



A cross-cultural study comparing British and Ghanaian children's levels and sources of subjective well-being

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ABSTRACT

The current study adopted a cross-cultural approach to examine individualistic and collectivistic cultural influences on children's subjective well-being. Research suggests person-centred individualistic and social-centred collectivistic cultures differ in their specific pathways for achieving subjective well-being. Previous research has focused on adults from wealthy cultures. The present study aimed to examine subjective well-being in children, incorporating a low economically developed country. 200 children from Britain and Ghana completed The Individual and Socially Orientated Subjective Well-Being Scale, Happiness Ladder Scale and responded to the question "what makes you happy?". Questionnaire results found children were strongly influenced by their culture's values. Ghanaian children rated themselves higher than British children in levels of subjective well-being. Individualistic and collectivistic influences were found in children's qualitative responses. Furthermore, poverty influences were apparent in Ghanaian children's responses. The present study highlights the impact that culture has on influencing children's sources and levels of subjective well-being.

KEY WORDS:	CULTURE	SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING	CHILDREN	INDIVIDUALISTIC	COLLECTIVISTIC
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A Cross-Cultural Study Comparing British and Ghanaian Children's Levels and Sources of Subjective Well-Being

The subjective experience of well-being (SWB) has been objectively measured and found to be culturally dependant (Diener & Diener, 1995; Lu & Shih, 1997; Kitayama and Markus, 2000; Suh, 2000). There are two types of contrasting cultures; individualistic and collectivistic, which each place emphasis on different cultural factors (personal accountability, explicit pursuit, dialectical balance and role obligations) with regards to increasing SWB (Kitayama and Markus, 2000). Poverty, especially in collectivistic cultures, has been shown to decrease SWB (Diener & Lucas, 2000) and individualistic wealth has been found to increase SWB (Diener & Lucas, 2000). However, little research has explored if similar findings are apparent in children. The aim of this study is to therefore examine whether culturally dependant SWB influences are apparent in children, and to explore whether poverty affects levels and sources of SWB in children.

Subjective well-being

In recent years, "what is the good life?" (Diener, 2000, p.34) and "what is happiness?" (Lu & Gilmour, 2006, p.36) are questions which have been under psychological investigation. This focus is a reflection of the Positive Psychology movement, led by Martin Seligman (2000), who felt enough research within psychology focused on negative emotions. This movement instead shifts its investigation on character strengths, virtues, laughter, hope and happiness (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Subjective well-being (SWB) has been labelled as an umbrella term within this field, and has been described as "a broad category of phenomena that includes peoples emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgements of life satisfaction" (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith 1999, p.277). Exploring SWB therefore covers a diverse amount of phenomena including "life satisfaction and satisfaction with life domains such as marriage, work, income, housing and leisure, feeling positive affects most of the time, experiencing infrequent feelings of negative affect and judging one's life to be fulfilling and meaningful" (Diener & Diener, 2002, p.2). In colloquial terms, research into SWB could be considered the study of happiness (Diener, 2000) and therefore measuring SWB is essentially the individual's current evaluation of his/her happiness (Schwartz & Starck, 1999).

Diener (1994) explains there are two separate components to SWB; affective and cognitive. The first is the "presence of positive affect and absence of negative" (Diener, 1994, p.106). This affective part of SWB is led by emotion and feelings. The second component, cognitive, refers to the "information-based appraisal of one's life for which people measure the extent to which their life so far measures up to their expectations" (Diener, 1994, p.106). The cognitive aspect considers how their current life compares to their ideal life or to the lives of others.

The importance of measuring well-being subjectively is defined by Layard (2005) who suggests human perception is central to defining well-being and therefore the only person who truly knows whether they are experiencing well-being is the individual who perceives it. Suh, Diener, Oishi and Triandis (1998) highlight the importance of SWB using a sample of 7,204 college students from 42 countries.

They found that on average all countries rated happiness and life satisfaction as very important and a vast amount of participants claimed to deliberate on increasing these factors regularly. This is irrespective of the idea that the causality for higher levels of SWB is culturally conditional (Matsumoto, 2000). Therefore a deeper knowledge of cultural influences is essential in understanding differences in levels and sources of SWB.

Culture and subjective well-being

Bruner (1990) suggests all meanings and concepts are defined by individual cultures. Kitayama and Markus (2000) relate this suggestion to the field of SWB, proposing that what it means to be well or experience SWB is defined within culture. Therefore, not only is the definition of SWB culturally dependant, but also what constitutes achieving and maintaining it would also fall under this category. However, increased levels of individual SWB differ considerably between alternate cultures as shown by previous studies (Diener & Diener, 1995; Lu & Shih, 1997; Suh, 2000). Hence why, recent research has concentrated on defining these different types of culture and also the characteristics within them that influence SWB in diverse ways.

Kitayama and Markus (2000) propose there are two contrasting cultures which directly affect levels and influences of SWB. The first are individualistic or individual-orientated cultures (Lu, 2008), which include westernised societies such as the United Kingdom and the United States. These societies have a tendency to be focused around the self, with emphasis on perusing own goals and interests. Individualistic cultures encourage individual's motives, values and traits to be focused around self-fulfilment instead of considering others (Lu, 2005). Westernised values, institutions and media accentuate free will and individual reason with regards to achieving SWB (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). The notion of happiness being a born right and emphasis that individuals are responsible for their own happiness has been termed *personal accountability* (Lu and Gilmour, 2006). Individualistic cultures tend to view being happy as a personal achievement and thus encourage personal accountability through the emphasised importance of attaining SWB (Lu, 2005). Lu (2005) suggests individualistic cultures influence individual's to centre their thoughts and behaviour in a self-orientated way, rather than considering others thoughts and feelings. Therefore emphasising that achieving SWB should be central to all individuals and they should strive to achieve it despite all costs (Lu & Gilmour, 2006). This characteristic has been labelled *explicit pursuit*, and is central to influencing person-centred conceptions of SWB (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). In summary, a person from an individualistic culture will prioritise self-orientated goals and achievements in their pursuit of achieving SWB, through the influence of personal accountability and explicit pursuit.

In contrast, the second type of culture is collectivistic society, which includes non-westernised nations such as those in Asia and Africa. Within these cultures, the pursuit of achieving SWB is bound to others, with emphasis placed on social relationships over personal attributes (Lu and Gilmour, 2006). These cultures develop individuals to view themselves as part of a social unit and consider their behaviour, feelings and emotions to be dependent on others. Social customs, values, institutions and the media, especially in Asian countries, emphasise the importance of in-group memberships (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Achieving SWB in collectivistic cultures differs greatly from individualistic cultures where individual

achievements are important in finding happiness. Collectivistic cultures shift importance off the self and onto ensuring good social relationships. To ensure these interpersonal relationships are maintained harmoniously, collectivistic cultures encourage individuals to fulfil their *role obligations* at home, work and in marriage (Lu, 2005). Therefore, individuals in collectivistic cultures should find increased SWB from ensuring good in-group harmony and welfare. Beattie (1980) suggests African and Asian cultures are extremely sensitive to such interdependencies among others. A further value of collectivistic cultures is the view that happiness and unhappiness are not opposites, but instead dialectic; the notion that happiness is dependent on unhappiness and unhappiness is present in happiness (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). This collectivistic concept of *dialectical balance* discourages individuals from excessively striving for SWB, like in individualistic cultures, but instead places importance on achieving homeostasis between happiness and unhappiness (Lu and Gilmour, 2006). To summarise, individuals within a collectivistic society are culturally shaped to engage in role obligations to increase SWB levels by creating harmonious social relationships. Collectivistic values also do not encourage individuals to excessively strive for high levels of SWB, but to instead create a steady balance of positive and negative emotion.

