Pervasive Social Influences, Part I
Cultural Contexts

The proximal social contexts that influence people's motivation and well-being are embedded within broader social contexts that include cultures, economic structures, and political systems. In this chapter, we examine culture as a pervasive influence, discussing the ways in which cultures both directly and indirectly affect the satisfaction and frustration of basic psychological needs, and thus their constituents' motivation and wellness. Cultures differ both in styles of socialization and in differentially valuing people's relatedness, interdependence, competence, and autonomy. The issue of autonomy has been particularly controversial, as some psychologists have argued that it is a concept relevant to Western, male, wealthy individuals but not to people of many other cultures and subgroups. We review research showing that when people from various cultures are more autonomous in enacting their own cultural values, they evidence greater psychological health and integrity. Other research is reviewed showing that, across cultures, autonomy support generally enhances well-being and performance, mediated by satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. Also discussed is the meaning of choice and its relevance in both collectivist and individualistic cultures. We also suggest that not all cultural contents are equally capable of integration, in large part because of their incongruence with basic needs. Finally, we discuss the importance of respecting autonomy in cultural competence, which involves appreciating the multiple ways in which people are connected in communities.

Throughout this book, we have focused primarily on the influences of *proximal social contexts*—for example, families, peer groups, schools, teams, and work organizations—on the individuals' motivation, development, and wellness. We describe these contexts as "proximal" in the sense that the individuals have direct interpersonal contacts with the people who make up these contexts. As SDT evidence has shown, proximal social contexts have a powerful impact on motivation, behavior, and experience, effects that are strongly mediated by basic psychological need satisfactions and frustrations.

Yet proximal social contexts are themselves embedded within broader or more encompassing social systems, both formal and informal, which influence need satisfaction and behavior in myriad ways. These *pervasive contexts* include the overarching cultural

and religious identifications, political structures, and economic systems within which proximal social contexts are constructed and occur (Ryan & Deci, 2011). Every proximal social context, with its controlling and autonomy-affording elements and its affordances and obstacles to need satisfaction, is, in fact, strongly shaped by these more pervasive and distally organized social systems, which are themselves varied in their characteristic values, pressures, reward structures, and norms.

Pervasive contexts can at times *directly* affect people's behaviors and need satisfactions by actively regulating or even blocking their activities. For example, governments can raise barriers to education or economic mobility, and cultural or religious authorities can prohibit or even punish certain lifestyle choices. Yet the primary influence of these distal contexts is typically more indirect, as pervasive cultural norms or economic structures present "invisible" or implicit values, constraints, and affordances, which are then reflected in more proximal social conditions and conveyed by socializing agents from parents and teachers to cultural messengers such as religious leaders, politicians, and celebrities.

Indeed, pervasive contexts, be they economic, political, or cultural, set *psychological horizons* on the very possibilities that persons within them can envision, thereby affecting people's motivations, values, aspirations, and scope of social and personal awareness. Social, religious, and political contexts are never "neutral"—they are, instead, infused with certain beliefs, ideals, rituals, obligations, and practices that are ready for internalization and, at the same time, absent of certain other sensibilities and possibilities. For example, cultures of consumerism and individualism may draw attention away from issues of relational importance and focus people instead on social comparisons, status, and outward image, which, while offering a seductive set of interests and goals, may fail to satisfy basic psychological needs (see, e.g., Kasser, 2011; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Deci, 2008). In contrast, cultures of tradition, power, and distance (Hofstede, 2001) may compel individuals to suppress or neglect authentic aspects of self and relationships that could have brought them deep satisfactions.

The aspirations people hold and the forces of regulation they experience around them thus vary by culture, political context, and economic systems, as do the pathways through which these pervasive contexts influence individuals' motivations. As a first example, consider the frequent observation that psychological control (e.g., Barber, 1996) is higher among Chinese relative to Western parents and more accepted as normative by Chinese children (Cheng, Shu, Zhou, & Lam, 2016). Nonetheless, considerable evidence suggests that such psychological control is generally a costly parental approach for a child's well-being, regardless of culture (Helwig & McNiel, 2011; Qin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Recent studies have, however, linked these cultural differences to the pervasive controlling pressures felt by Chinese parents. Thus Wuyts, Chen, Vansteenkiste, and Soenens (2015) sampled more than 400 Chinese and 400 Belgian parents of adolescents. First, parental styles varied considerably within both samples, yet they also found the expected between-country mean differences, with Chinese parents on average being more psychologically controlling. These between-country differences were, in turn, accounted for by Chinese parents' having greater child-invested contingent self-esteem, experiencing greater social pressure, and having feelings of unfulfilled dreams of their own. In addition, the Chinese parents perceived fewer pathways to their children's success, which heightened their intense focus on school achievement. Similar findings were reported by Ng, Pomerantz, and Deng (2014), who suggested that parents feel conditional social

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regard as a function of children's performance, leading to greater psychological control. Here we see how pervasive norms and pressures affect the proximal sphere of the family, leading to differences in motivation and basic psychological need satisfactions.

Similarly, consider the phenomenon of materialistic youth, who, across cultures, show lower well-being (Dittmar, 2007; Kasser, 2002a). We discussed the proximal causes of this negative relation between materialism and wellness in depth in Chapter 11. There, we outlined how individuals who are acquisitive regarding external symbols of worth are often compensating for experiences of basic need thwarting during development (e.g. Kasser, Ryan, Couchman, & Sheldon, 2004). Yet this need thwarting is also culturally embedded. Parents who are more extrinsically focused are potentially less supportive of their children's needs, as they direct their energies elsewhere. For example, Kushlev, Dunn, and Ashton-James (2012) showed how this focus on money or affluence can be associated with a diminished sense of finding meaning in caring for one's children. Using a daily diary method, they found that socioeconomic status (SES) was *negatively* related to the meaning that parents reported when taking care of their children. In a second study, they showed that parents exposed to a photograph of money (intended to prime the significance of wealth) reported a lower sense of meaning in life while spending time with their children at a festival. Such parental dynamics are obviously potentiated in a cultural context of economic competition and wealth inequality, which puts pressure on parents to succeed themselves and to display visible signs of worth (Kasser, Kanner, Cohn, & Ryan, 2007).

These two examples illustrate, first, how readily unrealized parental aspirations and culturally promoted compensatory dreams can become introjected by children, something that happens in diverse cultures. But, more generally, each represents an example, drawn from a plethora available to SDT analyses, of the complex pathways through which overarching cultural, political, and economic contexts can influence individuals' motivations and relationships in more proximal contexts—even the most intimate environments, such as that between parents and their children.

In short, all cultures, whether collectivistic or individualistic, hierarchical or egalitarian, contain pervasive influences that shape the dynamics of proximal environments, resulting in practices that tend to enhance or diminish the need satisfactions of their constituents. SDT, which places its values on the basic need satisfactions essential to wellness, thus considers it an important agenda to understand and empirically study this chain of influence from pervasive to proximal to individual characteristics.

Alongside these "downward" influences of pervasive contexts on individuals, we must also recognize (especially given the body of work we have been reviewing throughout this book), the powerful potential for the "upward" effects that individuals and groups can exert on their pervasive contexts, norms, and practices. People can, through intentional autonomous actions, modify their own cultures, sway the direction of politics, or influence economic systems. Indeed, it is the actions, both separately and collectively, of individuals, often acting with purpose and integrity, that have been at the heart of many of the progressive social and cultural changes we have seen across modern history—changes in which rights conducive to self-determination have been slowly and unsteadily, yet significantly, advanced (Chirkov, Sheldon, & Ryan, 2011). For example, Welzel (2013), using multicultural historical data, has compellingly documented that it is people's expression of emancipatory values that typically *precedes* the establishment of their actual political and social rights. That is, people's desire for autonomy and freedom is likely to expand into rights and behaviors when circumstances allow.

Needs as a Critical Focus

SDT claims applicability across political, cultural, or economic viewpoints, and yet, as we pointed out in Chapter 1, it does so as a *critical* theory. SDT especially aims to evaluate *all* environments with regard to how they support or thwart basic psychological need satisfactions. This critical perspective can be applied not only to proximal social contexts (e.g., parent–child, manager–employee) but also to the more distally organized, pervasive contexts of cultures, governments, and economies.

Clearly some cultural norms, political institutions, and economic systems contribute to basic need satisfaction, and thus to human flourishing, whereas others diminish or even crush opportunities for autonomy, competence development, and relatedness satisfactions of the individuals subjected to them, harming their capacities for self-realization and wellness. Indeed, evaluation of any culture, political structure, or economic system will reveal that, as complex and historically anchored systems, they entail both basic need-supportive and need-thwarting elements. We turn now to such pervasive contexts and their varied functional significance, beginning in this chapter with the construct of *culture* and turning in the following chapter to *political* and *economic* systems.

Self within Cultures: Psychological Needs and Their Universality

Culture, broadly defined, is perhaps the most pervasive influence on human behavior, as well as the most complex to conceptualize and measure. In a profound sense, culture supplies the waters within which the individual psyche swims. Individuals emerge *within* cultures, growing up not just as recipients of prescribed behaviors but as participants in a cultural community (Rogoff, 2003). From an SDT viewpoint, culture and individual are inseparable in the sense that the self develops through the ongoing internalization and integration of ambient cultural practices, values, and regulations (Ryan, 1993). Cultural internalization concerns not only major life issues, such as taking on and assimilating afforded identities, roles, and relationships, but also the routine microhabits of everyday living, from personal hygiene to dietary preferences to manners of speaking. All of these facets of life are influenced by culture, the specifics of which, ideally, not only are readily assimilated by individuals but also provide for them a scaffolding for growth and a sense of meaning and purpose. Further, as SDT highlights, as individuals internalize culture, they are also continuously transforming it, as part of the dialectics of societal change.

There are two fundamental processes through which cultural forms and styles differentially affect basic need satisfactions. First, SDT posits (and supplies abundant empirical evidence for) an inherent human tendency to *internalize and integrate* social practices, as specified in organismic integration theory (OIT; Chapter 8). SDT further assumes that *how* a culture transmits or conveys its regulations and values affects how well they are internalized. When more controlling methods are used to teach or enforce adherence to social practices and value systems, SDT predicts more impoverished and unstable forms of internalization, such as external regulation and introjection. By contrast, more autonomy-supportive socialization techniques foster more integrated internalization of cultural norms and practices. In part, the reason is that autonomy support conduces to openness or receptiveness to learning such that, under autonomy-supportive conditions, individuals can more consciously represent, assimilate, transform, and ultimately better integrate cultural regulations to the self.

