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Perceiving One's Own and Others' Feelings Around the World: The Relations of Attention to and Clarity of Feelings With Subjective Well-Being Across Nations

Tanja Lischetzke[1], Michael Eid[1], and Ed Diener[2]

Abstract

The present study examined meta-mood variables pertaining to beliefs about the perception of one's own and other people's feelings across nations. A total of 9,102 college students from 42 nations provided self-reports of attention to and clarity of their own feelings, attention to and clarity of others' feelings, and the cognitive (life satisfaction) and the affective (affect balance) component of subjective well-being (SWB). Multilevel analyses tested whether nations differed in the relations between meta-mood variables and SWB and whether the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism moderated these relations. Attention to own feelings demonstrated a heterogeneous relation with SWB across nations. Clarity of own feelings showed an adaptive pattern in nearly all nations, but it was more closely related to SWB in individualistic than in collectivistic nations. Attention to others' feelings demonstrated low positive relations with SWB in most nations. Unexpectedly, clarity of others' feelings tended to be less important to affect balance in collectivistic than in individualistic nations. The results suggest that although beliefs about clearly perceiving own and others' feelings might, to some degree, be universally adaptive, cultural differences appear to exist in how relevant the perception of feelings is to SWB.

Keywords

attention to feelings, clarity of feelings, meta-mood, subjective well-being, culture, individualism-collectivism

Individuals differ in the frequency with which they direct attention to their own and to other people's feelings, and they differ in the extent to which they are clear (certain) versus unclear (confused) about what they are feeling themselves and what other people are feeling (Feldman

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Barrett & Salovey, 2002). Research in the past 20 years has shed light on the role awareness of one's *own* feelings plays in the self-regulation of affective states and adaptive psychological functioning (e.g., Larsen, 2000; Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996). Similarly, discerning *other people's feelings* is considered an important element in guiding social interactions and the development of social relationships (e.g., Saarni, 1999). Individuals who navigate the social world more successfully than others experience less social rejection, which in turn should enhance life satisfaction and happiness (Leary, 2010). Hence, the perception of both one's own and others' feelings is thought to be related to subjective well-being (SWB). What is not well understood, however, is the role the cultural context plays in this relationship.

To date, attention to and clarity of own and others' feelings have been almost exclusively investigated in North American and Western European samples, but not cross-culturally. That is, the degree of within- and between-nations variability in these "meta-mood" variables (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988) is still unknown. It also remains an open question whether nations differ in the relations between attention to and clarity of own and others' feelings and SWB. In particular, it has not been tested whether the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism (I-C) moderates the relation of these meta-mood variables with SWB. The present study aims to address these issues by analyzing self-report data on perceiving own and others' feelings from a large-scale cross-cultural study, the International College Survey 2001.

Perceiving Own and Others' Feelings: Definitions and Measurement

Attention to own feelings refers to the frequency with which individuals direct attention toward their moods and emotions (e.g., Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995; Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995). *Clarity of own feelings* refers to the extent to which individuals know what they feel and can label their feelings (Salovey et al., 1995; Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995). *Attention to others' feelings* describes the frequency with which individuals direct attention toward other people's feelings, and *clarity of others' feelings* describes the ability to identify and label others' feelings (Lischetzke, Eid, Wittig, & Trierweiler, 2001).

How frequently an individual directs his or her attention toward own and other people's feelings does not reflect an ability but a preference for a specific behavior, for which it is hard to define an absolute criterion, such as an optimal level. Similarly, the degree to which individuals find their own feelings to be clear is an inherently subjective evaluation, and there is probably no objective standard that can be used to verify this evaluation. Due to the internal nature of the constructs, self-report seems to be the best method to assess attention to own and others' feelings and clarity of own feelings.

With respect to the clarity of others' feelings, both actual abilities and beliefs about this ability can be measured. Individuals' actual ability to decode others' feelings can be assessed by emotion recognition tests (e.g., Baum & Nowicki, 1998; Matsumoto et al., 2000). Beliefs about being clear of others' feelings can be assessed by self-report (Lischetzke et al., 2001). These self-reports tap the individual's perceived competence in identifying and labeling others' moods and emotions. Actual ability to decode others' feelings and beliefs about this ability may not necessarily overlap to a large extent. However, irrespective of whether actual and self-reported decoding ability do converge, beliefs about abilities can be considered important in their own right. Beliefs about emotion-related abilities can be conceptualized as emotional self-efficacy beliefs (e.g., Petrides & Furnham, 2001), and self-efficacy beliefs have been shown to affect a wide range of psychological and behavioral variables in different domains such as health behavior (e.g., Scholz, Keller, & Perren, 2009) or academic achievement (e.g., Grigorenko et al., 2009). The present study focuses on cross-cultural differences in beliefs about paying attention to and being clear of own and others' feelings.

Relation Between Meta-Mood Variables and Subjective Well-Being

Models of mood regulation (e.g., Larsen, 2000; Parkinson et al., 1996) assume that a minimum of attention to feelings is necessary—but not sufficient—to become clear about one's feelings, and that being clear about one's feelings facilitates affect regulation. The results of empirical studies that have been conducted in the United States and Western Europe demonstrated a positive relation between beliefs about clarity of own feelings and SWB indicators (e.g., Extremera, Durán, & Rey, 2007; Gohm & Clore, 2002; Lischetzke, Cuccodoro, Gauger, Todeschini, & Eid, 2005; Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Salovey et al., 1995; Shulman & Hemenover, 2006; Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995).

The role that *attention to own feelings* plays in affect regulation is more complex. On the one hand, attention is required for the perception and effective regulation of affective states. Paying attention to an unpleasant mood, for instance, may prompt attempts to improve the mood. By focusing attention on a pleasant mood, for instance, individuals may appreciate and enhance the mood state (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). On the other hand, monitoring a negative mood may intensify and prolong it (Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995), and a highly introspective focus might dampen or cut short a positive mood (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Empirical results revealed that attention to own feelings and SWB are often uncorrelated (e.g., Extremera et al., 2007; Gohm & Clore, 2002; Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Salovey et al., 1995). That is, attention to own feelings per se seems to be neither beneficial nor detrimental to SWB.

From an interpersonal perspective, emotions serve communicative and social functions by conveying information about others' thoughts and intentions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). To discern what *other people* are feeling, individuals have to direct attention to a person's affective state and use available cues (e.g., facial expression, voice, posture, situational information) to identify and label the other's feelings. Having insight into the emotions and moods of others should enable individuals, for instance, to anticipate others' behavior, consider others' feelings in their own behavior, and influence others' affective state (e.g., Saarni, 1999). Paying attention to others' feelings and clearly perceiving them should therefore enhance social acceptance and SWB.

