

Are Scandinavians Happier than Asians? Issues in Comparing Nations on Subjective Well-Being

Ed Diener

University of Illinois and the Gallup Organization

Shigehiro Oishi

University of Minnesota

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as people's evaluations of their lives, and includes variables such as life satisfaction, the frequent experience of pleasant emotions, the infrequent experience of unpleasant emotions, satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work, and feelings of fulfillment and meaning. In this chapter we first describe the basic findings on levels of SWB in Asian versus nonAsian nations, as well as whether the causes of SWB are universal or vary across societies. We conclude that Asian nations show diverse levels of SWB, and that the low levels of SWB in certain of these countries occur for several reasons, such as cultural norms, poverty, and deteriorating economic conditions. We next discuss a few of the more technical and complex issues that are often raised in analyzing differences in SWB across cultures. We discuss whether SWB is a desirable characteristic, and what we know about the consequences of happiness. Several implications of the SWB findings for governance and economic policy are described.

I. Introduction

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as people's assessments of the quality of their lives. People evaluate their lives in several ways. First, people make judgments about their lives – whether their lives are fulfilling, satisfying, and meaningful. People also evaluate specific aspects of their lives such as their marriages, health, work, and leisure time. In addition, people react to events with affect (moods and emotions): positive or pleasant affect when things are going well, and negative or unpleasant affect when things are going badly. Thus, the affect system provides an ongoing or “on-line” evaluation of life. Thus, the more a person experiences pleasant emotions, and the less he or she experiences unpleasant emotions, the more the individual's affect system is evaluating life in positive terms. Thus, SWB is an umbrella term that refers to these different forms of evaluation of one's life – and colloquially called “happiness.”

Philosophers and other thinkers have discussed happiness for millennia, and made many suggestions about how best to pursue it. In recent decades behavioral scientists have begun to study happiness empirically, and interesting conclusions have begun to emerge. For more extended discussions of the scientific field of SWB, the reader is referred to: Diener (1984), Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz (1999), and Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999). For additional discussions about culture and SWB, the reader is referred to Diener and Suh (2000) and Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003).

Evaluating Nations. We might evaluate nations in terms of their Gross Domestic Products, the longevity of their people, or the human rights and equality they offer their citizens. However, another criterion is whether the citizens of a society are happy – whether they experience high SWB. Is it justifiable to evaluate societies, or is this endeavor merely a way to impose our values on others? A strict cultural relativistic view must be rejected, in which all cultures are seen as equally desirable, because it does not make sense to say that Nazi Germany was as good as all other societies. In Sick Societies, Robert Edgerton argues against cultural relativism, and argues that some societies better meet the health and needs of their peoples. There are some “sick societies,” where humans are miserable, and human needs are not

met – for example, societies that are immersed in continuing civil war or ones in which basic human needs cannot be met. Thus, one might use happiness (as well as health) as a criterion for societal well-being: the people in that society consider their lives to be going well, and believe that their lives are happy, fulfilling, and satisfying. After all, if the people of a society themselves are unhappy and do not consider their lives to be desirable, then in some sense the society is not succeeding. The SWB criterion is democratic; we do not look to the experts or to the powerful, but to the people’s judgments (made by insiders within the country, not by outsiders). Although political stability and economic health are usually desirable characteristics of a society, we argue that the experience of people in a nation must also be considered.

Although SWB is necessary for the good life and the well-being of societies, it is not sufficient. SWB is necessary for the good life because it is hard to imagine a desirable society that is depressed, unfulfilled, miserable, and dissatisfied. However, SWB is not sufficient for the good society because we want more: we want longevity and human rights, as well as other characteristics that we value. Furthermore, we want people to not merely feel happy, but to be happy because they are accomplishing those things they value. For instance, we would not want a society that is happy because a dictator imposes a narcotic drug on the citizens, which induces feelings of euphoria. People want to be happy, but be happy for the right reasons: because they experience the things that they value. Thus, SWB is an important criterion for the successful society, but not the only one.

II. Basic Findings

Comparing the SWB of Nations

Table 1 shows the reported life satisfaction in Asian and nonAsian nations based on the World Value Survey. The values are the percentage of people who report a positive level of life satisfaction. For comparison purposes, we also show life satisfaction values from one of our samples of college students. As can be seen, there is substantial variability across nations in the amount of life satisfaction that is reported. At the top of the list are several wealthy nations in central and Northern Europe. Among the Asian nations, Russia stands out with a particularly low score. Although the college student scores correlate with those from the general survey, there are clear anomalies such as the higher satisfaction of students in Russia and Chile. This is not surprising, in light of the elite status and particular life circumstances of university students, which often differs substantially from the general population.

In Table 2 we present figures on satisfaction from three life domains. As can be seen, in general the highest satisfaction is with the family. Despite the fact that family satisfaction is high in most nations, there are clear exceptions such as Jordan and Pakistan. Jordan shows relatively low scores across domains, but many of the Asian nations show low scores for satisfaction with income and job. Russia shows a very low score in the area of income satisfaction, and Japan and South Korea show low income satisfaction scores when their high objective income is considered. Vietnam stands out as a nation with relatively high domain satisfaction scores, perhaps because of the recent improvements that have occurred in that nation.

Table 3 shows the mean average levels of pleasant and unpleasant emotions in nations. The respondents were all college students in a survey of 47 nations that we conducted with the help of colleagues from around the globe. Because we have found in nations throughout the world a core set of pleasant emotions that cluster together, and a core set of unpleasant feelings that form a consistent core cluster, it is these feelings that we report here. The Pleasant Emotion score represents the percent of time people report feeling pleasant, cheerful, and happy, and the Unpleasant Emotion cluster represents the amount of time respondents reported feeling sad, unpleasant, and angry. Affect Balance refers to the

difference between the average of the three pleasant emotions and the average of the three unpleasant emotions.

As can be seen, the pleasant and unpleasant emotions do not show the exact same pattern. For example, a nation might be high in both or low in both – they do not invariably vary inversely. This is one important finding that has come out of research on SWB – that pleasant and unpleasant emotions are not exact opposites, and they may correlate with different variables (Diener & Emmons, 1984). The independence of pleasant and unpleasant emotions was also observed in the cross-cultural psychopathology literature. Although Latin American nations are often the happiest in the world, they also have the higher proportion of their residents reporting common forms of psychopathologies (e.g., depression and anxiety). Interestingly, East Asians reported fewer psychopathological symptoms than did Latin Americans and Western Europeans (Kreuger, Chentsova-Dutton, Markon, Goldberg, & Ormel, in press). Tables 1, 2 and 3 also show that the emotion scores do not map perfectly onto the life satisfaction scores. For example, students in Nigeria report high Affect Balance, but only moderate life satisfaction (cf. Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). The factors that influence one's emotions are somewhat different from the factors that influence one's satisfaction judgments.

Consistent with Krueger et al. (in press), China in our data set scored low in both pleasant and unpleasant emotions – Chinese students simply reported less frequent emotional experience. In general the unpleasant affect scores are somewhat high in a number of the Asian nations. One factor at work is emotion norms – whether people believe it is good or bad to feel certain emotions (Eid & Diener, 2001). We have found in our previous research that Latin American students believe that pleasant emotions are very desirable and that unpleasant emotions are very undesirable, and this apparently influences the emotions they experience and report. In contrast, people in East Asian nations are less likely to feel that pleasant emotions are more desirable than unpleasant ones, and we observe lower Affect Balance scores in these societies. It should be noted, however, that the link between emotion norms and emotional experiences varies between pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Whereas the desirability for pleasant emotions is positively associated with the actual frequency of pleasant emotional experiences, the desirability for unpleasant emotions is less related to the actual frequency of unpleasant emotional experiences. That might be a reason why Latin Americans still reported the high level of unpleasant emotions and psychopathology. In addition, extreme poverty and internal conflict might lead to higher Unpleasant Emotion scores in some nations. Very high Unpleasant Emotion scores in respondents from Turkey and Egypt, for example, might reflect high levels of frustration among students in those countries. In short, the examination of life satisfaction, pleasant emotion, and unpleasant emotion enriches our understanding of SWB and people's daily lives in various parts of the world, while highlighting the remarkable complexities of each society and its conditions.

