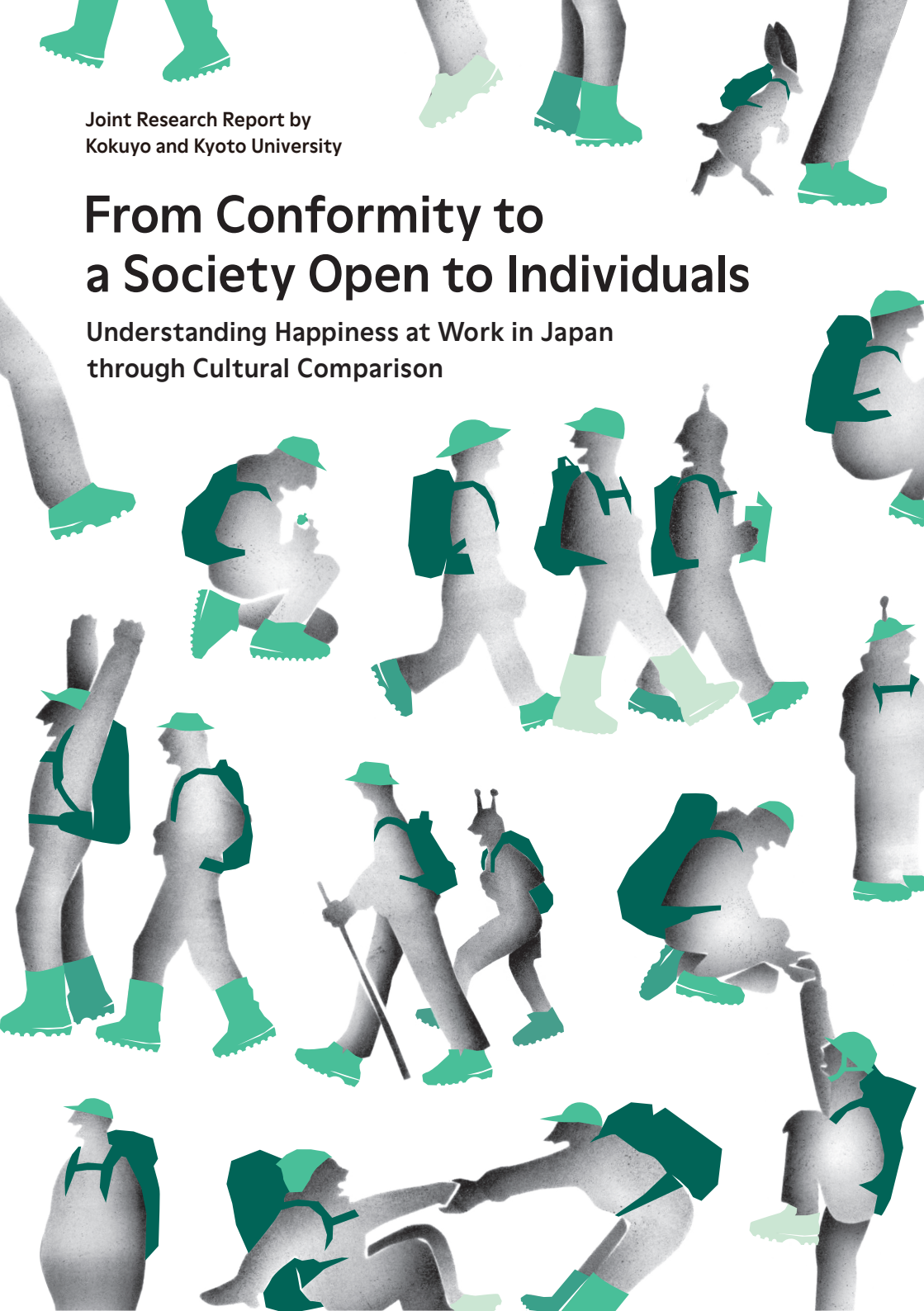
Joint Research Report by
Kokuyo and Kyoto University

From Conformity to a Society Open to Individuals

Understanding Happiness at Work in Japan through Cultural Comparison



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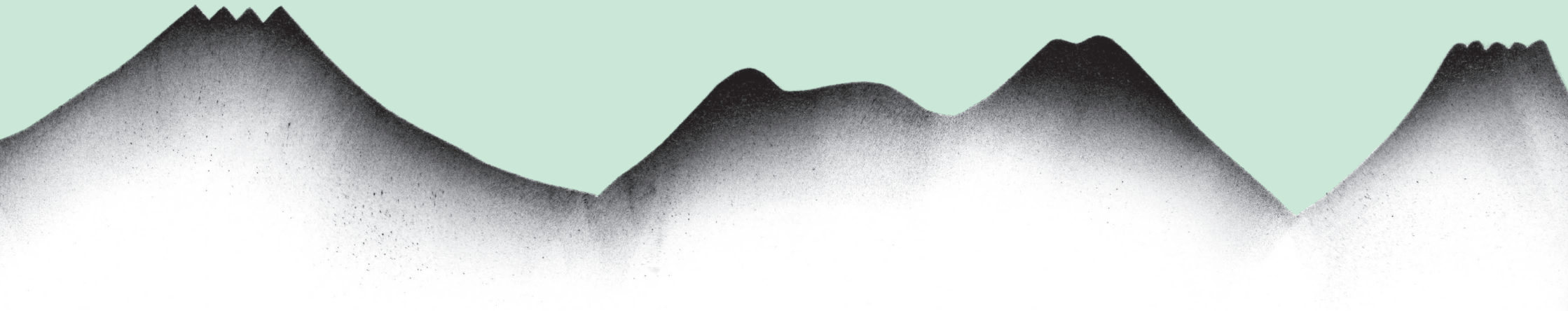
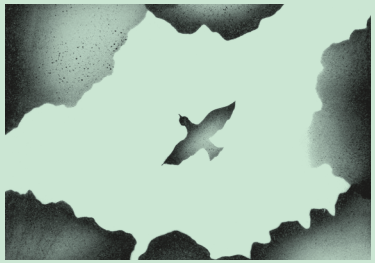


Foreword



Happiness, or well-being, has become an important goal or a matter we must understand in many settings, such as companies, communities, and in education. Broadly speaking, we can define well-being as a state in which people feel that they are living well and that their happiness is sustainable. Along with economic value and healthy life expectancy, well-being is becoming an essential concept in our lives.

The first happiness/well-being movement in Japan probably occurred in 2010, when Japan's Cabinet Office established the Commission on Measuring Well-Being. At the time, there was growing empathy for the idea of focusing not only on economic wealth, but also psychological wealth, as epitomized by Bhutan's gross national happiness (GNH). Likewise in Japan, gross Arakawa happiness (GAH) became a topic of discussion, while Tokyo's Arakawa Ward established the Happiness League. The Commission on Measuring Well-Being set a goal of formulating an index for measuring happiness in Japan and conducting ongoing surveys over time. Soon thereafter, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake struck, and people in Japan began to emphasize the importance of psychological wealth, as well as regional reconstruction and the kizuna (bonds) that support it.

Ten years later, the world began to focus on well-being, a term that encompasses the emotional comfort in the word "happiness," but also implies a longer-term nuance and connects with the ideas of coexistence with nature and sustainability (e.g., the SDGs). This was when Japan experienced another era of focus on well-being. While happiness is a more personal, short-term emotion (what one might describe as the hedonic feelings of comfort or pleasure), well-being, while it includes hedonic aspects, is a eudaimonic (i.e., connected to meaning and purpose in life) concept one can think of as longer-term and extending to coexistence with other people and nature.

The author has recently taken an interest in well-being as it exists in a place beyond the individual, rather than in its hedonic elements intended for the optimization of the individual. For example, when considering job satisfaction and well-being in the workplace, the tendency of much research is toward individual perspectives such as boosting individual engagement or self-actualization in the company. The question that arises, meanwhile, is: What kinds of places support these individual states? So that an individual person may achieve well-being, one needs not only to be in a good state, but to be in a workplace that is in a sustainably good state. Therefore, creating the right environment is necessary. This is because no matter how hard the individual tries, if the environment and systems are not functioning, in the end, the individual's motivation cannot last long.

In contemplating this, we must take a deeper look at the situation in each workplace, or what we can call "organizational culture." However, this report will first present an overarching perspective on workplace well-being in terms of culture at the area and country level. This will then lend us an understanding of how culture influences the nature of well-being. It should be noted that while some readers of this report may feel that they and their companies have very Japanese cultural values, others may feel otherwise. From these relative perspectives, we may be able to see the direction toward which we and our workplaces should aim.