Cross-Cultural Differences

Between-Nations Differences in Meta-Mood Variables' Mean Levels and Their Individual-Level Relation to SWB

To our knowledge, no study to date has examined these meta-mood variables across a large set of nations. We are aware of only three studies that assessed attention to and clarity of *own* feelings in two to three nations (U.S./Iran: Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, Davison, & Mack, 2002; Australia/Singapore: Wong et al., 2007; U.S./Spain/Chile: Fernández-Berrocal, Salovey, Vera, Extremera, & Ramos, 2005). Ghorbani et al. and Fernández-Berrocal et al. found mean-level differences in attention, and Ghorbani et al. and Wong et al. found mean level differences in clarity. In the three studies, the individual-level relation between attention to own feelings and SWB varied substantively across nations, whereas the relation between clarity of own feelings and SWB was positive in all but one of the nations.

Individualism-Collectivism and Mean Levels in Meta-Mood Variables

A broad cultural variable that may have implications for the importance of perceiving one's own and others' feelings is I-C (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). In individualistic societies, the self

is viewed as an autonomous and independent entity. The normative goal for an individual is to discover and express his or her unique inner attributes, such as attitudes, preferences, and feelings. Attention to private aspects of the self, including emotions and moods, provides a source of important intraindividual information. In collectivistic societies, the self is construed as interdependent, the normative goal is to maintain a harmonious equilibrium with others, and an individual is expected to recognize "that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of *others* in the relationship" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Because much of individuals' attention in collectivist cultures is directed externally, private aspects of the self "are not as elaborated and organized as in individualist cultures" (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998, p. 483). Consequently, we assumed that individuals in individualistic societies should report directing their attention more frequently to their *own* feelings and report being more clear about them than individuals in collectivistic societies. On the other hand, individuals in collectivistic societies should direct their attention more frequently to *others'* feelings and report being more clear about them than individuals in individualistic societies.

Indirect evidence for the association of mean levels in attention to and clarity of *own* feelings with a nation's I-C comes from a large cross-cultural study on personality (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005). In this study, national mean levels of peer-reported openness to experience were moderately correlated with individualism ($r = .33$). Openness to experience, which comprises openness to feelings, has some conceptual overlap with meta-mood constructs, in particular with attention to own feelings. In previous research, openness to experience demonstrated moderate to high positive correlations with attention to own feelings (Coffey, Berenbaum, & Kerns, 2003; Shulman & Hemenover, 2006) and a moderate positive relation to clarity of own feelings (Coffey et al., 2003).

Individualism-Collectivism Moderating the Relation Between Meta-Mood Variables and SWB

In individualistic societies, being able to identify one's own feelings should help to find out about one's strivings, express and regulate affect, and guide behavior toward personal goals. Research has shown that progress towards self-initiated goals leads to increases in SWB (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). In collectivistic societies, social norms and others' expectations shape individuals' affective experience more strongly, and goals associated with independence and self-expression may be less beneficial to SWB (Oishi, 2000). Consequently, we hypothesized that clarity of *own* feelings should be more important to SWB in individualistic societies than in collectivistic societies. Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2005) tested whether I-C moderated the relation between clarity of own feelings and depression, but the results did not support this prediction. An important limitation of their study, however, is its comparison of only three nations. Therefore, it remains an open question whether I-C moderates the relation between clarity of own feelings and SWB in a larger and more diverse set of nations.

When looking at the perception of *others*' feelings from a cross-cultural perspective, the higher importance of interpersonal adjustment in collectivistic societies seems to be especially relevant. Kwan, Bond, and Singelis (1997) demonstrated that the relative importance of relationship harmony to self-esteem in predicting life satisfaction was greater in a collectivistic nation (Hong Kong) than in an individualistic nation (United States). Given that higher levels in attention to and clarity of others' feelings should help to achieve relationship harmony because they should facilitate adaptation to others' thoughts, feelings, and goals, we assumed that these other-focus meta-mood variables should be more closely related to SWB in collectivistic than in

individualistic nations. We are not aware of any study that has tested this hypothesis. Therefore, the present study aimed to fill this gap.

Cross-Cultural Variability in Response Styles

When analyzing self-reports across a large and diverse set of nations, researchers face the problem of cross-cultural differences in response styles, that is, a systematic tendency to use response scales in a specific way that is independent of the construct under study (Byrne & Campbell, 1999). If nations differ in the way individuals use response scales, cultural differences in means of variables of interest (and relations between them) might be partly due to this artefact. Two important forms of response style are acquiescent response style and extreme response style. Acquiescent response style refers to the consistent tendency to agree rather than disagree with items, regardless of their content. Extreme response style refers to the consistent tendency to select the end-categories of a response scale and avoid the middle categories.

Between-nations differences in response styles might reflect cultural differences in communication styles (Smith & Fischer, 2008): In collectivistic cultures, individuals will experience a greater cultural press towards modesty and overt harmony, an expression of which might be acquiescent responding. In individualistic cultures, individuals will experience a greater cultural press towards confident and distinctive self-presentation, which might foster extreme responding to survey questions. In line with this view, empirical evidence demonstrates that acquiescent response style tends to be more typical of collectivistic nations and extreme response style tends to be more typical of individualistic nations (for a recent overview, see, e.g., Johnson, Shavitt, & Holbrook, 2011).

To control for potential contamination of self-report scores by cultural differences in acquiescent and extreme response styles, the present study used a within-nations standardization approach (Fischer, 2004) and compared the results of analyses that used different scoring procedures for the dependent and independent variables (see Method section for details).

Overview of the Present Research

Because no study to date directly compared a large set of nations with respect to beliefs about attention to and clarity of own and others' feelings, the first aim was to provide descriptive information. In particular, we investigated how much of the variability between individuals in these meta-mood variables can be attributed to the nation level. For each nation, we analyzed the distribution of the four meta-mood variables and their relation with SWB.

Second, we examined the relations among the four meta-mood variables on the national level, and we tested whether national (mean) levels in meta-mood variables are related to I-C. We hypothesized that a nation's I-C correlates positively with mean levels in attention to and clarity of *own* feelings and negatively with mean levels in attention to and clarity of *others*' feelings. That is, we expected more self-focus in individualistic (compared with collectivistic) nations and more other-focus in collectivistic (compared with individualistic) nations.

Third, we tested whether the individual-level relations between the four meta-mood variables and SWB vary across nations and whether I-C moderates these relations. Clarity of *own* feelings should be more closely (positively) related to SWB in individualistic nations than in collectivistic nations. The relations between attention to and clarity of *others*' feelings and SWB should be positive and closer in collectivistic nations than in individualistic nations. Because attention to own feelings has demonstrated mixed relations with SWB in different samples within nations in previous studies (conducted in comparatively individualistic nations), we did not predict any moderator effects for attention to own feelings.

