

CHAPTER 19

THE CULTURAL SHAPING OF HAPPINESS

The Role of Ideal Affect

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"A smile is the universal welcome."

—Max Eastman, American philosopher

"Smiling is very important. If we are not able to smile, then the world will not have peace."

—Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk

"If a man smiles all the time, he's probably selling something that doesn't work."

—George Carlin, American comedian

"Behind every smile, there's teeth"

—Confucius

If you had to name one facial expression that transcends national, religious, and linguistic boundaries, you might first think of the human smile. As suggested by the first two quotes, many people view the smile as the universal signal of happiness and other positive states, including warmth, connection, and love. And yet, as reflected by the second two quotes, a smile may also connote deception and power. If a smile has multiple meanings within a culture, might it also have different meanings across cultures? And might the same be true for other aspects of happiness and other positive emotions? In this chapter, we review the empirical literature demonstrating both cultural similarities and differences in happiness and positive emotion, present our own work in this area, and then discuss the implications of our findings for the study of happiness and positive emotion. But first we define our terms.

HAPPINESS AND OTHER POSITIVE STATES

Studies of self-reported mood, emotional facial expressions, and emotion lexicons suggest that across cultures, different feeling states can be categorized in terms of at least two dimensions: (1) valence, and (2) arousal (Barrett & Russell, 1999; Kuppens, Ceulemans, Timmerman, Diener, & Kim-Prieto, 2006; Russell, Lewicka, & Niit, 1989; Yik & Russell, 2003; Yik & Russell, 2003) (See Figure 19.1).

Whereas the valence dimension corresponds to the feeling of environmental gain (positive valence; e.g., “happy,” “satisfied”) or loss (negative valence; e.g., “sad,” “unhappy”), the arousal dimension corresponds to the feeling that one’s environment requires energy and mobilization (high arousal; e.g., “aroused”) or allows rest and recuperation (low arousal; e.g., “inactive”) (Barrett & Russell, 1999; Larsen & Diener, 1992; Russell, 2003; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Thus, although “enthusiastic” and “calm” are both positive states, “enthusiastic” is a high-arousal positive state [HAP], whereas “calm” is a low-arousal positive state [LAP]. Notably, based on the affective circumplex, “happiness” is not necessarily high or low in arousal. Therefore, in this chapter, when we use the terms “happiness,” “positive affect” or “positive emotion,” we are referring to all states—high and low in arousal—that are positively valenced. However, we will also argue that when researchers use the term “happiness,” they are often—consciously or not—referring to the specific positive states that are valued by their cultures.

CULTURE

We refer to Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s definition of “culture” as historically derived and socially transmitted ideas that are instantiated through cultural rituals (e.g., birthday celebrations, weddings), practices (e.g., greetings), products and artifacts (e.g., magazines, advertisements), and

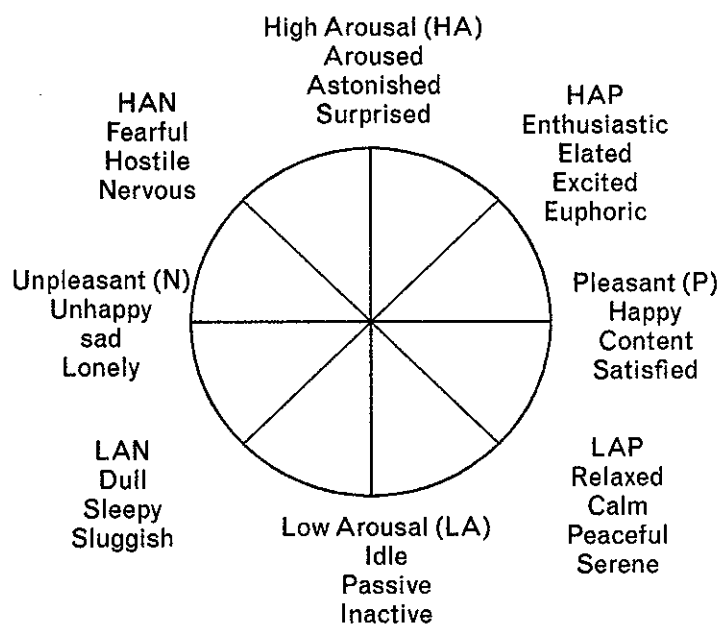


FIGURE 19.1: Two-Dimensional Map of Affective States. Adapted from Feldman Barrett & Russell (1999); Larsen & Diener (1992); Russell (1991); Thayer (1989); Watson & Tellegen (1985).

institutions (e.g., family structure). Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) described culture as what humans create, as well as the “conditioning elements” of future human action. For example, designers create advertisements for magazines that reflect their culture’s ideals (e.g., regarding beauty, health, emotion), and readers exposed to those advertisements respond to those ideals, either by internalizing or rejecting them.