It should also be noted that the term "culture" as used in this report refers to the sum of values, institutions, and customs in our daily lives within human society, as different from fine arts and other elements of arts and culture. Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn describes culture as the pattern of thoughts, feelings, and reactions which people acquire and transmit through that which has been created in human society, and includes traditions that have been selected through history and the values assigned to various things.[1] In a similar vein, Markus and Kitayama state that culture consists of the customs and public meanings/everyday reality that have been built up over the course of a society's history.[2][3]

Examples of culture with the deepest connection to happiness and well-being include the values within an organization (e.g., hard work is good; the results are more important than the process) as well as customs that have been passed down through culture and are now taken for granted (e.g., an emphasis on hierarchy through titles, use of language, etc.; greetings that company employees use with

co-workers they otherwise do not know). This report describes organizational values as “organizational culture”. At a certain level, culture has wide-ranging influence on matters such as how we live and work and how we form social relationships. Past research into cultural psychology has shown that culture influences various aspects of psychology and behavior, such as decision-making, motivation, and emotions.[2)] The same is true for well-being, which can be a life goal.[4)]

Culture exists at the national level as well as at the company or workplace level. This report is intended to establish a foundation by clarifying the differences and similarities in culture at the national or area level, then cover culture on the company and workplace levels (i.e., organizational culture) in the second half. By comparing cultures on the macro scale of countries and areas, it becomes clear that what we have taken for granted may differ between regions.

Japanese culture is said to be accommodative. Well-being, meanwhile, is thought to be based on mutual interdependence and balance, or on the idea that people feel secure from being like those around them and see happiness in moderation because it is not excessive in any way. This is what the author has termed “interdependent happiness” (details in the author’s book, *Uchida, Y., & Rappleye, J. (2024). An Interdependent Approach to Happiness and Well-Being (p. 172). Springer Nature.*). However, it is not simply a peaceful type of happiness, such as the joy of getting along with other people. As those who have lived in Japan for a long time know, it is quite costly (both mentally and physically) to maintain interdependence in Japan. It is not based upon secure relationships but is rather a cumbersome matter requiring constant vigilance and maintenance, as well as attention to uphold one’s reputation while simultaneously saving face for others.

Unlike in Japan, European American culture is based on high levels of independence and self-esteem, as well as an unquestioning desire for positivity (because they believe that one’s happiness will “Change the world!”). Well-being in the U.S. is reliant upon “achievement-oriented happiness,” in which self-actualization and self-esteem are felt within the midst of competition. In other words, an individual person must maximize the desirability of one’s inner attributes (such as abilities and personality, as well as acquired career experience).

Whereas most prior research has compared Japan and the United States, this report includes not only these two countries, but also the United Kingdom and Taiwan. In particular, the report brings Japan’s characteristics into even greater relief by providing comparisons to Taiwan, another “interdependently oriented society” in East Asia. While both Japan and Taiwan are said to emphasize mutual interdependence and interpersonal relations, differences in emphasis and approaches have emerged. What kind of company has many people with high well-being? What kind of workplace excels at fostering an atmosphere conducive to well-being? And what approaches could be taken in the future? This report will provide a variety of hints.

Professor Yukiko Uchida

Yukiko Uchida
Director of the Institute for the Future of Human Society and professor at Kyoto University. Ph.D. in Social Psychology, Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kyoto University. Specialist in cultural and social psychology. After serving as a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan and Stanford University, she has been engaged in research as a faculty member at Kyoto University since 2008, as a professor since 2019, and as an institute director since 2023. Along with international research activities, has been involved in Japan’s well-being policy, serving as a member of the Cabinet Office Commission on Measuring Well-Being (2010-2013) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s Central Council for Education (from 2021).

Table of Contents

Prologue

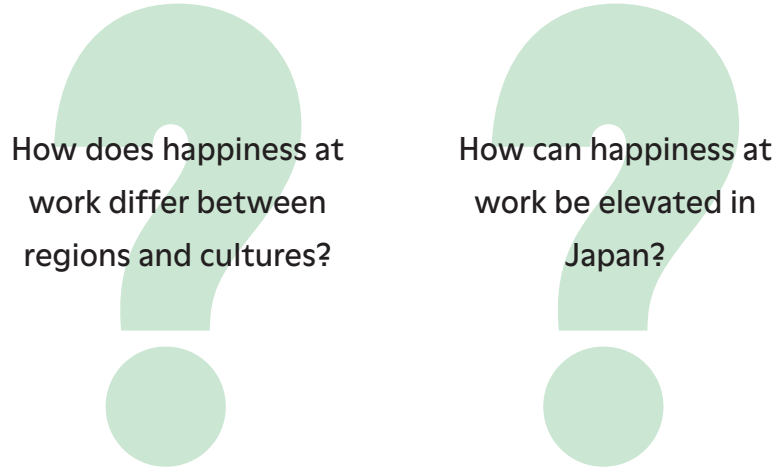
In Search of What Happiness at Work Is

Purpose of Research

Poignant stories in the news provide daily reminders about Japan's stagnation. Sluggish innovation, the fast-depreciating yen, low worker productivity and happiness, and uncertainty about the future due to the declining birthrate and graying society... These problems have hung over Japanese society for years. People are losing hope about the future and enthusiasm for their work.[5] With Western countries dominating the top spots in happiness rankings,[6] how can Japan create joy? Is it enough to simply imitate Western approaches? To answer these questions, this report will use comparisons between Japan and three other areas with different cultures as a springboard to unravel the nature of and requirements for future happiness in Japanese society and workplaces.

Another purpose of this report is to provide a clearer idea of the "autonomous cooperative society" that Kokuyo advocates as its vision for society. This means a society in which, rather than relying on existing large social systems, every individual can freely and autonomously express themselves, but not in isolation, because they meanwhile cooperate and collaborate with other people. Although autonomy and cooperation are often considered opposing concepts, the settings where they coexist also deserve mention.

Research Questions



Research Method

Survey method: online questionnaire survey (Intage Inc.)
Survey period: April 1 - June 12, 2023
Target regions, sample size: Japan (556), U.K. (312), U.S. (331), Taiwan (285)
Respondents: full-time employees at private companies and civil servants
Attributes (all areas):

Gender: male (53%), female (47%)
Ages: under 30 (18%), 30s (22%), 40s (22%), 50s (20%), 60+ (18%) (19 - 69 years old)
Positions: executive/proprietor class (13%), department manager class (13%), section manager/assistant manager class (9%), chief clerk/supervisor class (15%), no position (50%)
Industries: information services (11%), manufacturing (17%), finance/insurance (6%), construction/real estate (6%), transportation/logistics (5%), wholesale/retail (8%), hotels/restaurants (5%), advertising/media/printing (2%), education (8%), medicine/nursing/welfare (10%), other services (8%), government corporation/public office (5%), other (10%).

Happiness evaluation indicators:
Two indicators, "life satisfaction" and "interdependent happiness," were used to measure the degree of happiness. Life satisfaction is a measure of individual positivity and success. Since happiness in this country presumably includes not only personal achievement, but also harmony and tranquility with others, interdependent happiness was also used to measure the degree of happiness. This report will refer to the combination of both indicators as "happiness."

Indicator 1 - life satisfaction: an indicator focused on personal success and affluence (achievement-oriented happiness)[7]
Sample questions:
- In general, my life is close to ideal.
- My life is in an excellent state.
- I am satisfied with my life.
- I have accomplished the important things in my life that I want.
- If I did my life over again, there is little I would change.

Indicator 2 - interdependent happiness: an indicator focused on harmony and tranquility with others (accommodative happiness)[8]
Sample questions:
- I think that I and the people around me are having fun.
- I feel that the people around me accept me.
- I think I make the important people in my life happy.
- I am living an ordinary but stable life.
- I think I am as happy as the people around me.

Research Map

The five chapters in this report explore the nature of and requirements for happiness in Japan through comparisons with the U.K., the U.S., and Taiwan.

First, Chapter 1 will compare degrees of happiness and reactions to happiness to confirm any differences between areas in terms of how people perceive happiness. Furthermore, Chapter 2 will specify what kinds of events are considered happy in each area.

