

## **Me, myself or us: work preferences and predispositions of individualists and collectivists**

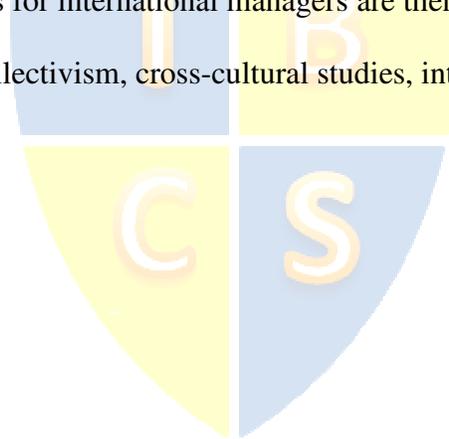
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### Abstract:

The work preferences and predispositions of individualists and collectivists were compared using an international dataset. Respondents were culturally classified based on research (i.e., Americans and Australians as individualists and Japanese and S. Koreans as collectivists). Specifically, the results showed that individualists were less attached to their current work situation (and more likely to move to a new job); collectivists indicated less work/family conflict; individualists valued independent work more and collectivists valued deciding work time more; and, collectivists showed less inclination towards self-enhancement. The implications of the results for international managers are then discussed.

Keywords: individualism, collectivism, cross-cultural studies, international management



## **INTRODUCTION**

Individualism/collectivism, an important cross-cultural dimension (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Triandis 2001), has much influence within the work environment (Hofstede 1997). An understanding of this influence could help multinational organizations, their managers, and their employees, to be more effective. This study will examine individualists and collectivists at work: their perceptions, preferences, and predispositions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Individualism and collectivism**

What distinguishes collectivists and individualists, and vice-versa, has long been an issue of interest and debate (Bond, 1994; Brewer and Chen 2007; Oyserman et al., 2002, Zou et al., 2009). Broadly speaking, individualists tend to put the needs and goals of self over those of their ingroups, ingroups being groups such as family, friends, and coworkers (Hofstede 1997; Leung et al., 1992). Collectivists, in contrast, tend to feel obligated more to the needs and goals of their ingroups and to the context to which they belong than to themselves (Triandis, 1989, 2001). This paper compares two individualistic countries, Australia and the United States (Hofstede, 1997), with two collectivistic countries, Japan and South Korea (Hofstede, 1997), on several dimensions related to the construct of individualism/collectivism.

### **Commitment to self or organization**

Because of their greater relative emphasis on self over group, individualists are less encumbered by the strictures of their groups (Hofstede, 1997; Triandis 2001); their associations are more transitory and fluid (Hofstede, 1997). When a given group or situational context doesn't fit with their objectives, they feel freer to leave and seek a more desirable situation (Hofstede, 1997). For individualists, then, the pull of the group doesn't seem to have the same meaning and effect as it does to a collectivist (Yamaguchi et al., 1995 in Triandis, 2001): it is not in the individualists cultural programming, as such (Hofstede, 1997). Translating to a work context, we might expect individualists to have less commitment and predisposition towards staying in their current work situation, as hypothesis 1 (H1) notes:

H1: Individualists will display less attachment towards their current work situations than will collectivists

### **Relative value of personal autonomy and self-fulfillment**

Hofstede (1980) notes that individualists emphasize personal autonomy and self-fulfillment. Individualists are calculating in their group memberships, tending to leave when the costs outweigh the benefits (Kim, 1994). In contrast, underlying collectivism, "is the assumption that groups bind and mutually obligate the individual" (Oyserman et al., page 9, 2002). Collectivists, thus, have a sense of duty to ingroup members (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Oyserman et al., 2002; Triandis 2001) and one of the primary ingroups for collectivists is the family

(Hofstede 1997; Lay et al., 1998). In a modern society, where people generally work away from home, we might expect the dual obligations of work and family to cause conflict for the collectivist. In support of this, Peterson et al. (1995) in a 21-nation study of middle managers found that collectivism was positively related to role overload, “an individual’s lack of the personal resources needed to fulfill commitments, obligations, or requirements (page 429)”. One cannot, of course, be in two places at the same time or serve two different groups (i.e., the work group and the family) at once.