Several factors seem to explain the national SWB findings. First, the satisfaction scores correlate with economic development. Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995) found that income correlates substantially with the average life satisfaction of nations. However, they found that the wealth of nations also correlates highly with other factors such as human rights and democracy, equality of education and income, individualism, and longevity. Because these factors are so highly correlated, and the number of nations sampled is not huge, it is impossible at this point to separate the effects of these variables. Thus, although income and factors such as equality and human rights all correlate with surveys of SWB, we cannot be certain which of these factors is most important.

A second influence on the SWB of nations is the amount of stability they have recently experienced. The former communist bloc nations have shown dramatic drops in SWB over the last 20

years that correspond to the breakdown of the Soviet system. These nations abandoned their political system and ideology, as well as undergoing economic upheaval, and this resulted in dramatic declines in SWB. Note that nations that are much poorer than Russia report higher levels of SWB. Thus, downward shifts in income can lead to declines in SWB even if the absolute level of income is not rock-bottom.

The third factor that is needed to explain the SWB levels of nations is culture. We have found in a number of studies that East Asian cultures that have been heavily influenced by the Confucian tradition, such as S. Korea, Japan, and China, often show lower levels of SWB than one might expect based on their incomes (Diener et al., 1995). In contrast, Latin American nations often show higher levels of SWB than one might expect based on average income levels. The cultural influence in East Asia appears to be related to the desire for mastery and pleasing in-group members, with accompanying tendencies to self-criticism and guilt for not excelling (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). We have found that East Asians tend to weight the worst area of their lives when computing their life satisfaction, whereas Latin Americans tend to look toward the best area of their lives when reporting life satisfaction (Diener, Scollon, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Suh, 2000). We also find that East Asians do not show a positivity bias when reporting their life satisfaction (Oishi, 2002). Self-criticism may aid the mastery goals of East Asians, but also lead to relatively low SWB (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Kim-Prieto, 2001).

It is clear that the SWB scores represent a mix of objective conditions and psychological influences. Some people have developed high expectations, and thus are not particularly satisfied with incomes that are very high (e.g., Japan). A drop in income such as has occurred in the former Soviet bloc nations has a very negative influence on SWB, even controlling for levels of income. Our research among traditional groups who have low incomes shows that they can be satisfied, despite low levels of market consumption. Thus, it is people's levels of income in combination with their desires that appears to lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Solberg, Diener, Wirtz, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002). In addition, psychological and cultural variables such as people's norms for feeling emotions, and the desire to fulfill the high expectations of others, can also have an effect.

Another conclusion is that blanket statements about the happiness of nations do not capture the richness of experience because different SWB variables – pleasant emotions, life satisfaction, and unpleasant emotions – show different patterns. Students in a nation such as India report relatively low life satisfaction, but moderately high levels of pleasant emotions. It does appear that college students in a number of Asian nations feel relatively high levels of unpleasant emotions.

Basic Findings on Correlates and Causes of SWB Across Nations

Besides examining levels of SWB, we can also inquire about whether the causes of SWB are universal, or are specific to each culture. Is it universals such as food and shelter that lead to SWB, or do specific things valued in each cultures (e.g., luxury goods in one nation, achievement in another, and relaxation in yet another) lead to happiness in that society?

One finding that should first be noted is that most people seem to be happy – at least above the neutral point. Diener and Diener (1996) reported findings that, based on a number of types of measurement methods, show that the majority of people report SWB above neutral. In later research we have found that groups such as the Maasai in East Africa, the Inughuit of Northern Greenland, and the American Amish all report positive levels of SWB. Thus, a high standard of living is not necessary for positive SWB. This conclusion is also supported by the data reported in Tables 1 and 2. Both for life satisfaction and for the three domains, the majority of people in most nations are above neutrality. However, there are clear exceptions. In Tables 1 we can see that in Bulgaria and Russia the majority of people are not satisfied with

their lives, and people in a number of nations are dissatisfied with their incomes. We hypothesize that people are prewired to feel mildly positive, but that in bad circumstances (or ones that have quickly gotten worse), most people will not be happy. This conclusion is supported by the finding that certain groups such as the homeless in the USA, prisoners, street prostitutes, and mental patients show very low levels of SWB. Because of the positive offset that might be inherent in human nature, we hypothesize that people will be unhappy only when their desires far outstrip current conditions.

We have found several correlates of happiness that appear across many nations. For example, we found that extraverts are happier across a variety of nations (Lucas, Diener, Grob, Suh, & Shao, 2000). Extraversion is thought to reflect a predisposition to pleasant emotions, and this might explain why in all nations we have studied the relation between this personality variable and the experience of pleasant emotions is positive. Another predictor that we found is universal across nations is marriage – married people were happier than other groups in all nations we studied, although the “marriage dividend” varies in size.

Although there are likely to be universals in the causes of happiness, we have also found very clear differences across societies in the correlates of SWB. For instance, although the degree to which extraversion was related to the frequency of pleasant emotional experiences was equal between individualistic (USA & Germany) and collectivistic nations (Japan, Mexico, & Ghana), the degree to which emotions were used in life satisfaction judgments differed between nations. Respondents in individualistic nations based their life satisfaction judgments on their emotions to a greater degree than those in collectivistic nations (Schimmack et al., 2002). Likewise, although satisfaction with family and friendship was a universal predictor of life satisfaction, self-esteem was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in individualistic nations than in collectivistic societies, and satisfaction with finances was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in poorer nations than in richer ones (Diener & Diener, 1995; Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh, 1999). Besides emotion and domain satisfaction, self-concept consistency, which is measured by the degree of consistency in self-concept across different social roles, predicted happiness in the USA, but not in S. Korea (Suh, 2002). Interestingly, consistent persons were better-liked than inconsistent persons in the USA, but inconsistent persons were as well-liked as consistent persons in S. Korea. Suh argued that self-consistency is a Western cultural ideal, whereas attunement to situational demands is an Eastern cultural ideal, and therefore the attributes of happy persons differ across cultures.

Suh’s research further suggests that there exist cultural differences not only in the sources of subjective evaluation of life (*subjective* well-being), but also in the way in which individuals evaluate other’s life (*interpersonal* well-being). Similarly, a longitudinal study (Oishi & Diener, 2001a) showed that European Americans who became more satisfied over time were those who achieved their goals which they pursued for fun and enjoyment. In contrast, Japanese who became more satisfied over time were those who achieved their goals which they pursued to make their friends and parents happy and to meet the expectations of others (see also Radhakrishnan & Chan, 1997). A general conclusion appears to be that collectivists, those who place the group above the individual, are likely to place more weight on social factors when judging their lives. In contrast, individualists, those who place great importance on the autonomy of the individual, are more likely to place more importance on internal factors such as the person’s emotions. Individualists are likely to see internal attributes as defining who the person is, and therefore whether these characteristics are positive take on more importance in the respondents’ life satisfaction judgments. Along the same lines, we found that feelings of autonomy, meaning, and growth were more important in predicting life satisfaction in the USA than in East Asia (Diener, Suh, & Sapyta, 1997).

