# The folk psychology of happiness in Korea[*]

**Eunsoo Choi**[1)†]        **Yoon-youngKim**[2)]        **YukikoUchida**[3)]

[1)]Center for Happiness Studies, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

[2)]Department of Psychology, Korea University, Seoul, Korea

[3)]Department of Psychology, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Happiness research has primarily been conducted based on the American model of happiness. The agentic concept of happiness in the West emphasizes the positive feeling state stemming from individual achievement and positive interpersonal relationships. However, previous studies on lay theories of happiness in other East Asian countries, such as China and Japan, have suggested that these meanings of happiness differ from those of the Western cultural context. The present study examined the lay theory of happiness among Koreans using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Furthermore, the authors compared the Korean model of happiness with that of the Japanese and Americans from Uchida and Kitayama (2009). The findings from the present research indicate that the Korean model of happiness involves both positive and negative states and consequences of happiness, unlike the uniformly positively connoted happiness in Western cultural contexts. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the current findings on happiness research in the Korean culture.

*Key words : Korean, culture, happiness, emotion, lay theory*

The emphasis on happiness in Korean society is unprecedented to the extent that one of the national core agendas of the current government is promoting the happiness of its citizens (The Korea Times, 2013). However, until a couple of decades ago, happiness was not considered an important goal in life among Koreans, as other issues such as economic or political stability took priority (Cho, 1996; Han, 1995; Koo & Kim, 2006). In addition, their attitude toward happiness was not entirely positive and happiness was not strongly endorsed in the traditional Korean context, which is heavily influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism (Choi & Chung, 2001; Suh, 2004). Thus, the focus on and pursuit of happiness in Korean society is a relatively recent phenomenon. The growing interest in happiness in recent years has resulted in a dramatic increase in research on happiness. For example, in 1994, the Korean Information Service System (KISS) listed only 11 citations containing the word "happiness (*haengbok*)." Since then, the number of the studies on happiness has increased dramatically: In 2014 alone, for instance, the number of citations that included the word "happiness (*haengbok*)" in KISS was 253. Although citation count is by no means a perfect metric, the 20-plus-fold increase in citations over just a decade is a telling sign of the growing interest in happiness among researchers and in the Korean society.

Happiness or subjective-well being research in the past has been primarily understood as a subjective experience of positive emotions. In particular, hedonic view of happiness focuses on positive experiences of emotions or lack of negative emotions as consisting of human well-being. Although there has been equally active discussion among scholars with eudaimonic view of well-being, the construct of happiness seems to bear a highly affective connotation in Western cultural context, and in North American culture in particular (Wierzbicka, 2004). Indeed, happiness treated as one of the six basic emotions that basic emotion researchers claim are universal. (Levenson, Ekman, Heider, & Friesen, 1992). However, this does not mean that happiness is construed equivalently across different cultural contexts, just as basic emotions are not culturally universal. (Gendron, Roberson, van der Vyver, & Barrett, 2014). As many cultural psychologists have pointed out, the assumption that happiness is understood more or less the same across cultural contexts is problematic in that psychological processes, including the meanings and experiences of happiness, are constructed through a process of interaction between the environment and the people comprising that context. Even the concept of happiness in Western history has not been invariant (Bruner, 1990; Shweder, 1991). Recently, using historical indicators such as presidential speeches and Google Ngrams for books published in English in America, researchers have found that the concept of happiness in the United States has changed over

time (Oishi, Graham, Kesebir, & Galinha, 2013). Thus, it is important for researchers to examine the meaning and correlates of happiness from the indigenous psychological perspective in order to not impose the definition of happiness of a certain cultural context upon other cultures.

## Cultural differences in meanings of happiness

Some researchers have recognized the limitation of mainstream research on happiness or subjective well-being and have attempted to understand the folk models of happiness in the East Asian cultural context (Furnham & Cheng, 2000; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Lu, 2001; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009; Suh, Koo, Lee, Chung, & Choi, 2010). It is no coincidence that the researchers who attempted to address this limitation were from the East Asian cultural context, given that the construct of happiness that has been developed and used in previous research has primarily been shaped by the Western model. Lu and his colleagues (2001; 2004) were among the first researchers to examine the cultural scripts of happiness. The researchers conducted a content analysis of essays freely written in response to the prompt "what is happiness?" by Taiwanese and American undergraduate students. In their qualitative analyses of the written descriptions of happiness, Lu and his colleagues concluded that both Chinese and Americans perceived happiness as a

mental state of satisfaction and positive emotions and associated it with personal achievement and harmonious social relationships. However, compared to Americans, Chinese respondents indicated that social relationships were the primary elements of happiness and were wider in scope, extending to relationships well beyond the immediate family and friends. In particular, the most prominent difference between Chinese and Americans was that, while Americans' accounts of happiness were unambiguously positive and emotionally charged with high arousal emotions such as excitement and elation, those of Chinese were more balanced and reserved. For Chinese people, happiness is not purely positive, but is intertwined with unhappiness. The authors suggested that the Chinese respondents' emphasis on the balance of happiness can be traced back to the ancient yin‐yang theory that takes a dialectical view of the relationship between happiness and unhappiness and concludes that the homeostasis of positive and negative elements in life is considered the ideal state for human beings (Lu, 2001).

