivism model (minus Venezuela), which was not significantly worse than the freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [5] = 7.77, p > .05$) and was significantly better than the fully constrained model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = 10.76, p < .05$). As expected, the constrained values of the unstandardized path coefficients were much more negative in the individualistic cultures ($B = -1.63, SE = .28$) than in the collectivistic cultures ($B = -.67, SE = .09$). In contrast, the dialecticism model was again significantly worse than the
freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [5] = 15.71, p < .01$) and not significantly better than the fully constrained model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = 2.81, p > .05$). The AIC fit index also favored the individualism-collectivism model (AIC = 148.74) over the dialecticism model (AIC = 156.69). Thus, although the constrained (unstandardized) path coefficients in the non-dialectical cultures ($B = -1.05$, SE = .19) were, as predicted, somewhat more negative than in the dialectical cultures ($B = -.69$, SE = .10), the individualism-collectivism model did a better job of accounting for cultural differences in the relationship between short-term instability and hedonic well-being.

**Short-term instability and eudaimonic well-being.** A model in which the path coefficients relating short-term instability to eudaimonic well-being were freely estimated in each culture fit the data well (GFI = .92, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04, RMR = .06). The freely estimated path coefficients are shown in Table 2 (see SEM composite under eudaimonic well-being). The path coefficients were statistically significant in five of the seven cultures, indicating that greater short-term instability was usually associated with lower eudaimonic well-being, as hypothesized. The fully constrained model yielded a significantly worse fit than the freely estimated model, indicating the presence of cultural differences ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [6] = 16.36, p < .05$). The individualism-collectivism model was not significantly worse than the freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [5] = 2.62, p > .05$) and was significantly better than the fully constrained model) ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = 13.75, p < .01$). As hypothesized, the constrained unstandardized path coefficients were much more negative in the individualistic cultures ($B = -1.49$, SE = .30) than in the collectivistic cultures ($B = -.33$, SE = .08).

In this instance, the dialecticism model was also not significantly worse than the freely estimated model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [5] = 8.26, p > .05$) and was significantly better than the fully constrained model ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}} [1] = 8.11, p < .01$). However, the AIC fit indices again favored the individualism-collectivism model (AIC = 562.51) over the dialecticism model (AIC = 568.15). Thus, although
the constrained (unstandardized) path coefficients were, as predicted, more negative in the non-dialectical cultures ($B = -0.93$, $SE = 0.20$) than in the dialectical cultures ($B = -0.31$, $SE = 0.09$), the individualism-collectivism distinction again provided a better account of the cultural differences.

**Summary.** Hypotheses 1 and 2 were largely supported. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, cross-role variability and short-term instability were associated with less hedonic well-being in all cultures. As seen in Tables 1 and 2, both cross-role variability and short-term instability were much more strongly and consistently related to negative affect than to positive affect. In addition, both cross-role variability and short-term instability were associated with less eudaimonic well-being in the majority of cultures. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the individualism-collectivism distinction provided a plausible explanation for cultural differences in the strength of the relationships between cross-role variability and eudaimonic well-being, and between short-term instability and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. No cultural differences were observed in the strength of the relationship between cross-role variability and hedonic well-being. As predicted, cross-role variability and short-term instability also tended to be more negatively related to eudaimonic well-being in non-dialectical cultures than in dialectical cultures. However, in each SEM comparison, the individualism-collectivism model did a better job of accounting for the cultural differences than the dialecticism model. The patterns of freely estimated path coefficients in Tables 1 and 2 also suggest greater support for the individualism-collectivism explanation. Overall, the results suggest that cross-role variability and short-term instability are universally related to hedonic well-being, particularly negative affect, but more reliably related (inversely) to eudaimonic well-being in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.$^4$
Relating Cross-role Consistency and Short-term Stability to the Big Five Traits

