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INDONESIAN – AUSTRALIAN DIFFERENCES IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS: DO MY INSECURITIES AND MY FAMILY AFFECT MY RELATIONSHIPS?

Margareta Jessica

Faculty of Psychology University of Indonesia, Jakarta

Abstract

In an attempt to investigate cultural differences in the relation between self-esteem and reflected appraisals, this study compared Indonesian and Australian dating individuals. Based on studies conducted in Western societies, self-esteem has been suggested to strongly predict reflected appraisals (e.g. Murray, Holmes, Griffin, 2000). Two prominent theories, sociometer theory and dependency regulation theory, have been proposed to explain why self-esteem has such effects. The present study tested whether both theories can be applied in Indonesia.

Questionnaire data were collected from Australian and Indonesian university students who were involved in dating relationships. It was hypothesised that there would not be cultural differences between Indonesians and Australians in terms of the effects of self-esteem on reflected appraisals and other relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction), suggesting the applicability of both theories to Eastern culture. Considering cultural differences between interdependent and independent cultures, other factors that may uniquely predict reflected appraisals in Eastern culture (i.e., the importance of family-esteem and family opinions) were also explored. It was expected that feeling positively about family (family esteem), and being invested in evaluations from one's family regarding one's romantic partner (family opinion) would predict more positive reflected appraisals for Indonesians but not for Australians.

It was found that sociometer theory and dependency regulation theory were applicable in Indonesia. However, family-esteem was found to be a significant predictor of reflected appraisals for Australians, but not Indonesians. Further, it was found that irrespective of culture, family opinion was a significant predictor of reflected appraisals. The discussion centres on the meaning of these results for studying relationships in Eastern cultures.

Key words: cultural differences, dating relationships, self-esteem, Australian, Indonesia

Introduction

Despite the fact that self-esteem (SE) has been the focus of much psychological research (Leary, 1999), there have been very few studies conducted cross-culturally, particularly in terms of the influence of SE on people's reactions in romantic relationships. Several studies have demonstrated the crucial role of SE in romantic relationships. For instance, a person's view of self has been shown to influence how positively they view their partner and their romantic relationship (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000).

Various studies (e.g., Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996b; 2000) have found that, compared to low self-esteem (LSE) individuals, high self-esteem (HSE) individuals have more positive evaluations of their partner and their relationship. However, to the author's knowledge, research on the effect of SE on adults' romantic relationships has been conducted exclusively in Western societies. Thus, the current study examined associations between SE and reflected appraisals (RA) across Australian and Indonesian cultures. Further, this study also attempted

to investigate the relationships between views of family and RA as well as between RA and relationship outcomes.

To begin, evidences on the influence of SE on RA, partner evaluations, and relationship outcomes that has been found in North American societies will be reviewed. Second, two main theories that have been commonly used to explain why SE has such effects will be presented: sociometer theory and dependency regulation model. Lastly, there will be a discussion on literature on differences between interdependent and independent cultures that are useful in developing hypotheses in regard to factors that may influence RA in Indonesian culture.

It is argued that SE should influence RA in both Australian and Indonesian culture. If this prediction is supported, then it would imply that sociometer and dependency regulation theories that have been developed in Western society are applicable in Indonesia.

Further, since people in collectivist societies place great importance on connectedness with other (e.g., family), it is argued that family-esteem (FE) and family opinion (FO) may also influence RA, particularly in Indonesia. For exploratory purposes, FE and FO was also expected to predict relationship outcomes. Finally, the writer will also discuss the implications of this study and how future research might enrich cross-cultural psychology knowledge.

Self-esteem and reflected appraisals

SE is defined as an evaluation of one's self-worth (Leary & MacDonald, 2003). This sense of self-worth has been suggested to be strongly, positively tied to RA or the perceptions of a partner's positive regard and unconditional acceptance for the self (Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Murray et al., 2000). For example, Leary et al. (1995) found that participants who believed that they were not accepted by the other group members felt less posi-

tively about themselves and reporting LSE.