Second, SDT posits that *cultural contents*—that is, the specific practices, values, rituals, and norms of a culture—vary in the degree to which they are functionally supportive versus thwarting of basic psychological need satisfactions. Cultural contents that are more conducive to the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are expected to be more readily and easily internalized and integrated, and, in accordance with goal content theory (GCT; Chapter 11), to foster greater wellness. In contrast, when the transmitted values or regulations inherently conflict with, or thwart, basic need satisfactions, individuals will less readily internalize them, and, when they do so, they will show more evidence of introjection, compartmentalization, defensiveness, inner conflict, and ill-being.

SDT, therefore, provides two distinct types of analyses that can be applied to both within-culture and between-culture studies. Cultural *methods of socialization* can be examined for their need-supportive versus need-thwarting characteristics, and *cultural contents* (the transmitted practices and values) can be examined for their affordance of basic need satisfactions. SDT hypothesizes that cultural features that are introduced and fostered in more autonomy-supportive ways and that are conducive to greater autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfactions will yield greater integration and will thus foster more stable, engaged adherence. Cultural elements that are disseminated in more controlling or authoritarian ways and/or that involve need-frustrating practices or constraints will less likely be associated with flourishing, and individuals exposed to them will show less intrapersonal integration.

As plausible and as evidence-supported as these SDT positions may be, in the domain of cultural studies, they have tended to be highly controversial. In large part, this is due to the fact that some scholars, especially those from a *cultural relativism* perspective, resist any critiques of cultures based on universal conceptions of basic needs. Indeed, authors such as Illich (1978) have argued that any positing of common or basic needs threatens individual autonomy and cultural diversity. It risks imposing one cultural viewpoint on others whose cultural meanings may differ. Cultural relativism, instead, asks scholars to "suspend judgment when dealing with groups or societies different from one's own" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 15).

Although we can deeply appreciate cultural relativism's embrace of respect for cultural diversity, in its more radical forms cultural relativism can leave scholars and policy makers ill equipped to be in any way culturally comparative or critical. That is, certain forms of cultural relativism, while correctly emphasizing (1) the variability in people's cultural behaviors, values, attitudes, and goals and (2) the indigenous activity of social construction that has fostered that variability, seem to suggest that all expressed values must be accepted at face value as being equally *good for* those people participating in the culture. This implies that, as long as people are acting consistently with their ambient cultural norms and practices, all is well. Thus, even where cultural norms are clearly oppressive to the basic psychological needs of certain subgroups (e.g., women in cultures in which they have few rights; children in some cultures in which they can be exploited; minorities in some cultures in which they may face stigma and diminished advantages), the relativist perspective supplies no foundation for critiquing them—even though they may do objective harm. In fact, in their laudable attempts to be epistemologically accurate in understanding cultures, there has been a fear of subjecting them to any common wellness criteria.

Ironically, we suggest that the very resistance shown by some scholars to recognizing any human psychological universals arises from an implicit recognition of the fundamental importance of *respecting the autonomy of persons in every culture*. That

is, the fear of imposing what is alien on others, of not understanding them in their own terms, presupposes the fundamental and universal need for human autonomy, not only at the individual level but also at the level of culture itself. In contrast to relativism, SDT, both in its theory and advocated practices, explicitly highlights the central importance of autonomy for human flourishing, along with relatedness and competence. Autonomy is a basic need that is not content-specific—indeed, one of the facts of human diversity is that different cultures, groups, and individuals will autonomously embrace and endorse different values and practices.

Values, Motives, and Needs within Cultures

We thus emphasize that, when approaching the sensitive area of cultural studies, SDT does not seek to impose cultural values, norms, or practices (see Craven et al., 2016). Rather, its task is to evaluate specific values, norms, and practices within cultures with respect to very specific criteria: whether they fulfill versus frustrate the basic psychological needs SDT posits to be universal (Chirkov et al., 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2012). This evaluation concerns both *why* people enact specific practices or values (e.g., their relative autonomy) and *what* specific values and behaviors they enact (e.g., their intrinsic vs. extrinsic aspirations). Thus SDT work separates the "why" and the "what" of enacted cultural norms, offering predictions in both areas based on the potential satisfaction versus frustration of people's basic psychological needs.

In examining these issues, careful applications of SDT must differentiate the too-often-confused constructs of *value, motive,* and *need*. Put simply, a *value* is a culturally or individually preferred sensibility or outcome; a *motive* is an implicit or explicit reason for behaving (with some relative degree of autonomy); and a *need* is an essential nutrient for thriving and wellness. These distinctions have import, especially because people can value or fail to value something they need. In addition, any given value may or may not be conducive to need satisfaction. Finally, autonomous or controlled motives can underpin attempts at value attainment, which accordingly affects need satisfactions. Thus each of these constructs can be understood as distinct, while also being interrelated.

Stated more technically, SDT claims that its central constructs concerning basic needs are *etic universals,* defined as characteristics or processes that can be empirically identified as cross-culturally valid. SDT does not claim, however, that its constructs are necessarily *emic universals,* in the sense that SDT acknowledges that these constructs vary in their salience and meaning within the ideologies and conceptual systems of different cultures. For example, SDT posits a universal need for autonomy, yet recognizes that autonomy is not always similarly valued or understood across cultural contexts (e.g., Cheng et al., 2016; Marbell & Grolnick, 2013). Yet, as McGregor (2007) argued, "although it may be differently manifest in different cultures, the concept of 'autonomy' remains essential to understand well-being in all" (p. 332).

Basic Need Satisfactions: Are the Effects Universal?

It is worth noting that, although the concept of universal or pan-cultural psychological needs appears explicitly in few theories, the needs for relatedness and competence are in some ways often acknowledged as basic and universal. For example, Harlow (1958) vividly demonstrated the importance of contact and care in social primates, research that had strong implications for primacy of relatedness in humans. Bowlby (1979), in his work on attachment, proposed a need for secure emotional attachments that he saw as basic to

all human beings. Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed a fundamental need for belongingness that few have contested. As such, the concept of a basic need for relatedness has been proposed within multiple theories, although not always evoking the specific concept of a basic need (Lieberman, 2013).

The more radical relativists, again, would be the exception to recognizing the universality of relatedness needs. Social-cognitive theorists (e.g., Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997) have argued that relatedness and belonging is more significant for persons from collectivist cultures, and they suggest that self-interest and self-enhancement are more characteristic of Westerners. In fact, some from this school of thought have used a quite pejorative term to characterize Western individuals, describing them as having a *disjointed* self, bounded and separate from others. In contrast, they describe Eastern individuals as having *conjoint* selves, connected, caring, and contextually sensitive. Instead of universalities, their dichotomous portrait suggests a lack of importance of relatedness in Western peoples.

In contrast to this dichotomous perspective, SDT sees relatedness as functionally important across both East and West (and North and South), rather than as a culturally specific need. Being disjointed is also not, as we see it, an appropriate cultural description. Instead, we see it as a potential condition of persons within all cultures, having everything to do with their sense of inclusion and relatedness and integration into the group. Unlike the dichotomous cultural views, we sadly see alienation and thwarted relatedness as crossing cultural boundaries. For example, consider the Japanese young adults described as *hikikomori,* who have withdrawn from the evaluations and pressures of their outside society but often suffer alone with depression and anxiety. Some Asians are also deeply connected with others but in ways that are controlled and crushing to their autonomous strivings, as in the "Tiger Mom" phenomenon (e.g., see Ng, Pomerantz, & Deng, 2014; Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & Assor, 2015). Our point is that we can find many portraits of alienation and protective or compensatory identities in *all* cultures, demonstrating that feelings of distance and separateness are not unique to the West. The issue is to understand the factors within *every* culture, group, and family that foster feelings of belonging and relatedness versus alienation and "disjointedness," rather than to claim that some cultures are connected and others are not.

Regarding competence, White (1959) proposed a basic need for competence, stating that people engage in competence-promoting behavior because it "satisfies an intrinsic need to deal with the environment" (p. 318). More recently, Elliot, McGregor, and Thrash (2002) postulated a basic need for competence that underlies achievement goal pursuits. In addition, the concept of competence or efficacy has become a core condition for motivated behavior within goal theories (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990), expectancy theories (e.g., Bandura, 1996), and the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Although these latter theories do not endorse the concept of a "need for competence," they emphasize the necessity of experiencing control and competence for adaptation and health. Moreover, the idea of a basic need for competence has generated little debate or controversy, suggesting at least implicit acceptance by many. Yet it is also clear that opportunities for experiencing competence differ within and across cultures. Sen (2000), for example, has argued that some cultures do not afford women the capabilities of education that could help them flourish, to the detriment of the overall development of those cultures.

Although relatedness and competence are widely recognized as needs, the acceptance of a basic need for autonomy has been a quite different matter. Psychologists such as Iyengar and DeVoe (2003) have portrayed autonomy as largely a Western concept and concern not applicable to traditional societies, and in particular to East Asian societies.

Iyengar and Lepper (1999) suggested that the value of autonomy is contradictory to values for relatedness to groups, asserting that the latter is more central within Eastern cultures. Markus, Kitayama, and Heiman (1996), and later Markus and Kitayama (2003), articulated a cultural relativist position, suggesting that values such as autonomy and relatedness are culturally constructed and conveyed (rather than intrinsic and natural). Within Western individualist cultures, their view suggests, autonomy is highly valued and important to wellness, at least among people higher in socioeconomic status (SES; Snibbe & Markus, 2005), but within Eastern collectivist cultures it is considered to be neither valued nor particularly important.