Individualists, in comparison, tend to emphasize their own prerogatives over those of their ingroup (Triandis 2001). This manifestation comes in many shapes and sizes, popular sayings or songs being one case in point. For example, in America (generally considered an individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1980)) there are the popular phrases “Do your own thing” or “I did it my way”. We might naturally expect the individualist’s greater emphasis on self over the ingroup, then, to affect their workplace behavior and aspirations. Specifically, we might presume that individualists would value the pursuit of workplace success over their ingroup relationships (such as family) more so than would collectivists. In particular, individualists might feel less qualms or conflict over the pursuit of work goals when they conflict with the goals or needs of the family. Familial obligations, although important for all cultures (Brewer & Chen, 2007), do not have the same salience for the individualist as they do for the collectivist (Hofstede, 1997). When the individualist’s work conflicts with his/her family, we might expect him or her to be less concerned. This leads to hypothesis 2 (H2):

H2: Collectivists will perceive greater work/family conflict than will individualists

### **Preferences for independence**

A core element of individualism is the desire for a high level of independence (Oyserman et al., 2002). The individualist inherently wants the freedom to make choices and pursue self-interests (Hofstede 1997; Kagitcibasi, 1994). The collectivist, in contrast, is more sensitive to context and more malleable to the group’s interests (Triandis, 1989; Zou et al., 2009). Where the individualist sees “me”, the collectivist sees “us” (Hofstede 1997). The collectivist, thereby, is willing to change his/her behavior to meet the requirements of the situation and has less desire to express him- or herself independently (Zou et al., 2009).

Although some have examined these cultural differences in terms of their workplace manifestations (e.g., Hofstede (1980) and his IBM sample), unfortunately, many have used contexts outside of the workplace, such as students in a university setting (e.g., Dakhli, 2009; Leung et al., 1992; Leung & Bond, 1982; Zou et al., 2009), which makes the applicability of their assertions somewhat more tenuous. The current study benefits from a more applicable sample of mostly working adults. That being the case, and considering the discussion above, we might expect individualists to prefer greater independence at work than would collectivists. As a natural consequence, we anticipate the following hypothesis (H3) to hold:

H3: Individualists will display greater preference towards independent work arrangements than will collectivists

## **Tendencies to self-inflate or deflate**

Markus and Kityama (1991) contrast individualists and collectivists with the relatively equivalent terminology of independent self and interdependent self. Independent selves are Westerners (culturally) who focus on themselves as independent entities with thoughts, feelings, and actions that have an internal origin (Markus and Kityama, 1991). Independent selves focus on self-expression, self-image, and a uniqueness of the person in general (Markus & Kitayama, 2003). Self-esteem, personal success and the sense of being a distinctive and valued individual are more important attributes for the Western, independent self (Oyserman & Markus, 1993; Triandis, 1995). In contrast, interdependent selves (or collectivists) are non-Westerners, and view themselves as relatively more connected and less differentiated from others (Zou et al., 2009). They are motivated by fit in, fulfill and create obligations, and be more sensitive to the context created by those around the person (Markus & Kityama, 1991). As Heine and Lehman (1995) note, people in these cultures don't generally hold unrealistically positive views of themselves; they have a tendency for self-effacement (Kim et al., 2003; Triandis, 1995).

In sum, the independent (or individualistic) self, more so than the interdependent (or collectivistic) self, will tend to create and maintain a positive sense of self (Heine et al., 1999). Feeling good about oneself is more important to the individualist (Triandis, 1995). Triandis (2001) notes that people in individualistic cultures display a tendency towards greater self-enhancement. When we go to compare individualists and collectivists, then, we might expect individualists to manifest this self-enhancement tendency by amplifying their positive attributes and downplaying their negative attributes. Hypothesis 4 (H4) explicates this point:

H4: Individualists will rate themselves higher on positive characteristics and lower on negative characteristics than will collectivists.

## **METHOD**

### **Dataset: Work Orientations Module III**

The dataset for this study was garnered from the Work Orientations Module III (WOM III). The WOM III (2005) was a cross-national study performed under the umbrella of the International Social Survey Programme (2011). The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is an international collaboration of 41 countries and the country-level data were merged by the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung at the University of Cologne (Scholz & Faab, 2007).