Recognizing the importance of exploring the culturally shaped meanings of happiness, Uchida and Kitayama (2009) investigated the lay theories of happiness among Japanese and Americans. Overcoming the qualitative nature of the previous studies of Lu and his colleagues (2001; 2004), Uchida and Kitayama utilized both qualitative and quantitative strategies to examine the lay concepts of happiness by

- 167 -

examining free descriptions of happiness and inductively identifying the dimensions of happiness using multidimensional scaling (MDS). In both cultural groups, a social orientation (i.e., independence‐interdependence) dimension and valence (i.e., positive‐negative) dimension emerged. Similar to Lu and his colleagues' interpretation of their data, Japanese participants were much more likely than Americans to evaluate happiness as having negative implications, such as disrupting social harmony by causing jealousy or failing to pay attention to others. For example, although approximately 34% of the descriptions of happiness were about non-positive features (i.e., social disruption, transcendental reappraisal) for Japanese, less than 2% of the descriptions were non-positive for Americans. Uchida and Kitayama posited that the different ways of interpreting happiness between Americans and Japanese are associated with the different models of self that are endorsed by respective cultural contexts (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Markus& Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1994). For Americans, happiness is primarily a personal experience of hedonic states such as pleasure and is a highly valued goal in life (Lutz, 1988; Hochschild, 1983). In contrast, in the Japanese culture, where one's view of the self is interdependent and embedded in the surrounding environment, happiness or good feelings are associated with interpersonal relationships (Lu, 2001; Lu & Gilmour, 2004). As a result, certain positive emotions such as

pride generated by one's accomplishment of goals can have negative implications as they may lead to jealousy from others, thereby potentially harming social harmony. Hence, the exhibition of a "habit of hesitation" toward happiness (Minami, 1971, p. 34) was observed among the Japanese participants.

In addition to the studies that directly examined the conceptualization of happiness, research on positive emotions, which is a critical element in happiness or subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005), also provides evidence of significant cultural differences. Positive emotions have stronger associations with happiness for more independent cultures, such as North America compared to interdependent cultures (Kuppens, Realo, & Diener, 2008; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). Such positive relationships between positive emotions and individualism have been repeatedly found in previous studies (see Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003 for a review), but do not hold depending on the cultural contexts. At the individual level, individualistic values have predicted a decreased subjective well-being for Japanese while the opposite was true for European Americans (Ogihara & Uchida, 2014). Furthermore, growing empirical evidence indicates that, while positive emotions and negative emotions are contradictory in Western cultures, they exist in parallel among East Asians (Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999; Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010). A mixed affective

experience, in which people experience both positive and negative emotions simultaneously, is more commonly observed among East Asians than European Americans (see Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Kaiping Peng, 2010 for a review).

Hence, previous research on folk models of happiness and empirical evidence on the cultural differences in correlates of positive emotions clearly demonstrate that the definition of happiness and associated motivations, antecedents, and consequences differ across cultures. Specifically, happiness involves hedonic experiences that are closely linked to the achievement of personal goals for individuals in the West, whereas East Asians focus more on the social implications of happiness. Furthermore, East Asians have an ambivalent attitude toward happiness that can be both positive and negative depending on the situational constraints. As such, it is important to understand the different connotations of happiness present among laypeople in pertinent cultural contexts.

## The present study

The present study extends the existing literature by examining the cultural models of happiness in Korea. Given that there are hundreds of studies on happiness in Korea, it is surprising that no systematic and empirical investigation has yet examined how happiness is construed by laypeople in Korea. Koo and Kim's (2006) study is an exception in that it investigated Koreans' experience of happiness from a folk psychological perspective by analyzing the themes in respondents' free descriptions of their experience of happiness (see also Park & Kim, 2006). However, given that the most prominent definition of happiness is undoubtedly positive, the prompt "when do you feel happy?" implicitly biased participants to report experiences that were positive in valence. Therefore, the previous studies overlooked an important question: What is happiness to Koreans? The present study aims to address this limitation by directly investigating the conceptualization of happiness among Koreans. Considering that Korea shares the cultural tradition of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with other nearby East Asian countries, we expected that the conceptualization of happiness would diverge from that of Western happiness. Despite the recent phenomenon of pursuing happiness as one of the important lifetime goals, we expected there to be mixed views on happiness that are shared among people, implying both positive and negative aspects of happiness. Furthermore, as Koreans value relational obligations and societal norms (Suh et al., 1998), we expected the Korean models of happiness to be strongly related to interpersonal harmony.

