




Putting the “We” Into Well-being: Using Collectivism-Themed Measures of Well-Being Attenuates Well-being’s Association With Individualism

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Studies repeatedly have documented that societal well-being is associated with individualism. Most of these studies, however, have conceptualized/measured well-being as individual life satisfaction—a type of well-being that originates in Western research traditions. Drawing from the latest research on interdependent happiness and on family well-being, we posit that people across cultures pursue different types of well-being, and test whether more collectivism-themed types of well-being that originate in Confucian traditions also are associated with individualism. Based on data collected from 2,036 participants across 12 countries, we find support for the association between individual life satisfaction and individualism at the societal level, but show that well-being’s association with individualism is attenuated when some collectivism-themed measures of well-being are considered. Our article advances knowledge on the flourishing of societies by suggesting that individualism may not always be strongly linked with societal well-being. Implications for public policies are signaled.

Keywords: culture, family well-being, individual well-being, interdependent happiness, satisfaction with life, self-construals.

Happiness depends upon ourselves.

Aristotle

There is no winter without snow, no spring without sunshine, and no happiness without companions.

Korean proverb

Societal well-being (i.e., country-level averages of individual well-being reports) differs between countries. Perhaps not surprisingly, objective societal differences

such as gross domestic product per capita (GDP) and life expectancy partially explain between-country variability in societal well-being (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2016). The degree to which a national culture is individualistic is an important predictor of societal well-being as well (Cheng, Cheung, & Montasem, 2016; Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Diener & Suh, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; Krys, Uchida, Oishi, & Diener, 2018). In fact, some findings have documented that objective societal indicators cease to have significant associations with societal well-being after controlling for individualism (Diener et al., 1995; cf. Krys et al., 2018).

Triandis (1995) defined individualism as “a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives” and who “give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others” (p. 2). Collectivism, in contrast, is characterized by

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prioritization of the group over individual self. The aforementioned research on the link between individualism and societal well-being repeatedly has found that societal well-being is higher in cultures that are more individualistic. This research, however, has tended to focus on one type of well-being (i.e., individual life satisfaction; Cheng et al., 2016; Diener et al., 2003; Diener & Suh, 1999; Kryś et al., 2018) while ignoring other kinds of well-being. In the current study, we investigate whether individualism's association with societal well-being generalizes to other (more collectivism-themed) kinds of well-being (Kryś et al., 2019). We do this by measuring different types of well-being (i.e., life satisfaction and interdependent happiness) of different targets (i.e., individuals and families) in 12 countries.

Toward Collectivism-Themed Well-Being

People across cultures pursue different types of well-being (Uchida & Kitayama, 2009; Wang, Wong, Yeh, & Wang, 2018). Interdependent happiness, for instance, has been introduced as a more relationship-oriented view of well-being—emphasizing harmony with others, quiescence, and ordinariness—that is thought to be typical for Confucian Asian cultures and pursued by people with more interdependent mindsets (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997; Lu & Gilmour, 2006; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). Life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), in contrast, originates from a Western perspective and does not explicitly emphasize relational functioning, which may make it a less apt measure of well-being in more collectivistic contexts (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015). The association between individualism and societal well-being may fade when considering more interdependent forms of well-being, such as interdependent happiness. In addition, one might expect that collectivism will be associated with more interdependent forms of societal well-being. We assess both life satisfaction and interdependent happiness in the current research to test these predictions.

The subject or unit of analysis of the most commonly employed measures of well-being might be another reason why they provide a better fit for individualistic cultures. These measures focus on the individual as the reference point, which is typical for individualistic cultures and research traditions (Lee et al., 2012; Triandis, 2001; Uchida, Ueno, & Miyamoto, 2014). For collectivistic cultures, the more important reference is the basic social group (Lee et al., 2012; Triandis, 2001). In particular, collectivists tend to be more accustomed to thinking about themselves as part of a family, and individual self-descriptions may seem artificial; descriptions of themselves as part of their family are more natural because it locates their selves in their habitual unit of representation

(Cousins, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Uchida et al., 2014). “How are we doing/feeling as a family?” may be a more salient and important question than is “How am I doing/feeling as an individual?” in cultures that are less individualistic. Thus, in the current article, we also compare the well-being of *I* (an individual) with the well-being of *us* (a family as a whole; Sampson, 1981). Yet, using family (vs. individual) as the referent is potentially independent from Confucian-based measures of harmony. Considering both simultaneously yields four types of well-being, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The importance of family in people's understanding of well-being has been outlined in the study by Delle Fave et al. (2016). They asked lay people from 12 nations an open-ended question about what happiness meant to them. Besides psychological definitions (42% of all answers), “family” was the most commonly listed category of lay definitions of happiness (16% of all answers). These results suggest that studies on well-being also may want to pay attention to the well-being of one's family, and this element may be important across cultures. Moreover, Delle Fave et al. found that “harmony/balance” was more frequently mentioned in lay definitions of happiness than was “satisfaction” (12% vs. 7% of all answers). This lends support for our focus on interdependent happiness in the current study, along with the more popular and established construct of life satisfaction.