Through asking collectivistic Chinese and individualistic American participants “what is happiness?” Lu and Gilmour (2004) tested the existence of these culture types. They found that, despite all participants placing equal importance on achieving SWB, the theorised cultural structures were prevalent in the samples used. They concluded that participants from an American individualistic society sourced their SWB from self-orientated pursuits (personal accountability and explicit pursuit). In contrast, participants from a Chinese collectivistic society sourced their SWB from socially-orientated pursuits (role obligation and dialectical balance). Based on these findings, the researchers later devised a questionnaire which aimed to measure each of the four characteristics as empirical subscales in opposition to the previous qualitative measures (Lu & Gilmour, 2006). Their preliminary results indicated American participants rated individualistic measures higher on the questionnaire whereas Chinese participants rated collectivistic measures higher. However, such findings are only applicable to adults.

Research suggests that culture dictates particular pathways for achieving SWB and outlines specific concepts strongly related to the influences of SWB (Lu, 2008). It is however unknown when this impact of culture begins. The reason for this uncertainty is based in a lack of clarity surrounding the extent culture influences children and teenagers. Despite a large body of research focusing on the effects of culture on SWB in adults (Diener & Diener, 1995; Lu & Shih, 1997; Suh, 2000; Lu and Gilmour, 2004, Lu and Gilmour, 2006), no research has been found that focuses on children, to explore if the same influences are apparent.

Wealth, poverty and subjective well-being

As mentioned above, there is a substantial amount of evidence that suggests SWB is shaped by individual and collectivistic cultures (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Lu & Gilmour, 2006). However, deeper understanding of these cultures is necessary to explore any additional cultural factors which may influence levels and sources of SWB. Previous researchers (Diener & Diener, 1995; Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Lu & Gilmour, 2006) have used samples from

collectivistic/individualistic cultures, but with a tendency to rely upon wealthier nations, such as China and America. Research in this field therefore tends to rely upon more industrialised societies (Diener, 1995). Conclusions from such studies have indicated that “very poor countries such as those in Africa are still underrepresented” (Diener, & Suh, 2000, p.8). It would thus be relevant to examine whether the external factor of poverty influences SWB sources and levels. It would be possible, using a collectivist African country, to examine whether poverty causes individuals to prioritise and source SWB from basic needs such as food over family/community values set out by their culture.

The majority of research surrounding poverty, wealth and SWB within this field tends to focus on self-reported SWB levels over sources of happiness. Generally such research concludes that life satisfaction is positively correlated to higher income (Diener & Lucas, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2000; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). National survey data can be seen as incorporating large sample numbers over a vast amount of nations. An example of this is the World Happiness Report (2012) which uses more than 1,000 participants from each country in the world. The conclusions of their data reflect previous studies, also concluding that wealthier nations report themselves to be happier.

However, there is also research which suggests this is not always the case. Diener (2001) found that slum dwellers in Calcutta, despite their lack of basic necessities, were satisfied with many areas of their lives including social relations. When asked to list positive and negative happenings over the previous year, the sample acknowledged more good events than bad. Furthermore, data from the National Survey of Costa Rica suggests that only 24% of those deemed below the poverty threshold considered themselves unhappy (Rojas, 2009). Such research highlights that poor living conditions do not necessarily cause low levels of SWB if other life aspects are good. It would therefore be relevant to establish if, when faced with deprivation of basic needs, emphasis on social relationships (already prevalent in collectivistic cultures), can stabilise levels of SWB.

Such a suggestion is backed by Diener, Ng, Harter and Aurora’s (2010) research into Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. In his original theory, Maslow suggested life satisfaction and SWB is determined by five separate life components which formulate a pyramid: psychological needs, safety factors, love/belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation/fulfilment. He argued each level of the pyramid must be achieved before the individual can advance to the next. Using samples from 123 countries representing every major region of the world, Diener, Ng, Harter and Aurora’s research concluded that all factors within the original theories pyramid of needs are needed for complete self-fulfilment. However, the researchers argued that the order in which levels of the pyramid are achieved is irrelevant and not all components are necessary to achieve SWB; findings highlighted individuals who self-reported high SWB that were lacking in physiological needs but achieving in love/belonging. Such findings reiterate that SWB is obtainable even if individuals are lacking in certain life aspects.

Children’s subjective well-being

Research into specific factors which are linked to increased SWB in adults have concluded that high income, human rights, job satisfaction and social equality

are positively correlated despite culture type (Diener & Diener, 1995). However, it could be questioned whether these factors are of such importance to adolescents and children. Life components such as job satisfaction may not be applicable to younger individuals, especially those of school age. Huebner (2004) highlights how SWB has been studied extensively in adults but considerably less in children. The Office of National Statistics (2011) addressed this under-researched field by asking a sample of British children aged 3-16 years what happiness meant to them. Responses highlighted several categories of which children reported as reasons for their SWB. Categories included: good relationships with parents/friends, exercise, animals, clothes/appearance, activities with parents/friends, junk food such as sweets/chocolate, technology and toys. Such categories clearly highlight differences in influences of SWB between adults and children. However, this research is only representative of children from Britain as an individualistic culture. No research was found which has similarly explored influences of happiness on children in a collectivistic culture. Such research could highlight any differences between children of differing cultures with regards to their sources of SWB.

Aims of the present study

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned research, it is clear that there is a lack of study that explores the influence of collectivistic and individualistic culture types on children. Furthermore, research exploring SWB using developing countries also appears to be lacking. In addition to this, it is apparent that there is limited research investigating self-reported happiness sources in children, particularly those of a collectivistic culture.

Therefore, the present study had three aims.

Firstly, to explore whether the cultural characteristics defined by Markus and Kitayama (2000); personal accountability, explicit pursuit (individualistic) role obligations and dialectical balance (collectivistic) were as apparent in children's quantitatively self-reported influences of SWB as they are in adults (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Lu & Gilmour, 2006).

Secondly, it was investigated whether there were differences in self-reported levels of happiness, between children from an individualistic country and those from a less economically developed, collectivistic country. Research exploring this in adults is contradictory; Diener and Lucas (2000) propose high income and individualism cause increased SWB, however Diener (2001) found high SWB in poverty and collectivism.

The final aim of this research was to compare qualitatively self-reported influences of SWB between children from collectivistic and individualistic cultures. The present results will then be compared to research from The Office of National Statistics (2011) who highlighted several categories which influenced British children's SWB.

Therefore, there were three hypotheses tested in the present paper:

British children will source SWB from individualistic measures.

Ghanaian children will source SWB from collectivistic measures.

There will be a difference in SWB levels between British and Ghanaian children.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 200 school children aged 10-12 years were selected to partake in the study. This sample comprised of 100 Ghanaian children (50 male and 50 female) selected from Pitiku Primary School, Ghana. The mean age for this sample was 11.09 years (SD=.81; range = 10-12 years). A further 100 British children (50 male and 50 female) were recruited from a variety of schools in the South of England. The mean age for this sample was 10.08 years (SD=.83; range = 10-12 years).

Quantitative measures

Revised Individual and Socially-oriented Subjective Well-Being Scale (ISSWB)

The ISSWB is a 51-item inventory created by Lu and Gilmour (2006), which aims to measure key elements of individual-orientated and socially-orientated cultural conceptions of SWB. The questionnaire had to be modified to be made more child-friendly; all of the 51 statements were revised and rephrased into relatable terms. The questionnaire comprises of four subscales with a varying amount of items in each. *Personal accountability* (happiness as a born right) consists of 15 individualistic statements, such as; “happiness is the most important thing in life”. The second subscale, *explicit pursuit* (you must strive to be happy) consists of 10 individualistic statements, such as; “you should find happiness even when it’s hard to”. *Role obligations* (fulfilling role obligations to help others) consists of 14 collectivistic measures, such as; “happy is helping people around me”. Finally, *Dialectical balance* (happiness and unhappiness of equal value) consists of 12 collectivistic measures, such as; “you must have been unhappy to feel happy”. The items were presented in a random order to prevent subcategories being identified by participants. Participants responded to each of the 51 statements using a 6-point likert scale (see Figure 1) which was also made to appear more child-friendly through use of cartoon facial expressions; from 1 = big yes (strongly agree) to 6 = big no (strongly disagree).

