

The Dynamics of Daily Events and Well-Being Across Cultures: When Less Is More

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The authors examined cultural and individual differences in the relation between daily events and daily satisfaction. In a preliminary study, they established cross-cultural equivalence of 50 daily events. In the main study, participants in the United States, Korea, and Japan completed daily surveys on the 50 events and daily satisfaction for 21 days. The multilevel random coefficient model analyses showed that (a) the within-person association between positive events and daily satisfaction was significantly stronger among Asian American, Korean, and Japanese participants than among European American participants and (b) the within-person association between positive events and daily satisfaction was significantly weaker among individuals high in global life satisfaction than among those low in global life satisfaction. The findings demonstrate a weaker effect of positive events on daily well-being among individuals and cultures high in global well-being.

Keywords: culture, well-being, daily events

Throughout the course of a typical day, people experience various events, some positive and others negative. A professor might give a brilliant lecture and receive a standing ovation from his students in the morning but return to his office in the afternoon to find out that his latest paper was rejected for publication. To

what degree might a positive event such as giving an excellent lecture mitigate the damaging effect of a negative event such as rejection? Conversely, to what extent do negative events nullify the impact of positive events on daily satisfaction? The present research examined cultural and individual differences in the relation between daily events and daily satisfaction. Specifically, we sought to answer three fundamental questions: (a) How many positive events must be experienced to mitigate a negative event? (b) Are there individual and/or cultural differences in the number of positive events needed to nullify the effect of one negative event? and (c) What are the factors underlying these individual and cultural differences, if they do in fact exist? Answers to these questions will illuminate the process of adaptation to daily life events and shed light on the dynamic interplay between positive and negative daily experiences, bolstering the critical building blocks of recent theorizing and research on well-being (Diener & Oishi, 2005; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Myers, 2000; Wilson & Gilbert, 2005).

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Life Events and Well-Being

Previous research on life events has uncovered important processes underlying how quickly people adapt to major life events, such as winning the lottery (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978), the death of a spouse (Lehman, Wortman, & Williams, 1987; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003; Stroebe, Stroebe,

Abakoumkin, & Schut, 1996), and experiencing disability (Brickman et al., 1978), as well as to daily events, such as getting an A on an exam or receiving an unexpected gift (Seidlitz & Diener, 1993). It has also been shown that certain types of events are easier to adjust to than others (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Weinsten, 1982). In addition, previous research on personality and coping styles has demonstrated that individuals vary not only in their reactivity to life events (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Carver et al., 1993; Caspi et al., 2003; Peterson, Seligman, & Vaillant, 1988; Stone, Kennedy-Moore, & Neale, 1995) but also in the degree to which they actively create certain life events (Headey & Wearing, 1989; Seidlitz & Diener, 1993; Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996; Suls & Martin, 2005). The research on life events, adaptation, and well-being has thus far tended to examine either the effects of positive events on overall well-being without considering the nullifying effect of negative events, or the effect of negative events without considering the mitigating effect of positive events. With recent research (e.g., Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) demonstrating the important mitigating power of positive affect, the next step is to determine the equilibrium point—that is, the number of positive life events one must experience to mitigate one negative event.

The Equilibrium Point

Fredrickson and Losada (2005) have recently extended Gottman's (1994) research on marital interactions and the critical ratio of positive versus negative interactions in order to document the emotional lives of flourishing versus languishing individuals. The researchers found that individuals who experienced at least 2.9 times more positive than negative emotions rated their lives to be satisfying, whereas those who had a positive-to-negative-emotion ratio of less than 2.9 to 1 rated their lives to be unsatisfying. Just as successful couples had five times more positive interactions than negative ones in Gottman's research, individuals, too, appear to need more positive than negative emotions to maintain a satisfying life.

Although Fredrickson and Losada (2005) were the first to explicitly examine the critical ratio of positive to negative emotions on overall well-being, several diary studies provide other relevant information. Lawton, DeVoe, and Parmelee (1995), for instance, examined daily events and affect among the elderly and found that the impact of negative events was 1.8 times stronger than that of positive ones.¹ Similarly, Nezlek and Gable (2001) reported that daily negative events were 2.25 times more strongly associated with participants' daily self-esteem than daily positive events (see also David, Green, Martin, & Suls, 1997; Nezlek & Plesko, 2003).

Beyond the realm of well-being research, there is a plethora of findings suggesting that the negative is more influential than the positive, observed in domains ranging from judgment and decision making (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), person perception (e.g., Skowronski & Carlston, 1989), and psychophysiology (e.g., Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999; Ito, Larsen, Smith, & Cacioppo, 1998) to food (Rozin & Royzman, 2001) and marriage (see Gottman, 1994; Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; see also Taylor, 1991, for an excellent review).

Individual and Cultural Differences in the Equilibrium Point

Whereas the primacy of negative experiences over positive ones has been well documented across a variety of domains, individual differences in the degree of negative experience potency have rarely been examined (for exceptions, see Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000; Nezlek & Gable, 2001; Nezlek & Plesko, 2003). To our knowledge, moreover, cultural differences have never been examined. This absence of systematic investigation into individual and cultural differences in the relative impact of positive versus negative events on well-being may be due to the fact that no appropriate theoretical model exists. Thus, in order to put forward a systematic, theory-based investigation into individual and cultural differences in this area, we propose a frequency model of life events and well-being. Like Baumeister et al. (2001), we first postulate that the impact of a positive event should be larger for individuals or societies that experience positive events infrequently than for individuals or societies that experience positive events frequently. We propose that those who experience positive events frequently become accustomed to them, come to expect their frequent occurrence, and consequently pay less attention to them (cf. Kahneman & Thaler, in press). Thus, a new positive event does not have the same import that it might for someone who does not experience positive events as frequently. In addition, people adapt more quickly to an event that can be easily explained (e.g., an expected event) than to an event that cannot be easily explained (e.g., a surprising event; Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, & Gilbert, 2005). To the extent that positive events are less expected for people who experience them less frequently, positive events should have a greater impact on the well-being of these individuals.

The frequency model points to an intriguing divergence between global and daily satisfaction. The frequent experience of positive events has repeatedly been shown to be associated with high global well-being (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991; Schimmack, 2003). However, if our speculation is correct, this very factor is, ironically, also associated with the diminished effect of a positive event on daily satisfaction. In other words, individuals who experience positive events frequently are higher in global life satisfaction but benefit less on a day-to-day basis from the experience of a single positive event, as compared with those low in global life satisfaction. In more formal terms, we expect that global well-being is related to a declining benefit of positive events for daily satisfaction. That is, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction should be weaker for individuals high in global life satisfaction and stronger for those low in global life satisfaction.

