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CULTURE, PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUALISM: THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH AND WELL-BEING

Valery I. Chirkov

The recent research and theorizing in cross-cultural social psychology have raised several interesting and conceptually important issues about the role of autonomy, self-determination and freedom of choice in different cultures and regarding the role of these factors in human functioning within various cultural contexts (Ahuvia, 2001; Inghilleri, 1999; Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Kagitcibasi, 2003, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Miller, 2003; Rychlak, 2003; Schwartz, 2000). The following are among the key questions that have been raised: What is the nature and role of autonomy in the behavior of people from different cultures? Is autonomy's positive influence only a prerogative of Western cultures built on the ideology of individualism? How does autonomy support relate to the psychological well-being (PWB) of people from different cultures? In this paper, I suggest answers to these questions and provide empirical evidence that support them.

CULTURE AND AUTONOMY

The issue of autonomy is becoming increasingly pervasive in cross-cultural research relating to parenting and teaching (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Choy & Moneta, 2002; d'Ailly, 2003; Dennis, Cole, Zahn-Waxler, & Mizuta., 2002; Fuligni, 1998; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Liu, 2005; Tanaka & Yamauchi, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005; Vogel & Cormeraie, 1996; Yamauchi & Tanaka, 1998), psychopathology, (Sato, 2001), psychological well-being, motivation and other aspect of human functioning (Alkire, 2005; Altman, 2001; Rychlak, 2003). In our modern world, which is becoming more global and boundless, this is up to peoples' autonomous decisions to choose where, how and with whom to live their lives and what cultural practices to exercise. To understand what forces stands behind these agentic and responsible decisions that shape the life of modern societies, we need to look into the nature of human autonomy, differentiate it from related concepts of individualism, independence and separateness, and identify its role in people's lives in different cultural environments.

The existing anthropological research provides evidence that autonomy, if it is understood as actions that emanates from one's self, is one of human universals (Brown, 1991; Pinker, 2002) (Murdock, 1945) meaning that regardless of the country, culture, or society wherein people live, they have a clear idea that some of their actions can be and

should be regulated by their selves and that some of their behaviors are regulated by forces outside their own selves. Combined with such other universals as ‘intentions’, ‘choice making (choosing alternatives)’, ‘self-control’, and ‘self is responsible’ (these descriptions are taken from the appendix “Donald Brown’s list of human universals” in (Pinker, 2002)), these universals create a pretty clear picture of a modern understanding of autonomy as a psychological state which includes intentions to act, originated within one’s self, and which most naturally occurs when a person chooses among alternatives. If a choice is autonomous, then the self is responsible for this action and it regulates a person’s self-determined actions according to one’s ‘moral sentiments’ and ‘world views’ (another two human universals). But these sentiments and views have to be internalized and deeply integrated into a person’s self in order to be guidelines of a truly autonomous action. The logic of this reasoning leads to the conclusion that autonomy, or, saying it more correctly, a tendency toward autonomous actions, is a part of human nature and that we all, as members of the human specie, are predisposed to exercise and practice this powerful capacity under favorable conditions (Alkire, 2002; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1985).

Another view of autonomy stems from a constructionist position that autonomy is a moral value which results from social construction within the network of meanings and practices of a particular society and culture (Schneewind, 1998). As a socio-cultural construction, autonomy, in this case, together with other moral values as ‘freedom’, ‘human rights’, ‘individualism’, etc., is not culturally universal as the tendency toward autonomous actions described above, but is more cultural, historical and society relative. The confusion emerges when the scholars who study human agency and motivation cross-culturally reject the idea of human nature with “inherent desires such as ... love, ... esteem, autonomy, ... and self-expression...” (Pinker, 2002, p.169) and treat human motivation together with the issues of autonomy and agency as mere cultural constructions dependent on the nature of self, which is also predetermined by societal forces (Cross & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Miller, 2003).