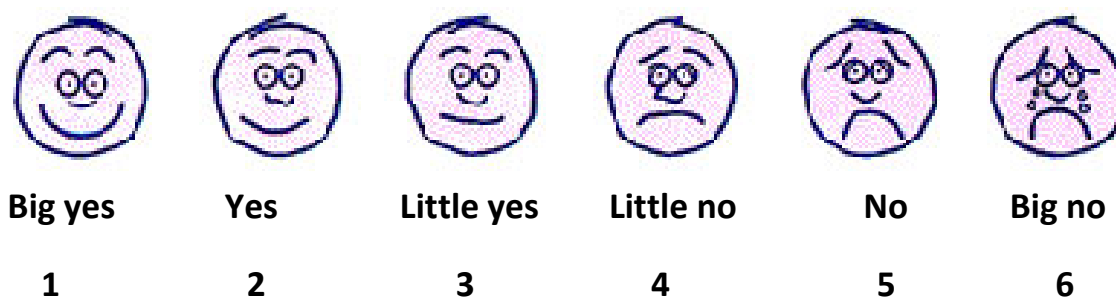


Figure 1: Child-friendly 6-point likert scale

Cantril's Happiness Ladder (1965)

The Happiness Ladder aims to measure SWB through life evaluation and satisfaction (Diener, Kahneman, Tov & Arora, 2009). The measure consists of a ladder diagram with 10 steps. The diagram is presented with the question: "The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?" Participants were encouraged to mark themselves on one step of the ladder from 1-10. Beckie and Hayduk (1997) reported the measure to have adequate reliability and validity.

Qualitative measures

"What makes you happy?"

In their qualitative study in 2011, The Office of National Statistics asked British children what made them happy. From responses, the researchers were able to identify several categories influencing children's SWB. The present research also aimed to explore self-reported sources of SWB, but using both individualistic British and collectivistic Ghanaian children by means to compare responses. To do this, children were asked the open-ended question "what makes you happy?" Participants were not restricted to the amount of sources they could report.

Procedure

Parental consent was gained for the entire British sample. However, it was not deemed appropriate to gain parental consent for the Ghanaian sample due to high levels of adult illiteracy in Ghana. Consent was instead gained from the headmaster of The Pitiku Primary School, Ghana, who acted as the children's gatekeeper.

The participants were reminded they did not have to take part in the study and that their answers would remain anonymous. The first measure presented to the children was the open-ended question "what makes you happy?" in an attempt to ensure responses were not influenced by any of the later measures. This was followed by the Happiness Ladder scale question and finally the 51 item ISSWB questionnaire. All measures were read to each of the participants by the researcher and children gave verbal responses. The researcher then noted each answer onto an answer sheet. Each child's age, country and gender was also recorded onto the answer sheet.

Results

Quantitative Results

Revised Individual and Socially-Oriented Subjective Well-being Scale (ISSWB)

The first aim of the study was to examine individualistic and collectivistic measures in children using the ISSWB questionnaire. The means for each of the four subscales (personal accountability, explicit pursuit, role obligations and dialectical balance) were calculated and tested for Cronbach's Alpha reliability (see Table 1).

Table 1
Means and standard deviations for all ISSWB subscales

	Personal Accountability		Explicit Pursuit		Role obligations		Dialectical Balance	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ghanaian	5.04	.26	5.17	.32	2.03	.27	1.94	.31
British	2.08	.46	1.86	.49	5.08	.48	5.02	.52
Cronbach's Alpha Reliability	.99		.98		.99		.97	

A two-way mixed ANOVA was conducted on the ISSWB questionnaire responses and found no significant main effect between the means of each of the questionnaire subscales, $F(3,594) = 1.47$, ns. There was a marginal significant main effect of country, $F(1,198) = 3.44$, $p=0.065$, suggesting the mean scores of Ghana ($M=3.55$, $SD=.01$) and England ($M=3.51$, $SD=.01$) averaged out slightly different to each other. There was a significant interaction between each of the 4 sub-scale scores and country, $F(3,594)=3431.08$, $p=.0001$ (see Figure 2).

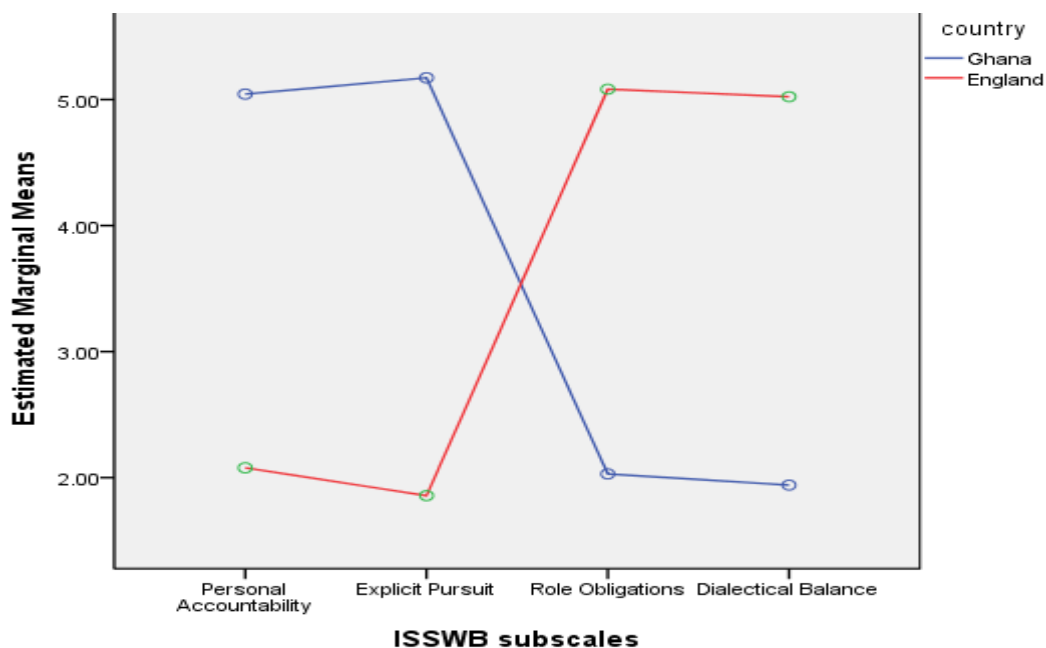


Figure 2: Graph to show interaction of country and ISSWB subscale means

The interaction graph clearly shows that British children responded low to the individualistic subscales (personal accountability and explicit pursuit) in strong agreement, and high to the collectivistic subscales (role obligations and dialectical balance) in strong disagreement. Ghanaian children visibly responded in the opposite manner, strongly agreeing with collectivistic subscales (role obligations & dialectical balance) and strongly disagreeing with individualistic subscales (personal accountability & explicit pursuit).

The Happiness Ladder

The second aim of this study was to compare self-reported levels of SWB between British and Ghanaian children using Cantril's Happiness Ladder. Means for each country were calculated and compared using an independent samples t-test. A significant difference was found in scores from British children ($M=6.2$, $SD=1.12$) and Ghanaian children ($M=8.78$, $SD=.91$); $t(198) = 18.02$, $p=.0001$. Ghanaian children self-reported themselves as being happier than British children.

