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Claremont McKenna College

**Examining the Cross-Cultural Differences in Affect Valuation:
Whites, East Asians, and Third Culture Kids**

Submitted to
Dr. Stacey Doan

by
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Abstract

This paper explores the cross-cultural differences in affect valuation, emotion regulation, and the relationship between affect valuation, emotion regulation and subjective well-being across White Americans, Asians, and Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Emotional experiences shape every facet of our lives, yet understanding the extent to which emotional experiences are universal is still poorly understood. This is particularly the case among individuals with diverse cultural experiences. In the current study, we look at TCK individuals, a group composed of White-identifying individuals who spent a significant time of their childhood in East Asian countries. Through a questionnaire that was distributed via email and word of mouth, participants (N = 239) were asked to complete five surveys that included a subjective well-being scale, the affect valuation index, an emotion regulation questionnaire, an interpersonal emotion regulation questionnaire, and a set of scenarios that tested the individual's tendency to feel a duty to themselves or to others. This study found that the Asian group significantly valued low arousal emotions more so than European Americans or the TCK individuals. TCKs were most likely to feel a strong sense of duty to help others.

Keywords: affect valuation, emotion regulation, subjective well-being, TCKs, scenarios

Introduction

Emotions are undoubtedly an essential part of human existence. The feeling of elation when you get a good grade on a test, the overwhelming sadness when someone you love passes away, the guilt you feel for cheating on a quiz are all emotions that drive human lives. Although we all experience variations of certain feelings, to what degree are emotions experienced universally? Moreover, how do cultural experiences shape these factors? Research on emotions and culture has generally focused on three aspects of emotion: affect valuation, emotion regulation, and the relations between emotion and subjective well-being (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; Haga, Kraft, & Corby, 2009; Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008; J. L. Tsai, 2007). Exploring the cultural distinctions can help individuals learn how to adapt and interact with others. This paper will aim to uncover the cultural nuances in affect valuation, emotion regulation, and their intersection with subjective well-being across European Americans, Asians, and Third Culture Kids.

Affect valuation

Knowing the extent to which individuals value their emotions can help us understand behaviors and motivations. In this context, the majority of humans prioritize positive emotions, which does not equate simply with the reduction of negative feelings (Diener, Larsen, & Emmons, 1984). Thus, it's clear that people can't necessarily focus on decreasing "bad" feelings in order to increase "good" feelings. Cultivating positive emotions are important because positive emotions are associated with better health incomes and can buffer the effects of negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and anger (Fredrickson, 2000). Frederickson (2000) also showed that by thinking consistently about positive feelings, people were more likely to feel happier on average because of the

repeated exposure. Hence, by pursuing positive emotions, people are able to potentially decrease their negative feelings, whilst simultaneously feeling more positive on average.

Despite what may be apparent universality in the prioritization of positive affect, there is also evidence of cultural variability. Affect valuation is defined as the affective states that people value and would ideally like to feel. Tsai, Knutson and Fung (2006) conducted a study to understand more about how affect valuation can impact individual emotions. Their research explored the idea of ideal affect and actual affect. Ideal affect refers to an emotional goal that individuals are trying to reach; it's how they desire to feel. Using the Affect Valuation Index (Tsai, 2007), participants were asked to rate how often they'd ideally like to feel a variety of emotions. On the flip side, actual affect refers to how someone actually feels. It's often a response to a situation or a state. According to Tsai, the discrepancy between ideal affect and actual affect is where individuals will make an effort to change their current affective state. For example, if someone values excitement and is not currently excited, they will seek out opportunities to feel excited.

In addition to the distinction between ideal and actual affect, individuals also seem to place different values on various aspects of emotion. In emotion research, valence refers to the quality of the emotion; it can be positive or negative. On the other hand, arousal refers to activation of intensity; it can be high or low. Excitement, therefore, would have positive valence with high arousal. Fear on the other hand, would have negative valence with high arousal. In terms of culture, Tsai proposed that different cultures are likely to value varying levels of arousal and valence. European Americans and Asian Americans tend to value "high-arousal positive affect," while Hong Kong Chinese as well as Asian American individuals value "low-arousal positive affect" more

than their European American counterparts. Along those same lines, Asians and Asian Americans are also more likely to value any sort of low-arousal emotion, be it positive or negative. As Fredrickson (2000) mentioned, content – which is a low-arousal positive emotion – may perhaps be the most underrated emotion in Western culture, yet it is highly regarded in Asian culture.

Emotion regulation

Another important component of understanding emotions, is the understanding of how they are regulated. Whether someone decides to punch someone out of anger or remain calm and composed is testament to how they regulate their emotions. Within emotion regulation, Gross and John (2003) proposed that there are two processes: reappraisal and suppression. Reappraisal is “the way in which individuals construe an emotion-eliciting situation to change its impact on emotional experience.” On the other hand, suppression is the “inhibition of emotional expressive behavior” (Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008).