We assume that family is cross-culturally regarded as a fundamentally important component of a person's life (Kryś et al., 2019); at the same time, we think that collectivistic societies may attribute extraordinary value to family. Data

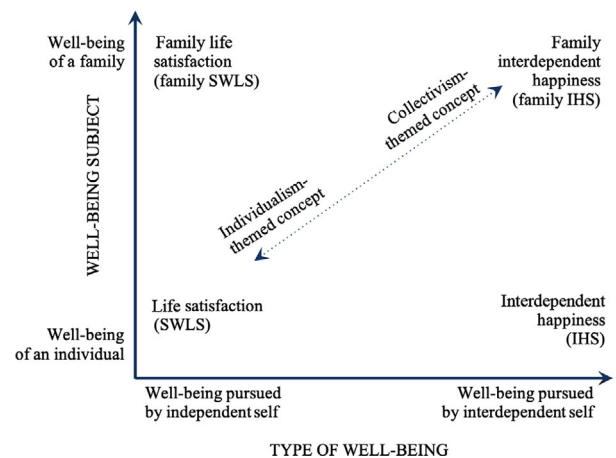


Figure 1 Four kinds of well-being concepts (and in brackets, their measures). The vertical axis differentiates the subject of well-being (an individual vs. a family). The horizontal axis differentiates the type of well-being (life satisfaction vs. interdependent happiness). IHS = the Interdependent Happiness Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

from the latest World Values Survey (2016) have provided support for these predictions. Based on a scale of 1 (*very important*) to 4 (*not at all important*), the importance of a family reached close to the ceiling level in the whole sample ($M = 1.10$, $SD = .37$, $N_{\text{participants}} = 90,017$, $N_{\text{countries}} = 60$). Moreover, in each of the 60 analyzed countries, family was indicated as the most important of the six researched life domains (family, friends, leisure time, politics, work, and religion; for more see Kryś et al., 2019). Despite such cultural “universality” of family importance, the small amount of between-country variation of family valuation was still explained by collectivism, as assessed by Schwartz’ (2009) cultural dimension of embeddedness, $r = .56$, $p < .001$ (for a discussion of the considerable overlap between collectivism and embeddedness, see Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004).

In our study, we follow common approaches in family well-being research to measure family well-being (Kryś et al., 2019). First, the family well-being constructs under investigation (i.e., family life satisfaction and family interdependent happiness) are adapted from individual well-being constructs (Hu, Summers, Turnbull, & Zuna, 2011; Park et al., 2003; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Following Diener et al. (1985), family life satisfaction is defined here as a person’s overall assessment of their family’s quality of life according to their own criteria. Following Hitokoto and Uchida (2015), family interdependent happiness is defined here as an overall subjective assessment of the degree to which a person’s family is ordinary, quiescent, connected to the collective way of well-being, and socially harmonized. Second, like the majority of previous research (Hu et al., 2011), family well-being is studied here from the perspective of a single member of a family. Third, instead of measuring narrower aspects of family well-being as some studies have (Andersz, Czarnota-Bojarska, & Wojtkowska, 2018; Newland, 2015), we adhere to a more general conceptualization of family well-being (i.e., its globalized and holistic assessment; Zabriskie & Ward, 2013).

Although our approach is similar to previous research in the ways listed earlier, what is unique about the current study is that we simultaneously consider both the life satisfaction and interdependent happiness of individuals and families, allowing us to investigate four kinds of well-being that range from a more individualism-themed conceptualization of well-being (i.e., individual life satisfaction) to a more collectivism-themed conceptualization (i.e., family interdependent happiness; see Figure 1 and Kryś et al., 2019).

The Present Study

To examine the robustness of the link between societal well-being and individualism, we study how four types of well-being are associated with self-construals at the country level (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Self-construals

refer to individuals’ conceptions of themselves as autonomous and expressing unique inner attributes (independent self), or to the emphasis on attending to others, fitting in, and maintaining harmonious interdependence with others (interdependent self). Originally, Markus and Kitayama (1991) linked independent and interdependent self-construals with American individualism and Confucian collectivism, respectively, but self-construals have since been theorized to generalize to all types of individualistic and collectivistic societies (Triandis, 1995; cf. Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Here, we aggregate country-level averages of independent and interdependent self-construals as markers of individualism and collectivism, respectively (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2005; cf. Takano & Osaka, 2018; Vignoles, 2018). To distinguish individual- from country-level constructs, we refer to country-level aggregates of independent and interdependent self-construals as individualistic and collectivistic *contexts*, and individual-level independent and interdependent self-construals as individualistic and collectivistic *mindsets*.