In other words, unlike relatedness and competence needs, the issue of autonomy draws heavy fire in psychology. However, we suggest that among the major reasons that social learning theorists (e.g., Bandura, 1989) and cultural relativists (e.g., Markus et al., 1996) have rejected the universal importance of autonomy is that their definitions of autonomy are undifferentiated, typically conflating ideas of volition, choice, independence, and separateness, all constructs that SDT carefully distinguishes. Specifically, approaches such as social-cognitive theory, cognitive attribution theory, and cultural relativism have all understood autonomy as: (1) independence (nonreliance) on others (e.g., Markus et al., 1996); (2) "freedom from" all social-environmental influences (Bandura, 1989); or (3) separateness and detachment from others (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). These definitions, in turn, lead them to equate autonomy with individualism and independence and, conversely, to (incorrectly) assume that persons acting in the interests of a collective, adhering with a tradition, or following a norm must somehow lack autonomy.

By differentiating autonomy from independence, as SDT has long explicitly done (e.g., Ryan & Lynch, 1989), important considerations concerning cultural psychologies are opened up. Specifically, SDT understands, along with cultural theorists such as Hofstede (2001) or Triandis and Gelfand (1998), that cultures vary considerably in their values for independence and for supporting group norms and traditions. These cultural contents, however, can be *further* examined within SDT as variously internalized within cultures by cultural subgroups and individuals, with corresponding variance in their relative autonomy (Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Van Petegem, 2015). In every culture, and for each practice within cultures, members experience more or less acceptance and integration and levels of controlled internalization.

When autonomy is understood as the experience of self-endorsement and congruence in one's actions and the result of deeper, more integrated internalization of norms and values, the view that autonomy is merely a Western idea is exposed as inaccurate. Indeed, an understanding of autonomy as a product of deep internalization is salient even in the writings of Confucius, whose views are typically associated with the vertical collectivism of East Asia. For example, Lo (2003) reflects that the Chinese word *ji* refers to one's inner, core self—that is, to the authentic identity of one's self—and that the word *shen* refers to the outer embodiment of the *ji,* which is the expression of one's authenticity. Lo suggests that in the philosophy of Confucius, *ji* and *shen* are integrated in a wise and cultivated person. Chong (2003) similarly draws on Confucian texts in arguing that autonomy, when it refers to self-directedness, is an ideal, adding that, as moral agents, people have "a deep seated desire for directing [their] own lives" (p. 277). Chong further stated that personal autonomy expresses "the individual's ability and freedom to realize projects that are important to his or her own identity" (p.169), projects that can include the values of family and tradition. Finally, Cheng (2004), discussing the Confucian philosophy of selfhood, highlighted that *self-cultivation,* a concept central to the Confucian

worldview, entails that the individual develop both reflective and self-regulatory capacities (see also Chen, 2014).

Moving to Indian texts, Paranjpe (1987) pointed out that, within the very early *Upanishads,* critical distinctions were made between a reflective and agentic self versus one's image of oneself and one's identity, paralleling those distinctions we have made between self-as-process versus self-as-object (see Chapters 3 and 15). Paranjpe further argued that the deep intellectual traditions of India acknowledge the self as an experiential center of volition and, further, that these texts, including those drawn from both Yoga and Vedanta, tend to embed these considerations of self in analyses of personal and existential concerns, with an aim toward the development of self-realization.

Ryan and Rigby (2015) discussed and compared Buddhist conceptions of *no-self* with Western conceptions of self and autonomy. Buddhist traditions, in recognizing the impermanence of all things, reject attachments to self-as-object phenomena such as one's identities or self-concepts. In fact, for the Buddhist, esteeming one's self as an image, identity, or ideal are as problematic as not esteeming them (Ryan & Brown, 2005). Thus, clearly, any personal investment in self-as-object contradicts the no-self doctrines of Buddhist thought. Yet the relations of Buddhist doctrines to conceptions of self-as-process and to autonomy are more complex. Ryan and Rigby (2015) pointed to considerable evidence that those individuals higher in mindfulness demonstrate more autonomous functioning and, moreover, that the core concepts of integrity, responsibility, and reflectiveness that characterize healthy self-functioning within the SDT tradition are all supported by, and valued within, Buddhist philosophies. The properties of integrated self-regulation were, indeed, shown by the Buddha himself.

In citing these few examples of Eastern traditions, our claim is not that they exactingly express distinctions we make within our empirical-psychological theorizing in SDT. Rather, we are addressing the claims of scholars who imply that conceptions of autonomy and a self that can be responsible for actions are exclusively Western preoccupations, needs, or concerns. That claim is no less troublesome than the idea that relatedness and community are Eastern sensibilities that are not salient or important to Westerners (e.g., see Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Joshanloo, 2014). Such portrayals are at best highly selective characterizations of both Eastern and Western thinking, but, more problematically, these dichotomization-focused models preclude more nuanced thinking about basic human psychological needs and the dynamics of their satisfaction within *any* culture.

An excellent example of the need for more nuanced views was illustrated in a study by Pan, Gauvain, and Schwartz (2013) of the value for *filial piety,* which concerns upholding honor of one's family and caring for parents. They sampled more than 300 Chinese parents and their eighth-grade children, examining how filial piety was both understood and conveyed. They found that when Chinese parents' collectivistic attitudes and values for filial piety emphasized *respecting and caring* for parents, this positively contributed to children's autonomous motivation, a relation that was mediated through parental autonomy support. In contrast, when parents' collectivistic attitudes and values focused on the children's *upholding parents' honor and reputation,* this was negatively associated with children's autonomous motivation, a relation mediated by parental psychological control. Such findings suggest that collectivistic values are not monolithic or uniformly antithetical to autonomy—indeed, they can support either autonomous or controlled practices and, in turn, differentially influence internalization and children's autonomy development.

Claims that autonomy is primarily a *male* concern are equally problematic (Jordan, 1991). As Friedman (2000) pointed out, the notion that autonomy is inherently inhospitable to women confuses autonomy with self-sufficiency. It also somehow assumes that women's autonomy would be achieved at the expense of connection and relatedness. The viewpoint that men are concerned with autonomy and women are concerned with relatedness simply fails to take stock of the idea that women, as much as men, require autonomy to resist controlling influences and constraints and that autonomy (more than heteronomy) facilitates connectedness, an idea supported within much of the SDT-based research we have already cited in Chapter 12 and elsewhere (see also Nussbaum, 2003). Moreover, as Collins (1991) argued, for many African American women caught in the throes of racism and poverty, autonomy as empowerment is critical to their liberation and well-being. Finally, as Sen (2000) has asserted, autonomy is a central capability, essential for flourishing and wellness in both the developing and wealthy nations. He pointed out that women's autonomy, in particular, is a hallmark of a flourishing economy, and, of course, we know that women's autonomy is an issue that is differentially treated around the world, with women's condition spanning from equal rights to legalized oppression.

Van Bergen and Saharso (2016) provided a particularly poignant example of the costs of denying women personal autonomy. They conducted qualitative interviews with 15 women from minority ethnicities (e.g., Turks, Moroccans, and Surinamese women) residing in the Netherlands who either had attempted or contemplated suicide. Examining the women's narratives, the researchers found that their suicidality was strongly connected with the women's frustration over the violation of their personal autonomy regarding life choices in areas of sexuality, career, relationships, and lifestyles. Some involved severe restrictions of choices and personal freedoms; some entailed subjection to abuse. The interviews made clear how the oppression of autonomy led to despair and depression and a desire to end life rather than endure.

Such narratives tell us why a differentiated concept of autonomy is critical to cross-cultural psychology. If we conceptualized it in terms of choice and volition rather than separateness or individualism, we believe there would be significantly less controversy about autonomy's universal importance for human flourishing or its role in fostering higher quality cultural and economic engagement.

Where tension is salient and goes beyond mere sematic debates, however, is among those who would put priority on group identity and cohesion *over* individual rights to identify or not identify with the group. For example, there are communitarian groups across the globe whose very ethos is built upon ideas of autonomy and willingness and whose vitality is a function of people volitionally adhering to them. Yet there are also communitarian cultures across the globe (and within nearly every nation) whose ethos includes the idea that individuals have *no right* to refuse to identify with them or the practices they purvey. There are, indeed, religious and political groups whose expressed ideology says that one should be *put to death* if she or he does not identify with the group or its practices. This extreme denial of individual rights explicitly puts the priority of the group's identity above the value for individual autonomy. Of interest is the extent to which individuals within such groups can willingly adhere to such beliefs or must instead comply through mechanisms such as compartmentalization, introjection, or simply external regulation.

As we suggest in this and the next chapter, the issue of individual autonomy in relation to the rights and privileges of groups to control or regulate their members is both important and highly controversial in cultural, ethical, and legal studies today. Yet those

who are typically most alarmed and disturbed by ideas about the universal import of autonomy at the level of individuals are the power elites and their ideological supporters within groups who most benefit from controlling or constraining others. Cultural conservatives, by definition, are those who most fear ideas of choice or latitude for individuals to define their own values or to have the ability to reject particular identities, values, and practices—ideas associated with liberalism and cosmopolitanism (see Appiah, 2005). Nonetheless, historical trends of globalization and accessible technologies mean that more people in all societies are adopting multiple identities, each of which is more or less internalized by the person and is accordingly more versus less compatible with both her or his other identifications and needs (integration) and with other individuals within the person's social contexts (homonomy).

From Theory to Evidence: Cross-Cultural Research Using SDT

As previously stated, SDT takes interest in both the *process* of internalization within cultures and the relative autonomy of practices for individuals and the general *contents* of culture, in terms of their affordance of need satisfactions versus frustrations. We now turn to a discussion and review of each of these issues as they have so far been researched across cultures.

Cross-Cultural Research I: The Significance of Internalization and Relative Autonomy

Attempting to distinguish differences in cultural contents from the relative autonomy of their adoption, Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan (2003) empirically examined the idea that cultural values and practices, including those reflecting collectivism or individualism, will be endorsed to differing degrees *between* cultures, and yet the degree of internalization, or relative autonomy, in people's motives for practicing ambient norms will be associated with the level of positive outcomes *within* cultures.

Using Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) dimensional framework, Chirkov et al. (2003) identified four types of cultural norms and practices. *Horizontal collectivist* practices place priority on the societal collective and treat individuals as similar and equal. *Horizontal individualist* practices allow persons to follow their own personal beliefs or preferences, yet at the same time value all individuals as important and equal. *Vertical collectivist* cultures emphasize that the needs of the collective come before those of individuals, and individuals recognize their place within the hierarchical relationships of the collective. Finally, *vertical individualist* cultures endorse individuals' striving for recognition and distinction and their striving competitively to achieve a position of power and influence relative to others.