Further evidence comes from Blaine and Crocker's (1993) study which suggested that people who experience repeated relational devaluation and rejection from others are more likely to develop LSE. In support, Harter (1993) found that children who were avoided and not included by their peers tended to have lower SE compared to those who were accepted by their peers.

Moreover, Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, and Kusche (2002) found LSE individuals reported less positive and more pessimistic beliefs about their partner, less confidence in the partner's acceptance, and increasing self-doubts or less positive evaluations of themselves despite their partners' actual positive perceptions of them. Similar results also have been suggested by other studies (Murray and colleagues 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 2000; 2001). For instance, HSE individuals, saw their partners as less critical of their faults and more accurately perceived how positively their partners regarded them (Murray *et al.*, 2000). This suggests that in the face of acceptance threat, people with different levels of SE evaluate RA in different fashions.

Self-esteem's effects on other relationship outcomes

SE also has been shown to influence partner evaluation (MacDonald, Leary, & Boksman, 2002; Murray and colleagues 1996a, b; 1998; 2001). For instance, Murray et al. (2001) found that LSE individuals tend to see their partner less positively and believe that their partner also has less positive evaluations of the participant.

Various studies also have reported that compared to HSE individuals, LSE individuals have lower levels of satisfaction (MacDonald *et al.*, 2002; Murray and colleagues 1996a; b; 1998; 2001), and more sensitivity to perceptions of rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In con-

trast, Murray *et al.* (1998; 2002) found that HSE individuals tend to experience greater feelings of closeness to their partner than LSE individuals (Murray *et al.*, 2001; Murray *et al.*, 2002).

In sum, the above studies suggest that HSE individuals experience more security in their partner's affections, have more positive evaluations of their partners and relationships, and more closeness in relationships. LSE individuals, in contrast, tend to project their own self-doubts onto their partner, and as a result, they tend to be less satisfied with their relationship and distance themselves from their partner. Next, I will discuss two theories that help explain why SE may be related to relationship outcomes in this way – sociometer theory and dependency regulation theory.

Sociometer theory

Sociometer theory stems from the assumption that human beings have a need to belong, the need to form and maintain at least a small number of interpersonal relationships, which is fundamental and universal across cultures (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Considering that being included in a group is so important for an individual, it seems reasonable that humans developed an internal mechanism (SE) that acts as a gauge of inclusion, or a sociometer (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

This mechanism is particularly sensitive to changes in signals of how acceptable one is to others by associating negative self-beliefs (i.e., LSE) with cues for rejection or exclusion (Leary *et al.*, 1995). When such cues are detected, this sociometer will motivate individual to engage in behaviours that minimise the likelihood of being excluded or rejected by others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Thus, according to sociometer theory, SE is a subjective monitor of the quality of an individual's actual and potential relationships which in turn helps to regulate behaviour in order to maintain a number

of significant interpersonal relationships (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Due to repeated experiences of acceptance and rejection, individuals' trait level of SE develops over time. When an individual has perceived that other people regard their relationship with the individual as valuable and close, that person will develop HSE. In contrast, when an individual has perceived relational devaluation, such as romantic rejection, they are more likely to develop LSE. Further, Blaine and Crocker (1993) proposed that individuals' SE acts as a filter through which information that is relevant to the self-concept is interpreted in social situations and thus distorted information processing about the self.

The literature reviewed here suggests that the sociometer for LSE individuals, who perceive that their need for social inclusion is not being met, and thus have a greater need for approval, leads them to be more likely to crave acceptance. Although they are more attentive to social cues, at the same time they are more anxious over others' negative evaluations and process information in a negative light. As a result, they more heavily weight rejection cues and less heavily weight acceptance cues (Blaine & Crocker, 1993; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Leary *et al.*, 1995).

This explains why LSE individuals have lower levels of RA toward their romantic partner. Individuals with HSE, on the contrary, feel adequately valued and accepted by their partners. These individuals tend not to be anxious of partners' evaluation about the self and process information more positively. As a result, they perceive their partner's regard more accurately (Leary *et al.*, 1995).