Qualitative Results

"What makes you happy?"

A content analysis was conducted to examine all qualitative responses to the question "what makes you happy?" In total, the 200 participants supplied 221 answers, which were grouped into 48 subcategories within 17 main categories. Below is a table presenting the raw number of responses relating to each category from Ghanaian children, British children and the combined total.

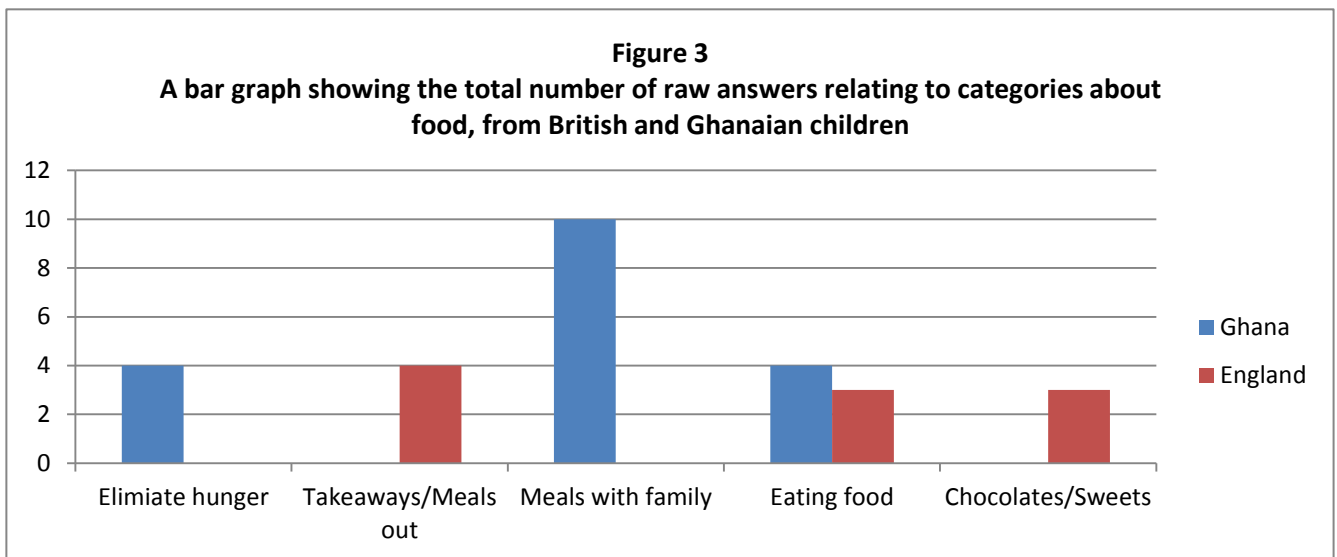
Table 2
Raw data from content analysis

Main Category	Raw number of Ghanaian responses	Raw number of British responses	Raw number of total answers	Percentage of total answers
Food	18	10	28	13%
Play	0	26	26	12%
School	19	4	23	11%
Celebrations	7	13	20	9%
Shopping	3	16	20	9%
Health	12	1	13	6%
Friends	6	7	13	6%
Family	13	0	13	6%
Music	7	6	13	6%
Sports	5	7	12	5%
Days out	4	7	11	5%
Television	0	9	9	4%
Holidays	0	7	7	3%
Water	6	0	6	3%
Others	1	2	3	1%
Death	3	0	3	1%
Animals	0	3	3	1%

Graphs of categories totalling more than 6% of responses are presented below. Note that raw numbers of responses within each subcategory are included in the graphs.

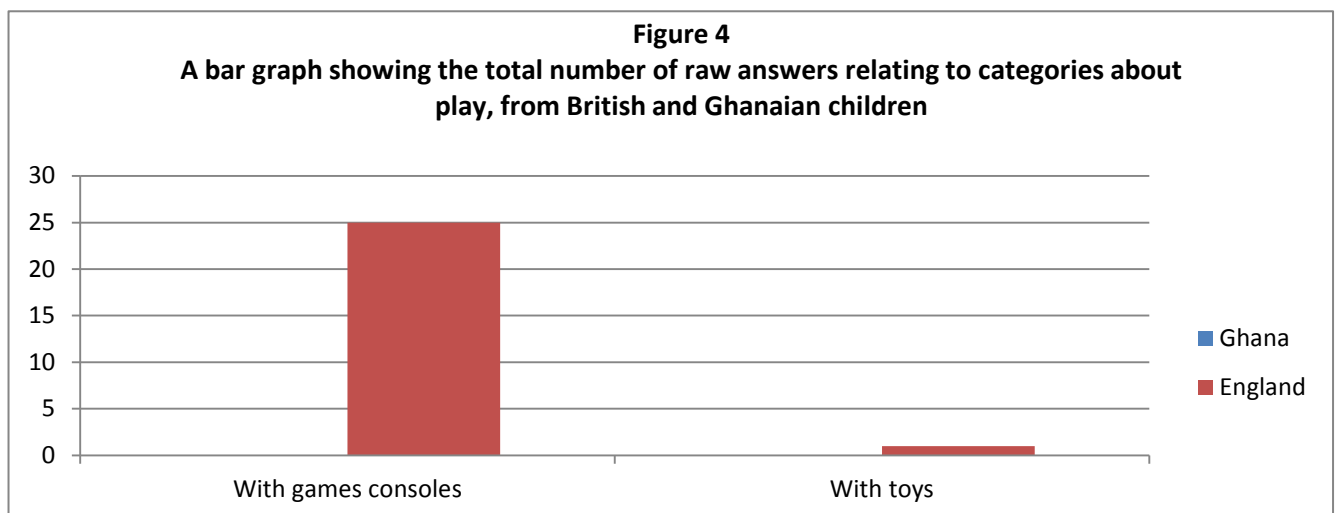
Food category

The main category of food was divided into 5 subcategories: to eliminate hunger, ordering takeaways/eating out, having meals with family, eating food, and eating sweets and chocolate. As shown in Figure 3, there are clear differences in responses between the children from each country. For example, food to eliminate hunger and having meals with family was only mentioned by Ghanaian children, while takeaways/meals out and chocolate and sweets were only mentioned by British children. Children from both cultures mentioned eating food as a source of happiness.