Chirkov et al. (2003) then recruited participants from universities in Russia, Turkey, South Korea, and the United States, because they were expected to vary in where they fell on these cultural dimensions. The participants were first asked to provide their perceptions of the frequency and importance that other people in their local cultures placed on each of the four types of practices. This provided information about the degree to which the participants saw these practices and values as central and meaningful within their ambient cultural contexts. Then they were asked why they would *personally* engage in each of the cultural practices, using the external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic constructs derived from OIT.

Results confirmed Chirkov et al.'s (2003) expectations that cultures would differ in their normative practices in line with Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) model. Yet, despite these differences in ambient values and practices, within all four cultures, for both genders, and for all cultural practices, the degree to which an individual was more autonomous in enacting the practices positively predicted well-being. Cultural membership did not moderate this relation. In short, autonomous behavior was found to be important for psychological health in all cultures, regardless of whether they were collectivist or individualist, horizontal or vertical. Noteworthy, too, was that in no country was the relation between autonomy and psychological well-being moderated by gender, suggesting that satisfaction of the need for autonomy is equally important for males and females.

Chirkov et al. (2003) raised an additional, exploratory question of whether people internalize and integrate all cultural values with equal readiness, reasoning that some societal orientations that are less compatible with satisfaction of basic psychological needs might be more difficult to accept and endorse. In this regard, they speculated that vertical value systems might be more difficult to integrate than horizontal, egalitarian value systems. The fact of being subordinate to more powerful others in vertical systems represents a high risk, for the autonomy need has a high likelihood of being thwarted by the controlling practices of powerful others, as does the relatedness need, because hierarchies often place limits on people with whom one can affiliate. If those speculations were true, then vertical practices should have a lower relative autonomy index than horizontal practices. Chirkov et al. indeed found a significant mean difference between internalization scores for horizontal, relative to vertical, practices, across cultures and across collectivism–individualism, suggesting that on average the hierarchical values and practices measured might be more difficult to integrate than the horizontal values.

Downie, Koestner, El Geledi, and Cree (2004) did a follow-up of the Chirkov at al. (2003) study that had examined cultural internalization of horizontal versus vertical cultural values. Participants were non-Canadian students living in Montreal. Each had a heritage culture (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Pakistani) and, given the bicultural context of Montreal, exposure to two host cultures (viz., English Canadian and French Canadian). The primary questions of interest were whether the degree of egalitarianism of the heritage culture would affect the degree to which participants had internalized the heritage cultures' practices, were competent in their heritage-cultural settings, and displayed well-being. Also of interest were the relations among internalization (i.e., relative autonomy), cultural competence, and well-being with respect to the host cultures. Internalization was assessed with self-reports, whereas cultural competence and well-being were assessed with both self-reports and ratings made by participants' peers.

The first focus was on the participants' *heritage culture*. Each heritage country was classified in terms of the degree to which it was egalitarian, based on Schwartz's (1994) rating system. Consistent with Chirkov et al.'s (2003) findings, the degree of egalitarianism of the heritage country predicted both greater internalization (relative autonomy) of heritage practices and greater cultural competence in the heritage culture. Autonomy and competence, in turn, predicted the participants' experiencing positive affect when acting in their heritage cultures.

Parallel results were present for internalization of the *host cultures*. The more participants had internalized one of their host culture's values, the greater their cultural competence in that culture was, and, further, both internalization and cultural competence were related to experiencing positive affect in the host cultures.

Sheldon, Elliot, et al. (2004) also examined the relation of autonomous motivation to subjective well-being in three Eastern cultures and the United States. Participants

listed the personal strivings (Emmons, 1986) that were most important to them and then were asked to rate the degree to which they were pursuing each striving for external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic reasons, from which an overall relative autonomy score was derived. Although the mean level of autonomous motivation differed (with the U.S. and South Korean samples being high relative to those from China and Taiwan), autonomous motivation was significantly positively related to subjective well-being in all four cultures. As with Chirkov et al. (2003), neither gender nor demographic factors moderated the relations between autonomy and well-being. Using still different methods, Rudy, Sheldon, Awong, and Tan (2007) reported that individual autonomy was positively associated with psychological well-being among Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and Singaporeans alike. Such studies are consistent with a growing literature revealing that autonomy concerns are not unique to Western cultures and that greater autonomy predicts wellness in collectivist Eastern societies as well as Western ones.

Again, this becomes less surprising when one distinguishes autonomy as volition from independence and self-reliance. Chen, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, Soenens, and Van Petegem (2013) examined SDT's distinction between autonomy and independence in more than 500 adolescents from both urban and rural regions of China. Independence was operationalized as the degree of independent decision making within the family; autonomy was operationalized in terms of the degree of volition reflected in the motives underlying one's decision making. Chen et al. hypothesized, based on SDT, that autonomy would positively link to wellness, a result they expected to be mediated by basic psychological need satisfaction. Results confirmed that autonomy significantly predicted well-being indicators, with basic need satisfaction accounting for that result. In contrast, independent decision making was not significantly related with well-being or need satisfaction, echoing other SDT findings (e.g., Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Individual differences in collectivistic cultural orientations did not moderate any of these findings.

What this body of research shows is that, despite the fact that *what* people may practice or value differs as a function of culture, the issue of *why* they engage in practices or values has universal import. Internalization and integration, reflected in one's relative autonomy when enacting cultural practices, has more generalized effects. The less well integrated one's values and practices are, the lower will be one's wellness, a fact that applies across highly diverse cultural values and practices and across gender.

Cross-Cultural Research II: Autonomy Support's Impact

Given the universal import of autonomy and integrated internalization of cultures, it follows that the issue of autonomy support and control would also be important as a cross-cultural issue. In this regard, one thing is clear—parenting practices differ across cultures. Moreover, beneath surface differences in style and content, there is, from an SDT viewpoint, an important, underlying universal issue concerning how parents motivate their children and the perceived locus of causality (PLOC) for actions that follows within the children. That is, across the globe SDT expects that children can be pawns or origins, as de Charms (1968) would have described it.

Chirkov and Ryan (2001) examined parents' and teachers' autonomy support of high school students in Russia and the United States, Russia being a moderately collectivist culture and the United States being a highly individualist culture. They predicted that autonomy support from parents and teachers would predict both autonomous motivation and psychological health in both countries. Well-being was measured with a composite of self-esteem, self-actualization, life satisfaction, and the reverse of depression, whereas

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autonomous and controlled motivations were measured with an adapted self-regulation questionnaire (Ryan & Connell, 1989). All measures were translated into Russian and back-translated, as well as examined for comparability using means and covariance structure (MACS) analysis (Little, 1997). Results indicated that, although both parent and teacher autonomy support tended to be lower in Russia than in the United States, in both cultural settings they were related positively to more autonomous forms of motivation and more negatively to controlled motivations. Further, autonomy support from both parents and teachers were comparably positive predictors of the mental-health indicators in both countries.

Although not cross-cultural, Jang, Kim, and their colleagues published several papers specifically challenging statements by authors such as Murphy-Berman and Berman (2003) and Iyengar and DeVoe (2003), which suggest that autonomy and autonomy support would not be important in East Asian contexts. As one example, Jang, Reeve, Ryan, and Kim (2009) presented four studies focused on high school students in South Korea. In the first two, they asked the students about their most and least satisfying learning experiences and their most productive experiences, demonstrating that these were strongly predicted by basic need satisfactions for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A third study replicated and extended these findings by showing that such results held even when controlling for cultural and parental influences, including the collectivistic value orientation. A fourth, semester-long prospective study showed that teacher support for autonomy was positively related to student need satisfactions, which in turn related to an array of well-being and performance outcomes, whereas controlling practices were negatively related to these outcomes.

Taylor and Lonsdale (2010) explored cultural differences in the relations between teacher autonomy support, basic psychological need satisfactions, subjective vitality, and effort among students ages 13–15 in physical education classes from both the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, China. Using a multilevel analysis, they found in both samples positive relations between autonomy support and students' vitality and effort in class. These relations were, in turn, mediated by students' basic psychological need satisfaction. Among the few differences in patterns, the relation between autonomy support and competence was stronger in the Chinese sample compared with the U.K. sample. Taylor and Lonsdale argued that their findings supported the view that, for both Chinese and British students, an autonomy-supportive environment facilitated more positive student engagement and experience. Indeed, many studies echo these findings, revealing that autonomy support provided by parents and teachers positively predicted Chinese and South Korean students' academic functioning and psychological well-being (D'Ailly, 2003; Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004; Wang et al. 2007; Zhou, Ma, & Deci, 2009).

These results are not unexpected from an SDT point of view, but they surprise many who imagine that collectivist values must be heteronomously disseminated. SDT expects, in fact, that autonomy support within collectivistic cultures facilitates more autonomous internalization of ambient collectivist values. However, it also suggests that various elements of cultures may have distinct functional significances for cultural members (e.g., Pan et al., 2013, reviewed above). There is no doubt that features of broad concepts such as collectivism or individualism that support, or alternatively thwart, people's basic needs will affect their readiness to internalize and integrate these cultural elements. This is why the critical agenda for cultural studies articulated by SDT promises to be both rich and complex.

Nor is this issue restricted to East–West comparisons. Sheldon, Abad, and Omoile (2009) examined a variety of SDT variables as predictors of wellness in both Indian and Nigerian adolescents. Consistent with research in other cultures, perceived teacher autonomy support was associated with greater basic need satisfaction in schools. The three basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness also predicted students' evaluations of their classes and whether they would recommend them to friends. Basic need satisfactions also predicted greater general life satisfaction in both cultural samples. Finally, the researchers obtained ratings of perceived maternal and paternal autonomy support and found that both predicted greater life satisfaction in both samples.

