**Akumal Culture Summary**

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**January 4th, Thursday**

**General remarks**

Dr. Seligman introduced the meeting by discussing the background of the positive psychology movement and the goals for this meeting, which is to promote good science; more specifically, the goals include proposals that would produce a book, a major grant request, or a major scientific discovery.

# Dr. Ed Diener

# Measurement of subjective-well being across societies

Types of quality of life (QOL) indicators:

Following are types of indicators that might be used to measure quality of life:

* Philosophical definitions of the good: Chosen by people; a priori values from religion, philosophy, Experienced as positive or pleasureful.
* Economic indicators.
* Social indicators (e.g. longevity, pollution, crime indicators, etc.).
* Subjective well-being indicators: people’s evaluations of their lives, including ratings of life satisfaction, domain, satisfaction (family, work etc), positive and negative affect, optimism, fulfillment, zest, and attitudes toward institutions.

## Models of culture and subjective well-being

* Universal needs. if a society meets universal human needs, we might consider its quality of life and/or subjective well being to be higher in that society than in one that does not meet such needs (Edgerton, Sick Societies). One issue is which needs to consider besides basic, physiological needs.
* Self-contained systems. Subjective well-being is defined within a culture; this is related to the concept of cultural relativism and might suggest that societies are all equal and cannot be compared. But on the other hand one could explore how well a society is meeting its own goals.
* Subjective well-being is one value among many, and only one of the goals that people seek. It is important to keep in mind that the value of positive and negative affect can vary across cultures (in China, positive and negative affect both seen as about equally valuable).
* Heritability: temperament and adaptation. People adapt to their conditions and temperament is a long-term cause of individual differences in subjective well-being. In each culture, there is a normal distribution of temperament types. Thus there are few differences between cultures in subjective well-being.
* Measurement problems. Subjective well-being measurement across cultures can be confounded by artifacts (e.g. humility, number use, indigenous emotion words, impression management, recall differences) and by the fact that it may be impossible to make such comparisons across cultures, as the notion and elements of subjective well-being may be different across cultures.
* Wellsprings model. (comments from Dr. Seligman and others). A good life consists of the exercise of various virtues and strengths. Another model of subjective well-being across cultures could be to ask to what extent a culture lives up to a set of virtues and strengths

## Data

One type of data about subjective well-being across cultures comes from a 1992 world value survey based on representative samples in which people provided a 1-10 life satisfaction rating. Eastern European, former Soviet bloc countries were less happy than they are now, and also than poor countries such as Nigeria. Japan and South Korea rather low in ratings; Pacific Rim, Confucian countries were less happy than might expected. Argentina, Chile were happier than might be expected based on income.

Income correlates with average satisfaction ranking .65. Income is also correlated with equality among sexes, greater human rights, more democracy, and greater longevity. The effects of such confounds May not be separable.

Across countries, major predictors are norms and income. Within countries, income is a weaker predictor. There is a.13 correlation in the US among income and subjective well-being. In poor countries, the correlation is bigger: .6. This pattern of results may point to the importance of income disparity as a predictor, or social comparison (comment by Dr. Rozin).

Issue of heritability and subjective well-being.

Dr. Seligman pointed out the possible genetics confound, as there is a .5 heritability of positive affectivity. This may have come about because evolution ought to be interested in subjective states. Maybe, therefore, there is heritability between cultures, as well. Dr. Diener proposed that for this issue one could look at immigrants. Also suggestive of a genetic disposition toward temperament is a study showing that if a tissue is placed on infants’ faces, infants do not resist as much in Asia, suggesting they innately have a quieter temperament. Moreover, Dr. Seligman pointed out, Blacks in the US have 60% the rate of depression of Whites, and Hispanics 80%, which might point to a genetic buffer.

## Measurement issues

One important measurement issue is what time period to focus on: past, present or future. For example, an old person might not be very happy currently, but might be very satisfied with her overall life.