Projecting to the group level, we predict that a cultural group with higher levels of global well-being should benefit less on a day-to-day basis from the experience of a positive event as compared with a group with lower levels of global well-being. On average, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction should be smaller in groups with higher levels of global well-being than in groups with lower levels

¹ The ratios reported here were computed using the regression coefficients reported in Lawton et al. (1995) and Nezlek and Gable (2001).

of global well-being. Previous research in this regard has consistently found that Koreans, Japanese, and Asian Americans report lower levels of global life satisfaction than do European Americans (see Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003, for a review). Moreover, it has been shown that North Americans expect more positive events to happen to them in the future than do Japanese (e.g., Chang & Asakawa, 2003; Heine & Lehman, 1995). Extrapolating from these findings, we anticipate that the benefit of a positive event on daily satisfaction will be higher for Koreans, Japanese, and Asian Americans than for European Americans.

In summary, we present the frequency model of life events and well-being and investigate a new set of questions about the interplay between positive and negative events across cultures. Before testing our main research questions, however, we first conducted a preliminary study to test the equivalence of 50 daily events in the United States, Japan, and Korea. Once the cross-cultural equivalence of these daily events was established, we conducted the main study, a 21-day diary study in the United States, Japan, and Korea. We chose the daily method for the several reasons. First, this method reduces memory biases, which are often present in research on life events and well-being (Kahneman et al., 2004; Reis & Gable, 2000). Second, many of the central theoretical questions regarding affective adaptation are, by nature, within-person phenomena (e.g., “How many positive events must an individual experience to mitigate a negative event?”), and the daily diary method provides an ideal test for such questions (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Tennen, Affleck, & Armeli, 2005). Finally, most cross-cultural research in the past has examined either mean differences (e.g., “Which nation is more satisfied?”) or differences in the magnitude of between-person correlations (e.g., “Is the size of the correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction different across cultures?”; for exceptions, see Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002; Oishi, Diener, Scollon, & Biswas-Diener, 2004; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1984). In this regard, previous cross-cultural research has not sufficiently tested the effect of real-life contexts, including actual life events, on well-being.

Contextual effects are best detected when the same individual is observed on numerous occasions (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977; Lazarus, 2000). Several prominent psychologists have argued that the pattern of variation within an individual should serve as the basic building block of personality psychology (Allport, 1961; Fleeson, 2001; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Nesselroade, 1984; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). We echo this sentiment by arguing that scientific theories regarding culture and well-being should also be built from the bottom up, starting with the within-individual processes (see Oishi, 2004, for a brief theoretical discussion on this issue). The investigation of how the frequency of positive and negative events relates to the daily fluctuations in an individual’s satisfaction, and how the pattern of these within-person associations might differ across cultural groups, will provide a valuable vantage point for understanding the processes of adaptation to life events and well-being across cultures.

Preliminary Study

We conducted a preliminary study with two goals in mind. The first goal was to test and establish cross-cultural equivalence of daily events used in the main daily diary study. This was an important first step because if positive events were perceived more

positively and negative events were perceived less negatively in Culture A than in Culture B, participants in Culture A would be more likely to overcome a negative event with fewer positive events than would participants in Culture B. In other words, cultural differences in positivity–negativity ratings of daily events used in the main study could create artificial cultural differences in the number of positive events required to mitigate one negative event. The second goal of the preliminary study was to test and establish equivalence of the strength of positive and negative events. If the negative events included were extremely negative and the positive events were mildly positive, this would necessarily result in a negativity bias (i.e., more than one positive event would be required to overcome one negative event). To avoid this pitfall, we needed to establish that the positivity of positive events was equivalent in strength to the negativity of negative events included in the main study.

Method

Participants. Participants were 139 college students in the United States, Korea, and Japan. Specifically, the sample included 29 European American students (18 women, 11 men) and 44 Asian American students (27 women, 17 men) at California State University, East Bay; 36 Korean students (23 women, 13 men) at Yonsei University and Seoul National University in Korea; and 30 Japanese students (18 women, 12 men) at Kansei Gakuin University in Japan.

Procedure. Participants were recruited in class or via e-mail. Potential participants contacted the researcher at each research site via e-mail and then were given the Web address of the questionnaire. They completed the Web survey at their own convenience. Participation was voluntary, and no compensation was given. Students at California State University, East Bay, completed the questionnaire in English, Korean students completed the questionnaire in Korean, and Japanese students completed the questionnaire in Japanese. All survey materials had been translated from English into Japanese and Korean by an experienced translator. The final versions of the materials were then tested for equivalence by psychologists in the respective cultures. Minor adjustments in wording were made to make the questionnaire and survey questions as clear as possible.

Participants were asked to indicate how good or bad each of the 50 events would be if it happened on a typical day, using a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely bad*, 4 = *neither bad nor good*, 7 = *extremely good*). We chose the 50 events from a review of the literature on life events by Seidlitz and Diener (1993), who had compiled a list of 80 events. Our research team, which includes one Japanese, one Korean, and two Asian Americans, examined these events and selected 25 positive and 25 negative events that appeared to occur commonly in Korea and Japan as well as in the United States. Of these, 13 positive and 13 negative events were used in the analyses in the main study; these are listed in the Appendix. In addition to the events in the Appendix, the original 50 events included “went to a concert, play, movie, or other artistic event,” “went to a talk, seminar, or public meeting on a topic of interest,” “went for a walk,” “went to an athletic or sporting event,” “attended a religious service (because I wanted to),” “engaged in spiritual reading or meditation,” “engaged in creative art or craft work for leisure,” “read an interesting article or book,” “I

improved my character,” “did homework,” “received a personal letter, phone call, or e-mail message,” “I felt good physically and emotionally,” “almost got run over, or hit someone while driving,” “spilled food or drink on oneself or someone,” “had an unexpected expense over \$30 that I personally had to pay,” “self or immediate family member was victim of a nonviolent crime,” “received an unfairly low grade on a quiz, test, homework, or paper,” “food I ate was not of satisfactory quality,” and “performed poorly in a sports event.”

Results and Discussion

Are positivity and negativity of daily events equivalent across cultures? We first computed the mean positivity–negativity ratings for each cultural group separately for the original 25 positive and 25 negative events and for the 13 positive and 13 negative events used in the main analyses (see Table 1). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed no cultural group differences in positivity ratings of the 25 positive events, $F(3, 135) = 0.35, ns$, or on the 13 positive events, $F(3, 135) = 0.10, ns$. One-way ANOVA also showed no cultural group differences in negativity of the 25 negative events, $F(3, 135) = 1.75, p = .16$, or the 13 negative events, $F(3, 135) = 2.63, p = .06$. Because the cultural difference in the 13 negative events approached significance, we conducted post hoc tests with Bonferroni corrections. None of the six pairwise group comparisons, however, was close to significant ($ps > .22$). Thus, positivity–negativity of the daily events used in the main study did not differ across the four cultural groups.