The consequences of having these different approaches applied to the issue of autonomy could be pretty dramatic. If we accept the idea that autonomy is a part of human nature, then, it is logical to expect that providing the opportunities for people to exercise this ability will make them happy and fully functioning individuals in most if not all societies. People “suffer when the freedom to exercise the (inherent) desires is thwarted” (Pinker, 2002, p. 165). But the culture relativist approach would partly or completely deny the ability of people within particular cultures to value and benefit from autonomous actions (Oishi, 2000), or even further, it may emphasize that in some societies, being controlled and exposed to authoritarian ruling “may be associated both with behavioral satisfaction and with more adaptive behavioral outcomes” (Miller, 1999, p. 183).

Related to these conceptual differences in understanding the nature of autonomy is another widespread confusion of it with the notion of individualism. Researchers such as (Hofstede, 1997; Kim, Triandis., Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Triandis, 1995) have defined individualism as the system of cultural representations and practices where priority is given to the individual’s needs, goals, and preferences, rather than to the group’s needs, goals and preferences. Thus, individualism is seen a pattern of cultural values, meanings, and practices that has been constructed through the history of human civilizations in order to provide people with guiding rules and standards for decision making in their behaviors. Individualism is one of several systems of cultural values

(e.g. collectivism) which are distributed among various societies, ethnic groups and countries. Autonomy as a moral value is one of the constituents of individualism (Lukes, 1973), and thus bounded to the cultures that exercise and propagate the philosophy of individualism, whereas if we understand autonomy as the natural and universal tendency of human beings to execute their behavior willingly and to fully endorse the actions they are engaged with (Ryan & Deci, 2001), then this tendency toward autonomous actions becomes a universal attribute of any member of any society independently of what system of cultural values and practices—individualism or collectivism—they exercise (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003). I fully agree with Markus & Kitayama (2003) that the meaning, the value and even the label of this natural tendency are constructed by the socio-cultural context wherein it is exercised. But the phenomenological experience of it and its functional role in human activity remains the same across countries and continents. In order to be fully humans we need to be autonomous in our actions.

AUTONOMY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH

An answer to the question regarding the determinants of the psychological well-being of people in different cultures depends on the understanding of the nature of autonomy and other human motivational tendencies and needs. If a scholar sees these tendencies (among others, the tendency to be the master of one's own actions, to be efficient in one's actions and to feel related to other people, which are all strong candidates for human universals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brown, 1991; White, 1959) as natural and universal human capabilities that need to be nurtured and exercised in all societies, then people's well-being is seen as a psychological state in which people's basic needs and capabilities are realized and adequately treated. In other words, within this perspective PWB is interpreted as a realization and fulfillment of natural and inalienable human potentialities, which need to be nurtured by society and culture in order for individuals to feel happy and fully functioning (Nussbaum, 2000; R. M. Ryan & Edward L. Deci, 2001; Sen, 1985).

But, if scientists consider humans' potentialities to be socially constructed and culturally relative, then they assume that people's well-being is dependant on their adjustment to the values and norms of their culture. Diener and Suh (2000) formulated this cultural relativistic position in a following way: "If societies have different sets of values, people in them are likely to consider different criteria relevant when judging the success of the society (p. 3). By the success of the society they mean the ability of a society to provide the conditions for accomplishing people's own values and goals. And, as these values and goals are predetermined by their society, the better people are adjusted to their social environment the better should be their well-being (Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh, 1999). Thus, there are two different yardsticks to evaluate the conditions favorable for people's well-being across cultures: one is their nature and another is their culture. If a researcher endorses the idea that there is a human nature, which autonomy is a part of, then, regardless of the ideology of the society, members of this society will be well to the extent that there are the conditions that nurture this nature. Different societies may value these conditions differently and the extent to which they endorse these conditions may be judged as more or less healthy for human functioning. But if scholars believe that people's culture shapes their potentialities, selves, values and goals,

then, the higher the congruence between people's personal strivings and the prescriptions and standards that are set up by their culture, the better their well-being and functioning. More research is needed to establish the validity of each approach, but I personally cannot ignore the statement of a prominent philosopher and spiritual leader, Jiddu Krishnamurti who once said: "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society". These two positions: cultural universalism and cultural relativism, with regard to the nature and determinants of people's well-being constitute the essence of the current debate around people's autonomy and happiness in cross-cultural psychology.