We conducted multigroup SEM analyses to examine the relationship between the Big Five traits and cross-role variability and short-term instability. In each analysis, one of the Big Five traits, assessed with three item parcels, predicted either the cross-role variability (SD) index or the short-term instability index. Measurement models with the factor loadings for each Big Five trait constrained to be equal across cultures fit the data very well, supporting measurement invariance (GFI range = .98 to .99, CFI range = .95 to .99, RMSEA range = .01 to .04, RMR range = .02 to .05). Table 3 shows the freely estimated path coefficients (i.e., standardized regression weights) relating the Big Five dimensions to the cross-role variability and short-term instability indices in these analyses. All of the models with freely estimated path coefficients had excellent fit indices, ranging from .97 to .99 for the GFI, .92 to .99 for the CFI, .02 to .04 for the RMSEA, and .01 to .05 for the RMR. Across cultures, the most consistent predictor of both cross-role variability and short-term instability was Emotional Stability. As indicated by the negative path coefficients, participants who described themselves as more emotionally stable described their traits more consistently across roles and within roles over time. In addition, in several cultures, participants who described themselves as more conscientious described their traits more consistently across roles and within roles over time. Other relationships between the Big Five traits and the cross-role variability and short-term instability indices were more modest or inconsistent.

In the last column of Table 3 we show the results of $\chi^2$ difference tests in comparisons of models in which the path coefficients relating the Big Five traits to the cross-role variability and short-term instability indices were freely estimated versus constrained to be equal across cultures. For Emotional Stability, the constrained and freely estimated models did not differ significantly in fit, indicating that emotional stability predicted cross-role variability and short-
term instability to an equivalent degree across cultures. In contrast, the other Big Five traits predicted either cross-role variability or instability over time to varying degrees across cultures.

To determine whether cross-role variability and short-term instability provided unique prediction of well-being beyond the Big Five traits we conducted hierarchical multiple regression analyses in each culture. Gender was entered in Step 1, Big Five trait scores in Step 2, and either the cross-role variability or short-term instability index in Step 3. In each analysis, one of the well-being scales was the criterion variable. Cross-role variability provided significant (or marginally significant) incremental prediction of negative affect beyond the Big Five traits in Mexico ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), Venezuela ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$), the Philippines ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), Malaysia ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), China ($\beta = .12$, $p < .07$), and Japan ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$), but did not provide incremental prediction of the eudaimonic well-being scales. The only exception was in Australia, where cross-role variability provided incremental prediction of two aspects of eudaimonic well-being (environmental mastery, $\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$; personal growth, $\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$). Short-term instability provided significant (or marginally significant) incremental prediction of negative affect in the United States ($\beta = .13$, $p < .06$), Australia ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$), the Philippines ($\beta = .11$, $p < .09$), Malaysia ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$), and China ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$). In addition, short-term instability provided modest incremental prediction of positive relations with others, an aspect of eudaimonic well-being, in the United States ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$), the Philippines ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$), Malaysia ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$), and China ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .06$). Only in Mexico did short-term instability provide modest incremental prediction ($p < .05$) of additional aspects of eudaimonic well-being (i.e., personal growth, $\beta = -.19$; purpose in life, $\beta = -.16$; self-acceptance, $\beta = -.15$).

In summary, we found that the Big Five traits, especially Emotional Stability, predicted both cross-role variability and short-term instability. In addition, both cross-role variability and
short-term instability provided fairly consistent incremental prediction of negative affect beyond the Big Five traits, but not aspects of eudaimonic well-being. As noted earlier, the marginal reliability estimates for some of the Big Five scales, particularly in Mexico and Malaysia, indicated that some caution was warranted in these analyses. However, the strong measurement invariance of the Big Five measures and the rather consistent findings across cultures—particularly regarding the relationship between emotional stability and the cross-role consistency and short-term instability indices—alleviates these concerns somewhat.

**Discussion**

Western theories have suggested that a consistent self-concept is important for well-being and several studies in the United States have supported this view (e.g., Campbell et al., 2003; Donahue et al., 1993; Sheldon et al., 1997). We investigated whether cross-role consistency and short-term stability in self-concepts are important for well-being in a diversity of cultures and whether their relationships with well-being are weaker in collectivistic or dialectical cultures, as predicted by cultural psychologists. Cross-role variability and short-term instability were most consistently and strongly associated with negative affect, as compared to other aspects of well-being, and to Emotional Stability, as compared to other Big Five traits. These findings suggest that both cross-role variability and short-term instability in self-concepts have a significant temperamental or affective basis and that this temperamental basis is a cultural universal. In all eight cultures, participants with more temperamental or moody traits (i.e., lower scores on Emotional Stability) reported greater self-concept variability both across roles and within roles over time, and both types of variability were most associated with negative affect, even after controlling for the Big Five traits. In short, the relationship between self-concept variability and negative affect is not limited to individualistic or non-dialectical cultures. The universality of this relationship probably reflects the fact that cross-role variability and short-term instability are
associated with Big Five Emotional Stability—a heritable and universal trait dimension—which can be largely defined as the tendency to experience negative affect (Watson & Clark, 1992).