Culturally, this can manifest itself in different ways. Cultures with higher levels of maintaining social order and collectivistic cultures have positively correlated reappraisal and suppression scores (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Although suppression may not be an ideal emotion regulation tactic in Western culture, it doesn't carry the same negative connotations in East Asian culture (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007). In fact, Wierzbicka (1994) argued that individuals from collectivistic backgrounds often encourage suppression when the lack of suppression would otherwise hurt the other person and their relationship with them. On the other hand, cultures that value individualistic behaviors record much lower scores on suppression (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Unlike their East

Asian counterparts, individualistic cultures often engage in suppression mostly when it serves a self-protecting purpose (Butler et al., 2007). Since suppression is likely used as a tactic for self-protecting purposes in Western culture, it can be argued that suppression in these cultures is associated with negative emotions as well (Gross & John, 2003).

According to Gross, Richards, and John (2006), cognitive reappraisal actually requires less energy and effort than expressive suppression, thus resulting in the entire change of emotion. This conscious effort to change emotions can be found more frequently in individualistic cultures due to the fact that much of the way that they are feeling is individually driven (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

In addition to these intrapersonal processes of emotion regulation, recent research has also focused on interpersonal emotion regulation. Interpersonal emotion regulation refers to the process of influencing the emotional state of another person (Niven, Totterdell, & Holman, 2009). Instead of relying on themselves to regulate their own emotions, individuals often turn to friends for help and through this, ways to regulate their emotions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Interpersonal emotion regulation can come in both physical interactions and cognitive processes. For example, imagining how a friend would react when you express a strong emotion may be just as effective as having an actual conversation with them (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Unsurprisingly, interpersonal emotion regulation can be more effective in certain situations and fairly useless in others. Marroquín (2011) showed that interpersonal interactions in depressive scenarios can be either debilitating or actually helpful. It is important to note that depression as a disease can have detrimental impacts on intrapersonal emotion regulation, which could be the reason why individuals who are battling this disease may have a difficult time using

interpersonal strategies as well (Marroquín, 2011). Clearly, there are many factors that play into interpersonal emotion regulation, which could be a reason why it is not as well-researched as intrapersonal emotion regulation. However, this form of emotion regulation is still important because it uncovers potential trends in how individuals use other people to help them cope with strong emotions.

In the cultural context, interpersonal emotion regulation can differ across groups. In one study, East Asian individuals were more likely to use their interpersonal skills to maintain relationships with others (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Being able to maintain social order in East Asian cultures is vital, thus being able to use other people to help gauge emotions can play a large role in establishing a norm for that society. However, Taylor et al. (2004) showed in their study that Asian individuals were actually less likely than European Americans to share stressful events with their social network. This can be explained by the interdependent nature of East Asian culture; individuals don't want to burden their social networks with their individual problems (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). On the other hand, European Americans benefited most from explicit social support (Kim et al., 2008), which entails seeking support individually and pursuing that support for individual purposes. This is consistent with the literature on how individualistic cultures are more likely to ask for help when needed.

Since emotion regulation is a process that individuals experience daily, understanding the nuanced cultural differences is important in interacting with individuals from different backgrounds.

The relationship between emotions and subjective well-being

Predictably, overall well-being is also strongly related to affect valuation and emotion regulation. In terms of emotion regulation, Gross and John (2003) showed that individuals who were more likely to use suppression were also less likely to have positive emotions. Similarly, Haga, Kraft and Corby (2009) showed that individuals who used cognitive reappraisal more often were less likely to experience negative affective states. Unsurprisingly, emotion regulation evidently plays a large role in the resulting affective state and subjective well-beings of individuals.

Regarding the valuation of certain emotions, it is important to understand how the value placed on an affective state can impact the way individuals perceive their well-being. For example, being happy comes with many social and health benefits. Happy people are more likely to live longer (Diener & Chan, 2011) and people often prefer being in the presence of happy people rather than unhappy people, which could result in more friendships. Additionally, happiness predicts lower heart rates and blood pressure (Steptoe & Wardle, 2005). In this study, self-identified happy people had a heart beat that was approximately six beats lower than the control group. Happiness is also shown to improve immune systems. When 81 graduate students were given the Hepatitis B vaccine, the graduate students who rated themselves as having the most positive emotions were more likely to have a high antibody response to the vaccine (Marsland, Cohen, Rabin, & Manuck, 2006). Therefore, it's not a surprise that happiness is often valued highly and individuals might regulate their emotions to come back to that state of being as often as possible.

Furthermore, within the understanding of emotions and culture, knowing what increases and decreases subjective well-being is vital. The literature suggests that there is

a significant difference in how individuals perceive their subjective well-being to be in either collectivistic and individualistic cultures. As expected, individual goal attainment resulted in higher levels of subjective well-being for European Americans while pursuing goals for the happiness of others showed positive changes in the well-beings of Asian Americans (Oishi & Diener, 2009). Suh (2002) explored the relationship of identity of self with subjective well-being and showed that although the idea that self-consistency may be correlated with higher levels of well-being in European Americans, Asian individuals don't feel the same way. Knowing how culture, emotion regulation, and subjective well-being intersect with each other can help illuminate how individuals from various backgrounds would react in affect valuation and emotion regulation.

Cultural context

Understanding the nuances of cultural variation is important in realizing the differences in individualistic and collectivistic cultures in the value of emotion. Individualistic cultures (United States and Western Europe) places emphasis on personal improvement and self-goal achievement. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures (Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan) encourage a more family and group-oriented approach to life, thus superseding the needs or desires of the individual. The different natures of these cultures can lead to different takes on situations in life.