Are positive events as positive as negative events are negative? Next, we tested whether positive events were perceived as positively as negative events were perceived negatively in our samples. We conducted a one-sample t test against the midpoint of the 7-point scale (4, *neither bad nor good*). As predicted, the mean positivity rating of the 25 positive events was significantly higher than the midpoint of 4 ($M_{dif} = 1.86$), $t(138) = 43.72, p < .001$, whereas the mean negativity rating of the 25 negative events was significantly lower than the midpoint of 4 ($M_{dif} = -1.84$), $t(138) = -42.08, p < .001$. The magnitudes of deviation from the midpoint were nearly identical, demonstrating the equivalence in strength of positivity–negativity of these 25 positive and 25 negative events. Similarly, the mean positivity rating of the 13 positive events was significantly higher than the midpoint of 4 ($M_{dif} = 2.14$), $t(138) = 47.82, p < .001$, whereas the mean negativity rating of the 13 negative events was significantly lower than the midpoint of 4

($M_{dif} = -1.88$), $t(138) = -40.05, p < .001$. Again, the magnitudes of deviation from the midpoint were nearly symmetrical.

In sum, this study established the cross-cultural equivalence of daily events that were used in the subsequent main study, at least in terms of positivity and negativity. In addition, this study demonstrated that the positive events were as positive as the negative events were negative. With these two important assumptions supported, we moved on to the main daily dairy study.

Main Study

Method

Participants. Participants were 96 students (48 men, 47 women, 1 not specified) from Seoul National University in Seoul, South Korea; 45 students (11 men, 29 women, 5 not specified) from the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan; and 215 students from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC). Of the UIUC students, 109 (45 men, 64 women) identified themselves as European American, 101 (50 men, 51 women) identified themselves as Asian or Asian American, and 5 identified themselves as “other.” To distinguish the Asians and Asian Americans at UIUC from the Koreans and Japanese in the present study, we use the term *Asian Americans* to refer to the former group in this article. Out of the 101 Asian Americans at UIUC, 38 were born in the United States and 63 were born outside of the United States; of the latter group, 45 had been in the United States for less than 2 years at the time of data collection.

Materials and procedures

Participants met with a trained experimenter who spoke in the local language in the psychology office at each site. All materials had been translated from English into Japanese or Korean by an experienced translator. The final versions of the materials were then tested for equivalence by psychologists in the respective cultures. Minor wording adjustments were made to make the questionnaire and survey items as clear as possible.

Participants completed a short survey on global life satisfaction, assessed using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS consists of five items, including “The conditions of my life are excellent” and “I am satisfied with my life” ($\alpha = .82$ for European Americans, .86 for Asian Americans, .83 for Koreans, and .85 for Japanese).

Table 1
Mean Positivity–Negativity Ratings (and Standard Deviations) of Daily Events

Cultural group	Original 50 events		Final 26 events	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
European Americans	5.88 (0.50)	2.26 (0.50)	6.10 (0.51)	2.24 (0.51)
Asian Americans	5.81 (0.52)	2.26 (0.64)	6.15 (0.53)	2.25 (0.69)
Koreans	5.92 (0.49)	2.08 (0.40)	6.17 (0.52)	1.99 (0.40)
Japanese	5.84 (0.51)	2.04 (0.43)	6.13 (0.57)	1.99 (0.47)

Note. Mean ratings for the original 50 events (25 positive, 25 negative) and the 26 events used in the final analyses (13 positive, 13 negative). Ratings were made on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely bad*, 4 = *neither bad nor good*, 7 = *extremely good*).

Participants indicated their agreement with the five statements on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). SWLS scores range from 5 to 35. Consistent with previous research (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995; Oishi, 2002), significant cultural differences in global life satisfaction were found, $F(3, 322) = 10.40, p < .01$. Post hoc tests using Bonferroni adjustments indicated that European Americans were more satisfied with their lives ($M = 25.61, SD = 5.10$) than were Asian Americans ($M = 21.96, SD = 6.67$), Koreans ($M = 21.93, SD = 5.67$), and Japanese ($M = 20.46, SD = 5.93$). There were no significant differences between Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese.

After completing the SWLS, participants were given the instructions for responding to a daily Web survey, which they completed during the following 21 days. The first two questions of the daily diary survey were concerned with daily life satisfaction: "How was today?," measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *terrible* to 7 = *excellent*), and "How satisfied were you with your life today?," measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied*). We combined responses on these items into a daily satisfaction score ($\alpha = .91$ for European Americans, .93 for Asian Americans, .94 for Koreans, and .88 for Japanese).

Next, participants were presented with a list of 50 events and asked to indicate how many of the events had happened to them that day. Because about half of the events did not correspond to another event of the opposite valence, we included in the following analyses only the 26 events that could be placed into pairs with events of opposite valence (see Appendix for the complete list). Selecting only these corresponding events (e.g., "got complimented" vs. "got ignored") made the positive-negative event ratio more meaningful. It should be noted, however, that the key findings of individual and cultural differences were very similar when we used the entire list of 50 events.² Because there were a few outliers who reported having experienced a particular event 1,000 times on a given day, we capped the daily frequency of each event at 20 (for over 99% of the participants, the frequency reported was already less than 20). The daily positive and negative event scores were computed by summing the daily frequencies of the 13 positive and 13 negative events. We also computed the average daily positive (FreqPos) and negative events (FreqNeg) over the 3-week period, which indicated individual differences in chronic level of positive and negative events (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics).

To ensure that participants completed the surveys every day, an experimenter checked the database each morning and sent an e-mail reminder to participants who had not yet completed the survey. Participants were allowed to complete each day's survey before noon on the following day; Kahneman et al. (2004) found that retrospective reports about the previous day's life events and affect are highly associated with concurrent reports. At the end of the daily diary study, participants returned to the psychology office, completed a brief survey, and received \$25 in the United States or the equivalent amount in won in Korea or yen in Japan.

