

# A Proposed Model of Cross-Cultural Competence, Emotion Regulation, Intercultural Adjustment and Ethnic Outgroup Aggression

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## Introduction

Research has shown that the principle of **intergroup anxiety** and **susceptibility to persuasion** can lead to **higher ethnic outgroup aggression**. The increment of both are significantly related to aggressive behaviors.<sup>1,2</sup>

In the context of intercultural encounters it is the process of **Emotion Regulation (ER)** that **determines** the degree of **adaptation** to a certain situation. People who **rarely suppress emotions** are less likely to adapt.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence **high ethnic outgroup aggression is expected**.

The current model will be an **expansion of the previous model<sup>2</sup>**, where cross-cultural competence (CCC) is a predictor of intergroup anxiety and susceptibility to persuasion.<sup>4</sup>

### Aim

To present a brief overview of a recent body of literature regarding ER, intercultural communication (ICC) and their relationship, to relate it to the proposed model and expand upon that model.

## Emotion Regulation and Culture

**Emotion regulation (ER)** is important for well-being and health. ER can be achieved by employing **healthy** (e.g. reappraisal)<sup>5</sup> and **unhealthy** (e.g. self-injury) **copng mechanisms**.<sup>6</sup> When someone cannot regulate their emotions well, this can lead to overwhelming emotions. This inability to regulate and the feeling (**dysregulation**) of overwhelming emotion can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms in the form of **maladaptive behaviour**.<sup>7</sup>

There are cultural differences in ER. In **individualist cultures**: people regulate less high arousal emotions to save energy. In **collectivist cultures**: people regulate less low arousal emotions as those are needed for influencing people. However, **collectivist cultures** value **conformity** and harmony, for which **low arousal** emotions work.<sup>8</sup>

## Intercultural Communication

**Intercultural communication (ICC)** can be verbal and non-verbal.<sup>9</sup> **Verbal ICC** occurs via **language**. In children, language **conveys culture** by communicating norms and rules.<sup>10</sup>

ICC is an essential part of **cross-cultural competence (CCC)**. The higher the CCC, the better someone's **ability to communicate with people from different cultures**. Hence, they are less prone to failure in communication, and better at conveying information.<sup>11</sup>

A progressive **ICC will result in improved CCC** of both parties involved, as this kind of communication is required in order to receive the information conveyed during cross-cultural interactions.