Relationships are viewed quite differently in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Asian Americans are likely to express their feelings in interpersonal terms and behavior is often dictated by relationships (Tsai & Lau, 2013). In collectivistic cultures, relationships are highly valued – even more so than in individualistic cultures – which results in many East Asian individuals to see themselves in the context of these

relationships. However, in individualistic cultures, relationships – although important – are not necessarily always considered in an individual's pursuit of happiness (Suh, 2002).

When pursuing goals, collectivistic and individualistic cultures also emphasize very different priorities. In a collectivistic culture, group goals are much more important (Liu, Lieberman, Stevens, Auerbach, & Shankman, 2016). By valuing being a part of a group so highly, collectivistic cultures often encourage individuals to pursue group goals first (Matsumoto et al., 2008). While it's important to put these group goals ahead of personal goals, it's also equally as critical to show humility in the pursuance and achievement of those goals (Fredrickson, 2000) in order to maintain the social harmony that is highly valued in collectivistic cultures. On the flip side, in individualistic cultures, individuals have a goal and they strive to reach that goal in order to satisfy themselves. Oishi and Diener (2009) showed that well-being increased for European Americans when they were able to achieve a personal goal, whereas achieving an interpersonal goal increased the well-beings of Asian Americans.

Negative experiences – as universal as they are – can manifest themselves very differently in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Based on Tsai and Lau's study (2013), there were clear distinctions in how East Asian Americans viewed failure compared to their European American counterparts. When reflecting on a negative experience, Asian Americans were more likely to have a higher increase in distress levels. Since collectivistic cultures often define their successes and failures through interpersonal relationships, it's no surprise that Asian Americans would be more susceptible to feeling poorly about themselves in the context of negative experiences. The feeling of shame and guilt of letting down someone else often drives this feeling. On the

flipside, individualistic cultures are more likely to attribute their failures to situational factors. This very distinct difference in how collectivistic cultures and individualistic cultures view failure is telling of the obvious influences that culture has on affect valuation.

Finally, cultural variation in affect valuation can also be attributed to the differences in individualistic and collectivistic cultural scripts. Emotions in East Asian scripts focus on paying attention to others (Tsai, 2007). Collectivist cultures value adjustment rather than arousal and influence, which could be a reason why contentment is an emotion that is highly regarded in these cultures (Fredrickson, 2000). European American scripts, however, focus on cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. Emotions that emphasize influence often take the front stage in individualistic cultures.

Therefore, the norms that surround emotion regulation and expressiveness – including the manifestation of feelings – are all tied to maintaining social order within a culture (Matsumoto et al., 2008). This is why affect valuation, emotion regulation and subjective well-being are so closely tied to cultures and why many cultures can and do prioritize and demand various emotions. Culture plays a large role in how individuals feel they can express their emotions and also helps shape what people view as good, moral, and virtuous (Tsai, 2007). For that reason, it's not a surprise that emotions and affects are valued differently across cultures.

Third Culture Kids

Clearly, this dichotomy of cultures influences the way that individuals from each type of culture views life and thus, it's clear that emotion valuation is different amongst individualistic and collectivistic cultures. However, given the globalization of the

economy, a growing number of families have been raising their children outside of their parent culture. International schools that span across the world often house these individuals dubbed “Third Culture Kids” (TCKs). Although TCKs can refer to individuals who grew up in any culture that is separate from their parent culture, we will be looking specifically at TCKs who grew up in East Asia. With the understanding that collectivistic and individualistic cultures are different, it is interesting to fathom how TCKs identify – do they associate closely with their European American individualistic culture where they’re from or do they associate more closely with their East Asian collectivistic culture where they grew up?

By being raised across country lines, TCKs often have a very interesting concept of identity. Various factors within their move to a different country can impact the way that they develop during formative years in their life. Lyttle, Barker and Cornwell (Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwell, 2011) showed that TCKs reported a higher level of interpersonal sensitivity due to the constant changes in their environments, thus allowing them to interpret social situations and adapt quicker to the changes. Unsurprisingly, this can play a role in the way TCKs value their emotions in addition to how they regulate them

Furthermore, language differences between the TCK’s home country and host country make them a very interesting group to study. Differences in American nonverbal and verbal communication and East Asian nonverbal and verbal communication can affect the way that individuals perceive ideal affect (Tsai, 2007). For example, communication styles are different between Japanese and European American culture. The Japanese are more passive with criticisms than European Americans are, thus showing how aggressiveness or directness is not necessarily the best way to approach

conflict (Nomura & Barnlund, 1983). European Americans were more likely to take a direct approach in dealing with a disagreement, whereas the levels of directness from the Japanese were more calculated based on their relationship with the individual. Additionally, Japanese language often omits the concept of “I” in both written and spoken language, which is telling of how Japanese culture is shaped (Minami & McCabe, 1995). As evident here, knowing that there is already a conflict between a TCK’s home language and their host country’s language, it’s important to consider how that changes the way that they might identify.

In addition to language variances, TCKs also grow up in a culture that is unique to their situation. The “third culture” refers to the culture that surrounds these individuals, oftentimes provided by the various other individuals who have these same nomadic lifestyles. This could include students at other international schools, individuals from similar expat communities, American military families or people and families on religious missions, all whom who share similar international experiences. By being removed from their parents’ home culture and yet not completely assimilated or attached to the culture of their new country, TCKs find themselves often struggling to find an identity for themselves.