In contrast, cross-role consistency and short-term stability were less reliably associated with eudaimonic well-being across cultures and provided little incremental prediction of eudaimonic well-being beyond the Big Five traits. In particular, cross-role consistency and short-term stability were more reliable and stronger predictors of eudaimonic well-being in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures. This finding provides support for cultural psychology perspectives, which propose that a consistent self-concept is less important for well-being in collectivistic cultures where self-concept flexibility and adaptability to situational contexts is valued (Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010; Suh, 2002). Whereas negative affect, an aspect of hedonic well-being, is reliably related to cross-role consistency and short-term stability across cultures, eudaimonic well-being is not. This is plausibly due to the fact that self-appraisals of eudaimonic well-being involve relatively cognitive evaluations of one’s autonomy, mastery, relatedness, and sense of purpose in life, whereas it is the temperamental or affective nature of self-concept variability and instability that is more universal across cultures. These aspects of eudaimonic well-being—which could be viewed as self-actualizing tendencies—may be valued to some extent in all cultures (Ryan, 1995), but they are apparently less reliably associated with having a consistent and stable self-concept in collectivistic cultures.

Our findings are consistent with several previous studies, some of which involved cross-cultural comparisons. Baird et al. (2006), in one of their three studies in the United States, found that cross-role variability predicted negative affect, but not positive affect or life satisfaction, after controlling for mean trait levels. In addition, across their three studies, the most consistent predictor of cross-role variability was Neuroticism, which is consistent with our Big Five
Emotional Stability findings. Similarly, in an experience sampling study, Locke (2008) found that attachment anxiety, which is related to Neuroticism, predicted within-individual variability in interpersonal goals over time. Suh (2002) found weaker correlations between cross-role consistency and hedonic well-being in Korean college students than in American college students. In addition, in both cultural samples the strongest correlations were observed between cross-role variability and negative affect, as in the present study. Church, Anderson-Harumi et al. (2008) found that cross-role consistency predicted well-being better in the United States than in Mexico, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Japan, and cross-role consistency was again most reliably related to negative affect. Finally, two cross-cultural studies examined the relationship between cross-context consistency and alternative indicators of well-being. English and Chen (2011) found that consistency across relationship contexts was more strongly related to authenticity and relationship quality in European Americans, as compared to Asian Americans. In a combined sample of Americans and Chinese, Boucher (2011) found that cross-role consistency was more strongly related to life satisfaction, self-concept clarity, and felt authenticity for participants with lower dialecticism.

Thus, although a few cross-cultural studies have reported cultural differences in the strength of the relationship between cross-role consistency and well-being, definitive conclusions regarding the cultural bases of these differences may require further research. Suh (2002) attributed the cultural differences to differences in self-construals, whereas English and Chen (2011) and Boucher (2011) attributed the cultural differences to dialecticism. The findings in the present study were better accounted for by the individualism-collectivism distinction than by dialecticism. That said, our Chinese findings were only partially consistent with an individualism-collectivism interpretation. In our Chinese sample, the relationship between short-term instability and eudaimonic well-being was weaker than in the individualistic cultures (see
Table 2), but this was not the case for the relationship between cross-role consistency and eudaimonic well-being (see Table 1). China is generally viewed as a collectivistic culture. However, Cai, Kwan, and Sedikides (2012) have recently noted an increasing preoccupation with self, an indicator of individualism, in young Chinese adults as a result of the one-child only policy, increasing urbanization, and higher socioeconomic status (see also Cameron, Erkal, Gangadharan, & Meng, 2013). Thus, it is conceivable that our sample of Chinese college students was relatively individualistic or in transition from collectivism to individualism. Additional studies will be needed to determine whether our partially inconsistent findings in China are replicable or anomalous.