One interesting culture difference comes from Gohm, Oishi, Darlington, and Diener (1998). We found that divorce had a more negative effect on the life satisfaction of college-age children in individualistic nations than in collectivistic ones. Perhaps the extended families in collectivistic societies can offer the children of divorce more support and guidance than occurs in the typical individualistic society. Our hypothesis is that individualistic societies generally tend to have high levels of SWB because they offer people freedom. At the same time these societies are likely to offer less support when things go wrong. We find that there are higher levels of SWB reported in individualistic societies, but, paradoxically, also higher levels of problems such as suicide and divorce. When things go well, individualistic societies are rewarding because the person can follow her or his “own bliss,” and is personally rewarded for success. However, when things go badly, failure may fall more squarely on the shoulders of the individual, and there is likely to be less extended family to offer support. Especially individuals who have substantial personal problems may do worse in individualistic nations (see Krueger et al., in press). Thus, the individualistic and collectivistic patterns of culture each have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Some of the differences between cultures in SWB are likely due to values and norms, others seem due to the structure of relationships. So, for example, self-esteem might be less important to SWB where the self is less important and central. But some of the moderating effects of individualism on the correlation of social relationships and life satisfaction appear to be due to the structure of social relationships in different societies. It appears that in a collectivistic society, with extended family members often living together and supporting each other, that the social structure can help buffer some of negative effects of problems such as divorce. It is also important to note that because emotions represent an evaluation of what is happening to the person, they do not just entail a visceral sense of pleasure or displeasure, but also an evaluation of the circumstances and events that are being experienced by the person. Thus, SWB is not the only value, but it may have special significance in terms of reflecting a broad sense of whether the person is achieving his/her values. Nevertheless, people might do things they value that do not lead to immediate feelings of fun or joy, and these might be valued over positive emotional feelings. People might trade pleasant emotions in order to obtain satisfaction or meaning and fulfillment.

III. Technical Issues In Comparing SWB Across Cultures

The basic findings presented above rest on a straightforward interpretation of the SWB findings – accepting the scores at face value. However, measuring SWB and making comparisons of scores across nations is not without complications and controversy. In the following section we briefly discuss some of these controversies, for the reader who is interested in these issues. For others not interested in these technical details, skip to Section IV. Critics of SWB research raise many of the issues described below, and the validity of our earlier discussion rests in part on whether we can answer the various critiques.

There are two distinct approaches to culture in the fields of anthropology and psychology. One of these approaches, called Cross-Cultural Psychology, searches for universals across cultures, as well as the ways that cultures differ. Often there is an assumption that specifics (what language people speak and what food they eat) rests on underlying universals (all people have language and all people eat food). An extreme statement in this approach would be that basic psychological processes (e.g., emotions, logical thinking, social relationships) are universal, and only differ in superficial ways across cultures (e.g., styles of clothing or the spices used in cooking). In other words, culture is seen as a thin veneer covering the bedrock of universal human nature. In the realm of SWB, scholars following this approach believe that people may vary in their level of SWB, but that feelings of well-being or ill-being are much the same throughout the

world. Furthermore, the causes of SWB are likely to be relatively invariant.

In contrast, Cultural Psychologists search for what is unique in cultures, and how cultural practices transform the human psyche. Cultural differences in mind, self, and emotions are emphasized. Practitioners of this approach are leery of making comparisons of SWB between cultures. Making contrasts between cultures is considered to be dangerous because people might not consider the same feelings to be desirable, for example, and might not value life satisfaction or happiness. Instead, Cultural Psychologists prefer to use qualitative methods to describe the unique patterns of experience that are thought to compose well-being in various cultures, and to assess cultures from an internal frame of reference.

We consider the two approaches to be like Scylla and Charybdis, the twin monsters faced by Ulysses. The only way to avoid these dangers is a middle course, in which wisdom from both traditions is appreciated. In the discussion above, we saw this middle course in the fact that there are probably universal causes of happiness, as well as correlates that are more important in specific cultures. As we will see below, one must be cautious in making comparisons of SWB across cultures. At the same time, there are probably enough universals in experience to validly make some comparisons, as long as caution is used and methodological issues are addressed. Cultural psychology has the allure that it can explain a particular culture in much detail and accuracy. But the danger is that one will sacrifice all generality of knowledge to detailed description, and never arrive at any generalizable conclusions. One can luxuriate in detailed description without reaching a level of deeper understanding. We believe that there are some universals, and there are some common dimensions on which cultures can be compared. Like individuals, there are both similarities and differences between societies. Every culture is similar to all others, and every culture is also unique. The danger of Cross-cultural psychology is that one oversimplifies specific cultures, and loses too much knowledge by aggregation and over-simplification, but the benefit is that one can arrive at more general conclusions. Eventually knowledge must be built on certain abstract concepts that apply to more than a single unique historical situation and moment. In part, the choices we make in our research will also depend on our goals. One goal is to search for universals or general phenomena, and build a science. But researchers also can build a humanity that seeks to understand and appreciate diversity.

Measurement Validity

When people say that they are satisfied, or that they feel happy, are these reports valid, and do these reports have comparable meaning across individuals? It could be that people, especially respondents who come from different cultures, might mean different things by “happy” and “satisfied.” Furthermore, they might have different tendencies to present themselves as “happy,” depending on norms in the culture for being happy and presenting themselves in this light. In addition, their responses might be colored by factors such as their current mood, their propensity to be humble and not stand out from the group, and by their experience with surveys. We have studied these and other measurement artifacts, and briefly review the conclusions below.

We find that reports of SWB correlate with other measures such as the reports of family and friends, interviewer ratings, amount of smiling by the respondent, and memory for number of good events in life (e.g., Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993). In addition, biological measures thought to reflect pleasant emotions or stress correlate with the self-report measures (see Larsen & Fredrickson, 1999 for a review). Besides the global survey measures, we have developed the Experience Sampling Method, in which we assess people’s moods at random times during the course of a week or more in the participant’s daily life. This method helps us to assess emotions in a way that is less influenced by recall biases, and which can indicate when and where people feel happy and unhappy. Reports from experience sampling correlate

substantially with the global survey measures (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2003a). Furthermore, we find differences between Affect Balance across cultures using the Experience Sampling Method, which map onto the findings from the broad survey measures. In one study in which we found that surveys showed that Russian students were relatively unhappy, memories for good and bad events by respondents supported the validity of the survey findings (Balatsky & Diener, 1993).

We have searched to determine whether measurement artifacts might be responsible for the differences in SWB between cultures (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995). We have not found evidence that variation in humility produce the differences in reports. We found some cultural differences in the way people use the response scales (Vitterso, Biswas-Diener, and Diener, 2003). In addition, we also found that the SWB scales are more reliable in some societies than in others, and that differences in reliability can produce differences in conclusions. In addition, people in some nations are likely to think about their SWB more, and it might be that the reports are more valid in these societies.

Other factors that can influence reports of SWB might be considered measurement artifacts by some, and substantive findings by others. For example, Oishi (2002) found that European Americans recalled being more satisfied in retrospective reports than they reported when assessed on a daily basis, whereas Asian Americans were accurate in their recall. Thus, European Americans were significantly more satisfied according to the global recall measure than Asian Americans, but they were not significantly more satisfied when responding daily. This finding suggests that recall might cause differences between groups where self-concept or expectancies differ. Such recall differences are important and interesting, but they suggest that not all cultural differences found so far will necessarily be found when Experience Sampling is used.