We predict that the association between individualistic context and societal well-being will be strongest for individual life satisfaction (i.e., the most individualism-themed type of well-being) and weakest (if present at all) for family interdependent happiness (i.e., the most collectivism-themed type of well-being). In contrast, we predict that collectivistic context may be positively associated with the more collectivism-themed types of well-being, such as family interdependent happiness. The collected data also let us explore two additional issues. First, we checked what portion of variation in the four different types of well-being is explained by cultural context (we had no a priori predictions about the results of these analyses). Second, we explored how the individualistic and collectivistic mindsets are associated with self-reported levels of different types of well-being. Previous research has found a relationship between having a more individualistic mindset and reporting greater individual well-being (Park, Norasakkunkit, & Kashima, 2017; Pilarska, 2014; Yamaguchi & Kim, 2015), and that *both* types of mindsets are associated with individual well-being (Novin, Tso, & Konrath, 2014; Suh, Diener, & Updegraff, 2008). Moreover, Pilarska (2014) found that individual life satisfaction was more strongly associated with an individualistic rather than a collectivistic mindset. We wanted to see whether these results would replicate in the current study.

Method

Participants and Countries

Students from various fields of study were recruited at each author’s university and in accordance with APA ethical rules. Data were gathered from 2,049 respondents

in 12 countries: Canada, China, Colombia, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. After removing individuals with missing answers on the primary measures, the final sample consisted of 2,036 participants (participants who withdrew or only partially completed the questionnaires were not recorded/reported in the majority of samples). Demographic characteristics for all country samples are presented in Table 1, along with descriptive statistics for all the variables of interest.

Materials and Procedure

We employed the Satisfaction With Life Scale (individual SWLS; Diener et al., 1985; e.g., “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”) to measure individual life satisfaction. The Interdependent Happiness Scale (individual IHS; Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015; e.g., “I can do what I want without causing problems for other people”) was used to measure individual interdependent happiness. Similar to Krys and collaborators (2019), we also adapted both measures to assess participants’ views of their families by changing the subject of the individual SWLS and individual IHS measures from an individual to their family (e.g., “In most ways the life of my family is close to ideal” for family SWLS and “As a family we can do what we want without causing problems for other people” for family IHS; for a full list of the original and modified SWLS and IHS items, see Supporting Information).

To measure individualistic and collectivistic mindsets and contexts, we included 10 items from the Self-Construal Scale (SCS; Singelis, 1994; e.g., “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects” for independence [$SCS_{\text{independent self}}$], and “I will sacrifice my self interest for the benefit of the group I am in” for interdependence [$SCS_{\text{interdependent self}}$]), which have been used previously by other researchers as a shortened version of this scale (Nezlek, Schaafsma, Safron, & Krejtz, 2012; for a full list of the selected SCS items, see Supporting Information). Independent and interdependent self-construals served as measures of individualistic and collectivistic mindsets, respectively, and their country-level averages served as measures of individualistic and collectivistic contexts.

Participants rated how much they agreed with the well-being and self-construal items on a Likert-type scale of 1 (*I don't agree at all*) to 7 (*I fully agree*). At the end of the questionnaire, all participants were asked to provide information on their social status (i.e., education of parents and number of books in the family home), age, gender, monthly budgets (i.e., participant's own budget and their family's per capita budget),

satisfaction with these two budgets, and satisfaction with other various aspects of life (i.e., health, family, friends, neighbors, and relations with other significant people). The Canadian researchers also included items to assess participants' ethnicity and nationality in their sample. Following Hitokoto and Uchida (2015), we also measured self-esteem. The measures that are not related to the current research questions are not mentioned again in this article. Materials were prepared in Polish and English. Instructions and demographic items were translated from English into the dominant language of every country covered by the study, and the appropriate language versions of the SWLS and the IHS scales were used. To establish linguistic equivalence of the instructions and demographic items, team leaders followed the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970).

