

**A Multi-national Study of Satisfaction with One's Life to Date Using Big Five Predictors in National Cultures Socializing Children for Different Qualities<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Satisfaction with one's life to date (SWOLD) may be regarded as a cognitive assessment of how well persons have accommodated themselves to the socialization demands in their current life space. Success in this accommodation will depend in part upon the personality resources that each person can bring to bear in the cultural niche into which they were thrown by the fatedness of their birth. These issues were addressed by extracting measures of the Big Five personality dimensions and socialization goals for children from the responses of representative samples of over 34,000 citizens from 23 nations in Wave 6 of the World Values Survey. It was expected and found that the personality resources of Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability predicted SWOLD pan-nationally. However, the strength of the effect of Conscientiousness varied depending on the culture of a nation's socialization of its children for different qualities. The relationship between Conscientiousness and SWOLD was stronger in nations socializing children for Self-Directedness as opposed to Other-Directedness. Results from this analysis were discussed in term of how personality resources promote successful adaptation to life and to certain socialization environments as a consequence of the social-psychological presses for right conduct characterizing those national niches for the development of social capital. Throughout this essay, we will try to relate this recent multi-national research to the corpus of Paul Wong's writing on indigenous

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and cross-cultural models of positive psychology responsive to the cultural traditions of Chinese people.

**Paul's contribution to the field.**

Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?

–Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day”

This paper addresses five issues: 1. What is this concept, well-being, and how might it relate to a person's assessment of his or her satisfaction with life to date (SWOLD)? 2. How do personality resources as assessed by the Big Five model of personality relate to a person's achievement of SWOLD? 3. Do certain personality resources show a stronger relationship to a person's SWOLD in different kinds of cultural settings, and why? 4. How do cultural settings, in the present case, nations, vary in terms of their goals for socializing children? 5. What are the relationships around the world between persons' personality resources and their SWOLD in different national cultures varying in their emphasis on different qualities for the socialization of their children?

So, in this paper we adopt a functional perspective to examine the linkages between personality resources and a general sense of well-being pan-culturally. Additionally, we examine whether there is moderation in the linkages between Big Five personality dimensions and SWOLD by the socialization pressures for ideal human capital characterizing different nations. To our knowledge, no such study has yet been conducted. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this approach to understanding the individual's journey towards a sense of satisfaction, or not, with his or her life to date has been the focus of philosophical discourse and psychological investigation through millennia and especially during the last half century. This study, however simplistic, is an attempt to broaden the ambit of this discussion beyond its traditionally narrow cultural confines to be more culturally inclusive.

Paul Wong's career as a clinically trained Chinese psychologist constitutes a major thrust in enlarging the discussion of well-being and the process of its achievement beyond narrower cultural confines. His sustained focus has been levelled upon identifying and

encouraging the inclusion of indigenous Chinese worldviews into our disciplinary understanding of how a person may achieve a good life, especially in distinction from so-called “Western” or “American” models (Wong, 2009, 2013). This abstract from Wong (2016) encapsulates his career-long agenda:

...since Chinese culture is complex and profound, an uncritical transplant of American positive psychology to Chinese soil may not be fruitful. It proposes that a more promising approach to Chinese Positive Psychology (CPP) calls for research programs that meet the needs of the Chinese people in their unique cultural and political context. More specifically, it first describes the defining characteristics of the Chinese culture and then outlines three related tracks of research: (1) Basic psychological research based on Chinese yin-yang dialectics, (2) the indigenous psychology movement, and (3) cross-cultural psychology research. This paper concludes that Wong's (2011) dialectical perspective of Positive Psychology 2.0 may provide a more culturally appropriate framework for a productive CPP and a hopeful future for China. (p. 1)

In attempting this ambitious agenda, Paul joins other post-WWII thinkers in exhorting a broader appreciation of all that is human, so that our understanding of psychology is less ethnocentric, more responsive to the complexity of living in a multi-cultural, 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

This essay is a contribution to a *Festschrift* in honor of Paul Wong's contribution to this discourse. Accordingly, we will try to indicate throughout this essay, various places where his extensive work interfaces with the present study that follows. We apologize in advance for our shortfall in doing adequate justice to Paul's legacy, as it interfaces with our current research program.

