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HOW ROBUST IS THE ASSOCIATION OF LIFE SATISFACTION WITH VALUE CONGRUENCE? A STUDY OF CONSTRUCTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS IN A RUSSIAN NATIONAL SAMPLE

Congruence between own values and those of one's reference groups has been found to promote life satisfaction. Actual or anticipated support or sanctions from reference others presumably explains this effect. Does the effect extend to congruence with the values of others who are similar only in socio-demographic characteristics with whom one does not interact? We constructed 36 socio-demographic groups by crossing age, gender, religion, education level, and region of residence in a representative Russian national sample (N=961). We derived value congruence scores by correlating individuals' values with the mean values of their constructed group. Value congruence and life satisfaction correlated significantly across individuals even in these groups. The less important self-direction values to individuals, the stronger the correlation. A meta-analysis of the correlations in the 36 groups also confirmed the positive association of value congruence with life satisfaction. The characteristics used to construct the groups did not moderate this association.

JEL Classification: Z

Key words: value congruence, life satisfaction, self-direction values, meta-analysis, constructed groups, refined values theory

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Researchers have identified three main types of predictors of life satisfaction: individuals' socio-demographic characteristics, their psychological traits, and their social relationships. Among the many socio-demographic characteristics identified are age (e.g., Frijters & Beaton, 2012), gender and health (e.g., Tesch-Romer et al., 2008), education (e.g., Helliwell, 2003), occupation (e.g., Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2011), income (e.g. Ball & Chernova 2008, Stanka 2011), unemployment (e.g. Clark et al., 2001, Eichhorn, 2014), and immigrant status (e.g., Safi 2009). Relevant psychological traits include intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation (e.g., del Mar Salinas-Jime'nez et al., 2010), perceived control (e.g., Grob, 2000), personal values (e.g., Sagiv & Schwartz, 2001), generalized trust (e.g., Helliwell & Putnam, 2004), and religiosity (e.g., Bartram, 2011).

The current research focuses on the third type of predictor, social relationships. Good relationships with close friends and family, involvement in community activity, and embeddedness in social networks contribute to life satisfaction and well-being, as found both across countries and across the life span (e.g., Diener & Seligman, 2002; Helliwell et al., 2010; Pinquart & Sørensen, 2000; Umberson, et al., 1996).

Although relationships clearly contribute to life satisfaction, their contribution depends on their quality (e.g., Powdthavee, 2008; Sortheix & Lonnqvist, 2014). Poor relationships can undermine well-being just as good relationships can promote it. Relationship quality is likely to be better to the extent that people share similar interests, attitudes, beliefs, and values with those with whom they interact. Similarity increases the likelihood that people will be able to pursue shared interests, fulfill their values, and express their attitudes and beliefs comfortably and with little fear of contradiction. This is both a basic assumption and a conclusion of the research on person-environment fit (Edwards, 1991). Thus, for example, the fit between employees' values and goals and those of their organizations increases employees' job satisfaction (Verquer et al., 2003).

Fit with those with whom one regularly interacts is relevant for life satisfaction because these interaction partners may respond positively or negatively to one's goal and value pursuit. However, fit with one's reference groups may be even more important: People tend to compare themselves with their reference groups and care most about the responses of their referent others. Of course, one's reference groups and those with whom one regularly interacts may overlap. Friends and work colleagues are typically the targets of comparison. For example, Clark and Senik (2010) found that people tend to compare themselves with their friends and work colleagues when evaluating their income. Similarly, students tend to compare their own marks with the marks of their friends, and it is those friends with marks similar to their own whom they usually choose as targets for comparison (Lubbers et al., 2009). Such reference group

comparisons influence individuals' subjective well-being (Van Praag, 2011). One reason friends may be such a common reference group is that they tend to have similar value priorities (Steca et al., 2012).

The present study investigates whether the congruence—life satisfaction effect holds even with regard to others who are only a potential reference group. That is, does the effect extend even to congruence with socio-demographic groups constructed from the general population? We examine the consequences for life satisfaction of congruence between people's own basic values and the average values of sets of others whose major socio-demographic characteristics they share but with whom they do not necessarily interact.

Basic values (e.g., conformity, power, tradition, achievement) represent important, broad goals that serve as guiding principles in life (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Most value researchers agree that basic values share the following six features (Schwartz, 2012): Values are beliefs linked to affect; they refer to desirable goals that motivate action; they transcend specific actions and situations; they serve as standards or criteria; they are ordered hierarchically by their relative importance; and they guide decisions, attitudes, and actions based on the relative importance of the values that are activated in a situation. Whereas these features characterize all values, the feature that distinguishes among them is the type of motivation they express.