In our study, we analyzed two components of SWB: the cognitive component (life satisfaction) and the affective component (affect balance). Life satisfaction is a global, cognitive judgment about the quality of a person's life. Affect balance is the relative frequency of positive and negative emotions. It can be conceived of as a measure of a basic dimension of affective experience: pleasantness-unpleasantness, or hedonic level. Both components of SWB have been demonstrated to vary considerably within and between nations (e.g., Basabe et al., 2002; Diener & Diener, 1995).

Method

Participants

The data that were used for the present analyses were collected in the context of the International College Survey 2001 (ICS 2001, see also Kuppens, Ceulemans, Timmerman, Diener, & Kim-Prieto, 2006; Kuppens, Realo, & Diener, 2008). A total of 10,018 participants from 48 nations took part in the ICS 2001. For the present analyses, data from participants with missing values on the attention, clarity, and SWB scales were removed. Data from Egypt were discarded from our analyses because the correlations between the variables deviated very strongly from those in the other nations (e.g., correlations between life satisfaction and both negative and positive affect deviated more than three standard deviations from those in the total sample; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998). Additionally, data from five nations with very low alpha coefficients (< .40) for the clarity scales were discarded from our analyses (Cameroon, India, Kuwait, Slovakia, and Uganda). The final sample consisted of 9,102 participants from 42 nations (see Table 1). Sixty-two percent of the sample were women (n = 5,604), 38% were men (n = 3,492), and 6 participants did not report gender. Ninety-one percent of the sample (n = 8,254) were between 18 and 25 years old.

Procedure

A questionnaire which included various scales was constructed in English and translated and back-translated to three other languages (Japanese, Korean, and Spanish) by the main initiators of the study. If needed, local collaborators arranged for the questionnaire to be translated into their native language. In several of the multilanguage nations involved (e.g., Hong Kong), the data were collected from subsamples in different languages. Participants in 22 countries used an English-version questionnaire or a questionnaire that had been translated from English and back-translated into English. The other participants completed the questionnaire in one of the following 19 languages: Arabic, Basque, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Georgian, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, and Turkish. Questionnaire items focused on SWB and meta-mood aspects, as well as on other variables that were not relevant for the present analyses.

Measures

Meta-mood variables. Attention to own feelings was assessed by two items ("I pay attention to my feelings," "I think about how I feel"). To measure attention to others' feelings, these items were slightly reformulated ("I pay attention to other people's feelings," "I think about how other people feel"). Clarity of own feelings was also assessed by two items ("It is difficult for me to describe my feelings," "I am not sure about what I actually feel"). Reformulations of these items were used to measure clarity of others' feelings ("It is difficult for me to describe other people's

Table 1. Number of Participants, Individualism-Collectivism, and Means and Standard Deviations of Subjective Well-Being and Meta-Mood Variables By Nation

			LS[a]		AB[b]		A-OWN[c]		C-OWN[c]		A-OTH[c]		C-OTH[c]	
Nation	*n*	I-C	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
United States	361	10	4.89	1.18	1.97	1.97	3.19	0.71	2.78	0.82	3.21	0.65	2.80	0.72
Australia	181	9	4.89	1.20	2.26	2.17	3.23	0.72	2.85	0.70	3.26	0.61	2.92	0.57
Canada	103	9	5.54	0.96	3.10	1.95	3.47	0.54	3.05	0.64	2.95	0.66	2.82	0.62
The Netherlands	39	9	4.98	1.04	2.27	2.01	2.95	0.70	3.05	0.63	3.00	0.65	2.95	0.52
Switzerland	145	9	5.40	0.85	2.32	1.66	3.28	0.67	3.17	0.56	3.23	0.56	2.98	0.54
Austria	128	8	4.88	1.15	1.88	1.90	3.23	0.64	2.85	0.76	3.11	0.69	2.77	0.64
Germany	148	8	4.88	1.06	1.85	2.10	3.21	0.70	3.05	0.69	3.18	0.55	2.85	0.63
Italy	314	8	4.47	1.16	1.03	2.10	3.50	0.64	2.79	0.80	3.32	0.60	2.67	0.68
Belgium	117	7	4.90	1.11	2.30	1.97	3.12	0.63	2.77	0.72	2.95	0.62	2.68	0.62
Greece	222	7	4.54	1.11	1.32	1.99	3.23	0.64	2.89	0.68	3.23	0.61	2.63	0.64
Hungary	605	7	4.44	1.17	1.82	1.89	3.17	0.61	2.83	0.70	3.09	0.60	2.69	0.66
Chile	368	6	5.28	1.02	2.69	2.07	3.56	0.59	2.86	0.76	3.24	0.70	2.83	0.70
Poland	560	6	4.47	0.96	1.59	2.04	3.20	0.61	2.94	0.70	2.99	0.64	2.72	0.62
Portugal	231	6	4.75	1.10	1.91	2.00	3.48	0.57	2.70	0.75	3.20	0.56	2.69	0.63
Slovenia	277	6	4.96	0.95	2.58	2.03	3.04	0.69	3.15	0.66	2.89	0.64	2.87	0.66
Spain	508	6	4.73	1.00	2.27	2.09	3.55	0.55	2.77	0.78	3.30	0.60	2.78	0.68
Bulgaria	129	5	4.09	1.09	1.52	1.93	3.17	0.67	3.04	0.66	3.02	0.67	2.85	0.63
Croatia	146	5	4.58	1.24	1.73	2.35	3.29	0.72	2.85	0.72	2.98	0.69	2.80	0.67
Cyprus	95	5	4.52	1.17	1.09	2.09	3.43	0.60	2.65	0.73	3.28	0.59	2.58	0.60
Georgia	108	5	3.68	1.19	1.85	2.00	3.19	0.63	2.81	0.74	2.98	0.72	2.78	0.71
Hong Kong (China)	194	5	4.18	1.15	0.83	2.02	3.23	0.66	2.73	0.75	3.04	0.60	2.58	0.66
Mexico	335	5	5.00	1.12	3.02	2.37	3.43	0.65	2.79	0.86	3.01	0.71	2.63	0.79
Russia	107	5	4.49	0.95	1.66	1.97	3.23	0.68	2.80	0.81	3.01	0.67	2.78	0.65
South Africa	29	5	5.06	0.81	2.94	2.04	2.95	0.64	2.95	0.72	2.74	0.73	2.50	0.78
Singapore	90	5	4.04	1.27	0.79	1.92	3.24	0.75	2.66	0.71	2.96	0.73	2.64	0.65
Brazil	254	4	4.88	1.12	2.16	2.06	3.31	0.59	2.84	0.75	2.96	0.68	2.57	0.80
China	352	4	3.20	1.00	1.05	1.89	2.68	0.60	2.77	0.64	2.51	0.62	2.56	0.63
Iran	191	4	3.89	1.32	0.55	2.22	3.02	0.68	2.64	0.68	2.82	0.72	2.47	0.74
Japan	166	4	3.81	1.23	0.61	1.96	2.83	0.76	2.42	0.79	3.01	0.68	2.09	0.82
Malaysia	373	4	4.68	0.94	1.91	1.71	2.91	0.67	2.51	0.71	2.83	0.69	2.48	0.74
Nepal	105	4	3.78	1.10	1.44	2.00	3.14	0.57	2.49	0.76	2.94	0.67	2.38	0.78
The Philippines	198	4	4.54	1.06	2.22	1.73	3.22	0.62	2.56	0.75	3.08	0.64	2.66	0.64
Thailand	194	4	3.93	1.01	1.60	1.74	3.05	0.60	2.57	0.69	2.98	0.58	2.30	0.75
Turkey	123	4	3.93	1.09	0.25	1.85	3.00	0.53	2.78	0.63	3.01	0.45	2.80	0.55
Venezuela	209	4	5.21	1.06	2.67	2.43	3.57	0.59	3.08	0.78	3.23	0.72	2.89	0.67
Indonesia	240	3	4.50	1.06	2.35	1.86	3.10	0.62	2.83	0.59	2.88	0.63	2.74	0.57
Korea	182	3	3.98	1.19	1.64	1.98	3.04	0.64	2.69	0.72	3.08	0.58	2.48	0.67
Nigeria	276	3	4.23	1.23	2.65	1.86	3.14	0.73	2.97	0.75	2.89	0.72	2.73	0.76
Columbia	357	2	4.87	1.19	2.30	2.52	3.46	0.62	2.78	0.85	3.16	0.68	2.69	0.77
Bangladesh	88	1	4.39	1.13	0.89	2.05	3.24	0.61	2.65	0.77	3.11	0.60	2.51	0.78
Ghana	145	1	4.21	1.19	2.29	1.94	2.98	0.71	3.04	0.58	2.89	0.71	2.89	0.57
Zimbabwe	109	1	4.29	1.18	1.86	1.72	3.27	0.63	2.84	0.75	2.98	0.55	2.78	0.88
Average	226	5.24	4.54	1.20	1.89	2.12	3.22	0.67	2.81	0.75	3.05	0.67	2.69	0.70

