Emotions in Collectivist and Individualist Contexts

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A theory of cultural differences in emotions was tested in a questionnaire study. Hypotheses about the differences between emotion in individualist and collectivist contexts covered different components of emotion: concerns and appraisals, action readiness, social sharing, and belief changes. The questionnaire focused on 6 types of events that were rated as similar in meaning across cultures. Participants were 86 Dutch individualist respondents and 171 Surinamese and Turkish collectivist respondents living in the Netherlands. As compared with emotions in individualist cultures, emotions in collectivist cultures (a) were more grounded in assessments of social worth and of shifts in relative social worth, (b) were to a large extent taken to reflect reality rather than the inner world of the individual, and (c) belonged to the self-other relationship rather than being confined to the subjectivity of the self.

Cross-cultural endeavors in psychology have focused on the universality of emotional phenomena (e.g., Ekman, 1973; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994), revealing a number of transcultural features of emotions. The psychological focus on universality has precluded the search for cultural variations in emotion. Ethnographic studies (e.g., Lutz, 1988) have clearly illustrated such differences, but methodological limitations do not allow for firm conclusions on the nature and the extent of cultural variation in emotion, either. The goal of the present study is, therefore, to determine whether within the context of similar emotional situations there are interpretable and predictable differences in emotional phenomena.

I studied differences in emotions by comparing individualist with collectivist cultures. Individualism and collectivism are best represented as systems of meanings, practices, and social institutions in the context of which the nature of emotion should be expected to vary. Collectivism is a set of meanings and practices that emphasize the relatedness of a person to his or her in-group and, more generally, to the world. Similarly, individualism is a set of meanings and practices that underline the individual as bounded, unique, and independent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Levine, 1984; Triandis, 1995). Even though collectivism and individualism may characterize cultural groups, not all individuals in a given context engage in the same ideas and practices, nor do they engage in them in identical ways (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). However, across people within an individualist or collectivist context, emotions are patterned in some discernable ways.

In this study, it is assumed that cultural instantiations of emotion can be predicted from the meanings and practices within which they occur. Emotions in collectivist cultures are expected to stress and reproduce the self in relation to others or the self in relation to the world, whereas emotions in individualist cultures are assumed to underline and amplify a bounded, subjective self. Collectivism and individualism are not conceived of as independent variables in the traditional sense of the word. They are not causal determinants of emotions but rather characterizations of the syndromes of which emotions are a part.

Emotions: Social or Individual Events

In an open interview study preceding the current one (Mesquita, in press), self-reported emotions in collectivist contexts appeared to be quite different from those in individualist contexts. As an illustration, one may consider the following self-reports.

A respondent from a collectivist context (Turkish) said the following in an interview:

I was admitted to Turkey’s most competitive university. It was the second time that I participated in the national competition, because after the first time I quit university. I ended in the highest percentile. My [extended] family did not want me to participate a second time, as this would lower the chances of their own children to get into good programs. There was resentment about me participating, and so my honor was challenged. I was forced to be competitive with the children of my relatives. [That I won the competition] was important to my mom. It was her pride that she could use my university ID and without me knowing it, my mom had taken it to show them. My parents had invited all their relatives and neighbors over to their house to celebrate this success. My relatives asked me questions to humiliate me: “Are you going to finish this time?” They kissed me, and wished me well, but I knew that they privately thought...
"Damn it, you won again"... After I won [the competition], many families were prepared to offer me their daughters to marry. Of course, my self-esteem increased.

A respondent from an individualist context (Dutch) said the following in an interview:

I gave my final presentation for my masters in civil engineering... You feel like you have really done it. Yes [you wonder] how you have actually managed to do it... I felt like enormously relieved... Not really excited, but more like "It is finally over!"... I had set myself this deadline and it made me feel really good that I made it this time... Afterwards I went out with some friends and relatives, seven people. We did not really talk about my presentation. Yes, sure, they are friends of mine, so they know that this is important for me... They had come to listen to my presentation, of course, and so they did tell me that I did a good job. They also said "You are done now, it is over," that kind of things... Other than that we just talked about other stuff... For a few months, when I would run into people, I would tell them. It gave me a good feeling. Each time it dawns on you a little more that you are really done with it.