Only participants with 10 or more daily surveys were included in the following analyses, to ensure reliable estimates of the within-person analyses (20 participants, or 5.7%, failed to provide a sufficient amount of data), resulting in 332 participants (100 European Americans, 98 Asian Americans, 94 Koreans, and 39 Japanese). Data provided by 3 Japanese participants were discarded because the participants had typed their responses in *hira-*

Table 2
Number of Average Daily Positive and Negative Events

Event type and group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Positive events		
European Americans	14.51 ^a	8.77
Asian Americans	10.57 ^{b,c}	8.23
Koreans	6.61 ^d	3.71
Japanese	7.21 ^{c,d}	4.24
Total	10.23	7.69
Negative events		
European Americans	4.14 ^a	3.67
Asian Americans	3.10 ^a	2.79
Koreans	2.79 ^b	2.06
Japanese	3.72 ^a	2.73
Total	3.40	2.95

Note. Means that share an alphabet superscript did not differ from one another. Means that do not share a superscript differed from one another, according to post hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustments, at the overall p value of .05.

gana mode, which was not properly recognized in the database. Compliance was excellent. The average number of daily reports completed ranged from 18.97 among European Americans to 20.38 among Japanese.

Results and Discussion

We first test the main hypotheses regarding cultural differences in within-person association between daily events and daily satisfaction, followed by individual differences. Then, we examine cultural and individual differences simultaneously. Next, we examine a time-lag relation between daily events and daily satisfaction. Finally, we address other important issues, such as outliers, response styles, and acculturation.

Are there cultural differences in the negativity bias? We tested our main research questions on cultural differences in the within-person association between daily events and daily satisfaction with multilevel random coefficient models using the Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) program (Version 5.02; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2001). The Level 1 (within-person) model was as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \times (\text{positive event}) + \beta_{2j} \times (\text{negative event}) + r_{ij},$$

where Y_{ij} is daily satisfaction for person j on day i , β_{0j} is a random coefficient representing the intercept for person j (here, the average daily satisfaction over 21 days for person j because predictors were centered around each individual's mean), β_{1j} is a random coefficient

² When we used the 50-item list of events, the positive-negative event impact ratio was 2.40:1 for European Americans, 1.43:1 for Asian Americans, 1.35:1 for Koreans, and 1.18:1 for Japanese. When only interpersonal events from the original 50 events were included, the positive-negative event impact ratio was 2.37:1 for European Americans, 1.72:1 for Asian Americans, 1.63:1 for Koreans, and 1.58:1 for Japanese. The key individual-difference findings on the overall frequency of positive and negative events and global life satisfaction were almost identical, regardless of whether we used the original 50 events or the 26 paired events.

cient for positive events, β_{2j} is a random coefficient for negative events, and r_{ij} represents error. Because both positive and negative events were centered around each individual's mean, coefficients for daily events described the relations between the daily deviations from each person's mean number of positive and negative events and deviations from that person's mean daily satisfaction.

Cultural differences in the average within-person association between daily events and satisfaction were tested at Level 2. The Level 2 (or between-person) model was specified as follows:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \times (\text{Code 1}) + \gamma_{02} \times (\text{Code 2}) + \gamma_{03} \times (\text{Code 3}) + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \times (\text{Code 1}) + \gamma_{12} \times (\text{Code 2}) + \gamma_{13} \times (\text{Code 3}) + u_{1j}$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21} \times (\text{Code 1}) + \gamma_{22} \times (\text{Code 2}) + \gamma_{23} \times (\text{Code 3}) + u_{2j}$$

where each of the Level 1 variables was predicted by three dummy codes representing four different cultural groups: In Dummy Code 1, Asian Americans were coded as 1 and the rest were coded as 0; in Dummy Code 2, Koreans were coded as 1 and the rest were coded as 0, and in Dummy Code 3, Japanese were coded as 1 and the rest were coded as 0. This set of dummy codes allowed us to use European Americans as the reference group (i.e., Dummy Code 1 tested the difference between Asian Americans and European Americans; Dummy Code 2 tested the difference between Koreans and European Americans; Dummy Code 3 tested the difference between Japanese and European Americans). Before conducting this analysis, we checked for gender differences in the within-person association between daily events and daily satisfaction. Because no gender differences were found, we did not include gender in subsequent analyses.

Table 3 shows the results of the HLM analysis. γ_{00} indicates that the average daily satisfaction for European Americans was 4.718. The average daily satisfaction of Asian Americans was significantly lower than that of European Americans, as indicated by the significant γ_{01} . Although European Americans reported a higher level of general life satisfaction, as measured by the SWLS, than did Japanese and Koreans, there were no differences between European Americans and Koreans or between European Americans and Japanese in the average daily satisfaction, as indicated by the nonsignificant γ_{02} and γ_{03} (see Oishi, 2002, for similar findings).

The second section of Table 3 illustrates critical information with regard to cultural differences in the size of the average within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction. Consistent with our prediction, a one-unit increase in daily positive event (i.e., each positive event) was associated with a greater increase in daily satisfaction for Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese than for European Americans (as indicated by the significant γ_{11} , γ_{12} , and γ_{13} in Table 3). Specifically, one positive event was associated with a .068-point increase in daily satisfaction for European Americans, as compared with a .094-point increase for Asian Americans, a .132-point increase for Koreans, and a .129-point increase for Japanese.

The last section of Table 3 illustrates the cultural similarities and differences in the average within-person association between daily

Table 3
Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analysis of Daily Life Events and Daily Satisfaction

Predictor	Unstandardized coefficient	SE	t	p
For INTERCEPT1, β_0				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{00}	4.718	0.087	54.43	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{01}	-0.277	0.123	-2.24	.025
Dummy Code 2, γ_{02}	-0.116	0.124	-0.93	.352
Dummy Code 3, γ_{03}	-0.223	0.163	-1.37	.175
For positive event slope, β_1				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{10}	0.068	0.006	10.89	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{11}	0.026	0.009	2.84	.005
Dummy Code 2, γ_{12}	0.064	0.010	6.27	.000
Dummy Code 3, γ_{13}	0.061	0.014	4.44	.000
For negative event slope, β_2				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{20}	-0.130	0.011	-11.44	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{21}	0.070	0.017	0.42	.675
Dummy Code 2, γ_{22}	-0.044	0.017	-2.55	.011
Dummy Code 3, γ_{23}	0.008	0.022	0.35	.726

Note. Dummy Code 1: Asian Americans were coded as 1, others as 0. Dummy Code 2: Koreans were coded as 1, others as 0. Dummy Code 3: Japanese were coded as 1, others as 0. Approximate degree of freedom is 328.

negative events and daily satisfaction. γ_{21} and γ_{23} were nonsignificant, suggesting that the strength of the within-person association between negative events and daily satisfaction did not differ between Asian Americans and European Americans or between Japanese and European Americans. γ_{22} , however, was significant, indicating that the strength of association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction was stronger for Koreans than for European Americans. On a day when Koreans experienced one more negative event than usual, their daily satisfaction was .174 points lower than usual, whereas on a day when European Americans experienced one more negative event than average, their daily satisfaction was .130 points lower than average.