Note. Total *N* (Level 1) = 9,102. I-C = Individualism-Collectivism (the higher the score, the more individualistic the nation); LS = life satisfaction; AB = affect balance; A-OWN = attention to own feelings; C-OWN = clarity of own feelings; A-OTH = attention to others' feelings; C-OTH = clarity of others' feelings.

[a]Potential range of scores is 1 to 7.

[b]Potential range of scores is -8 to 8.

[c]Potential range of scores is 1 to 4.

feelings," "I am not sure about what other people actually feel"). The items were rated on 4-point frequency scales ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 4 (*almost always*). Clarity items were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated higher levels of clarity. The two items were selected from longer (six-item) scales measuring the attention to and clarity of one's own and other people's feelings (Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Lischetzke et al., 2001), which have demonstrated high reliability in German samples (Lischetzke, Angelova, & Eid, 2011; Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Lischetzke et al., 2001) and Swiss (French-speaking) samples (Lischetzke et al., 2005; Lischetzke & Eid, 2003). Short scales (instead of full scales) were used due to space restrictions in the questionnaire. Across the 42 nations, alpha coefficients ranged from .46 to .88 (*Mdn* = .72) for the Attention to Own Feelings Scale, from .43 to .79 (*Mdn* = .60) for the Clarity of Own Feelings Scale, from .40 to .87 (*Mdn* = .73) for the Attention to Others' Feelings Scale, and from .50 to .82 (*Mdn* = .65) for the Clarity of Others Feelings Scale.

Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was assessed using the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Participants rated the scale's five items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Alpha coefficients ranged from .56 to .88 (*Mdn* = .80).

Affect balance. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they had felt six positive emotions (pleasant, happy, cheerful, pride, gratitude, and love) and eight negative emotions (unpleasant, sad, anger, guilt, shame, worry, stress, and jealousy) in the last week. The frequency of each emotion was rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*all the time*). A frequency of positive emotions score was calculated by averaging the positive items, and a frequency of negative emotions score was calculated by averaging the negative items. Alpha coefficients ranged from .56 to .86 (*Mdn* = .77) for frequency of positive emotions and from .65 to .82 (*Mdn* = .77) for frequency of negative emotions. An affect balance score was created by subtracting frequency of negative emotions from frequency of positive emotions.

Individualism-Collectivism. I-C scores of nations were obtained by a leading expert in the area of individualism and collectivism, Harry Triandis, who rated each of the 42 countries on a 1 to 10 scale. A 1 indicated the most collectivistic nation, and a 10 indicated the most individualistic nation. Triandis was unaware of the survey content and the hypotheses being examined. As a test of the validity of these ratings, we correlated them with Hofstede's index of I-C (Hofstede, 2001). The two ratings correlated .83 for the 38 countries that were rated by both experts. To have more statistical power in the analyses involving I-C as a nation-level moderator variable, we used Triandis' I-C scores, which were available for all nations included in the study.

Controlling for Cross-Cultural Variability in Response Styles

To control for between-nations differences in *acquiescent response style*, we centered individual scores on the respective mean across individuals in each nation (group-mean centering; see Fischer, 2004). Consequently, individuals' scores cannot be contaminated by a general culture-specific tendency to shift responses towards the positive end of the response scale. In within-nations correlational analyses, all variables were group-mean centered, and in multilevel regression models, the individual-level predictor variables were group-mean centered.

As one way to control for *extreme response style*, researchers have used measures that had been specifically designed for that purpose (e.g., Greenleaf, 1992). However, we were not able to include such a specific measure in the ICS 2001 dataset. To investigate whether extreme response style might threaten the validity of our results, we therefore selected a different strategy: We compared the estimates of analyses that used the original scoring of items with the estimates of analyses that used transformed item scores. The rationale was to combine the end-categories of the rating scale with one or two adjacent categories and assign them the same value. Consequently,

strong (dis)agreement with item content is treated in the same way as moderate (dis)agreement, and hence, a culture-specific tendency to shift individuals' responses towards the extreme ends of the response scale can no longer account for results yielded by these transformed variables.