The acculturation that many TCKs experience is distinctive to their situation. As opposed to immigrants, TCKs may have a harder time adjusting to their new environment because they know that they are only there for a brief amount of time (Gerner, Perry, Moselle, & Archbold, 1992). Furthermore, reintroduction to American culture on United States soil can also be difficult and peers may view them differently because of their international backgrounds and perhaps cultures that they’ve picked up (Useem &

Downie, 1976). It's also evident that the friendships that TCKs build when they're abroad are very different than the friends they would've had if they stayed in their home countries. According to Useem and Cottrell (1996), nine out of the ten TCKs they researched said that they feel out of sync with their age group throughout their lifetime. When TCK individuals return to the United States, there is often a reverse culture shock because American culture is different overseas than it actually is. Reintroducing themselves to American culture means that they have been slightly "out of sync" with their non-TCK American peers, whether it's slang, behavior or music taste.

Much of the literature on TCKs surround their acculturation processes and how they feel when they move to a new country or when they move back to their home country. Not many studies talk about the actual culture shift that they experience when they are members of a new community and whether or not they identify with their host country more than their home country. Fry's (2007) refined Ebuchi (1983) model of TCKs shows that although there are influences coming from the host culture, ultimately, the parents are a driving influence in what the TCK decides to identify as. In a sense, the parents are gate keepers to what their children take away from their abroad experience.

The current study

Although there is a significant amount of literature on the comparisons between European Americans and Asians, there is not much literature on how TCKs understand and experience emotions. For that reason, this study – in addition to further exploring affect valuation and emotion regulation differences in Asian and White groups – aims to also investigate the connection between TCKs and the multicultural experience that is

unique to their upbringing. It's imperative to understand how TCKs culturally identify because globalization will continue to grow and with that, the population of TCKs will undoubtedly increase. Thus, realizing that there's a high chance that individuals will interact with someone with a TCK background is key in establishing some sort of understanding of their cultural background and identity.

Thus, this study has three research questions:

- (1) How does affect valuation (including sense of duty to self and duty to others) differ across White individuals, TCK individuals, and Asian individuals?
- (2) How does emotion regulation differ across White individuals, TCK individuals, and Asian individuals?
- (3) What is the relationship between individual satisfaction with life and affect valuation as well as emotion regulation across the groups?

Methods

Procedure:

We used a quantitative approach to understand cultural differences in affect valuation and emotion regulation. Through the use of established psychological survey scales (described below), we looked to understand more about an individual's satisfaction with life, affect valuation, and emotion regulation. Additionally, we asked the participant to put themselves in a hypothetical situation where a character in a story either pursues their individual happiness or decides to value other people's needs over their own. They were then asked to what degree they agreed with the character's decision.

The online survey was distributed by mass email and the five scenarios were randomly assigned based on the Qualtrics randomization tool. Either the "Duty and Obligation to Others" or the "Personal Pursuit of Happiness" version of the scenarios were shown to participants. To conceal order effects, all five scenarios were also randomly ordered with the Qualtrics randomization tool.

Participants:

Participants were recruited online through emails and word of mouth. 239 subjects participated in the study (females = 172). Asian identifying (n = 86) individuals, White (n = 109) identifying individuals, and 44 "Third Culture Kids" were included in the study. All participants spoke English fluently. Within the Asian group, there were 65 females and 21 males, within the White American group, there were 78 females and 21 males, and within the TCK group, there were 29 females and 15 males.

Materials:

Measures:

Participants were asked to fill out measures that evaluated their current emotional state and what their view of affect valuation entailed. To understand the basic demographics of the participant pool, some general demographic questions were included in the survey. The demographic questions asked about gender, age, places lived, ethnicity of individual as well as biological parents, and education level of parents.

Satisfaction with life scale. To measure how satisfied the participants are with their current life, they were asked to answer a short 5 item satisfaction with life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The instrument asked participants to agree or disagree with five statements regarding their life on a Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree seven-point Likert scale. This helped us understand more about how the current perception of their life could affect how they value emotions.

Ideal affect. To assess ideal affect, participants were asked to answer the Affect Valuation Index created by Tsai, Knutson, and Fung (2006). Ideal affect and actual affect are important to distinguish because of the various research surrounding the differences between the two (Tsai, 2007). Ideal affect is also impactful in understanding the value of emotions across cultures because it shows how individuals from various backgrounds idealize certain emotions. Participants were asked, “Rate how much you would IDEALLY like to feel” each of 30 feelings, by using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time).

Emotion Regulation. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) was used to assess individual and cultural differences in emotion regulation styles. The scale consists of two subscales that tap into reappraisal and suppression. Reappraisal is the term used to describe the way individuals perceive an emotional situation and changing the way they think of it. On the other hand, suppression is used to understand how individuals express their emotions in those emotion-eliciting situations (Matsumoto et al., 2008). This questionnaire involved ten different emotional scenarios such as “I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I’m in” and “I control my emotions by not expressing them.” Participants had to rate their agreement on a seven-point “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” Likert scale.