On the basis of the HLM analysis above, we computed the relative power of positive versus negative events on daily satisfaction. For European Americans, the unstandardized coefficient was .068 for positive events and -.130 for negative events, indicating that negative events were 1.91 times more strongly associated with daily satisfaction than were positive events. The corresponding unstandardized coefficients were .094 and -.123 for Asian Americans, indicating that one negative event was only 1.31 times more strongly associated with daily satisfaction than one positive event. For Koreans, the unstandardized coefficients for positive and negative events were .132 and -.174, indicating that the power of a negative event was 1.32 times stronger than that of a positive event. Finally, for Japanese, the unstandardized coefficients for positive and negative events were .123 and -.123, meaning that a negative event had exactly the same degree of association with daily satisfaction as did a positive event. In other words, it took roughly two positive events (e.g., receiving two compliments) to offset one negative event (e.g., getting ignored once) for European Americans, whereas just one positive event neutralized a negative event for Japanese.

A closer look at the frequency effect: Individual differences. Next, we moved on to test our individual-difference hypothesis. The first postulate of our frequency model predicts that the size of

the within-person association between daily positive (or negative) events and daily satisfaction should be larger among individuals who experience fewer positive (or negative) events. We tested this idea using the following two-level HLM model:

Level 1 (within person):

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \times (\text{positive event}) + \beta_{2j} \times (\text{negative event}) + r_{ij}$$

Level 2 (between person):

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \times (\text{FreqPos}) + \gamma_{02} \times (\text{FreqNeg}) + r_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \times (\text{FreqPos}) + r_{1j}$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21} \times (\text{FreqNeg}) + r_{2j}$$

where FreqPos and FreqNeg indicate the average frequency of daily positive and negative events, respectively, for each participant over the 21-day period. As expected, our analysis showed that individuals who experienced more positive events over the course of 21 days had a higher mean level of daily satisfaction, $\gamma_{01} = .065$, $SE = .0060$, $t = 10.92$, $p < .001$, and individuals who experienced more negative events overall had a lower mean level of daily satisfaction, $\gamma_{02} = -.134$, $SE = .0155$, $t = -8.64$, $p < .001$. As was the case in the previous analysis, daily positive events were positively associated with daily satisfaction, $\gamma_{10} = .1035$, $SE = .0038$, $t = 26.89$, $p < .001$, and daily negative events were negatively associated with daily satisfaction, $\gamma_{20} = -.1505$, $SE = .0067$, $t = -22.46$, $p < .01$.

Most important, and consistent with our frequency model, the association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was significantly smaller for individuals who experienced more positive events overall, $\gamma_{11} = -.0033$, $SE = .00039$, $t = -8.59$, $p < .001$. Again, in accordance with our hypothesis, the negative association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction was weaker for individuals who experienced a higher overall frequency of negative events, $\gamma_{21} = .0103$, $SE = .0017$, $t = 6.16$, $p < .001$. In short, the degree to which positive events were associated with daily satisfaction was smaller for individuals high in overall frequency of positive events, whereas the degree to which negative events were associated with decreased daily satisfaction was smaller for individuals high in overall frequency of negative events.

A closer look at global life satisfaction and daily satisfaction. Next, we tested the more general idea that individuals higher in global life satisfaction would benefit less from a given positive event in terms of their daily satisfaction. Global life satisfaction was significantly associated with the overall frequency of positive events ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) but unrelated to the overall frequency of negative events ($r = -.04$, *ns*). The Level 1 (within-person) HLM model was exactly the same as the previously presented model. At Level 2 (between-person), Level 1 variables were predicted by the grand-centered SWLS score.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Oishi, Schimmack, & Diener, 2001), individuals high in global life satisfaction had higher levels of daily satisfaction than those low in global life satisfaction, $\gamma_{01} = .063$, $SE = .007$, $t = 9.02$, $p < .001$. With regard to our prediction, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was, as expected, significantly smaller for individuals with higher levels of global

life satisfaction than for those low in global life satisfaction, $\gamma_{11} = -.0024$, $SE = .00067$, $t = -3.58$, $p < .001$. It is also worth noting that the within-person association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction was even more negative for individuals with higher levels of global life satisfaction, $\gamma_{21} = -.00276$, $SE = .00108$, $t = -2.54$, $p < .05$. In other words, the daily satisfaction of individuals higher in global life satisfaction covaried with negative events more strongly than that of individuals lower in global life satisfaction, whereas it covaried with positive events less strongly than that of individuals lower in global life satisfaction.

A plausible alternative explanation for our individual-difference findings is that the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction is smaller among individuals high in global life satisfaction or high in overall frequency of positive events because their daily satisfaction fluctuates less. We examined the possibility of limited variability in the daily satisfaction of this group by computing a within-person standard deviation of daily satisfaction. The within-person variability index was not correlated with global life satisfaction ($r = -.02$, *ns*) or with the overall frequency of daily positive events ($r = -.01$, *ns*), a finding that rules out this alternative explanation.

Simultaneous examination of cultural and individual differences. Next, we examined the aforementioned cultural and individual differences simultaneously. Specifically, we tested the model in which overall frequency of positive and negative events, global life satisfaction, and three culture dummy variables were included at Level 2 to test whether the previously obtained individual and cultural differences were independent of each other. As in the initial analyses, overall daily satisfaction was higher among individuals with high global life satisfaction, $t = 6.43$, $p < .01$; those who experienced many positive events during the 21-day period, $t = 9.48$, $p < .01$; and those who experienced fewer negative events, $t = -8.08$, $p < .01$. Once these individual-difference variables were entered, the difference in average daily satisfaction between European Americans and Asian Americans disappeared, $t = -0.03$, $p = .98$. When global life satisfaction and overall frequency of daily events were controlled, Korean and Japanese participants had higher average daily satisfaction than European Americans, $t_s > 2.87$, $p_s < .01$.

Most central to our hypotheses, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction remained significantly stronger among Japanese and Koreans than among European Americans, $t_s > 2.72$, $p_s < .01$, even when global life satisfaction and overall frequency of daily events were included in the analysis. In addition, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction remained significantly smaller among those who experienced more positive events during the 21-day period than others, $t = -5.99$, $p < .01$. In contrast, the difference in the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction between European Americans and Asian Americans originally observed became nonsignificant, $t = 1.44$, $p = .15$. In addition, once the overall frequencies of positive and negative events were controlled, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was not different across individuals, depending on the level of global life satisfaction, $t = -1.09$, $p = .28$. With regard to the within-person association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction, all of the significant effects from the original analyses remained significant. Namely, the association was smaller among those who

experienced more negative events overall than others, $t = 5.44$, $p < .01$, and larger among those high in global life satisfaction than those low in global life satisfaction, $t = -2.33$, $p < .05$. In short, the key differences between European Americans and Koreans/Japanese remained substantial even after controlling for individual differences in global life satisfaction and the overall frequency of positive and negative events. In addition, the frequency effect at the between-individual level also remained sizable after controlling for cultural differences. Thus, the individual differences and cultural differences we observed were largely independent of one another.