It is important to differentiate between these differentially related constructs: positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. Across countries, using probability samples, mean positive affect and mean life satisfaction are correlated .47 in a representative sample, .58 in college students. The correlation between life satisfaction and negative affect is smaller: -.37 in a representative sample, -.16 in a college sample. The correlation between positive and negative affect is .26 in a representative sample, .29 in college students.

There are many different measures of subjective well-being. Examples include self reports, experience sampling (beeper studies), informant reports, biological measures (e.g. left frontal dominance, cortisol levels), objective behavior, and memory/retrospective reports. The distinction between online and retrospective well being measures is highlighted by the fact that there can be a greater disparity between Asian Americans’ online and retrospective reports than between European Americans’. Online, these two groups gave rather similar ratings, but the Asian-Americans retrospectively report less well-being. In online ratings, Asian Americans were not as unhappy as Japanese, but were retrospectively quite negative, while the Japanese were quite low both on online and retrospective reports. Taking the difference between life satisfaction and event memory, Illinois students remain very positive, Moscow students slightly positive, while the homeless in Calcutta and in Fresno have a very small difference.

## Measurement model

Stages of subjective well-being responses: Events and circumstances person perceive as relevant to well being, immediate reactions (norms can have some influence), a later recall of well being (norms can have strong influence), global judgments (which involves the weighting of different memories). Informant reports can also be used as a measurement tool.

Dr. Schimmack cited data from 6countreis suggesting that emotional components are weaker predictors of life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures because one’s personal emotions may not be seen as being as relevant to life satisfaction as in individualistic cultures.

**Dr. Mel Konner**

**Discussion**

## Issues addressed in this discussion.

Are there universal causes of subjective well-being? At what level of abstraction?

Universalist vs. culture-specific views.

Are there “sick” and “healthy” societies? How are these to be defined and measured?

## Evolutionary background

Dr. Konner approaches these issues from an evolutionary perspective. We’re here because of our ancestors’ cleverness about survival, reproduction. Evolution is about overcoming adversity which is pervasive (this is still true for most people), which may have resulted in a selection pressure for resiliency and optimism (perhaps even unrealistic optimism, as when can see likely future events, our own death, availability or not of food, risks of hunting, realistic appraisals would have prohibited further evolution).

In taking such a perspective, it is instructive to look at our close genetic relatives. Chimps and bonobos both share about 98.5% of DNA with humans. But they are socially very different. Chimps are violent, competitive and hierarchical, while bonobos seem to operate on the principle, make love not war. Bonobo societies have little violence, with female dominant coalitions which can be partly cemented through lesbian sexual encounters. Males have to make alliances with females. One question raised by Dr. Seligman is whether bonobos experience more positive affect, which might be investigated through body signs, faces, or vocalizations as indicators.

Positive anthropology.

Despite the fact that the !kung san live in such difficult circumstances, they are doing really well emotionally for people in such difficult circumstances. They have art, religious ritual, etc., and live in a mostly civil society. For leisure they often sit around a fire and talk. Interestingly their conversation style seems to be to frame comments as complaints, which contrasts with the upbeat mood with which they go about life. This highlights the issue from the first session on how to measure subjective well-being – through what people say, or through their mood?

Positive and negative emotions.

A lively discussion on the nature of positive and negative emotions ensued. Dr. Seligman characterized emotions as galvanizing – negative emotions are for fighting or fleeing, positive emotions are for building and broadening. Citing Cacciopo, we seem to react more quickly to negative things as the cost is high for ignoring threats. The possibility was raised that negative emotions come into play in zero-sum games (e.g. survival clash), positive emotions in non zero-sum interactions.

Dr. Mesquita proposed that emotions are inherently about social interactions. Also discussed were emotions (emotional expressions) as social signals (Dr. Rozin).

Dr. Seligman pointed out that one crucial distinction lies in differentiating truly positive emotions from the relief of negative states. This may hinge on a rigid delineation of indifference.

Dr. Diener commented that there may be a common pathway at the end of pleasure (n. acumbens), and that the distinction between different positive emotions may be in the initial pathways.

Individualism and collectivism as they relate to subjective well-being.