### **What is Well-being?**

The good life and how to live one's life well have provoked discussion throughout human history. Answers have been offered by philosophers, spiritual thinkers, medical practitioners, nutritionists, social planners, psychotherapists, politicians, and motivational speakers from all cultural traditions. Since the 1990's, this topic of interest has crystalized into the Positive Psychology movement, generating a host of theories, conceptualizations, definitions, measures, and associated research findings. These findings are important for coaches, educationalists, human resource professionals, counsellors, religious leaders and other professionals tasked to enhance the human performance of their mentees, students, clients, followers and others for whom they assume or are tasked with role responsibility; these findings generate considerable public interest and are carefully screened for possible prescriptions on how to live better, be that as individuals or as societies (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positive\\_psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positive_psychology)).

The plethora of findings generated from this extensive theorizing has moved from its Anglo-Russian-European, mostly U.S. American, center of gravity to consider other cultural traditions as proposed by their local proponents and apologists. New questions have arisen: What is the key psychological outcome of living well – happiness, contentment, equanimity, acceptance, grace under pressure, calm-and-harmony-based mature happiness (Wong & Bowers, 2018), a sense of satisfaction? What are the associated personality resources promoting those outcomes – various virtues, like purity or filiality; worldviews, like fatalism, dualism or collectivism (Wong, 2016); or orientations, like a balanced time perspective; values, like benevolence or enterprise; behavioural styles, like resilience or enthusiasm?

Do these various judgments about the good life, its end points and processes for reaching those end points, themselves reflect culturally grounded provisions? Would this grounding in a given cultural tradition find its resonance in other cultural traditions? Would the demands of living in certain types of cultural environment shape these judgments,

allowing researchers to understand these differences in emphasis? To address this question, social scientists have begun conducting their explorations multi-culturally, using representative populations to ensure that as many cultural voices as possible enter the busy colloquy. How far can we generalize theories and models for the good life using widely sourced, empirical data?

A host of measures for personal well-being have been offered and assessed in various populations, but rarely inter-related. Friedman, Kern, and Reynolds' (2010) use of the longitudinal Terman study of giftedness is an exception - they assessed the physical health, subjective well-being, social competence, and productivity as achieved by the Termites over their lifespans. Friedman et al. defined subjective well-being as, "...the psychological well-being of a person and how satisfying a person believes his or her life is. Good subjective well-being (SWB) involves good mental adjustment and having a positive acceptance of one's life in general." (p. 189) It was measured by a 10-item scale that showed a consistency of .71, suggesting a single construct underlying these self-assessments of SWB. Did their measure of SWB, however, include items tapping other cultural conceptions, such as Wong and Bowers' (2018) concept of calm-and-harmony? Would the inclusion of such items have modified Friedman et al.s' conclusions? That query cannot be assessed, of course, until such Chinese-culture derived items are included in research on SWB.

Friedman et al. (2010) was a mono-cultural study; multi-cultural studies using multiple measures of self-reported well-being are rare. One exception is that of Church et al. (2013) who extended the range of measures for SWB considerably, as befits a multi-cultural study: each of their respondents reported his or her responses to the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994) as a measure of hedonic well-being; Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Purpose in Life, Positive Relations With Others, and Self-Acceptance scales to tap eudaimonic well-being

(Ryff, 1989); and a scale assessing Meaning in Life – Presence (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) among college students in eight nations. Despite the differences in the types of well-being measure applied, these researchers found that the composite well-being measure of all 62 items from these eight different scales factored into a single factor in each and all national cultures, with no indication of an identifiable second factor in any of the cultural groups assessed (Church, personal communication).

What are we to conclude about measuring well-being multi-culturally when a collection of such measures consistently yields a one-factor solution, even when well-educated respondents are responding to these different types of well-being scales in their native or classroom language? Is well-being as subjectively experienced and reported measurable with adequate validity by a single item asking respondents to report on their SWOLD?