In order to conduct a systematic examination of the lay conception of happiness among Koreans, the present study utilized both qualitative and quantitative strategies based on

the methodology used by Uchida and Kitayama (2009). First, we gathered free descriptions of happiness, which were used as a primary set of data. This approach is especially powerful in that it does not restrict individuals'responses by providing specific dimensions. These data were then used for a free sorting task based on categorization. The results of the sorting task were then subjected to an MDS analysis, which provides the interpretation for the underlying dimensions. Using these dimensions, a coding scheme was developed for coding the free descriptions of happiness, which allowed for a systematic investigation into how Koreans categorize different meanings of happiness.

## Method

### Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study. 70 undergraduate students from a university in Seoul participated in the first part of the study ($M_{age}$ = 23.46, $SD_{age}$ = 2.67, 42 females, 27 males, 1 unidentified). A separate group of 13 students from the same school participated in a sorting task in the second part of the study ($M_{age}$ = 23.15, $SD_{age}$ = 2.19, 7 females, 6 males).

### Procedure and materials

### Free writing task

The study consisted of two parts. In Part 1, participantswere asked to write down descriptions of happiness. Specifically, they were asked to write about different characteristics, features, or effects of happiness (*haengbok* in Korean). They were given an empty sheet of paper with five lines and were allowed to write down as many as five descriptions of happiness. After they provided these descriptions, participants were asked to rate the desirability of the aspects or effects of happiness that they just provided,using a scale ranging from 1 = *not at all desirable* to 5 = *very desirable*.

### Free sorting task

In Part 2, a separate group of participants sorted the descriptions of happiness, which was subsequently analyzed using MDS to draw a mental map of happiness. The descriptions that participants in Part 2 sorted came from the descriptions provided by the participants in Part 1. The participants were provided with the subset of descriptions that were selected through a procedure as follows: First, we randomly selected 30 participants from Part 1 and collected their descriptions. Any redundant or repeating description was replaced by other descriptions from the remaining pool of participants of Part 1. This procedure yielded 90 descriptions of happiness. The participants in Part 2were given 90 index cards, each of which was written with a description about happiness.

The participants were asked to sort them into 10-20 groups that can be categorized as a meaningful group. They were then asked to combine groups that had similar meanings to form a superordinate group. Participants followed the rule that the lower level groups should be under a single higher level group and created as many levels as they thought necessary.

### Happiness category coding

After "mapping" participants' mental model of happiness using the card-sorting task, we generated a coding scheme for happiness. Two native Korean coders coded all of the 311 descriptions provided by the participants from Part 1 using this coding scheme.

## Results

### Descriptions of happiness

The desirability ratings on happiness descriptions of Koreans were compared to those of Japanese and American participants available from Uchida and Kitayama (2009). We conducted 2 (gender: male, female) x 3 (cultural group: Korea, Japan, and US) ANCOVA on the desirability rating, controlling for age.[1] There was a significant main effect of gender, $F(1,$

_____

1) There was a significant age difference between Korean participants ($M$=23.46, $SD$ = 2.67) compared to Japanese ($M$ = 19.01, $SD$ = 0.92) and American ($M$ = 18.90, $SD$ = 0.89) participants.

229) = 7.86, $p$ = .005, $\eta_p^2$ = .033, with females ($M$ = 4.46, $SD$= 0.56) reporting higher scores than males ($M$ = 4.25, $SD$ = 0.75). There was also a significant main effect of cultural group, $F(2, 229)$ = 48.70, $p$ < .001, $\eta_p^2$ = .298. There was no interaction between gender and cultural group, $F(2, 229)$ = 1.81, $p$ = .116. Planned comparison revealed that Americans rated happiness descriptions as more desirable than Japanese, $F(1, 163)$ = 6.61, $p$ < .05, $\eta_p^2$ = .039, and Koreans, $F(1, 158)$ = 28.39, $p$ < .001, $\eta_p^2$ = .152. However, there was no difference in the desirability ratings between Koreans and Japanese, $F(1, 136)$ = 0.41, $p$ =.525 (Table 1). In addition, whereas almost all American participants (98.19%) perceived happiness as positive (rated as 4 or 5), only 66.67% of Japanese and 78.41% of Koreans perceived it as positive.