In the early cross-cultural studies of emotion, “culture” was operationalized simply in terms of country or nation of residence. Because researchers were mainly interested in whether cultural differences could be observed, the cultures studied were often chosen for logistical rather than theoretical reasons, or because they had minimal exposure to American culture so that similarities could not be attributed to Western influence. As a result, many of the observed differences were explained in a relatively post-hoc fashion. However, as cross-cultural and cultural psychology evolved, so did researchers’ operationalizations of culture. Researchers began to select participants from countries that varied along certain dimensions (e.g., individualism-collectivism [Hofstede, 1980]) and that had particular ideas and practices that have implications for emotion (e.g., value on self-expression). More recently, in addition to using standardized questionnaires and behavioral tasks, researchers are beginning to examine how cultural ideas are reflected in widely distributed cultural products and practices (e.g., advertisements, websites, storybooks, songs) (for review, please see Lamoreaux & Morling, 2012; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008). These developments, among others, are one reason why a more nuanced understanding of how culture shapes happiness is emerging. To provide a larger context for this work, however, we first briefly describe the work suggesting cultural similarities in happiness.

CULTURAL SIMILARITIES IN “HAPPINESS”

“Englishmen are much less demonstrative than the men of most other European nations, and they shrug their shoulders far less frequently and energetically than Frenchmen or Italians do...

...if we look to the various races of man, these signs [of affirmation and negation] are not so universally employed as I should have expected... on the whole we find considerable diversity in the signs of affirmation and negation in the different races of man.”

—Charles Darwin (1872)

From the very beginning of work on emotion, researchers acknowledged that cultural factors played a role in emotion. As demonstrated by the above quotes, even Charles Darwin, the father of evolution through natural selection, in “The Emotional Expression of Man and Animals” (Darwin, 2002 [1872]) reported being struck and surprised by the amount of cultural variation in expression that he and his colleagues observed on their travels. Similarly, Paul Ekman’s neurocultural model of emotion (1972) asserted that while the link between an emotion and its facial signal was hard-wired, almost all other aspects of an emotional response were shaped by culture, including the antecedent events that triggered an emotion and the ways in which emotional responses were socially expressed. For this reason, when Ekman and his colleagues showed pictures of happy (and angry, sad, disgusted, afraid) faces to people from different countries, including the United States, Borneo, Chile, Brazil, Japan, and New Guinea (to a group

with minimal exposure to Western culture), he was surprised by the results. Instead of cultural differences in recognition rates, the vast majority of participants in each culture (close to 80 percent) were able to identify the smiling face as "happy" (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1971; Ekman, Sorenson, & Friesen, 1969).

Indeed, recognition rates were the highest for happiness compared to the other negative emotions. More recently, Elfenbein & Ambady (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on 97 cross-cultural studies of emotions conducted since the early 1960s (including samples from 182 countries), and reported that "happiness was the most accurately recognized" expression across cultures (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002, p. 222). Furthermore, although participants tend to recognize the emotions of members of their racial group better (the "in group advantage") (e.g., Elfenbein, Beaupré, Lévesque, & Hess, 2007; Markham & Wang, 1996), this advantage is smaller for happiness compared to most of the other negative emotions studied (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002).

Together, these studies suggest that the smile is easily recognized as a sign of happiness across cultures, at least when compared to facial expressions of negative emotions. What about other aspects of happiness? Are the triggers of happiness the same across cultures? Here the answer also appears to be yes. For example, Boucher and Brandt (1981) asked American participants to identify emotions evoked by various antecedent events that were drawn from the United States and Malaysia. Americans easily recognized the happy events from either culture. Furthermore, happy events were recognized as much as fear events and more than the other negative emotions sampled. These findings have been replicated with other cultures as well (e.g., Brandt & Boucher, 1985).

Consistent with these findings, the situational appraisals associated with happiness also appear similar across cultures: across 37 different countries representing six distinct geopolitical regions (North/Central Europe, Mediterranean Basin, Anglo American New World countries, Latin America, Asia, and Africa), participants reported experiencing happiness when they were in situations that were pleasant, elicited internal attributions, and consistent with their goals (Scherer, 1997). And again, these findings are consistent with other cross-cultural studies of the appraisals associated with happiness (Mauro, Sato, & Tucker, 1992). Thus, there appears to be cultural consistency in the types of events (and situations) that elicit happiness.