Dependency regulation model

The dependency regulation model is based on attachment and interdependence theories of relationship development. Murray *et al.* (1996a, b; 1998; 2000; 2001) suggest that individuals will regu-

late their affectionate behaviours in a self-protective manner. It is proposed that to feel comfortable pursuing closeness and dependence in a romantic relationship, one must experience felt security, that is, have faith in a partner's love and intimacy, and perceive one's partner as responsive to one's needs (Collins & Read, 1990; Murray *et al.*, 2000; Murray *et al.*, 2001).

In other words, the dependency regulation model suggests that only when an individual feels secure that their partner has positive regard for them and reciprocates their love, then he or she will feel comfortable with emotional openness and intimacy in the relationship.

According to sociometer theory, LSE individuals have difficulty feeling secure in their relationships. More specifically, since the oversensitive sociometer of LSE individuals makes them feel that rejection from others is likely, they tend to focus on cues of rejection from their partner. In response to feeling undervalued, dependency regulation mechanisms lead these individuals to approach closeness cautiously to avoid being hurt by rejection (Murray *et al.*, 1998; Murray *et al.*, 2001; Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997). For instance, LSE individuals tend to avoid close attachment by valuing their partner less and downplaying the importance of their relationships.

By doing so, LSE individuals hope to create emotional distance and feel that they have less to lose if they are rejected (MacDonald *et al.*, 2002). In contrast, HSE individuals, who are predisposed to perceive that they have positive traits, are likeable, and attractive (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), have more positive perceptions of their partner's regard which allows them to feel more secure that their partner would value them. As a result, HSE individuals let intimacy and dependence develop in their relationships.

In sum, sociometer theory and the dependency regulation model suggest that SE affects one's RA and, ultimately, relationship outcomes. More specifically,

since LSE individuals perceive less acceptance from their partner, they tend to feel insecure in their relationships.

This leads them to have more negative RA and perceive a greater chance of getting rejected by their partner. In the end, they believe that it is not worthwhile to become close to their partner, and thus maintain distance in their relationships. As a consequence, their relationships are marked by less positive relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction). As suggested by dependency regulation theory, RA are the mediator between SE and relationship outcomes. Murray *et al.* (1998; 2000; 2002) conducted mediational analyses and revealed that RA was a full mediator between SE, and relationship satisfaction and partner evaluations.

As mentioned earlier, both sociometer and dependency regulation theories have been developed and tested in Western societies only. Next, I will review differences between Eastern and Western cultures in order to explore whether the model can be applied in Eastern societies, it will be reviewed.

Independent vs. interdependent self-construals

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding these differences is the theory of self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The theory suggests that people across cultures vary in the degree they see themselves as separate from others (independent) or connected with others (interdependent). People in Western cultures have been found to have high independent and low interdependent self-construals (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They are characterized as placing more importance on internal thoughts and feelings rather than incorporating those of others.

On the other hand, people who see themselves as connected with others base their self-concept more on interpersonal relationships, have high interdepen-

dent and low independent self-construals. High levels of interdependent self-construals are more likely to occur in Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and considered to place importance on fitting in with others and maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships. Of focus in this paper is Indonesia, as interdependent culture, and Australia as independent culture (Hofstede, 1983 cited in Gudykunst *et al.*, 1988).

Self-esteem – reflected appraisals

Hamaguchi (1985) proposed that people from different cultures may weight information differently in defining their self. Hamaguchi (1985) and Kang, Shaver, Sue, Min, & Jing (2003) suggest that in interdependent cultures, the uniqueness of self is developed from the sense that one is accepted by one's significant others and that one is able to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships (self-liking, SL). This is contrary to independent cultures which place greater emphasis on self-efficacy to define themselves (self-competence, SC).

In a study that compared Malaysian (interdependent) and British (independent) university students, Taforodi, Lang and Smith (1999) suggested that Malaysians tend to base their sense of self-worth more on SL or RA that convey acceptance and approval of others. On the contrary, British participants define themselves based on both SL and SC. If this is the case, the reviewer expects to find that RA would be related to the SE of individuals with high interdependent self-construals (Indonesian).

Family-esteem –reflected appraisals

FE is defined as one's beliefs and feelings regarding how pleased he/she is in relation to his/her family. This includes how much pride and respect one has for one's family, and how one believes one's family is evaluated by others. While there is no study that has been conducted to examine the possible relationship be-

tween FE and RA, studies that examine the effects of family status on one's SE may be used as a base to make predictions of the possible relationship between FE and RA.