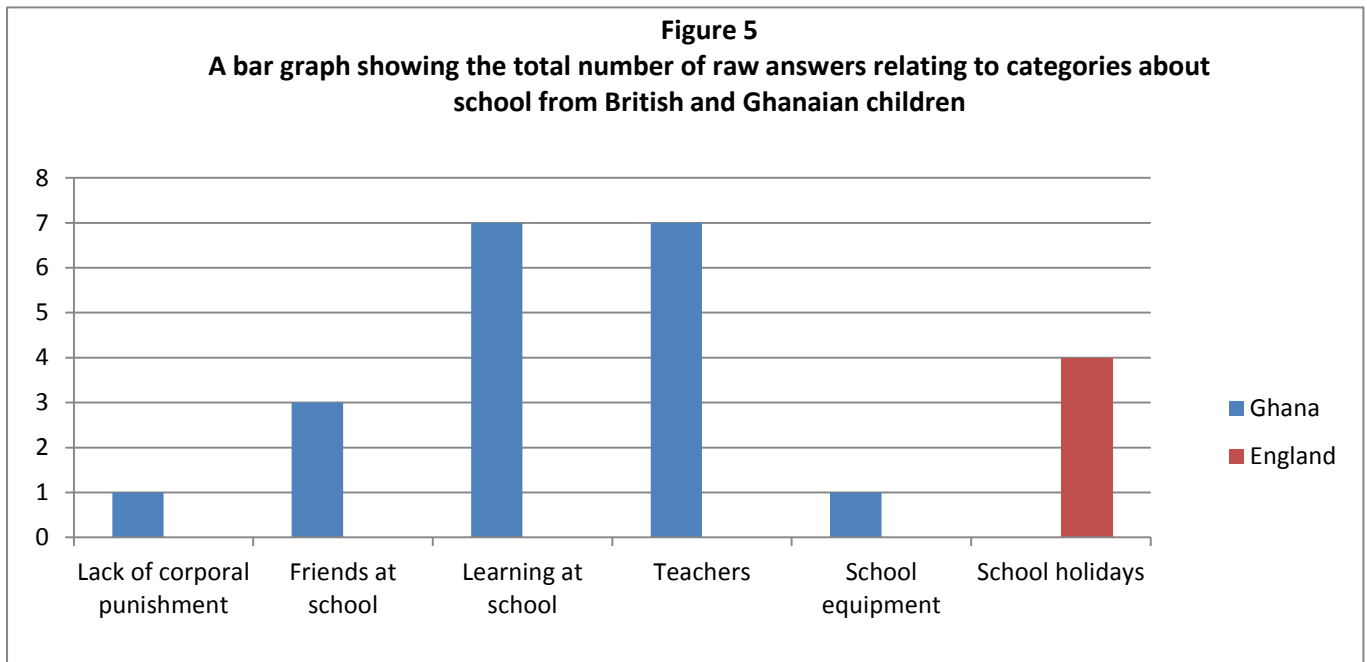
Play category

The main category of play was divided into 2 subcategories: playing with games consoles and playing with toys. There is a noticeable cultural difference as show in Figure 4. For example, only British children mentioned the category of play when sourcing happiness.



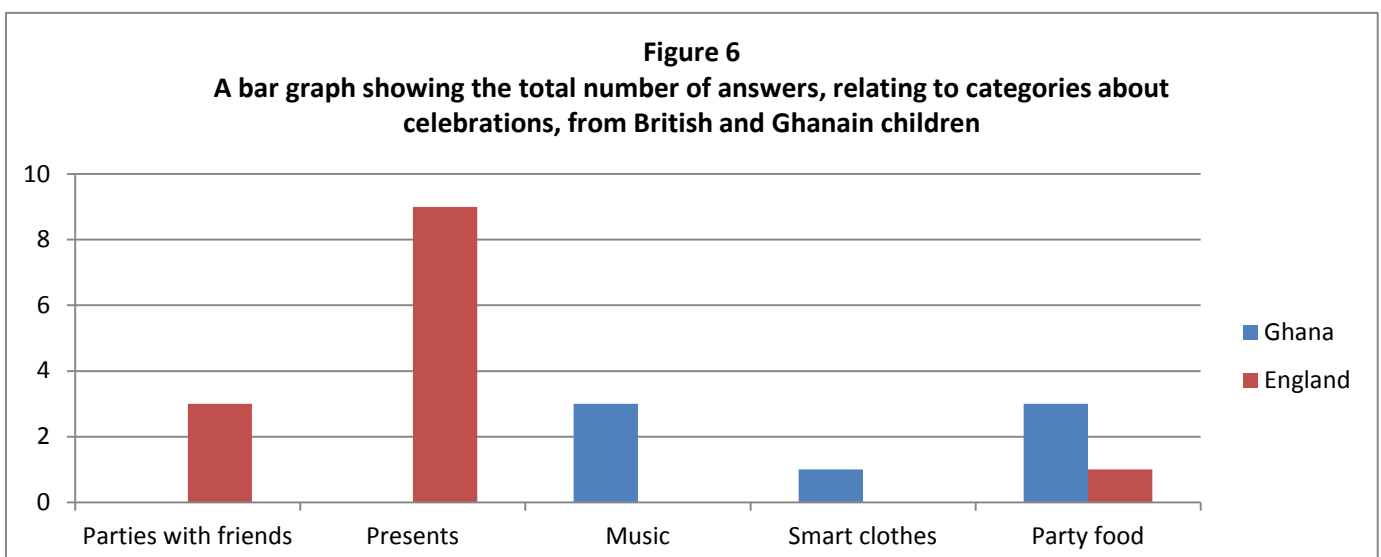
School category

The main category of school had 6 subcategories: lack of corporal punishment at school, friends at school, learning at school, teachers, school equipment and school holidays. Cultural differences can be seen in Figure 5. For example, the Ghanaian children enjoyed many aspects of school including learning, teachers, lack of punishment, equipment and being with friends at school, while the British children only mentioned school in reference to school holidays and thus the absence of school.



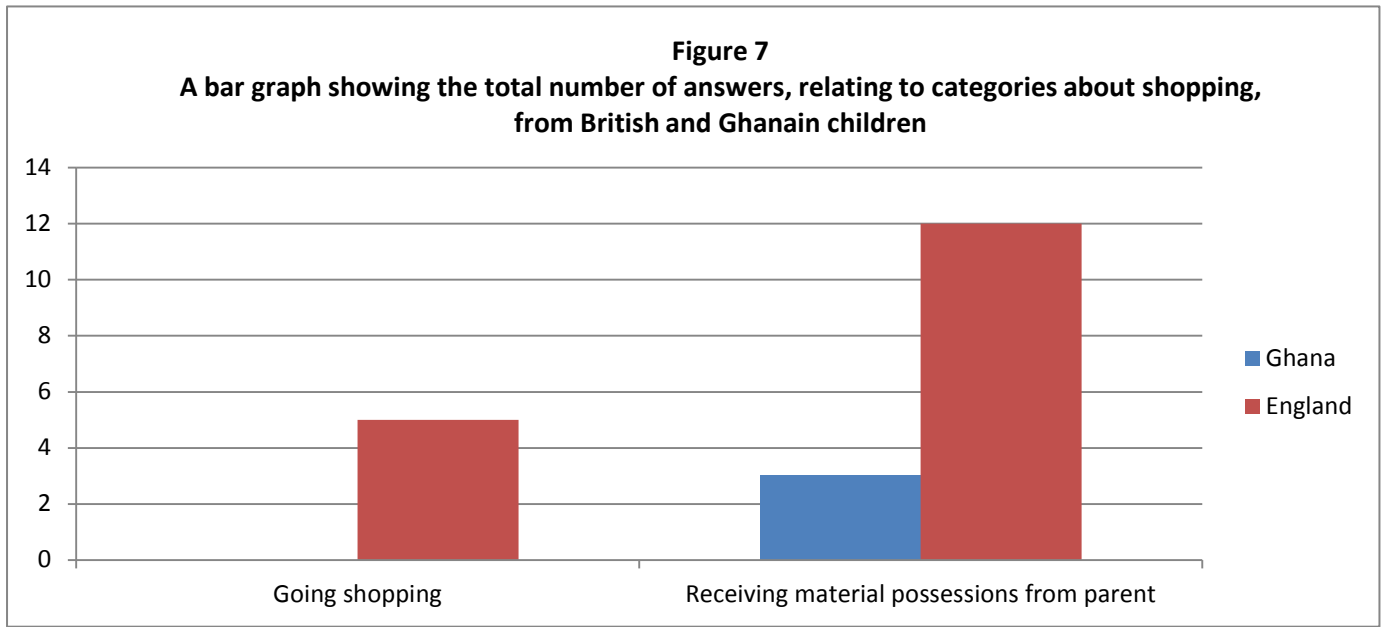
Celebrations category

The main category of celebrations was divided into 5 subcategories: parties with friends, presents, music, smart clothes, and party food. As shown in Figure 6, there were differences in responses between countries. For example, Ghanaian children mentioned music and smart clothes while British children mentioned presents and parties with friends. Both cultures mentioned party food highlighting an aspect of celebrations that is similarly enjoyed.