What about the physiological and behavior correlates of happiness/joy? When participants from a variety of countries (ranging from 27–37 across different studies) were asked to describe their reactions to joy, their self-reported responses were also strikingly similar: participants reported smiling and laughing; becoming highly expressive; engaging in approach behaviors; having low levels of cardiovascular arousal, muscle tension, and stomach symptoms; and feeling warm (Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, & Wallbott, 1988; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994; Wallbott & Scherer, 1986; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Findings from studies that actually measure physiological responding, reports of subjective experience, and expressive behavior during an emotional event are consistent with these findings. For example, in our own work, we have compared the autonomic responses (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance) and expressive facial behavior of European Americans and bicultural Asian Americans during amusing film clips (Tsai, Levenson, & Carstensen, 2000) and while reliving episodes of happiness (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, Freire-Bebeau, & Przymus, 2002). In neither case did group differences in physiological response or reported intensity of emotional experience emerge.

Interestingly, there was a clear cultural difference in expressive behavior while European Americans and Hmong Americans relived happiness: although the groups did not differ in the occurrence of "genuine" smiles (i.e., smiles associated with the actual experience of happiness)

or their reported experience of happiness, more European Americans showed social smiles (i.e., smiles associated with the maintenance of social norms, such as the amplification of positive emotion) than did Hmong Americans. We discuss this finding further below.

WHY SO FEW CULTURAL DIFFERENCES?

The above studies suggest that with the exception of expressive behavior, there are more cultural similarities than differences in many aspects of happiness, and it is no wonder that many emotion researchers assume that happiness is the most universal of emotions (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Matsumoto, 1992). And yet, if positive emotions are as critical for social bonding as recent theory and empirical research suggest (e.g., Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Fredrickson, 1998), then in addition to containing universal elements, positive emotions should also be particularly sensitive and responsive to socialization factors. Indeed, twin studies suggest that levels of smiling during childhood are more shaped by shared environmental than genetic factors (Goldsmith, Buss, & Lemery, 1997). Thus, there should be important ways in which happiness and other positive states vary across cultures. In part, these cultural differences may have been obscured by three limitations of the previous work: (1) the focus on samples of convenience and/or with minimal exposure to Western culture, (2) the comparison of happiness with different negative emotions rather than different positive emotions, and (3) the emphasis on actual affect, or the states that people actually feel. We discuss each limitation next.

Focus on samples of convenience and/or with minimal exposure to Western culture. As mentioned above, many cross-cultural studies of emotion, especially the earlier ones, selected samples based on convenience or their lack of exposure to Western culture, rather than on particular ideas and practices that could have implications for emotion. Emotional differences between countries, however, are more likely to be observed when there is a clear cultural reason for such differences. For example, based on their classic paper distinguishing between independent (which are prevalent in North American contexts) and interdependent (which are prevalent in East Asian contexts) models of self and agency (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), the authors predicted that general happiness would be based more on interpersonally *disengaging* emotions (i.e., feelings that distinguish individuals from others, such as feeling superior and proud) in North American contexts and more on interpersonally *engaging* emotions (i.e., feelings that facilitate closeness and connection, such as friendly feelings) in East Asian contexts. The authors asked Japanese and American participants to rate how frequently they experienced these emotions in their daily lives. As predicted, general happiness was associated with interpersonally disengaging positive emotions more and interpersonally engaging positive emotions less for Americans compared to Japanese (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; see also Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002).

Comparison of happiness with different negative states. In the vast majority of the studies described above, "happiness" was the only positive emotion sampled. As reflected by work on the structure of affect, individuals distinguish good from bad, and positive from negative across cultures. Therefore, cultural similarities in the perception of happiness and the other components of happiness may reflect cultural similarities in the distinction between positive and negative states rather than in happiness per se (Russell, 1994). Thus, in order to assess whether cultural differences in a particular positive emotion exist, other positive states are needed as comparisons. For example, in a cross-cultural study of body movements associated with specific

emotions between Japan and the United States (Sogon & Masutani, 1989), the recognition rates for happiness were a little over 50 percent for both cultural groups, which is significantly lower than the recognition rates for happiness in studies of facial expression (which are close to 80 percent). In part, this may be because in this study, "interest" and "happiness" were examined, and therefore, participants had to distinguish between two positive states, whereas in the studies of facial expression described earlier, participants had to distinguish happiness from other negative states. Similarly, in our study of European American and Hmong American responses during relived emotions (Tsai et al., 2002), we examined relived pride and love, in addition to happiness. Differences in smiling emerged in happiness perhaps because including pride and love with other negative emotions required participants to distinguish "happiness" from the other positive states.