### Semantic space of happiness

We used the sorting data from Part 2 to visualize the semantic space of happiness. First, for each participant, the lowest and the highest levels of categories were identified. We then assigned similarity scores of 90 descriptions of happiness with the following steps. A score of 1 was assigned to pairs that were included within a lowest level category; a score of 2 to pairs that were not in the same lowest category, but that were included in the next lowest category; a score of 3 to pairs that were not included in the first two lowest levels, but that were

Table 1. Age adjusted means of desirability ratings of happiness descriptions

|  | Korea (*n* = 70) | Japan (*n* = 73) | United States (*n* = 95) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 4.23$_a$ | 3.79$_a$ | 4.80$_b$ |
| Female | 4.03$_a$ | 4.18$_a$ | 4.85$_b$ |

*Note*. Means with differing subscripts are significantly different at the *p* < .05 based on Bonferroni's post hoc paired comparisons.

included in the next lowest level; a score of 4 to pairs that were not included in the first three lowest levels, but that were included in the next lowest level category. The number of levels ranged from three to five. The similarity scores were standardized by dividing the scores by the number of levels. By following the recommendations by Young & Harris (2004), the dissimilarities scores were used as input to the MDS program, so that the higher scores indicated the greater perceived psychological distance. The resulting dissimilarity scores were averaged across all 13 participants and were analyzed with an MDS analysis using ALSCAL of SPSS version 23.0.

The stress index was reasonable for a three-dimensional solution for the current data (.18). A careful examination of the dimensions showed that the two dimensions could be interpreted in terms of positive vs. negative and state vs. functions (i.e., changes or consequences that happiness brings). The third dimension in the solution was difficult to interpret and considering the two-dimension solutions from Uchida and Kitayama (2009), we decided to present the data with the two dimensions [2]. The

solution is illustrated in Figure 1. The horizontal dimension of the solution can be seen as representing the valence of happiness. On the positive end, descriptions such as "happiness helps build relationships" or "happiness makes people feel good" are positioned, whereas on the negative end, negative aspects of happiness such as "happiness makes it difficult to concentrate on work" or "happiness can cause jealousy" are positioned. The vertical dimension represents states of happiness (e.g., "Happiness is a state without worry", "Happiness is when you are satisfied with life") on one end, and functions or consequences of happiness (e.g., "Happiness motivates you to live life", "Happiness makes you overcome hardships in life", "Happiness makes you want to help others") on the other. With the two-dimensional solution, we were able to identify 6 categories—positive states, positive functions, social harmony, reappraisal, social disruption, and negative functions—that consisted the meanings associated with happiness. As illustrated in Figure 1, different ovals were marked for each category and these ovals

---

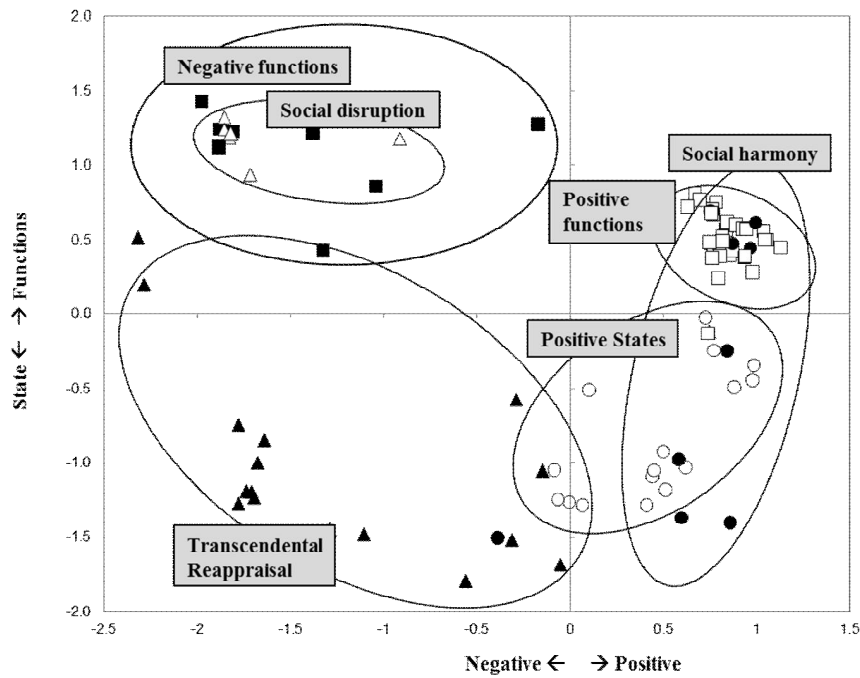[2] The stress indices for one- through five-dimensional solutions were .51, .29, .19, .13, and .11.

*Figure 1.* The multidimensional scaling solution for happiness. There are six categor
happiness in the solution. The categories are represented with the following symbols
positive functions (e.g., makes you have positive view of oneself, makes you view th
in a positive light),  ● = social harmony (e.g., in a good relationship with others, w
share with others, makes one become nice to others), ○ = positive state (e.g., good
comfortable, ■ = negative functions (e.g., makes you arrogant, makes you forget in
things), △ = social disruption (e.g., pursuing one's happiness can harm others), ▲
transcendental reappraisal (e.g., not lasting forever, does not come often, here and nc

covered more than 95% of the items.