THE SDT APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF AUTONOMY AND HUMAN FUNCTIONING

In this presentation, I examine the above questions regarding the nature and role of autonomy in human functioning across cultures using the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of human motivation, developed by the American psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; R. M. Ryan & E. L. Deci, 2001). This theory has repeatedly defended the naturalistic understanding of autonomy as a universal psychological need, which, together with the need for competence and relatedness, constitutes the motivational basic of human nature (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan, 1995; Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). According to this theory, autonomy is a psychological need, meaning that without nurturing it in an appropriate way, human development and functioning will be thwarted (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The followers of SDT are the most consistent supporters of the position that differentiates autonomy from both independence and separateness (Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995) and the view that autonomy is not an illusion but a phenomenon firmly substantiated by philosophical and empirical investigations, which constitutes the very essence of our human existence (Ryan & Deci, 2004).

SDT is a growing, empirically-based theoretical framework that postulates several universal organismic and motivational tendencies in human beings that optimize their development and psychological functioning (Ryan, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2003; Ryan et al., 1995). Specifically, it posits the existence of a fundamental organismic tendency toward *self-regulation* which, according to this theory, includes a propensity toward *self-determination (or autonomy)* and *organismic integration*. Self-regulation ideally describes the processes through which an individual can continue to grow, maintain integrity, and experience wellness. However, according to SDT these self-regulatory propensities can flourish only when particular conditions are met. Specifically, one of these conditions is *basic psychological needs support*, a support that the social environment provides for the gratification of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan, 1995). The SDT answers the above questions about the nature of autonomy in the following ways. Autonomy refers to the natural and universal tendency of human beings to execute their behaviors willingly and to fully endorse the actions in which they are engaged (Ryan et al., 1995). Regardless of the culture in which people have been socialized, they need to experience this ownership of their behavior in order to be healthy. Different cultures may value autonomy and label its manifestations differently; as a result the level of autonomy support in different cultures may vary, but the functional role of autonomy and autonomy support is universal: the more people experience autonomy support, the better their psychological health is.

Human nature requires particular conditions to thrive. If people experience these conditions, they develop fully and harmoniously. If these conditions are incompatible with human nature, people may function poorly and in the long run they may be maladjusted and they may even develop psychological pathology. Thus, it is logical to assume that some cultural values and practices may be less concordant to the requirements of human nature and, as a result, they will be more detrimental for human development, functioning and health (Ryan et al., 1997). In the next section I present some empirical evidence that supports this approach.