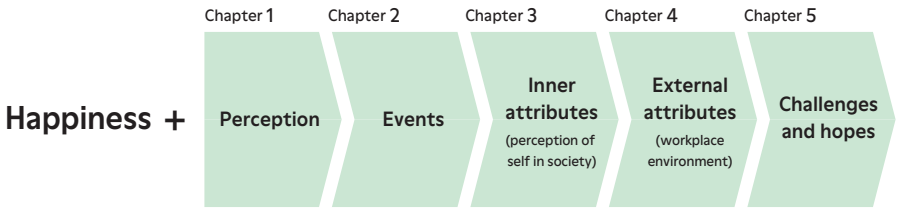
If there are differences in how people perceive happiness and in events between areas, why is this so? Chapter 3 will unravel the reasons from the internal perspective of cultural construals of the self (i.e., how one perceives oneself in society). In other words, this report will hypothesize that differences in perceptions of what society and other people mean to oneself—or what one's position is in the eyes of society and other people—create differences in how one perceives happiness. This is where we can observe differences between areas in their perceptions of autonomy and cooperation.

The external environment also seems to be responsible for differences in how people perceive happiness. Focusing on the workplace environment and organizational culture in which an employee is placed, Chapter 4 will clarify the differences in environments that bring happiness according to the area and individual. Chapter 5 will present challenges relating to happiness in Japan and the most important factors that will shape happiness in the future.

Synthesizing the results of the analysis in Chapters 1 through 5, the final chapter will propose guidelines for enhancing future happiness at work in Japan and places for fostering it.

By comparing these countries, Japan U.S. U.K. Taiwan

we will explore the nature of and requirements for happiness.



Chapter 1

Why Is Japan Unhappy? High Arousal Happiness and Low Arousal Happiness

Q: What differences are there between areas in how people perceive happiness?

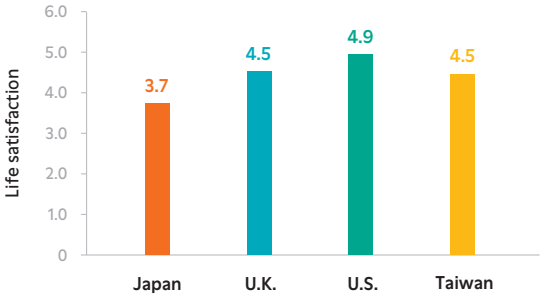
Feeling No Excessive Happiness

"How happy do you feel right now?" First, let us examine how people in each area answered this question. The U.S. scored highest for both life satisfaction, which represents achievement-oriented happiness, and interdependent happiness, which represents accommodative happiness, followed by the U.K., Taiwan, and lastly, Japan (Figures 1-1 and 1-2).

These results are similar to those in the "World Happiness Report," a well-known survey of happiness. Japan's low happiness score has been observed in various surveys.[6] While the "World Happiness Report" cites low levels of freedom for life choices and low tolerance as factors, many have pointed out that Japanese show a strong preference for the middle point of the scale when answering questions.[9]

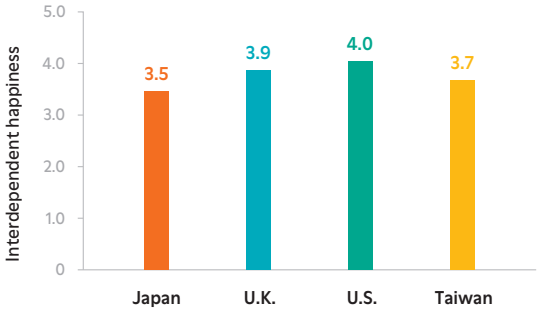
In any case, will Japan's happiness increase if it tries to catch up with and imitate the top ranked areas, seeing them as more "advanced"? The ways to elevate either happiness or tolerance are not uniform around the world. Perhaps some approaches in the other cultural contexts can be imported and adapted for Japanese people, but given that the perceptions and nature of happiness are different between countries, these approaches will require substantial adaptation according to Japanese values. Therefore, this report will analyze happiness from various perspectives to explore the elements behind happiness and the appropriate steps to take in Japan.

Figure 1-1 Average Life Satisfaction



* Life satisfaction is measured on a scale of 1 to 7.
* T-test differences: Japan < U.K.***, Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan***, U.K. < U.S.**, U.S. > Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Figure 1-2 Average Interdependent Happiness



* Construal of accommodative happiness is measured on a scale of 1 to 5.
* T-test differences: Japan < U.K.***, Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan***, U.K. < U.S.*, U.K. > Taiwan*, U.S. > Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Lively Youthful Happiness and Happiness Accumulated with Age

Let us, for example, compare happiness between generations in terms of age. In each area, we can see differences in the generations that are more likely to feel happiness (Figures 1-3 and 1-4). In Japan, the trend line dips, with relatively high happiness among those in their 20s and 60s and low levels among those in their 40s and 50s. Although many companies tend to focus on young people's growth and activity among seniors, as is the case with recent trends in the U.S. and other countries to create menopause-friendly workplaces,[10] Japan should also show more respect for such middle aged groups.

What are the trends in other areas? First, the U.K. exhibits a similar trend to Japan's. However, the difference between the two lies in the generations with

Figure 1-3 Comparison of Life Satisfaction by Age

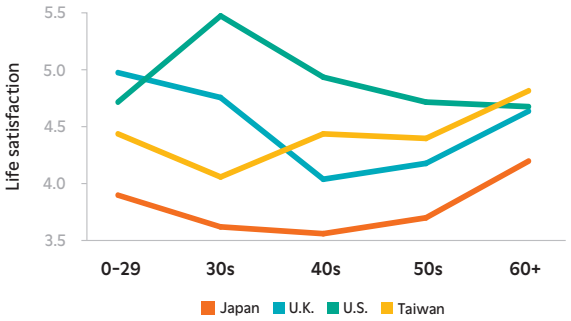
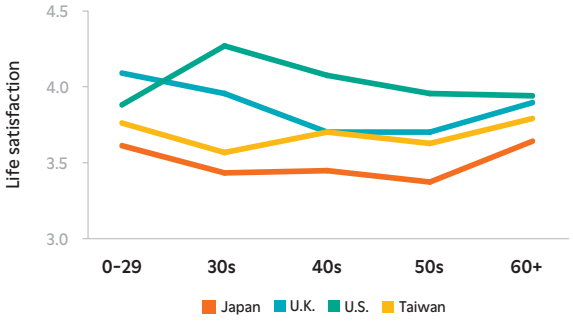


Figure 1-4 Comparison of Interdependent Happiness by Age



the highest happiness. In Japan, people 60 and older are the happiest, while in the U.K., it is those in their 20s. In the U.S., the level of happiness is markedly higher among 30s, while it tends to be lower among older generations. Taiwan has nearly the exact opposite characteristics of the U.S. that is happiness is low among young people up through their 30s, but it becomes to be higher among older generations.

To generalize these characteristics, we can say that young adults in the U.S. and U.K. are relatively healthy, have a high degree of freedom, and feel happy in this stage of life when they are undergoing personal transformation through growth and identity building. In contrast, in Japanese and Taiwanese society, seniors who have integrated the experiences, wisdom, and connections they have accumulated over the course of their lives, are more likely to appreciate happiness. This generalization is only based on the characteristics of present-day adults and seniors, so it is unclear whether the same trends will continue in coming decades. One reason cited as to why people tend to feel happier in their old age is that, aware that their remaining time in life is limited, they focus on being selective to choose activities and relationships that are satisfying (based on socioemotional selectivity theory).[11] These findings suggest that happiness may differ depending on the social and generational perspectives in each area. Therefore, the next step is to compare perceptions of happiness in each area.

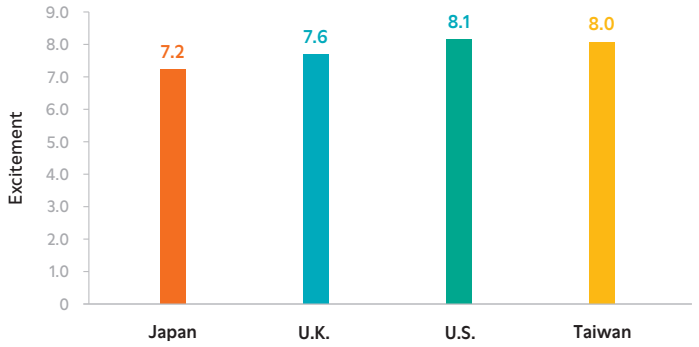
Japanese People Perceive Happiness with a Serene Mind

When you experience happiness, what state of mind are you in? Just as some people become joyful and excited, while others feel a peaceful calm, there is no single emotion associated with happiness.[12] For example, a comparison by area, excitement tends to be high in the U.S. and Taiwan and relatively low in Japan (Figure 1-5). In other words, people in the U.S. and Taiwan perceive happiness when they feel the elation that accompanies excitement or enthusiasm, while those in Japan are more likely to perceive happiness as a calmness that accompanies low arousal emotional state.