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation. The Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Questionnaire that was developed by Hofmann, Carpenter, and Curtiss (2016) is included in the survey because of the high influence that social interpersonal relationships have within East Asian culture. This questionnaire included 20 questions that asked about how the individual reacts emotionally in relation to other people’s emotional states. For example, “It helps me deal with my depressed mood when others point out that things aren’t as bad as they seem.” The questionnaire was evaluated on four different subscales: enhancing positive affect, perspective taking, social modeling, and soothing. Enhancing positive affect refers to the use of other people to help encourage positive affect. Perspective taking refers to using a social connection to help put a situation in perspective. Social modeling refers to modeling individual behavior to be in coordination with other people. Soothing refers to using other people to help sooth an individual.

Participants are asked to rate how accurately the statements applied to their emotion regulation on a five-point Likert scale anchored by “Not True At All”/ “Definitely True.”

Individual Desire/Group Needs. Finally, to assess participants’ preferences for making a decision based on their emotions versus obligations, scenarios were developed and participants were randomized to read either a “duty and obligation to others” scenario or a “pursuance of individual happiness” scenario. There are five different scenarios that emphasize different levels of relational engagement to other individuals. Both variations of the five scenarios were created with conscious attention to comparable length and language. For example, for a “duty and obligation to others” scenario, “Mary wants to go to a concert on the same night as a weekly family event. Although she really wants to go to the concert, she decides to stay in with her family.” Alternatively, participants may have been randomized to read, “Mary wants to go to a concert on the same night as a weekly family event. Although her family wants her to stay, Mary decides to go to the concert.” The language stays similar and so does the length of the paragraphs. Participants were then asked to rate how much they agreed with the actions taken in the scenario on a self-defined scale of 1-7. See Appendix A for a copy of the scenarios.

Results

Group differences in affect valuation

We ran a multi-variate ANOVA to test for group differences. We found significant ($p < 0.05$) differences in positive ideal affect. Asian individuals had a much lower mean positive ideal affect score ($M = 3.771$) than White individuals ($M = 4.104$) and TCK ($M = 4.015$) individuals (See Table 1). Additionally, the data showed that Asian individuals were significantly more likely to prefer low arousal (LA) ideal emotion ($M = 2.205$) than their White ($M = 1.960$) and TCK ($M = 1.955$) counterparts. In that same vein, Asian individuals had significantly higher levels of low arousal negative (LAN) ideal emotions ($M = 2.205$) as well as negative ideal emotions ($M = 1.919$) in general. When we ask participants to rate their ideal affect, we find that Asian individuals are more likely to prefer low arousal ideal affects as well as negative ideal affects as compared to the other two groups.

Group differences in emotion regulation

We found no group differences with regards to ($p = 0.07$) reappraisal, however, significance significant effect was found for suppression ($p < 0.05$). Asians reported much higher levels of suppression ($M = 4.044$) than their TCK ($M = 4.494$) and White ($M = 4.462$) peers (Table 2). Additionally, with regards to the interpersonal emotion regulation dimensions of perspective taking and social modeling, the Asian group also had significantly higher levels of using others for perspective taking ($M = 2.291$) as well as social modeling ($M = 3.337$), which shows that Asians are more likely to use other people to regulate their emotions in some aspects.

Group differences in self versus others affect valuation

There was a marginal ($p = 0.07$) effect in the TCK group in having a high level of duty to others ($M = 4.994$) that was not found in the Asian ($M = 4.650$) nor the White ($M = 4.642$) group (Table 3).

Group differences in subjective well-being

Based on the Satisfaction with Life Scale, White individuals were significantly happier than our two other groups ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4).

Relationship between emotions and subjective well-being

Table 5 presents the correlations. Correlations by group revealed that white individuals were less likely to reappraise if they were unhappy ($r = .387$) (Table 5). Unsurprisingly, lower levels of happiness also showed that they are less likely to use any interpersonal strategies to increase their well-being ($r = -.268$). Asian individuals were also less likely to reappraise if they were unhappy ($r = .312$), however, suppression does not seem to follow the same pattern (Table 5). The Asian group was also less likely to use other people to regulate their emotions if they are unhappy ($r = -.216$). There didn't seem to be a relationship in the TCK group between emotions and subjective well-being.

Relationship between affect valuation and subjective well-being

The unhappier White individuals feel, the less duty to others they feel ($r = -.331$). However, the same trend does not hold for either the TCK nor the Asian group (Table 6).

Unsurprisingly, both the White group and the Asian group showed significant relationships –with their subjective well-being score and their positive and negative emotions (i.e: the lower their score, the higher they felt on negative emotions and vice versa). However, the TCK group did not report any strong relationships between affect valuation and subjective well-being. There was no significance even in the relationship between subjective well-being and their positive or negative feelings.

Discussion

In the current study, we examined cultural differences in affect valuation and emotion regulation. In addition, we examined relations between affect valuation, emotion regulation and well-being across Asian, European Americans and TCKs. As expected, Asians were found to value low arousal emotions more than European Americans and Third Culture Kids. They were also more likely to suppress their emotions and also more likely to use others to regulate their emotions. Interestingly, the TCK group felt more obliged to help others than their Asian and White American counterparts. Additionally, lower levels of subjective well-being were negatively correlated with the desire to help others for European Americans, while that was not the case for the other two groups. Many of the results were consistent with the literature, however, there were also findings that have not yet been reported in other studies, specifically within the TCK group.