To arrive at transformed scores for the meta-mood variables, the two response categories at the lower end of the scale (Categories 1 and 2) were combined, and the two response categories at the higher end of the scale (Categories 3 and 4) were combined for each item. That is, the original 4-point format was changed into a dichotomous format (0 vs. 1). For each meta-mood variable, the average of the two dichotomized items was calculated. The 7- and 9-point response scales of life satisfaction and affect items, respectively, were trichotomized by combining the extreme response categories at each end with the two adjacent categories. That is, for life satisfaction items, Categories 1, 2, and 3 were combined and assigned a score of 1, the middle category (4) was assigned a score of 2, and Categories 5, 6, and 7 were combined and assigned a score of 3. For affect items, Categories 1, 2, and 3 were combined and assigned a score of 1, the middle categories (4, 5, and 6) were combined and assigned a score of 2, and Categories 7, 8, and 9 were combined and assigned a score of 3. Subsequently, the trichotomized life satisfaction items were averaged to create a single transformed indicator of life satisfaction. To create a transformed affect balance score, trichotomized positive emotion items were averaged, trichotomized negative emotion items were averaged, and the negative emotions score was subtracted from the positive emotions score.

Transformed variables were used in additional analyses to be compared with the results based on group-centered (but not otherwise transformed) variables. In these additional multilevel regression models, the transformed meta-mood variables (based on dichotomized items) were entered as group-mean-centered predictors (i.e., in the additional analyses, the predictors were double-transformed to control for both acquiescent and extreme response style). This was done to analyze whether additionally controlling for extreme response style changed the results obtained by controlling only for acquiescent response style.

Results

Descriptive Statistics for Meta-Mood Variables Within Nations

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the four meta-mood variables within nations. To estimate that part of the total variance of the scales that can be explained by the nation level, we analyzed four separate multilevel "null models" using HLM 6.08 (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). That is, for each meta-mood variable, we estimated a multilevel model with individuals at Level 1 and nations at Level 2 that contained no predictor variables. The intraclass correlation coefficients (i.e., that part of the total variance that is due to the nation level) were .09 for attention to own feelings, .05 for clarity of own feelings, .06 for attention to others' feelings, and .06 for clarity of others' feelings. This indicates that although individuals within a nation showed some degree of similarity, the within-nation variability was much larger than the between-nation variability.

The correlations between the four meta-mood variables and the two SWB indicators—life satisfaction and affect balance—for each nation can be found in Table 2. The correlations between life satisfaction and affect balance (which are not listed in Table 2) ranged from .25 to.66 (*Mdn* = .47) across the 42 nations.

To examine the overall within-nations relations among the four meta-mood variables, we centered the variables within nations and calculated correlations, which can be found in Table 3 (below the diagonal). The relation between attention to own feelings and clarity of own feelings was positive but very low. A similar result emerged for the relation between attention to others'

Table 2. Correlations of Meta-Mood Variables With Life Satisfaction and Affect Balance by Nation

	A-OWN		C-OWN		A-OTH		C-OTH	
Nation	LS	AB	LS	AB	LS	AB	LS	AB
United States	.11*	.07	.28**	.26**	.20**	.15**	.20**	.19**
Australia	.08	.00	.11	.20**	.05	.08	–.05	.03
Canada	.29**	.16	.33**	.47**	.22*	.08	.23*	.30**
The Netherlands	.06	–.05	.36*	.34*	.33*	.22	.14	.33*
Switzerland	.07	.05	.24**	.26**	–.09	–.01	.27**	.17*
Austria	.07	.07	.17	.22*	.20*	.10	.06	.06
Germany	.01	.00	.18*	.25**	.13	.04	.28**	.25**
Italy	.10	.00	.32**	.28**	.13*	–.06	.10	.12*
Belgium	–.07	–.15	.27**	.26**	.04	–.12	.09	.07
Greece	.10	–.06	.15*	.17**	.13	.00	.13*	.04
Hungary	.00	.00	.16**	.23**	.09*	.07	.11**	.19**
Chile	.09	.09	.13*	.25**	.14**	.11**	.08	.08
Poland	.02	.00	.15**	.21**	.09*	.08	.08	.13**
Portugal	.02	.02	.22**	.22**	.16*	.09	.16*	.14*
Slovenia	.01	–.11	.23**	.28**	.04	–.12*	.07	.04
Spain	.10*	.10*	.20**	.30**	.09*	.00	.05	.10*
Bulgaria	–.13	.05	.07	.02	–.06	–.09	.12	–.11
Croatia	.00	–.13	.32**	.26**	.08	–.02	.29**	.17*
Cyprus	–.02	–.04	.28**	.35**	.18	.16	.23*	.15
Georgia	–.02	.01	.11	.17	.10	–.02	.16	.11
Hong Kong (China)	–.08	–.10	.22**	.29**	.16*	.07	.22**	.22**
Mexico	.30**	.27**	.23**	.28**	.18**	.11*	.11*	.12*
Russia	.04	.17	.09	.15	.10	.06	–.07	–.06
South Africa	.25	–.04	.26	.27	.30	.25	.06	.06
Singapore	.14	.03	.24*	.12	.09	.13	.04	.14
Brazil	.19**	.32**	.20**	.29**	.14*	.16**	.14*	.16*
China	.03	.02	.18**	.19**	.01	.11*	.08	.08
Iran	.21**	.10	.09	.24**	.07	–.07	–.02	.05
Japan	-.05	–.05	.16*	.18*	–.08	–.09	–.03	–.08
Malaysia	.09	.08	–.05	.12*	.10*	.11*	.02	.12*
Nepal	–.01	–.11	.23*	.20*	–.06	–.22*	.12	–.10
The Philippines	.16*	.12	.20**	.23**	.15*	.04	.05	.13
Thailand	–.05	–.09	.09	.25**	–.02	.08	.19**	.14
Turkey	.00	–.02	.07	.19*	.03	–.06	.15	.18*
Venezuela	.15*	.10	.26**	.27**	.06	.06	.08	.18**
Indonesia	–.09	–.02	.11	.18**	.12	.17**	.14*	.17**
Korea	.05	–.03	.37**	.34**	.03	.07	.24**	.19**
Nigeria	.04	.10	–.08	.05	.09	.12*	–.08	.06
Columbia	.19**	.25**	.18**	.20**	.16**	.18**	.15**	.18**
Bangladesh	.02	.01	.14	.28**	–.09	.08	.08	.14
Ghana	.08	–.07	.05	.19*	.14	.05	.02	.04
Zimbabwe	–.06	.04	.17	.07	.24*	.15	.01	–.15
Average	.06**	.04**	.17**	.23**	.10**	.06**	.10**	.11**