In addition, when we examine to what extent the degree of excitement is related to happiness, the correlation is smaller in Japan than in the U.S. and Taiwan, indicating that, again, in Japan, events that arouse the emotions do not always lead directly to happiness (Figure 1-6). Furthermore, according to some research, while American workers focus only on positive experiences as they grow older, Japanese workers try to find positive aspects in their negative experiences as they age.[13] This suggests that the latter (especially more experienced workers) are more tolerant of unpleasant events and are more likely to reinterpret such events from multiple perspectives.

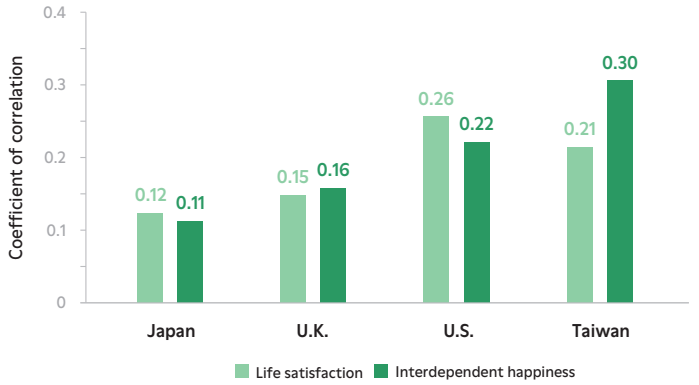
These findings suggest that in the U.S. and Taiwan, emotionally charged and unusual experiences are more likely to lead to happiness, whereas in Japan (and similarly in the U.K.), daily routines that allow one to lead a calm and peaceful life without excess emotion tend to bring happiness. The differences in the emotions

Figure 1-5 Excitement about Happy Events



* Excitement: Measured on a scale of 1 to 11. The larger the number, the more the excitement or enthusiasm accompanying happy events.
* T-test differences: Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Figure 1-6 Correlation between Excitement and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of −1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to −1, the stronger the negative correlation.

associated with happiness between areas is partially attributable to the fact that cultural virtues and norms—such as those in real-life interpersonal communication, novels, and music—bring about differences in each culture's ideal emotions.[14] In Japan, for example, the aesthetic sense of wabi-sabi (the acceptance of reality's transience and imperfections) and an education that urges people not to inconvenience others may be among the influences that define peaceful, low arousal happiness as the ideal.

Chapter 1 — Summary

Although happiness scores tend to be low in Japan, we should not compare levels of happiness alone, as types of happiness vary between areas.

In today's society, adults in the U.S. and U.K., who are full of energy and proactively transforming themselves, are more likely to feel happy. Meanwhile, seniors in Japan and Taiwan, who have integrated the experiences, wisdom, and connections they have accumulated over the course of their lives, are more likely to appreciate happiness.

In Japan, people are more likely to feel a low arousal happiness that includes both negative and tranquil elements. On the other hand, people in the U.S. and Taiwan are more likely to obtain elated happiness with a high level of excitement.

Column A

How to Measure Happiness

There are different happiness indicators in use in countries around the world. Since the concept of happiness is subjective, there are skeptics who compare different measures of happiness and question how these indicators are used. Gross domestic product, or GDP, is an economic indicator that has been used as a measure of a country's wealth. However, even GDP does not tell the whole story. One major problem with this statistic is that it is unrelated to citizens' subjective happiness. Meanwhile, there have been a number of studies on happiness indicators.

In creating these indicators, the emphasis has been on identifying both international comparisons and the state of happiness in each cultural context. For this purpose, we must understand the characteristics of happiness in Japanese culture. Prior research has shown that there are certain cultural differences in the way people perceive happiness, predictors of happiness, and the relationship between the socioeconomic environment and happiness.[15] Compared to countries at the same economic level, Japan has low subjective happiness. Based solely on the average figure, Japan is often said to be an unhappy country. Happiness in the U.S. is defined as a state in which one's abilities, environmental factors, and so on are maximized. In the U.S., a happy person is defined as one who is young, healthy, well-educated, well-paid, possesses good social skills, has a good job, and has high self-esteem.

In contrast to the American idea of happiness as something one achieves and acquires, the Japanese concept is a more balanced, accommodative one that reflects an outlook on life which sees happiness as something that changes over time, with the good and the bad always side-by-side. For example, when respondents in Japan and the U.S. were asked to describe up to five meanings for happiness, 97.4% of responses collected in the U.S. were positive contents (e.g., "happiness is when you achieve something," "you feel like jumping up and down when you are happy"), while in Japan, positive descriptions accounted for 68% of the total, with the remainder of nearly 30% being negative[4] (e.g., "people envy

me if I express happiness in a wrong way," "I stop growing as a person," "I feel insecure"). As the description "people envy me" illustrates, Japanese people place importance on balance in relationships. It is undesirable to be alone in being happy or unhappy. Feeling like one is like other people is important, and a tranquil life is the standard by which happiness is determined. Perhaps reflecting this balanced mentality, the average response on a ten-point scale to one's happiness in Japan has consistently remained around 6.5. And when asked what the ideal level of happiness is, Japanese respondents' answers are at around 7.[16)]

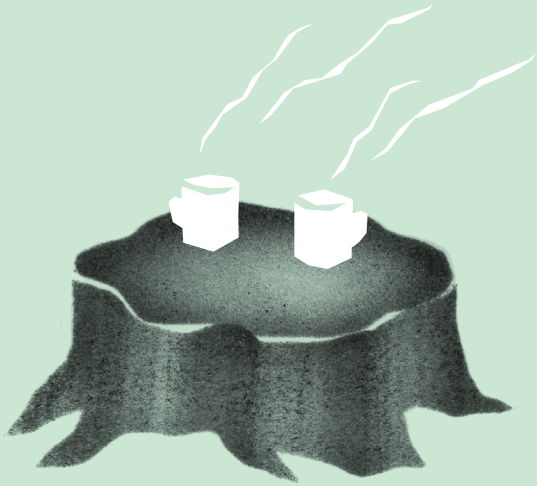
Connections with other people are important, and having access to emotional support from those close to us has been found to be more associated with happiness in Japan than in North America.[17)] In addition, pleasant feelings (e.g., friendly feeling) obtained when in harmonious relationships with other people are more associated with happiness in Japan. On the other hand, relationships may not be stable even for the long relationships.

In research on happiness, it is easy to make comparisons between countries, prefectures, occupations, and so on. In doing so, however, one should be wary of simplifying conclusions from comparisons of aggregate values or over-interpreting spurious correlations. In responses that are given based on a scale, cultural response bias (e.g., the tendency in Japan to avoid using the extreme ends of a scale) may exist. Furthermore, optimal values of happiness vary. It would be premature to simply formulate a conclusion based on a simple mean comparison showing that one country with a high happiness score is a happier country than another with a lower score. It is important that we be able to analyze and verify the differences in how happiness is structured in each country and culture, as well as the differences in the patterns themselves, such as what is more likely to be associated with happiness.