We propose that nuances important to some conceptualizations of well-being may be lost, but the general concept will be assessable and comparable across cultural groups. Is SWOLD what Sheldon has presented for consideration as “a content-free outcome that presumes no causes”, a “conceptually neutral positive outcome” whose use across cultures prevents bias in our search for correlates of desirable outcomes in different cultural traditions (Sheldon, 2018)? Instead, could measuring SWOLD as an outcome allow researchers to explore a host of personality components and processes that contribute towards an individual's judgment of his or her level of SWOLD particular to or more strongly emphasized in the cultural niche that he or she must manage to function within? We propose so.

**Personality Resources and Attaining Satisfaction with One's Life to Date (SWOLD)**

Are persons fated by birth to be more or less satisfied with their lives? Or, do persons report a level of SWOLD consequent upon realizing their particular profile of motivations after struggling to achieve their motivational goals against the backdrop of their skills, intelligence, and emotionality applied to their cultural world at hand? Does a worldview develop over one's time interfacing with cultural settings that buffer "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and enable one to appreciate whatever life one has crafted?

Psychological models for attaining personal well-being have been proposed, such as Wong's Model of Mature Happiness (see Wong & Bowers, 2018). These models include personality concepts facilitating the attainment of well-being, like mental toughness (Lin, Mutz, Clough, & Papageorgiou, 2017), environmental mastery (Ryff, 1989), resilience (e.g., Klohnen, 1996), and worldviews, like religiosity, fate control (Hui, Bond, & Ng, 2007), and social cynicism (Lai, Bond, & Hui, 2007), together with personality characteristics that undercut the process, like Neuroticism, the opposite of Emotional Stability (Friedman et al., 2010; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).

Models for achieving well-being across the developmental span have been proposed, such as the Life Course of Personality model (Hampson, Edmonds, Goldberg, Dubanoski, & Hillier, 2015; Shanahan, Hill, Roberts, Eccles, & Friedman, 2014). Across the developmental trajectory, the Big Five personality dimension of Conscientiousness has been identified as a "master mariner", guiding the adaptation-extension process at each stage of an individual's life: The proposed importance of Conscientiousness is supported in the longitudinal work of Friedman et al. (2010) with the Termites and Vaillant with the men in the Harvard Study of Adult Development (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).

Conscientiousness is a broad construct, indeed. Its formulation by Costa and McCrae (1989) identified six facets constituting this basic factor of personality - Sense of



Competence, Orderliness, Sense of Responsibility, Achievement Striving, Self-Discipline, and Deliberateness. This is a heady mix of components for self-regulation, and we expect that many constructs advanced in other theories of well-being overlap with one or more of these six. As is the case with models of self-management, e.g., Manz's self-leadership theory (see e.g., Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011), these other constructs and their associated measures may simply be "old wine in new skin", in empirical reality little different from one another providing no practical addition. Research examining the proliferation of constructs is badly needed to identify underlying commonalities in clinical-personality psychology, indeed in all areas of personality psychology (see e.g., Le, Schmidt, Harter, & Lauver, 2012); novelty is not progress until proven so.

Shanahan et al. (2013) point out additionally that, "Conscientiousness may be more consequential in some social contexts than in others, and when accompanied by some constellations of personality characteristics than by others." (p. 1407) What might these other personality characteristics be and in which social contexts might they become more consequential? The present research aims to provide an answer to this question by examining the impact of all Big Five dimensions of personality across national cultures of child socialization for different qualities.