Emphasis on on-line emotional experience, or how people actually feel. As suggested by Oishi, Scollon, and others (Oishi, 2002; Robinson & Clore, 2002; Scollon, Koh, & Au, 2011), a third reason previous cross-cultural studies may have revealed more cultural similarities than differences in positive emotion may be that most of these studies focused on participants' on-line experience of happiness (i.e., actual positive affect) rather than participants' beliefs, norms, expectations, and ideals of happiness and other positive emotions. Decades of research suggest that actual affect is primarily shaped by temperamental factors (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; David, Green, Martin, & Suls, 1997; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Gross, Sutton, & Ketelaar, 1998; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; McCrae, Costa, & Yik, 1996; Rusting & Larsen, 1997; Schimmack, Radhakrishnan, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Ahadi, 2002). In our own work, when we do find cultural differences in reports of actual affect, these disappear after we control for extraversion and neuroticism. Thus, in the next section, we argue that affective ideals may be more influenced by culture than actual affect, and that affective ideals have important consequences for various aspects of emotional life. We begin by presenting the theoretical framework that has organized our research on ideal affect, Affect Valuation Theory (AVT), and its empirical support. We then discuss the implications of AVT for the study of happiness and positive emotion.

AVT

Across cultures, most people want to feel good, but what specific good feelings do people want to feel? Whereas some people may want to feel excited, elated, enthusiastic, and other high-arousal positive (HAP) states, others may desire calm, relaxation, peacefulness, and other low-arousal positive (LAP) states. We refer to the feelings that people ideally want to feel as their "ideal affect." AVT is a framework that integrates ideal affect into existing models of affect and emotion.

IDEAL AFFECT DIFFERS FROM ACTUAL AFFECT

The first premise of AVT is that how people actually feel (their "actual affect") differs from how they would ideally like to feel (their "ideal affect"). Although this may seem like an obvious statement, the vast majority of research in affective science has focused on actual affect. Whereas actual affect is a response to a particular event (state actual affect), or an average pattern of responding (trait actual affect), ideal affect is a desired response to a particular event (state ideal affect) or a desire to feel a certain way on average (trait ideal affect). Whereas actual

affect answers the question, "How am I feeling right now?" ideal affect answers the questions, "Am I feeling good?" and "Does this feel right?" In other words, ideal affect serves as a yardstick as well as a guide for our feelings.

To examine whether individuals distinguish between their actual and ideal affect, we created a measure of ideal affect (Affect Valuation Index), based on existing measures of actual affect, in which participants are asked to rate how much they actually and ideally want to feel a variety of affective states (listed in Figure 19.1). Across a variety of cultures, we have found that people want to feel more positive and less negative than they actually feel. Moreover, across these samples, actual and ideal affect were weakly to moderately correlated, and structural equation modeling revealed that models that treat the two constructs as distinct fit the data better than those that treat actual and ideal affect as a single construct.

CULTURAL FACTORS SHAPE IDEAL MORE THAN ACTUAL AFFECT; TEMPERAMENTAL FACTORS SHAPE ACTUAL MORE THAN IDEAL AFFECT

The second premise of AVT is that although cultural and temperamental factors shape both actual and ideal affect, cultural factors shape ideal affect more than actual affect, and temperamental factors shape actual affect more than ideal affect. Culture shapes what people view as desirable, moral, and right (Shweder, 2003); by extension, culture shapes what *feelings* people view as desirable, moral, and right. Although culture also shapes actual affect, actual affect is shaped by other factors as well, such as temperament, regulation ability, and circumstance. Therefore, AVT predicts that cultural factors shape ideal more than actual affect.

In support of this prediction, we have observed across a variety of studies clear cultural differences in ideal affect: American culture values excitement and other HAP states more than Chinese culture, whereas Chinese culture values calm and other LAP states more than American culture. These differences emerge whether we compare the responses of European American, Chinese American, and Hong Kong Chinese college students (see Figure 19.2) or community adults using the Affect Valuation Index (Tsai, 2007; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006); the emotional content of European American and Hong Kong Chinese college students' Facebook pages (Moon, Chim, Tsai, Ho, & Fung, 2011); or the degree to which European American, Asian American and Taiwanese preschoolers preferred calm (small, closed-mouthed) versus excited (big, open-mouthed) smiles (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007). Furthermore, these differences hold even after controlling for actual affect. Other research teams have also replicated these findings: for example, Ruby et al. (2012) observed that European Canadians valued HAP more and LAP less than Hong Kong Chinese, and Huang & Park (2012) found that American Facebook pages had more intense smiles than did East Asian Facebook pages.