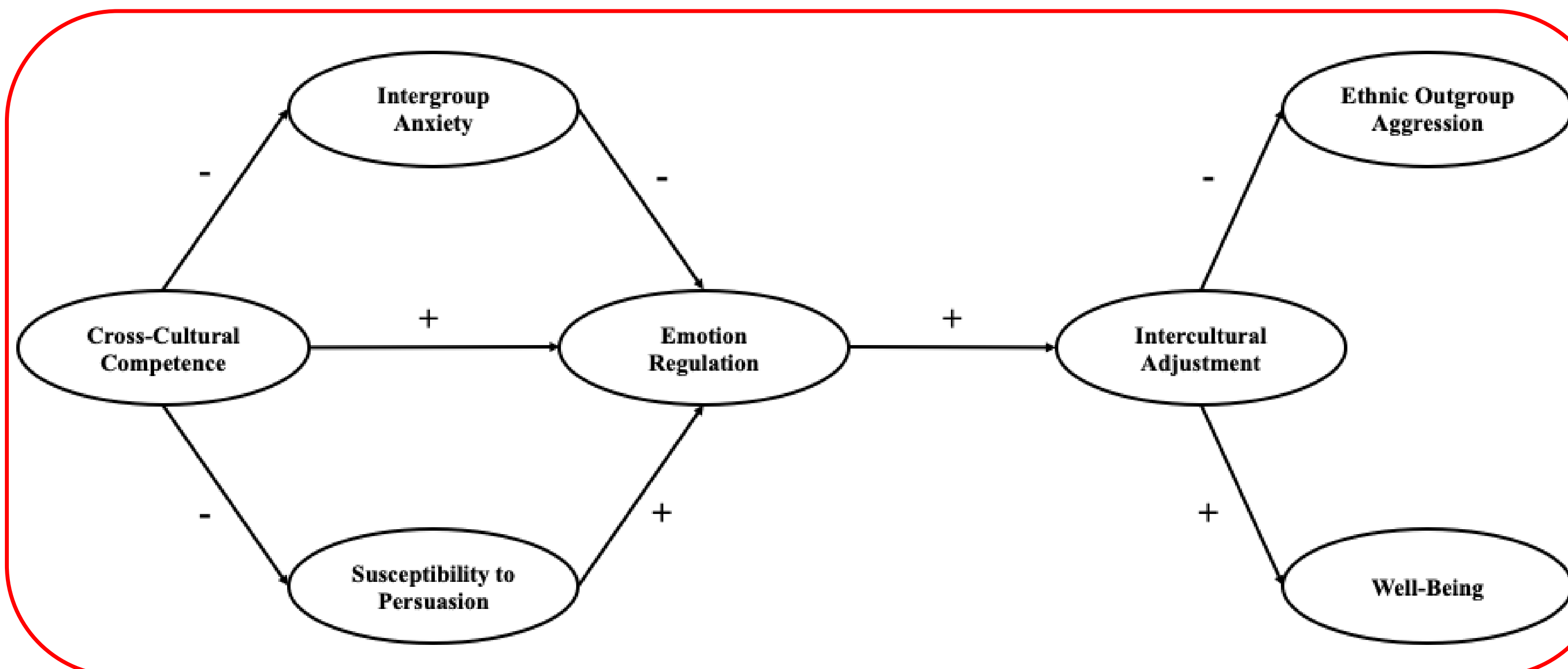


Fig. 1 The proposed model based on literature research on the effects of intercultural factors, their effect on emotion regulation and the effect that will have on well-being.

## The Role of Emotion Regulation and Cross-Cultural Competence on Intercultural Adjustment and Ethnic Outgroup Aggression

People often engage in **intercultural adjustment and adaptations**. A **higher intercultural adjustment** will lead to **lower ethnic outgroup aggression** and in turn a **improved well-being**.<sup>3</sup>

The degree of adaptation **depends on cultural background**, which effects the likelihood of suppression of emotions. The **higher the CCC** (which is affected by ICC), the **lower the intergroup anxiety**, and **susceptibility to persuasion**. This leads to an **increased likelihood to adjust and adapt**.<sup>11</sup>

ER can be seen as a **mediator of CCC-intercultural adjustment relationship**. The degree of adaptation is influenced by ER strategies that are deemed appropriate in certain cultural contexts. However, it also affects future regulation strategies and how they affect one's well-being.<sup>11</sup>

## The Proposed Model

**ER is important** for cross-cultural communication within interpersonal relationships. The **better the ER**, the **better the ICC**. Maleficent ER-strategies, and **over/under regulation** of our emotions most likely **affects our intercultural communication**. See Figure 1.

**CCC affects** intergroup anxiety and susceptibility to persuasion negatively, and ER positively. **Higher susceptibility to persuasion**, means a person is also **better at ER**. **Higher outgroup aggression** results in a lower capability to exercise ER.

A lower ER rate means **more difficulties with intercultural adjustment**, a **higher likelihood of ethnic outgroup aggression**, and a **decrease in well-being**.

## Recommendations

**More research** is needed on the **relationship between ER and CCC**, as there is a paucity of studies on cross-cultural differences and similarities in the ER-ICC relationship.

Another aspect that requires **more research** is the **assessment of ER strategies and ICC**, as most measures are in self-report format. Cross-culturally sensitive measures are needed to compare data on this.

Currently, we are looking for partners who want to collaborate in this research project. If you are interested, please contact: [s.stupar@ucr.nl](mailto:s.stupar@ucr.nl)

## References