Note. Nations are sorted by their I-C score. Average correlations represent individual-level correlations across nations (N = 9,102), with variables centered within nations. A-OWN = attention to own feelings; C-OWN = clarity of own feelings; A-OTH = attention to others' feelings; C-OTH = clarity of others' feelings; LS = life satisfaction; AB = affect balance.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 3. Correlations Among Meta-Mood Variables at the Individual Level and Correlations of Meta-Mood Variables and Individualism-Collectivism at the Nation Level

	A-OWN	C-OWN	A-OTH	C-OTH	I-C
A-OWN	—	.17	.74***	.36*	.20
C-OWN	.08	—	.07	.81***	.35*
A-OTH	.35	.03	—	.28	.40**
C-OTH	.03	.32	.09	—	.39*

Note. Correlations at the individual level (N = 9,102) are depicted below the diagonal, and correlations at the nation level (N = 42) are depicted above the diagonal. To calculate correlations at the individual level, all variables were centered within nations. All correlations at the individual level are significant at $p < .05$. A-OWN = attention to own feelings; C-OWN = clarity of own feelings; A-OTH = attention to others' feelings; C-OTH = clarity of others' feelings; I-C = Individualism-Collectivism (the higher the score, the more individualistic the nation).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

feelings and clarity of others' feelings. It can also be seen that self- and other-focus of the same variable were positively related. That is, individuals who report paying high attention to their own feelings also tend to pay more attention to others' feelings, and individuals who report high clarity of their own feelings also tend to be clearer about others' feelings. However, the moderate level of these correlations indicates that individuals differentiate between self-focus and other-focus when answering the items.

When transformed meta-mood variables (based on dichotomized item scores and centered within nations after the transformation) were used to calculate within-nations correlations, the results did not change. Only the correlation between attention to own and attention to others' feelings was somewhat smaller (.23, $p < .001$).

Nation-Level Meta-Mood Variables and I-C

To examine between-nations correlations, average levels of meta-mood variables were computed for each nation. Correlations among the four variables and their correlations with I-C can be found in Table 3 (above the diagonal). I-C was unrelated to attention to own feelings and moderately positively related to clarity of own feelings. Unexpectedly, I-C was positively related to attention to and clarity of others' feelings. That is, contrary to our expectation, individuals in collectivistic nations, on average, reported paying less attention to and being less clear about others' feelings than individuals in individualistic nations.

When transformed meta-mood variables (based on dichotomized item scores) were used to calculate between-nations correlations, the size of most correlation coefficients changed only very slightly. The largest change appeared for the relation between I-C and mean clarity of own feelings, which dropped from .35 ($p < .05$) to .28 ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

Between-Nations Differences in Meta-Mood-SWB Link and Moderating Role of I-C

To test whether the individual-level relations of the four meta-mood variables with SWB vary across nations and whether I-C moderates these relations, we adopted a multilevel modeling strategy using HLM 6.08 (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Multilevel models with individuals at Level 1 and nations at Level 2 were analyzed. The dependent variable was either life satisfaction

Table 4. Multilevel Models Predicting Subjective Well-Being by Attention to and Clarity of Own Feelings at Level 1 and Individualism-Collectivism at Level 2

Outcome	Fixed				Random				
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*t*	*df*	*SD*	χ^2	*df*	95% Predictive Interval[a]	Slopes > 0[b]
Life satisfaction									
Intercept	4.41	0.07	63.85***	40	0.43	1486.92***	40		
I-C	0.11	0.03	3.59**	40					
Female	0.18	0.02	7.44***	9,089					
A-OWN	0.07	0.02	2.80**	40	0.10	63.62*	40	[–0.12; 0.25]	75%
I-C	–0.01	0.01	–0.53	40					
C-OWN	0.26	0.02	11.45***	40	0.10	73.15**	40	[0.05; 0.47]	99%
I-C	0.02	0.01	2.00†	40					
Affect balance									
Intercept	1.76	0.11	16.07***	40	0.67	970.49***	40		
I-C	0.06	0.05	1.17	40					
Female	0.12	0.04	2.59*	9,089					
A-OWN	0.05	0.05	0.90	40	0.27	102.33***	40	[–0.49; 0.59]	57%
I-C	–0.04	0.02	–1.50	40					
C-OWN	0.62	0.03	21.90***	9,089					
I-C	0.03	0.01	2.45*	9,089					

Note. Sex was included as a dummy-coded Level 1 covariate in both models. *N* (Level 1) = 9,096. *N* (Level 2) = 42. A-OWN = attention to own feelings; C-OWN = clarity of own feelings; I-C = Individualism-Collectivism.

a. Based on the assumption of normally distributed regression coefficients, the 95% predictive interval indicates the range of values between which 95% of the regression coefficients are estimated to lie (Hox, 2010). The intervals were calculated based on a model without Level 2 predictors.

b. Based on the assumption of normally distributed regression coefficients, this value indicates the percentage of regression coefficients that are positive (Hox, 2010). The percentages were calculated based on a model without Level 2 predictors.

†$p < .06$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

or affect balance, and the set of predictors involved either self-focus or other-focus meta-mood variables. To get "pure" estimates of the overall within-nations relationships (Enders & Tofighi, 2007) and to control for acquiescent response style, the Level 1 predictors were group-mean centered in all analyses. To make the regression coefficients more easily interpretable, the Level 2 predictor I-C was grand-mean centered. Sex was included as a Level-1 covariate in all analyses.

The results of the multilevel model predicting *life satisfaction* by attention to and clarity of *own* feelings at Level 1 and I-C at Level 2 can be found in the upper part of Table 4. Because the meta-mood variables were centered and sex was included as a covariate, the value of the overall intercept (4.41) represents the predicted life satisfaction for males at average levels of attention and clarity. Some of the intercept variability was explained by I-C. That is, citizens of a particular nation were more satisfied with their lives, on average, when their country was more individualistic. Overall, individual-level attention to and clarity of own feelings positively predicted life satisfaction, with clarity contributing more strongly to the prediction. The significant standard deviations for the slopes of attention and clarity indicate that the relation of these two variables with life satisfaction varied across nations. To examine the pattern of between-nations differences in these relations in more detail, we calculated the range of values between which 95% of the nation-specific slope coefficients were estimated to lie and the percentage of slope coefficients that are positive (Hox, 2010; see last two columns of Table 4). Attention to own feelings

demonstrated a more heterogeneous pattern of relations with life satisfaction than clarity of own feelings: For attention, 75% of the nations were estimated to have a positive regression coefficient, whereas for clarity, nearly all nations were estimated to have a positive regression coefficient. The cross-level interaction between I-C and clarity was marginally significant ($p = .052$), and it took the expected form: The more individualistic a nation, the more positive was the relation between clarity of own feelings and life satisfaction.