### **Attaining SWOLD in Different Cultural Systems**

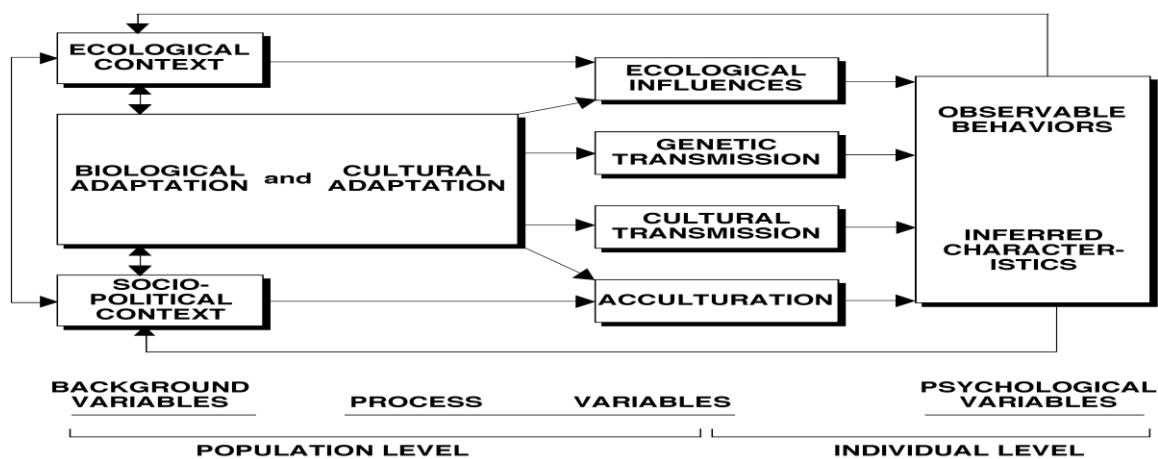
Some of these models, e.g., the Life Course of Personality model (Hampson et al., 2015) acknowledge the importance of one's social-developmental context, viz., age-related, gender, and work roles as instantiated within a given cultural heritage. However, these individual-level studies are conducted within a single nation, usually with a single ethnic group. Occasionally they span the gender cultures within a national culture, with comparisons in the processes leading to SWOLD being noted (Friedman et al., 2010). Studies of SWOLD

are also occasionally multi-national, e.g., Church et al. (2013) and Schimmack, Radhakrishnan, Oishi, Dzokoto, and Ahadi (2002), but rarely include enough national cultures for researchers to identify the national-cultural processes involved in leading to greater or lesser SWOLD. How might the influence of national culture on psychological processes leading to SWOLD be examined and tested?

National culture, like other demographic categories such as gender, age, social class, education, occupation, and so forth, must be unpackaged in psychologically informative ways. For present purposes, the Berry (2018) eco-social model provides general categories for consideration. It links features of ecological-cultural systems (background variables, below) to the individual functioning of a cultural group’s members (psychological variables, below) through the adaptive influences shaping individual development (process variables, below) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Berry’s (2018) eco-social model*



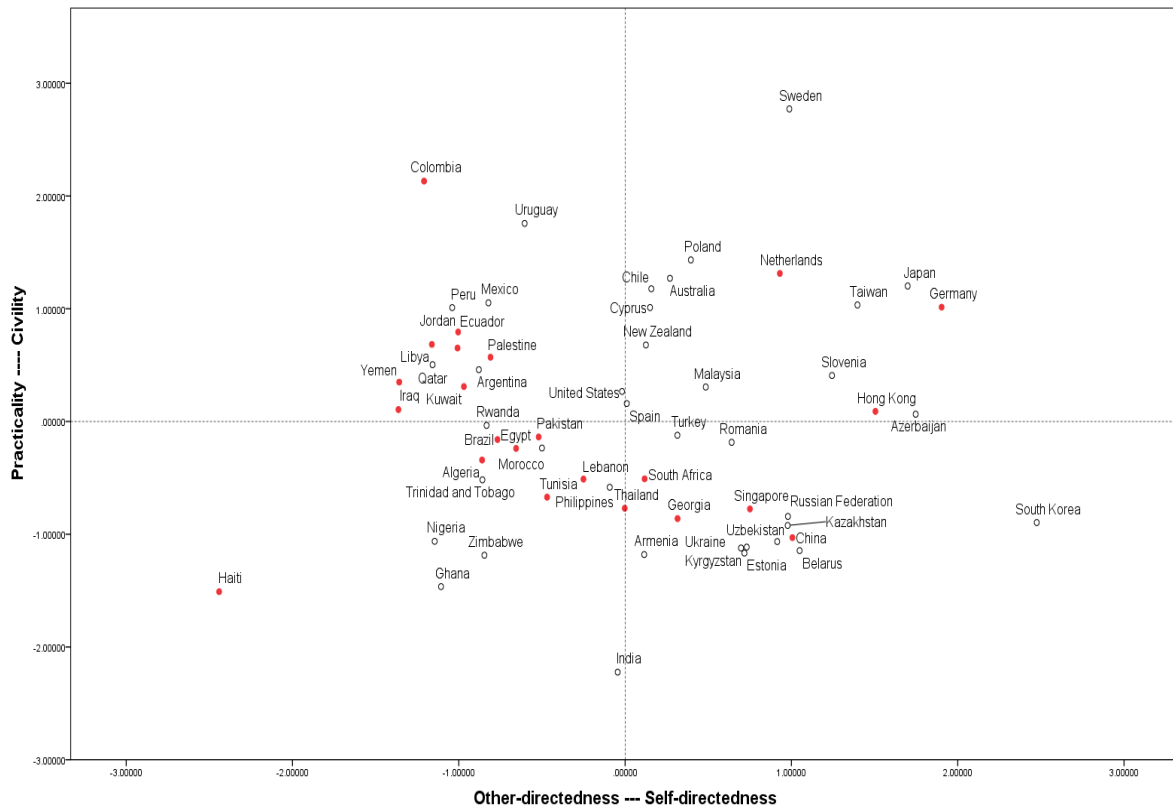
Our paper focuses upon the process variable of cultural transmission as revealed through the goals chosen by representative populations across national groups for the socialization of children in the nation. These preferred goals target future social capital for