Special efforts were made to ensure the cross-national equivalence and validity of the survey (Scholz and Faab, 2007): “The annual topics for the ISSP are developed...by a sub-committee and are pre-tested in various countries. ISSP questions need to be relevant to all countries and expressed in an equivalent manner in all languages (page 3)...ISSP modules are developed over a minimum period of two years during which a multi-national drafting group prepares several questionnaire drafts in accordance with the decisions taken at general assembly meetings...A final draft version is discussed and signed off at the general assembly meeting prior to the year of fielding (page 6, Scholz and Faab, 2007).”

In terms of sampling, the “Working Principles” of the ISSP require individual members to have nationally representative random samples of the adult population (International Social

Survey Programme, 2011). Additional details about the principles and conduct of ISSP surveys can be found at the ISSP home page ([www.issp.org](http://www.issp.org)).

### **Variables relevant to individualism and collectivism were selected**

The authors inspected the WOM III questionnaire for items (or variables) relevant to the research and theories of individualism and collectivism. Four areas stood out, and they are as follows (with hypothesis number): Individualists will display less attachment towards their current work situations than will collectivists (Hypothesis 1), collectivists will experience greater work/family conflict than will individualists (Hypothesis 2), individualists will display greater preference towards independent work arrangements than will collectivists (Hypothesis 3), and individualists will rate themselves higher on positive characteristics and lower on negative characteristics than will collectivists (Hypothesis 4).

### **Selection of individualistic and collectivistic countries**

Once the questions and constructs were selected, countries needed to be selected for the statistical analysis which could be clearly identified as either collectivistic or individualistic, as well as comparable economically. Economically comparable countries were desired to reduce any confounding or alternative explanations for the results. For example, hypothesis 1 dealt with attachment towards one's work. If one were to compare economically dissimilar countries then differences in work attachment might be caused more by income issues than by cultural values, as economic freedom would probably result in greater work freedom and less attachment. Based on level of economic development (i.e., gross domestic product) and prior research and theorizing on individualism and collectivism, the two individualistic countries selected were Australia and the United States and the two collectivistic countries selected were Japan and South Korea. All four of these countries are in the top 15 rankings for highest gross domestic product in the world (World Bank, 2009).

In addition, throughout the literature on individualism/collectivism, America and Australia are generally considered to be countries high in individualism and low on collectivism and East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea are considered low on individualism and high on collectivism (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Kim et al., 2003; Oyserman et al., 2002; Zou et al., 2009). Hofstede (1980), using his IBM data, scored the United States and Australia as the two most individualistic countries in the world, scoring 91 and 90 out of a 100 point scale, respectively; Japan and South Korea scored much lower in individualism, at 46 and 18, respectively, out of the same 100 point scale. These countries were grouped together for all the statistical analyses and will be referred to as individualists and collectivists throughout this paper.

## **RESULTS**

### **Hypothesis 1 is supported**

The first analyses were conducted on Hypothesis 1: Individualists will display less attachment than collectivists to their current work situation. The two questions addressing this issue were "All in all, how likely is it that you (i.e., the respondent) will try to find a job with

another firm or organization within the next 12 months (reverse coded so that 1 is very unlikely, 2 is unlikely, 3 is likely, and 4 is very likely) and “I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organization” (1 is strongly agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neither agree or disagree, 4 is disagree, and 5 is strongly disagree). T-tests were performed to detect differences between individualists and collectivists. Table 1 displays the results (see Appendix). The results indicated that individualists were significantly more likely than collectivists to try to find a new job in the next 12 months with a mean of 2.02 (S.D. 1.08) versus 1.65 (S.D. .933),  $p < .001$  and to accept a higher paying job if it were available with a mean of 3.26 (S.D. 1.22) versus 2.83 (S.D. 1.37) and  $p < .001$ , as indicated in Table 1. Thus, strong support was found for Hypothesis 1: Individualists will display less attachment than collectivists to their current work situation.