Watkins and Astilla (1979) proposed the possibility that family status – perceptions of one's family's position in society – is an important component of one's SE. It was found that Filipino's sense of self-worth is influenced by their perception of their family's position in the society (Watkins & Astilla, 1979), while Australians' SE is not affected by their family status (Watkins, 1976).

Based on these findings, I hypothesized that FE would predict RA. Since one's sense of self-worth may be affected by his/her family status, it is possible that FE may also affect RA. If, for example, one feels positively about their family, then they should be more likely to believe that their partner would have more positive appraisals toward themselves. As a result, they may feel more secure about the future of their relationships. Thus, Indonesians' FE was expected to predict RA to greater extent than were Australians.

Family opinion – reflected appraisals

Lee and Stone (1980) suggested that the criteria for mate selection vary across cultures. They suggest that "autonomous" mate selection systems, in which individuals select their own partners, usually occur in independent societies. In contrast, arranged systems of mate selection, in which other members of the extended family have a say in determining whether a romantic relationship should be continued or terminated for their children, are most likely to occur in collectivist societies.

This findings can be used to predict that in individualist societies with nuclear family systems (e.g., Australia), FO are not as important in determining mate selection as in collectivist societies with extended family systems (e.g., Indonesia).

Reflected appraisals –relationship outcomes

Lastly, this paper explores whether or not RA correlates with several relationship outcomes (i.e., partner evaluations and relationship satisfaction) in both sample. As mentioned earlier, RA has found to be a significant mediator between SE and relationship outcomes in Western societies. Consequently, if similar mediation is found in the Indonesian sample, then this would clearly suggest that the dependency regulation model can be applied in Indonesia.

Overview of the study

The present study involved a survey design which explores Indonesian – Australian differences in relation to the effects of SE, FE, and importance of FO on RA. It was hypothesised (H1) there would not be cultural differences for the effects of SE on RA or relationship outcomes. (H2) It was expected that Indonesians would report more positive RA when they felt more positively about their family, and (H3) that the more importance Indonesians places on FO, the more positive their RA would be. (H4) It was expected that RA would mediate the link between SE and relationship outcomes for each culture. Lastly, as an exploratory analysis, I examined the possibility that RA would mediate the relationship between FE/FO and relationship outcomes.

Method

Participants

Participants were university students who were currently involved in heterosexual dating relationships. The Australian participants were 61 female and 17 male (N = 78; M age = 19 years) first year psychology students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Queensland and awarded one course credit for participation.

For Indonesian participants, 54 females and 45 males were included in the study (N = 99; M age = 22 years). They

participated on a voluntary basis and were not awarded any reimbursements for their participation.

Materials

The present study used a set of questionnaires involving even-numbered response options (i.e., 6-point Likert scale). This was done to avoid the possibility of response set due to cultural differences (Zax & Takahashi, 1967).

Questionnaires.

Each of the participants was asked to complete a set of questionnaire which includes: demographic questions; RA (Murray et al., 1998); partner evaluations (MacDonald et al., 2002); relationship satisfaction (MacDonald et al., 2002); Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979), Self-construal Scale (SCS; Singelis, 1994); and 2 scales that were specially constructed for the present study: family - esteem scale, and importance of family opinions scale.

Procedure

Participants at the University of Queensland were asked to take a seat in a classroom. They were given an information sheet and a booklet of questionnaires. They were complete all of the questionnaires, they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

For the participants in Indonesia, they were approached individually by the research assistant around the university area (e.g., university hallways, parking lots, and refectories). When they agreed to participate, they were given the same questionnaire booklet that had been translated into Indonesian. The procedure was attempted to be as similar as the Australian version.

Results

Dependent Variables (Relationship outcomes). A bivariate correlation analysis found that relationship satisfaction and partner evaluations were positively correlated. Thus they were combined and averaged to form a single measure of 'satisfaction'.