Understanding affect valuation across ethnic groups can be beneficial in knowing what makes individuals from different backgrounds happy, thus maximizing their utility in their everyday lives. The results from this study indicated that Asians prefer generally lower arousal positive affects rather than high arousal ones. This is consistent with Tsai et al.'s (2006) literature about how East Asian cultures value low arousal affects because of how it contributes more to the harmonious living aspect of collectivistic cultures. Furthermore, Asian individuals seemed to prefer higher levels of negative affect, which could also be attributed to their collectivistic backgrounds. Since East Asian scripts focus on paying attention to others (Tsai, 2007), it could be that East Asians are more likely to – consciously or subconsciously – internalize the negative emotions that are being emitted by the people around them. In fact, it's been shown that individuals from

collectivistic cultures often blame themselves for the unhappiness they may have caused others (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005).

Negative emotions also don't seem as "bad" in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures, which could explain the reason why this Asian sample was more likely prefer some negative emotions over their White and TCK counterparts. Furthermore, in collectivistic cultures, positive affect and negative affect are not viewed as opposites, but rather complementary to one another (Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999). Similarly, knowing that life is a cycle of positive and negative emotions can be a reason why individuals from collectivistic cultures might not strive to change their current negative affect (Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010). Bagozzi, Wong, and Yi (1999) also emphasized the fact that in collectivistic cultures, emotions weren't necessarily used to differentiate from one another, but rather to encourage the idea of harmonious living with no conflict. Knowing that positive states are balanced out by negative states can help understand why this study showed that the Asian group seemed to value negative ideal affect higher than their European American and TCK peers did.

With regards to emotion regulation, we saw that there were significantly higher levels of suppression in the Asian group, as expected. Individuals from collectivistic cultures are more likely to suppress their emotions (Wierzbicka, 1994) in order to protect their relationships with other people. The Asian group also reported higher levels of perspective taking and social modeling with interpersonal emotion regulation, which shows that Asians are more likely to use their peers to help them regulate their emotions. This could go hand in hand with how East Asians are also more likely to value low arousal emotions (Tsai et al., 2006). Being able to use other people for perspective taking

and social modeling shows a form of regulation that could potentially help bring their emotions back down to a lower arousal level. For example, by talking to their friends, an Asian individual may conclude that they are frustrated rather than enraged at a certain situation, due to the perspective taking and social modeling that their friends may have exhibited. The TCK and White group looked pretty similar in their results within emotion regulation, which seems to indicate that they are more likely to rely on themselves to regulate their emotions. This is very consistent with the individualistic notion of individual pursuit of happiness (Ford, Shallcross, Mauss, Floerke, & Gruber, 2014).

For a portion of the survey, individuals were asked to read scenarios in which they would have to rate their agreement with what the character did. Since the scenarios were differentiated based on whether it emphasized a duty to one's own happiness and a duty to other's happiness, we were able to uncover some interesting results. The TCK group – although only marginally significant ($p=0.07$) – had the highest levels of duty to others than their White and Asian counterparts. This marginal significance could be a function of the small sample, which means that it's still important to address. The literature on TCKs remain slim and narrow, however, by extrapolating Gerner et al.'s (1992) study about TCKs, it can be inferred that due to their constant opportunity and desire for adjustment, TCKs are more likely to understand and adapt to their host culture. Since adjustment is a process that doesn't end with assimilation for TCKs, perhaps TCKs internalize a higher pressure to help others. Helping others is a universal way to be more liked and accepted, so by taking that extra step, TCKs may be able to alter their "foreignness" to be a positive factor in their journey to adapt to the new host culture. TCKs also tend to be more observant with higher interpersonal sensitivity (Lyttle et al., 2011). This

plays a large role in how they address situations in which people might need help, which could potentially be a reason why individuals from TCK backgrounds scored highly on their duty to others.

As reported above, there are lots of social and health benefits of being happy, which could be grossly approximated with satisfaction with life. With the scale that we used to measure dissatisfaction with life, White individuals scored the lowest. This could be for a multitude of different reasons. Many of the White individuals that were surveyed were born and raised in the United States, which means that there wasn't much – if any – moving around internationally. As we know, TCKs experience emotional instability when they are thrust into a different culture (Peterson & Plamondon, 2009). TCKs have a harder time adjusting to new environments because of how temporary their move is (Gerner et al., 1992). Given these implications, it's no surprise that TCKs may feel a higher level of dissatisfaction with their lives. With the Asian group that had significantly lower life-satisfaction scores, it could be attributed to how much the idea of harmonious living is emphasized in collectivistic cultures (Boehm, Lyubomirsky, & Sheldon, 2011). Humility in every day actions (Fredrickson, 2000) could potentially result in not recording a high satisfaction score. As Boehm et al. (2011) reported, individuals from collectivistic cultures “may be reluctant to experience and express intense positive states for fear of disrupting harmonious relationships” (Boehm et al., 2011). Asians are likely to want their lives to be considered “average satisfaction” because collectivistic cultures often emphasize the importance of not sticking out from their crowd (Boehm et al., 2011). The Japanese proverb “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down” is an example of how collectivistic cultures view the importance of living in social harmony.