Initially, the two variables above were combined to possibly create a single scale. Although the two variables were significantly correlated (Pearson’s Correlation = .38,  $p < .001$ ), the Cronbach’s alpha was .54 which is below the generally accepted threshold of .7 (Cortina 1993); therefore, the variables were considered separately.

Job satisfaction was an additional variable included in the WOM III dataset. (“How satisfied are you in your main job?” in a 7-point scale from completely satisfied to completely dissatisfied.) Follow-up analyses were performed to determine if the differences in Table 1 might have been caused by job satisfaction and not by individualism/collectivism. In other words, perhaps job satisfaction was the real causal factor in job-related intentions and the grouping factor’s significant effects were merely spurious. Research has shown job satisfaction to be related both with intentions to quit and willingness stay with a job (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2006; Seston et al, 2009). Analysis of covariances (or ANCOVA’s) were performed with level of job satisfaction as a covariate and individualism/collectivism as a between subjects variable for both job variables. Although job satisfaction was a statistically significant covariate in the ANCOVA analyses of work attachment, the between subject effects of individualism/collectivism were still greater than the effects of job satisfaction (and still significant at  $p < .001$ ) in predicting both job variables. (For the sake of parsimony, these results are not included but will be sent upon request by the authors.)

### **Hypothesis 2 is not supported: Results in opposite direction**

Next, statistical analyses were performed for Hypothesis 2: Collectivists will experience greater work/family conflict than will individualists. The first question addressing this issue was: “Suppose you could change the way you spend your time, spending more time on some things and less time on others. (For) time with your family, would you like to spend?” (scale was 1 to 5 with 1= much more time, 2= a bit more time, 3=same time as now, 4=a bit less time, and 5=much less time). The second question was “How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family life? Would you say...” (scale was 1 to 5 with 1=always, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=hardly ever, 5=never).

Initially, the two variables above were combined to possibly create a single scale. Although the two variables were significantly correlated (Pearson’s Correlation = .23,  $p < .001$ ), the Cronbach’s alpha was .36 which is below the generally accepted threshold of .7 (Cortina, 1993); therefore, the variables were considered separately.

T-tests were performed to detect differences between individualists and collectivists. Table 2 indicates the results (see Appendix). Contrary to expectations, the results indicated that

individualists were significantly more likely to experience work/family conflict than were collectivists. The mean for the item “More time w/Family” was 1.83 (S.D. .82) for individualists and 2.38 (S.D. .74) for collectivists with a t-value of -26.35 and  $p < .001$ . The mean for the item “Job Interferes w/Family” was 3.33 (S.D. 1.04) for individualists and 3.84 (S.D. .99) for collectivists with a t-value of -14.75 and  $p < .001$ , as indicated in Table 2.

Given the counterintuitive results, the authors looked for an alternative explanation. One possibility considered was that hours worked (reported per week—included in the dataset) caused the resulting work/family conflict. In other words, perhaps hours worked per week were the real causal factor in determining work/family conflict and the effects of individualism/collectivism were spurious. Research has shown hours worked to have a significant effect on work/family conflict (e.g., Lingard & Francis, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2008; Yildirim & Aycan, 2008). Edwards and Rothbard (2000) use the phrase resource drain to indicate how elements like time are finite, such that an increase of hours in one domain of life (e.g., work) takes away from available hours in another domain of life (e.g., home). Thus, ANCOVA's were performed with hours worked per week as a covariate and individualism/collectivism as a between subjects variable for both work/family variables. Although the covariate (hours worked per week) had statistically significant effects in the ANCOVA analyses, the between subject effects of individualism/collectivism were still greater than the effects of hours worked (and still significant at  $p < .001$ ) in predicting both job variables. (For the sake of parsimony, these results are not included but will be sent upon request by the authors.)

### **Hypothesis 3 receives mixed support**

Next, statistical analyses were performed for Hypothesis 3: Individualists will display greater preference towards independent work arrangements than will collectivists. The two questions addressing this issue were: “How important is a job that allows someone to work independently?” (scale 1 to 5 with 1=very important, 2=important, 3=neither important nor unimportant, 4=not important, 5=not at all important); and “How important is a job that allows someone to decide their times or days of work?” (scale 1 to 5 same as previous question). Initially, the two variables above were combined to possibly create a single scale. Although the two variables were significantly correlated (Pearson's Correlation = .32,  $p < .001$ ), the Cronbach's alpha was .48 which is below the generally accepted threshold of .7 (Cortina, 1993); thus, the variables were considered separately.