Both accounts, the collectivist and the individualist, are about good feelings in response to a significant personal accomplishment in the context of higher education. However, in the collectivist context, the meaning of the event (a) is constituted by its impact on the various relationships the respondent has, including a relationship with others in general, as expressed by the respondent’s honor; (b) is represented as obvious, as when the respondent reported that his honor is challenged and that he is forced to succeed; and (c) is relevant to other people who are emotionally involved in it. By contrast, in the individualist context, the emotion appears to be (a) described entirely in terms of its relevance to the respondent’s own standards and goals, (b) focused on the subjective feelings of the respondent rather than on any social or objective consequence, and (c) of importance to the respondent alone. The described differences in emotions appear to reflect some of the core characteristics of collectivist and individualist cultures generally.

A Componential Model of Emotions

Specific predictions in the present study are based on a componential model of emotions (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). This study focuses on the cultural similarities and variations in concerns, appraisal, action readiness, social sharing, and belief changes. Emotions develop when an event is appraised as being relevant to one’s concerns—goals, motives, values, and expectations about oneself or others and about the world in which one lives. Appraisal processes have been conceived of as a series of evaluations with respect to a set of appraisal dimensions such as pleasantness–unpleasantness, controllability, and the attribution of agency (i.e., responsibility; Ellsworth, 1994; Scherer, 1997). Emotions also involve changes in action readiness—changes in the relational goals of the individual. (Frijda, 1986). Social sharing of emotions occurs when emotions are shared with others who were not necessarily involved in the emotional event to begin with (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991). Belief changes are thought to develop if appraisals of particular emotion-eliciting events generalize to beliefs about event classes or actors. In belief changes, the cognitive level of the appraisal is thus lifted from a particular act or event to the actor or class of events by which the appraisal gains predictive force (Semin & Fiedler, 1988). In componential models of emotion, components are conceived of as the constituents of emotion: The emotional experience per se is captured by its various components.

Specific Predictions on the Nature of Individualist and Collectivist Emotions

Emotions in collectivist contexts have been characterized as relational and contextualized phenomena, whereas emotions in individualist contexts are intrapersonal and subjective (Lutz, 1988). The current study takes these ideas one step beyond a general characterization by making predictions for each component separately (Table 1).

**Concerns**

Because collectivist groups stress the relatedness between people, a major concern for those living in collectivist cultures is that they be perceived as qualifying for relationships with others, as illustrated by the Turkish respondent’s concern for honor. Changes in social worth as well as in the respect of family and in-group (e.g., the Turkish mother’s pride in her son’s success) are thus

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expected to be associated with emotions to a larger extent in
collectivist contexts than in individualist cultures.

Appraisal

In collectivist cultures, the social worth of different people is
perceived as interconnected. The Turkish man related in his inter-
view that his social worth and that of his nuclear family correspond
negatively with that of his relatives. In a collectivist context, a
person who is made to lose respect will assume that the offender’s
motive was to gain it and thus will appraise the act as intentional.
In individualist cultures, by contrast, the respect of different people
appears to be unconnected and is less likely to be perceived as
intentional.

The Perceived Source of Appraisal

Because emotions in collectivist cultures tend to be about situ-
ations of shared concern, there must be consensual validation of
what these situations mean. Hence, the meaning of emotional
situations is perceived as obvious in collectivist cultures—that is,
these situations are considered to be sources of information about
the outside world to a larger extent than in individualist cultures,
where emotions are considered as subjective phenomena without
much obviousness.

Action Readiness

I predict that action readiness will gain force from the relational
orientation of collectivist cultures. Although even an individualist
self does, on occasion, seek to change its relationship with the
environment, I expect the relational character of emotions in
collectivist cultures to increase the outward orientation that is
reflected by many action tendencies.

Social Sharing

In collectivist cultures, the social sharing of emotions is ex-
pected to consist of letting other people in on what regards them.
The parents of the Turkish respondent who won the competition
organized a party to show off the success of their son and,
therefore, their own success. In contrast, the individualist practice
of social sharing has been found to consist of a mere exchange of
information (Rimé et al., 1991), thus underlining the distinction
between the individual and the sharing partner.

Belief Changes

Whereas collectivist cultures appear to treat emotions as pieces
of information that feed into the beliefs one has about the world,
individualist cultures less readily consider emotions as pertinent to
beliefs. Emotions in the collectivist groups result more often in
belief changes than do emotions in the individualist culture.