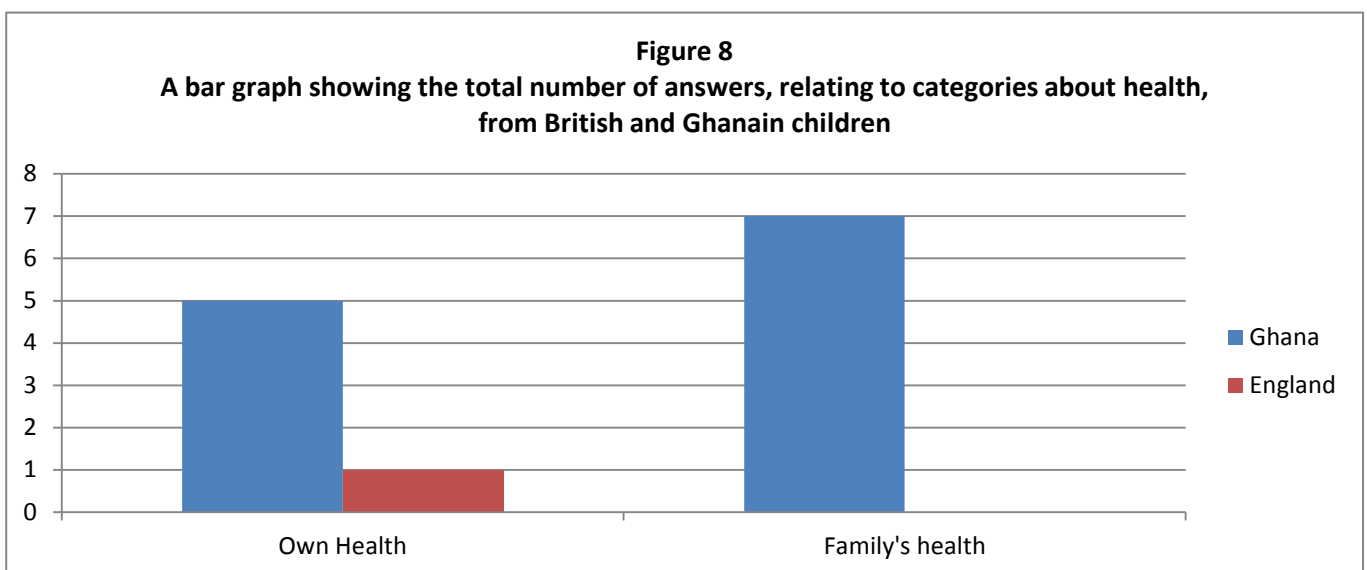
Shopping category

The main category shopping was divided into 2 subcategories: going shopping and receiving material possessions from a parent. There were differences across countries as Figure 7 shows. For example, British children mentioned going shopping as well as receiving a material possession. A few Ghanaian children also mentioned receiving a material possession.



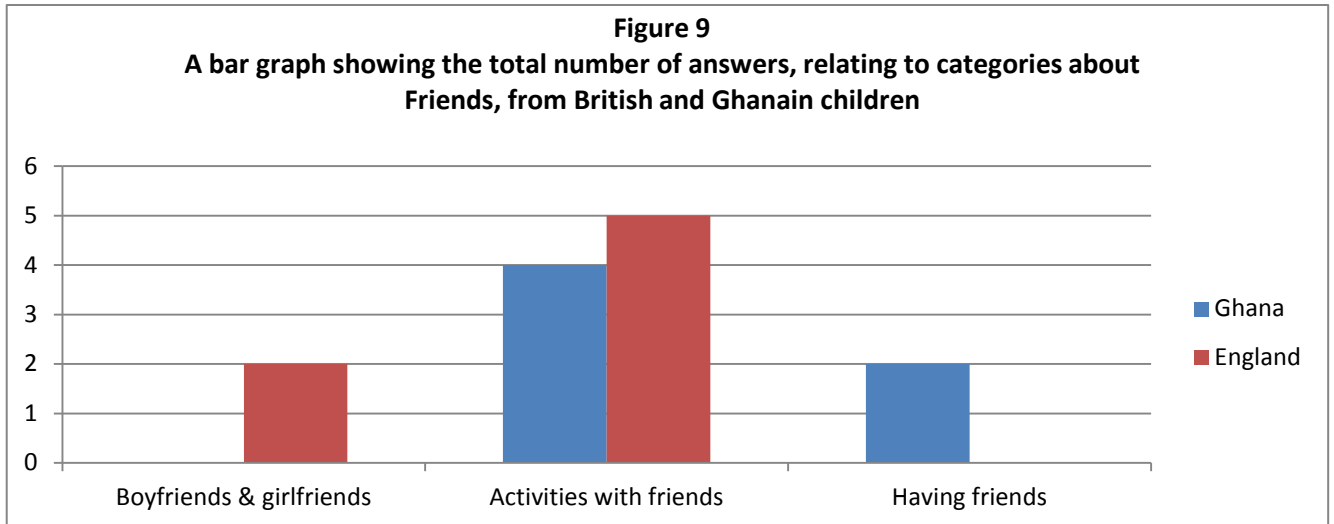
Health category

The main category of health was divided into 2 subcategories: own health and family's health. Figure 8 shows a difference across countries. For example, Ghanaian children mentioned both their own health and their family's health, while only one British child mentioned their own health.



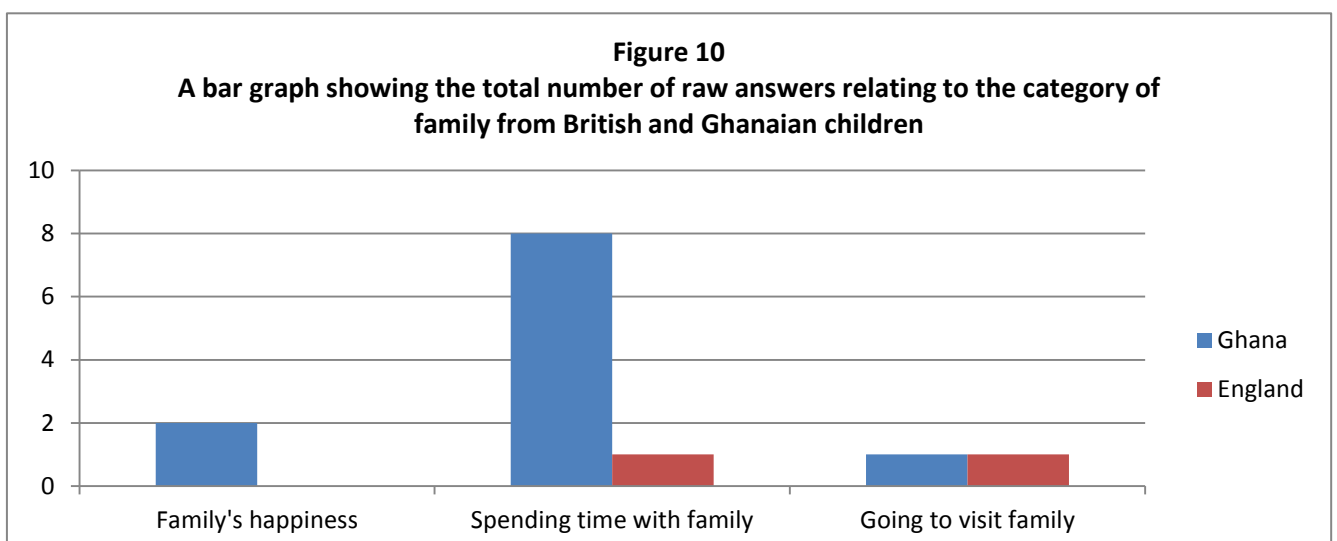
Friends category

The category of friends had 3 subcategories: boyfriends and girlfriends, activities with friends, and having friends. There were differences between countries as shown in Figure 9. For example, British children referred to boyfriends and girlfriends, while Ghanaian mentioned simply having friends. Both cultures mentioned activities with friends as making them happy.