One interesting thread in the session had to do with subjective well-being as it relates to individuals’ experiences as opposed to other people. Several relevant points were made. Dr. Kitayama pointed out that subjective well being has to do with the individual, and he focused on collective aspects of subjective well-being. Likely emotions related to this are gratitude, compassion, sympathy, etc. Subjective well-being may be against rule of collectivism – against devotion to parents, kids, in-group members. Further, the question of how satisfied one is with one’s life may be unnatural to Japanese.

One particularly powerful example of positive emotions comes from a gratitude exercise which was performed in Dr. Seligman’s positive psychology seminar, in which people wrote testimonials about what certain people had done for them, and the people were flown in to hear these testimonials. Dr. Nisbett brought up a kind of therapy in Japan (Nikon therapy?), debt to others emphasized.

Dr. Fischler focused on subjective well-being as it relates to control. Americans seem obsessed with having a sense of control over life and destiny, and thus feel a personal responsibility for success and failure

Is some aspect of subjective well-being universal if monitoring is not? How to measure?

Dr. Schimmack argued that across cultures the tendency to sit back and reflect over past may differ.

Dr. Peterson suggested eliminating “subjective” and letting people rate their well-being however they feel is appropriate. Dr. Kitayama proposed that people could describe occasions when they feel good and that they would be able to mention social aspects.

Measuring subjective well-being across cultures is problematic because of how to interpret the scores. People may be using different reference points or comparison groups in their ratings (a paper by Peng and Nisbett talks about this problem). Also problematic is the clustering of scores around the high point of the scale – is this really a feature of people or is it an artifact?

Dr. Seligman proposed that one domain in which the description of one’s subjective experience is worked out well is in wine tasting; this could be used as a paradigm for measuring subjective well-being.

**Dr. Batja Mesquita and Dr. Mayumi Karasawa**

**Different standards of good: Well-being and coping in US and Japan.**

### Focus of session

The topic of this session was insight into dynamic processes of coping, everything a person may do to arrange a new fit between the person and the world, including overt and covert reactions. Successful coping makes a new level of well being after it was disturbed.

Assessment of subjective well-being is culturally grounded. Coping goals may be different for US and Japanese subjects. In America, there may be a goal for self-enhancement. One may wish to influence relationships in ways that accommodate one’s goals, and one may do this by being assertive. Negative relationships may be discontinued if one’s own goals demand it. In Japan, the coping goals may be to maintain or improve relationships. People may be expected to adjust to relationships in ways that make them selves inconspicuous, striving to be “no self”.

Studies.

Structured interviews were conducted with 40 American and 50 Japanese men and women, coming from student and community samples. In general the differences between the countries were larger than the differences between samples. Participants were asked to generate situations in which another offended them. They were then asked structured questions. Coping styles were coded into strategies derived from existing lists and updated through this dataset. Open-ended work was needed before quantitative work can start. Results showed that Americans’ strategies tended toward: blaming the other person, minimizing agency. Americans tended to try to influence the relationship through aggression and assertion about what they wanted (75% of Americans mentioned doing it vs. 25% of Japanese). Americans also tended to distance themselves by breaking off the relationship or by making it less important. In contrast, Japanese coping styles focused much more on attempts to improve the relationship, for example by trying to understand the other person’s perspective. Japanese were also more likely to refrain from doing anything.

Goals of well-being are intertwined with how we want to achieve it. In another study on experience sampling, 50 American and 50 Japanese students reported on their emotions 4x/day for a week. These were categorized as being related to exercising influence (e.g. anger) or adjusting (e.g. resignment). Americans had twice as many influence than adjustment emotions. Japanese had about equal amounts. Similar results were obtained when people were asked to generate as many emotions as possible in a certain amount of time.

### Positive psychology, happyology and short-cuts.

There was a lot of discussion around whether people simply want to be happy, or whether they want to be happy for the right reasons – through the exercise of virtues. Nozick’s happiness machine is relevant here, as is Dr. Seligman’s lizard story about an iguana who refused food that was presented to it and would only eat if it could stalk and capture the food. Shortcuts, such as drugs, are context-free ways of achieving happiness. These eliminate the meaning of well-being because overcoming obstacles may be necessary for enjoying life. It is important to distinguish different types of meaning:

* Fullness of moment – these include things like lingering, savoring
* Authenticity – the relationship between actions and emotions that occur, and the connection to signature strengths.
* Meaning – attachment to something larger than you are.