The "positive states" category includes positive emotional experiences or states (e.g., good feelings, comfortable, warm, feeling rewarded). The "positive functions" category includes the positive effects that happiness brings to personal domains such as motivations (e.g., happiness makes you try other things, gives meaning to lead life), optimism (e.g., makes you think positively, hopeful of the bright future), and cognitions (e.g., happiness makes you think

positively, makes you quick-witted). The "social harmony" category includes the conditions that involve positive interpersonal relational status (e.g., happiness is a state when you are in good relationship with others) and positive interpersonal consequences (e.g., happiness makes you want to help others, share with others). The "transcendental reappraisal" category includes transcendental realization (e.g., happiness is ambiguous, happiness is discovered within yourself), nihilism (e.g., happiness does not last)

and impersonal definition of happiness (e.g., requires a certain level of income, a state that people want to maintain). The "negative functions" category includes the negative consequences to personal domains such as cognition (e.g., happiness makes you irrational, happiness makes it hard to focus) and motivation (e.g., makes you greedy). Finally, the "social disruption" category includes negative interpersonal consequences (e.g., relative deprivation, jealousy).

### Facets of happiness

The six categories— positive states, positive functions, social harmony, transcendental reappraisal, negative functions, and social disruption—consisting of the structure of happiness was then used as a basis for developing the coding scheme. Based on the coding schemes developed from the MDS solution, the two coders coded the descriptions provided by the participants in Part 1. There were 314 descriptions altogether, but 3 of them were excluded from the analysis due to the

difficulty interpreting the meaning of the descriptions. The average Cohen's kappa (1960) across all of the categories was .84 (agreement on individual categories ranging from .76 to 1.0), indicating a high reliability across the coders. The disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion. The results indicated that the majority of the descriptions belonged to positive states (27.7%) and positive functions categories (26.9%). The third most commonly reported category was social harmony (15.4%), which was followed by the categories of transcendental reappraisal (15.1%), negative functions (4.5%), and social disruption (1.9%).

The ratings of desirability for each category were observed. Overall, there were significant differences in ratings of desirability across the six categories, $F(5, 306) = 48.79$, $\eta_p^2 = .44$, $p < .001$. Sheffé post hoc analyses revealed that the categories of positive state, positive functions, and social harmony did not differ from one another, but they were rated as more desirable compared to categories of transcendental reappraisal, negative function, and social

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of six categories of happiness descriptions

| Positive state (*n* = 97) | Positive function (*n* = 94) | Social harmony (*n* = 54) | Transcendental reappraisal (*n* = 47) | Negative function (*n* = 14) | Social disruption (*n* = 6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4.61$_a$ | 4.52$_a$ | 4.61$_a$ | 3.51$_b$ | 2.29$_c$ | 1.67$_c$ |
| (0.67) | (0.80) | (0.56) | (1.04) | (0.99) | (0.52) |

*Note.* Standard deviations appear in parentheses bellow means. Means with differing subscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ based on Sheffé's post hoc paired comparisons.

disruption. Transcendental reappraisal category was more positively regarded compared to negative functions and social disruption categories (Table 1). The mean levels of a 5-point scale in each category clearly indicate that the categories of positive state, positive function, and social harmony were considered highly positive, while negative function and social disruption categories were rated as highly negative, with transcendental reappraisal category being neither undesirable nor desirable.

## General Discussion

Despite the growing interest in studying happiness among Koreans, relatively little research has focused on the lay conceptions of happiness. Moreover, previous studies on happiness in the Korean context have mainly addressed happiness as a sense of satisfaction in life (Suh, Koo, Lee, Chung, & Choi, 2010). The present study filled this gap by inductively identifying the model of happiness among Koreans. The examination of shared scripts of happiness by collecting free descriptions was particularly useful in uncovering the dimensions of happiness and revealing laypeople's appraisal of the environment (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Like most concepts that do not have a clear set of defining characteristics and clear boundaries (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006), the construct of happiness consists of multiple components and

dimensions that are in constant dynamic interaction with scripts available in a given cultural context. As such, the meaning of happiness varies across cultural contexts and time. The happiness that was understood by previous research as a positive emotional experience primarily involving personal achievement may be culture-specific to Western societies. The present study showed that the Korean model of happiness is distinct from the models of happiness previously observed in the Western cultural context. The examination of the dimensions emerging from the MDS analysis highlighted several points worthy of attention.