development to achieve national goals arising from each nation's ecological-historical legacy and contemporary political-economic-social situation. A person's SWOLD will then reflect in part that individual's achievement in approximating the national ideal within the limits imposed by each individual's genetic endowment (see e.g., Deary, Weiss, & Batty, 2010; Johnson, 2007).

**National goals for the socialization of children.** Two orthogonal dimensions of preferred goals for the socialization of children were initially identified across 55 nations by Bond and Lun (2014) from the World Values Survey, Wave 5. These dimensions were named Self-Directedness versus Other-Directedness, which was operationalized by qualities such as independence religious faith (negative), and obedience (negative); Civility versus Practicality, which consisted of qualities such as tolerance and respect of other people and thrift and saving money and things (negative). Using the same analytic procedure, the authors located the nations meeting the research protocol and respondent requirements from WVS Wave 6 data as arrayed in Figure 2, below.

## **Figure 2**

*WVS Wave 6 data*



These two dimensions for the preferred goals of socializing children are one way to conceptualize and measure the “process variables” highlighted in Berry’s (2018) eco-social model presented above. They enable researchers to link the eco-cultural conditions, termed “background variables”, characterizing a nation to the “psychological variables” characterizing its population.

**Which Personality Resources Promote higher SWOLD?**

A person’s self-endorsement on a measure of a personality quality reflects a life-to-date of feedback from the social system in which they function about their position on that personality characteristic relative to others in their life-space. There has been considerable historical debate about how many dimensions are necessary to describe personality variation comprehensively (De Raad, 2009). The Big Five organization of self-perceived (and other-perceived) personality represents an emerging consensus from research around the world into the question of how many features are necessary to map the domain of personality

comprehensively (McCrae, 2009). For present purposes, the five dimensions of Extroversion-Introversion, Agreeableness-Antagonism, Conscientiousness-Undependability, Emotional Stability-Neuroticism, and Openness versus Closedness to Experience will be used to assess their linkage to SWOLD in differing national cultures of socialization.

Based on historical record and socio-analytic theorizing, Hogan and Bond (2009) have argued that there are three basic motive patterns that govern human social behaviors:

...we use as shorthand terms for these three motive patterns the phrases “getting along”, “getting ahead”, and “finding meaning”. Our needs for social contact lead to behaviors designed to survive and get along; our needs for status result in behaviors designed to acquire more resources and get ahead; and our needs for predictability and order lead to efforts to regulate our life with others and find meaning and purpose in our daily activities. Finally, there will be individual differences in peoples’ desire and ability to get along, to get ahead, and to find meaning, and these differences lead to differences in life outcomes, both intrapsychically and socially. (p. 579)

SWOLD is a self-assessment by each person about how well they have done in the game of life so far in meeting these three motivations given the constraints and affordances for their realization in the cultural setting he or she must negotiate. The resources they bring into the game of life are initially shaped by their genetic endowment, including their intelligence and their innate skills, and subsequently by the opportunities afforded them by the quality and emphases of their parenting. As they merge into the flow of daily living, the social institutions for human capital building that characterize their birthplace will potentiate or retard their success in meeting their varying motivational profiles.