Consider another study by Marbell and Grolnick (2013), who examined the perceptions of parental styles by sixth-grade Ghanaian students. They reasoned that Ghana was an interesting place to test the generalizability of SDT's constructs given its collectivist and traditional culture and concerns that autonomy support might be at odds with Ghanaian children's values of strong respect for elders. Results found support for several elements of SDT's model of parenting (see Chapter 13). Provision of structure was related to cognitive perceived competence, whereas parental control was associated with greater controlled (i.e., external/introjected) regulation around academic work and decreased school engagement. Finally, parental autonomy support was negatively related to depression and positively related to autonomous forms of motivation, engagement in school, and perhaps most important for our current discussion, children's endorsement of collectivist cultural values. It seems that in this collectivist society, children who experience autonomy support more willingly assimilate its practices. Parents' support of their offspring's autonomy was not in conflict with values of respect and communalism, but instead was positively associated with children's endorsement of these cultural values. This is consistent with SDT, which holds that children are more likely to internalize cultural values when they are presented in a way that does not force adherence but, rather, invites it with provision of rationale and support, thereby deepening their ownership and integration of their culture. Autonomy is thus not antithetical to traditional cultures; it can make them more stable.

It has been argued from a relativistic approach that psychological control carries a different meaning for individuals from more collectivistic contexts. For example, Chao and Aque (2009) reported that Asian adolescents feel less angry about parents using psychological control compared with European American adolescents. We noted above that Cheng et al. (2016) reported similar findings with Chinese students. Mason, Kosterman, Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Lengua, and McCauley (2004) found that African American adolescents experience mothers' guilt-inducing behavior as more indicative of care and love than their European American counterparts. These differences in the interpretation of parenting behaviors might suggest differing effects. However, on this point the evidence is much less clear. For example, recall Chirkov and Ryan's (2001) result that, despite parental control being more normative in Russia, its negative effects were similar to those in the United States. Cheng et al. (2016) noted moderation of some outcomes but problems with controlling practices on others. Similarly, Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, and Mouratidis (2012) applied well-validated measures of psychological control, autonomy support, and warmth in both European (Belgian) and South Korean samples. They found that there were similar effects on wellness outcomes in the two groups, specifically, decreased depressive symptoms. Thus, although there may indeed be a different functional significance given to the same behaviors in differing cultural contexts, we think there are limits on that idea. Some kinds of parenting strategies may be inherently controlling, whatever the cultural interpretation applied to them.

Ahmad, Vansteenkiste, and Soenens (2013) extended the consideration of the functional effects of parental autonomy support and control to a sample of Jordanian adolescents. As a cultural context, Jordan has been characterized as both vertical and collectivist, yet quite culturally divergent from Asian contexts considered above. Ahmad et al. measured Jordanian teens' perceptions of maternal psychological control and responsiveness and also obtained an independent measure of teacher-rated adjustment, so their results were not based solely on self-reports. As would be predicted by SDT, maternal psychological control was negatively related to teacher-rated adjustment, whereas maternal responsiveness was positively related to this outcome. Further, the relations of these two parenting dimensions to adjustment outcomes were mediated by satisfaction of basic psychological needs, particularly those for autonomy and competence.

Our viewpoint, as well as those of other cultural theorists, is that, although the cultural contents that parents are modeling and transmitting to their children vary greatly across the world, socialization operates more smoothly and conduces to better child outcomes when parents are autonomy-supportive. Autonomy support is not inherently antithetical to traditional or collective values, nor is its importance supplanted or strongly modified by them. At the same time, there are normative differences in the functional significance of certain practices that can (within limits) moderate effects on outcomes, as offspring in different cultures may perceive different meanings to the same parental practices, resulting in differing levels of basic need satisfaction or frustration. Such nuances are an important focus of true cross-cultural research.

Cross-Cultural Research III: Basic Need Satisfaction and Wellness

The postulate that the basic psychological needs are etic universals even though they may be manifested differently in cultures with different values, goals, or practices suggests that it is important to study need satisfaction across cultures, including cultures with very different cultural values. To do this meaningfully, however, it is necessary to take a dynamic perspective that goes deeply enough into psychological processes to find linkages that relate the basic psychological needs to the phenotypic goals and behaviors that are common in different cultures and may even appear on the surface to be contradictory to a specific need. Staying at a more superficial level of behaviors and cognitions, as many investigators have done, is inadequate for dealing with the issue of etic universality. Yet, despite the difficulties of such research, there are now many cross-cultural empirical investigations focused on the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which SDT maintains are fundamental and universal needs. We, for illustrative purposes, review only some examples from this ever-expanding literature.

Among our first forays into cross-cultural work on needs was a study that took place with Bulgarian and U.S. workers in the early 1990s. Bulgaria had been under Soviet domination until 1989, with a long-standing totalitarian government in the Stalinist tradition. Virtually all industries were owned by the state and operated by central planning principles. Cultural values were collectivist, and the country was relatively isolated from the West. After the nation was freed from Soviet domination, change was slow, as, even 5 years later, none of the important state-owned companies had passed into private hands. Payments to Bulgarian workers from the state, as owner of the companies, were often weeks or months late. In a free election, Communists had been voted back into power, as the citizens struggled with change.

It was in this context that Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, and Kornazheva (2001) began to collect data on basic psychological need satisfaction among Bulgarian

working adults and U.S. comparisons. Observations of work groups in several state-owned industries suggested considerable inefficiency but also unusual possibilities for need satisfaction. Within work groups, relatedness among members frequently appeared to be very important and cultivated. Work groups also often elected their leaders, giving them some feeling of autonomy in micro-decisions, although major decisions were still made in a top-down fashion. Work in many settings we observed was neither pressured by rewards nor tightly supervised. Competence, on the other hand, was of little concern, as it had never been an important criterion for employment or reward under the communist ethic; feedback and contingencies based on performance or effort were not salient.

We collected reports from employees of 10 such state-owned companies concerning their perceptions of their work climate (i.e., autonomy support vs. control), their basic need satisfactions, their motivation for work, and their psychological well-being. The same measures were also obtained from the employees of a data management firm in the United States so as to have a comparative reference point. Analyses showed that the constructs were comparably understood and meaningful in both Bulgarian and U.S. samples. More important, results revealed that autonomy support (from both immediate supervisors and top management) was positively related to satisfaction of each of the basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and that the social-contextual support for autonomy was also strongly related to motivation and well-being in *both* cultural contexts. Additionally, findings indicated that need satisfaction was strongly related to engagement and well-being, suggesting that employees who reported greater need satisfaction on the job were more motivated and engaged in their work and, in turn, were psychologically better adjusted. Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated that, across employees of state-owned Bulgarian industries and workers in the U.S. organization, autonomy support predicted need satisfaction, and that in turn predicted both engagement and well-being. In sum, need satisfaction was important for the motivation and well-being of workers in both Bulgaria and the United States, despite the especially robust differences in terms of cultural, political, and economic circumstances at the pivotal time of this research.

As we previously reviewed, Chirkov et al. (2003) similarly demonstrated strong relations between basic need satisfactions and indicators of wellness in their cross-cultural studies. Following up on this, with special interest in moving beyond "East–West" dichotomies, Chirkov, Ryan, and Willness (2005) compared Brazilian and Canadian samples. In both nations, they found that satisfaction of basic psychological needs was a predictor not only of well-being but also of the extent to which people felt "at home" in their own cultural contexts. Put differently, whether Brazilian or Canadian, persons who reported low satisfaction of SDT's basic psychological needs were also more culturally estranged. Chirkov et al. (2005) also showed that greater relative autonomy in enacting cultural practices was associated with well-being in both countries. Finally, as in the Chirkov et al. (2003) research, here, too, the researchers found that internalization tended to be higher for horizontal relative to vertical practices.

Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, and Kasser (2001) examined the phenomenal salience of basic needs in participants from both South Korea and the United States by assessing what they experienced as having been satisfied when they had what they considered satisfying experiences. The researchers assumed that need satisfactions would represent qualities of experience that people require to thrive and thus would be salient in experiences of satisfaction. They assembled a list of 10 constructs that they considered "candidate needs" that might be the basis for people's experiencing satisfaction. These candidate needs included competence, autonomy, and relatedness (SDT's basic psychological needs),

as well as a range of other desires, namely, money, security, popularity, self-esteem, physical health, pleasurable stimulation, and self-actualization, none of which is considered a basic need within SDT.

Before moving on to a further description of the research, let us first reemphasize the meaning of the concept of "need" from the SDT perspective. In this theory, a basic psychological need is a satisfaction that is essential for thriving—for growth, integrity, and wellness—and that applies to all people. In other words, the importance of need satisfactions to wellness is inherent in our human design and is universal rather than learned. Further, we maintain that, in naming needs, it is important to keep the list of needs as short as possible, to include only needs that specify the content of what the organism requires to thrive and to name the needs in such a way that they will provide the basis for integrating a large number of phenomena that have been observed in psychological research. Additionally, it is important to separate the idea of needs—the basic human universals—from desires, which may or may not promote thriving. Evidence reviewed in Chapter 11 indicates, for example, that money and popularity are common desires but not needs, for their pursuit and attainment are not invariably associated with health and wellness. Finally, we believe it is important to draw a distinction between concepts that index thriving and those that promote it. In other words, we view some of the candidate needs (viz., self-esteem, self-actualization) as indicators of psychological health and thriving rather than needs in themselves. Thus, for us, although self-actualization and self-esteem are not technically needs, they do index the results of having had the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfied.

To return to the Sheldon et al. (2001) research, participants were asked to think about the most satisfying event they have experienced in recent times and briefly describe it. They were then provided with 30 descriptive sentences (3 relating to each of the 10 candidate needs) and asked to what degree, during their described event, they had experienced the state represented in each statement. Finally, they reported the degree to which, during the event, they had felt positive affect. Evidence from these studies indicated quite clearly that autonomy, competence, and relatedness emerged as three of the four most important candidate needs across the studies and the countries, thus providing evidence that people understand these experiences to be extremely important in life satisfaction. Again, this evidence of emic commonality is not essential to our claim that basic needs are etic universals, but such shared salience is nonetheless noteworthy. The fourth candidate need that was consistently important to people was self-esteem, which we consider to be an outcome of need satisfaction rather than a need itself.

Sheldon et al. also assessed the strength of each of the 10 "candidate needs" for all participants as individual differences. The idea was to see whether the strength or importance that people place on these needs would moderate the relations between satisfaction of the needs and the individuals' well-being. A match hypothesis (e.g., Hackman & Lawler, 1971) would suggest that when people satisfy "needs" that are important to them, the positive effect on well-being would be greater than when they satisfy less important "needs." In contrast, SDT claims that satisfaction of basic needs will be positively linked to individuals' well-being regardless of whether the individuals value the needs highly. In line with SDT's postulate, results of the Sheldon et al. (2001) analyses showed that the link from need satisfaction to well-being was not moderated by strength, again showing why needs should be distinguished from desires.