For our choice of basic values, we draw upon the refined theory of basic values (Schwartz, et al.

2012). This theory discriminates 19 narrowly defined values rather than the ten values in the original theory (Schwartz, 1992). This finer discrimination of values provides more precise prediction and explanation of phenomena associated with values. Using 19 rather than 10 values enables us to generate more reliable indexes of the congruence between individuals' own values and the mean values of their socio-demographic group Tab. 1 presents the 19 values and their conceptual definitions.

Tab. 1. The 19 values in the refined theory, each defined in terms of its motivational goal

Value	Conceptual Definitions in terms of Motivational Goals
Self-Direction—Thought	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas
Self-Direction—Action	Freedom to determine one's own actions
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and change
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification
Achievement	Success according to social standards
Power—Dominance	Power through exercising control over people
Power—Resources	Power through wealth and control of material resources
Face	Maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation
Security—Personal	Security of self and one's immediate environment
Security—Societal	Security in the wider society
Tradition	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family and/or religious traditions
Conformity—Rules	Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations
Conformity—Interpersonal	Avoidance of upsetting or harming others
Humility	Recognizing one's insignificance in the larger scheme of things
Benevolence—Dependability	Being a trustworthy and reliable member of the ingroup
Benevolence—Caring	Devotion to the welfare of ingroup members
Universalism—Concern	Commitment to equality, justice and protection for all people
Universalism—Nature	Preservation of the natural environment
Universalism—Tolerance	Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself

From Schwartz et al. (2012).

Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective well being (Diener, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998). According to Sagiv and Schwartz (2000), three mechanisms account for the positive association of value congruence with subjective well-being. A first mechanism refers to the

affordances or opportunities which environments provide for the attainment of personal goals. Congruent environments provide more and better opportunities for people to pursue their goals because the action possibilities and functional utilities (Gibson, 1979) available for this purpose are greater when those around them wish to pursue similar goals (Pervin, 1992). Thus, congruent environments make it easier for people to express their important values, to plan how to fulfill them, and to do what they wish based on these values. Living in congruent environments is therefore likely to increase well-being. In contrast, incongruent environments afford fewer opportunities to pursue one's valued goals and make it more difficult to find ways to express and fulfill them, thereby decreasing well-being.

A second mechanism refers to the effect of value congruence or incongruence on the social sanctions people experience as they try to act on their values. In any environment, a system of social sanctions regulates interaction among people. If people hold values that are shared by others and therefore expected and approved in the environment, they can expect reinforcement and support from others when they act on these values. In contrast, if people hold values that differ from others, they are more likely to experience negative sanctions and lack of support when they act on these values. The experience of actual or anticipated approval or disapproval for pursuing one's values is likely to lead to greater or lesser life satisfaction.

A third mechanism refers to internal value conflict. If people think that the values they favor and wish to pursue are incompatible with those that others in their environment favor, they are likely to experience conflict in decision-making. They may even anticipate social pressure to violate or abandon their own values. The internal value conflict they experience may undermine their life satisfaction.

Based on these mechanisms, Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) hypothesized that well-being correlates positively with the congruence between people's value priorities and the priorities that prevail in their environment. To test this hypothesis, they examined students from psychology and business administration departments. They assumed that students who want to be psychologists are concerned with promoting the welfare of other people. In contrast, students who choose to go into business are more concerned with their own competitive success and achievement. They therefore assumed that benevolence and universalism values are prevalent in psychology departments and that achievement and power values are prevalent in business administration. The self-reported value priorities of students in the two departments supported these assumptions.

In keeping with the hypothesis, students in psychology who gave higher priority to benevolence and universalism were more satisfied with life than those who gave lower priority to these two values. Also confirming the hypotheses, students in business administration who

gave higher priority to achievement and power were more satisfied with life than those who gave lower priority to these values. Both findings supported a positive effect on subjective well-being of value congruence with the surrounding environment.

Two more recent studies related value congruence, measured directly, to subjective well-being. Musiol and Boehnke (2013) formed congruence scores for German adolescents by comparing the importance that each adolescent attributed to the ten values of the original Schwartz (1992) theory with the mean importance attributed to them by their peers. They found a weak, but significantly positive correlation ($r = .16$) between the adolescents' congruence scores and their life-satisfaction. In a study of psychology/education and business students from Argentina, Bulgaria, and Finland, Sortheix and Lonnqvist (2014) computed value congruence scores by comparing individuals' value profiles on 45 value items with the mean priorities of the student group in their own country. In a regression, they found positive relations between value congruence and subjective well-being across countries ($\beta = .22$).