Professor Yukiko Uchida

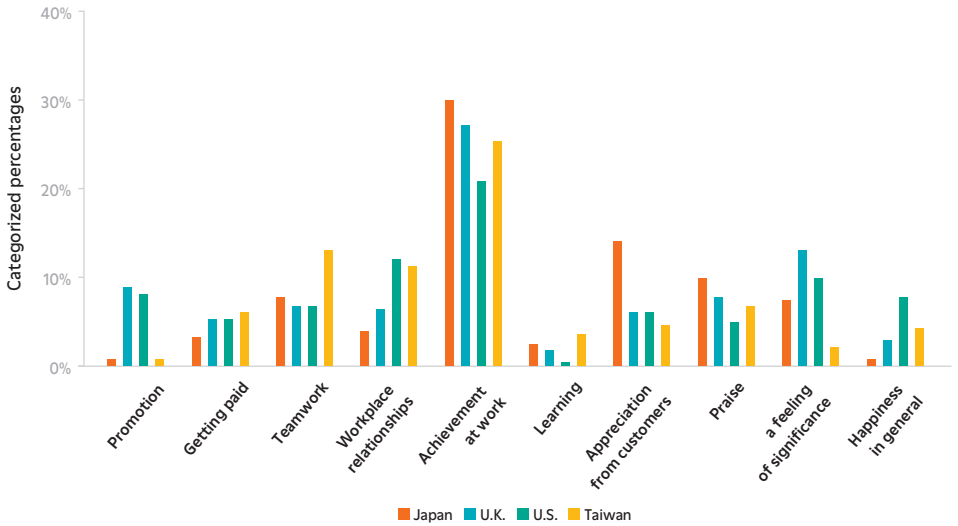
Chapter 2

Happiness Is Created with the Customer



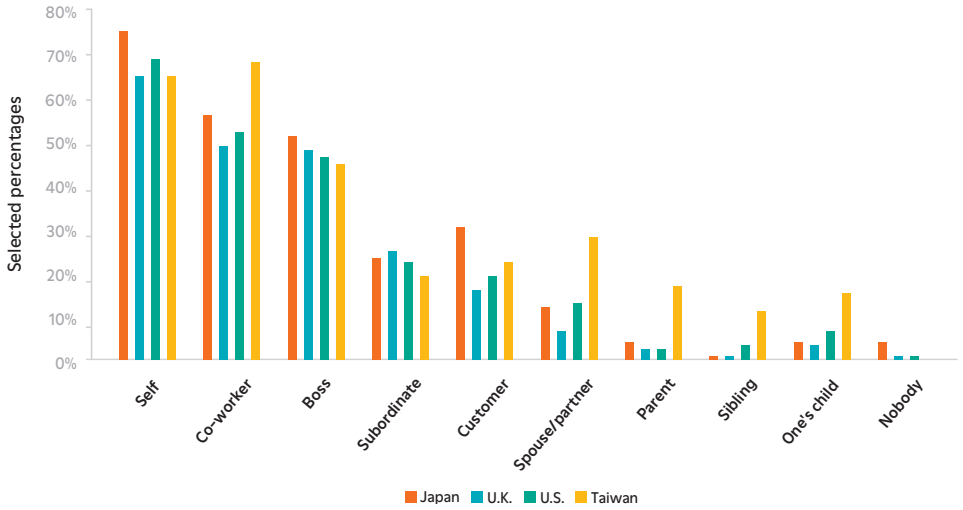
Q: What events make workers in each area feel happy?

Figure 2-1 Types of Happy Events



* Free responses categorized as "events that made you feel happiness while working."

Figure 2-2 Contributors to Happy Events



* Respondents could give answers with multiple contributors to happiness.

Happiness Fostered through Relationships, Happiness Created through Individual Advancements

The previous chapter showed us differences in how people feel happiness between areas. But does the source of happiness different as well? In this chapter, we will focus on the realm of work to analyze this question. Let us first examine the results concerning ten categories of events that made people feel happy while working (Figure 2-1). The most commonly mentioned event in all areas was achievement at work. The tendency to experience happiness in achieving or going above and beyond one's work objectives is present across regions. Perhaps "achievement" is central to happiness at work.

Next, when we focus on the categories that track with achievement at work, the characteristics of each area emerge. In Japan, many events are associated with gratitude to customers; far more so than in the other three areas. On the other hand, the U.S. and U.K. exhibit similar trends, with many events involving promotions and a feeling of significance. In Taiwan, events related to teamwork and workplace relationships are more likely to be tied to happiness. In other words, while people in Japan and Taiwan tend to experience happiness in their relationships with other people, such as customers and co-workers, in the U.S. and U.K., individual advancements, such as promotions and significance, are more likely to contribute to happiness. Other research has also reported happiness having a relationship with personal achievement in the U.S. and with social harmony in Japan,[4] thus suggesting that in Japan, people are more likely to derive happiness from interpersonal and social relationships.

Co-creating Happiness

Then, who do workers perceive as the source of their happy events? Although many workers naturally respond that they themselves contribute to such events, differences in perception emerge when comparing contributions other than themselves across regions (Figure 2-2).

First off, we see that compared to other areas, contributions from customers are greater in Japan. This is clear from the large number of events related to appreciation from customers, and it seems that customers are the source of happiness at work in Japan. It is also worth noting that, although not a large percentage, more respondents in Japan than in other areas responded that no one contributed to the happy events. This may be due to the fact that it is not uncommon in Japan to consider certain events as the result of natural causes, luck, or fate, rather than the work of a specific person.[18]

Let us now look at Taiwan, which has some unique characteristics. In Taiwan, a large percentage of respondents identify many other contributors, indicating a tendency to recognize that various people are involved in one's happiness. Among this group, the percentage of those who identify co-workers and family members (e.g., spouse/partner, parent, child) as a contributor is larger than in other areas. Since people in Taiwan often perceive team-related events as happy, their selection of co-workers is direct, but what stands out is that they also consider contributions from family members as a reason for happiness in the workplace. It should be noted that there is no bias toward any particular people in the U.S. or the U.K., and we can infer that even within the same area, contributors to happiness vary from person to person.

Nostalgic Memories Remain Powerful

We have examined happy events in terms of people, and now we shall analyze them in terms of time.

First, with regard to the time when happy events occurred, more workers in Japan than in other areas cited events in the somewhat distant past that happened at least one year prior (Figure 2-3). To put it another way, Japanese workers are more likely to feel that, upon reflection, their current happiness is attributable to past experiences. In addition, there is a marked difference in the timing of happy events between different areas: Taiwanese workers are most likely to associate relatively recent experiences with happiness, followed by those in the U.S., the U.K., and Japan. Similarly, when we compare the frequency of events, Taiwanese workers tend to experience happiness more frequently than Japanese (Figure 2-4), suggesting that in Taiwan, happiness is formed by events that are experienced on a more frequent and continual basis, while in Japan, people continuously cultivate nostalgic memories that form the basis of their current happiness.

There are some similarities between Japan and Taiwan. Both countries show a certain correlation between the frequency of events and the level of happiness (Figure 2-5). Although the correlation is not very strong in either Japan or Taiwan, there is a noticeable relationships compared to the lack of correlation see in the U.S. and U.K., People in Taiwan currently experience happy events with great frequency, and if those in Japan have very frequent opportunities to ruminate on happiness in addition to events in the distant past, this may enrich their work. For example, in Japan, where people see happiness in relationships, they may convey gratitude or advice to their work colleagues or family members. For Japanese people, who are said to be genetically predisposed to feel anxiety,[19] perhaps there should be more emphasis on experiences that foster a sense of security while providing thoughtful feedback on one's actions or ideas. Anxiety can make it difficult to perceive the present as happy, and when that anxiety is relieved, it can be easier to recall that past experience as a good memory. However, it is also important to try and create conditions in which we and the people around us feel that every day is a good day.

Figure 2-3 Timing of Happy Events

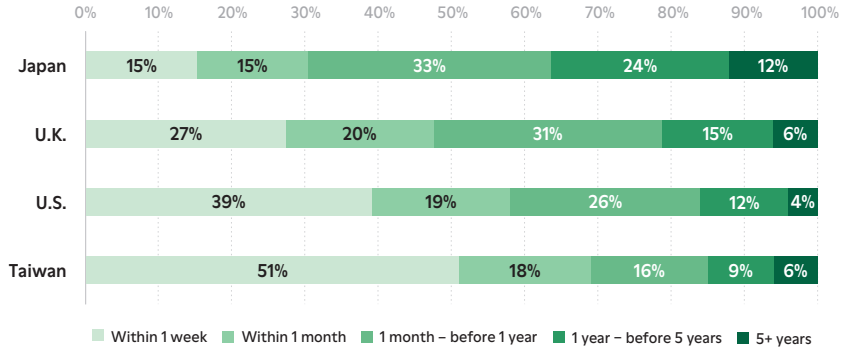


Figure 2-4 Frequency of Happy Events

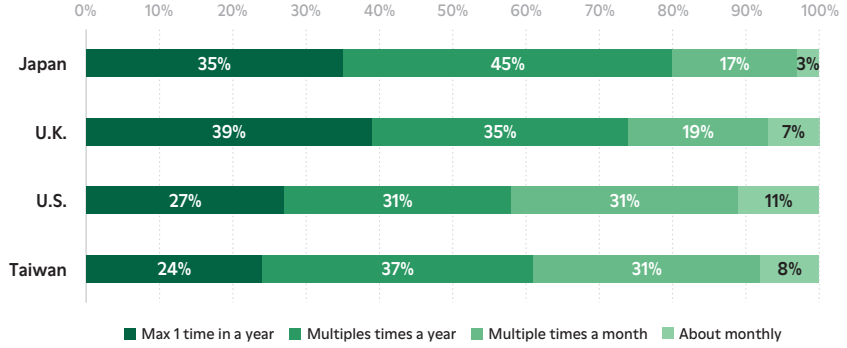
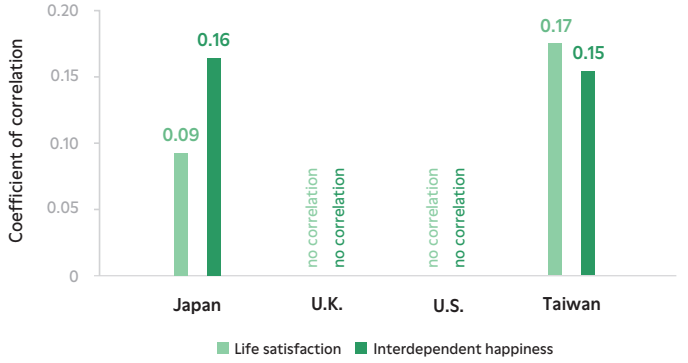