The relationship and correlation between affect valuation and levels of dissatisfaction across the groups showed that unsurprisingly, Asians felt similar levels of having a duty to help others whether or not they were satisfied with their own lives. On the other hand, White individuals who were unsatisfied with their lives were less likely to feel a duty to help others. With all of the research concerning collectivistic cultures and their high value of relationships, it's no surprise that this trend continued in this study. This might be explained by the understanding that loss of face is shameful in collectivistic and specifically, East Asian culture. Loss of face is the "loss of social image and social worth that is garnered based on one's performance in an interpersonal context" (Liu et al., 2016), which could explain why Asian individuals scored highly on helping others regardless of personal life satisfaction. The fear of losing face and causing shame to one's family and social network might be a reason why they feel so strongly about helping others despite not being very happy themselves. Compared to Asian culture, White individuals seem less likely to feel a social responsibility to their social networks regarding helping others.

The TCK group had very interesting results where the correlations between the dissatisfaction with their lives and ideal affect valuation had no significance. This was strange because there was also no correlation between dissatisfaction with life and negative affect, where logically, there would be a positive relationship. Since the research on TCKs is minimal, it's hard to find a concrete reason for this result. However, based on Gerner et al.'s (1992) research, TCKs rate themselves as more culturally accepting, which could start to explain why their unhappiness and affect valuation don't seem to correlate. TCKs have a very temporal view of their current situation because they are

aware that they're only there for a certain period of time (Lyttle et al., 2011). Thus, being able to justify their dissatisfaction due to the move to a new country could be a reason why we didn't find a correlation between dissatisfaction with life and affect valuation.

In terms of emotion regulation, as expected, White individuals who were more dissatisfied with their lives were less likely to reappraise their emotions and also less likely to use anyone else to help regulate their emotions. They were also more likely to suppress their emotions the more dissatisfied they were with their lives. This is consistent with the literature on how individualistic cultures emphasize the role of oneself in relation to their emotions – Westerners tend to see themselves as an individual who makes decisions on their own behalf (Tsai & Lau, 2013). For that reason, it makes sense that White individuals are more likely to turn inwards to themselves the more dissatisfied they are with their lives.

On the other hand, Asians showed no relationship between life dissatisfaction and levels of suppression. Collectivistic cultures often have higher levels of maintaining social order, which results in higher suppression levels (Matsumoto et al., 2008), thus it seems as though suppression is more of an expected response in these cultures. The discrepancy between the Asian group and the White group in the realm of suppression might be attributed to the fact that suppression doesn't carry the same negative connotations in collectivistic cultures as it does in individualistic cultures (Butler et al., 2007). For that reason, East Asian individuals in this sample may just suppress their feelings on a more regular basis than specifically when they're dissatisfied with their lives. Furthermore, individualistic cultures often encourage their citizens to speak their mind and be honest with their thoughts, however, collectivistic cultures emphasize social

harmony, thus suppression might come much more naturally for these collectivistic groups.

Surprisingly, there was no significant correlation for the TCKs in any relationship between reappraisal or suppression, their interpersonal emotion regulation and their dissatisfaction with life. This is interesting because there doesn't seem to be any literature on any explanations for this trend. Perhaps TCKs have a disconnect between their unhappiness and the way that they relate to other people because when individuals live in different cultures, a sense of not belonging is definitely a concern. Since TCKs are more likely to have moved around internationally, it could be inferred that being unhappy about it might be too draining and emotionally tiring. Since they're likely to move around again, not wasting emotional energy on an inevitable event could cause them to compartmentalize these feelings to help them adjust better to their new host country.

Limitations and future directions

Given the time constraint of this thesis, this survey was not as widely distributed as we would've hoped in order to have a more concrete data set. There were only 239 viable responses, which does not allow for robust sample sizes for any of the three groups. Although there seemed to be visible trends within our small sample size, it could be further amplified if we were able to have more time to gather even more data.

Since this was not a longitudinal study, it is hard to discuss the direction of causality within our results. Although we may see correlation with some of the data that we collected, it's unclear if correlation equates to causation. Whether or not a White

individual moves to an East Asian country doesn't necessarily mean that they will suddenly increase their tendency to feel a duty to others.

Additionally, in order to narrow our scope of research, we only took a look at White individuals who spent a considerable number of formative years in East Asia, which neglects to take into consideration the East Asians who grew up as a student in an international school. This could've had a potential impact on the East Asian group by having some individualistic traits engrained from their education. Having the East Asian group be extremely broad and not distinguishing East Asians from Asian Americans could've also impacted the results.

This study – although impactful – fails to acknowledge the experiences of other TCKs who live in other areas. Perhaps this phenomenon isn't isolated to just White individuals who grew up in East Asia, but rather a function of going to an international school in the first place. Whether or not the collectivistic culture of the host country actually made an impact on these individuals is still difficult to analyze, thus, future directions could be isolating this concept and testing it. Furthermore, this study showed that there is still a lot of literature missing on Third Culture Kids and being able to capitalize on the lack of knowledge could potentially open up a lot of doors for new interactions. Given the ever-changing globalization of the current economy, it's important to be able to understand the backgrounds of others.