Another similar finding is that some group differences emerge when people are asked about satisfaction with abstract, broad categories (e.g., satisfaction with education), whereas differences shrink when satisfaction with narrower, concrete categories (e.g., your textbooks, your grades) are assessed (Diener, Lucas, Oishi, & Suh, 2002; Oishi & Diener, 2001b). Satisfaction with more abstract categories seems to more strongly reflect a positivity disposition because of the latitude allowed in such questions, whereas satisfaction with narrower, more concrete items seems to be more rooted in actual experience. It appears that certain cultural differences emerge primarily when broad categories are used (Diener et al., 2000). Thus, some cultural differences might not reflect actual experience with domains as much as they reflect a propensity to be positive about life. Although general positivity is not necessarily a measurement artifact, because it is something of interest in its own right, like the recall findings mentioned above the positivity findings indicate that broad survey items can be influenced by factors beyond moment-to-moment experience. Broad categories such as life satisfaction and satisfaction with the self seem to be especially influenced by the propensity to positivity. One recent Item Response Theory analysis of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) found that two of the five items in the SWLS showed significant differential item functioning between Americans and mainland Chinese (Oishi, 2003). Satisfied Chinese did not endorse items such as "If I could live my life over, I would change nothing," whereas satisfied Americans tended to endorse these items. These cultural differences are consistent with the idea that East Asians are more self-critical than North Americans. Most important, however, this study showed that the mean latent life satisfaction scores of Chinese remained lower than those of Americans, even when the biased items were removed or when unbiased items were weighted more heavily than biased items in scoring of overall life satisfaction.

Much more research is needed on the meaning of various SWB measures across cultures, and when scores can be validly compared. What is known so far does not counsel despair, but it does counsel

caution. We need to understand the psychological processes leading to the scores in order to interpret them. Furthermore, we need more studies across cultures in which additional measures besides global survey reports are used to assess SWB. At present we can use the surveys cautiously – some valid conclusions can certainly be drawn from them. At the same time, we must seek to improve the measures, and not consider current studies to be definitive.

Comparing Emotions

Many measures of SWB include some assessment of people's affect – their moods and emotions, or general happiness. For example, research conducted by Basabe and his colleagues (Basabe et al., 2002) indicates that certain characteristics of nations such as power distance or uncertainty avoidance correlate with the emotions reported in those societies. When emotional experience is compared across cultures, a number of issues arise such as whether people feel the same emotions across countries, label those emotions in the same way, and whether there are indigenous emotions in nonwestern nations that are not tapped by the researchers. Again, we have explored these questions, but not in a comprehensive way.

A few behavioral scientists claim that emotions differ across culture, and that even the concept of emotion might or might not exist in a culture. It is claimed that emotions such as anger might not be recognized in a culture, whereas another culture might have emotions that we do not recognize (see Mesquita & Frijda, 1992 for review). For example, in India they have an emotion called *Avaman*, which means loving-prideful-anger, an emotion that has no equivalent in English.

Are there similar or different emotions across cultures? Although an early claim was that people in different cultures have different emotions, or perhaps no emotions at all, this view now seems unlikely. There are analyses that show that certain emotions exist across cultures and even across animal species (Berridge, 1999). For instance, anger, fear, sadness, affection, and joy seem common across cultures. However, an additional question is whether emotions show the same structure, the same relationship to each other, across cultures. If, for instance, anger was mostly experienced by people who also experience lots of joy, then the idea of some people being happier than others would be confusing. Furthermore, we need to know whether the same emotions are felt as pleasant and unpleasant across cultures. If some cultures thought that joy is unpleasant and undesirable, then the concept of happiness would also be confusing.

Shaver and his colleagues (1987) found a general structure of emotion that was quite similar across. Following this lead, we (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2003b) have studied a large number of emotions in college students across a large number of nations. Fortunately, there are certain emotions that form the same structure across all cultural regions of the world. We found a structure of emotions that is similar across cultures, with Sadness, Anger, and Unpleasantness forming a negative cluster of feelings, and Cheerfulness, Happiness, and Pleasant feelings forming a positive cluster. In addition, there are certain emotions such as affection that cluster close to the core positive cluster, and certain emotions such as guilt and jealousy that tend to fall close to the core negative cluster. These findings suggest that many of the same emotions are pleasant or unpleasant, regardless of culture, although there might be exceptional occasions when an emotion might have a different value (e.g., the fear when riding a roller coaster). However, there are also cultural differences in the emotion structure. For example, pride falls with the pleasant emotions in some cultures and with the negative emotions in other cultures. Worry clustered with the pleasant emotions in the European region because of its high frequency among college students (Diener, Fujita, Scollon, Kim-Prieto, & Diener, 2003). Similarly, sleepy covaried with other unpleasant moods among Americans, whereas the Japanese translation “*nemutai*” tended to covary with other pleasant

moods (Watson et al., 1984). Finally, whereas the frequency of pleasant and unpleasant emotions tended to be inversely correlated in the USA and Western European nations, the size of correlation was smaller in East Asian nations (Schimmack, Diener, & Oishi, 2001). Because pleasant and unpleasant emotions were negatively correlated in other non-Asian collectivist nations (Latin America), the difference between East Asians and Westerners seem to be due to a factor other than individualism-collectivism (e.g., cultural difference in thinking style: holistic vs. analytic thinking). Schimmack et al.'s findings suggest that East Asians experience ambivalent feelings more often than Americans and Western Europeans.

It appears that individuals who experience one form of pleasant emotion tend to experience other forms as well, and the same is true of unpleasant emotions. Similarly, there is a tendency for people to experience various types of pleasant emotions at the same time, and various forms of unpleasant emotions at the same time. Thus, despite the fact that cultures sometimes differ in how they value specific emotions, it appears that there is an overall structure such that certain emotions are usually considered pleasant and other emotions are usually considered unpleasant. These uniformities allow a starting point from which we can compare emotional experiences across cultures.

A researcher might be interested in a specific emotion such as anger or stress, not merely in unpleasant emotions. In this case, these emotions should be directly measured and not aggregated with other emotions. Nevertheless, the researcher might examine how much various emotions converge – whether the same individuals who feel anger also tend to feel sadness or fear. Thus, a comparison of specific emotions can sometimes yield informative results in addition to the more general comparison of levels of pleasant and unpleasant feelings.

What about emotions that are indigenous to some cultures but do not exist in the English lexicon? We examined this issue by assessing in Japan and India indigenous emotions, for which English has no simple label. We found that these emotions clustered tightly with the western list of pleasant and unpleasant emotions (Scollon et al., 2003b). If a researcher is interested in specific indigenous emotions, they should certainly be measured. However, it appears that a researcher will not be wildly misled if these emotions have not been included. Nevertheless, future inclusion of emotions that are specific to particular cultures will certainly enhance the accuracy and richness of findings.

Might people report more of an emotion, or less of it, because they think it is desirable or undesirable? It appears that this can happen. Studies in which reports are obtained in anonymous surveys versus face-to-face interviews sometimes show differences, as do telephone versus in-person interviews (see Schwarz & Strack, 1999 for review). At the same time, the desirability of a pleasant emotion seems to influence the actual frequency of experiencing it. Thus far researchers have not fully assessed the influences of impression management on the SWB measures in the cross-cultural setting.

Cross-cultural researchers are concerned about the influence of translation on their results, particularly when comparing across cultures. Words such as Pride or Anxiety can have different shades of meaning, and how the item is translated therefore can potentially influence the results of surveys. Furthermore, even in the best translation there might be subtle connotative differences in the meaning of survey items. How important is this problem? We analyzed this issue in several studies. In one study Shao (1993) gave bilingual speakers of Mandarin and English our Satisfaction with Life Scale in the two languages, several weeks apart. The results were essentially the same, suggesting that the language did not influence the results.