**The Big Five as resources in different cultures of socialization.** We will now briefly speculate on how each of the Big Five might position an individual to more successfully achieve SWOLD given the socialization goals for children of the nation where he or she lives:

1. **Conscientiousness:** this quality reflects the individual's capacity to attend to social rules and environmental affordances, to restrain impulses that pressure persons to behave in ways that violate social norms, especially in situations where they are not being monitored by social control agents, and to regulate their behaviors accordingly. Conscientious persons observe relationship rules and discipline themselves to learn and enhance their skills. So, they should achieve better outcomes from their social affiliations and achievement endeavours, as past research indicates (e.g., Hampson et al., 2015).

They will do so even better, however, in societies emphasizing Self-Directedness as opposed to Other-Directedness, since self-directed systems encourage individual achievement, thereby satisfying the human motivation for achievement more; the same enhancement should occur for Conscientiousness in civil as opposed to practical societies, since societies socializing children for Civility will encourage considerate and judicious interactants, thereby better satisfying the human motivation for affiliation.

2. **Agreeableness:** Agreeable persons are harmonizers, avoiding interpersonal conflict by presenting a modest demeanor, accommodating to others in terms of social norms, and acting in benevolent, considerate ways. They will experience greater SWOLD because of the positive social responses they receive from their social contacts pan-culturally, irrespective of their national context for socializing children.

3. **Emotional Stability:** Interpersonally, emotionally stable persons are more welcome interaction partners, since neurotics are intensely self-focused, often irritable, withdrawn and distractible as a consequence of their intrapersonal conflicts and dysphoria. Neurotics are more likely to be avoided and rejected by others across all types of interpersonal encounters, less able to fulfil their sociality and status motivations, and thus report lower SWOLD, irrespective of the national context for socializing children.
4. **Extroversion:** Extroverts engage more with others and are appreciated as proactive, enthusiastic initiators who help others achieve their needs by opening social space for synergy in needs fulfilment. They seek out interpersonal exchanges, receive positive feedback from those who choose to engage with them, and hence show higher levels of SWOLD. This effect should be even more pronounced in cultures of socialization incentivizing Self-Directedness. In Other-directed cultures of socialization, however, such proaction may be interpreted as rebelliousness and disrespect by social agents in positions of authority.
5. **Openness to Experience:** Open persons are more creative and liberal compared to more closed persons. Their exploratory character may enable open persons to discover personal meaning in their lives and hence be more satisfied through engaging in their personal projects. In more self-directed social systems, options for such personal fulfilment will be more accessible and supported. However, their liberal orientation artistically and politically is likely to generate a critical reception in more other-directed cultures of socialization where narrow-minded persons will fare better in these hierarchical, conservative societies, and hence attain higher SWOLD; in societies socializing children for Civility, they will be

accorded more opportunity to be exploratory in their personal lives than in societies socializing children for Practicality, and hence attain greater SWOLD.

**Results.** Translations of the short-form, counter-balanced measure of the Big Five (Rammstedt & John, 2007) were first checked for accuracy using Internet-based translation, followed by consultations with native speakers of the language in question when uncertainties arose. As a result, one of the two items assessing openness had to be dropped because its translation into Arabic was ambiguous. Responses with missing values were also dropped from subsequent analyses, leaving a total of more than 34,000 respondents from 23 nations.