Independent variables (SE, FE, FO). A bivariate correlation analysis found that each of the independent variables were not strongly correlated with each other. Thus, the decision was made to analyse each independent variable individually.

Descriptive statistics

Independent vs. Interdependent Self-Construals. T-test analyses revealed that there was no significant difference between Indonesians and Australians on independent self-construals, $t(175) = -.340$, ns. However, it was found that there was a significant difference for interdependent self-construals, $t(117) = -4.87$, $p < .001$. Specifically, compared to Australians, Indonesians had significantly higher levels of interdependent self-construals.

Length of relationships. A t-test analysis revealed that there was a significant difference between Indonesians' ($M = 28.0$ months, $SD = 26.17$) and Australians' length of relationships ($M = 15.9$ months, $SD = 14.8$), $t(175) = 3.884$, $p < .001$. As such, the length of relationships was controlled in each of the moderated regression analyses.

Multivariate analyses

Self-esteem – Reflected appraisals. Regression analysis revealed that there were significant main effects for culture and SE. It was found that there was a significant main effect of culture, $t(173) = -3.32$, $p = .021$, $DR^2 = .025$, indicating that Australians had higher RA compared to Indonesians. There was also a significant main effect of SE, $t(173) = 5.12$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .122$, indicating that people with HSE had more positive RA than people with LSE.

Self-esteem – Satisfaction. A significant main effect for culture was found, $t(170) = -2.95$, $p < .05$, $DR^2 = .042$. Specifically, it was shown that Australians had a higher level of satisfaction than Indonesians. Finally, there was also a significant main effect for SE, $t(170) = 3.36$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .054$. This indicates that participants with HSE were more satisfied in their re-

lationships than participants with LSE.

Family-esteem – Reflected appraisals. A significant main effect of culture was found, $t(171) = -3.70$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .072$. This suggests that Australians had more positive RA than Indonesians.

A significant interaction between culture and FE was found, $t(168) = -2.90$, $p < .05$, $DR^2 = .042$. As illustrated in Figure 1, a simple slopes test revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between FE and RA in Australian culture, $t(168) = 2.99$, $p < .05$. In Indonesian culture however, the relation between FE and RA was not found to be significant, $t(168) = .61$, ns.

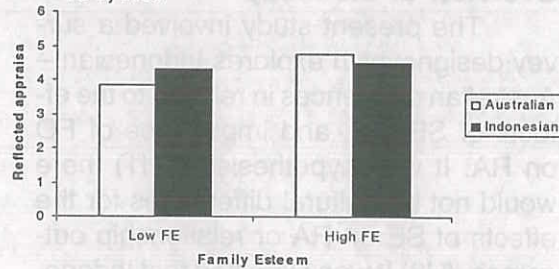


Figure 1. Relationship of family-esteem and reflected appraisals in Australian and Indonesian culture

Family-esteem – Satisfaction. A significant main effect of culture was found, $t(169) = -4.06$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .083$. It suggests that Australians have higher levels of satisfaction than Indonesians.

Family opinion – Reflected appraisals. The results indicated that there was a significant main effect of culture, $t(171) = -4.11$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .087$. This suggested that Australians have more positive RA than Indonesians. Additionally, a significant main effect of FO was found, $t(171) = 3.017$, $p = .003$, $DR^2 = .047$. It showed that individuals who place less importance on FO have lower levels of RA than individuals who place more importance on FO.

Family opinion – Satisfaction. A significant main effect of culture was found, $t(169) = -4.83$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .109$, such that Australians reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction than Indonesians. Additionally, a significant main effect of FO

was found, $t(169) = 3.94$, $p < .001$, $DR^2 = .073$. It implies that participants who place more importance on FO have higher levels of satisfaction than those who place less importance.

Mediational analyses

To provide a more stringent test of whether dependency regulation theory is equally applicable in both cultures, mediation analyses were conducted separately for each culture. If the dependency regulation model can be applied in Indonesia and Australia, as it is in other Western cultures, RA should mediate the relation between SE and satisfaction. In addition, exploratory mediation analyses of RA were also conducted for FO in predicting relationship satisfaction.