T-tests were performed to detect differences between individualists and collectivists. Table 3 indicates the results (see Appendix). The results show that individualists were significantly more likely to view working independently as personally important (mean 1.96, S.D. .82) than were collectivists (mean 2.40, S.D. 1.01) with a t-value of -18.43 and  $p < .001$ , as indicated in Table 3. Contrary to expectations, however, collectivists were significantly more likely to view deciding times of days or work as more important than were individualists.

### **Hypothesis 4 is supported**

Finally, statistical analyses were performed for Hypothesis 4: Individualists will rate themselves higher on positive characteristics and lower on negative characteristics than will collectivists. Two questions addressing this issue were: “To what extent do you agree or

disagree with the following statement: I see myself as someone who does a thorough job” (scaled 1 to 5 with 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree); and “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy” (same 1 to 5 scale as the previous question).

Initially, the two variables above were combined to possibly create a single scale (with the “I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy” reverse scored). Although the two variables were significantly correlated (Pearson’s Correlation = .33,  $p < .001$ ), the Cronbach’s alpha was .48 which is below the generally accepted threshold of .7 (Cortina, 1993); thus, the variables were considered separately.

T-tests were performed to detect differences between individualists and collectivists. Table 4 indicates the results (see Appendix). Both results confirmed hypothesis 4. As expected, the results indicated that individualists (mean 1.55, S.D. .58) were significantly more likely to view themselves as thorough than were collectivists (mean 2.12, S.D. .97) with a t-value of -20.75 and  $p < .001$ . Also as expected, individualists (mean 4.09, S.D. .92) were less likely to view themselves as lazy than were collectivists (mean 3.56, S.D. 1.12) with a t-value of 14.91 and  $p < .001$ , as indicated in Table 4.

### **A summary of the study’s results**

Hypothesis 1: Individualists will display less attachment towards their current work situations than will collectivists.

Item one: All in all, how likely is it that you will try to find a job with another firm or organization within the next 12 months? Result: Individualists were more likely than collectivists to find a new job.

Item two: I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organization. Result: Individualists were less likely than collectivists to turn down another job.

Hypothesis 2: Collectivists will perceive greater work/family conflict than will individualists

Item one: Suppose you could change the way you spend your time, spending more time on some things and less time on others. (For) time with your family, would you like to spend more or less time? Result: Individualists wanted to spend more time with family than did collectivists.

Item two: How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family life? Result: Individualists were more likely than collectivists to feel demands of job interfere with family life.

Hypothesis 3: Individualists will display greater preference towards independent work arrangements than will collectivists

Item one: How important is a job that allows someone to work independently? Result: Collectivists were less likely than individualists to value a job with independent work.

Item two: How important is a job that allows someone to decide their times or days of work?  
Result: Collectivists believed deciding times of work was more important than did individualists.

Hypothesis 4: Individualists will rate themselves higher on positive characteristics and lower on negative characteristics than will collectivists.

Item one: I see myself as someone who does a thorough job. Result: Collectivists were less likely than individualists to see themselves as doing a thorough job.

Item two: I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy. Result: Collectivists were more likely than individualists to see themselves as lazy.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Companies with individualistic workers should increase retention efforts**

Individualists and collectivists were significantly different on all the variables examined in this study. These results seem to have implications for organizations that operate within a cross-cultural environment. First, individualists displayed less attachment to their current work situations than did collectivists (Hypothesis 1). Individualists indicated they were more likely to seek a new job and would also be more willing to accept a new position if the pay was significantly higher. This indicates that companies operating in more individualistic environments may need to work harder at retaining workers. There is a body of literature advocating just such methods for keeping employees. To name just a few, Chew and Chan (2008), for example, found in an Australian context that pay, recognition, training and career development were significantly related to intentions to stay with an organization. Currall et al., (2005), found that pay satisfaction led to lower intentions to quit. Somaya et al. (2008) advocate a less orthodox approach to employee turnover: Accepting this fact and taking advantage of departed employees through cooperative relationships (if they move on to organizations such as customers or suppliers) and having an alumni network of ex-employees. The reader is directed to these and other studies to address issues related to retaining workers and capitalizing upon the resources of those workers who do leave.