Context, short-vs. long-term focus, and exercise of strengths and virtues are all crucial to positive psychology as differentiated from merely the science of happiness.

**Dr. Paul Rozin**

**Comforts and pleasures across cultures**

Framework.

Dr. Rozin wishes to approach the topic from a framework broader than is usually taken in cultural psychology, taking into account for example, domains of activity, social class, intra-cultural variation (e.g. urban vs. rural, generation), and the evolution of cultures.

Humor and aesthetics, two topics of immense importance to positive psychology, have been virtually ignored by modern psychology.

One major point made is that a lot of the way that culture operates is not inside people’s heads, but in how the environment is arranged - how culture builds the world around us. For example, the French eat less because portions smaller.

Framing pleasurable events – what unit of analysis to apply?

What experience one compares a given event to will determine how that event is experienced and remembered. The question arises as to whether we want to maximize online experience of pleasure as opposed to memory for pleasure. We seem to structure or frame our negative events in such a way that we neglect how long they last. Kahneman and Fredrickson have shown that what determined our memory for painful events are the peak of the event and the offset. One key question is if pleasurable events are remembered in the same way.

Focus of the Pod.

Three central questions will be addressed: How experiences are coded and segmented, how culture influences such segmentation, and how such segmentation can that be modified. Drs. Konner and Rozin discussed that individuals and cultures can differ on emphasis on memory, anticipation and online experience but probably all memory is event-centered and duration neglectful. One of the main points of this session is that people can experience more positivity if they can segment their lives or code events in certain ways that maximizes experienced pleasure and minimizes adaptation to it, along with coding negative events in ways that minimize their impact on life as well.

The pleasure – comfort distinction.

In Schitovsky’s Joyless Economy, a distinction is drawn between comforts (these make life better and easier but have a steady state quality which is adapted to) and pleasures (unique events which are not adapted to). Europeans spend more on pleasures and Americans on comforts. Dr. Seligman proposed that maybe the distinction between comforts and pleasures lies in how fast the stimulus takes effect (air conditioning is slower than ice cream). What is adapted to may be a product of cultural ideas about what constitutes a meaningful life. People seem in general poor at predicting how much they will like something in the future. Older people seem better at predicting what they will adapt to.

Dr. Rozin suggests framing positive experiences in such a way that does not make regular life bad. We want to compare daily life to negative events so that we are constantly reminded of how good things are. Dr. Diener points out that happy people do less social comparison in general or look up and see something to strive for and down think better off than them.

Drs. Kupperman and Kitayama discussed a Japanese concept, *mono no aware,* which describes a bittersweet exp, one that is wonderful but sad because it is finite. This brings up again how events can be coded differently depending on one’s perspective.

**January 5th, Friday**

**Dr. Ed Diener.**

**Values and norms for subjective well-being; ideal levels of subjective well-being; other goals and competition among values; approach and avoidance; the scrim**

The studies to be talked about are related to the effect of norms on happiness across cultures. The differences probably are not wholly due to genetic differences (Sun & Diener book chapter discusses this).

It seems that norms for negative emotions don’t correlate with the experience of unpleasant emotions. But for positive emotions, there are correlations between means across countries and correlations within countries.The measure of norms is rather shallow: “is it appropriate to feel/express guilt?”).

College students in selected countries out of 42 indicated how frequently during the past week they felt pride, contentment, affection and joy. Latin American countries at top of scale, while China, Hong Kong, Japan, S Korea, and Taiwan were at the bottom. When ranking countries on appropriateness of feeling positive and negative affect, very similar rankings emerge; that is, across countries, norms for feeling positive and negative emotions and people’s experience of positive and negative emotions are highly correlated. There seems to be no relationship to collectivism as Latin American countries and Pacific Rim, Confucian countries are spread out on the scales.