Sampling

The particular cultures included in this study were an indigenous Dutch
group in the Netherlands, classified by previous research as individualist,
and African Surinamese and Turkish groups in the Netherlands that had
been characterized as collectivist cultures (e.g., Eppink, 1982; Hofstede,
1980). The interest was in getting samples that could reasonably be
expected to have more between- than within-group variation in value
orientation. Respondents were classified as Dutch, Surinamese, or Turkish
if they met at least two out of four criteria: (a) Most of their friends were
from the same culture, (b) their partner or spouse was from the same
culture, (c) they spoke the language of their own group, and (d) they had
lived in their country of origin for more than half of their lives.

Respondents were approached by same-culture interviewers who ex-
plained the aims and procedures of the study concerned. The interviewers
were asked to select (a) the same number of men and women, (b) respon-
dents 18 years old or older, and (c) people from different age groups.

Participants were 86 Dutch, 88 Surinamese, and 83 Turkish individuals.
Cultural differences were found for neither gender nor age. About half of
the respondents in each group were women; the average age in all three
groups was around 35 years. Self-reported education (four levels) differed
across cultures, χ²(6, N = 259) = 42.8, p < .01, with the highest level of
education in the Dutch group and the lowest in the Turkish.

Selection of Emotional Situations: The Basis of
Comparison

I developed well-defined standards of comparison that were maximally
comparable in meaning and, in addition, relevant in all three cultures.
Unlike most previous cross-cultural studies that started with emotion words
(Russell, 1991), this study started from common emotion-eliciting situ-
ations. One reason is that corresponding emotion words in different lan-
guages are often only partial translations of each other (Wierzbicka, 1992).

Two pilot studies were designed to find event types that were cross-
culturally equivalent in both meaning and relevance (Mesquita, in press).
In the first study, respondents from all three cultures generated emotion
words. Out of the most frequent emotion words in each language obtained
from this process, five classes of emotion words were selected—anger,
sadness, shame, happiness, and pride. In the second study, different sam-
ple of respondents from all three cultures reported events that had led
them to feel one of the emotions selected from the first study. The reported
events were coded. The level of representation of the event categories was
chosen to be as close to the experience of the participants as possible
without containing situation-specific or culture-specific details.

Six of these event categories were used in the current study on the basis
of their relevance to each of the three cultures: success, positive attention,
offense by a nonintimate other, offense by an intimate other, immoral
behavior by an intimate other, and immoral behavior by the self. Parici-
nants in all three cultures recognized the stimulus events and were able to
report instances from their own past that fit each event type.

Questionnaires

Each questionnaire started with one of the six stimulus events.1 Partic-
ipants were asked to report an instance from the past that fit one of the six
stimulus events and, subsequently, to answer questions pertaining to that

1 For success, the questionnaire read “You had success because of some
accomplishment or achievement; for example, passing an exam, etc.” For
positive attention, it began with “Other people complimented you on
something or showed their admiration (You and the other people were
together).” For the offense-by-nonintimate situation, the questionnaire read
“An acquaintance, a neighbor or a colleague for example, offended you,
did not treat you seriously, or was inconsiderate of you,” and for the
offense-by-intimate situation, it read “Your partner, an intimate friend, or
a close relative offended you, did not treat you seriously, or was inconsider-
ate of you.” For intimate immoral behavior, the questionnaire read “Your
partner, an intimate friend, or a close relative treated you unfairly or
improperly,” and for self immoral behavior, it read “You treated your
partner, an intimate friend or a close relative unfairly or improperly.”
situation. Questions were designed to fit the situation at hand, with the implication that only a selection of all the possible questions per component were asked and that the precise contents of the questionnaires differed by stimulus situation.²

Four questions (rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 = no to 3 = yes) on a subset of concerns were designed to test cultural differences in the change in social worth: respect, prestige, family respect and individual group.

Appraisal scales (rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = not at all and 5 = totally) that the literature considers to be basic (e.g., Frijda, Kuipers, & Terschure, 1989; Scherer, 1997) served as a check on the similarity of meaning of the stimulus events. Dimensions for the positive events were as follows, with instantiations of the general dimensions for the situation type in parentheses: unexpected (expectedness), pleasant (pleasantness), fair (fairness), self responsible (agency), and self-esteem increased (self-esteem); for the offense situation and the intimate immoral situation, dimensions were unexpected (expectedness), unpleasant (pleasantness), other responsible (agency), self-esteem decreased (self-esteem), and avoidability; for the situation of self immoral behavior, dimensions were unpleasant (pleasantness), self responsible (agency), self-esteem, avoidability, and immorality.