New cross-cultural research on the issue of need satisfaction continues to emerge. For example, Chen, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, Boone, et al. (2015) investigated both need satisfaction (vs. lack thereof) and need frustration (vs. lack thereof) as distinct dimensions

Work on the topic of emotional reliance within SDT illuminates some of the issues in this area. Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov, and Kim (2005) suggested that when people experience sadness, anger, or fear and when they experience joy, excitement, and exhilaration, they often want to turn to others to share their feelings. Doing so is likely to help them manage emotions and is likely to increase experiences of intimacy and provide satisfaction of the need for relatedness. Although this tendency to turn to others, to rely on them at emotional times, may be a universal desire, cultures clearly tend to have different norms with respect to emotional expression, emotion sharing, and relying on others. Accordingly, Ryan and colleagues (2005) examined *emotional reliance* on families and friends in samples from four countries—South Korea, Russia, Turkey, and the United States. They found that emotional reliance tended to be highest in Russia, with the United States being second, Turkey third, and Koreans reporting low reliance on families and friends when having emotional experiences. Like Chirkov and Ryan (2001), however, these investigators were less focused on mean differences between samples but on whether, despite these normative differences, the degree to which people within each country emotionally relied on families or friends when having emotional experiences was a positive predictor of well-being. Thus, although cultures have different norms about the appropriateness of expressing emotions to others (e.g., in Korea, people may tend to believe it would burden their families and friends if they focused too much on their own feelings), the degree to which people do so is associated with stronger mental health, regardless of the cultures' norms. This, we maintain, is because people will experience greater satisfaction of their relatedness need at these important times. Moreover, according to SDT, turning to others to authentically share experiences is facilitated, again universally, by autonomy-supportive others. Supporting this view, across all four samples people indicated more willingness to share their feelings with those others they felt were autonomy-supportive, a result not moderated by cultural membership.

Beyond sharing emotional experiences, based on relationship motivation theory (RMT; Chapter 12), one expects that when people are with others who support their autonomy, they can more easily be the people they aspire to be, and this means being closer to their own ideals. In a cross-cultural test of this expectation, Lynch, LaGuardia, and Ryan (2009) used multilevel modeling to examine the prediction that partners' autonomy support would be associated with smaller discrepancies between one's ideal self and one's self when with the partners. They had samples from the United States, Russia, and China rate their actual and ideal selves using Big Five trait measures (Costa & McCrea, 1992). They then were asked to rate how they view themselves when they are with each of several specific primary social partners. At a within-person level, participants' actual self-concept was closer to their ideal when with autonomy-supportive social partners. Although there was some weak moderation by country membership, associations were in the same direction for all countries. Specifically, people tended to be more open, extraverted, agreeable, and conscientious when with others who were autonomy-supportive, and this was also associated with greater subjective wellness across cultural samples.

It seems that quality in relating to others has some common elements across diverse cultures. When others are more autonomy-supportive, people are able to be more open, more authentic, closer to their ideal selves, and more engaged (e.g., Weinstein, Hodgins, & Ryan, 2010), as well as higher in the well-being that follows. This does not mean that cultural styles are equally characterized by autonomy support—indeed, evidence suggests that there are significant mean-level differences in autonomy supportiveness (e.g. Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson, & Bush, 2009; Chirkov & Ryan, 2001), even though within-culture

correlates are similar. Rather, what does appear relatively invariant across cultures and contexts are the generally positive functional effects of autonomy support and the generally negative effects of controlling environments on human flourishing and wellness.

Cross-Cultural Research V: Choice, Autonomy, and Well-Being

Central to human autonomy is the experience of choice. When autonomously motivated, people feel that, all things considered, they would choose to do that which they are doing. Their experience is one of volition, endorsement, and choice—experiences that can be confirmed by reflective endorsement of their actions. As we have, perhaps, laboriously argued in previous chapters, this does not mean that individuals have to be the initiators of their goals, have multiple options, or be self-directive in their actions; it means only that they have to truly concur with undertaking an action, either for intrinsic or well-internalized motives.

SDT, because of its focus on the nuances of autonomous functioning, specifically distinguishes the issue of choice from the cognitive concept of making decisions. Decision making is the process of selecting among options that are available to a person. But not all decisions involve a sense of choice. The boss says "Work this weekend or get fired." The employee has a decision to make here, but he or she may not be choosing to engage either option in the sense of undertaking either willingly. When we examine decision making, then, we are careful within SDT not to confuse mere selections between options with the kinds of opportunities for choosing that facilitate autonomy. In addition, SDT recognizes that people can feel a sense of choice in following others' leads or mandates, again if they have reason to congruently assent to these directives or the legitimacy of the authority. So, even if the source of a goal is external, people can autonomously assent to it, finding in it either value or interest. Finally, the number of behavioral options available to people certainly does not necessarily index the amount of "choice" they have, nor guarantee any sense of autonomy. Too many options or selections are likely to represent the experience of additional cognitive load, rather than a meaningful choice. Instead, the facilitating aspect of options, whether few or many, is contingent on whether they afford pathways that, when chosen, are better matched with the person's values and volitional interests.

Distinguishing differences between choice, defined as mere decision making, as a number of options, or as assent to an available option are conceptual nuances that have often been lost with the experimental and cross-cultural literatures on choice. So, too, is the notion that one might feel a sense of choice and volition when following trusted others. Instead, the search for dichotomies has led researchers to forget that the very nature of cultural differences implies that there will be differential deployment of one's motivation as a function of varied cultural internalizations. Insofar as cultures differ, they will internalize, and assent to, different things. In this regard, some theorists have yet to appreciate that collectivism and traditionalism *can* be autonomously embraced. Because of the importance of this issue, we now look more closely at experimentation on choice in the area of cultures.

To set the stage, let's return to a classic experiment of choice and intrinsic motivation reviewed in Chapter 6. Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, and Deci (1978) suggested that one social-contextual factor that could increase people's autonomy was the "experience of choice," which they operationalized experimentally as allowing people to decide what activities to do (selecting among different puzzles) and how long to work on each one they selected. The contrast was a "yoked" condition in which an experimenter told

each participant which puzzles to work on and how much time to spend on each, using the decisions that had been made by the experimental-group participants to whom these no-choice participants had been yoked. Results indicated that participants who had been allowed to make choices were more intrinsically motivated for the activity than those simply assigned activities and times.

Since the Zuckerman et al. experiment, there have been many replications of the "choice" effect in samples from multiple contexts and developmental periods. A meta-analysis by Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008), for example, examined 41 studies on the effects of choice on intrinsic motivation and found overall that choice enhanced intrinsic motivation. This effect was stronger for children than adults, and a moderate number of options led to more positive motivational results. This general pattern of choice facilitating motivation has, it seems, been widely replicated, and research by Murayama et al. (2015) found, using Japanese participants, that the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) played a key role in this facilitation effect.

Replications of this choice effect come from research labs around the globe and are not unique to the West. Illustrative is a recent experiment from Chinese investigators Meng and Ma (2015). They had university students engage in tasks of equal difficulty, sometimes chosen and sometimes externally assigned. The effect of having choice was then examined both behaviorally and through electrophysiological methods. The researchers found that when choice was available, participants showed a greater stimulus-preceding negativity (SPN), (suggesting enhanced positive expectations), and a larger feedback-related negativity (FRN) loss–win difference wave (d-FRN), which they interpreted in terms of greater intrinsic motivation toward the task.

However, some cultural theorists dispute the importance of choice in collectivist contexts. For example, in a very widely cited study, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) argued that "personal choice" is not as important to people in the collectivist cultures of Asia and elsewhere. The investigators did two experiments with U.S. elementary school students to test their reasoning. In their studies, European American and Asian American children were assigned to one of three conditions: (1) making choices individually, (2) accepting the choices made by trusted ingroup members (e.g., their mothers, Study 1; ingroup close classmates, Study 2), and (3) having the choices made by outgroup members (an adult experimenter, Study 1; outgroup students in a lower grade from another school, Study 2). The ingroup and outgroup choices were yoked to the individuals' choices in the same way that Zuckerman et al. had done it, to allow the individual-choice participants a true choice while ensuring comparability in the task across conditions.

Results indicated, first, that, in *both* the European American and the Asian American groups, making individual choices led to significantly greater intrinsic motivation than having decisions made by the experimenter or outgroup children. Thus this experiment strongly replicated the Zuckerman et al. (1978) finding for participants of both ethnicities, a result frequently not acknowledged in reviews of this work. It appeared that personal choice did matter to both groups. Yet, in addition, within the European American sample, individual choices led to higher intrinsic motivation than did the trusted-others' choices, whereas in the Asian American group, the trusted-others' choices led to *higher* intrinsic motivation than did individual choices. Iyengar and Lepper interpreted the findings as evidence that students from collectivist backgrounds do not prefer to make their own decisions, and they implied, moreover, that collectivists do not need autonomy. Showing their confounding of ideas of independence and autonomy, they specifically stated that the results showed that "provision of individual choice seems to be more crucial to American independent selves, for whom the act of making a personal choice

offers not only an opportunity to express and receive one's personal preference, but also a chance to establish one's unique self-identity" (p. 363). This interpretation seems to us far from what was studied, and further demonstrates the conflation of distinct constructs of individuality, autonomy, independence, and uniqueness. They further predicted that their results would have been even stronger had they not used Asian American subjects.

We first note that the Patall et al. (2008) meta-analysis of choice effects found the Iyengar and Lepper (1999) effect sizes to be so discrepant from others that, in keeping with meta-analytic protocol, these studies were eliminated from the analysis. We thus interpret their results with caution. Yet even given the observed pattern of findings, SDT would give a different interpretation. We maintain that to understand the results in terms of the meaning of choice and autonomy, it would be necessary to understand the degree to which the students experienced autonomy when enacting their parents' or close-others' decisions, and that would relate to internalization. If, for example, the participants had a close relationship with the trusted others, they may well have enacted their decisions autonomously. SDT would, in fact, hold that the positive motivational effects might have resulted from an experience of autonomy *and* relatedness satisfactions they experienced in following the trusted others' selection of the particular pen colors or puzzles they used. However, no measures of autonomy, relatedness, or reasons for assenting to others' choices were assessed.