To test whether cross-cultural differences in extreme response style can account for the results, we analyzed the same multilevel model using transformed life satisfaction (based on trichotomized item scores) and transformed attention to and clarity of own feelings scales (based on dichotomized item scores). Transformed attention and clarity scales were entered as group-mean-centered predictors (i.e., both extreme response and acquiescent style were controlled). The slope coefficient for attention to own feelings was only marginally significant ($p = .06$), but the slope coefficient for clarity of own feelings was again positive ($p < .001$). The regression coefficient of the cross-level interaction between I-C and clarity of own feelings was again positive, but the effect was not significant ($p = .17$).

The results of the multilevel model predicting *affect balance* by attention to and clarity of *own* feelings at Level 1 and I-C at Level 2 can be found in the lower part of Table 4. On average, attention to own feelings was unrelated to affect balance. However, nations differed significantly in this relation. In 57% of the nations, attention to own feelings demonstrated a positive relation to affect balance, and in 43% of the nations, attention to own feelings demonstrated a negative relation to affect balance. Clarity of own feelings was positively related to affect balance. As expected, I-C significantly moderated the relation between clarity of own feelings and affect balance: The more individualistic a nation, the more positive was the relation between clarity of own feelings and affect balance. There were no unexplained between-nations differences in the clarity-affect-balance link, as indicated by a lack of a standard deviation estimate for this variable in Table 4 (i.e., no random slopes; as indicated by a deviance test: $\chi^2 = 1.32$, $df = 3$, $p = .73$).

Again, we ran the same multilevel model using transformed affect balance (based on trichotomized item scores) and transformed attention to and clarity of own feelings scales (based on dichotomized item scores). Transformed attention and clarity scales were entered as group-mean-centered predictors (i.e., both extreme response and acquiescent style were controlled). The results for the individual-level slopes remained the same, as well as the pattern of cross-level interactions: I-C moderated the relation between clarity of own feelings and affect balance ($p < .01$), but not the relation between attention to own feelings and affect balance ($p = .37$).

The results of the multilevel model predicting *life satisfaction* by attention to and clarity of *others*' feelings at Level 1 and I-C at Level 2 can be found in the upper part of Table 5. Attention to others' feelings positively predicted life satisfaction, and between-nations differences in this relation did not reach significance (as indicated by a deviance test: $\chi^2 = 5.24$, $df = 3$, $p = .15$). Unexpectedly, I-C did not moderate the relation between attention to others' feelings and life satisfaction. Overall, clarity of others' feelings was positively related to life satisfaction, but nations differed in this relation. Given that nearly all nations (97%) were estimated to have a positive slope coefficient, these between-nations differences largely refer to the *strength* of the positive relation between clarity of others' feelings and life satisfaction. The regression coefficient for the cross-level interaction between clarity of others' feelings and I-C was positive. This means that the form of the interaction went in a direction other than the expected direction (i.e., the more individualistic a nation, the more positive the relation between clarity of others' feelings and life satisfaction tended to be). However, the regression coefficient did not reach significance ($p = .14$).

Subsequent analyses using transformed life satisfaction (based on trichotomized item scores) and transformed attention to and clarity of others' feelings scales (based on dichotomized item

Table 5. Multilevel Models Predicting Subjective Well-Being by Attention to and Clarity of Others' Feelings at Level 1 and Individualism-Collectivism at Level 2

Outcome	Fixed				Random				
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*t*	*df*	*SD*	χ^2	*df*	95% Predictive Interval[a]	Slopes > 0[b]
Life satisfaction									
Intercept	4.42	0.07	63.88***	40	0.43	1461.86***	40		
I-C	0.11	0.03	3.59**	40					
Female	0.16	0.02	6.43***	9,089					
A-OTH	0.14	0.02	7.59***	9,089					
I-C	0.01	0.01	0.60	9,089					
C-OTH	0.15	0.02	6.99***	40	0.08	58.86*	40	[–0.01; 0.31]	97%
I-C	0.02	0.01	1.52	40					
Affect balance									
Intercept	1.78	0.11	16.21***	40	0.67	933.01***	40		
I-C	0.06	0.05	1.19	40					
Female	0.08	0.05	1.75	9,089					
A-OTH	0.13	0.05	2.89**	40	0.18	66.62**	40	[–0.23; 0.49]	76%
I-C	–0.02	0.02	–0.82	40					
C-OTH	0.31	0.04	8.35***	40	0.13	56.70*	40	[0.06; 0.56]	99%
I-C	0.03	0.02	1.98†	40					

Note. Sex was included as a dummy-coded covariate in both models. *N* (Level 1) = 9,096. *N* (Level 2) = 42. A-OTH = attention to others' feelings; C-OTH = clarity of others' feelings; I-C = Individualism-Collectivism.

a. Based on the assumption of normally distributed regression coefficients, the 95% predictive interval indicates the range of values between which 95% of the regression coefficients are estimated to lie (Hox, 2010). The intervals were calculated based on a model without Level 2 predictors.

b. Based on the assumption of normally distributed regression coefficients, this value indicates the percentage of regression coefficients that are positive (Hox, 2010). The percentages were calculated based on a model without Level 2 predictors.

†$p < .06$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

scores; group-mean centered after this transformation) yielded similar results. In particular, the cross-level interaction between clarity of others' feelings and I-C was not significant ($p = .98$).

The results of the multilevel model predicting *affect balance* by attention to and clarity of *others*' feelings at Level 1 and I-C at Level 2 can be found in the lower part of Table 5. Both attention to and clarity of others' feelings positively predicted affect balance, on average, but nations differed in these relations. For attention to others' feelings, 76% of the slopes were estimated to be positive, and for clarity of others' feelings, nearly all nations (99%) were estimated to have a positive regression coefficient. Thus, the relation between attention to others' feelings and affect balance was somewhat more heterogeneous across nations. I-C did not moderate the relation between attention to others' feelings and affect balance, but the cross-level interaction between I-C and clarity of others' feelings was marginally significant ($p = .055$). However, the form of the cross-level interaction differed from what was expected: The more individualistic a nation, the more positive was the relation between clarity of others' feelings and affect balance.