A second set of appraisal questions tested for cultural differences in the connectedness of respect. In the three situations in which another person inflicted harm, the intentionality of harm was measured by three questions (e.g., "Did the other person act in order to profit?")

Source of appraisal. Three questions (rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 = no to 3 = yes) referred to the obviousness of meaning and implications, asking whether another person would find the situation as pleasant or unpleasant as the respondent did.³ would think and feel in a similar way, and would react similarly to the way the respondent had. A considerable number of the respondents, mainly Dutch and, to a lesser extent, also Surinamese, indicated that they did not assume the existence of a general, obvious norm of interpretation or reaction. A post hoc fourth answer category of I don't know was added to the scale. The four answer categories were treated as an ordinal scale, ranging from 1 (don't know) to 4 (yes).

Action readiness questions were selected from the scale used by Frijda et al. (1989) on the basis of their relevance to the stimulus situation at hand. Where necessary, the items were adapted to a unipolar format (0 = not at all, 4 = totally). A few items were added because of their apparent relevance to one or more of these groups particularly. Principal component analyses of the action readiness items yielded three to five factors for each event type, explaining 57-65% of the variance. To reduce the number of avoidability, for the situation of self immoral behavior, dimensions were unpleasant (pleasantness), self responsible (agency), self-esteem, avoidability, and immorality.

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Results

Comparability of Stimulus Events

To ensure that respondents across cultures understood the stimulus events in reasonably similar terms, these events were "anchored" through their basic appraisals. Following other research (e.g., Frijda et al., 1989), I established the "presence" of these appraisals as a cultural mean greater than 2 on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (totally). With only two exceptions, all appraisal dimensions were present in all six events, which points to cross-cultural similarity in the meaning of the stimulus situations.

General Analytic Strategy

Hypotheses on concerns, appraisals, obviousness, social sharing, and belief changes were tested for three different combinations of stimulus situations: the positive situations (success and positive attention), the offense situations (offense by nonintimate other and offense by intimate other), and the immoral situations (intimate immoral and self immoral). The coupling of situations was chosen to guarantee that (a) within each analysis the data were independent and (b) the items of coupled situations had maximal overlap.

When the Culture × Situation interaction reached significance for a particular component, the culture effects were analyzed for each situation separately. Out of the 20 analyses performed, only two Culture × Situation interactions reached significance. Culture × Situation effects were found for belief changes in both the offense situations, F(1, 168) = 5.6, p < .05, and the immoral situations, F(1, 176) = 9.3, p < .01.

All hypotheses on cultural differences in emotions were tested by contrasting the individualist Dutch culture with the two collectivistic cultures.

² The full text of the questionnaires can be obtained from Batja Mesquita.
³ Only in Situation Profile 6, immoral treatment by self, was the first question regarding the unpleasantness of the situation omitted.
⁴ Correspondence between two judges was 96% for the respondents' sharing behaviors and 82% for those of the sharing partners' behaviors.
tivist cultures, the Surinamese and the Turkish. All analyses controlled for the level of education. Multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) with culture (individualist and collectivist) as a between-subjects factor were performed for respect concerns, relatedness of respect appraisals, obviousness, and action readiness. Means in these MANCOVAs were adjusted for education. To confirm that the cultural differences pertained to all or most of the individual variables, significant multivariate effects were followed by planned contrasts on the means of each item adjusted for education. Furthermore, planned contrasts between individualist and collectivist scores, adjusted for level of education, were performed for social sharing and belief changes, as these components were measured by unrelated items and a single scale, respectively.

Cultural differences in concerns. Relational concerns were expected to have more relevance to the collectivist cultures, in which emotions are perceived to be about relationships with other people, than to the individualist group, which supposedly lacks such a relational perspective. Indeed, main effects for culture were found for the positive situations, $F(4, 154) = 17.1, p < .001$, the offense situations, $F(4, 160) = 8.7, p = .001$, and the immoral situations, $F(4, 164) = 3.8, p = .01$. Planned contrasts for the individual items revealed that these differences held up for all individual concern items.