First, the pleasantness dimension emerged. The valence dimension is one of the most consistently found dimensions in previous emotion research (Russell, 2003). Interestingly, it is clear from the data that happiness was associated with both positive and negative features. A significant proportion of the dimension was non-positive, including categories of social disruption, negative functions, and transcendental reappraisal. In fact, non-positive features covered more space than positive features did in the MDS solution. In addition, the mean ratings of the desirability of the three categories —transcendental reappraisal, negative function, and social disruption— supported that Koreans interpreted them as non-positive. This result shows a greater similarity to the Japanese data compared to the American data, which contained only a few items that could be considered as transcendental

reappraisal or social disruptions (Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). In the current Korean data, nearly 20% of the descriptions were on the ambivalent nature of happiness, which reflects the traditional Confucianism of yin and yang and the importance of moderation (Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001). Having an excess of even the positive things such as happiness can tip the balance and therefore be considered undesirable. Furthermore, the ethos of self-improvement that is prevalent in East Asian cultures may account for Koreans' reluctance to fully emerge the positive hedonic feelings that happiness brings (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). However, unlike the Japanese data (10.27%), the current Korean data contain relatively fewer numbers of features (1.9%) related to social disruption. Instead, the majority of the non-positive descriptions Koreans generated were descriptions of negative consequences of happiness (4.4%) or transcendental reappraisal of happiness (14.9%). However, Koreans were more likely to acknowledge the non-positive features of happiness compared to the Americans in Uchida and Kitayama's (200) study (1.30% on transcendental reappraisal, 0.64% on social disruption). Depending on the situational needs and constraints, happiness can be either positively or negatively interpreted and have different consequences.

The second dimension, state-function dimension, suggests that Koreans seemed to distinguish between happiness as affective states and happiness as having functions that involve cognitive changes and interpersonal consequences. This second dimension is what differentiates Koreans from Japanese for whom the distinction between the individual and collective happiness seemed more salient. Although there were clusters of social aspects of happiness (i.e., social harmony and social disruption), they were not structured in a way that yielded independent-interdependent dimension as was seen in Japanese and American data. The difference between Koreans and Japanese may be explained by the differences in their emphasis on agency within social relationships. Although Koreans and Japanese are both considered as valuing interpersonal relationships and holding interdependent self, Yoshiyuki and Kim (2006) argued that Koreans tend to perceive themselves as a central subject in social relations whereas Japanese as a peripheral agent adjusting to social influences. As supporting evidence, they showed that Koreans showed stronger positive illusions compared to Japanese individuals. Such difference within collectivistic East Asian cultures provides a promising area for cultural psychological researchers.

The emergence of the state-function dimension is consistent with the functional accounts of emotions, which posit that emotions are responses that serve the goal of adapting to the environment (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). For Koreans, happiness is not merely an affective experience, but rather an emotional experience or

response that may be used for other goals in bringing positive and, less often, negative consequences. In other words, individuals appraise happiness in relation to their goals and situations and utilize its strengths while taking caution of its weaknesses. In the current data set, these functions included changes in motivation, cognition, and interpersonal relationships, which seems to suggest that for Koreans the ultimate goal may not be to reach a state of happiness but rather reaching an alternative ideal state, such as meaningfulness, productivity, or social harmony, by means of happiness. Happiness in this sense can be interpreted as having action tendencies that lead to individuals' behavioral or cognitive changes to influence their target of concern (Frijda, 1988).

Finally, more than 17% (15.4% positive and 1.9% negative) of the happiness descriptions involved interpersonal consequences and states. This finding is also consistent with the model of the interdependent self as a prevalent model in East Asian cultural contexts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). When definition of being happy encompasses the happiness in the lives of one's beloved people, it would be much more difficult to reach the level of happiness compared to when focusing only on one's own quality of life. One can easily imagine a situation in which one's perfect life with a thriving career and a romantic relationship is not perceived as ideal when one realizes that a family member is going through a tragic life event. Then the evaluation of life satisfaction would depend on the degree to which close others are factored into this equation. Future studies should expand these observations to examine what kinds of relationships and the degree to which the inclusion of others' well-being contribute to one's happiness.

## Limitations and Conclusion

This study is not without limitations. Although the MDS method is advantageous in discovering dimensions that spontaneously emerge from participants' responses without researchers imposing on their theoretical orientation, this approach has a few shortcomings. In the free sorting task to get similar ratings of happiness descriptions, participants were likely to rely on the most salient dimensions while the researchers also relied solely on the arrangement of the stimuli, which often led to revealing no more than two or three dimensions. There is a possibility that the current data and interpretations could have missed a critical dimension underlying the construct of happiness, such as luck and fortune. Indeed, previous literature has found that favorable external conditions or rare events are central to the meaning of happiness in many cultural contexts other than the modern American culture (McMahon, 2006; Wierzbicka, 2004). Specifically, in North American culture, it has more recently (particularly in the 1920s) changed to include

primarily the inner positive feelings of an individual. The researchers suggested the change in American society to modernization, urbanization, and consumerism shifted individuals' attention to individualistic goals of promoting feeling good. Future studies in which participants are more guided could reveal dimensions not observed in the current study.