Autonomy is culturally universal

One of the advantages of the SDT approach to studying autonomy is that it provides the operationalization of autonomous motivation with high construct and predictive validity. Accordingly, the SDT researchers differentiate the continuum of motivational regulation, which they conceptualize as a Perceived Locus of Causality (PLOC), that ranges from autonomous to non-autonomous or controlled regulation of various forms of behaviors: academic, sport, health, etc. (Ryan & Connell, 1995). To assess these forms of regulation, participants are asked one question: “Why do you, or why would you do certain behaviors?” Then, the respondents are requested to rate different reasons for performing these behaviors. These reasons reflect different levels of autonomy starting with non-autonomous regulation and ending with highly autonomous regulation: *external regulation* (behavior is performed to get rewards or to avoid punishments), *introjected regulation* (behavior is performed to get approval and to avoid guilt), *identified regulation* (behavior is performed because it is important to the person), and *integrated regulation* (behavior is performed because a person has thoughtfully considered and fully chosen this behavior). The index of relative autonomy is calculated by weighing and multiplying the scores for each reason with greater autonomy reflected in higher scores. Numerous research projects have been conducted using various versions of the Self-Regulation Questionnaires (SRQ: this is how the questionnaire to measure PLOC has been labeled) to study academic, sport, health, and many other forms of human behaviors (see (Deci & Ryan, 2002)). These studies demonstrated the ability of the questionnaires not only to adequately measure the level of perceived autonomy, but also to predict the quality of performance and the state of the participants’ psychological well-being. The majority of these studies were conducted in Western countries, mostly in the U.S. and Canada. If the SDT operationalization of autonomy is valid, then it should reflect the universal nature of this motivational tendency and, thus, these SRQs should produce similar results in the countries that have a system of cultural meanings and practices that is different from the North American culture. To test this hypothesis, several studies, mostly with regard to the academic motivation of school and university students, were conducted in China (d’Ailly, 2003; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005), Japan (Tanaka & Yamauchi, 2000; Yamauchi & Tanaka, 1998), Russia (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001), Germany (Levesque, Zuehlke, Stanek, & Ryan, 2004) and Belgium (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). The results of these projects demonstrated that all translated versions of the SRQ-AM (Academic Motivation) were measurement and/or linguistically invariant and were adequately understood by students of different ages and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, these studies demonstrated that the relations between autonomous motivation and psychological well-being and between motivation and learning outcomes were in

the same direction as in the North American countries: autonomous motivation was beneficial for students' well-being and their learning performance.

Thus, these studies provided strong empirical support to the proposition that if researchers understand autonomy as a natural human tendency to have people's actions be determined and regulated by their selves, then this human capability is culturally universal and should be treated as a basic human motivational tendency.

Autonomy is not the same as individualism

If culture is considered a system of behavioral practices and meanings, then it is possible to apply the SRQ to these practices in order to measure the level of autonomous regulation with regard to the behaviors that represent such cultural systems as individualism and collectivism. If this assumption is correct, then it is logical to expect that individualistic practices could either be autonomously regulated or be executed under external pressures. The same should hold true with regard to the practices that represent a collectivistic system of values. In addition, if this assumption is correct for people from different countries, then we have serious arguments toward differentiating autonomy as a natural tendency to be a master of ones' own behavior, as opposed to individualism/collectivism which is defined as two sets of culturally constructed systems of practices and meanings.

To validate these hypotheses, my colleagues and I have investigated the relative autonomy of the execution of the four types of cultural practices: horizontal individualism and collectivism (HI and HC) and vertical individualism and collectivism (VI and VC) (Chirkov et al., 2003; Chirkov, Ryan, & Willness, 2005) samples were drawn from six countries which may be characterized by different levels of individualism and collectivism at a national level: Brazil, Canada, South Korea, Russia, Turkey and the U.S. The participants were 828 students selected from these countries: 127 university students from Brazil, 142 students from a university in the prairie region of Canada, 111 from a South Korean university, 159 from two universities in north-central Russia; 94 from a university in south-west Turkey, and 195 from a north-eastern U.S. university.

To assess autonomy, we created a special scale based on previously designed and validated versions of the SRQ (Ryan & Connell, 1989). Our scale assessed the PLOC with regard to the above-mentioned 2 types of cultural practices regarding individualism (H) and collectivism (C), combined with another cultural dimension of horizontality (H)/ verticality (V) (Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). We created four subscales, each consisting of 6 behaviors which represented HI, HC, VI and VC. Here are some examples of these cultural practices: HI: *"To cultivate a personal identity, independent of others"*; HC: *"To maintain harmony within any group that one belongs to"*; VI: *"To strive to work in situations involving competition with others"*; VC: *"To sacrifice self-interest for the benefit of the group/ collective"*. Participants were asked the standard question: "Why do you, or why would you do certain behaviors?" Based on the SDT theorizing about different levels of autonomous regulation, the respondents were asked to rate different reasons for performing these practices. (The full version of the SRQ-CP (Cultural Practices) is presented in Appendix). The measurement invariance of all scales was tested by the Means and Covariance Structure Analysis (Little, 1997, 2000). This scale showed to be measurement invariant and reliable. The results of this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Means for the Relative Autonomy Indices for Four Cultural Practices in Brazil, Canada Korea, Russia, Turkey, and the U.S.