Self-esteem - Reflected appraisals - Satisfaction. A significant mediational effect between SE and satisfaction was found for both Indonesians and Australians. For Indonesians and Australians, it was revealed that there was a significant mediational effect, $z = 2.30$, $p < .05$, and $z = 2.80$, $p < .05$ respectively. This implies that RA was a full mediator between SE and relationship satisfaction for Indonesians and Australians.

Family opinion - Reflected appraisals - Satisfaction. RA was found as a full mediator between FO and relationship satisfaction in Australian culture. It was revealed that there was a significant mediational effect, $z = 2.44$, $p < .05$. This implies that RA was a full mediator between FO and relationship satisfaction only for Australian, and not for Indonesians.

Discussion

The results largely confirmed the hypotheses regarding the relation between SE and relationship beliefs. Consistent with the first hypothesis, it was found that in comparison to LSE individuals, individuals with HSE tended to have more positive RA. This effect was not moderated by culture - no significant interaction between culture and SE was found. These

findings lend support to the notion that irrespective of their culture, individuals' perceived acceptance is related to their SE (Kang et al., 2003; Tafarodi et al., 1999).

The lack of an effect for culture was found despite the fact that Indonesians were found to have significantly higher levels of interdependent self-construals than the Australians. As predicted, SE also significantly predicted relationship satisfaction regardless of culture. It was revealed that participants with LSE reported lower levels of satisfaction compared to participants with HSE. This finding is congruent with previous findings by Murray and colleagues (1996a; 1996b; 1998; 2000; 2001; 2002) with samples drawn exclusively from Western cultures. These findings support sociometer theory, suggesting that SE is a predictor of RA in both Indonesian and Australian society.

Further, they also support the notion that SE is a predictor of relationship satisfaction for both Indonesians and Australians, suggesting the generalizability of the dependency regulation model. This conclusion is bolstered by the mediation analyses. These results revealed that in both Indonesia and Australia, the path between SE and satisfaction was mediated by RA (SE \rightarrow RA \rightarrow satisfaction). It implies that the dependency regulation model is applicable in Indonesia.

The results for FE were less consistent with predictions. A significant culture by FE interaction was found. However, contrary to predictions, the relation between FE and RA was only significant for Australians. That is, for Australians, more positive feelings about family were related to more confidence in a partner's affections. Hence, the second hypothesis was not supported. These findings indirectly contradict previous studies by Watkins and Astilla (1979) and Watkins (1976) that suggest that the perception of one's family status or position in society is related to SE for people in collectivist (i.e., Filipinos) but not individualist (i.e., Australians) cultures. One might question

whether the effects of FE in the present study are simply a reflection of SE, however, controlling for SE in the analysis did not influence the results.

Several factors may explain these findings. First, there was a difference in terms of the psychometric properties of the FE scale, with the more reliable scale measuring Australians' FE than Indonesians'. Consequently, the scale may not have been sensitive enough to detect a relation between FE and RA for Indonesians. Furthermore, Indonesians may be raised with prescriptive norms to be proud of their family, and thus may have more consistent FE scores than Australians, who are more likely to criticise their own family. Consequently, higher variance in Australians' FE scores may lead to more power to find statistically significant results.

Issues of measurement may also explain why the FE results were different from past research. Specifically, previous studies used a different construct in measuring FE. Watkins and Astilla (1976) and Watkins (1976) used different construct to measure FE (e.g., perception of family's position in society, parents' level of education and occupation status). However, these constructs are not directly reflective of FE, and thus I developed a new, more direct measure of FE. The FE scale used in this study was designed to tap one's actual perception of feelings about family by asking such questions directly. This different operationalization of the construct of FE may then be responsible for the unexpected findings.

Lastly, since the results are based on correlational analyses, the direction of causation is not certain. It may be that changes in RA lead to changes in FE, rather than vice-versa. Perhaps, since individuals are representative of their families, they believe that those who accept the individual would also accept that person's family. This could be extended to explain why the effect was found for Australians but not Indonesians. As men-

tioned earlier, as part of being raised in an interdependent culture, Indonesians are brought up to feel proud of their family. Possibly, then, Indonesians' FE may not be particularly contingent on what others think of the family. Conversely, Australians, who have more flexibility in the positivity of their family evaluations, may have FE that is more contingent on how others evaluate their family. Of course, assessing the validity of this explanation is beyond the scope of the present study.