A second limitation pertains to the sample of participants used in this study, which were strictly limited to college students. A study conducted in the United States found that for young Americans happiness was associated with the high arousal of positive emotions such as excitement, whereas the low arousal of positive emotions such as peaceful feelings co-occurred with happiness for older Americans (Siedlecki, Tucker-Drob, Oishi, & Salthouse, 2008). For a society that has gone through a dramatic change, it is not difficult to expect significant generational differences in the concept of happiness in Korea. The model of happiness of older Koreans may look even more different from the Western model of happiness. Thus, it is important to examine not only the developmental shift, but also a possible cohort effect on the model of happiness among Koreans. Furthermore, the college students who participated in the current study may be biased in that they were a convenient sample of students and were relatively a selective group in terms of academic performance. Whether or not this is representative of college students in Korea

should depend on further studies on this topic.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the present study was one of the first to examine the lay theory of happiness among Koreans. The findings suggest that happiness could be understood along the dimensions of valence and state/functions. The establishment of culturally specific dimensions of happiness has important implications for researchers and policy makers alike. Happiness is often used as a universal and objective index for well-being in policy making. However, asking about "happiness" in different nations may be getting at different constructs. Considering that Koreans focus much of their attention on utilizing happiness to motivate themselves to work and relate to others, asking about their motivation for the future rather than about their current satisfaction or experience of positive feelings may lead to a more accurate picture of their "happiness". Understanding the meaning of happiness should be the first step to investigating the levels of and different correlates of happiness. Future research should further delineate the causes and consequences of such conceptualizations of happiness.

## References

Bagozzi, R. P., Wong, N., & Yi, Y. (1999). The Role of Culture and Gender in the Relationship between Positive and Negative Affect. *Cognition & Emotion*, *13*(6), 641-672.

doi:10.1080/026999399379023

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cho, G. H. (1996). The quality of life and subjective well-being: Cross-cultural consideration. Sogang *Social Science Research, 5,* 229-283.

Choi, S. C, & Jung, T. Y. (2001). Psychology of Ingo for Koreans: Accompaniment of rewards and reimbursement of faults. *Korean Journal of Psychology: Culture and Social Issues, 7*(2), 21-38.

Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *54*, 403-25. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145056

Frijda, N. H. (1988). The laws of emotion. *The American Psychologist*, *43*(5), 349-58. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3389582

Gendron, M., Roberson, D., van der Vyver, J. M., & Barrett, L. F. (2014). Perceptions of emotion from facial expressions are not culturally universal: Evidence from a remote culture. *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)*, *14*(2), 251-62. doi:10.1037/a0036052

Han, S. Y. (1995). Quality of life and intrinsic motivation. *Korean Journal of Psychology: Culture and Social Issues, 2*(1), 95-111.

Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive self-regard? *Psychological Review*, *106*(4), 766-94. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10560328

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart.* London, England: University of California Press, Ltd.

Yoshiyuki, I., & Kim, Y. J. (2006) A Comparison of Positive Illusions Between South Korean and Japanese: Explanation by Subjective Self and Objective Self. *Korean Journal of Psychology: Social and Personality, 20*(4),19-34.

Ji, L., Nisbett, R. E., & Su, Y. (2001). Culture, change, and prediction. *Psychological Science*, *12*(6), 450-456.

Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (1999). Social functions of emotions at four levels of analysis. *Cognition and Emotion*, *13*, 505-521.

Kitayama, S., & Markus, H. R. (2000). The pursuit of happiness and the realization of sympathy: Cultural patterns of self, social, relations, and well-being. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and Subjective Well-Being* (pp. 113-161).

Koo, J., & Kim, U. (2006). Happiness and subjective well-being among Korean students and adults: Indigenous psychological analysis. *Korean Journal of Culture and Social Issues, 12*(2), 77-100.

Kuppens, P., Realo, A., & Diener, E. (2008). The role of positive and negative emotions in life satisfaction judgment across nations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *95*(1), 66-75. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.66

Lee, C. S. (2013, February 28). Promoting happiness is elusive national goal. *The Korea Times*. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2015/09/298_131270.html

Levenson, R. W., Ekman, P., Heider, K., &

Friesen, W. V. (1992). Emotion and autonomic nervous system activity in the Minangkabau of west Sumatra. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *62*(6), 972-88.

Lu, L. (2001). Understanding happiness: A look into the chinese folk psychology. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *2*, 407-432. doi:10.1023/A:1013944228205

Lu, L., & Gilmour, R. (2004). Culture and conceptions of happiness: individual oriented and social oriented swb. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *5*(3), 269-291. doi:10.1007/s10902-004-8789-5

Lutz, C. (1988). *Unnatural emotions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, *131*(6), 803-55. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*(2), 224-253.