| | Relative Autonomy | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Horizontal Individualism | Horizontal Collectivism | Vertical Individualism | Vertical Collectivism |
| Brazil | 6.11 ^a | 6.05 ^a | 3.56 ^d | 5.12 ^d |
| Canada | 3.86 ^c | 4.08 ^b | .67 ^c | .88 ^c |
| Korea | 5.48 ^a | 4.47 ^b | 1.78 ^a | 1.17 ^a |
| Russia | 5.18 ^a | 4.13 ^b | 2.80 ^b | 2.87 ^b |
| Turkey | 5.41 ^a | 5.44 ^a | 3.81 ^d | 2.30 ^b |
| U.S. | 4.62 ^b | 3.65 ^b | 0.69 ^c | -.71 ^c |

Note: Means in the same column that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

The numbers in this table represent the relative autonomy score (the extent to which the autonomous motivation for performing particular practices prevails over the controlled motivation) for each type of cultural practice. There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this table. First, both collectivistic and individualistic practices may be executed more or less autonomously. This means that some people may choose and intentionally execute the individualistic practices of their own volition, whereas others may be forced to do this and may feel pressured to behave individualistically. The same conclusion can also be applied to the collectivistic practices. The data from this table also tell us that the autonomous regulation of different cultural practices may take place both in collectivistic (Russia, South Korea and Turkey) and individualistic (Canada and the United States) countries. Moreover, in many collectivistic countries the autonomous regulation of individualistic behavior may be as high as it is in the individualistic countries. Thus, the relative autonomy indexes for HI in 'collectivistic' countries are higher than in the individualistic ones.

Additionally, we conducted regression analysis predicting psychological well-being (PWB) by the level of relative autonomy both within and across samples. As predicted, in all samples, the higher the level of autonomy the higher the scores of participants' well-being were. These results allowed us to conclude that if autonomy is understood as a universal motivational tendency, then it may be applied cross-culturally to different countries. Independently of the country and the nature of cultural practices that are exercised in these countries, there appears to be positive relations between more autonomous regulation and well-being. These results support the SDT idea that autonomy is a basic psychological need which promotes PWB regardless of the cultural context. Our results also indicate that both individualistic and collectivistic practices may be enacted more or less autonomously, demonstrating that autonomy as an attribute of behavior regulation is different from individualism/collectivism, which is a set of socially constructed meanings and practices.

Sheldon and his colleagues (Sheldon et al., 2004) used a conceptually similar approach to study the level of autonomous motivation for the pursuit of personal goals (which they labeled 'self-concordance') in samples of university students from the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Taiwan (China) and the U.S. The participants were asked to generate a list of goals they typically try to accomplish in their everyday life (the authors call them 'personal strivings') and they were then asked to assess their motivation for pursuing these goals using the same format as the SRQ described above. In addition, the standard measures of subjective well-being were used: positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. The researchers discovered that autonomous (self-concordant) personal goals pursuit is relatively high compared to non-autonomous goals

strivings in all four countries. They also discovered that personal strivings' autonomous regulation was predictive of subjective well-being both within and across samples. These results, although obtained by using a format that is different from those employed by Chirkov and colleagues (2003) (i.e. self-concordance of personal strivings vs. relative autonomous regulation of four types of cultural practices) were consistent with the predictions based on the SDT propositions: that is, autonomy as the 'owing' of ones' actions or goals is relevant to people from various countries, regardless of their cultural membership and the concrete nature of their behaviors or goals. Autonomy, when it is understood this way, is universally beneficial to peoples' well-being regardless of their country and culture.

Autonomy support is universally beneficial for people's PWB

SDT posits that if autonomy, as a tendency to be involved in actions and pursue the goals that emanate from one's core self, is a human universal, then it is logical to expect that the support that social environment (families, educational institutions, work settings) provides for exercising this tendency should also be universally beneficial for people's well-being and optimal functioning.