### **Create more flexible work arrangements for individualistic workers**

The result for hypothesis 2, with individualists indicating greater work/family conflict than collectivists, was surprising. Although this result contrasts with our stereotypical definitions of collectivism, it does confirm Oyserman et al.'s. (2002) observation that a sense of belonging to ingroups is just as important to individualists as it is to collectivists. In fact, Oyserman et al. argue that relationality may be a component of individualism as Americans choose to be close to their family but not obligated to them. The distinguishing factor (Oyserman et al., 2002) is that collectivists feel a greater sense of duty to their ingroups and a greater willingness to promote group harmony than do individualists.

This result (i.e., greater work/family conflict reported by individualists—opposite direction of hypothesis 2) may also imply at least a partial solution to increase the individualists' lower work attachment (hypothesis 1 results). Certainly, there has been much positive press

given to flexible work arrangements (Shockley & Allen, 2007) and organizations are definitely making efforts at family friendly practices such as telecommuting (Golden et al., 2006). Hypothesis two's result reinforces those efforts and perhaps encourages organizations in individualistic countries to take even greater strides to help employees manage the intersection between their work and family lives. Flextime, job sharing, compressed work weeks, and telecommuting are all methods of doing so and strategies such as these could be embraced to an even greater extent to reduce work/family conflict.

### **Give individualists work independence and collectivists time flexibility**

Tests for hypothesis 3 showed individualists reporting greater desire to work independently than collectivists (this was the first of two items relating to this hypothesis). This result lends support to theories such as Hackman and Oldham's (1980) Job Characteristics Model's core job dimension of autonomy. Autonomy is the degree to which one has freedom, discretion and independence in a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). That individualists valued independence more than collectivists, however, also seems to support claims that many of our theories, such as Hackman and Oldham's job design model are culture bound and not necessarily applicable to other cultures (Boyacigiller & Adler 1991).

Tests of the second item connected to hypothesis 3 showed that collectivists desired greater ability to decide their time of work. The authors find this result somewhat difficult to interpret. In looking more closely at the results, we can see that the means for the two groups are closer for this variable than any of the other variables. (The individualists mean was 2.48 and the collectivists mean was 2.33 with a difference of .15 or around 1/6 of a standard deviation.) The scaling for this variable demonstrates that this element of work, perhaps, was not exceptionally important for either group, as a response of 2 meant important and 3 meant neutral. Perhaps the strongest conclusion one could draw was that deciding hours of what was somewhat important for both individualists and collectivists, but not critical in importance for either group. Future research could investigate this phenomenon more closely as many factors might affect work time decisions, such as the ability to telecommute or the availability of transportation to and from work.

### **Deflate individualists' claims and inflate collectivists' claims**

Hypothesis 4 (i.e., individualists will rate themselves higher on positive characteristics and lower on negative characteristics than will collectivists) was confirmed: individualists did tend to self-enhance more and self-deprecate less than collectivists. These results are consistent with prior research and provide additional confirmation, since previous studies used students in their methods (see, for example, Kim et al., 2003). This also has clear implications for cross-cultural managers. Firstly, during the interview and selection phase, interviewers can be aware of this tendency. They can be careful to interpret claims being made by individualists and collectivists. Since individualists seemingly tend to overstate their positive and downplay their negative characteristics, interviewers could be careful about attenuating or, at a minimum, carefully validating the accuracy of assertions made by individualists. Vice-versa, since collectivists seemingly tend to downplay their positive and overstate their negative characteristics, interviewers might carefully amplify the positive and attenuate the negative claims made by collectivists. This perceptual handicapping of individualists and collectivists

should lead to more accurate selection decisions. Awareness of these tendencies would seem highly important for cross-cultural interviewers.