These cultural differences in ideal affect are reflected in and reinforced by widely distributed cultural products (e.g., advertisements, children's storybooks) and practices (e.g., meditation). For example, when we compared the best-selling American and Taiwanese Chinese storybooks for children between the ages of 4–8, we observed that the characters in the American storybooks had more excited and fewer calm smiles, and they were engaged in higher arousal activities than the characters in the Taiwanese storybooks (Tsai et al., 2007). Similarly, when we compared the smiles in American and Chinese women's magazines, we found that American women's magazines contained more excited and fewer calm smiles than did Chinese women's magazines

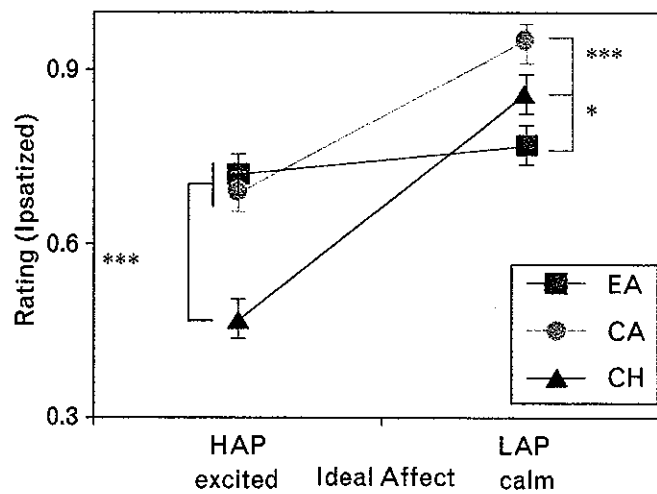


FIGURE 19.2: Cultural Differences in Ideal Affect. Reprinted from Tsai, Knutson, Fung (2006).

(Chim, Moon, & Tsai, 2009). These differences appear also to be embedded in the religious traditions of these contexts: Christian texts—both classic texts (e.g., the Gospels of the Bible) and contemporary self-help books (*Your Best Life Now* by Joel Osteen)—encourage their readers to value HAP states more and LAP states less than do Buddhist texts (e.g., the Dhammapada, *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama) (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007). And using both correlational and experimental approaches, we recently demonstrated that engaging in short-term Buddhist-inspired meditation increased how much participants valued calm and other LAP states more than how much they actually felt calm and other LAP states (Koopmann-Holm, Sze, Ochs, & Tsai, 2013). Together, these findings illustrate how culturally shaped ideal affect is reflected in and reinforced by cultural products and practices.

Why do these cultural differences in ideal affect exist? In a series of studies, we predicted and found that the cultural differences in ideal affect described above were mediated by cultural differences in influence and adjustment goals (Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, & Yeung, 2007). As described by Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto (2002), American culture values influencing others by changing others' beliefs and actions to be consistent with *one's own* beliefs and actions, whereas many East Asian cultures value adjusting to others by changing one's own beliefs and actions to be consistent with *others'* beliefs and actions. Because influencing others requires action, and action involves increases in physiological arousal, we predicted that *wanting* to influence others would be associated with *wanting* to feel HAP states. Conversely, because adjusting to others requires initial suspended action (in order to assess what others want), and suspended action involves reductions in physiological arousal, we predicted that *wanting* to adjust to others would be associated with *wanting* to feel LAP states. Consistent with these predictions, we found that differences in self-reports of ideal affect among European Americans, Asian Americans, and Hong Kong Chinese were mediated by cultural differences in self-reported influence and adjustment goals.

We assessed causality in a series of experimental studies. When European American, Asian American, and Hong Kong Chinese were randomly assigned to either an influence or adjustment condition (e.g., "build a block object of your choice and then explain to your partner how to build it" versus "follow your partner's directions and build her object"), we observed that across cultures, participants in the influence condition valued HAP more and LAP less than those in the adjustment condition. These findings held when ideal affect was assessed via self-report or behaviorally (e.g., a choice between exciting versus calm music).

What about the role of temperament? Affect Valuation Theory predicts that whereas cultural factors shape ideal affect more than actual affect, temperamental factors shape actual affect more than ideal affect. Although some studies in the literature have found cultural differences in actual affect (e.g., Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2004), it is possible that these differences are in part due to temperamental factors. Indeed, in our own work, when we observe cultural differences in actual affect, they disappear when we control for temperamental factors such as extraversion and neuroticism. As mentioned above, this is consistent with prior work suggesting that across cultures, extraversion and neuroticism are highly correlated with actual high arousal positive and negative affect, respectively. When we examine the percentage of variance in actual and ideal affect accounted for by cultural and temperamental factors, cultural factors (e.g., influence goals, adjustment goals) account for greater variation in ideal HAP and ideal LAP than actual HAP and LAP, respectively, whereas temperamental factors (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism) account for greater variation in actual HAP and actual LAP than ideal HAP and ideal LAP, respectively (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). This latter finding has also been replicated by other research groups (Scollon, Howard, Caldwell, & Ito, 2009).