We compare this with a more comprehensive series of studies on this phenomenon carried out by Bao and Lam (2008). They examined choice effects in elementary Chinese children from Hong Kong (rather than the Asian American groups in Iyengar and Lepper's experiment), and they measured a number of these relevant variables. They argued, in line with SDT, that when others, such as parents and teachers, make choices for their children or students, the youth could feel quite autonomous in performing the behaviors selected for them if they had a close relationship with that adult figure. As such, they would not have had to personally make the decision themselves in order to feel autonomous. However, if they did not feel such close support from the adult, they would be less likely to feel autonomous when the adult chose for them, showing the undermining effect.

Bao and Lam (2008) reported four studies. In the first, children reported on who (either they or their mothers) had selected an extracurricular course they were attending, how close to and supported they felt by their mothers, and how intrinsically motivated they were for the course. Results indicated that students who reported low relatedness to their mothers were more intrinsically motivated when they selected for themselves than when their mothers selected the course for them. For children with high relatedness to their mothers, there was no advantage to choosing for themselves. They were just as intrinsically motivated.

Two experimental studies were then reported, one with mothers and one with teachers, in which they manipulated choice. Participants were again Chinese children who reported on their closeness to their mothers (Study 2), or teachers (Study 3). They then worked on anagrams, with half selecting for themselves and half working on ones selected by their mothers (or teachers). Results showed that both relatedness and choice had positive main effects on intrinsic motivation for this task. Yet, as expected, there was also an interaction in which students with low relatedness to their mothers (or teachers) were more intrinsically motivated when they chose for themselves, but the intrinsic motivation for students with more supportive relationships was just as high (although not higher) as when choosing for themselves. Interestingly, however, on a measure of performance (rather than persistence), those in the self-selection group still evidenced the best outcomes.

    In a final study, Bao and Lam assessed students' experiences of autonomy for doing schoolwork (based on the Ryan & Connell, 1989, approach), their closeness to their teachers, and their level of classroom engagement. Results indicated that both relative autonomy for schoolwork and closeness to the teachers positively predicted classroom engagement, two main effects expected by SDT. Further, there was not an interaction. Autonomy did not have its positive effects only in relationally supportive contexts; rather, feeling autonomous was advantageous, as was relational satisfaction.

    These findings show that it is the experience of autonomy, whether it comes from making choices or accepting and internalizing other trusted people's choices, that is the important determinant of intrinsic motivation and engagement within both individualist and collectivist cultures. Here we see the importance of distinguishing in theory the difference between independence and autonomy and the more complex and nuanced view of what leads to a sense of volition.

    Katz (2003) and her colleagues performed another set of studies that examined choice and decision making within an individualist and a collectivist culture within Israel: namely, secular Jews, who are relatively individualistic in their orientation, and Bedouins, who are relatively collectivistic in theirs. She examined the effects of making choices on intrinsic motivation of schoolchildren from these two cultures, comparing the intrinsic motivation of students who made their own choices to the intrinsic motivation of students whose parents were said to have made the choice for them. However, in this work, Katz noted that parents might make choices that are consistent with their children's preferences, thus allowing the children to do their preferred activity and also conveying to the children that their parents understand and acknowledge their interests. Alternatively, parents might make choices that are inconsistent with their children's preferences, which would likely feel to the children less supportive and acknowledging. Thus the interest-consistent parental choice would be more intrinsically interesting for the children and would promote internalization (i.e., identification with the activity), whereas the interest-inconsistent parental choice would not be intrinsically interesting and would be unlikely to promote internalization. Accordingly, there were three conditions in the Katz (2003) experiment: individual choice, parents' choice that was interest-*consistent,* and parents' choice that was interest-*inconsistent.*

    High school students in the experiment were told that they would be spending some of their after-school time pursuing one of several possible subjects typically taught in a local college, and they were asked to rank order the subjects according to their interests. This was done so that the experimenter would have the information for later use. Then, at a later session, the experimental manipulations were performed for the three conditions. In the individual-choice condition, the students were asked to choose which subject they would pursue. Needless to say, they chose the topic they had rated as most interesting. In the parent-choice interest-*consistent* condition, the students were told their parents had made a choice for them, and the topic they were said to have chosen turned out to be the one the students had rated most interesting. In the parent-choice interest-*inconsistent* condition, the students were also told their parents had made a choice, but the topic they were said to have chosen was one the students had rated as very low in interest.

    Katz (2003) reported that, for *both* the secular Jews and the Bedouins, the level of intrinsic motivation, behaviorally assessed, did not differ for the students in the individual-choice and the parent-choice interest-consistent conditions. However, for students from each background, the intrinsic motivation of those in the parent-choice interest-inconsistent condition was significantly lower than that of the students in the other two experimental conditions. Thus having parents choose for them did not

undermine the intrinsic motivation of the children if the parents had been responsive to the students' interests, but having the parents choose when the students' interests were not acknowledged had a negative effect, whether they were part of an individualist or collectivist culture.

Again, results of this study stand in contrast to those of Iyengar and Lepper (1999), as do the results of the Bao and Lam (2008) study. Neither the Katz (2003) study nor the Bao and Lam (2008) study showed that parent or teacher selection of activities for their children led to significantly greater intrinsic motivation than did the children's own selection of activities for themselves. However, the parent selection led to significantly less intrinsic motivation when the selection of activities was interest-inconsistent or when there was not a close relationship, issues that were not examined by Iyengar and Lepper.

Yet another interesting result stemmed from Katz's (2003) research. She found that, although the behavioral measure of intrinsic motivation was undermined for Bedouin students in the parent-choice, interest-inconsistent condition, self-reports of interest were not lower in that condition than in the individual-choice condition. This finding for the self-report measure was therefore more consistent with the results of Iyengar and Lepper (1999). Subsequently, Katz and Assor (2006) did a follow-up study to clarify the Katz (2003) results. They hypothesized that students from the collectivist culture whose parents had selected an option for them that did not match their interests would not have *reported* their lack of interest in the option because they had learned that they should accept what their parents decide. In this follow-up study, Katz and Assor thus had three groups of students that paralleled those in the Katz (2003) study. However, in the Katz and Assor study, the participants (both secular Jews and Bedouins) were given descriptions of *another student* who had had an experience that mirrored what had happened in the corresponding condition of the Katz (2003) study. That is, one group was told that the hypothetical other student had made a choice for himself or herself; one group was told that the parents had made a choice that matched the student's interests; and one group was told that the parents had made a choice that did not match the student's interests. Then, using an interview format, the researchers asked the participants in this study to think about how they would feel in the various conditions. Invariantly, for both cultural groups, the students initially expressed negative feelings when they imagined parents having chosen the uninteresting option; however, whereas secular Jews continued over time to view that option less positively than the other two options, the Bedouin participants began to gravitate toward more positive reports of how they would feel in the situation in which parents had chosen the uninteresting option. Thus the important points from this study are (1) that the negative feelings of having been denied the opportunity to choose or to have gotten what they would have chosen were apparent independent of cultural values; but (2) cultural values do influence the extent to which members of a culture can outwardly express or are willing to report negative feelings about choices imposed by parents. Thus the Bedouin students gravitated toward saying they would feel fine if the parents chose for them a course that did not interest them (as behaviorally measured), presumably because their cultural value says that parents' decisions should be respected.

Important here is that there are clear cultural differences in where people draw personal boundaries and accept influence. Both American and Israeli children may well be less intrinsically motivated when close others choose for them than their Asian or Bedouin counterparts. In these latter cases, we see that autonomy and relatedness are by no means antithetical, as SDT has always maintained. But it is also clear that a sense of choice matters in all the studied cultures, with personal choice invariably enhancing motivation over external choices made by non-close others.

Autonomy, Choice, and Duty across Cultures

Consider a cultural value or its manifest normative standard that it is one's duty to follow the expectations of one's family, which scholars such as Katz (2003), Pan et al. (2013), and Miller (2002) have pointed out is a common value in some collectivist cultures. The fact that people enact specific cultural values does not, however, tell us *why* they do so (Chirkov et al., 2003). In SDT's view, within any culture people might have varied motives to enact norms of familial duty. Perhaps they autonomously embrace the importance of family and tradition (identification). Perhaps they appreciate the inherent satisfactions of fulfilling duties toward others, including enhanced relatedness (intrinsic). Perhaps, in contrast, they perform their familial duty primarily because others pressure, or even coerce, them to do so (external regulation) or because they would feel shame or disapproval were they not to appear dutiful (introjection). In this sense, SDT has no a priori concerns with familial duty *as a value,* but it does have something important to say about each of these motives and their relative autonomy as a basis for enacting the value.

The fact that some cultures endorse specific values such as familial duty also does not tell us what the functional costs and benefits of enacting the values might be. One might ask, for example, does adhering to this valued norm lead to enhanced relatedness, competence, and autonomy, or does it leave people feeling alienated, ineffective, or controlled? Conversely, does an absence of sense of duty or obligation to family in some cultures interfere with relatedness, competence, or autonomy? Could it leave people feeling "disjointed"? Accordingly, analyses considering both whether a value or behavior is autonomously internalized and whether its realization is supportive of basic psychological needs can be directed toward any culture with its norms and practices or its rejection or neglect of those norms.

Sheldon, Kasser, Houser-Marko, Jones, and Turban (2005) examined issues of duty in both U.S. and Singaporean samples. Their specific interest was on the relation of age to one's relative autonomy in fulfilling duties. They hypothesized that, as people age, they may more deeply understand and internalize the meaning of duties and thus be more autonomous in performing them. They reported three studies. In the first, they found that older Americans reported greater autonomous motivations for the duties of voting, paying taxes, and giving tips to service people. In a second study, they compared U.S. parents to their children, finding that parents expressed more autonomy in their roles as workers and citizens. Finally, in a third investigation, Sheldon et al. found that older Singaporeans reported greater autonomous motivation when obeying authorities, helping distant relatives, and being politically informed. Important, too, was that, in all three of these studies, greater autonomy was associated with higher subjective well-being.