Figure 2-5 Correlation between Frequency of Happy Events and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

Chapter 2 — Summary

While people in Japan and Taiwan tend to find happiness in their relationships with other people, such as customers and co-workers, in the U.S. and U.K., individual advancements, such as promotions and personal significance, are more likely to contribute to happiness.

In Japan, events in the relatively distant past tend to shape current happiness. Consequently, although these experiences may tend to be less frequent, opportunities to increase their frequency, such as expressing gratitude to work colleagues, may contribute to fostering happiness.

Chapter 3

The Happiness of Growing Up in an Interdependent Culture

Q: What kind of self-perception is related to feeling happiness?

Q: Do relationships between the self and others/society differ between areas?

Figure 3-1 Differences in Perceptions of Self in Society (Cultural Self-Construal)

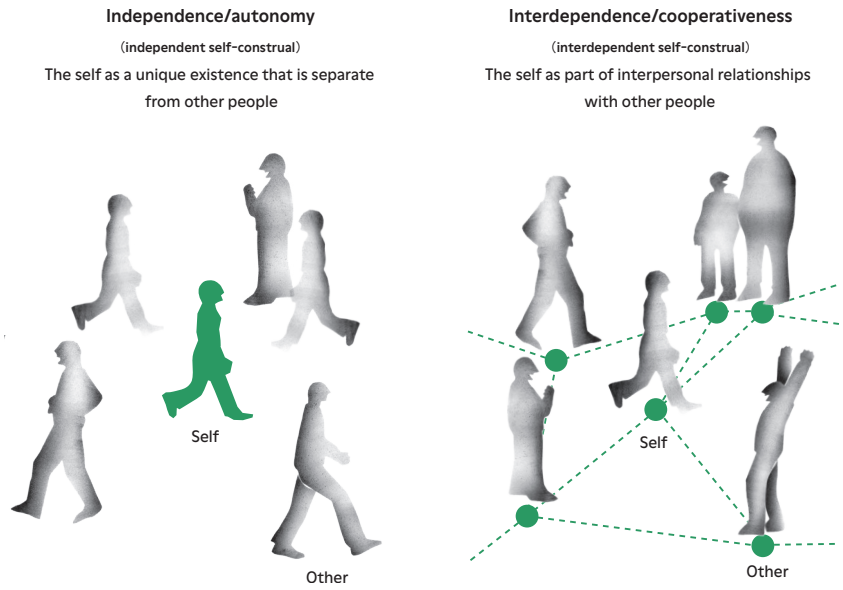
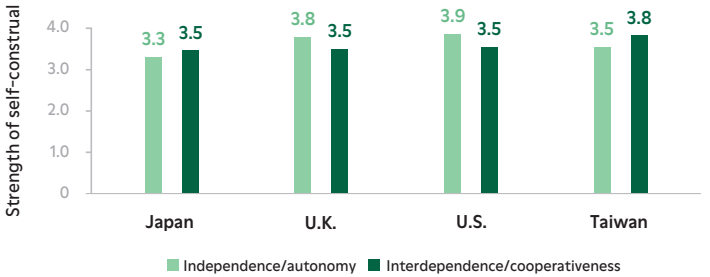


Figure 3-2 Average Cultural Self-Construal



* Both indicators of cultural construals of the self are measured on a scale of 1 to 5.
* T-test differences (within areas): <Japan> independence < interdependence***, <U.K.> independence > interdependence ***, <U.S.> independence > interdependence ***, <Taiwan> independence < interdependence *** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Foundations: Autonomy in the West, Cooperation in the East

Chapter 2 demonstrated that people in Japan and Taiwan tend to find happiness in relationships, while those in the U.S. and U.K. tend to find it through individual advancements. But why do the factors driving happiness differ between areas? As mentioned in the introduction, Kokuyo envisions an autonomous cooperative society where autonomy and cooperation coexist at the individual and group levels. If people in American and British society have autonomous tendencies, then the strong cooperative tendencies among people in Japan and Taiwan may be what defines their happiness. To test this hypothesis, we shall examine how individual workers perceive themselves in society (i.e., cultural construals of the self). It should be noted that in this report, cultural construal of the self is assessed.

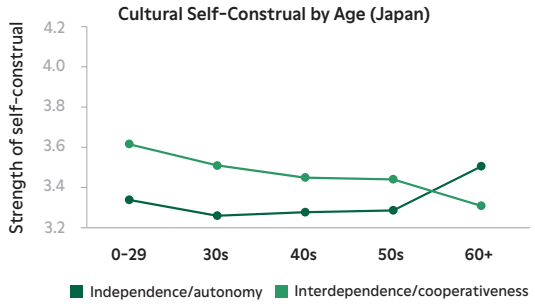
There are two main types of cultural construals of the self (simply "self-construal" below): independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal[20] (Figure 3-1). Independent self-construal emphasizes personal autonomy, independence, and freedom; it is a perception of the self as a unique existence that is separate from other people. Interdependent self-construal, on the other hand, emphasizes cooperation, harmony, and conformity with others; it is a perception of the self as part of interpersonal relationships with other people. None of us has only one or the other, but rather a mix of both, albeit with different degrees of priority given to each. It should be noted that in this report, for the sake of clarifying the relationship with the autonomous cooperative society, independent self-construal will be rephrased as "independence/autonomy," while interdependent self-construal will be "interdependence/cooperativeness" (and may appear in a figure as "autonomy" or "cooperativeness," respectively).

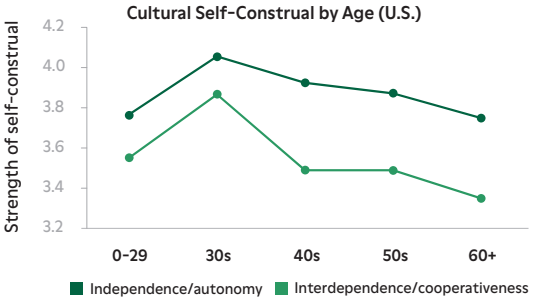
Let us now compare the four areas in terms of self-construal. Clearly, independence/autonomy is stronger in the U.S. and U.K., while accommodation/cooperativeness is stronger in Japan and Taiwan (Figure 3-2). Generally, independence/autonomy is considered a foundation of Western cultures, while accommodation/cooperativeness are considered as such in Eastern cultures. The findings of this research are in line with this. Given the conclusions arrived at in the preceding chapters, it would seem that people in cultures that emphasize accommodation/cooperativeness are more likely to find happiness in relationships, while those in cultures that emphasize independence/autonomy are more likely to find it in the individual. In other words, the way one perceives oneself in society creates differences in how one identifies happiness.

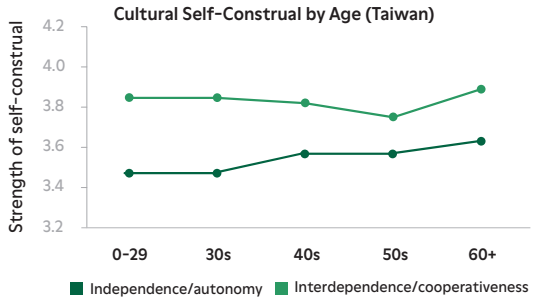
Would Your Perception of Self Change from a Different Position?

However, do all the respondents in the same area each possess the same type of self-construal? To shed some light on this question, let us compare the strength of independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperativeness by age group (Figure 3-3).