Past studies of relations between value congruence and life satisfaction considered the congruence of individuals' values either with others with whom they interact regularly (e.g., students or faculty with whom they study, fellow workers in an organization) or others likely to constitute an important reference group for them (e.g., adolescents, for whom age peers are highly significant). The current study asks whether the value congruence effect on life satisfaction persists even when individuals' values are compared with those of others who resemble them only in being matched on socio-demographic variables. Are individuals sufficiently aware of the value priorities of others who are similar to them in gender, education, age, religion, or region of residence to perceive that their own values are more or less congruent with such others? This is a necessary condition for the mechanisms described above to operate.

Perez-Asenjo (2011) found that people typically compare themselves to others of the same age, gender, religion, and race when thinking about how satisfied they are with their income and, in turn, how happy they are. If they also do this in comparing their values, and if they have some sense of others' values, value congruence might affect their life satisfaction. Value congruence with others who are similar only in being matched on socio-demographic variables could be expected to have a weaker effect than congruence with important reference groups.

The mechanisms presumed to give rise to the effects of value congruence are likely to apply more weakly to constructed socio-demographic groups, of course, but they may nonetheless operate to some extent. Research has revealed many differences in value priorities that are linked to socio-demographic characteristics across cultures (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005, 2009). Such differences give rise to norms for what should be more or less important to people

of particular ages, genders, levels of education, etc. For example, competitiveness and pursuit of power and resources are more normative values for men in the early stages of their occupational careers than for mothers or grandmothers. Conformity and tradition values are more normative for the religious than for the non-religious, whereas hedonism is more normative for the latter (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004)

People who perceive that their values are congruent with the values of others with similar socio-demographic characteristics may feel more comfortable with themselves because they believe they hold values accepted by others, and hence those values are normatively appropriate. They may experience less internal conflict when deciding to pursue their important values and they may anticipate more support and less disapproval from others. We therefore hypothesize (H1): The more congruent the value priorities of individuals with those of others with similar socio-demographic characteristics, the greater their life satisfaction.

Past studies have examined only the main effect of value congruence on life satisfaction. This association may be moderated by other factors, however. It is possible that value congruence relates more or less strongly to life satisfaction as a function of contextual variables (e.g., group size or value consensus). It is also possible that characteristics of the individual moderate the value congruence-life satisfaction relationship. We investigate whether the priority people give to two particular values moderates this relationship.

First, consider the priority people attribute to interpersonal conformity values. Interpersonal conformity values explicitly express the goal of avoiding annoying, upsetting, or irritating other people. For those who give high priority to this value, it is important to restrain actions and intentions that might upset, annoy, or anger others or go against social expectations., pursuing their incongruent values will be especially problematic for them. Doing so, they are liable to upset or annoy others or to defy social expectations. Their life satisfaction may therefore be dependent on having values congruent with those of others. Unable to conform with others' expectations and also to pursue their own values, social pressure to conform may undermine their life satisfaction (cf. Roccas et al., 2000). We therefore offer the following moderation hypothesis (H2): Value congruence correlates more positively with life satisfaction among those who attribute high as against low importance to interpersonal conformity.

Self-direction is a second value that might moderate the relations of value congruence to life satisfaction. The two narrowly-defined subtypes of self-direction are both relevant. They express the motivation to be free to cultivate one's own ideas (self-direction-thought) and to determine one's own actions (self-direction-action). For those who give high priority to self-direction, it is important to make their own choices and decisions, to think and act independently. A lack of congruence with the values of others may be of little concern to them because they

tend not to rely on others to guide their choices and behavior. In contrast, for those who give low priority to self-direction, independence of thought and action may be of little interest. They rely more on the expectations of others to guide their thinking and behaving. A lack of congruence with the values of others is more likely to be distressing while value congruence may be a source of reassurance, contributing to life satisfaction. We therefore offer the following moderation hypothesis (H3): Value congruence correlates more positively with life satisfaction among those who attribute low as against high importance to self-direction.