In another study, we examined national differences by examining sites within nations that had used different languages. We examined self-reports of emotional experience. If language were an overriding factor, then sites using the same language (e.g., English) should have clustered together. Instead, virtually all

sites within individual nations clustered together, regardless of the language used. Furthermore, nations with similar cultures clustered together, and did not cluster with sites from dissimilar cultures, even when a common language was used (Diener, Fujita, Scollon, & Kim-Prieto, 2003). Again, these findings suggest that the issue of language translation is not cause for extreme alarm. At the same time, more research on this issue is needed.

Although translation and back-translation is a standard method in cross-cultural work, there are both conceptual and pragmatic issues involved. We did not use back-translation for most nations in the international college studies, for example, because of the practical difficulties involved. However, in such a study the necessity of back-translation is less important than in studies where only a few cultures are compared, because patterns can be seen in the data that are unlikely to be due to translation in any particular nation. When a number stands out as atypical, it might be due to the translation of the item. But when a pattern forms across many societies, for example that happiness is rated as more important than wealth, or that happiness is considered more important in Latin American than in East Asian nations, it is unlikely that the results are due to translations, which differ from nation to nation.

Culture as entities and causes

Another issue is whether nations, or cultures, truly provide homogeneous and meaningful findings. It is undeniable that there are large differences in SWB within nations, for example difference due to inborn temperament. We find that culture accounts for only modest amounts of variance in reports of moods and emotions, and that individual differences between people within cultures loom large. Nevertheless, analyses of cultures and nations has yielded an understanding of some of the factors that can influence SWB.

One method we developed, based on a statistical approach called latent class analysis, examines whether there are homogeneous clusters of individuals within cultures, and whether there are similar clusters across cultures. We (Eid & Diener, 2001) found that some clusters are unique, meaning that a particular configuration of SWB variables occurs only in that culture. For instance, 16% of Chinese said all positive emotions are undesirable, while this class did not exist among Americans, Australians, and Taiwanese. The latent class technique also allows us to estimate cultural differences in the size of a “class” (e.g., 83% of Australians and Americans indicated that all positive emotions are desirable, whereas only 9% of Chinese and 32% of Taiwanese were in this class), and the existence of intra-cultural variation (each sample had 4-5 distinct “classes”). This is an exciting development because it recognizes within-nation variations as well as between-nation variations, although the technique should be refined so that smaller samples can be used with it, and one need not separately analyze each and every response alternative as an independent item.

Cultural patterns may reach beyond the boundaries of nations. For instance, a European cultural pattern has certainly had a strong influence on the USA, Canada, and Australia, and these three nations exhibit many similarities in culture (and of course some notable differences, too). Besides analyzing nations, we have also analyzed super-national regions, and have found that there are meaningful regions of the world that share similarities in terms of emotional experience. For example, Spain, Portugal, and Latin American nations are similar in their norms and experience of positive emotions (Diener, 2000). Although each nation and group is likely to have some unique characteristics, there is also substantial similarity in the general patterns of this cultural grouping. In addition, there are broad dimensions on which cultures can be placed, such as individualism-collectivism or power distance. Although these dimensions do oversimplify things to some extent, they also capture some broad ways that cultures tend to vary. Thus, we see cultural patterns that can transcend national boundaries. One example of this is the fact that we find the East Asian nations are usually less happy than we would expect based on economic development, but that Latin

American nations as a group tend to be happier than we would expect based on income. Asia is made up of different cultural regions, and therefore the cultural effects on SWB are likely to vary from East Asia, to the Indian region, to the Arab nations, to Russia.

Are nations a desirable level of analysis, when we recognize that some nations are made up of people from many different cultural backgrounds? Because nations have often been built initially on cultural groupings where people share common characteristics such as language, religion, or customs, nations do provide some leverage on uncovering cultural influences. Most international data that are currently available record nation but not ethnic identity, and therefore nation-level analyses are mostly what are available to us. However, nations differ in their cultural homogeneity, and so studying individual cultural groups within nations is a desirable goal for future research (cf., Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002).

Another fact that should be mentioned is that cultures are not static; they are dynamic entities. College students might not completely share the culture of their grandparents, and are often becoming more westernized. Cultures are dynamic entities in that patterns of beliefs, behavior, emotions, and well-being are likely to change over time. There is evidence that happiness of nations can change over time (e.g., Inglehart & Klingemann, 2000) showing that Belgium went down when the economy soured; and that Soviet bloc nations declined in SWB when the Soviet system broke up). Thus, the effects of culture on SWB are likely to be dynamic over time, with some nations moving up or down in the ratings. However, many nations have remained stable in the rankings, perhaps because conditions in them are relatively stable.

One interesting issue is whether it makes any sense to talk about happy or unhappy people, when we know that people's moods change constantly over time. How can a person be called happy if she or he is elated one minute, sad the next day, and mildly joyful the following day? The degree of stability in people's moods over time, as well as the consistency of people's moods across situations, has been studied. Diener and Larsen (1984) found that people's moment-to-moment moods do change a lot, but that people have an average mood that is somewhat stable. We (Oishi, Diener, Scollon, & Biswas-Diener, in press) replicated Diener and Larsen's findings in the USA, India, and Japan. When aggregated over time, individuals who were happier in one situation (e.g., alone) were happier than other in another situation (e.g., without friends) in India and Japan, as well. However, we also found some cultural variation in the intra-individual level analysis: The intensity of pleasant emotion differed to a greater degree across situations among Japanese than among Americans. In other words, the moods of Japanese respondents are more dependent on situations (e.g., with friends vs. with strangers) than Americans, and therefore it makes less sense to talk about "happy people" in Japan than in the USA. Nevertheless, even in Japan the rank-order of individuals in positive moods was relatively constant across situations (that is, for example, Aki and Yoko's moods differed quite a bit depending on whether they were alone or with friends; however in both situations Aki was happier than Yoko). Thus, we can talk about happy and unhappy people, but this is more or less useful, depending on the culture (i.e., the moods of "happy Japanese" might be much more variable over time and across situations than "happy Americans."). In a related vein, another interesting finding about stability of moods is that people who change a lot tend to have lower average moods (Eid & Diener, 1999). We found that people who change moods a lot on a daily basis, as well as people who have wildly fluctuating life satisfaction over years, show lower SWB.

Whereas some researchers claim that there is too much momentary variation in mood to study happy versus unhappy people, others have argued that personality is such a strong influence on SWB that it does not help much to study conditions. The argument is that people adapt over time to events and circumstances so that the only significant influence on long-term SWB is inborn temperament (e.g., Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). Inglehart and Klingemann (1999) and others have shown that this is not always true –

that societal conditions can substantially influence SWB. The longitudinal data from Russia show, for example, how deteriorating conditions can lower SWB. In our own longitudinal research on widows and the unemployed in Germany, we have found that these conditions can lower life satisfaction for many years. Thus, temperament is important in understanding happiness, but it is not the only long-term influence.

Aggregation

Many of the questions that have been raised about the assessment of SWB are questions about aggregation – what can be added together and still provide meaningful results? Can various emotions be added together to produce superordinate emotion categories such as pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions? Can the experience of an individual be aggregated over time, even though the experience of that individual changes from moment to moment and across situations? This is the question of whether some people can be meaningfully categorized as happier and unhappier, even though moods change over time. Finally, the question of culture itself is one of aggregation – whether people from a similar ethnic background or from one nation can be meaningfully grouped together, in light of the fact that there are very apparent differences in SWB between individuals from the same country or culture. Can people from different backgrounds sometimes be grouped together in a superordinate category (e.g., Korean-Americans and Japanese Americans as Asian Americans)?