Figure 3-3 Comparisons of Cultural Self-Construal by Age







In Japan and Taiwan, although interdependence/cooperativeness is fundamentally stronger, the gap between independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperativeness tends to narrow among older generations. In other words, today's younger generations have stronger self-construal based on interdependence toward others, while those with more experience possess a stronger sense of self as an individual. Moreover, independence/autonomy seems to predominate among those ago 60 and older in Japan. This trend may be partially attributable to the seniority system in organizations, whereby people in their 50s and 60s tend to lead a large group of people and must constantly make decisions. Such positions could conceivably nurture individual autonomy.

More experienced individuals are not considered weak in terms of interdependence/cooperativeness. Instead, they incorporate independence/autonomy that is founded upon the interdependence/cooperativeness through their experienced as adults.[21] Conversely, younger generations frequently receive requests from leaders and senior employees in organizations. Also, as shown by the recent attention given in Japan to the "good child syndrome" (in which one tends to prioritize the opinions of those around them and, instead of asserting opinions of oneself), [22] these younger generations are a stronger reflection of interdependence/cooperativeness.

In the U.S. and U.K., meanwhile, independence/autonomy generally dominates in every generation. In these societies, both independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperativeness are strongest among those in their 30s. In addition, the gap in the U.S. between independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperativeness is wider among those age 40 and older compared to those age 30 and under. More experienced individuals tend to place greater emphasis on respect for the individual rather than harmony with others, which is similar to the trends observed in Japan and Taiwan.

These findings suggest that in addition to each area's culture, one's role and position in an organization may influence one's self-construal. In other words, the perception of self is not uniquely determined by one's ancestry or birthplace, but rather, it can be transformed by one's individual experiences and position.

It should be noted, however, that certain individuals do not necessarily undergo the changes shown in the graphs as they age. For example, although today's 20-somethings in Japan have strong interdependence/cooperativeness, it is possible that they will maintain this tendency when they become managers, thereby forming different self-construal than those in their 60s. This is because, in addition to the possibility that individual roles and positions may influence self-construal, differences in social and organizational norms during adolescence and adulthood, when each generation forms its identity, may lead to differences in self-construal between generations. For instance, exposure to international issues and widespread internet access during adolescence may have influenced millennials' self-construal). This will require future research.

Balance between Autonomy and Cooperation

The fact that self-construal varies by generation and position means that individuals living in the same area will have different self-construal. Therefore, let us attempt to analyze the distribution of individuals with similar self-construal in each area by grouping individuals with similar self-construal in all the areas.

First, we can perform a cluster analysis of all the areas based on the degree of self-construal and categorize them into four self-construal clusters (Figure 3-4).

Cluster 1: Synergy Pioneer

Characteristics: Possesses equally high levels of autonomy and cooperativeness, with an emphasis on creating synergy within the team while respecting other members' individuality and autonomy.

Cluster 2: Bridge Builder

Characteristics: Possesses fairly balanced autonomy and cooperativeness, with cooperativeness being somewhat stronger. They emphasize bridging distortions and gaps that arise while eliciting opinions and ideas from themselves and other members.

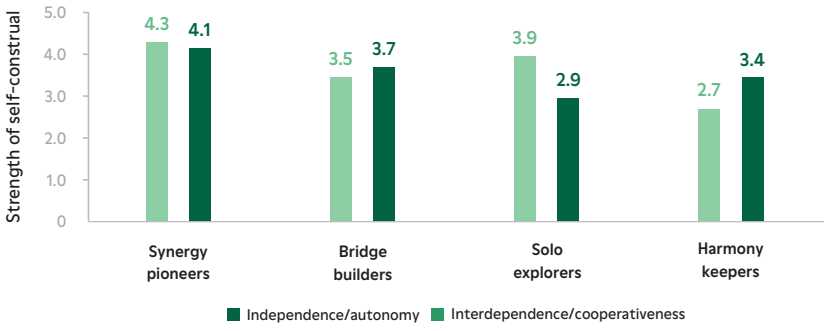
Cluster 3: Solo Explorer

Characteristics: Has strong autonomy and low cooperativeness, with an emphasis on independently performing duties and exploring matters.

Cluster 4: Harmony Keeper

Characteristics: Has strong cooperativeness and low autonomy, with an emphasis on maintaining harmony with the group.

Figure 3-4 Characteristics of Four Self-Construal Clusters



These four clusters are present in all areas, but their distribution varies greatly (Figure 3-5). In Japan, there is an extremely small number of Synergy Pioneers (Cluster 1), while one out of three respondents is a Harmony Keeper (Cluster 4), who have strong interdependence/cooperativeness. Taiwan has an extremely low number of Solo Explorers (Cluster 3), who have strong independence/autonomy, and more Bridge Builders (Cluster 2) than any other area. Although both Japan and Taiwan are considered interdependently oriented societies, it seems that Japan has many workers who prioritize group harmony above all else, while Taiwan has many workers who value harmony but also demonstrate autonomous speech and behavior. In the U.S. and U.K., Clusters 1 and 3 account for around 30% of people, while the Harmony Keepers (Cluster 4), who have weak independence/autonomy, are few in number.

Relationship between Self-Construal and Happiness

When we then compare happiness among the self-construal clusters, we find that in all areas, Synergy Pioneers (Cluster 1) tend to be the happiest, while the Harmony Keepers (Cluster 4) to be the least happy (Figure 3-6).

This is due to the fact that the degree of independence/autonomy more strongly influences happiness. Since, in all areas, independence/autonomy has a stronger correlation with happiness than interdependence/cooperativeness (Figure 3-7), fostering individual independence/autonomy is likely essential to enjoying greater happiness than now. However, in Japan, it is not advisable to neglect interdependence and harmony with others. In Japan, happiness tends to be found in relationships (see Chapter 2); happiness is easily seen when it is shared with others or when it involves being like other people.[15] Furthermore, there is a certain correlation between interdependent happiness and interdependence/cooperativeness in Japan (Figure 3-7). Thus, fostering happiness built with peers, organizations, and society, rather than focusing solely on one's own happiness, requires creating an environment that resects both autonomous behavior, and cooperative behavior.

Figure 3-5 Self-Construal Cluster Ratios (by Area)

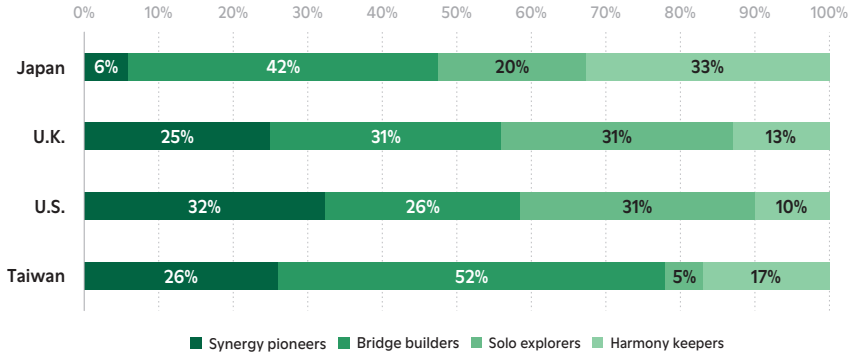
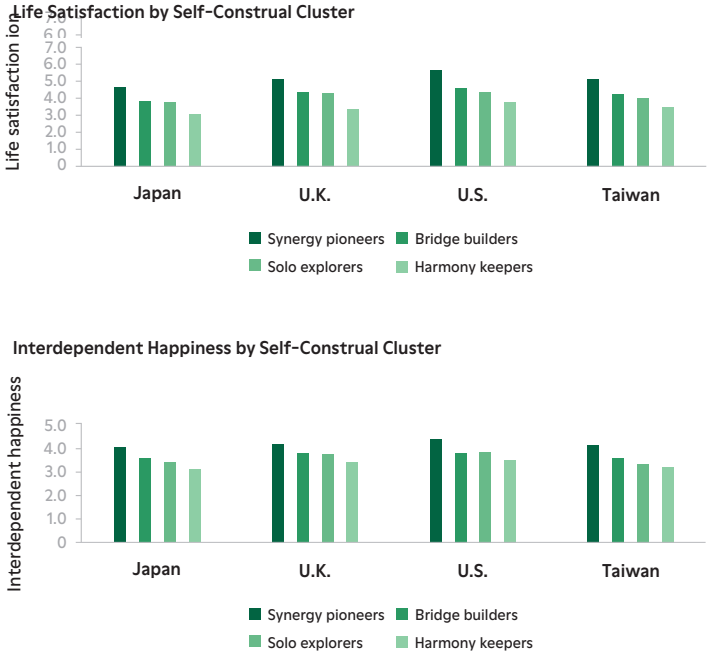