Finally, our conclusion that the observed cultural differences could be accounted for by the individualism-collectivism distinction was based on the traditional view of the sampled cultures along these dimensions in the extant literature (e.g., Church, 1987; Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Hofstede, 2001). However, as noted in footnote 4, the self-construal scores for some of the cultural samples did not conform to expectations (Church et al., 2012) and did not moderate the cultural differences in moderated multiple regression analyses. A likely explanation is that it is difficult to validly measure cultural dimensions with self-report measures, which are subject to a variety of reference group effects and response styles (e.g., Heine et al., 2002) and often fail to conform to expectations (Oyserman et al., 2002). Nonetheless, some caution is warranted in interpreting the cultural differences observed. Other important findings of the study—in particular, the universal relationships between cross-role consistency and short-term stability, on the one hand, and negative affect and Big Five Emotional Stability, on the other hand—are not subject to this caution. We can confidently conclude that in a variety of cultures, self-concept variability and instability are associated with negative affect and less emotional stability.
The present study is novel and extends knowledge relative to our own and others’ previous studies in several ways. In the same cultural samples, Church et al. (2012) found that cross-role variability was considerable in all cultural samples, but somewhat greater in Japan than in the other seven cultures. In support of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Church et al. (2013) found that satisfaction across social roles of needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (as well as needs for self-actualization and pleasure-stimulation) predicted overall well-being to a similar degree in all eight cultures. However, neither of these studies related cross-role consistency and short-term stability to well-being, which was our focus in the present study.

More similar to the present study was our previous investigation of cross-role variability and adjustment, in which we found that cross-role variability predicted one or more adjustment indicators in all six cultures sampled, including several of the cultures included in the present study (Church, Anderson-Harumi et al., 2008). However, as noted in the introduction, the present study extended our previous results in several important ways, beyond the inclusion of new and additional cultural samples. First, and perhaps most significant, was the inclusion of indicators of eudaimonic well-being, whereas previous studies, including our own, have been largely limited to measures of subjective or hedonic well-being. Importantly, our inclusion of measures of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being enabled us to clarify which aspects of well-being are related to self-concept consistency and stability in all cultures (i.e., negative affect) and which aspects exhibit cultural differences associated with individualism-collectivism (i.e., eudaimonic well-being). Accordingly, we were able to show that cultural psychology hypotheses regarding the relationship between self-concept consistency and well-being may be more applicable to indices of eudaimonic well-being than hedonic well-being.
Second, the present study also included a short-term stability component, which was not included in our previous study and has only been investigated previously by English and Chen (2007, 2011) in two cultures. This enabled us to show that two different aspects of self-concept consistency—both cross-role variability and short-term stability within roles—exhibited similar relations to indices of well-being. As English and Chen (2007, 2011) have noted, these two aspects of self-concept consistency are conceptually distinct and need not relate to other variables in the same manner. Third, unlike in our previous study, we obtained scores for the Big Five traits, which enabled us to determine which traits (in particular Emotional Stability) predict self-concept consistency and short-term stability. This also enabled us to show that the relationship between consistency and some aspects of well-being (in particular, negative affect) is not solely due to (or an artifact of) personality trait differences. Fourth, whereas our previous study was primarily based on simple correlational relationships, in the present study we conducted structural equations modeling analyses. SEM analyses control for unreliability of measurement and should provide better estimates of the relationship between self-concept consistency and well-being. Finally, the present study extended our knowledge of the relationship between self-concept consistency and stability to many more cultures than have been investigated by previous researchers.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There were also several limitations of this study. First, we sampled only college students, so similar studies should be conducted in broader samples. Second, we examined the relationship between consistency and well-being in self-report ratings. Future studies should examine whether well-being can be predicted from cross-role consistency and short-term stability in actual behavior or daily experiences, for example, using experience sampling methods (e.g., Kernis, 2005). Third, the direction of causality is ambiguous in non-longitudinal correlational
data. While it is plausible that cross-role variability and short-term instability cause negative affect, the reverse might also be the case. Fourth, our assessment of self-concepts was limited to trait attributes. Although traits are generally viewed as a core element of self-concepts, self-concepts also include non-trait elements (McConnell, 2011). Fifth, we focused only on the cross-role consistency and short-term stability of trait ratings, rather than alternative conceptualizations of self-concept consistency or complexity (e.g., Boucher, 2011; Campbell et al., 1997; Linville, 1987). Finally, to date, studies of self-concept consistency and stability have only included samples in the Americas, Australia, and Asia, so studies of additional cultures outside these geographical regions are needed.