Secondly, awareness of these self-enhancement (by individualists) and self-deprecatory (by collectivists) tendencies is probably also critical for day-to-day cross-cultural managers. It is no secret that managers are affected by what is said by employees as well as what is actually done (e.g., see the impression management literature such as Harris et al., 2009). Managers need to be careful not to be unduly affected by claims or assertions of what has been done or of what will be accomplished—particularly in cross-cultural settings. Since individualists might self-enhance and collectivists might self-deprecate, concomitant adjustments in perceptions need to be done so that, for example, the best employees get selected for the right projects, or, for example, employees get performance appraisals that are based upon their actual accomplishments and not upon embellishments or lack thereof.

## LIMITATIONS

### Single-item measures

The use of single-item measures in this study could be considered a limitation in interpreting the results. Some organizational researchers believe that single item measures should not be used and are inappropriate for at least a couple of reasons (Diener, 1984; Loo, 2002). First, single-item measures don't allow for testing the inter-item correlations of items and calculating the related statistics such as coefficient alphas (Jordan & Turner, 2008), with longer scales leading higher reliabilities (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Secondly, for constructs that have some breadth, a single item may not fully measure the whole construct (Berkvist & Rossiter, 2007). For example, job satisfaction may have several elements, such as satisfaction with pay, supervision, working conditions, or opportunities for advancement. A single measure such as "I am satisfied with my job" may be insufficient to encompass all of those areas.

Single-item measures are, however, legitimate for several reasons (Nagy, 2002; Wanous & Reichers, 1996). Single-item measures tend to have high face validity as respondents can more easily see the linkage between the items and the topics of the survey (Nagy, 2002; Gardner et al., 1998). Surveys with many items are sometimes viewed as redundant, monotonous and are also more likely to result in the respondent either not completing the survey or not giving full attention to each item (Dollinger & Malmquist, 2009; Gardner et al., 1998; Wanous et al., 1997). Single-item measures are also easier to develop and facilitate survey implementation in large scale survey operations (Dollinger & Malmquist, 2009), such as the data (i.e., Work Orientations Module III) used in this paper. Single items are easier to translate in different populations and contexts (Nagy, 2002; Oshagbemi, 1999). Further, constructs with many items can make a complete survey instrument unwieldy for both the respondents and those who implement the survey; there are many more questions and much more data to be stored, entered and manipulated (Berkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Wanous et al., 1997).

In addition to their relative economy (Nagy, 2002), single-item surveys may also provide better measurement in certain instances. Multiple-item surveys can have spurious correlations caused by common response patterns on the part of survey respondents (Berkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Robins et al., 2001). Multiple questions with similar required responses, such as groups of Likert-scaled responses, can lead to respondents answering each question in a similar way (Williams et al., 1989). Thus, high inter-item correlations can be caused more by common

method variance than by the actual correlations with one another (Jordan & Turner, 2008). Single-item responses may also better measure global constructs (Jordan & Turner, 2008; Nagy, 2002). Take job satisfaction, for instance, which, as noted above, has several facets such as satisfaction with pay, supervision, working conditions, or opportunities for advancement. A typical multiple-item measure would garner information about all of the different facets, with responses to each item being weighed equally. The respondent, however, may not value each facet equally and may, in fact, be relatively unconcerned about some facets and very concerned about others (Jordan & Turner, 2008; Nagy, 2002; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983). A multiple-item measure does not take this into account as each item tends to be weighted equally (Jordan & Turner, 2008). A single-item, measure, however, allows the respondent to choose whichever facet is most salient to him/her in responding to the single-item at hand (Jordan & Turner 2008). This seems to be a real strength of single-item measures.

Indeed, there seem to be very good reasons for using single-item measures, and to consider their use as legitimate, given the various trade-offs noted above relating to the respondents' time and motivation and the researchers objectives for his/her study. As further support of this point, researchers studying this issue have found estimated and test-retest reliabilities of single-items to be generally high and also valid in their predictive validity (e.g., Dollinger & Malmquist, 2009; Wanous et al., 1997).