The current study provides five innovations to the research on value congruence and life satisfaction. First, we assess value congruence using the 19 distinct values in the refined value theory (Schwartz, et al., 2012) rather than the ten values of the original theory or the four higher order values (Schwartz, 1992) used in previous studies. Second, we investigate how characteristics of individuals (specific value priorities) may moderate relations of value congruence to life satisfaction. Third, we test whether the value congruence effect on life satisfaction persists when the comparison group is matched only on socio-demographic variables rather than being a specific reference group. Fourth, we test the hypotheses in representative adult samples. Finally, we study relations between value congruence and life satisfaction in Russia for the first time.

Methods

Sample and procedure

A stratified random sample of 1934 adults, aged 18-60, representative of the populations of the Central and North Caucasus regions of Russia, responded to a face-to-face interview in their homes during the summer of 2012. The first section of the interview was the value survey. Next were sections on trust, national identity, social contacts, creativity, business activities, and social involvement, not discussed here. These were followed by the question on satisfaction with life and socio-demographic variables.

We included in this study the 855 respondents from Central Russia who indicated their nationality as Russian and the 106 respondents from Chechnya (a sub-region of the North Caucasus) who indicated their nationality as Chechen. In constructing the socio-demographic subgroups, we subdivided the Russian nationals into those from Moscow (N=265) and those from the other districts of Central Russia (N=590). This was necessary to increase the socio-economic homogeneity of the three sub-samples because the gross regional product per capita varied greatly. It was \$28,867 (USD equivalent in 2011) in Moscow, \$6,700 in the other Central

Russian districts, and only \$2,033 in Chechnya.⁴ We constructed groups for calculating value congruence by further subdividing each sample by gender, age, religious affiliation, and education (see below).

Measures

Values. To measure the 19 personal values, respondents completed the Portrait Values Questionnaire – Revised (PVQ-R) in Russian (Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz & Butenko, in press). This questionnaire consists of 57 items formulated as short (one sentence) verbal portraits of people. Each of the gender-matched portraits describes a person in terms of his or her goals and reflects a value that is important for the person. For each portrait, respondents indicate how similar the person is to themselves on a 6-pt scale from 1 (not like me at all) to 6 (very much like me). We inferred respondents' own values from the values of the people they described as similar to themselves. For example “It is important to him to follow the rules even if no-one is watching” describes a person for whom conformity-rules values are important; “It is important for her to have her own original ideas” describes a person for whom self-direction-thought values are important.

Life satisfaction. We used responses to the item “How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: I am satisfied with my life?” which asks directly about life satisfaction. Respondents marked the extent of their agreement with this statement on a 7-pt scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Value congruence. We calculated a value congruence score for each individual after first constructing socio-demographic groups with which to compare their values. We formed groups by crossing region (Moscow, Central Russia, Chechnya) by age group (18-29, 30-44, 45-60 years old) by gender by education level (basic, higher) and by religious affiliation (Russian Orthodox, Islam, and non-affiliated).

We split education level into basic and higher levels, following the Russian legislation that defines completing secondary or vocational school as basic education and completing some university as higher education. We classified religious affiliation based on two items: “Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?” We coded ‘no’ responses as non-affiliated. Those who answered ‘yes’ were asked: “To which religion or denomination do you belong?” Ninety-eight percent of the affiliated indicated either Russian Orthodoxy or Islam, so we excluded the others.

The cross-classification yielded 42 socio-demographic groups ranging in size from 5 to 82. We retained for the analysis only groups with at least 15 respondents, leaving a total sample

⁴ Computed from data retrieved from <http://www.regionstat.ru/rating.php?year=¶meter=12> on 21.10.14 and converted at the rate of 30 rubles per USD.

of 961 respondents. We adopted a minimum group size of 15 in order to insure that the hierarchy of value means for the group would not be affected by outliers.⁵ This also enabled us to retain almost all respondents. This left 36 socio-demographic groups with a mean of 26.69 members (SD = 12.05).

We computed the value congruence score for each individual in two steps: We first computed the mean ratings of the 19 values for the group of which he or she was a member. We then computed the Pearson correlation between the individual's ratings of the 19 values and the mean group ratings. This Pearson correlation is a profile similarity coefficient (Cohen, 1969; Luo & Klohnen, 2005) that served as the value congruence score.

Analyses

To test whether value similarity predicted life satisfaction (H1), we performed two types of analysis. We first examined the association between value congruence and life satisfaction across all individuals with hierarchical regression (cf. Sörtheix & Lonnqvist, 2014). We regressed each individual's life satisfaction on his or her value congruence score, controlling for age, gender, and education. In a second step, we tested whether interpersonal conformity values (H2) or self-direction values (H3) moderated the relations of value congruence to life satisfaction by adding one or the other to the regression. Specifically, in separate analyses, we regressed life satisfaction on age, gender, and value congruence, plus each value and its interaction with value congruence.