IDEAL AFFECT SHAPES MOOD-PRODUCING BEHAVIOR

The third premise of AVT is that ideal affect predicts what people do to feel good. When people feel bad, most people try to change their mood in some way (e.g., by doing something to feel better). What people specifically do to improve their mood—whether they decide to get a massage or go rock climbing—may depend on their ideal affect. In a series of studies, we found that the more people valued HAP states, the more they preferred exciting vacations (e.g., adventure), leisure activities (e.g., running), music (e.g., loud and fast tunes), and drugs (e.g., stimulants), and that ideal affect accounted for cultural differences in these mood-producing behaviors, even after controlling for actual affect (Tsai, Knutson, & Rothman, 2007; Sims, Tsai, Koopmann-Holm, Thomas & Goldstein, *in press*). Thus, ideal affect has consequences for daily behavior.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF HAPPINESS AND OTHER POSITIVE EMOTIONS

As demonstrated above, ideal affect has important implications for what people do to feel good and may explain cultural differences in a variety of mood-producing behaviors. In this section, we argue that ideal affect not only shapes what we do, but also how we think about happiness, well-being, and emotions more generally, and therefore, has important implications for the study of happiness and other positive states.

IDEAL AFFECT SHAPES DEFINITIONS OF "HAPPINESS" AND "WELL-BEING"

When we presented European American, Asian American, and Hong Kong Chinese college students with a variety of affective states that sampled the affective circumplex, and asked them to

choose the four states that were central to “feeling good or happy,” European Americans and Asian Americans used a greater proportion of HAP words and a smaller proportion of LAP words than did Hong Kong Chinese (Hong & Tsai, 2013). Thus, although based on the affective circumplex, “happiness” is not necessarily high or low arousal, because of cultural differences in ideal affect, happiness in mainstream American contexts is defined as excitement, elation, and other HAP states, whereas happiness in Chinese contexts is defined as calm, relaxation, and other LAP states. Thus, although across cultures, people may value and desire “happiness,” the emotions they associate with happiness may differ. Indeed, this may explain why in an earlier study (Tsai et al., 2002), European Americans showed more social smiles during their relived happiness episodes than Hmong Americans: even though they were both reliving “happiness,” they were likely reliving different types of happiness. European Americans may have been thinking of a high arousal positive or exciting happy event, which elicited more social smiles, whereas Hmong Americans may have been thinking of a low arousal positive or calming event, which elicited fewer social smiles.

Because scientists and clinicians are also cultural beings, ideal affect shapes their definitions of happiness and well-being as well. For example, when we analyzed the affective content of the most popular Western measures of well-being used in research and clinical settings (16 measures, 333 items), we found significantly more HAP than LAP. Only a handful items contained LAP. Indeed, the Western emphasis on HAP may explain why many Western scholars and clinicians define “emotion” as “high arousal” or “high intensity” states, and why calm and other low arousal states are often viewed as the “absence of affect” or sit at the “low” end of emotion (e.g., Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). Thus, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of human—not just Western—happiness, we must broaden our studies to include states that are valued more in non-Western contexts. For instance, when studying happiness and well-being in East Asian contexts, it would be important to use measures that explicitly assess LAP (e.g., Lee, Lin, Huang, & Fredrickson, 2012). In addition, rather than treat calm and other LAP states as neutral or non-emotional, they should be objects of study themselves.

IDEAL AFFECT SHAPES HOW ACTUAL POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT RELATE TO EACH OTHER

Although actual positive affect and actual negative affect are typically negatively associated (i.e., bipolar) across cultures, significant cultural variation exists in how bipolar they are. Whereas the correlation between reports of trait actual positive and negative affect ranges from $-.61$ to $-.22$ in American samples, the correlation ranges from $-.42$ to $.19$ in East Asian samples (e.g., Barrett & Russell, 1999; Miyamoto & Ryff, 2010; Schimmack, Diener, & Oishi, 2002). A similar difference is found for momentary reports of actual positive and negative affect in daily life ($-.77$ to $-.25$ in Western samples; $-.68$ to $-.12$ for Asian and Asian American samples) (e.g., Perunovic, Heller, & Rafaeli, 2007; Yik, 2007). In other words, the actual experience of positive and negative affect appears to be less mutually exclusive in East Asian contexts compared to Western contexts. This seems to be particularly true during positive events: when people described pleasant emotional events, especially those related to personal success, 48 percent of Japanese compared to 21 percent of Americans reported feeling positive *and* negative emotions during the event (Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010).