Analytic Approach

As a preliminary test of our hypotheses and to illustrate associations between the variables of interest, we carried out correlational analyses. When comparing correlation coefficients, we employed the test of the difference between two dependent correlations with one variable in common (Steiger, 1980). As the main analytic tool, we employed multilevel modelling (MLM) to examine how individualistic and collectivistic contexts were related to the four kinds of well-being at the country level of analysis. MLM also allowed us to examine similar relations at the individual level. Self-construals for all individuals were group-mean centered within countries (and labelled as *mindsets*), and the average scores of self-construals for each country were grand-mean centered by the average of the 12 countries (and labelled as *contexts*). For the predicted variables, we analyzed the four types of well-being (i.e., individual SWLS, individual IHS, family SWLS, and family IHS). In the analyses reported next, we controlled for the gender of participants (to do so, in the MLMs, we excluded data from 6 participants who indicated “other” gender) and for the gender imbalance in the samples (the latter at the country level of analysis). We also modelled the four two-way cross-level interactions between the main self-construal variables of interest (i.e., Individualistic Mindset \times Individualistic Context, Individualistic Mindset \times Collectivistic Context, Collectivistic Mindset \times Individualistic Context, and Collectivistic Mindset \times Collectivistic Context). To facilitate interpretation of our main finding, we present standardized regression coefficients in Figure 2 (we followed the equation on p. 22 of Hox, 2010 to standardize the coefficients).

Table 1
Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics for the Well-Being Variables and Individualistic and Collectivistic Contexts

	Coll. n	Anlz. n	Fem. %	Age M (SD)	Individual SWLS 1 M (SD) α	Family SWLS 2 M (SD) α	Individual IHS 3 M (SD) α	Family IHS 4 M (SD) α	Individualistic Context 5 M (SD) α	Collectivistic Context 6 M (SD) α
Canada	151	151	73	20.12 (3.17)	4.53 (1.26) .88	4.70 (1.50) .93	4.69 (1.12) .91	4.87 (1.30) .93	5.04 (0.98) .75	4.16 (1.03) .75
China	150	150	55	19.56 (2.20)	4.32 (1.21) .87	4.78 (1.27) .92	4.87 (0.91) .88	5.28 (0.91) .90	4.48 (0.70) .35	4.04 (0.87) .63
Colombia	150	150	55	25.68 (11.25)	4.98 (1.13) .82	5.11 (1.15) .84	4.97 (1.02) .87	5.19 (1.08) .92	5.35 (1.02) .69	3.85 (1.11) .63
Japan	126	126	14	21.14 (1.24)	3.41 (1.09) .77	4.21 (1.29) .87	3.84 (1.07) .87	4.69 (1.20) .92	4.47 (0.90) .61	4.02 (0.95) .65
Korea	111	111	57	22.22 (1.81)	3.91 (1.13) .86	4.12 (1.40) .93	4.75 (1.05) .92	4.73 (1.18) .94	4.45 (0.85) .61	3.88 (1.02) .74
Mexico	441	441	63	24.56 (10.16)	5.25 (1.07) .84	5.10 (1.39) .91	5.01 (1.01) .85	4.92 (1.18) .88	5.85 (0.85) .64	3.15 (1.19) .73
The Netherlands	140	139	67	20.93 (3.95)	4.10 (0.90) .65	4.44 (1.31) .92	4.86 (0.90) .86	4.91 (1.05) .92	4.92 (0.78) .62	3.99 (0.92) .69
Nigeria	166	166	52	21.27 (2.33)	4.36 (1.22) .81	4.86 (1.21) .84	4.70 (1.02) .85	5.10 (1.07) .89	5.16 (1.08) .73	4.08 (1.03) .58
Pakistan	192	192	38	21.09 (1.45)	4.43 (1.29) .81	4.96 (1.33) .85	4.60 (0.92) .75	5.20 (1.01) .82	5.14 (1.02) .56	4.65 (1.13) .66
Poland	143	143	67	27.84 (7.06)	4.28 (1.05) .86	4.52 (1.21) .91	4.67 (1.03) .91	4.95 (1.12) .93	4.92 (1.09) .81	4.42 (0.96) .71
United Kingdom	125	114	92	25.84 (8.10)	4.42 (1.26) .87	4.39 (1.57) .94	4.45 (1.09) .88	4.71 (1.31) .93	4.68 (0.96) .71	4.24 (0.93) .68
USA	154	153	53	19.61 (1.57)	4.77 (1.06) .83	4.84 (1.38) .92	4.87 (.95) .86	5.15 (1.13) .91	5.20 (0.89) .70	4.39 (0.89) .63
Average	171	170	57	22.5 (3.37)	4.40 (1.13) .82	4.67 (1.33) .90	4.69 (1.01) .87	4.98 (1.12) .90	4.97 (0.92) .65	4.07 (1.00) .67
Total	2,049	2,036	57	22.7 (6.96)	4.54 (1.24) .85	4.76 (1.37) .90	4.74 (1.04) .87	4.99 (1.14) .90	5.12 (1.03) .71	3.95 (1.14) .73

Note.. Coll. = Collected; Anlz. = Analyzed; Fem. = females; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; IHS = Interdependent Happiness Scale; individualistic context = aggregate of independent self; collectivistic context = country-level aggregate of interdependent self.