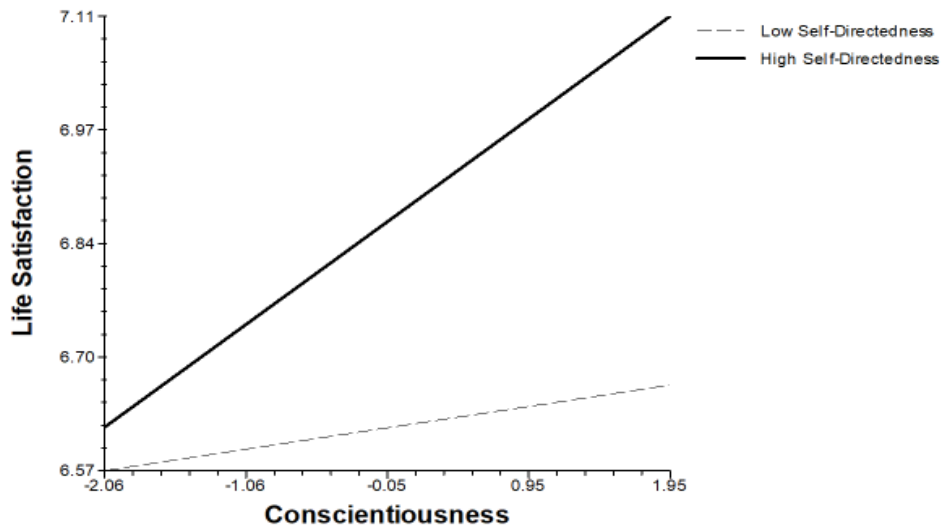
An exploratory factor analysis of the remaining nine items yielded a five-factor solution with four factors defined by the opposing pairs of items, openness appearing as a single-item factor. Each respondent's Big Five profile was then calculated by adding together the two items, appropriately reversed, to give scores on Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability; Openness to Experience was scored with a single item. Given the large sample size, the more conservative alpha level of .01 was chosen for reporting significant results in predicting SWOLD.

Many predicted effects were not found, as is often the case in cross-cultural psychology research generated from out of a Western cultural legacy. However, positive main effects across the whole sample were found for Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability, findings consistent with previous research cited above. Of particular importance for the present, multi-national approach, we found that the pan-nationally positive relationship between Conscientiousness and SWOLD was amplified in national cultures socializing children for Self-Directedness (see figure 3, below).

### **Figure 3**

*Pan-nationally positive relationship between conscientiousness and SWOLD*





Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability thus matter pan-nationally for SWOLD when the linkages are assessed with representative samples from the 23 national samples in the present study. It must be noted, however, that Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability effects were not found in *every* national culture considered separately. The same inconsistency was found in Church et al. (2013) where Venezuelan students showed no effect of Conscientiousness or Emotional Stability on SWB. Even with a pan-national main effect across all cultural units considered together, that effect is rarely found in *each* cultural unit tested. In multi-cultural research, it is important to remain alert to those cultures where the pan-nation effects have *not* occurred. These instances are cases for researchers to answer and may point the way towards new theorizing and testing to address the shortfall of one's present model in explaining the outcome of interest, in this study, SWOLD.

In the present study, the moderation of the link between Conscientiousness and SWOLD by national Self-Directedness reinforces this caution: for nations low in Self-Directedness (higher in Other-Directedness), there was *no* relationship between Conscientiousness and SWOLD (see Figure 3). In these nations, other dynamics are operating

to generate SWOLD in their populations. What might the predictive constructs and their associated measures be? What features of personality are missing?

**Is the Big Five enough to predict SWOLD?** Evidently the Big Five, as measured in the WVS, does a weak job in predicting SWOLD, as we have reported above. Why? Here we might recall Paul Wong's (2013) reminder about key indigenous considerations for the well-being of the Chinese:

Indigenous Chinese PP emphasizes that the cultural beliefs unique to the cultural heritage and historical experiences of the Chinese people are responsible for the Eastern ways of surviving and flourishing. The following five cultural beliefs that are most widespread and dominant in the traditional Chinese way of thinking are 1) uncontrollability of the world, 2) ubiquity of change, 3) fatalism, 4) dualism, and 5) collectivism. These beliefs are key influences on the Chinese approach to PP (positive psychology).