Most studies of cultural differences in the bipolarity of actual positive and negative affect (i.e., the correlation between positive and negative states) assume that these differences are due

to greater dialecticism (i.e., tolerance for contradiction and change) in East Asian contexts. Our recent work, however, suggests that ideal affect might also play a role (Sims, Tsai, Wang, Fung, & Zhang, 2013). As described by several researchers, American contexts not only value HAP states, but they also value minimizing negative states; in contrast, East Asian contexts value emotional moderation of both positive and negative states. Although previous researchers have speculated that these different affective ideals might influence the bipolarity of positive and negative affect, no studies have actually tested this hypothesis empirically. Therefore, in two experience-sampling studies, we asked people to rate both their actual and ideal affect each time they were signaled. As predicted, in the first study, Chinese Americans showed a *less* negative association between actual positive and negative affect compared to European Americans, and in the second study, Beijing and Hong Kong Chinese showed even weaker negative associations between actual positive and negative affect than did European American and Chinese American groups. Notably, these differences persisted even after controlling for cultural differences in response styles. Also as predicted, in both studies there were cultural differences in ideal affect: European Americans valued positive states more and negative states less than Chinese Americans in the first study, and both American samples valued positive states more and negative states less than both Chinese samples in the second study. Moreover, the cultural differences in the bipolarity of actual positive and negative affect were mediated by ideal positive and ideal negative affect: the more individuals valued positive states and the less they valued negative states, the more bipolar were their reports of actual positive and negative affect. These findings suggest that the extent to which people *value* positive relative to negative affect shapes how they *experience* positive affect relative to negative affect.

These findings also suggest that there may be cultural differences in the consequences of actual positive and negative affect for well-being. For example, Kuppens and colleagues (2008) sampled 46 countries in order to examine the associations between the frequencies of positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. The more individualistic (versus collectivistic) the countries were, the more negative affect reduced life satisfaction. In other words, negative affect had more of an impact on how satisfied people were with their lives in individualistic than in collectivistic contexts. This finding is consistent with Curhan et al. (2013), who found that negative affect had a greater negative impact on health and well-being in the United States than in Japan. Moreover, Kuppens and colleagues (2008) found that the more countries valued self-expression (versus survival), the more positive affect increased life satisfaction (Kuppens et al., 2008). In other words, in contexts that value self-expression, positive affect had a greater impact on how satisfied people were with their lives. Thus, culturally shaped affective ideals may influence how positive and negative affect relate to each other, as well as their psychological and social benefits and costs.

IDEAL AFFECT SHAPES AFFECTIVE RESPONSE

In laboratory-based studies of emotion, researchers expose study participants to various emotion-eliciting stimuli—films, pictures, hypothetical scenarios—to elicit an “affective response.” Affective responses are part of on-line or momentary actual affect, but occur in the context of a particular stimulus. Relatively little, however, is known about the factors that influence how people respond to various stimuli. Some studies suggest that responses vary as a function of temperament and gender (e.g., Berenbaum & Williams, 1995; Gross & Levenson, 1995; Gross et al., 1998). We predict that ideal affect shapes affective responses as well. Specifically, we

have been interested in whether people's ideal affect shapes their enjoyment of various activities. We predict that when activities match their ideal affect, people enjoy them more. Across a series of studies (Chim, Tsai, Lowdermilk, & Fung, 2013), we have found this to be true for calm and other low arousal positive states: the more people value calm states, the more they enjoy calming activities (e.g., ferris wheel rides, walking); valuing LAP, however, was not correlated with enjoyment of exciting activities (e.g., rollercoaster rides, running). We have also found that the more people value excitement states, the happier they feel when engaging in highly vigorous activities (Sims, Lowdermilk, & Tsai, 2012). In contrast to findings from other studies suggesting that wanting to feel extreme happiness may hinder the actual experience of happiness (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011), our findings suggest that valuing certain states at more moderate levels may actually enhance the enjoyment of activities that typically elicit those states. Thus, ideal affect is a source of variation in positive affective response.

IDEAL AFFECT INFLUENCES WHAT PEOPLE REGULATE

Most research on emotion regulation has focused on the dampening of negative states. This likely reflects the American emphasis on maximizing positive states and minimizing negative ones, and the assumption that across cultures, people have the same regulatory goals. However, Miyamoto and colleagues have observed that while European Americans savor high arousal positive emotions, East Asians actually try to dampen them (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). This makes perfect sense in the context of cultural differences in ideal affect: when European Americans experience excitement and other HAP states, they are meeting their cultural ideals, and therefore do not need to regulate their HAP states. In contrast, when East Asians are experiencing HAP, they must dampen them to achieve their desired LAP. As mentioned earlier, HAP states help narrow attention so that individuals can focus on their own needs and influence others, whereas LAP states help broaden attention so that individuals can focus on others and adjust to their needs. In contexts that value influence, the benefits of HAP are clear, but in contexts that value adjustment, HAP states have costs (i.e., make it difficult to attend to others) and must be dampened. Similarly, in contexts that value adjustment, the benefits of LAP are clear, but in contexts that value influence, LAP states have costs (i.e., make it difficult to focus on one thing and act) and therefore, may have to be "up-regulated" or amplified. Thus, understanding cultural differences in ideal affect is critical to understanding which states are regulated in a particular cultural context, and why.