Time-lag analyses. In addition, we conducted three time-lag analyses in order to delineate (a) cultural differences in the temporal relations between daily events and satisfaction, (b) individual differences in the frequency effects, and (c) individual differences in global life satisfaction. The Level 1 (within-person) model was as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \times (\text{day } t \text{ positive event}) + \beta_{2j} \times (\text{day } t \text{ negative event}) + \beta_{3j} \times (\text{day } t - 1 \text{ positive event}) + \beta_{4j} \times (\text{day } t - 1 \text{ negative event}) + \beta_{5j} \times (\text{day } t - 1 \text{ satisfaction}) + r_{ij}$$

where Y_{ij} was day t satisfaction. In the first time-lag model, which tested cultural differences, each of the Level 1 variables (β_{0j} to β_{5j}) was predicted by the same set of dummy codes used in previous analyses at Level 2. In essence, this model tested the degree to which daily changes in the number of positive and negative events predicted daily changes in satisfaction. Even after controlling for the previous day's satisfaction and events experienced, the results remained comparable to the original analysis. As seen in Table 4, the average within-person association between changes in daily positive events and changes in daily satisfaction was significantly stronger for Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese than for European Americans. In the latter group, daily changes in the frequency of negative events had 1.78 times more impact on daily satisfaction than did such changes in the frequency of positive events (i.e., it took 1.78 positive events to mitigate one negative event). In contrast, daily changes in the frequency of negative events had 1.35 times more impact on daily satisfaction for Asian Americans and 1.33 times more impact for Koreans. For Japanese, daily changes in the frequency of negative events had less impact (i.e., 0.94 times) on daily satisfaction than did changes in the frequency of positive events. In sum, the time-lag analysis showed that Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese benefited more from daily positive events than did European Americans.

Table 4
Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analysis of Daily Life Events and Daily Satisfaction, Controlling for Previous Day's Events and Well-Being

Predictor	Unstandardized coefficient	SE	t	p
For INTERCEPT1, β_0				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{00}	4.718	0.086	54.442	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{01}	-0.27	0.123	-2.244	.025
Dummy Code 2, γ_{02}	-0.11	0.124	-0.933	.351
Dummy Code 3, γ_{03}	-0.22	0.163	-1.356	.175
For day t positive event slope, β_1				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{10}	0.068	0.005	11.480	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{11}	0.023	0.008	2.682	.008
Dummy Code 2, γ_{12}	0.062	0.009	6.372	.000
Dummy Code 3, γ_{13}	0.059	0.013	4.417	.000
For day t negative event slope, β_2				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{20}	-0.121	0.011	-10.720	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{21}	-0.002	0.016	-0.168	.867
Dummy Code 2, γ_{22}	-0.052	0.017	-3.049	.003
Dummy Code 3, γ_{23}	0.001	0.021	0.061	.952
For day $t - 1$ positive event slope, β_3				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{30}	-0.014	0.003	-3.829	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{31}	0.005	0.006	0.954	.341
Dummy Code 2, γ_{32}	-0.001	0.007	-0.241	.810
Dummy Code 3, γ_{33}	-0.002	0.010	-0.276	.783
For day $t - 1$ negative event slope, β_4				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{40}	0.0098	0.008	1.110	.267
Dummy Code 1, γ_{41}	-0.015	0.013	-1.181	.238
Dummy Code 2, γ_{42}	0.0000	0.013	0.004	.996
Dummy Code 3, γ_{43}	-0.005	0.016	-0.334	.738
For day $t - 1$ well-being slope, β_5				
INTERCEPT2, γ_{50}	0.219	0.027	8.089	.000
Dummy Code 1, γ_{51}	-0.003	0.036	-0.085	.933
Dummy Code 2, γ_{52}	-0.081	0.036	-2.231	.026
Dummy Code 3, γ_{53}	-0.071	0.045	-1.574	.115

Note. Dummy Code 1: Asian Americans were coded as 1, others as 0. Dummy Code 2: Koreans were coded as 1, others as 0. Dummy Code 3: Japanese were coded as 1, others as 0. Approximate degree of freedom is 328.

In the second time-lag model, the Level 2 predictors were the overall frequencies of positive and negative events, rather than cultural differences. The Level 1 model was identical to the one used in the previous analysis. This analysis revealed, again, that the degree to which daily changes in the frequency of positive events were associated with changes in daily satisfaction was weaker among individuals high in overall frequency of positive events, -0.0032 , $SE = .000357$, $t = -8.95$, $p < .001$. The degree to which daily changes in the frequency of negative events were associated with changes in daily satisfaction was also weaker among individuals high in overall frequency of negative events, $.010307$, $SE = .001623$, $t = 6.37$, $p < .001$.

In the final time-lag model, the Level 2 predictors were global life satisfaction. Again, the Level 1 model was identical to the one used in the previous time-lag model. This analysis revealed, as hypothesized, that the magnitude of the within-person association between changes in the frequency of positive events and changes in daily satisfaction was significantly smaller among individuals high in global life satisfaction, $-.002431$, $SE = .000643$, $t = -3.78$, $p < .001$, whereas the magnitude of the within-person association between changes in the frequency of negative events and changes in daily satisfaction was significantly larger among individuals high in global life satisfaction, $-.002774$, $SE = .001073$, $t = 2.58$, $p = .01$.

Issues of outliers, response styles, and acculturation. Finally, we examined the issues of outliers, response styles, and acculturation. Analogous to putting the cap on reaction time data (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000), we capped the number of occurrences of each daily event at 20 in the aforementioned analyses. However, one might wonder whether this treatment still left many outliers in the data. We examined each participant's daily data separately, computing a skewness index and kurtosis for each individual's daily data. According to Curran, West, and Finch (1996), skewness greater than 2 and kurtosis greater than 7 should be considered outliers. Out of 332 participants, 21 (4 European Americans, 9 Asian Americans, and 8 Koreans) showed skewness greater than 2 and kurtosis greater than 7 on either positive or negative daily events. We reran the first HLM analysis with these individuals excluded. The results were almost identical to the original results: The within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was significantly larger among Asian Americans than among European Americans, $t = 3.28$, $p < .01$; among Koreans than among European Americans, $t = 4.20$, $p < .01$; and among Japanese than among European Americans, $t = 6.06$, $p < .01$. In addition, when outliers were excluded, the original frequency effect was again obtained. Namely, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was smaller among those who experienced more positive events overall than among those who experienced fewer positive events, $t = -8.78$, $p < .01$. Similarly, the within-person association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction was also smaller among those who experienced more negative events overall than others, $t = 6.35$, $p < .01$. Likewise, when outliers were excluded, the within-person association between daily positive events and daily satisfaction was smaller among individuals high in global life satisfaction than those low in global life satisfaction, $t = -3.71$, $p < .01$, whereas the within-person association between daily negative events and daily satisfaction was larger among those

high in global life satisfaction than among those low in global life satisfaction, $t = -2.57$, $p = .01$.