### **Country as culture**

This study, similar to many previous studies (e.g., Heine & Lehman, 1997; Kityama et al., 1997) did not specifically measure culture but assigned respondents to a culture based upon their location: i.e., respondents from Australia and the United States were assigned to the individualistic culture and respondents from Japan and South Korea were assigned to the collectivistic culture. A weakness of this method is that it "is difficult to say that the...countries were sufficiently distant on the culture factor of interest...to cause the observed differences in the dependent variable (Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001, page 556). This is also known as the "country as culture" or "country as surrogate for culture" problem (Cavusgil & Das, 1991; Nasif et al., 1991; Samiee & Jeong 1994). Of course, there is merit to this point. Even if the countries were assigned to the correct cultural category, there are bound to be persons who do not fit: there will be collectivists in individualistic countries and individualists in collectivistic countries. These mismatches might attenuate or even eliminate the hypothesized relationships between the variables of interest. There could also be unspecified variables that confound the results. This method also, perhaps, leads to greater stereotyping among researchers and even managers. As Kirkman et al., (2009) posited, managers also need to know their individual employee's cultural values. It is probably inappropriate for managers in a collectivistic culture to treat all employees as collectivistic and vice-versa for managers in individualistic countries.

In spite of this country as culture issue, there was good basis for the assignment of the focal countries to the two different cultures. As noted in the methods section, previous researchers and research have categorized Australia and the United States as individualistic and South Korea and Japan as collectivistic (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Hofstede 1980; Oyserman et al., 2002; Zou et al., 2009). Secondly, the construct of individualism/collectivism is sometimes difficult to operationalize at the individual level. Many individualism/collectivism scales are problematic with measurement issues (Bond, 2002) and low reliabilities (Fiske, 2002;

Oyserman et al., 2002). Earley and Gibson (1998) add that the individualism/collectivism construct does not lend itself to clear and consistent measurement, whether that method be surveys or some other method. Thirdly, from a practitioner point of view, global managers first look at macro, societal factors rather than at individuals (e.g., the managerial processes and systems in a society) when deciding on a global strategy and where to expand (see Ghoshal 1987, for example). For researchers to specify countries as belonging to one culture or another is probably most helpful to global practitioners—as the level of analysis is the same for the researcher and the practitioner. Finally, large-scale, multi-country research, such as the Work Orientations Module III (as described above) consists of dozens of items used in many countries. Adding several scales (such as an individualism/collectivism scale or others) adds to the costs of scale development (e.g., translation/backtranslation as recommended by Brislin, 1980), survey implementation (e.g., paper and data storage), and leads to respondent issues (e.g., boredom, incomplete surveys). Given the above issues and concerns, the assignment of countries to different cultures seems acceptable.

## Appendix

Table 1

T-Tests for Significant Differences Relating to Hypothesis 1

Variable	Individualists	Collectivists	T-Value	p
	Mean (S.D., N)	Mean (S.D., N)		
Find new job	2.02 (1.08, 2130)	1.65 (.933, 1402)	10.66	<.001
Turn down job	3.26 (1.22, 2113)	2.83 (1.37, 1348)	9.64	<.001

Table 2

T-Tests for Significant Differences Relating to Hypothesis 2

Variable	Individualists	Collectivists	T-Value	p
	Mean (S.D., N)	Mean (S.D., N)		
More Time w/Family	1.83 (.82, 3380)	2.38 (.74, 2407)	-26.35	<.001
Job Interferes w/Family	3.33 (1.04, 2172)	3.84 (.99, 1444)	-14.75	<.001

Table 3

T-Tests for Significant Differences Relating to Hypothesis 3

Variable	Individualists	Collectivists	T-Value	p
	Mean (S.D., N)	Mean (S.D., N)		
Work Independently	1.96 (.82, 3405)	2.40 (1.01, 2398)	-18.43	<.001

Decide Time of Work	2.48 (1.00, 3381)	2.33 (.96, 2431)	5.59	<.001
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Table 4

## T-Tests for Significant Differences Relating to Hypothesis 4

Variable	Individualists	Collectivists	T-Value	p
	Mean (S.D., N)	Mean (S.D., N)		
Self-view Thorough	1.55 (.58, 1514 <sup>a</sup> )	2.12 (.97, 2494)	-20.75	<.001
Self-view Lazy	4.09 (.92, 1515 <sup>a</sup> )	3.56 (1.12, 2498)	14.91	<.001

<sup>a</sup>The Australian questionnaire omitted these variables.

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