In each case of aggregation the usefulness of the aggregate must be empirically determined. If one is interested in how much fruit a person has, oranges and apples can be added together. In this sense aggregates can help understanding by simplifying the facts at hand. At the same time, information is inevitably lost when aggregation is practiced. When one creates a superordinate category of pleasant emotions, information about joy, affection, and contentment are lost in the aggregate. When one aggregates information about the average level of pleasant emotions in a society, information about men versus women, rich versus poor, and so forth is lost. And when one aggregates the experience of individuals, one loses information on when and why particular individuals are happy. Of course one can aggregate at larger or smaller levels, and which level will produce the most useful clusters is also an empirical and theoretical question. We now know that many aggregates provide useful and meaningful information, but understand the limits of the aggregation and what information is being lost.

No aggregation whatsoever is not a viable research strategy because there are an indefinite number of feelings that can be measured. For example, one might assess every emotion of every individual in a culture, in every situation and at each moment in time, and never aggregate any of the observations into larger groupings. Clearly, such a descriptive enterprise would be impossible, and would not aid understanding. Thus, the question is when and where to aggregate, but not whether to aggregate. We believe that aggregating people within cultures and comparing across cultures has provided stimulating findings, but that in some cases disaggregating the findings to more precise levels will also produce interesting patterns.

IV. Is SWB a Desirable State?

One question that many readers might be asking is whether SWB is truly a good thing? Might happiness be an American obsession that is not shared by people in other societies? Might it be that some dissatisfaction is good, driving people to higher achievement? Might it be that some unpleasant emotions serve a useful function, at least in some circumstances? Thus, it might be that although SWB feels good, by definition, it might not be functional in terms of individuals and societies fully meeting their goals. In order to

understand the issues involved, it is important to comprehend what SWB is, and is not.

We (Diener & Seligman, 2002) found that even the happiest people, the top 10 percent in happiness, have moods that go up and down – they are not stuck in euphoria. It is functional to have a mood system that reacts to events, including negative events. In some circumstances unpleasant emotions such as anxiety or sadness can facilitate effective functioning, and the happiest people occasionally feel such emotions – it is just that they do not do so very often. Furthermore, we have not found an individual who is at the very top of the happiness scale who is still at that level two years later. The happiest individuals seem to be in the 8 or 9 range on a 10-point scale, but do not experience continuing ecstasy, which would probably be dysfunctional.

It appears that happy people are successful, at least in western nations from which most available data come. Happy people are more likely to have rewarding marriages and not get divorced, make more money, persist at community volunteer activities, receive higher supervisor ratings on the job, and perhaps have better health (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2003). We do not know to what degree these results will generalize to other cultures. It might be that happy people do better in western nations because this state is so highly valued, and that in other cultures happy people might not have an advantage. However, there is little evidence so far that happy people are more likely to fail in life.

Laboratory studies in which pleasant and unpleasant moods are induced help to complete the picture of the behavior of people in happy moods. It appears that individuals who are put into a happy mood are more flexible, active and energetic, sociable, generous, helpful, and creative (see Isen, 2002 for a review). At the same time, such individuals are likely to use habits and solutions that have worked in the past, unless they start seeing that these are not working. In contrast, unhappy people are more vigilant and analytical – they do not rely as much on solutions that have worked before, and try to be very careful. As long as happy people are able to react appropriately when encountering failure, they can become vigilant and careful when needed. But their usual mode is to approach goals actively and use existing solutions to problems, which have usually worked in the past. Based on this set of findings, we can imagine situations where happy or unhappy people might perform better, but these have not been examined in everyday life (see Norem, 2001, for review).

Another approach to answering whether happiness is desirable is to ask people whether they believe it is important. We asked college students from many nations to rate the importance of happiness, as well as for other values. The results, shown in Table 4, show that happiness is highly valued by college students across cultures. Although happiness is rated as the most important value on average by respondents, it can be seen that other values sometimes take precedence. For example, in East Asia happiness is rated as relatively less important than in other nations. It is noteworthy that Latin American students believe that happiness is extremely important. This pattern of findings is consistent with the idea that Latin Americans place great value on pleasant emotions. Physical attractiveness and wealth are rated as relatively less important than happiness in virtually all nations.

Comparing Nations, Revisited

It seems quite plausible that people in poor and unstable Asian nations report low levels of SWB. However, Sweden scores lower in SWB than does Japan, and in this case both nations are democratic, respect human rights, are economically developed and industrialized, and have good health care. There are several reasons that we recommend caution about jumping to the conclusion that Norway is necessarily a more desirable society than Japan. First, although our measures have a degree of validity, it is still possible that differences between nations in the current measures could be influenced by response biases rather than

actual experience. For example, the Japanese might not want to stand out from their group by saying they are very happy. In the second place, people in Japan might value achievement and harmony more, and pleasant emotions less, and therefore might be willing to trade some of the latter in order to obtain the former. Third, there might be a tradeoff such that in a tight, collectivist society such as Japan the average person is a bit less happy because he or she is less able to “follow your bliss.” However, people with problems such as mental illness or marginal intelligence might fare better in a cohesive society where family members are obligated to look after them. Thus, we are at an early stage in our understanding of the benefits and costs of various cultural practices and beliefs. The Japanese are more likely to be “prevention focused,” believing that avoiding wrong action is very important. On the other hand, the Norwegians might be more “promotion focused,” believing that attaining positive goals is more important than whether one makes mistakes along the way. Both strategies might be beneficial under certain circumstances. Thus, we need more research to fully understand how to interpret the importance of national differences in SWB. Nonetheless, it is a possibility that such differences do point with some validity to differences between nations in how well they meet human needs.

V. Conclusions and Future Research

Not surprisingly, the SWB found in Asian nations is complex and heterogeneous. Some Asian nations tend to be happier, and some less so. It appears that political and economic stability can lead to lower SWB. Cultural factors such as the desirability of pleasant emotions or self-criticism also influence reports of SWB. Some Asian nations such as Japan show lower scores than we might expect based on income, whereas others such as Bangladesh do not score as low as we might expect based on income alone. Certain Asian nations where there is conflict appear to also score low on SWB. Besides the broad conclusions, however, one can also see differences depending on what type of SWB is used.

How nations rank on SWB depends in part on what measures are studied. For example, although Bulgaria tends to show low scores across several measures and samples, there are other nations where more variable results are shown. Russian and Indian college students score higher in pleasant emotions than adults in their countries score on relative life satisfaction. In virtually all nations, people are more satisfied with their families than they are with their incomes or jobs. However, there are a number of measurement issues that have not been addressed in a definitive way. Thus, we should use care when we compare Asian nations to each other and other areas of the world. In the future more sophisticated studies using experience sampling and controlling for impression management will help us to understand the results better. The addition of multi-measure studies, including biological measures, also has the promise of increasing confidence in the SWB findings.

One clear policy implication of the SWB findings is not surprising: provide peace, stability, and economic prosperity and SWB will follow. However, we also know that economic prosperity must be defined within the framework of people’s desires – even rich people can be dissatisfied with what they possess, and people without luxuries can be satisfied if they are able to meet their basic needs (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001). Another implication of our research is that there are some tradeoffs in achieving SWB, although we do not know if these tradeoffs are inevitable. For example, Japan has risen to a high level of economic prosperity, but perhaps at the cost of SWB. It may be that high expectations and desires lead to economic growth, but also create some continuing dissatisfaction. Individualistic nations have achieved high levels of SWB for most citizens, but perhaps at the cost of more problems for individuals for whom things go badly. One of the imperatives for future research is to explore these tradeoffs in more

detail, to determine whether they are inevitable.