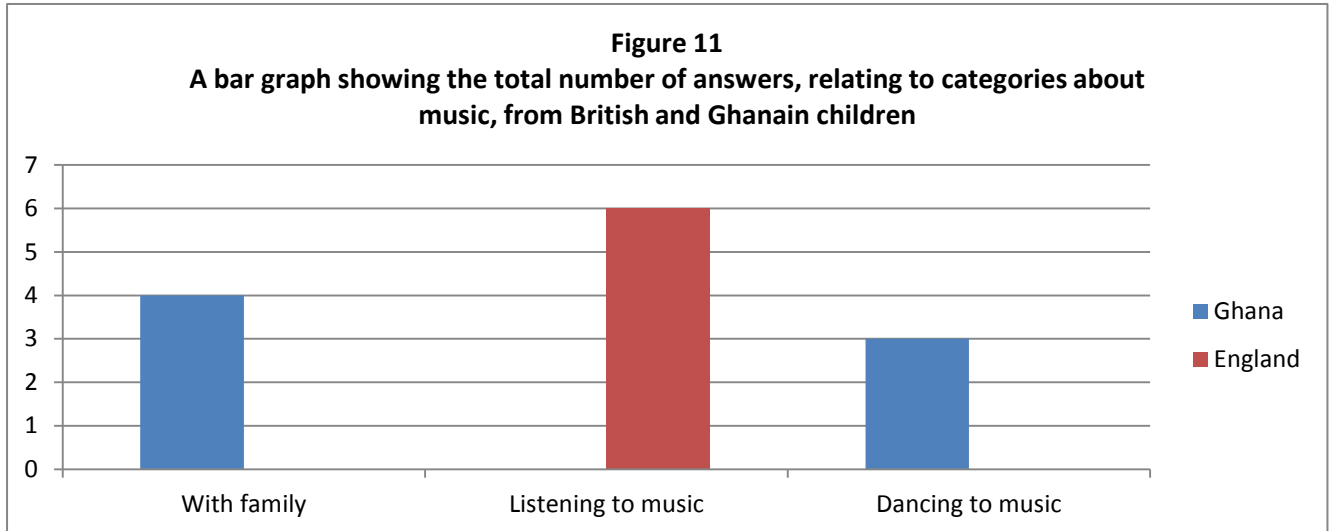
Family category

The main category of family was divided into 4 subcategories: family happiness, spending time with family, siblings, and visiting family. Differences across countries are clear in Figure 10. For example, Ghanaian children refer to every subcategory, while British children only mention spending time with family and visiting family.



Music category

The main category music was divided into 3 subcategories: with family, listening to music, and dancing to music. There were differences in responses across countries, as shown in Figure 11. For example, Ghanaian children mentioned dancing and singing with family and dancing to music on their own, while British children only referred to listening to music.



Discussion

The present paper adopted a cross-cultural approach to explore cultural influences on children's SWB. Results from this study demonstrate the importance of considering differing cultures (individualistic and collectivistic) as well as concepts, values and characteristics of these cultures when measuring children's SWB.

Specifically, children's SWB influences were found to be dependent on their culture, akin to previous study which used the same ISSWB scale with adults. Furthermore, Lu and Gilmour (2006)'s results highlighted a main effect of culture between American (individualistic) and Chinese (collectivistic) samples, suggesting the cultural specific values included within the subscales influenced SWB. It is important to note that since Lu and Gilmour (2006) used the ISSWB measure in its original format intended for adults, the ISSWB questionnaire was presently amended to appear more child-friendly and maintain good alpha reliability. Therefore it was a sufficient measure to examine cultural influences of SWB in children, and enables the present results to be comparable to previous research.

Consequently, similar to Lu and Gilmour's (2006) findings, a strong main effect of culture was also found in the present study. Similar to their findings from American adults, and as hypothesised, British children rated individualistic measures (personal accountability and explicit pursuit) with stronger agreement than collectivistic measures. Such findings indicate British children's SWB was influenced by individualistic cultural conceptions and values which encourage individuals to be focused on achieving personal happiness. In contrast, the Ghanaian children in the present study responded similarly to the Chinese adult sample used in Lu and Gilmour's study. As hypothesised, the Ghanaian children strongly agreed with the

questionnaire items related to collectivistic subscales (role obligations and explicit pursuit). Such agreement with these measures indicates children from collectivistic Ghana were influenced by cultural concepts which encourage interpersonal harmony and community welfare to achieve SWB. These results support the concept that individualistic and collectivistic cultures have differing sets of specific values of SWB, and place contrasting importance on particular pathways for individuals to achieve happiness (Lu, 2008). Taking this into consideration, findings could suggest that the body of literature (Markus & Kitayama, 2000; Lu and Gilmour, 2004; Lu and Gilmour, 2006, Lu, 2008) surrounding individualistic and collectivistic influences on SWB in adults can also be applied to children.

As previously mentioned, results indicated both British and Ghanaian children reported strong cultural influence in regards to the values and concepts of SWB. The second aim of this study therefore intended to explore if, as a result of these opposing cultural pathways, British and Ghanaian children reported differences in happiness levels. Results suggested that as hypothesised, there was a difference between British and Ghanaian children's mean Happiness Ladder scores, and that this difference was of a high statistical significance ($p < .001$). In relation to Cantril's Happiness Ladder (1965) Ghanaian children on average, presently rated themselves 8.8 out of 10. Cantril's guidelines for interpreting results indicate that scores over 7 suggest the individual's SWB is *thriving* indicating that their happiness is consistent and strong, and individuals have a generally positive attitude towards their present and future life. In contrast, British children, on average, rated themselves a considerably lesser score of 6.2. This score, according to Cantril, suggests their well-being is *struggling*; individuals have moderate or negative views of their present and future life. Results therefore suggest that children from collectivistic Ghana are on average happier than children from individualistic Britain, despite Ghana being a less economically developed country (Mahadevan & Asafu-Adjaye, 2007).

With regards to individualistic and collectivistic culture types, it could be argued that Ghanaian children reported themselves as happier due to the interpersonal-orientated values present within their collectivistic culture such as familial relationships. McMillian (1976) propose that collectivistic societies, with their central community-based values, provide individuals with the needs and feelings necessary to feel included in a group. Shared community values allow individuals to feel supported within their society and thus are able to achieve SWB with the reinforcement of others. Diener and Seligman (2002) suggest good social relationships are strongly correlated with high SWB. Therefore, it could be suggested that collectivistic cultures, which already value interpersonal harmony, allow individuals to thrive in creating strong relationships and are thus high in SWB. It may therefore also be more difficult for persons from an individualistic culture to achieve high SWB through social relationships due to cultural values being individual-orientated (Lu & Gilmour, 2006, p.36).

Differences in wealth and poverty between Britain and Ghana must also be considered SWB in this paper. The present study's results contrast with findings that have found a positive correlation between wealth and individualism with high levels of SWB in adults (Diener & Lucas, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2000; Diener & Biswas, 2002, The World Happiness Report, 2012). Nevertheless there are studies which support the present finding of high levels of SWB in low economically developed countries. An example of this involves Diener (2001)'s, study that examined slum

dwellers in Calcutta and found high self-reported levels of SWB amidst poverty. Similarly, Rojas (2009) found that only 24% of those deemed below the poverty threshold in Costa Rica reported themselves as being unhappy.