IDEAL AFFECT SHAPES HOW POSITIVE STATES ARE SOCIALLY PERCEIVED

In a series of on-going studies, we are accumulating evidence to suggest that ideal affect even shapes the social inferences that we make about people who show our ideal affect (and those who do not). The more people value HAP, the more they attribute positive interpersonal traits (e.g., friendliness, assertiveness, warmth, trustworthiness) to individuals who show excitement (versus calm) (Chim, Tsai, Park, & Knutson, 2013). In a related series of studies, we have found that ideal affect also shapes perceptions of others in health care settings. For example, we found that the more people valued HAP, the more trustworthy they perceived physicians who promote

HAP states (Sims, Tsai, Koopmann-Holm, Thomas, & Goldstein, *in press*). In another study, American medical students perceived patients expressing HAP to be better patients than those expressing LAP (Sims, Charles, & Tsai, 2013). Moreover, cultural differences in perceptions of excited (versus calm) faces as friendly and assertive are in line with these cultural differences in ideal affect: European Americans viewed excited faces as more friendly and assertive than did Hong Kong Chinese, and Hong Kong Chinese viewed calm faces as significantly more friendly and assertive than did European Americans. Thus, cultural differences in ideal affect may even influence how we perceive others' positive expressions.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In addition to pursuing the issues raised above, there are several other questions that should be addressed in future research. First, more research is needed to examine whether cultural differences in ideal affect account for observed cultural differences in emotion in the literature. For example, several studies have observed cultural differences in retrospective reports of actual positive and negative affect and well-being (e.g., Oishi, 2002; Scollon et al., 2004; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Interestingly, cultural differences seem to be more pronounced for retrospective reports of actual positive affect than actual negative affect. Some work suggests that ideal affect significantly predicts individuals' memory of emotional experiences (Scollon et al., 2009), and therefore, future studies should examine whether these cultural differences in recalled actual affect are related to cultural differences in ideal affect (Scollon et al., 2011). Another example comes from the handful of studies that have examined the recognition of vocal expression across cultures (Scherer, Banse, & Wallbott, 2001; Van Bezooijen, Otto, & Heenan, 1983). In these channels of expression, the recognition rates of happiness/joy were above chance, but were significantly lower than those for facial expressions of happiness (40 versus 80 percent). Interestingly, in these studies, members of East Asian groups rated Western vocal expressions. It is possible that the relatively low recognition rates are due to mismatches in ideal affect: whereas Western vocal expressions may have been more HAP, East Asian participants may have been listening and looking for LAP.

Second, throughout this chapter, we have described results that suggest that the benefits and costs of HAP and LAP states depend on whether the affective states are valued by the culture. More studies, however, are needed to test this hypothesis, and to examine the role that situational factors play both within and across cultures. For instance, is demonstrating enthusiasm always more effective in American than Chinese contexts, or are there settings even within American contexts when demonstrating enthusiasm is counterproductive?

Third, all of our work has focused on the value placed on high- and low-arousal positive states, but it would be important to examine the value placed on more interpersonal positive states such as pride and compassion. The value placed on these states may account for previous findings. For example in Study 3 of Tracy and Robins (2008), the recognition rate of pride ranged from 52–86 percent across six pride expressions, and it was frequently confused for contempt (49 percent of errors, 13 percent overall). This may have been because half of the sample was East Asian, and showing pride is valued less in East Asian compared to American cultures (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2004).

Finally, most of our work has focused on Western and East Asian contexts, and it is extremely important to broaden studies of ideal affect and emotion more generally to contexts

that have different ideas and practices. For example, Ruby et al. (2012) found that even though Mexican culture is collectivistic and interdependent, Mexicans valued HAP more than LAP. Does Mexican culture value influence more than Chinese and other East Asian cultures, or are there other cultural factors that shape ideal affect?

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have argued that although previous research suggests striking cultural similarities in happiness, these studies have a number of features that may have inadvertently obscured cultural differences in happiness. By addressing these limitations, we have revealed consistent and pervasive cultural differences in ideal affect: whereas American culture values excitement and other high-arousal positive states more than Chinese culture, Chinese culture values calm and other low-arousal positive states more than American culture. These cultural differences in ideal affect have important implications for the study of happiness and other positive states. Specifically, we suggest that culturally shaped ideal affect influences how laypeople and scientists define happiness, how positive and negative affect relate to each other, how people respond to positive events, whether people regulate their positive emotions, and what social inferences people draw from other people's smiles. Together, these findings suggest that in order to understand people's positive emotions, we have to understand their culturally shaped ideal affect.

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