Research by Miller, Das, and Chakravarthy (2011) comparing Indian and U.S. samples further underscored both the universality of autonomy effects concerning duty and the need for a nuanced approach to understanding its manifestations across cultures. Reasoning that expectations and duties are more likely to be more fully internalized in Indian culture and thus more autonomous, they showed that these were more positively associated with a sense of choice and satisfaction when compared to U.S. samples. Yet in both cultures experiencing a sense of choice predicted greater satisfaction. In addition, data suggested that, whereas in the Indian sample, duty and responsibility to help family members were most highly correlated with identified regulation, in the U.S. sample, they were not significantly related to autonomous regulations. Clearly, it is not the presence of norms, expectations, or obligations that defines autonomy versus heteronomy but, rather, the degree to which these are internalized (see also Roth et al., 2006; Gore & Cross, 2006).

Both we and other cultural theorists such as Kagitcibasi (1996, 2005) have emphasized the importance of carefully distinguishing the concepts of autonomy from those of independence and separateness. People can be autonomous *and* dependent or interdependent. They can be closely related without losing a sense of autonomy or agency. They can be obligated to one another and very much feel volition and choice in carrying out societal and familial duties. The sensitivity and accuracy of comparative and critical cross-cultural work depends on making such careful distinctions. Along with them, we think dimensional views that recognize the variations in values and internalization within cultures for different practices are preferable to dichotomous views. Using both carefully defined constructs and noncategorical thinking, we can much better understand how cultures vary in their impact on people's wellness and flourishing.

Not All Cultural Norms Can Be Easily Integrated

Different cultural values and goals inevitably provide greater or lesser satisfaction of the innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, also affecting wellness and thriving outcomes. This leads to another critical SDT focus, namely, the idea that some cultural goals and values are far more difficult to integrate and, indeed, may not be capable of being fully integrated and autonomous due to their inconsistency with basic needs and intrinsic psychological processes. We suggest, for example, that a cultural value that boys should not cry or that girls should not be educated could at best be introjected or be identified with in a compartmentalized way by the boys and girls, respectively, because of the seemingly inherent incompatibility of these cultural contents with their basic psychological needs. Of course, these are empirical questions, well within the methods of SDT to examine. Our view is, in fact, that *any* cultural content can be examined for the degree to which members of the culture can readily or effectively integrate it.

Consider the case of *female genital mutilation* as an example of the necessity of distinguishing between people's explicit endorsement of harmful practices and the relative integration of such practices. Female genital cutting is a practice that has existed for as long as 6,000 years and that affects more than 100 million women today in many African nations, parts of Asia, and less frequently in immigrant communities across the world (United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 2011). We focus here on *infibulation,* one of its more radical forms. Supported by justifications concerning purity, hygiene, tradition, or honor, the practice of infibulation is seen by many as a means of controlling female sexuality and freedom (Favazza, 1987). It is also often obviously painful and harmful, with consequences for many that include anemia, cysts and scar formation, urinary incontinence, painful sexual intercourse, and complications during childbirth, as well as enduring psychological effects from the trauma of the cutting and its aftermath (e.g., see Alsibiani & Rouzi, 2010; Behrendt & Moritz, 2005; World Health Organization, 2008; among many other reports). Women who have undergone these procedures often have to have their vaginal openings "reopened" before sexual intercourse can take place, with some being cut open on the first night of marriage (Walker & Parmar, 1993).

The practice of female infibulation is often vocally "endorsed" or justified as a valued and even "virtuous" cultural ritual (Fiske & Rai, 2015). For example, Shweder (2000), a strong cultural relativist, suggests that the medical fanfare over "FGM" is overblown and culturally insensitive and represents an imposition of a liberal feminist

worldview. He argues that the girls endure the pain and suffering and value it as a sign of courage. We can only agree with him that one can find people advocating and defending the practice. But in contrast to Shweder, we raise infibulation as an example of a cultural internalization that is likely to be *inherently* problematic from the standpoint of true integration. Supporting the practice, whether one is an advocate or participant, requires that one minimize, deny, ignore, or nullify a great many obvious problems and harms (Abusharaf, 2013). It necessitates turning one's sensibilities away from the truth of the girl's pain, often discounting her perspective, and denying or minimizing the myriad and well-documented negative health consequences of the procedure.

Incongruence and compartmentalization is evident, for example, in the filmed interviews accompanying Walker and Parmar's (1993) work, in which the inconstancies in the testimonies of infibulation practitioners and of the mothers who allow it are often palpable. They say in one moment there is no pain, and minutes later they discuss the terrible pain. They say in some moments this is desirable, and at others express dismay for the practice. As another example, in a *New York Times* (May 11, 2011) interview by Kristof, a female infibulator vigorously defended her practice, but thusly: "A young girl herself will want to be cut. . . . If a girl is not cut, it would be hard for her to live in the community. She would be stigmatized." What the infibulator therefore describes is thus a form of external control and/or introjection, rather than an expression of autonomy. Girls who do not undergo the procedure know they may face ostracism or punishment.

Finally, whether or not its *advocates* portray it as a virtue, autonomy does not characterize the experience of its recipients, who in almost no cases can give, or have given, truly informed consent to be cut. Many will not understand what has happened to them, nor its far-reaching negative health consequences, until well after the ritual is performed. It is unlikely any young girl would find inherent value in such a practice being performed on her body.

Like all cultural practices, the relative autonomy of female infibulation is an empirical question. It is one worthy of study, precisely because understanding how such harmful practices are internalized and therefore anchored in cultures is critical to changing them (Abusharaf, 2013). Yet we suspect this is a practice that is likely, because of its inherent relation to basic needs, not typically integrated, at least when the concepts of autonomy and integration are meaningfully applied, even though some will laud it as a cultural value.

We use infibulation as an example because it seems clear that it is largely an interference with flourishing and something typically undergone without true consent. We will, in fact, look at other examples in Chapter 24 concerning conformity to culturally endorsed violence. But we can find practices, both minor and significant, within every culture about which we can inquire as to people's capacity to truly integrate them, from gender roles to hygienic practices. Again, a value of SDT is that, although it has no a priori investment in specific cultural contents, it has common criteria by which any can be evaluated in its understanding of both basic needs and relative integration.

On Cultural Competence
and Interventions for Thriving and Development

Within SDT, supporting autonomous motivation and wellness is a core value, and, as we have previously described, it begins by taking the *internal frame of reference* of participants (Deci & Ryan, 1985b). This means respecting the perspectives, values, and concerns of all participants (Craven et al., 2016; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). This

central idea thus suggests that SDT-based research and interventions, particularly those focused on different cultural groups, should be sensitive and responsive to participants' views and values.

Indeed, SDT seeks, through both clinical methods (Ryan & Deci, 2008b) and interventions (e.g., Ng et al., 2012; Su & Reeve, 2011), to reflect the voices and choices of the individuals and groups to which it is applied. Through autonomy support, SDT supports diversity rather than hegemony. In other words, SDT supports person-centered approaches that maximize participant input and involvement in all inquiries and interventions, be they interpersonal or societal. In doing so, researchers and change agents are most likely to understand and appreciate barriers and resistances to change.

It is moreover a core assumption of SDT, reflected throughout these chapters, that, to the extent that the implementation of intervention or research programs is autonomy-supportive and participation is therefore experienced as elective and volitional rather than externally controlled, they will be more successfully internalized. Evidence for this is emerging in successful development programs (e.g. Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Sayanagi & Aikawa, 2016). Conversely, to the extent that programs, even those intended to support thriving and capabilities, are enacted in controlling ways, the theory suggests that they will be less likely to be internalized and integrated and therefore they will be less sustainable.

Although the contents of cultures vary widely, in every culture people generally want to experience ownership and initiative in processes of development and change, and they do not want external others imposing values and prescriptions without consent. This sensibility is of great importance to all cross-cultural projects and interventions and one fully congruent with the basic principles of SDT. As such, whereas some theorists have argued that positing needs and evaluating practices in a culture other than one's own would be imposing one's views and values on that culture and thus interfering with its autonomy, SDT emphasizes the importance of acting with and through autonomy support, especially when engaging with other cultures that are not one's own, and thus respecting the universal human need for autonomy.

Concluding Comments

Cultures vary greatly in the values, mores, and goals that are transmitted and the opportunities and affordances that are provided to the individuals who live within them. An important aspect of SDT is the recognition that cultural values and goals can be more or less well integrated by members of the cultures. A central focus of SDT is thus on the autonomy-supportive versus controlling approach to the socialization and maintenance of cultural norms. More authoritarian and controlling socialization is expected to lead to more controlling forms of self-regulation and, overall, to poorer quality internalization and wellness across cultural contexts.

Second, unlike extreme cultural relativist theories that assume that any culturally normative goal contents will yield positive outcomes if people take them in and succeed at them, SDT asks the question of whether specific cultural values or practices are consistent with the satisfaction of universal human needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The enactment of need-incongruent goals, we maintain, will engender costs in terms of psychological growth, integrity, and well-being.

As stated earlier, there are group cohesions and ideologies that may depend on the denial of the basic psychological needs and rights to autonomy of individuals, and thus

we will find individuals within such groups who—often in the service of relatedness to authorities or group norms—will explicitly accept practices that deny need satisfactions to themselves or to others, such as offspring or outgroup members. But merely providing surface evidence of such acceptance does not take the place of functional or dynamic analyses, and it is these analyses that are of primary interest within SDT.

A final speculation from the SDT perspective concerns the relation of needs to the stability of cultures and cultural and religious subgroups. Cultures transmit an array of values, some more compatible and some less compatible with basic needs. We suggest that the more a culture promotes integrated internalizations, both through the content of its values and through its normative style of socializing its members, the more harmony and thus stability will be evident in the culture. When cultures either use controlling forms of socialization or endorse goals and values that are very difficult or impossible to integrate, the cultures will tend to foster alienation, anomie, and perhaps rebellion. They will inspire more defectors when alternatives are available. As such, the cultures will be inherently less stable, and, through these ways, human needs will have constrained the dynamics of cultural evolution and the memes associated with it.

Cultures are pervasive influences, and they are adopted and expressed in various ways. They also yield different outcomes, some beneficial, some horrific. The lens of SDT can be focused on the micro and macro goals, activities, attitudes, and aspirations between and within cultures to determine their degrees of internalization, need satisfaction, and contributions to, or hindering of, human flourishing.