Results

Correlational Analyses

We present a summary of the correlational results in Table 2. In line with previous studies on the relationship between culture and well-being, individualistic context was significantly associated with higher levels of individual SWLS at the country level, $r(10) = .85$, $p < .001$. However, as predicted, the association between societal well-being and individualistic context tended to attenuate when more collectivism-themed types of well-being were analyzed. In the case of family IHS—the most collectivism-themed type of well-being—the country-level association was not statistically significant, $r(10) = .35$, $p = .27$. A direct comparison of the individual SWLS and family IHS country-level correlation coefficients with individualistic context revealed that the difference was significant, $z = 2.34$, $p = .019$. Moreover, the association between individualistic context and individual IHS was only marginally significant, $r(10) = .54$, $p = .072$, and was significantly weaker than the association between individualistic context and individual SWLS, $z = 2.37$, $p = .018$. Individualistic context's association with family SWLS, however, was significant, r

(10) = .81, $p = .001$, and of a similar magnitude as its association with individual SWLS. None of the country-level associations involving well-being and collectivistic context were significant, $ps > .31$, although family IHS was the only type of well-being with a positive sign of association.

We also explored findings at the individual level of analysis (i.e., individualistic and collectivistic mindsets). Data were standardized within countries to control for differences between countries for these analyses at the individual level. We found that both types of mindsets were significantly associated with each type of well-being, and the associations ranged from weak, $r = .08$, to moderate, $r = .41$. Similar to Pilarska (2014), associations of individualistic mindset with well-being were stronger than associations of collectivistic mindset with well-being (for direct comparisons of all four pairs of coefficients, $zs > 3.91$ and $ps < .001$).

Two-Level Analyses

We present a summary of the results from the MLMs for each of the four types of well-being in Table 3 and illustrate our main finding in standardized coefficients in Figure 2. The interpretation of results was similar when the gender control variables were excluded. In line with previous studies on the relationship between culture and well-being, individualistic context predicted higher levels of individual SWLS, $b = .94$, $SE = .19$, $p < .001$. In contrast, individualistic context was not a significant predictor of family IHS, $b = .27$, $SE = .16$, $p = .13$. Comparison of the regression coefficients for family IHS and individual SWLS revealed that they differed significantly, $t(20) = 2.77$, $p = .01$ (Soper, 2018). This difference indicates that individualistic context had a stronger relationship with individual SWLS than with family IHS. Furthermore, the results for the two remaining scales fell between the two aforementioned well-being scales, family SWLS: $b = .73$, $SE = .17$, $p = .003$, and individual IHS: $b = .31$, $SE = .18$, $p = .13$. Comparisons of regression coefficients revealed a significant difference between individual SWLS and individual IHS, $t(20) = 2.41$, $p = .03$, and a marginally significant difference between family SWLS and family IHS, $t(20) = 1.97$, $p = .06$; differences between the other regression coefficients did not reach levels of statistical significance, $ps > .10$. Collectivistic context was not a significant predictor of any type of societal well-being, $ps > .23$, although the sign of its associations with family IHS and family SWLS were positive. No significant cross-level interactions were observed, $ps > .10$.

At the individual level of analysis, both types of mindsets played a significant role in predicting each type of well-being (see Table 3). Individualistic mindset,

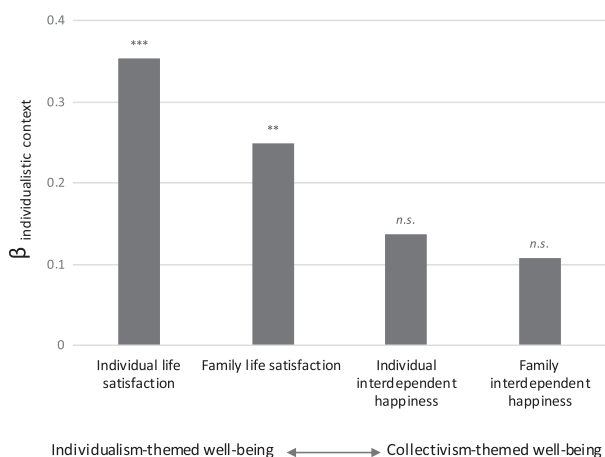


Figure 2 Country-level standardized regression coefficients for individualistic context (i.e., country-level aggregates of independent self-construals) predicting the four types of well-being based on the two-level models. Whereas individual Satisfaction With Life Scale (individual SWLS) is the most individualism-themed measure of well-being and family Interdependent Happiness Scale (family IHS) is the most collectivism-themed measure of well-being of the four types of well-being we examined, family SWLS and individual IHS can be regarded as sharing qualities of both contexts. Therefore, the arrangement of these two intermediate types of well-being is arbitrary and could be reversed. n.s. = $p > .10$ (not significant). ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Associations Between Well-Being and Individualistic and Collectivistic Mindsets and Contexts