Again, this is a very controversial thesis that is rejected by many cross-cultural and developmental psychologists. Specifically, many cultural psychologists argue that the role autonomy support plays in human behavior depends on the value that society assigns to autonomy (Miller, 1999). These researchers believe that in the Western societies, where individualism is highly valued, support autonomy is beneficial for people's functioning. However, they consider that support for autonomy may even be detrimental for human development in the cultures that value collectivism, conformity and obedience (Rudy & Grusec, 2001).

Here is some evidence that supports the SDT proposition of the universally beneficial role of autonomy support. My colleagues and I conducted two studies on the role of autonomy support in promoting PWB in countries that historically have been known as relatively authoritarian and controlling toward their people (Brazil and Russia) and in countries that are relatively liberal and egalitarian (Canada and the U.S.) (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Chirkov et al., 2005). We hypothesized that despite the expected lower level of autonomy support in the more authoritarian countries, the functional role of this kind of support will be similar across all countries. Specifically, we expected that the higher support for autonomy would be related to higher levels of people's well-being in all four samples. Indeed, we found support for this hypothesis. In study 1, we compared the high school students ($N = 236$) from Russia and the U.S., and in study 2 we compared the university students ($N = 239$) from Brazil and Canada. Using the scales for assessing the level of perceived autonomy support that the students get from their parents and teachers, we discovered that, as expected, the level of autonomy support in the Russian sample was lower than in the U.S. sample both for parents ($t = -2.97, p < .01$) and teachers ($t = -4.18, p < .001$). Brazilian students also saw their social context as more controlling compared to Canadian students both for parents ($t = -5.47, p < .001$) and teachers ($t = -3.30, p < .001$). Despite these differences in the level of autonomy support, the prediction of PWB by this support was universal across all four samples. Both in the Russian and the U.S. samples parental autonomy support was a positive, significant predictor of PWB ($\beta = .39, p < .01$). Teacher's autonomy support was a non-significant positive predictor of the same

dependent variable. In study 2, the support from parents in Brazil ($\beta = .36, p < .0001$) and Canada ($\beta = .35, p < .0001$) and the support from teachers for Brazilian ($\beta = .17, p < .10$) and for Canadian students ($\beta = .20, p < .05$) predicted students' well-being. These results unequivocally supported our initial hypothesis and demonstrated that despite the differences in the perceived support that students got from their social environment, the functional role of autonomy remains universally the same: the more parents and teachers acknowledge children's goals and intentions, the more freedom they provide these children to make their own choices, the more they respect these children's opinions and attitudes, the better these children feel, and the happier and more self-confident these children are.

This data obtained in various educational institutions is well complemented by the study conducted in Bulgaria and in the U.S. with white-collar workers from state-owned companies in Bulgarian compared with those in private American companies (Deci et al., 2001). Specifically, the researchers discovered that the supervisors' autonomy supportiveness predicted psychological need satisfaction (needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness) in both samples and that need satisfaction in turn predicted work engagement and well-being.

D'Ally (2003), in the study of academic motivation of Taiwanese students in the fourth to sixth grades, used the theoretical framework and operationalizations suggested by SDT and came to the conclusion that students with academic autonomous motivation not only prefer more challenging tasks and work to satisfy their own interests and curiosity, but also that this motivation is mainly affected by teachers' autonomy support and mothers' autonomy support and involvement.

Stewart and colleagues (Stewart et al., 2000) conducted a similar study on the role the perceived autonomy and relatedness support that Pakistani children get from their parents has in their psychological functioning. Despite the fact that Pakistani cultural values strongly emphasise conformity, respect for parents and obedience as basic virtues that have to be developed in children, and despite strong gender differences in child-rearing goals and practices, the researchers discovered that perceived parental autonomy support had relevance for both boys and girls. They also emphasised the fact that an autonomy supportive family environment is an important condition for the internalization of various cultural values, transmitted by parents, including the "acceptance of others' will".