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Tables**Table 1***Mean of Affect Valuation Across Groups*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
High Arousal Positive (HAP)	3.437	3.386	3.264
*Positive	4.104	4.015	3.771
Low Arousal Positive (LAP)	3.713	3.886	3.643
*Low Arousal (LA)	1.960	1.955	2.205
*Low Arousal Negative (LAN)	1.722	1.955	2.205
*Negative	1.566	1.674	1.919
*High Arousal Negative (HAN)	1.477	1.515	1.810
High Arousal (HA)	2.269	2.386	2.341

Notes. * $p < 0.05$ **Table 2***Mean of Emotion Regulation Across Groups*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
Levels of Reappraisal ^a	3.238	2.913	2.957
*Levels of Suppression ^a	4.462	4.494	4.044
Enhancing Positive Affect	3.945	3.723	3.807
*Perspective Taking	1.897	1.968	2.291
Soothing	2.949	2.814	2.988
*Social Modeling	3.013	3.050	3.337

Notes. * $p < 0.05$,^a Levels of reappraisal and suppression are reverse coded (1 = Strongly agree, 7 = Strongly disagree)

Table 3*Mean of "Duty to Self versus Duty to Others" Scenarios Across Groups*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
Duty to Self	4.657	5.185	4.706
Duty to Others	4.642	4.994	4.650

Notes. * $p < 0.05$ **Table 4***Mean of Subjective Well-Being Across Groups*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
Subjective Dissatisfaction with Life	12.733	14.773	14.791

Table 5*Correlation between Levels of Dissatisfaction and Emotion Regulation*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
Levels of Reappraisal ^a	.387*	.213	.312*
Levels of Suppression ^a	-.194*	.059	.066
Enhancing Positive Affect	-.268*	-.188	-.216*
Perspective Taking	-.268*	-.066	-.128
Soothing	-.148	-.021	.020
Social Modeling	-.236*	.026	-.002

Notes. * $p < 0.05$ ^a Levels of reappraisal and suppression are reverse coded**Table 6***Correlation between Levels of Dissatisfaction and Affect Valuation*

	Whites	TCKs	Asians
High Arousal Positive (HAP)	-.154	.045	-.209
Positive	-.246*	.052	-.335*
Low Arousal Positive (LAP)	-.180	.122	-.269*

Low Arousal (LA)	.008	.029	.253*
Low Arousal Negative (LAN)	.105	-.092	.144
Negative	.244*	.037	.212*
High Arousal Negative (HAN)	.183	.026	.096
High Arousal (HA)	-.018	.180	-.227*
Duty to Self	-0.060	-.227	.097
Duty to Others	-.331*	-.282	-.055

Notes. * $p < 0.05$

Appendix A

Duty and Obligation to Others	Pursuance of Individual Happiness
Mary wants to go to a concert on the same night as a weekly family event. Although she really wants to go to the concert, she decides to stay in with her family. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?	Mary wants to go to a concert on the same night as the weekly family gathering event. Although her family wants her to stay, Mary decides to go to the concert. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?
David was invited to a friend's birthday party but wants to spend time alone because he's really tired. David decides to go to the birthday party. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with his decision?	David was invited to a friend's birthday party but wants to spend time alone because he's really tired. David decides to stay in. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with his decision?
Becky is on her way to her hair cutting appointment, for which she is already late. As she is rushing along, the stranger in front of her is struggling to carry his groceries to his car. Becky, seeing the man's struggle, helps help him carry his bags and as a result, misses her appointment. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?	Becky is on her way to her hair cutting appointment, for which she is already late. As she is rushing along, the stranger in front of her is struggling to carry his groceries to his car. Becky, not wanting to miss her appointment, rushes past him and makes it to her appointment. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?
Benjamin has a huge test tomorrow morning. He's planning to study all day because he wants to do well on the exam. He suddenly gets a text from his friend asking him to come over for dinner. Although seeing his friend for dinner would make him happy, he decides to keep studying for his test. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with his decision?	Benjamin has a huge test tomorrow morning. He's planning to study all day because he wants to do well on the exam. He suddenly gets a text from his friend asking him to come over for dinner. Since seeing his friend for dinner would make him happy, he decides to go to the dinner. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with his decision?

Sally has a daughter, Ann, who she is trying to teach the idea of boundaries, especially when it comes to her body. If Sally wants to hug her daughter, and her daughter doesn't want a hug, Sally will not make her daughter hug her. Sally and Ann are visiting a country where it is common to express physical affection, even among strangers. One day while walking down the street, a stranger stops Sally and Ann, and says, "your daughter is so adorable." The stranger reaches down and starts to give Ann a hug. Sally stops the stranger from giving Ann a hug. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?

Sally has a daughter, Ann, who she is trying to teach the idea of boundaries, especially when it comes to her body. If Sally wants to hug her daughter, and her daughter doesn't want a hug, Sally will not make her daughter hug her. Sally and Ann are visiting a country where it is common to express physical affection, even among strangers. One day while walking down the street, a stranger stops Sally and Ann, and says, "your daughter is so adorable." The stranger reaches down and starts to give Ann a hug. Sally allows the stranger to give Ann a hug. On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with her decision?