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Individual SWLS	–	.48 ^{***}	.68 ^{***}	.42 ^{***}	.33 ^{***a}	.08 ^{***a}
2 Family SWLS [†]	.83 ^{***}	–	.52 ^{***}	.81 ^{***}	.27 ^{***b}	.15 ^{***b}
3 Individual IHS [†]	.76 ^{**}	.56 ⁺	–	.56 ^{***}	.41 ^{***c}	.15 ^{***b}
4 Family IHS	.46	.78 ^{**}	.51 ⁺	–	.33 ^{***a}	.16 ^{***b}
5 Individualistic mindset (above diagonal) and context (below diagonal)	.85 ^{***a}	.81 ^{** ab}	.54 ^{bc}	.35 ^c	–	.01
6 Collectivistic mindset (above diagonal) and context (below diagonal)	–.32 ^a	–.14 ^a	–.29 ^a	.23 ^a	–.36	–

Note. Individual-level correlations (after standardization within countries to control for between-country differences) are reported above the diagonal (upper right side); superscripts that differ within columns indicate that the mindset's association with one type of well-being is significantly different, $p < .05$, from its associations with another type of well-being. Country-level correlations are reported below the diagonal (lower left side); superscripts that differ within rows indicate that the context's association with one type of well-being is at least marginally significantly different, $p < .10$, from its associations with another type of well-being. Calculations were based on the test of the difference between two dependent correlations with one variable in common (Steiger, 1980). Individualistic mindset = independent self; collectivistic mindset = interdependent self; individualistic context = country-level aggregate of independent self; collectivistic context = country-level aggregate of interdependent self.

[†]Whereas individual SWLS is the most individualism-themed measure of well-being and family IHS is the most collectivism-themed measure of well-being of the four types of well-being we examined, family SWLS and individual IHS can be regarded as sharing qualities of both contexts. Therefore, the arrangement of these two intermediate types of well-being is arbitrary and could be reversed. All ps are two-tailed.

⁺ $p < .10$. ^{*} $p < .05$. ^{**} $p < .01$. ^{***} $p < .001$.

though, was a stronger predictor than was collectivistic mindset (four comparisons of regression coefficients revealed $ps \leq .03$).

Portion of Variation Explained by Culture

Although it was not the direct focus of our study, we also explored variability of the four types of well-being across cultures. To do so, we calculated the intraclass correlations (ICCs) for the four types of well-being. Individual SWLS was the most variable across cultures whereas family IHS was the least variable, $ICC_{\text{individual SWLS}} = .15$, $ICC_{\text{individual IHS}} = .08$, $ICC_{\text{family SWLS}} = .05$, $ICC_{\text{family IHS}} = .02$. Thus, the fractions of variance explained at the level of country (vs. individuals) appeared to be different for the four types of well-being.

Discussion

In this study, we sought to broaden the scope of cross-cultural research on the flourishing of societies by comparing how individualism- and collectivism-themed measures of societal well-being associate with individualistic and collectivistic contexts. This allowed us to examine how different cultural contexts might promote or hinder the experience of different kinds of well-being. The results mostly provided support for our prediction that using more collectivism-themed measures of well-being attenuates well-being's association with individualistic

context. We replicated previous findings by showing that country-level averages of the most individualism-themed measure of well-being (i.e., individual life satisfaction) were strongly related to the individualistic context. Novel to the research on societal well-being, we detected no significant association between our most collectivism-themed measure of well-being (i.e., family interdependent happiness) and individualistic context. Importantly, the regression coefficients describing these two culture-level associations were significantly different. This set of results supports the notion that the well-described relationship between individualism and societal well-being may be, at least partly, due to the most popular well-being measures better fitting individualistic contexts. As the conceptualization of well-being became less individualism-themed, the society-level association between well-being and individualism tended to fade (although this was not always the case, as individualism's associations with individual life satisfaction and family life satisfaction were similar).