Next, the findings reported above could possibly be due to individual and cultural differences in response styles. If response styles were responsible for our findings, then we should obtain similar cultural and individual differences with different content used as the dependent variable, as long as the response format is the same. At the end of the daily survey, we included an item regarding participants' satisfaction with today's weather, rated on the same 7-point scale used for the daily satisfaction item. Thus, we reran the first HLM analysis reported above after changing the dependent variable from daily satisfaction to daily weather satisfaction. Unlike in the original analysis on daily satisfaction, there were no differences between European Americans and Koreans or Asian Americans in the degree to which daily positive events were associated with daily weather satisfaction, $|t|s < 0.97$, $ps > .34$. Although daily positive events were more strongly associated with daily weather satisfaction among Japanese than among European Americans, $t = 2.57$, $p = .01$, daily negative events were also marginally more strongly associated with daily weather satisfaction among Japanese than among European Americans, $t = -1.85$, $p = .06$. We also reran the two individual-difference analyses reported after the first cultural difference analyses. Unlike in the original analyses, the overall frequency of daily positive events did not moderate the within-person relation between daily positive events and daily weather satisfaction, $t = -1.65$, $p = .10$, nor did the overall frequency of daily negative events moderate the within-person association between daily negative events and daily weather satisfaction, $t = 0.40$, $p = .69$. Similarly, the degree to which daily positive events were associated with daily weather satisfaction did not differ across individuals depending on the level of global life satisfaction, $t = -0.84$, $p = .40$, nor did the degree to which daily negative events were associated with weather satisfaction differ across individuals depending on the level of global life satisfaction, $t = -0.36$, $p = .72$. These analyses suggest that the alternative explanation for our findings based on individual and cultural differences in response styles is not viable.

Finally, we examined whether there was an acculturation effect among the Asian American sample. Specifically, we tested whether the 38 Asian Americans born in the United States would show different patterns than the 63 Asian Americans born outside of the United States. We reran the first HLM analysis reported above with the following change: The Level 2 predictor was the dummy code, in which Asian Americans born outside of the United States were coded as 0 and Asian Americans born in the United States were coded as 1. There were no differences in either the degree to which daily positive events were associated with daily satisfaction, $t = -1.07$, $p = .28$, or the degree to which daily negative events were associated with daily satisfaction, $t = 1.49$, $p = .14$. It took 1.39 positive events to counteract 1 negative event among Asian Americans born outside of the United States, whereas it took 1.19 positive events among U.S.-born Asian Americans. Thus, U.S.-born Asian Americans were no more similar to European Americans than were foreign-born Asian Americans in our study.

General Discussion

The present research used the daily diary method to examine individual and cultural differences in the equilibrium point of daily

satisfaction. As predicted, the association between positive life events and daily satisfaction was stronger among Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese than among European Americans. Whereas it took nearly two positive events (e.g., getting complimented and getting an A) to mitigate one negative event (e.g., getting ignored) for European Americans, it took only about 1.3 positive events to have the same mitigating effect for Asian Americans and Koreans and only one positive event to mitigate the negative event for Japanese (see Figure 1). Furthermore, in support of the frequency model of life events and well-being, we found systematic individual differences in the relative impact of positive versus negative life events on daily satisfaction in terms of both overall frequency and global life satisfaction. Finally, time-lag analyses replicated the aforementioned individual and cultural differences. This is the first study to demonstrate individual and cultural differences in the number of positive events required to counteract one negative event. It should be noted that we found support for our predictions after having established cross-cultural equivalence of the daily events used in the main diary study as well as equivalence in strength of positive and negative events in the preliminary study. Thus, our findings cannot be explained by cultural differences in positivity or negativity of the daily events used in our study. Moreover, we found similar individual and cultural differences when the original 50 events were included and when only interpersonal events were included (see Footnote 2). Thus, our findings were not limited to one particular kind of daily events.

Why Are There So Many “Happy” People but So Few “Very Happy” People?

Previous research has shown that although most people are above neutral in terms of well-being (Diener & Diener, 1996), very few people report being very happy, and those who do rarely stay

that way for a long time (Diener & Seligman, 2002). The explanation for these findings has remained a mystery; however, the present findings offer a possible solution. As global life satisfaction increases, the potency of each negative event increases with it, so that more positive events are needed to mitigate each negative event. Unfortunately, many negative events, such as power outages, flat tires, and flight delays, are unavoidable. Because satisfied individuals already experience many positive events, moving to “very satisfied” by improving the positive–negative event ratio is very difficult. Even if one manages to increase the frequency of positive events he or she experiences, this increase is accompanied by an even stronger negativity bias. The bias is so strong toward the highest end of well-being that it is virtually impossible to reach that point, let alone stay there. What is more, because people often spend much effort and energy on getting over a negative event, they may not have sufficient energy or resources to surpass their prior level of well-being (Taylor, 1991).

Divergent Processes in Culture and Well-Being

The evidence presented in this article contradicts data gathered in previous research on culture and well-being, which has generally converged on the notion that European Americans pay more attention to positive emotions, as well as to other positive aspects of life, than do East Asians (Diener, Scollon, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Suh, 2000; Oishi, 2002; Oishi & Diener, 2003; Schimmack, Radhakrishnan, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Ahadi, 2003; Wirtz, 2004). Suh, Diener, Oishi, and Triandis (1998), for instance, showed that the frequency of positive emotion is less strongly associated with life satisfaction for people in collectivist cultures such as Korea and Japan. Additionally, Oishi (2002) demonstrated that although both the most and the least satisfying days contributed to overall weekly satisfaction for Asians, only the most satisfying day influenced overall satisfaction for European Americans. Likewise, Eu-