McMahon, D. M. (2006). *Happiness: A history*. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Minami, H. (1971). *Psychology of the Japanese People*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Miyamoto, Y., Uchida, Y., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2010). Culture and mixed emotions: co-occurrence of positive and negative emotions in Japan and the United States. *Emotion*, *10*(3), 404-15. doi:10.1037/a0018430

Ogihara, Y., & Uchida, Y. (2014). Does individualism bring happiness? Negative effects of individualism on interpersonal relationships and happiness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *5*(March), 1-8. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00135

Oishi, S., Graham, J., Kesebir, S., & Galinha, I. C. (2013). Concepts of happiness across time and cultures. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *39*(5), 559-77. doi:10.1177/0146167213480042

Park, Y., & Kim, U. (2009). Psychological, relational, and financial resources: How do they influence happiness among Koreans. *Korean Journal of Culture and Social Issues, 15*(1), 95-132.

Russell, J. a. (2003). Core affect and the psychological construction of emotion. *Psychological Review*, *110*(1), 145-172. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.110.1.145

Schwartz, B., & Sharpe, K. E. (2006). Practical Wisdom: Aristotle meets Positive Psychology. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *7*(3), 377-395. doi:10.1007/s10902-005-3651-y

Shweder, R. (1991). *Thinking through cultures*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Siedlecki, K. L., Tucker-Drob, E. M., Oishi, S., & Salthouse, T. A. (2008). Life satisfaction across adulthood: Different deter- minants at different ages? *Journal of Positive Psychology, 3,* 153-164.

Spencer-Rodgers, J., Williams, M. J., & Kaiping Peng. (2010). Cultural differences in expectations of change and tolerance for contradiction: a decade of empirical research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review: An Official Journal of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc*, *14*(3), 296-312.

doi:10.1177/1088868310362982

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*(2), 482-493. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.74.2.482

Suh, E. M. (2004). Subjective well-being and trends in recent research. *Autumn Conference of Korean Clinical Psychology Association,* 3-18.

Suh, E. M., Koo, J. S., Lee, D, G, Jung, T. Y., & Choi, I. C. (2010). Happiness and mental health index of Korea: Happiness index of Korea and its meaning. *Annual Conference of Korean Psychological Association, 1,* 213-232.

Triandis, H. C. (1994). *Culture and Social Behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Uchida, Y., & Kitayama, S. (2009). Happiness and unhappiness in east and west: themes and variations. *Emotion*, *9*(4), 441-56. doi:10.1037/a0015634

Wierzbicka, A. (2004). "Happiness" in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective. *Daedalus, 133*, 34-43.

Young, F. W., Harris, D. F. (2004). Multidimensional scaling. In Norusis, M.J. (Ed.), *SPSS 13.0 Advanced Statistical Procedures Companion*, pp.287 354. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

# 한국인의 행복개념에 대한 분석

**최 은 수**[+]          **김 윤 영**          **Yukiko Uchida**

서울대학교 행복연구센터          고려대학교 심리학과          교토대학교 심리학과

행복에 대한 연구는 서구 중심의 학자들과 학문적 토대 아래 이루어져 왔다. 서양에서는 행복을 개인적인 성취와 대인관계에서의 긍정적인 정서적 경험으로 개념화하고 있다. 하지만 일본이나 중국 같은 동양권 문화에서 수행되었던 연구에 따르면 행복의 개념이 서양의 개념과 다르다는 것을 제안해준다. 본 연구는 83명의 대학생들을 대상으로 양적 분석 방법과 질적 분석 방법을 사용해 한국인들이 행복을 어떻게 개념화 하고 있는지 알아보았다. Yukiko와 Kitayama (2009)에서 일본인들과 미국인들의 행복개념을 비교 연구할 때 사용한 방법을 이용하여 한국인의 행복개념을 이전의 일본과 미국 데이터와 비교하는 작업을 실시했다. 분석 결과, 한국인들은 행복으로 인해 생기는 긍정적인 결과와 부정적인 결과를 모두 고려하는 변증법적인 행복 개념을 가지고 있어 일본인들과 비슷한 행복개념을 보이는 것으로 나타났으며, 행복을 지배적으로 긍정적인 경험으로 지각하는 미국인들과는 차이를 보였다. 또한 한국인들은 정서 상태로서의 행복과 삶의 다른 영역 (대인관계, 일)에 영향을 미치는 기능으로서의 행복으로 분류하는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구는 한국인들의 행복개념을 체계적으로 분석하는 시도를 통해 한국인이 가지는 행복개념의 특수성을 기존의 서구 중심의 행복 연구와 이론에서 정의하는 행복개념과 함께 고려하는 통합적인 시각이 필요하다는 점을 시사해준다.

주요어: 한국 문화, 행복, 정서, 행복개념