Our review of the research literature indicates that SWB leads to success in several areas of life. If this finding were to generalize across nations and cultures of the world, it would have large implications for policy because it would indicate that a happy populous, other things being equal, is more likely to have economic growth, as well as citizens who volunteer and get involved in their communities and experience rewarding social relationships. Thus, if the finding generalizes to other cultures that happy people do better in life, it would make SWB a national imperative not only because it feels good to be happy, but also because it leads to other qualities that are likely to be desired in all nations.

Although there are certain trouble-spots in Asia, we are optimistic about the future. Northern European societies show high levels of SWB. They have created prosperity, stability, and relative equality, and there is peace between these nations. In examining the problems faced by some Asian nations, it is important to remember that Europe was mired in world wars in the not distant past. Thus, there is hope that the troubled regions of Asia can also overcome conflicts and other problems that some regions currently face. The East Asian nations offer hope that poor Asian nations can experience economic development. Thus, we are hopeful that SWB will rise in many regions of Asia over the next decades

References and Further Reading

- Asakawa K, & Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1998. Feelings of connectedness and internalization of values in Asian American adolescents. Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 29, 121-145
- Balatsky, G., & Diener, E. (1993). Subjective well-being among Russian students. Social Indicators Research, 28, 225-243.
- Basabe N., Paez, D., Valencia, J., Gonzalez, J.L., Rime, B., & Diener, E. (2002). Cultural dimensions, socioeconomic development, climate, and emotional hedonic level. Cognition & Emotion, 16, 103-125.
- Berridge, K. C. (1999). Pleasure, pain, desire, and dread: Hidden core processes of emotion. In Kahneman, D., Diener, E. & Schwarz, N. (Eds.) Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology (pp. 525-557). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Biswas-Diener, R., & Diener, E. (2001). Making the best of a bad situation: Satisfaction in the slums of Calcutta. Social Indicators Research, 55, 329-352.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. Psychological Bulletin, 95, 542-575.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness, and a proposal for a national index. American Psychologist, 55, 34-43.
- Diener, E., & Diener, C. (1996). Most people are happy. Psychological Science, 7, 181-185.
- Diener, E., & Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68, 653-663.
- Diener, E., Diener, M., & Diener, C. (1995). Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69, 851-864.
- Diener, E., & Emmons, R. A. (1984). The independence of positive and negative affect. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47, 1105-1117.
- Diener, E., & Larsen, R. J. (1984). Temporal stability and cross-situational consistency of affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47, 871-883.
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., Oishi, S., & Suh, E. M. (2002). Looking up and looking down: Weighting

- good and bad information in life satisfaction judgments. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28, 437-445.
- Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. Annual Review of Psychology, 2003, 54, 403-425.
- Diener, E., Scollon, C. K. N., Oishi, S., Dzokoto, V., & Suh, E. M. (2000). Positivity and the construction of life satisfaction judgments: Global happiness is not the sum of its part. Journal of Happiness Studies, 1, 159-176.
- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. Psychological Science, 13, 80 - 83.
- Diener, E., & Suh, E. M. (Eds.). (2000). Culture and subjective well-being. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. E. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. Psychological Bulletin, 125, 276-302.
- Diener, E., Suh, E., Smith, H., & Shao, L. (1995). National differences in reported subjective well-being: Why do they occur? Social Indicators Research, 34, 7-32.
- Diener, E., Fujita, F., Scollon, C. N., & Kim-Prieto, C. (in preparation). A cluster analysis of emotions across 48 nations: When gratitude and pride are bad, and worry is good.
- Edgerton, R. B. (1992). Sick societies: Challenging the myth of primitive harmony. New York: The Free Press.
- Eid, M. & Diener, E. (2001). Norms for experiencing emotions in different cultures: Inter- and intranational differences. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81, 869-885.
- Gohm, C. L., Oishi, S., Darlington, J., & Diener, E. (1998). Culture, parental conflict, parental marital status, and the subjective well-being of young adults. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60, 319-334.
- Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive self-regard? Psychological Review, 106, 766-794.
- Inglehart, R., & Klingemann, H. D. (1999). Genes, culture, democracy, and happiness. In E. Diener and E. M. Suh (Eds.), Culture and subjective well-being (pp. 165-183). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Isen, A. M. (2002). A role for neuropsychology in understanding the facilitating influence of positive affect on social behavior and cognitive processes. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), Handbook of positive psychology (p.528-540). NY: Oxford University Press.
- Kim-Prieto, C. Y. (2001). What's a wonderful life? The pursuit of personal happiness versus the pursuit of in-group obligations. An unpublished Master's Thesis. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Krueger, R. F., Chentsova-Dutton, Y. E., Markon, K. E., Goldberg, D., & Ormel, J. (in press). A cross-cultural study of the structure of comorbidity among common psychopathological syndromes in the General Health Care Setting. Journal of Abnormal Psychology.
- Larsen, R. J., & Fredrickson, B. L. (1999). Measurement issues in emotion research. In Kahneman, D., Diener, E. & Schwarz, N. (Eds.) Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology (pp. 40-60). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lucas, R. E., Diener, E., Grob, A., Suh, E. M., & Shao, L. (2000). Cross-cultural evidence for the fundamental features of extraversion. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79, 452-

- 468.
- Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. Psychological Science, *7*, 186-189.
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2002). Happiness as a strength: A theory of the benefits of positive affect. Submitted for publication.
- Mesquita, B., & Frijda, N. H. (1992). Cultural variations in emotions: A review. Psychological Bulletin, *112*, 179-204.
- Norem, J. K. (2001). The positive power of negative thinking: Using defensive pessimism to manage anxiety and perform at your peak. NY: Basic Books.
- Oishi, S. (2003). An IRT analysis of the Satisfaction with Life Scale across cultures. A paper in preparation. The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
- Oishi, S., & Diener, E. (2001a). Goals, culture, and subjective well-being. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, *27*, 1674-1682.
- Oishi, S., & Diener, E. (2001b). Re-examining the general positivity model of subjective well-being: The discrepancy between specific and global domain satisfaction. Journal of Personality, *69*, 641-666.
- Oishi, S., & Diener, E. (2003). Culture and well-being: The cycle of action, evaluation, and decision. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.
- Oishi, S., Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Suh, E. (1999). Cross-cultural variations in predictors of life satisfaction: Perspectives from needs and values. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, *25*, 980-990.
- Plaut, V. C., Markus, H. R., & Lachman, M. E. (2002). Place matters: Consensual features and regional variation in American well-being and self. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *83*, 160-184.
- Radhakrishnan, P., & Chan, D. K-S. (1997). Cultural differences in the relation between self-discrepancy and life satisfaction. International Journal of Psychology, *32*, 387-398.
- Sandvik, E., Diener, E., & Seidlitz, L. (1993). Subjective well-being: The convergence and stability of self-report and non-self-report measures. Journal of Personality, *61*, 317-342.
- Schimmack, U., Oishi, S., & Diener, E. (2002). Cultural influences on the relation between pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions: Asian dialectic philosophies or individualism-collectivism? Cognition and Emotion, *16*, 705-719.
- Schimmack, U., Radhakrishnan, P., Oishi, S., Dzokoto, V., Ahadi, S. (2002). **Culture, personality, and subjective well-being: Integrating process models of life satisfaction**. Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, *82*, 582-593.
- Schwarz, N., & Strack, F. (1999). Reports of subjective well-being: Judgmental processes and their methodological implications. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology (pp.61-84). New York: Russell Sage.
- Shao, L. (1993). Multilanguage comparability of life satisfaction and happiness measures in Mainland Chinese and American students. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Shaver, P., Schwartz, J., Kirson, D., & O'Connor, C. (1987). Emotion knowledge: Further exploration of a prototype approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *52*, 1061-1086.
- Solberg, E. C., Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2002). Wanting, having, and

- satisfaction: Examining the role of desire discrepancies in satisfaction with income. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83, 725-734.
- Suh, E. M. (2002). Culture, identity consistency, and subjective well-being. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83, 1378-1391.
- Suh, E., Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Triandis, H. C. (1998). The shifting basis of life satisfaction judgments across cultures: Emotions versus norms. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74, 482-493.
- Vitterso, J., Biswas-Diener, R. & Diener, E. (In preparation). The divergent meaning of life satisfaction: Item response modeling of the Satisfaction with Life Scale in Greenland and Norway.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1984). Cross-cultural convergence in the structure of mood: A Japanese replication and a comparison with U.S. findings. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47, 127-144.