Conclusion

Across cultures, cross-role consistency and short-term stability of self-concepts are reliably related to Big Five Emotional Stability and (inversely) to negative affect. These findings suggest that self-concept variability has a significant temperamental or affective basis and that this temperamental basis is a cultural universal. In contrast, cross-role consistency and short-term stability are less reliably related to aspects of eudaimonic well-being—particularly after controlling for the Big Five traits—and may be more reliably related to eudaimonic well-being in relatively individualistic cultures. Nonetheless, our findings suggest that Western theory regarding the importance of a consistent self-concept for well-being may apply universally across cultures, at least in regard to the experience of negative affect. Thus, helping individuals develop a consistent self-concept or identity may facilitate well-being in most, if not all, parts of the world.
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Cross-role variation in the Big-Five personality traits and its relations with psychological


Footnotes

1 The ethnic minority students in the American and Australian samples (e.g., participants of Latino, Asian, and African heritage) may be more collectivistic than the majority students, potentially complicating cross-national comparisons along the individualism-collectivism dimension. When we computed the correlations in Tables 1 and 2 with all participants in these two countries, the correlations were generally a bit lower, reducing the contrast between these two countries and the other six cultures in the study.

2 Given our large sample sizes, the overall $\chi^2$ tests rejected the various SEM models ($p < .01$). However, it is well-known that this test is overly stringent and affected by sample size, so we focused on multiple goodness-of-fit indices to evaluate the models.

3 Not surprisingly, we obtained similar results when we tested the individualism versus collectivism model without the exceptional Chinese sample and obtained even better model fit. Unstandardized path coefficients ($B$s) are reported for the constrained models because it is those values that are constrained to be equal across cultures in SEM analyses. The standardized path coefficients ($\beta$s) can still differ to some extent across cultures because of cultural differences in variances.

4 The case for individualism-collectivism as a moderator variable in relating cross-role consistency and short-term stability to eudaimonic well-being would be further strengthened if the scores on self-construal measures also moderated these relationships. However, as noted in the introduction, the rank order of the eight cultures on the self-report measures of independent and collective self-construals reported by Church et al. (2012) did not entirely conform to expectations or the rank order in size of the path coefficients relating cross-role consistency and well-being in these cultures. This suggested that these measures would not serve as significant moderator variables in relating cross-role consistency and short-term stability to well-being.
Indeed, in moderated multiple regression analyses, neither the self-construal nor dialecticism measures were significant moderators of these relationships, either across or within cultures, so we do not present these analyses. This finding is addressed further in the Discussion section.
Table 1

**Correlations and SEM Path Coefficients Relating Cross-role Variability (SD Index) to Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-being**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-being measure</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Hedonic well-being</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.40**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
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<td>-.37**</td>
<td>-.47**</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>-.43**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>MLQ-Presence</td>
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<td>-.25*</td>
<td>-.09</td>
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<td>-.17*</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
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<td>PWB-Environmental mastery</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWB-Personal growth</td>
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<td>-.10</td>
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<td>-.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWB-Purpose in life</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
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<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWB-Positive relations</td>
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<td>-.20**</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>-.16</td>
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</table>

*Note. SEM composite entries are path coefficients (i.e., standardized regression weights) from SEM analyses; all other entries are Pearson correlations. MLQ = The Meaning in Life Questionnaire. PWB = Scales of Psychological Well-being.

*p < .05. **p < .01.*
### Table 2

**Correlations and SEM Path Coefficients Relating Short-term Instability to Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-being**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-being measure</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
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<td>.06</td>
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<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.19*</td>
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<td>-.19*</td>
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<td>-.35**</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>PWB-Autonomy</td>
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<td>PWB-Environmental mastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWB-Personal growth</td>
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<td>PWB-Purpose in life</td>
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<td>-.13</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>PWB-Self-acceptance</td>
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<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SEM composite entries are path coefficients (i.e., standardized regression weights) from SEM analyses; all other entries are Pearson correlations. Retest data were not collected in Venezuela. MLQ = The Meaning in Life Questionnaire. PWB = Scales of Psychological Well-being.

†p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.
### Table 3

**SEM Path Coefficients relating Big Five Traits to Cross-role Variability and Short-term Instability in Each Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Five dimension</th>
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<th>Australia</th>
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^aRetest data were not collected in Venezuela. 
*p < .05. **p < .01.