As for why there is a correlation for positive emotions but not for negative emotions, maybe for positive emotions people don’t know the norms so they use their own experiences to infer the norms, while people do know the norms for negative emotions. Another possibility is that people don’t use norms for positive affect.

Diener then described a latent class analysis he performed across cultures to explore the effects of norms on positive and negative affects. Through this technique he divided samples into “classes” (people who respond similarly) and then compared the proportions of classes across cultures. Participants were college students. Each class exists in each culture there is variation in how many people are in a given class in each culture.

* Class 1: all pleasant emotions are good. 90% of people in America and Australia, 8% in the People’s Republic of China.
* Class 5. joy and affection are good, pride and contentment are so-so. The majority of people in Taiwan fall into this class, almost no one else.
* Class 6: joy and affection are good, pride is terrible. 29% in PRC, (nearly) nobody in other 3 nations.

If different people value different emotions in different cultures, do these norms influence experience of emotions? Dr. Oishi’s study had Japanese-Americans and European-Americans shoot 10 baskets and then rate their moods, and then come back two weeks later, where they were given a choice of shooting baskets again or playing darts before mood measures. European-Americans who were good at basketball wanted to do it again. Euro-Americans who were bad at shooting baskets chose to play darts. European-Americans seemed to be maximizing their mood Japanese-Americans showed the opposite pattern vis-à-vis darts and basketball, and their mood went down if they worked on a game they were bad at. Thus Japanese may not be motivated to maximize their mood as Americans are, but to improve their skills in the long run.

Global v narrow measures of satisfaction.

Americans and people from the Pacific Rim show different patterns when asked about satisfaction globally or narrowly. In the Pacific Rim, people show little discrepancy when asked to rate global satisfaction (e.g. satisfaction with school) as compared to more narrow satisfaction (e.g. satisfaction with teachers, textbooks, etc.). In the US and Australia, people show higher global than narrow satisfaction. In Latin America there is the biggest difference. Using such a discrepancy, we can predict the average life satisfaction of countries. Betas: income predicts life satisfaction of nations (B=.37), but positivity (this discrepancy score) predicts life satisfaction just as well (B=.33).

Retrospective and online ratings of moods and emotions.

Differences across cultures in retrospectively rated satisfaction may be bigger than online satisfaction. European Americans remember being happier than they were, while Asian Americans are more accurate.

### Scrim

American students weight best thing in life heavily when rate satisfaction, while Asians rate worst thing in life heavily. This raises the question of romantic illusions cultures. Sandra Murray has shown that satisfaction and long-lastingness of relationships depends on the size of the discrepancy between your rating of your spouse and others’ rating of your spouse.

Socialization of emotions.

There is no data on how emotions are socialized. Could include cultural effects on:

* Attention to situations
* Interpretation of situations
* Attention to emotional feelings
* Interpretation of emotional feelings
* Expression of emotional feelings

### Discussion

Dr. Seligman pointed out that retrospective biases may come from the amount of attention that is paid to the construction of the narrative of one’s life. Or, as Dr. Diener pointed out, people may try to fit the past to a script when remembering events. When attn is deployed, triage of background and foreground. Dr. Kitayama suggested that in collectivism cultures, perhaps a sociography, rather than an autobiography, is being written.

Another issue discussed was whether positive emotions are more plastic than negative emotions.

**Dr. Shige Oishi**

**Data on differences in correlates across cultures.**

This meeting was a summary of existing literature on cultural differences and similarities in well being. Differences and similarities can emerge with respect to many different constructs, including domain satisfaction (satisfaction with self), personality (extraversion, consistency), self-discrepancies (ideal-actual discrepancies, self-vs. parent-goal discrepancies), emotion (emotion vs. norm, pride vs. shitashimi), and goal progress (independent vs. interdependent goal pursuits).