Table 1: Levels of Life Satisfaction

	<u>National Sample</u> ¹	<u>College Samples</u> ²
<u>Selected nonAsian Comparison Nations</u>		
Netherlands	92	24.6
Denmark	90	25.0
Switzerland	89	27.0
Norway	86	25.2
USA	85	24.4
Mexico	83	24.9
Chile	74	26.3
Brazil	72	
France	72	
Nigeria	71	21.4
Venezuela	66	
Ghana	66	20.9
Czech Republic	66	
Peru	61	
S. Africa	56	
Bulgaria	33	
<u>Asian Nations</u>		
Taiwan	76	20.1
S. Korea	76	19.9
Japan	74	19.1
China	72	15.9
Pakistan	72	22.8
India	67	19.7
Bangladesh	63	22.2
Turkey	54	
Russia	44	22.2

Note: 1. World Value Survey values are based on probability sampling of adults in each nation (see Inglehart & Klingemann, 1999). The values shown are the percent of respondents who reported being satisfied with life. 2. The college samples were collected by our colleagues at various universities. There were two waves of data collection, and some nations have two values because they were included in both waves. The scale ranges from 5 (Extremely dissatisfied) to 4 (Neutral) to 35 (Extremely satisfied).

Table 2: Satisfaction with Life Domains

<u>Nations</u>	<u>Percent Satisfied</u>		
	<u>Income</u>	<u>Family Life</u>	<u>Job</u>
<u>Nonasian</u>			
Canada	73	91	82
USA	74	91	86
Great Britain	71	90	86
Germany	69	91	84
Italy	69	82	61
France	69	88	82
Mexico	67	92	71
Venezuela	40	90	62
Peru	53	85	60
Brazil	37	85	65
Nigeria	49	77	54
South Africa	32	61	45
Ghana	35	46	35
<u>Asia</u>			
Russia	21	66	58
Japan	58	86	72
China	51	82	63
Vietnam	72	87	75
S. Korea	46	87	65
India	51	73	52
Bangladesh	51	72	59
Pakistan	56	60	57
Uzbekistan	46	82	75
Turkey	45	83	49
Jordan	31	57	20
Lebanon	53	82	63

Table 3: Emotional Experience Across Nations

	<u>Pleasant Emotions</u>	<u>Unpleasant Emotions</u>	<u>Affect Balance</u>
<u>NonAsian Nations</u>			
Canada	6.6	2.8	3.9
Mexico	6.6	3.6	3.1
Nigeria	6.2	3.2	3.0
Chile	6.2	3.5	2.8
S. Africa	6.6	3.4	3.4
Switzerland	5.9	3.0	2.8
USA	6.1	3.4	2.7
Ghana	5.8	3.2	2.6
Netherlands	5.4	3.1	2.5
Bulgaria	4.8	3.4	1.4
Italy	5.2	4.1	1.2
Egypt	5.3	4.3	1.1
<u>Asian Nations</u>			
India	6.0	3.5	2.5
Malaysia	6.0	3.6	2.4
Kuwait	5.9	3.8	2.2
S. Korea	5.4	3.9	1.9
Thailand	5.7	3.9	1.8
Nepal	5.5	3.7	1.8
Russia	5.1	3.5	1.6
China	4.6	3.0	1.5
Georgia	5.2	3.8	1.5
Hong Kong	5.3	3.9	1.4
Japan	5.1	4.0	1.2
Singapore	5.2	4.2	.9
Turkey	5.4	4.7	.7
Iran	4.7	4.2	.5
Bangladesh	5.0	4.4	.6

Note: Selected nations from a 47-nation college student study. The scores range from 1 = Never to 7 = Always. Affect Balance scores sometimes differ from straightforward subtraction because of rounding of the values.

Table 4

Importance Ratings of Happiness and Other Values

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Happiness</u>	<u>Wealth</u>	<u>Love</u>	<u>Health</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Attractiveness</u>	<u>Getting to</u>
			<u>& Affection</u>				<u>Heaven</u>
OVERALL	8.0	6.8	7.9	7.9	7.3	6.3	6.7
Brazil	8.7	6.9	8.7	8.6	8.3	6.4	7.8
Canada	8.6	7.1	8.6	8.2	8.1	6.3	6.5
Chile	8.6	6.9	8.6	8.1	8.2	5.8	7.8
Portugal	8.6	6.5	8.8	8.6	8.4	5.6	6.4
Singapore	8.4	7.1	8.1	8.0	7.6	7.4	7.1
Australia	8.3	6.5	8.2	7.9	7.6	5.9	6.8
Turkey	8.3	7.0	7.9	8.9	8.0	7.0	7.4
Nepal	8.2	7.2	8.4	8.3	8.3	6.3	7.2
Egypt	8.1	7.6	7.4	8.0	7.1	7.2	7.3
Ghana	8.1	7.1	7.9	8.0	7.2	6.7	8.1
Nigeria	8.1	7.4	8.2	8.4	7.1	7.2	8.4
Russia	8.1	7.3	7.9	8.2	7.9	6.9	5.9
Thailand	8.1	7.4	7.4	7.8	7.6	6.4	6.8
USA	8.1	6.7	8.3	7.6	7.6	6.2	7.3
Indonesia	8.0	7.2	7.9	8.0	7.9	6.7	8.2
Poland	8.0	6.8	8.2	8.2	8.1	6.2	7.5
Hong Kong	7.8	6.4	7.5	7.6	7.3	6.7	5.7
Iran	7.8	7.0	8.1	8.5	7.9	6.6	7.9
South Africa	7.8	6.4	7.6	7.6	7.2	5.5	8.2
Bangladesh	7.7	6.7	7.3	6.6	6.6	6.9	6.8
Germany	7.7	6.8	8.6	8.4	8.0	6.5	5.7
Switzerland	7.6	6.4	8.4	8.3	8.0	6.2	6.1
India	7.5	7.0	7.5	7.8	7.5	5.7	6.6
Kuwait	7.4	7.3	7.8	8.4	7.9	8.1	7.9
Japan	7.4	6.6	7.8	7.8	6.8	5.9	6.1
S. Korea	7.3	7.0	7.4	7.8	7.5	6.6	5.0
China	7.3	7.0	7.4	7.8	7.5	6.1	5.0
Malaysia	7.3	6.6	7.2	7.4	7.2	6.5	7.2

Note: Ratings made by college student respondents. Potential responses range from 9 (extremely important) to 1 (Not at all important). Nations shown are selected from the 47 nations that were sampled.