Our findings might reflect how cultural values translate into different conceptualizations of well-being (Lun & Bond, 2016). People in less individualistic contexts may sometimes deprioritize their individual well-being relative to their family's well-being. Furthermore, when social harmony is valued, focusing on individual well-being can be perceived as interfering with social relationships (Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). Therefore, individual well-being may act as a stronger

Table 3
Summary of Multilevel Modelling Results for Four Different Types of Well-Being

	Predicted Variables											
	Individual SWLS			Family SWLS ^a			Individual IHS ^a			Family IHS		
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Individual-level predictors												
Individualistic mindset	0.38	[0.28, 0.48]	<.001	0.35	[0.21, 0.47]	<.001	0.42	[0.33, 0.50]	<.001	0.38	[0.25, 0.49]	<.001
Collectivistic mindset	0.14	[0.07, 0.21]	.002	0.21	[0.14, 0.27]	<.001	0.16	[0.11, 0.20]	<.001	0.16	[0.10, 0.22]	<.001
Country-level predictors												
Individualistic context	0.94	[0.51, 1.37]	<.001	0.73	[0.33, 1.13]	.003	0.31	[-0.12, 0.73]	.13	0.27	[-0.10, 0.63]	.13
Collectivistic context	0.00	[-0.46, 0.46]	.99	0.16	[-0.27, 0.59]	.41	-0.08	[-0.54, 0.38]	.69	0.23	[-0.17, 0.62]	.23
Cross-level interactions	<0.16		>.10	<0.14		>.10	<0.13		>.20	<0.23		>.14
Gender control variables												
Gender of participant	0.10		.14	-0.08		.19	0.07		.26	-0.04		.50
Gender imbalance in cultural samples	0.67		.13	-0.17		.66	0.72		.10	-0.19		.59

Note.. Collectivistic context = country-level aggregate of interdependent self; collectivistic mindset = interdependent self; Family = family version of a scale; IHS = Interdependent Happiness Scale; Individual = individual version of a scale; individualistic context = country-level aggregate of independent self; individualistic mindset = independent self; SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale.

^aWhereas individual SWLS is the most individualism-themed measure of well-being and family IHS is the most collectivism-themed measure of well-being of the four types of well-being that we examined, family SWLS and individual IHS can be regarded as sharing qualities of both contexts. Therefore, the arrangement of these two intermediate types of well-being is arbitrary and could be reversed.

motivator in highly individualistic contexts. Some research has even suggested that fear of happiness is less prevalent in individualistic societies (Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014). Taken together, this suggests that individual life satisfaction may be viewed as an individualism-themed type of well-being (also see Kryś et al., 2018). If so, higher levels of individual life satisfaction in individualistic contexts are understandable. However, as we documented in the current study, the strong positive association of individual life satisfaction with individualism should not be generalized to the most collectivism-themed types of well-being.

Interestingly, our data do not provide support for our prediction that collectivistic context would be positively associated with more collectivism-themed types of well-being. Although some associations involving collectivistic context and the more collectivism-themed types of well-being were positive in sign, they did not reach statistical significance. Our design might have been underpowered to detect the smaller association between collectivistic context (and individualistic context) and the most collectivism-themed type of well-being. With a greater number of cultures, we may have found that family interdependent happiness is predicted by collectivistic context (and individualistic context). It also is possible that in collectivistic contexts (vs. individualistic contexts), the emphasis on relationships is not stronger, *per se*, but may be relatively stronger in comparison to the emphasis on self (see Kwan et al., 1997). Alternatively, the lack of association between the most collectivism-themed type of well-being and collectivistic context may document that family interdependent happiness is attained more universally across various cultures, and is not only a predominantly collectivistic phenomenon.

This universality of family conclusion also can be supported by our exploratory analyses. They revealed that individual life satisfaction was the most variable across cultures whereas family interdependent happiness was the most culturally stable (i.e., there was minimal between-country variability). This “universalism” is consistent with the latest World Values Survey (2016), which showed that family was rated as the most important aspect of life across all 60 countries that were sampled. According to Oyserman et al. (2002), family orientation may be separate from collectivism, and is a complex phenomenon: being close to family does not necessarily equal being obligated to it. An evolutionary perspective may help explain such apparent universality: ensuring the well-being of one’s family is one way of maximizing the probability of shared genes being passed on. With hints that family well-being is universally important, we recommend additional research on this construct.

When looking at our country-level results from yet another angle, one may conclude that individualistic

context is related to most types of well-being whereas collectivistic context is not significantly associated with any type of analyzed well-being. Thus, one can speculate that individualism (but not collectivism) is likely to promote the pursuit of happiness, which makes individualism have a stronger relationship with actual levels of happiness. Broadening this speculation from happiness (i.e., satisfaction and interdependent versions) to other types of being well (e.g., meaning in life) needs to be done with caution, however (see Oishi & Diener, 2014). As signaled earlier, studies on cultural differences in the valuation of different types of well-being are needed (e.g., Kryś et al., 2019).