These cultural beliefs have been identified, albeit using different names, in the research on social axioms, initially developed in Hong Kong by Leung and Bond (2004). These five dimensions of worldview, viz., Social Cynicism, Social Complexity, Reward for Application, Fate Control, and Religiosity, are only weakly related to Big Five-type measure of personality variation in Hong Kong Chinese culture, and so may be considered separately as predictors of SWOLD-type outcomes. In fact, Lai et al. (2007) showed that a Hong Kong Chinese person's level of Social Cynicism adds predictive power beyond a Big Five-type measure in explaining SWB.

So, culturally based worldviews can take our predictive reach beyond the ambit of the Big Five when considering SWOLD, as Wong (2013) might well have predicted with his highlighting of Chinese cultural beliefs. There are other culturally based, psychological

constructs that may additionally be brought to bear in this search, e.g., dialectical thinking, as assessed by the Dialectical Self Scale and the cross-cultural research it has inspired (Spencer-Rogers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). As demonstrated in the work of Cheung on the Taoism of Chinese responses to stressful life events, such dialectical thinking style shows beneficial effects for Chinese persons confronting daily hassles (Cheng, Lo, & Chio, 2010). Again, Paul Wong's writing about important Chinese worldviews has found its parallel in current research work on related social axioms and thinking styles both within and beyond Chinese cultures. Other research extensions of his writings are possible...

### **Which Features of National or other types of Culture to Use?**

Whatever explanations may be offered for the effects and non-effects of national culture revealed in our study are tentative. Indeed, they must be tentative, because so many factors are inter-related at the national level (see e.g., Simandan, 2014) - ecological (e.g., van de Vliert, 2016), economic (e.g., Fu et al., 2004), political (Welzel, 2013), societal-institutional (e.g., Muethel & Bond, 2013) factors, and psychological level variables (Minkov et al., 2017), or even genetic variables (e.g., Minkov & Bond, 2015). Cross-national researchers thus have a smorgasbord of constructs and their associated variables from which to reason about possible pathways of influence from the national-cultural level to the individual, psychological level. Which to choose often depends on investigators' disciplinary backgrounds, which they have found to shape the plausibility of their arguments. In the present case, we have chosen national goals for the socialization of children, as this way of unpacking national culture fits sensibly within developmental psychology and national differences in observed psychological outcomes, such as SWB (e.g., Lun & Bond, 2016) or SWOLD, as in the present study. Other types of national variation could have been chosen – the issue is to find a plausibility structure for presenting one's findings (Bond, 2018).

### **Preliminary Conclusions about SWOLD Across National Cultures**

Every person is “thrown” into the “blooming, buzzing confusion” of life in a particular time and place, born to parents they did not choose. At any given time in their life course, all persons must make a way using whatever psychological resources and external supports available for surviving and crafting a niche for themselves from which they can face their futures. At any point in their personal history, they may be asked to assess how satisfied they are with their life to date (SWOLD). This is a content-free question that invites them to consider how adequately they are doing in light of whatever personal advantages and social-cultural presses they must work and contend with.

The World Values Survey invites large, representative samples of persons over 16 years of age from a wide variety of nations to report their SWOLD. In a recent wave of the WVS, respondents from 23 nations were asked to self-assess their personality using a short form of the Big Five measure. Despite the limitations of these measures, it was found that persons who rated themselves as higher in Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability also rated their SWOLD as higher. However, their national context influenced these ratings somewhat: if a person high in Conscientiousness was socialized into a national culture that emphasized raising children to be self-directed as opposed to other-directed, then that person reported higher SWOLD. Evidently, certain aspects of one's character matter for achieving a more satisfying life, and some of those aspects matter more in certain cultural-developmental contexts. These contexts and other features of a person's cultural heritage may provide additional supports for individuals of different genders at different stages of their life cycles to attain higher SWOLD. Future research will address these questions of further interest.

知足不辱 知止不殆 可以長久 老子道德經 44 章

Knowing contentment

You will suffer no humiliation;

Knowing when to stop

You will be free from danger;

You will thereby endure.

(Lao Tzu, ca. 400 B. C. E./1990)

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