CONCLUSION

1. Autonomy is conceptualized in modern cross-cultural literature either as a universal and natural human tendency or as socially constructed moral values embedded into the network of cultural meanings and practices. Depending on a researcher's position, the role of autonomy and autonomy support in human functioning and well-being across cultures is seen differently: either autonomy is a natural promoter of people's well being or its promoting role is relative and depends on the values that society assigns to autonomy.

2. Self-Determination Theory provides a deep theoretical conceptualization and valid operationalizations of the naturalistic approach to studying autonomy. It sharply differentiates autonomy from individualism: autonomy is a fundamental psychological need of a human organism, whereas individualism/collectivism is a socially constructed doctrine about the relationships between an individual and society, which consists of

various values and practices that may be more or less internalized and as a result more or less autonomously executed.

3. The provided empirical evidence strongly supports the following propositions derived from the SDT. Autonomy, if seen as people's endorsement of their actions, is a relatively universal phenomenon which brings benefits to various aspects of people's lives across different societies and cultures. Autonomy support includes the acknowledgment of one's point of view and emotions, providing options, taking another person's perspective into consideration, providing rationale for change or various options, supporting a person's initiative, and giving feedback in an informative instead of a controlling way. Autonomy may be valued differently in different societies but the functional role of it is universal: the more people receive support for their basic psychological needs—including the need for autonomy—the better is their well-being and the better their functioning will be.

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APPENDIX

Self-Regulation Questionnaire—Cultural Practices (SRQ-CP)

This instrument for measuring the level of autonomous regulation of various cultural practices was developed in Chirkov, V. I. (2001). *A study of the internalization of cultural practices in college samples from South Korea, Russia, Turkey and the U.S.: A self-determination theory perspective on culture and well-being*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY and published in Chirkov, V. I., Ryan, R. M., Kim, Y., & Kaplan, U. (2003). Differentiating autonomy from individualism and independence: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization of cultural orientations and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(1), 97-110.

Assessment of motivation

In this task, we will ask you the question: **Why do you, or why would you do certain behaviors?**

People may be motivated to do something for many different reasons. Below there are descriptions of the 6 everyday behaviors that you have just rated and 6 possible reasons that can be applied to these behaviors. Some of these reasons are less, while the others are more applicable to your typical motivation for each of these behaviors. That is why we ask you to rate these behaviors in terms of each of the following six reasons.

Lets take as an example: ... *to dress neatly*. **Why do you or would you do this?** (Please don't write on the answer sheet).

Reason 1. Because of External Pressures (To Get Rewards or Avoid Punishments)

I would engage in this behavior because someone insists on my doing this, or I expect to get some kind of reward, or avoid some punishment for behaving this way.

According to this reason you would dress neatly because your parents, teachers, boss, or spouse make you do so. They reward such behavior, or insist on it. Without these external pressures you wouldn't dress neatly.

Assess to what extent you would dress neatly because of this reason.

Use the following scale:

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Not at all because of this reason | A little because of this reason | Somewhat because of this reason | Mostly because of this reason | Completely because of this reason |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If this were an actual question you would then mark this number on your answer sheet.

Reason 2. To Get Approval or Avoid Guilt

I would engage in this behavior because people around me would approve of me for doing so, and I think I should do it. If I wouldn't, I might feel guilty, ashamed, or anxious.

With this reason you would dress neatly to get the approval of people around you. If you would dress slovenly you would be ashamed. In comparison to the previous reason, you do not necessary have a direct outside pressure.

You would assess to what extent you typically dress neatly because of this reason by applying the same scale, and marking the appropriate number on your answer sheet.

Reason 3. Because It is Important

I would engage in this behavior because I personally believe that it is important and worthwhile to behave this way.

With this reason, you would dress neatly because you personally believe that it is important for you to look neat. You consider that this is the right way for you to be dressed.