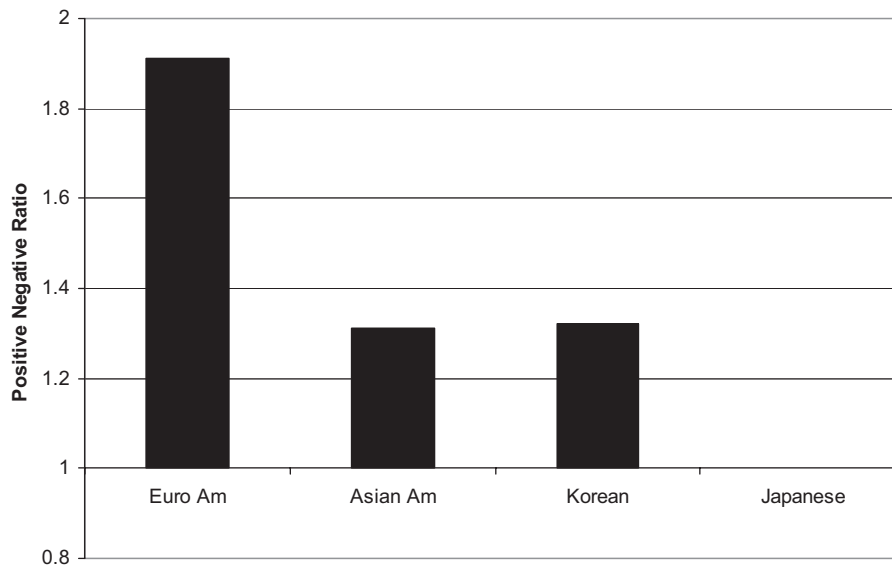


Figure 1. The ratio of positive to negative events needed to maintain daily satisfaction equilibrium for each cultural group. The higher the ratio is, the more positive events are required, relative to negative events, to maintain the same level of daily satisfaction. Euro Am = European American; Asian Am = Asian American.

European Americans evaluated their overall experiences as more satisfying than did Asians, even when there were no corresponding cultural differences in average daily satisfaction or actual experience (Oishi, 2002; Oishi & Diener, 2003; Wirtz, 2004). On the contrary, the current study suggests that it is Asians' daily satisfaction that is more susceptible to the power of a positive event.

To make sense of this paradox, one must consider both the type of well-being judgment under study and the role of novelty. In the context of evaluating a single day, novel or unexpected events should have a stronger impact than expected or frequently experienced events. However, in the context of evaluating a longer period of time, or life in general, memories of specific events are not always accessible, and individuals fall back on more general beliefs and expectancies about life (Kashima, 2000; Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005; Robinson & Clore, 2002; see Taylor, 1991, for the application of the mobilization–minimization hypothesis to memory of emotional experiences).

By examining (a) the within-person process as opposed to interindividual differences and (b) daily judgments (short-term) as opposed to global (long-term) judgments of well-being (cf. Diener & Fujita, 2005; Oishi et al., 2001), the present research provides a more complex, but also more complete, picture of culture and well-being. On average, European Americans hold more positive attitudes toward their lives and themselves (Chang & Asakawa, 2003; Heine & Lehman, 1995) and enjoy a higher level of global life satisfaction and self-esteem than Asian Americans, Japanese, or Koreans (Diener et al., 1995; Oishi & Sullivan, 2005). In terms of daily satisfaction, however, Asian Americans, Japanese, and Koreans benefit more from each positive event that happens to them. Asian Americans, Japanese, and Koreans, whose attitudes and expectations are not as positive as European Americans', might be amplifying the impact of each positive event. Given the present findings, although it may be good to have positive global expectations of happiness and life satisfaction in general, such expectations may undermine the impact of specific positive experiences on daily satisfaction. In this sense, less is sometimes more.

Before closing, we should note several limitations of the current research. First, although we identified intriguing counterintuitive phenomena, the underlying mechanisms at play are not yet fully identified. One important goal for future research is to explore the positive–negative ratio in terms of events that vary in novelty, controllability, and internal versus external causes. Second, the 13 positive events and 13 negative events that we chose to focus on in our analyses might not be exactly equivalent in terms of their meanings across cultures. In addition, the specific number of positive events required to nullify the detrimental effect of one negative event is likely to change, depending on specific events used (see Footnote 2 for examples). Furthermore, although the life events we included in the daily survey were quite diverse, by providing participants with a fixed list, we have overlooked the experience of events that were not included in the survey. Although we made sure that these events were meaningful to every cultural group we examined, the list of daily events was based on research conducted in the United States. Thus, in the future it will be important to test the current hypotheses using ideographic events generated by participants themselves. Finally, cultural differences in overall frequency of positive and negative events might be due to cultural differences in reporting styles. Asian Americans, Koreans, and Japanese might not have registered the same mildly

flattering comment from a friend as a compliment, whereas European Americans might have. This might have contributed in part to our findings, although reporting styles cannot fully explain cultural differences in the key variables, as the differences between European Americans and Koreans/Japanese in the key within-person association between positive events and daily satisfaction remained significant when the overall frequency of positive and negative events were statistically controlled.

Conclusion

In accordance with the frequency model of life events and well-being, we found that the potency of positive events was stronger for Asian Americans, Japanese, and Koreans than for European Americans. We also found systematic individual differences in the power of positive events on daily satisfaction in terms of both overall frequency and global life satisfaction. In sum, the underlying processes of the frequency model were supported at both the individual and cultural levels of analysis, showing that less is sometimes more. Furthermore, we discovered intriguing divergence between global and daily satisfaction: Experiencing many positive events may be good for global happiness, but it could also reduce the impact of each positive event on daily happiness. The present findings suggest that the quest for greater happiness is not a straightforward one, in part because of the paradoxical interplay of daily events, daily satisfaction, and global well-being.

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(Appendix follows)

Appendix

Daily Life Events

Positive Events

- 1a. Received an A on a quiz, test, homework, or paper
- 2a. Got complimented
- 3a. Received a gift
- 4a. Had fun
- 5a. My friends were understanding and supportive of me
- 6a. I was supportive of someone who needed me
- 7a. I learned much in school
- 8a. I impressed my friends
- 9a. I got along well with people around me
- 10a. Worked out
- 11a. My relationship with boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse was good
- 12a. I made a new friend
- 13a. Had a meal with friends

Negative Events

- 1b. Received a D on a quiz, test, homework, or paper
- 2b. Got ignored/Was called by a derogatory name

- 3b. Lost something valuable/Dropped something valuable and broke it (vase, clock, etc.)
- 4b. Had hassles
- 5b. A friend did something that made me disappointed or ashamed of him/her
- 6b. Said something to someone I deeply regretted afterwards
- 7b. Missed a class or an appointment/Was late for a class or appointment
- 8b. Had an embarrassing moment
- 9b. Had an argument with someone
- 10b. Had a headache, stomach ache, or a small cut
- 11b. Was turned down asking someone out on a date
- 12b. Missed being with my family
- 13b. Was stood up

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