Data from Diener and Diener (1995) coming from Michalos’s survey data of 35 nations correlated self-satisfaction and global satisfaction, family satisfaction and global satisfaction, and friendship satisfaction and global satisfaction. In individualistic nations, the correlation between self satisfaction and global satisfaction is high. Such correlations are lower in collectivistic nations, but are still significant. The more individualistic a nation is, the higher the correlation between self-satisfaction and global life satisfaction (r=.53). For family satisfaction and global satisfaction, the correlations are similar in individualistic and collectivistic nations. For friend satisfactions, the size of the correlations is a little higher in individualistic nations, which is counter-intuitive. The more individualistic a nation is, the higher the correlation. Dr. Seligman raised the concern that the shape of distributions of satisfaction should be attended to. Also, the concern was raised that satisfaction ratings can be problematic because of comparison group problems.

People in individualistic cultures who endorse horizontal individualism on Triandis’ measure are satisfied, whereas people in collectivistic cultures who endorse vertical collectivism are satisfied (Oishi, 2000).

Self-concept consistency is important in individualistic countries. College students rated themselves on 20 traits in 5 different situations: with best friend, parents, strangers, professors, younger person. An identity consistency score was calculated to reflect similarity across situations. In the US, there was a correlation between consistency and satisfaction with life, positive affect, and a negative correlation with negative affect. In Korea, the correlations were in the same directions, but smaller. In the US, those people who rate themselves consistently have more social skills, likeability as rated by informants, but there were no such correlations in Korea (Suh, 1999).

In European Canadians, the larger the discrepancy between the ideal self and the actual self, the more depression. Among Japanese, and Asian Canadians, the correlation was in the same direction but smaller. In European Canadians, the discrepancy was larger for unimportant traits, while among the Japanese, the discrepancy as larger on important traits(Heine & Lehman, 1999).

When subjects rated importance of different traits to be successful, getting along, being cooperative, and being hard-working were important to Canadians and to Japanese. Japanese rated being patient, sensitive to others, dependable, and adaptable more important. Canadians rated being self-motivated, determined, self-confident more important than the Japanese (Heine & Lehman, 1999).

Kitayama, Markus & Kurokawa (2000) showed that in Japan, there is a correlation (r=.58) between interpersonally engaged positive emotion (closeness, friendly, respect, : fureai, shitashimi, sonkei) and general positive emotions, while in the US the correlation is smaller (r=.30). In contrast, in Japan, the correlation between interpersonally disengaged positive emotion (proud, feel good about self) with general pos emotions is .20 while in the US it is higher, .54.

Oishi and Diener (2000) examined goals, culture and well-being. A Japanese sample of university students listed 5 goals they were pursuing over a week and why they were pursuing the goal: Foing for fun or enjoyment; for self, not others; to make parents and friends happy; to meet expectations of others. Then the participants came back in a week to rate how they were doing meeting goals and how satisfied they were with life over past week. If the goal had little to do with others’ expectations, there was no effect of goal progress on satisfaction. However, if the goal did have to do with expectations of others, there was a big effect on satisfaction of progress for meeting goal

### Summary

There are cultural similarities in satisfaction with family, and in the importance of getting along with others, cooperation. There are cultural differences in satisfaction with self, the importance of being unique, self-confident, self-motivated vs. patient, sensitive to others; interpersonally disengaged positive emotions (pride) vs. engaged (shitashimi); identity consistency; and independent vs. interdependent goal pursuits.

**Dr. Shinobu Kitayama**

**Discussion of differences in goals, correlates and causes of subjective well-being across cultures.**

This session focused mostly on methodological and definitional issues related to the measurement of satisfaction and well-being across cultures. One issue discussed had to do with whether well-being is conceptualized as being personally (subjectively) focused on focused on the external, social environment. If well-being is holistically as opposed to personally constructed, satisfaction may be hard to capture with analytic, sequential types of scales and proposed the development of more holistic, intuitive types of scales, along with behavioral measures. Also discussed were the possibilities that personal satisfaction and well-being may not have the same meaning across cultures and may not be salient to people in other cultures.

Dr. Rozin and others echoed this point and said that a more anthropological, ethnographic approach may be more appropriate at this stage rather than jumping into more “precise” measurements.