You would assess the correspondence of this reason to your typical motivation to dress neatly by applying the same scale, and marking the appropriate number on your answer sheet.

Reason 4. Because It Is Thoughtfully Considered and Fully Chosen

I have thought about this behavior and fully considered alternatives. It makes good sense to me to act this way. I would feel free in choosing and doing it, and would feel responsible for the outcomes.

According to this reason every time you would dress neatly, you would realize why you are doing it at that time. You would also understand that in other situations you might dress less neatly, but in each case you would admit the consequences of your choice and you would readily accept responsibility for your behavior.

You would assess the correspondence of this reason to your typical motivation to dress neatly by applying the same scale, and marking the appropriate number on your answer sheet.

Reason 5. Because It is Fun

I would engage in this behavior because it is interesting, enjoyable, and satisfying to do.

According to this reason, it is a real pleasure for you to dress neatly. You fully enjoy being dressed neatly and find it fun and satisfying to do this.

You would assess the correspondence of this reason to your typical motivation to dress neatly by applying the same scale, and marking the appropriate number on your answer sheet.

Reason 6. No Good Reasons

Although sometimes I have done this behavior, I don't have a good reason to do it.

Rate this reason highly if you don't have any good reasons to dress neatly. Perhaps you don't care about this, or can't do it, or simply don't have any pressures or values that make this a behavior you typically do. If you would dress neatly, it wouldn't be a real decision and you would do it without giving any thought to it.

You would assess the correspondence of this reason to your typical motivation to dress neatly by applying the same scale, and marking the appropriate number on your answer sheet.

Now, if you understand the task, please star.

Why do you or why would you do these behaviors?

Please remember that in answering this question we would like you to recall or imagine situations when you behaved or thought about behaving this way and then rate the typical motivation for this behavior in terms of each of the six reasons. Use the following scale:

| | | | | |
|---|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|
| Not at all because of this reason | | Somewhat because of this reason | | Completely because of this reason |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(This is an example of assessing one of the cultural practices)

*** to help a relative (within your means) if a relative has a financial problem.**

19. Reason 1. Because of External Pressures (Rewards or Punishments).
20. Reason 2. Get Approval or Avoid Guilt.
21. Reason 3. Because It is Important.
22. Reason 4. Because It Is Thoughtfully Considered and Fully Chosen.
23. Reason 5. Because It is Fun.
24. Reason 6. No Good Reason

Modified items describing four types of cultural practices

Horizontal Individualism

To do "one's own things".

- To rely on oneself most of the time and rarely rely on others.
- To behave in direct and forthright manner when having discussions with people.
- To depend on oneself rather than on others.
- To believe that what happens to people is their own doing.
- To cultivate a personal identity, independent of others.

Horizontal Collectivism

- To help a relative (within your means), if the relative has financial problems.
- To maintain harmony within any group that one belongs to.
- To do something to maintain co-workers'/classmates' well-being (such as caring for them or emotionally supporting them).
- To consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.
- To share little things (tools, kitchen stuff, books, etc) with one's neighbours.
- To cooperate and spend time with others.

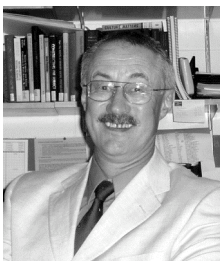
Vertical Individualism

- To strive to do job better than others.
- To strive to work in situations involving competition with others.
- To be annoyed when other people perform better than you.
- To get tense and aroused, when another person does better than you do.
- To express the idea that competition is the law of nature.
- To express the idea that without competition, it is impossible to have a good society.

Vertical Collectivism

- To do what would please one's family, even if one detests that activity.
- To teach children to place duty before pleasure.
- To sacrifice an activity that one enjoys very much (e.g., fishing, collecting, or other hobbies) if one's family did not approve of it.
- To respect decisions made by one's group/collective.
- To sacrifice self-interest for the benefit of group/collective.
- To take care of one's family, even when one has to sacrifice what he/she wants.

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