Differences in appraisal. In situations of harm by another person, appraisals of the connectedness of respect were expected to be more intense in collectivist than in individualist cultures. In the offense situation, appraisals of connectedness of respect were indeed more relevant in the collectivist than in the individualist cultures, $F(3, 161) = 4.2, p = .01$. Planned contrasts showed a significant effect of culture in each of the individual items on the connectedness of respect. In the situation of intimate immoral behavior, the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures on perceived connectedness of respect was only marginally significant, $F(3, 79) = 2.2, p < .10$.

Differences in obviousness. Cultural differences in the perceived source of appraisal were predicted, such that in the collectivist cultures, emotions would be appraised as more obvious—and thus more shared by others—than in the individualist cultures. As expected, significant main effects for culture were found with respect to positive, $F(3, 157) = 6.4, p < .001$, and offense situations, $F(3, 161) = 7.7, p < .001$. Planned contrasts revealed that the means adjusted for education were still significant when each of the obviousness items was considered separately. Contrary to our predictions, the culture main effect did not reach significance in immoral situations, $F(2, 166) = 0.0, p > .10$.

Cultural differences in action readiness. Contrasts were carried out over the summed factor scores for each event type. As predicted, after controlling for education, main effects for culture were significant for all stimulus situations, such that the collectivist groups were higher on action readiness than was the individualist group, success: $F(1, 144) = 30.6, p < .001$; positive attention: $F(1, 146) = 24.4, p < .001$; offense by nonintimate: $F(1, 130) = 21.0, p < .001$; offense by intimate: $F(1, 146) = 5.9, p < .05$; intimate immoral behavior: $F(1, 152) = 5.6, p < .05$; self immoral behavior: $F(1, 158) = 34.7, p < .001$.

Cultural differences in social sharing. Because of the more permeable self–other boundaries in the collectivist than in the individualist groups, a more involved kind of social sharing was expected in the collectivist cultures. Using planned contrasts, main effects for culture were found for each of the three variables of social sharing in the positive, offense, and immoral situations: the perceived concern of the sharing partner—positive situations: $F(1, 248) = 4.9, p < .05$; offense situations: $F(1, 330) = 7.5, p < .01$; immoral situations: $F(1, 254) = 4.0, p < .05$; the solicitation of commitment—positive situations: $F(1, 296) = 7.8, p < .01$; offense situations: $F(1, 254) = 4.9, p < .05$; immoral situations: $F(1, 256) = 26.3, p < .001$; and the degree of commitment on the part of the sharing partner—positive situations: $F(1, 318) = 4.2, p < .05$; offense situations: $F(1, 258) = 10.7, p < .001$; immoral situations: $F(1, 256) = 14.8, p < .001$.

Cultural differences in belief changes. Respondents in the collectivist cultures, in which emotions seem to inform people about reality, were expected to form more belief changes as a result of their emotions than were respondents in individualist cultures, who perceive emotions as strictly subjective. Indeed, planned contrasts suggested that respondents in the collectivist groups formed belief changes more readily than respondents in the individualist Dutch group did, although in two situations, the differences in belief changes were only marginally significant, positive situations: $F(1, 322) = 169.1, p < .001$; offense by nonintimate: $F(1, 170) = 143.0, p < .001$; offense by intimate: $F(1, 158) = 3.7, p < .1$; intimate immoral behavior: $F(1, 166) = 46.9, p < .001$; self immoral behavior: $F(1, 170) = 3.0, p < .1$.

Discussion

Collectivist and Individualist Emotions

Cultural differences between collectivist and individualist cultures were found in each of the emotion components studied, in ways consistent with the respective cultural syndromes in which they occurred. Because emotions were conceived of in this study in terms of the total of their constituent elements, one can conclude that emotional experience differs fundamentally between individualist and collectivist cultures.

As predicted, collectivist emotions emerged as relational phenomena, embedded in relationships with others and perceived to reflect the state of those relationships. Individualist emotions, on the other hand, refer much less to the social environment. Results on the relational concerns and connectedness of respect appraisals are good illustrations of this point.

The results also illustrate how boundaries between subjectivity and social reality are more permeable in collectivist than in individualist groups. Emotions in collectivist cultures tend to have an objective reality to the individual that emotions in the individualist group lack. In contrast to the participants from the individualist context, respondents in the collectivist cultures indicated that an-

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5 Initial analyses found no gender effects and only two significant Gender $\times$ Culture effects, both in the component of action readiness. Confidence intervals (95%) yielded significant differences between the Turkish and the Surinamese groups in 11% of the analyses, with the Turkish means higher than the Surinamese.