In our second set of exploratory analyses (i.e., when individuals and not countries were the focus), we found that both collectivistic and individualistic mindsets played a significant role in predicting each type of well-being, but individualistic mindset was a stronger predictor than was collectivistic mindset. These findings highlight the complexity of individual and cultural processes related to well-being. The fact that individualistic mindset (vs. collectivistic mindset) was the stronger predictor of individualism-themed well-being is in line with previous studies on individual life satisfaction (Park et al., 2017; Pilarska, 2014; Suh et al., 2008; Yamaguchi & Kim, 2015) and can be interpreted on the grounds of psychological fit theories. Although one might expect that interdependent happiness would be more strongly associated with interdependent mindsets (Suh et al., 2008), our results suggest that individualistic mindset was a better predictor of all four types of well-being at the individual level. One possible explanation is that individualistic mindsets promote the pursuit of positive outcomes (including happiness) more than do collectivistic mindsets. This is supported by research showing that approach motivation is higher in those with more individualistic mindsets whereas avoidance motivation is higher in those with more collectivistic mindsets (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim, & Sheldon, 2001; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). Even for more interdependent aspects of well-being, approaching positive incentives in relationships may ultimately work better than efforts to avoid conflict (Gable & Impett, 2012), though this explanation still requires confirmation, particularly in the cross-cultural context. In addition, our measure of (family) interdependent happiness is only one of many aspects of well-being. With alternative measures (e.g., pure harmony—the IHS asks about “happiness,” too—or meaning), research may well find more correspondence between collectivist mindsets and well-being. Our initial attempt here does not exhaust the possibilities.

Despite the current study shedding light on novel facets of societal well-being, there are limitations. First, concepts of family can differ between cultures: single-parent families are becoming more frequent in WEIRD cultures whereas extended families are more common in

more traditional societies (Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006). Thus, it would be ideal if future studies assessed the type of family to which participants belong. Second, the current study only included samples of students, who probably reported about their birth families. Data collected from mature parents could produce results different from those presented here due to their experiences and role in the family. The relatively small samples in each nation and our sampling of only 12 countries are other limitations that we acknowledge. In addition, the short version of Singelis' Self-Construal Scale that we used appeared to have modest reliabilities in some cultures; thus, future studies could increase the confidence in our findings by using other self-construal scales (Vignoles et al., 2016).

Research in cross-cultural psychology has evolved greatly in recent years, along with discussions on the nature of individualism and collectivism (Hamamura & Takemura, 2018; Krys et al., 2018). Takano and Osaka (2018), after an examination of 30 studies on individualism/collectivism, concluded that the common view on which countries are collectivistic and which are individualistic can be contested. Vignoles (2018), in his commentary to Takano and Osaka's argument, made several recommendations, among which was for more precision in defining concepts. Therefore, we would like to stress that the marker of individualism/collectivism we employ (i.e., country-level aggregates of self-construals) constitutes only one specific version of individualistic and collectivistic contexts. Our conclusions are based on this particular type of individualistic and collectivistic contexts, and broad generalizations beyond it may be risky until future studies allow for them.

The high levels of independent self-construals in Mexico and Colombia require some attention. Studies on self-construals in Latin America are scarce, and those available have delivered results consistent with our finding of members of Latin American cultures reporting high levels of independent self (Church et al., 2013; Fernandez, Paez, & Gonzalez, 2005; Oyserman et al., 2002; Vignoles et al., 2016). For instance, using a more psychometrically sound measure of self-construals, Vignoles et al. (2016) documented, like we did, that Latin Americans report having even more independent selfhoods than do members of Western cultures. Studies on honour versus face cultures (Krys et al., 2017), on relational mobility (Thomson et al., 2018), and on loose versus tight cultures (Gelfand et al., 2011) may help differentiate mindsets construed by Latin American and Confucian collectivisms, but further analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of the current article.

As research on societal well-being has accumulated, its implications for public policy have grown as well. In recent years, the search for alternatives to GDP per capita

as measures of societal development has intensified, and societal well-being seems to be one of the leading options (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015; Helliwell et al., 2016). Most recommendations are based, however, on measuring the societal well-being of individuals using constructs developed in individualistic cultures (i.e., individual life satisfaction). The assumption that this type of well-being is universally valued and desired may not be correct (Diener, Napa-Scollon, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Suh, 2000; Hornsey et al., 2018; Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014; Krys et al., 2019). Our findings suggest that we may need to elaborate and more thoroughly study societal well-being that is less culture-bound. Thus, research on family well-being and interdependent happiness may provide a more comprehensive description of the cultural contributors to societal well-being. Institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Durand, 2018) or the United Nations Development Programme (2018) may consider adapting their measures of societal well-being so that collectivistic aspects of well-being are more explicitly taken into account. Policy makers employing well-being indicators also may need to pay more attention to whether people across cultures report their lives as meaningful (Oishi & Diener, 2014). Being individually satisfied is only one of many ways of living a good life.

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