The third hypothesis predicted that there would be cultural differences in terms of the effects of FO on RA. Again, I predicted that this relation would be stronger for Indonesians compared to Australians. However, it was revealed that irrespective of culture, those who place more importance on FO have higher levels of RA. Further, FO was found to be a positive predictor of relationship satisfaction. Once again, counter-intuitively, RA were found to fully mediate the relation between FO and satisfaction only for Australian participants.

These findings highlight a number of things. First, they provide evidence that irrespective of culture, importance of FO plays a role in predicting one's RA and satisfaction in romantic relationships. This lends support for Magnis-Suseno (1997) and Mulder's (1997) notion that maintaining respect and harmonious relationships with parents are important in Indonesia. Second, it suggests that Australians' FO is related to their RA in romantic relationships. This serves as a reminder that people in less interdependent societies still place importance on connectedness with family. Further, it also questions Lee and Stones (1980) findings which suggest that people in independent nuclear family systems practice fully autonomous mate selection. The current results suggest the possibility that people from individualist societies may actually place significant importance on family opinion, as it is in collectivist societies.

This, however, raises the question

of why FO is not particularly relevant to RA for Indonesians who I expected would respect FO more favourably than Australians. One possibility is that there is a difference in parent-child relationships (i.e., parenting style) between Indonesia (authoritarian parenting style) and Australia (authoritative parenting style). Accordingly, Australian children may consider parent-child relationships more like friendships (i.e., parents' opinions are seen as non-threatening support/criticism). Conversely, Indonesians may consider the importance of FO as an obligation. Hence, Australians may find meaning in the evaluations of their parents that Indonesians do not.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations in this study. First, although possible acculturation biases may have been reduced by recruiting participants who identified themselves as natives of their respective countries, it is possible that Indonesians may be prone to a Westernization effect. This was suggested by the result that Indonesians did not identify themselves as less individualistic than their Australian counterparts. As a result, this attitude may affect Indonesians' beliefs about romantic relationships, as well as the importance of being collectivist/individualist. Future research should directly assess the possible impact of westernization for participants in collectivist societies, even if they are recruited from their home country.

Second, the applicability of the sociometer and dependency regulation models to Indonesia that has been suggested in this study may be limited to the specific ethnicities that were sampled. In order to broaden the generalization of the present findings, future research should examine different ethnic groups within Indonesia or even other collectivist societies. Different age cohorts and other types of relationships (e.g., marriage) may also broaden the generalizability of the findings.

Differences in the settings from which participants from each culture were recruited may also have influenced the findings. Specifically, Australian participants were participating for course credit in a classroom setting. Thus, they may have been more motivated and completed the questionnaires more earnestly. On the other hand, Indonesians voluntarily participated, without any reimbursement, upon request of their university lecturer or fellow student in a university grounds. Thus it is possible that Indonesian participants were less engaged in completing the questionnaires.

A further limitation of this study is the general tendency for people from Eastern societies to show modesty and self-effacement in expressing their feelings and opinions. Bond, Leung and Wan (1982) suggest that this may result from people with interdependent self-construals being modest as a means to maintain harmonious relationships with others. It is possible that this study found no cultural differences between Indonesians and Australians, such as in the relationship between SE and satisfaction, in part because of Indonesians being modest in their answers.

Additionally, given that there were no significant differences in mean levels of RA between Indonesians with low and high FE, the use of even-numbered scales may not have adequately solved the issue of a response set to the middle point. Despite these limitations, the present study is the first study to test sociometer and dependency regulation model cross-culturally. The potential applicability of both theories in Indonesia has been demonstrated. Likewise, the present study also has looked at the effects of two new constructs: FE and FO on romantic relationships. In general, the current results demonstrate the importance of SE, FE, and FO for individuals in both Eastern and Western cultures in maintaining a good romantic relationship. These constructs appear to affect not only how indi-

viduals perceive acceptance and unconditional regard from their partner, but also may affect their relationship satisfaction.

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