Dr. Diener raised the key question of whether, given these concerns, one could ever conclude for example that Americans are happier than the Japanese, as the data seem to suggest at this point.

**Dr. Shinobu Kitayama**

Presentation on working data.

This session replaced Dr. Dov Cohen’s discussion on differences in standards across cultures.

### Introduction

Dr. Kitayama described several studies on thee issue of subjective and intersubjective happiness across cultures. Subjective happiness characterizes a form of happiness which is pursued individually, a form of happiness which would be expected to be more common in Western, independent cultures. Intersubjective happiness is socially shared and socially realized, and which would be expected to be more common in Asian, interdependent cultures.

### Research projects

The project described as an attempt to predict happiness as function of variables which might have more to do with subjectivity/independence as opposed to intersubjectivity/interdependence. The predictors for the independent form of happiness were independent construal of the self and a self-esteem scale. The predictors for the interdependent form were interdependent construal of self, a sympathy scale, and an affectionate social support scale (subjects were to think about a friend and to indicate the extent to which the friend done each of 16 items such as sharing a point of view, sympathize when the subject falls out of love, and being happy when something good happens to the subject). Subjects were also asked to indicate how frequently they experience positive emotions. Participants were American undergrads, Philipino undergrads and Japanese undergrads.

The results showed that in the West, independence related variables, especially self-esteem, accounted for more variance in positive emotions in the West. In the East, interdependence variables were more effective, especially affectionate social support.

A second, similar study was conducted to explore whether in the US, individuals are happy when they achieve independent versus interdependent tasks. Subjects kept a diary for two weeks in which they recorded the strength of each experience during the episode in a day that was most emotional. The researchers computed a correlation for each individual between general positive emotions and independence related emotions (pride), and with interdependence related emotion (close to other, respect for other). The results were that the correlation between general positive emotions and engaging positive emotions was higher than the correlation between general positive emotions and disengaging positive emotions.

If one personally constructs interpersonal relations, one might be able to constrain relationships in such a way as to produce more happiness. If relationships are intersubjective, there may be less leeway to construct relationships to make oneself happier. Japanese and Americans were thus examined to see if they were accurately monitoring social relationships (if others’ assessments matches yours). Twenty same-sex pairs of friends were asked to rate how much help each had given to the other person and how much help had been received from the other person. American and Japanese friends give and receive about same amount of social support. For Americans, though, the average correlation between ratings was 0, while for Japanese, the average correlation was positive (avg corr = .44). These findings might suggest that among Japanese, well being might be better predicted by interpersonal support than by other variables, as perceived interpersonal support probably matches actual support received.

A lot of discussion followed about cultural scripts and freedom to behave in relationships in both cultures.

**Dr. Hazel Markus**

**Open discussion.**

Dr. Markus described research on the meaning of a good life. In one study, 150 adults (ages 45-55) drawn from a nationally representative sample were interviewed. Half of them were men and half women, half high school educated and half college educated. High school educated subjects were more likely to be divorced, have abusive parents, and have more health problems. They tended to stay where they grew up. They spent more time with family than with friends pointing to the possibility of different kinds of social networks different for high school educated vs. college educated people.

For both samples, the most important factor in having good life are: relations with others (85% of people mention this), health (70%), enjoyment, financial security, self-improvement, job, religion, being positive, and not being materialistic. College educated people valued friends and family as a resource for respect and information, while high school educated people valued their friends and family for being there, for the care and love they provide.

In another study presented, magazines were examined which have predominantly high school educated readership (Readers Digest, Redbook, Popular Mechanics, Playboy, and Good Housekeeping) or college educated readership (Business Weekly, Bon Appetite, Glamour, Time and Sports Illustrated). Full page ads in the magazines were coded for themes. For the high school magazines, the following themes were prominent: health themes, family, food, home, comfort and relaxing. For the college people’s magazines, themes related to self (40% of ads), productivity, work, affluence, and relationships with friends were common.

January 6th, Saturday.

Dr. Darrin Lehman

Discussion.