We performed a second type of analysis at the group level. This enabled us to ask whether the characteristics we cross-classified to form the groups (region, gender, age category, religious affiliation, education level) might affect the relation of life satisfaction to value congruence. First, within each of the 36 groups, we computed the correlation between life satisfaction and value congruence. Then, we performed a meta-analysis of the correlations across the 36 groups. This yielded a meta-analytic correlation that served as a second test of the hypothesized (H1) association between life satisfaction and value congruence. Finally, in order to examine the possibility that characteristics on which the groups differed affected this association, we assessed the heterogeneity of the group correlations.

Results

Column one of Tab. 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the value importance ratings of the 19 values across individuals. For life satisfaction, the mean score across

⁵ We assessed the stability of the hierarchy of the group's value means by sequentially removing one group member at a time and calculating the correlation between the hierarchy of means in the full group and the reduced group. With group size 15, all correlations were greater than .968, indicating high stability.

individuals was 4.33 (SD = 1.46) and for value congruence, the mean score was .52 (SD = .29). Model 1 in Table 3 tested the hypothesized effect of value congruence on life satisfaction (H1), controlling the socio-demographic variables. It revealed a significant positive effect for value congruence ($\beta = .11, p < .001$). The regression also revealed that older respondents and those with a higher education level were more satisfied with their lives.

Tab. 2. Means and standard deviations of value importance across individuals and groups

Value	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	individuals	groups
Self-Direction—Thought	4.36 (.67)	4.36 (.20)
Self-Direction—Action	4.27 (.61)	4.27 (.16)
Stimulation	3.64 (.8)	3.69 (.25)
Hedonism	3.86 (.86)	3.88 (.31)
Achievement	3.82 (.77)	3.85 (.20)
Power—Dominance	3.18 (1.09)	3.19 (.25)
Power—Resources	3.34 (1.1)	3.38 (.30)
Face	4.39 (.63)	4.38 (.14)
Security—Personal	4.53 (.65)	4.50 (.16)
Security—Societal	4.50 (.76)	4.47 (.18)
Tradition	4.03 (.71)	4.01 (.24)
Conformity—Rules	3.80 (.81)	3.80 (.26)
Conformity—Interpersonal	3.80 (.72)	3.77 (.19)
Humility	3.69 (.76)	3.69 (.16)
Benevolence—Dependability	3.71 (.79)	3.72 (.19)
Benevolence—Caring	4.10 (.65)	4.10 (.10)
Universalism—Concern	3.78 (.73)	3.79 (.15)
Universalism—Nature	4.53 (.58)	4.51 (.14)
Universalism—Tolerance	4.50 (.56)	4.49 (.10)

Model 2 in Tab. 3 tested the hypothesized moderation effect of interpersonal conformity values on relations of life satisfaction to value congruence. It revealed that neither interpersonal conformity values nor their interaction with value congruence affected life satisfaction. Thus, H2 was rejected. Model 3 in Table 3 tested the hypothesized moderation effect of self-direction values on relations of life satisfaction to value congruence. Because we theorized that both types of self-direction (thought and action) have similar effects, we combined them into a single self-direction index. The analysis revealed that (a) self-direction values contributed positively to life satisfaction ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$) and (b) that their interaction with value congruence also affected life satisfaction ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .01$). Specifically, value congruence related more positively to life satisfaction among those who attributed low as against high importance to self-direction. This negative interaction effect supported H3.

Tab. 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Life Satisfaction (N=961)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Age	-.02	.00	-.18***	-.02	.00	-.18***	-.02	.00	-.18***
Gender	-.07	.09	-.02	-.08	.10	-.03	-.09	.09	-.02
Education level	.10	.02	.15***	.10	.02	.15***	.11	.02	.15***
Value congruence (VC)	.15	.05	.11**	.15	.05	.10**	.11	.05	.08*
Interpersonal Conformity Values				-.01	.05	-.01			
Interpersonal Conformity*VC				.07	.06	.04			
Self-direction Values							.13	.05	.09**
Self-direction*VC							-.14	.05	-.10**
ΔR^2	.06			.00			.02		

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

The group-level meta-analytic approach also confirmed the positive relation of life satisfaction to value congruence (H1). We used the correlations between value congruence and life satisfaction in each group, converted into Fisher z-scores, as the effect sizes for the meta-analysis. In the random effects model of the meta-analysis, the mean correlation across the 36 groups was .19 ($p < .01$, $SE = .03$, $Z = 5.44$, $95\% CI = .12 - .26$). To assess whether it was appropriate to seek group characteristics that might have affected the relation of life satisfaction to value congruence, we examined the heterogeneity of the group correlations. The Cochran Q index of heterogeneity was not significant ($Q = 36.54$, $p > .35$), and the I² statistic, which measures the percentage of variability in the point estimates (here, correlations) that is due to heterogeneity rather than to sampling error (Higgins & Thompson, 2002) was only 1.47. Thus, group characteristics apparently did not moderate group-level relations of life satisfaction to value congruence.