Complementary to the findings from the Happiness Ladder, present results of a content analysis of the open-ended enquiry of “what makes you happy?” highlighted the presence of both individualistic and collectivistic values concerning SWB. An additional influence of poverty was also found.

Relevantly, The Office of National Statistics (2011) explored individualistic children’s SWB influences by asking British children aged 3-16 years what made them happy. From these responses, researchers were able to identify several categories of SWB sources relevant to children of an individualistic culture. The present study found synonymous categories in its British sample, specifically: *luxury food* such as chocolate, sweets and takeaways, *technology/toys* such as games consoles, *exercise* such as football and dance, *animals* and having pets, *shopping* for clothes/appearance, and having good relationships with *friends*. This similarity in findings could suggest that these categories are distinctive and reliable sources of happiness for British individualistic children.

The present study’s results also found that generally, British children’s self-reported sources of happiness reflected their individualistic culture, with the majority of responses referring to self-orientated SWB influences. Responses tended to be focused around the individual, often using first person pronouns “I” and “me”. Answers which mentioned others also referred to an activity; for example “going on holiday with my family” or “going to the cinema with my friends”. Therefore the main source of happiness is arguably the activity in which the child is involved rather than the company in which the child is in. Explanation for this can be drawn from the individualistic notion of the self being central to happiness. However, the inclusion of family/friends does support Diener and Seligman’s (2002) research which suggests social relationships are important universally, just not central in individualistic cultures. Further evidence of person-centred happiness sources can be seen in the category *school*. British children only mentioned school in a negative way, for example “summer holidays because I don’t have school and I can do what I want instead”. This could be a reflection of the violation of explicit pursuit, the individualistic notion of striving to achieve personal happiness. Some British children may feel restricted by educational institutions and consider them to be preventing them from doing what makes them happy.

Responses from this sample also tended to be materialistic in nature, with the majority referring to material objects/gain. For example, the most common category *play*, consisted of a quarter of British children sourcing games consoles as making them happy. This could well be a reflection of western society’s mass market of recreational computer games, especially in children (Woodard & Gridina, 2000). However, *food*, *celebrations* and *shopping* were also common categories which also included materialistic responses. Answers relating to these categories included luxury foods such as takeaways, receiving presents and going shopping, for example “when Mummy takes me shopping and buys me loads of new things”. Materialistic sources may generally be a reflection of Britain as a wealthy consumerist society. However another possible interpretation for why British children reported materialistic sources of happiness could be an expression of individualistic values and customs.

Britain, as an individualistic society, encourages personal successes and goal fulfilment to achieve SWB; termed personal accountability (Kitayama & Markus, 2000). Children may therefore consider material gain as personal gain and thus an achievement influencing their SWB.

In contrast, the collectivistic notion of social-orientated SWB was apparent in the Ghanaian children's sources of happiness. Responses frequently referred to the inclusion of family and friends, with the use of terms "we" and "they". Collectivistic inter-personal based influences are apparent in categories such as *family's happiness*, *spending time with family* and *having friends*. Unlike the British sample, Ghanaian children reported to source happiness simply from the well-being of others, for example "My family being happy makes me happy". Furthermore, there were differences in categories that both British and Ghanaian children mentioned such as *music*. Whilst British children stated their individual-centred enjoyment from music; "Music makes me happy", Ghanaian children expressed their collectivistic values again by the inclusion of others; "listening to music with my family, it makes us happy". Other than the differences in inclusion of family/friends, British and Ghanaian children varied considerably in the category of *school*. As mentioned, British children referred to school as a hindrance. Ghanaian children however, reported many positive aspects of school as making them happy, including *teachers*, *learning* and *friends*. An interpretation of this could be that in Ghana, a less developed country where access to education may be limited, children may appreciate the benefits and privilege of school. This is because it not only adds an additional aspect of community to their lives but also it may further their life more so than British children who may take compulsory education for granted.

Additional to the presence of collectivistic values in Ghanaian responses, poverty related influences were also identified as categories. 18/100 Ghanaian children's sources of happiness was *food*, specifically responses relating to eating food as basic need, for example "I am happy when I have a full tummy". Furthermore, Ghanaian children also reported to source happiness from water as eliminating thirst and causing crop growth, for example "having water to drink makes me happy". Responses referring to *absences of health problems* were also associated with fulfilment of basic needs. Such categories are a clear reflection of Ghana being a lesser economically developed country. It seems that as a result a considerable amount of Ghanaian children sourced happiness from the fulfilment of basic needs. However, collectivistic values were also frequently combined with fulfilment of basic needs, for example "when my brother isn't sick and he's happy too" and "when Mumma makes a good tasty meal for all the family", demonstrating the impact of social-orientated collectivistic values on children, even when faced with adverse conditions.

Such findings are again similar to those found by Diener (2001) who found high levels of SWB in slum dwellers in Calcutta. Findings suggested that poor living conditions and lack of basic needs were compensated with emphasis on secure relationships with family and friends. Furthermore, Diener, Harter and Aurora's (2010) research into Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1965) similarly suggest that SWB can be achieved with good social relationships and appreciation of others, even if basic needs such as food and water are lacking. Seemingly therefore, when basic needs are fulfilled, SWB will be increased further.

So in the present study collectivistic values have been found to influence Ghanaian children from as young as ten years of age. This culture forms central beliefs within these children that happiness is dependent on others happiness, and thus ensuring harmonious social relationships is vital. An interpretation of the differences found between these cultures is that as a child is dependent on parents/guardians, achieving SWB through good relationships with others is a more achievable notion in collectivistic societies for younger people. For children of an individualistic society however, achieving SWB through the pathway constructed by their culture could be considered more difficult because of its independent emphasis. Individualistic values which accentuate individual-centred happiness have been found presently amongst British children. For a child who is financially dependent on their family and regulated to attending school, it may be more difficult for British children to pursue their own interests and desires and thus find it much harder to achieve higher levels of SWB. As these restrictions diminish with age, children are able to replace school with careers and become financially independent, supporting the findings that job satisfaction and stable income are positively correlated with SWB in adults (Diener & Diener, 1995). This later shift toward independence could cause an increase in SWB levels, explaining why the majority of literature reports high SWB in individualistic adults (Diener & Lucas, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2000; Diener & Biswas, 2002, *The World Happiness Report*, 2012). In contrast, collectivistic children's values and concepts of SWB based around others remain consistent into adulthood as Lu & Gilmour (2006) report similar collectivistic influences of SWB in adults as the present paper does in children.

Needless to say, that there were limitations of the study that should be mentioned. Samples for this study were selected on the basis of their culture type and age, and as a result additional confounding variables were not considered. For example, it was not predicted that the influence of poverty would be so impacting on Ghanaian children. Sources of happiness self-reported by this sample, despite reflecting collectivistic values, had a tendency to reference basic needs as influencing SWB. It would therefore be interesting to examine British children who are also below the poverty threshold to see if sources of happiness reflected basic needs in favour of materialistic/individualistic sources. An additional factor which the present study did not consider, which future research could examine, is the interplay of both individualistic and collectivistic cultures. It may be interesting to explore cultural influences and sources of SWB in children who have immigrated from one culture to the other; for instance, children with a collectivistic upbringing who have moved to an individualistic culture. Such research could highlight the effects and interaction of conflicting collectivistic and individualistic influences on children.

In summary, the results from the present study compare to findings that explore SWB in adults; thus, suggesting individualistic and collectivistic cultural influences are as impacting on children as they are in adults. British children are reported to take a person-centred approach to achieving SWB, whereas Ghanaian children report to achieve SWB through interpersonal relationships. Ghanaian children also rated themselves as happier than their British counterparts. The findings from this study highlight the impact of cultural influences on children's well-being and thus, culture appears to be an important aspect contributing to the understanding of child development.

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