Dr. Lehman provided issues to prompt discussion, and Dr. Seligman reiterated the goals of the meeting: to promote a major scientific discovery, book, or major funding grant proposal. Following are the questions that Dr. Lehman provided.

* What are the most significant limitations, at present, in research on psychology and culture? Where should we be going and why? (e.g., behavioral studies, indigenous psychology)
* The pesky reference problem – possible solutions? (behavioral studies, any hope for questionnaires?)
* Psychological acculturation – domain specificity (e.g., social stuff vs. cognitive stuff)
* Measuring subjective well-being dichotomously (positive life changes literature)
* Chapter 1 of subjective well-being – where does it come from?
* Is there an interesting sub-group ‘waiting’ to be happy?
* Positive illusions in relationships – “relationship-serving bias” (finally, we found it. But what does it mean?)
* Heejung Kim data – but what about within-group settings?
* subjective well-being reports at the group level: (a) ask individuals about group’s well-being (b) ask group about group’s well-being
* Potential questions: (a) What makes you feel worthwhile (worthy)? (b) What makes you feel that you are doing what you should do?
* Within-culture variability – in social processes vs. cognitive processes
* The case for deeper analyses about meaning – George Brown assessment procedure
* (Early) developmental trends in subjective well-being – what do the data show?
* What happens when children learn, in a profound way, that people are responsible not only for their own well-being, but also for the well-being of close others? [the importance of (mutual) obligation]. Merely my list of a few possibilities:
  + Give less value to personal subjective well-being
  + Will feel well-being only if others too feel well-being
  + Makes assessment of well-being more complicated and uncertain
* Longitudinal study of people living in a culture in transition from “more collectivistic” to “more individualistic”. What psychological changes would we anticipate?
* Correlations between subjective well-being and biological markers, self-esteem, purpose, etc.
* Beyond gender, age, etc., what are the most important structural variables to consider within cultures (e.g., social class, religion, rural-urban)?
* “The origins” and “the change agents” of culture
* Can we agree on at least some of the important observable markers of subjective well-being or happiness?
* Asking Japanese-English bilinguals subjective well-being questions either in English or in Japanese?
* Interesting possible aspects of subjective well-being:
  + Mattering to others
  + Being known (true disclosure, a la Sid Jourard)
  + Meaning-making, feeling of purpose, spirituality, etc.
* The “ripple effect” of subjective well-being (happiness) in certain cultures (Now consider how the processes would unfold differently in different cultures.
* Can we think of Japanese self-effacement as self-enhancement? If so, consider how this informs us about possible differences in the making (and the meaning) of subjective well-being, and hence the measurement difficulties.
* How would we help people get more subjective well-being in Euro-NA culture? What would the intervention look like? Now, what about in Japan?
* Acknowledging important within-culture variability, is it possible that Japanese selfways are more about process (becoming) and Euro-NA selfways are more about status (being)? If so, does this inform us about potential cultural differences in the measurement of subjective well-being?
* How do we attempt to differentiate “true” subjective well-being from reported (but hollow) subjective well-being?

Also discussed in this session was the idea of adaptation to extreme circumstances. Dr. Norenzayan discussed living in Lebanon, and Dr. Mesquita research on Bosnian women, that showed the extraordinary power of people to adapt to extreme circumstances. On this issue, Dr. Lehman stressed that the meaning of an event may be related to the ability of people to adapt to it. Dr. Seligman wondered what kinds of things are and are not adaptable on the positive side of life. Other discussion focused on individual differences: Why do some people and some people don’t? Do the same people tend to adapt to different kinds of circumstances, or is adaptation more domain specific?

Likely pod interests

Although not much discussion was devoted to this, some time was spent discussing what pods people might be interested in. Many people felt that pods could be formed informally after the meeting, but some people did discuss likely associations. Drs. Markus, Mesquita and Lehman may be interested in a pod on the cultural construction of well being. Drs. Diener, Schimmack , Nisbett and Markus might be interested in a pod on building a better culture, finding ways not just to tolerate one another but to accommodate, and bring in positive.