6 Descriptive statistics and further details on the analyses can be obtained from Batja Mesquita.

7 The results for obviousness remained significant when the answer category of I don’t know was treated either as a missing value or was equaled to 1 (no) on a 3-point scale testing cultural differences in obviousness (ranging from 1 = no to 3 = yes).
other person encountering a similar event would be affected by the event in similar ways as they had been. Whereas in the individualist culture, a clear distinction was made between subjectivity and objectivity, allowing for interindividual differences in response, the collectivist cultures seem to endorse the principle of a subjective reality.

Consistently, respondents in the collectivist cultures who reported a higher readiness for belief changes than did respondents from the individualist culture also appeared to assume that they experienced the social reality. Respondents in the individualist culture, on the other hand, did not as readily form belief changes and can thus be said to adhere to the boundaries between subjective evaluation and objective reality.

Finally, differences in the self–other boundaries appear to be reflected as well, predominantly in action readiness and social sharing. Whereas emotions in the collectivist cultures tend to embody the connectedness between individuals and their social environment, emotions in individualist cultures appear to underline the disparity of self and others.

As compared with emotions in individualist cultures, emotions in collectivist cultures (a) were more grounded in assessments of social worth and of shifts in relative social worth, (b) were to a large extent taken to reflect reality rather than the inner world of the individual, and (c) belong to the self–other relationship rather than being confined to the subjectivity of the self.

Emotions are thus shaped in a fashion analogous to the ideas and practices of the cultures in which they occur. In turn, emotions are likely to reinforce and sustain the cultural themes that are significant in collectivist and individualist cultures, respectively. Emotions themselves can be seen as cultural practices that promote important cultural ideas.

The current study calls for a qualification of the idea that individualist cultures have more "self-focused" emotions, whereas collectivist cultures have more "other-focused" emotions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Rather than certain emotions such as anger and pride being invariably self-focused and other emotions such as the Japanese amae being other-focused, it seems that similar emotions such as anger may be instantiated in self-focused or other-focused ways. Other-focused emotions would focus on social worth, reflect reality, and belong to the self–other relationship.

### Some Methodological Issues

**Standards of comparison.** This study started from event types that were demonstrated to have similar meaning in all three cultures of comparison and that were known to occur with a reasonable frequency in each culture. Demonstrated similarity of appraisal rendered the events suitable as standards of comparison and made the cultural differences in emotional responses interpretable.

**Individualist bias.** The questionnaires were aimed primarily at capturing the otherness of the collectivist groups. It would have been better if the otherness of the individualist group had been instantiated by specific items as well. For example, some of the individualist concerns, such as independence from others and autonomy, could have been measured in addition to the social concerns measured now, with the expectation that the individualist concerns are more relevant to emotional experiences in the individualist group.

**Response bias.** The individualist bias has the side effect that most questions produced higher averages in the collectivist than the individualist cultures. Therefore, explanations in terms of response bias cannot be completely ruled out. However, differences in the basic appraisal dimensions did not reach significance in more than half of the cases, and the division for those appraisal dimensions that did significantly differ was not always between the individualist and collectivist cultures. Therefore, the questions not designed to test the theory suggest that the established differences on the hypothesis-testing items are not a matter of different response biases.

### Focus on Cultural Differences

Unlike the psychological tradition of looking for universality in emotions, this study has focused on the cross-cultural differences in emotions and, moreover, has found them. The search for cultural differences in emotions is fundamentally different from the search for universality in that it requires (a) a theory of the principles of cultural variation in emotions, (b) systematic predictions based on that theory, and (c) items or tasks that are capable of registering those aspects of variation. Without those theoretically based efforts to discover cultural differences in emotions, the psychology of cultural variation will remain limited to the accidental finding of differences that are unexplained and, therefore, unappealing.

In this study, predictions on cultural differences were made on the basis of different characterizations of the meanings and practices constituting individualism and collectivism. The divergent meanings and practices thus helped to conceptualize and articulate differences in the various components of emotions. Hypotheses derived this way were generally confirmed. This study has suggested some of the ways in which individualist and collectivist syndromes may shape emotions. Its focus was to describe the variability of emotional phenomena in a theory-driven manner. Future research is needed to clarify how precisely cultural syndromes and emotions constitute each other.

### References


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