Discussion

Past studies of relations between value congruence and life satisfaction considered the congruence of individuals' values either with others with whom they interact regularly or with others likely to constitute an important reference group for them. We asked whether an effect of value congruence on life satisfaction might be found even when congruence is defined as fit with the values of others who are similar only in sharing similar socio-demographic characteristics. Because the sample was selected randomly from a large population, very few, if any, of the respondents were acquainted with one another.

Confirmation of the positive relation of life satisfaction with value congruence in the current context suggests that individuals have at least an implicit sense of the values of others with similar socio-demographic characteristics. This is necessary for the mechanisms presumed to give rise to the effects of value congruence to operate. Without some sense of the normative values of one's "socio-demographic peers," congruence with those values will not prevent uncertainty or internal conflict regarding whether to pursue one's important values. Without this sense, value congruence will not foster anticipation of more support and less disapproval for acting on one's values.

The associations between value congruence and life satisfaction in the two types of analysis in this study were somewhat weaker than in past studies of life satisfaction and subjective well-being ($r = .16$, in Musiol & Boehnke, 2013 ; $\beta = .22$, in Sortheix & Lonnqvist, 2014). Two aspects of this study may account for this: First, congruence with constructed socio-demographic groups is likely to be less important to a person than

congruence with recognized reference groups. Second, a limitation of the current study is our use of a single item indicator of life satisfaction rather than a more reliable index.

Neither this nor the previous studies of relations of life satisfaction/subjective well-being to value congruence yielded strong findings. This may reflect the facts that general life satisfaction is dependent on a wide variety of factors and that the comparison groups in these studies included individuals with whom respondents did not interact regularly. A study by Verquer, et al. (2003) supports this reasoning. They performed a meta-analysis across ten studies of associations between value congruence and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction depends on a narrower set of factors and work group members tend to interact regularly. The meta-analytic correlation of $r = .31$ (Verquer, et al., 2003: Table 2) was indeed stronger than in the general life satisfaction studies.

An important innovation of the current study was to examine hypotheses regarding individual differences that might moderate the association between life satisfaction and value congruence. We hypothesized that the association is stronger the more individuals value interpersonal conformity. We reasoned that valuing interpersonal conformity makes a lack of value congruence especially problematic because pursuing incongruent values is liable to upset others and violate their expectations. The results did not support the hypothesis. This plausible hypothesis is worth testing in groups whose members interact frequently. In that context, upsetting others by pursuing one's incongruent values is more probable, so holding interpersonal conformity values may make congruent values more critical for life satisfaction.

We also hypothesized that the association is weaker the more individuals value self-direction. For those who give high priority to self-direction, it is important to think and act independently, so a lack of congruence with the values of others may be of little concern to them. In contrast, for those who give low priority to self-direction, independence of thought and action may be of little interest and others' expectations may guide them more. For them, value congruence may be a source of reassurance, contributing to life satisfaction, and incongruence may be distressing. The significant interaction between self-direction and value congruence in predicting life satisfaction supported this hypothesis. This is the first evidence that individual differences may moderate relations of life satisfaction to value congruence. Studying other potential moderators in future research might provide further insight into this relationship. The analysis also revealed a positive main effect of self-direction values on life satisfaction. Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) reported a similar effect for self-direction across six samples and discussed the mechanisms that underlie it.

Finally, in the group-level, meta-analytic analysis, we assessed whether the characteristics used to construct the 36 socio-demographic groups might have affected relations of life satisfaction to value congruence. Each group consisted of a unique cross-classification of age, gender, education, religion, and region of residence. Surprisingly, the analysis uncovered no significant heterogeneity across groups in the correlation between life satisfaction and value congruence. Perhaps, the multiplicity of characteristics on which the groups varied obviated a significant impact of any single one. Studies that compare the correlation of life satisfaction with value congruence across groups that differ on a single important characteristic may uncover group characteristics that moderate this correlation.

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