A model using transformed affect balance (based on trichotomized item scores) and transformed attention to and clarity of others' feelings scales (based on dichotomized item scores; group-mean centered after this transformation) yielded a rather similar pattern of results. In particular, the regression coefficient for the cross-level interaction between clarity of others' feelings and I-C was again positive, but not significantly different from zero ($p = .09$).

Discussion

The present study is the first study to analyze data on beliefs about attention to and clarity of own and others' feelings and their relations with SWB across a large set of nations. Variation in the four meta-mood variables was found on the individual level and the nation level. Between-nations differences explained between 5% to 9% of the variance in these meta-mood variables, which is similar to what has been found for personality traits (about 5%; e.g., McCrae et al., 2010). In the following, we will discuss the most important results concerning between-nations differences and the role of I-C as moderator of the meta-mood/well-being link.

Perceiving Own Feelings

As in previous studies that were conducted in the United States and Western Europe, clarity of own feelings was positively related to SWB in nearly all nations. This applied to both the cognitive and the affective component of SWB. This finding supports and extends prior cross-cultural research on clarity of own feelings' relation with life satisfaction (Wong et al., 2007) and depression (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2005; Ghorbani et al., 2002) in selected nations. Given that the present research was based on 42 nations, clarity's positive association with SWB can now be considered very robust.

Nonetheless, there was variability across nations with respect to the size of the relation between clarity of own feelings and SWB, and I-C partly explained this variability. As expected, clarity of own feelings was more closely related to affect balance in individualistic nations than in collectivistic nations, and this effect tended to hold for the prediction of life satisfaction too. Importantly, cross-cultural variability in response styles cannot account for these findings. Acquiescent response style had been controlled by using group-mean centering (Fischer, 2004). When extreme response style was controlled in additional analyses, the moderator effect on affect balance remained the same.

For ambivalence over emotional expression—an affect-related construct describing conflict over one's style of emotional expression (King & Emmons, 1990)—a similar result was found by Suh (1994, cited in Suh et al., 1998): The correlation between ambivalence over emotional expression and life satisfaction was closer in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures. Both (high) clarity of own feelings and (low) ambivalence of emotional expression can be thought of as being linked to self-actualization, which refers to the motivation to fulfill one's potential and involves the perception and acceptance of one's self, including one's feelings (Maslow, 1970).

The heterogeneity of results on the relationship between attention to own feelings' and SWB that has been found in previous studies (mostly conducted in the United States and Western Europe) was confirmed across nations: On average, attention to own feelings was unrelated to affect balance and demonstrated only a very slight positive relationship with life satisfaction. However, nations differed significantly in these relations, with the majority of nations demonstrating a positive relationship, but also a substantial part of nations demonstrating a negative relationship. Researchers have only started to analyze the personal conditions under which attention to own feelings is beneficial or detrimental to SWB on the individual level (e.g., Lischetzke & Eid, 2003). Future research might investigate a diverse set of cultural variables to find out in which cultural settings attention to own feelings might be beneficial or detrimental to individuals' SWB.

Perceiving Others' Feelings

Beliefs about attention to others' feelings demonstrated a positive relation with life satisfaction across nations, and nations did not significantly vary in this relationship. When predicting affect

balance, the average effect of attention to others' feelings was also rather low and positive, with the majority of nations demonstrating a positive relationship. We did not find evidence for a moderating effect of I-C. That is, attention to others' feelings can be considered as a behavioral preference that is positively related to SWB across many nations—individualistic and collectivistic nations. From the perspective of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), frequently directing attention to others' feelings might be a specific aspect of a more broader openness to experiences and mindfulness, which has been shown to increase daily experiences of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2008).

For nearly all nations, the relationship of clarity of others' feelings with SWB was positive. Nations differed mainly in the extent to which this relationship was positive. One could interpret this finding as meaning that believing in one's ability to discern other people's feelings helps to guide social interactions and develop social relationships in a variety of cultural contexts, albeit to varying degrees. However, it should be noted that these correlational findings do not imply causal mechanisms, and hence, it might also be the case that being happier and more satisfied with one's life leads individuals to pay more attention to others' feelings and perceive them more clearly.

Contrary to what we had expected, individuals in individualistic nations reported higher levels in attention to and clarity of others' feelings, on average, than individuals in collectivistic nations. Moreover, the moderator effect of I-C for the relation between clarity of others' feelings and affect balance showed a tendency in the opposite direction than hypothesized: The more individualistic a nation, the more positive the relation between clarity of others' feelings and affect balance tended to be. One post hoc explanation for this finding is that affective states in general (own *and* others' feelings) might be less influential in guiding behavior in collectivistic nations. Suh et al. (1998), for instance, found that in individualistic nations, emotions were far superior predictors of life satisfaction to norms, whereas in collectivistic nations, norms and emotions were equally strong predictors.

The present study focused on the cultural dimension of I-C. As has been previously shown, I-C is highly correlated with other societal and political factors, such as income level (GDP per capita) or human rights (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). Attempts to disentangle the effects of the various co-occurring cultural, societal, and political indicators have not been successful due to the high intercorrelations and the limited sample size of nations available for such analyses (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Future research could approach this challenge by longitudinal analyses of diverse nation characteristics in a large number of nations.

Limitations and Conclusions

A limitation of the present study is that it is based on college student samples that do not reflect the diversity of the nations' general populations. However, student samples can reflect the position of a nation's subgroup (students) relative to a similar subgroup in other nations. Moreover, for SWB, national means based on student samples have been found to correlate well with national means based on representative samples (Diener et al., 1995).

A second limitation is that in some nations, the samples were quite small. An advantage of multilevel models is, however, that they provide weighted regression estimates and shrink back extreme coefficients in nations with small sample sizes toward the mean, which leads to more precise estimates (Hox, 2010). Nonetheless, future research should investigate whether the relations between meta-mood variables and SWB found in the present study hold for larger and representative samples.

To summarize, the results of the present study suggest that frequently directing attention to others' feelings is associated with higher SWB in different cultural settings. The heterogeneity across nations that was found for the link between attention to own feelings and SWB confirmed the mixed empirical evidence from previous studies that were mainly conducted in individualistic

nations. Attention to own feelings seems to contain both adaptive and maladaptive elements (cf., Lischetzke & Eid, 2003). Clearly, more research is needed on the personal and cultural conditions under which attention to own feelings is beneficial or detrimental to SWB. For clarity of own and others' feelings, on the other hand, the cross-cultural comparison yielded a consistent picture: Beliefs about clearly perceiving own and others' feelings were universally related to higher SWB, albeit to varying degrees. In particular, clarity of own feelings seems to be more relevant to SWB in individualistic than in collectivistic nations. This might be due to the higher importance of self-actualization processes in more individualistic nations.

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