Figure 3-6 Happiness by Self-Construal Cluster

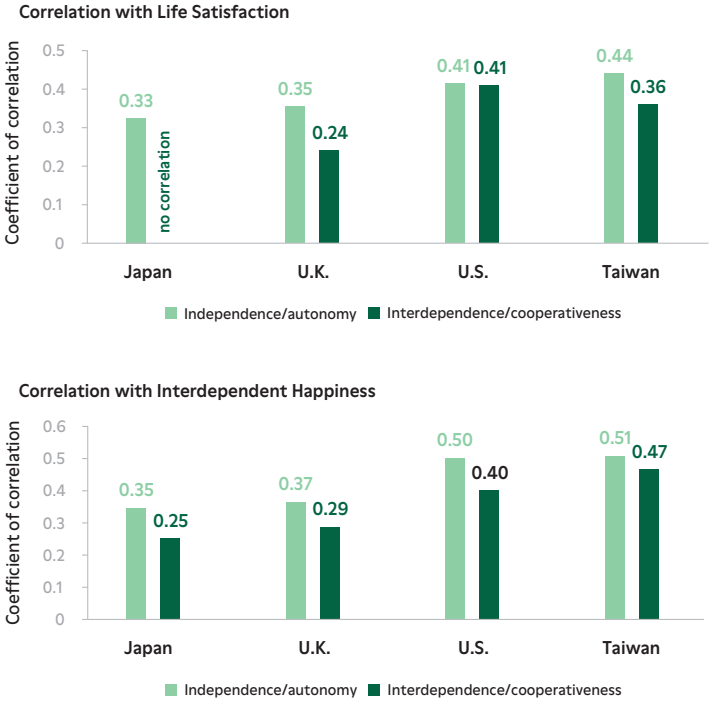


Maintaining Relationships through Conformity in the Japanese Workplace

However, balancing autonomous and cooperative behavior may be challenging in Japan. This is because, unlike in the other three areas, in Japan, independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperation tend to be seen as conflicting concepts, with a certain negative correlation (Figure 3-8). In other words, in the U.S., the U.K., and Taiwan, stronger self-perception leads to the enhancement of both independence/autonomy and interdependence/cooperativeness, while in Japan, attempts to increase independence/autonomy tend to reduce interdependence/cooperativeness, and vice versa.

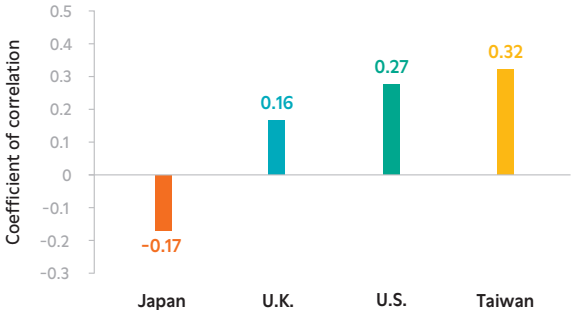
The reason may be that interdependence in Japan generally refers to conformity and the abandonment of independence and autonomy. There is research that indicates that people in the U.S. perceive independence and the similar trait of individualism as individuality, while in Japan, people tend to associate such traits with selfishness and isolation.[23] Against this background, the research suggests that people in the U.S. try to use their independence as capital to proactively build social relationships, while in Japan, they distance themselves from interdependent relationships in order to achieve independence. In short, in Japan, people

Figure 3-7 Correlation between Self-Construal and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

Figure 3-8 Correlation between Independence/Autonomy and Interdependence/Cooperation



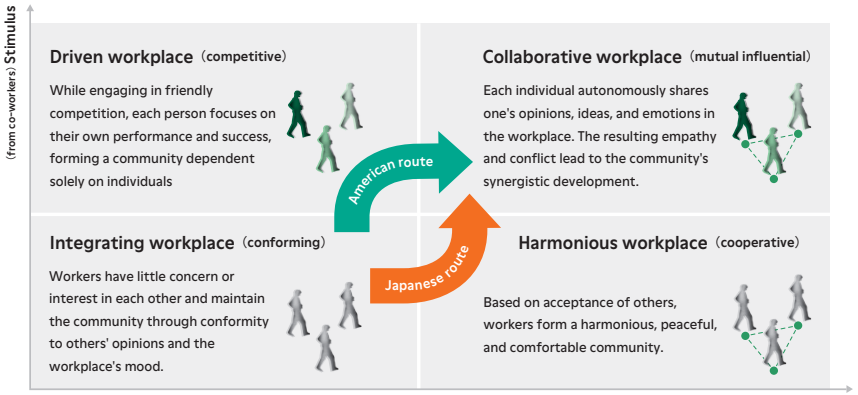
* Correlation Coefficient: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

are unable to strike the right balance between conformity, which places too much emphasis on harmony with one's surroundings, and isolation, which is the result of emphasizing self-expression.

This is why, in contrast to the U.S., where people practice cooperation based on autonomy, Japan requires conflict-free independence and autonomy, built on a foundation of interdependence and harmony. To that end, it is essential to shift from an integrating workplace where relationships are maintained through conformity, to a collaborative workplace where individuals express their opinions and ideas to each other in an attempt to develop relationships through mutual influence (Figure 3-9). Unlike in the U.S., where autonomy encourages cooperation, it would be appropriate in Japan to create an environment where autonomous behavior is accepted after fostering sufficient rapport with team members (see the discussion in Chapter 5 on the lack of rapport in Japan).

Furthermore, in terms of innovation, it is essential to transition to a collaborative organization that facilitates the creation of mutually influential cooperation. Cooperation that lacks independence and autonomy tends to produce only a framework that begins with a suggestion to do something new; in other words, a formulaic approach (whether a team or a project) that lacks specifics and a clear direction for enthusiasm. After individuals share their subjective enthusiasm and ideas, the group should develop a unique common goal, which will enhance the sustainability of the project. Self-disclosure is often cited as an approach to achieve such cooperation.[24] However, self-disclosure sometimes involves pain and fear among workplaces. Therefore, the final chapter will present ideas for fostering a collaborative workplace by moving beyond superficial relationships while mitigating pain and fear.

Figure 3-9 Types of Workplaces Based on Relationships with Co-workers



American route

<Autonomy → Cooperation>
Transition through proactive relationship-building by individualistic people expressing their autonomy

Japanese route

<Cooperation → Autonomy>
Transition by expressing one's autonomy after establishing rapport through familiarization with each other's interests and ideas

Chapter 3 — Summary

The way the self is perceived in society (self-construal) varies by area. People in the U.S. and U.K. tend to value independence/autonomy (respect for individual autonomy and independence), while people in Japan and Taiwan tend to value interdependence/cooperativeness (respect for cooperation and harmony with others).

A comparison between Japan and Taiwan shows that in Japan, there are many workers who value group harmony and conformity above all, whereas in Taiwan, there are many workers who value harmony but also demonstrate autonomous behavior.

Regardless of the area, greater independence/autonomy is likely to lead to greater happiness. In Japan, however, since acting autonomously may lead to isolation in the workplace, one must seek harmony with the group while exercising conflict-free autonomy.

To this end, steps should be taken in Japan to encourage autonomous action in environments that foster rapport (social capital) within teams. Along the way, organizations should shift from integrating workplaces where relationships are maintained through conformity to collaborative workplaces based on mutual influence, thereby creating employee happiness and organizational innovation.

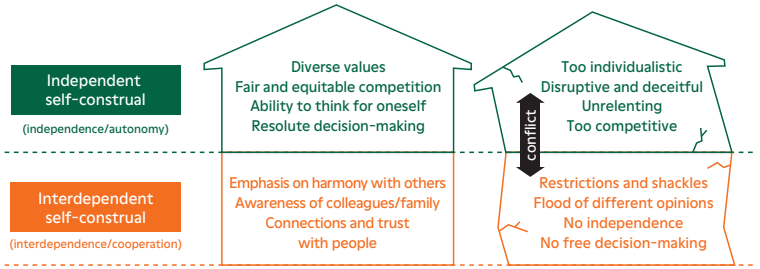
Column B

Cultural Divergence on Connecting the Self and Society

The accommodation that prevails in Japan includes both accommodation toward others so as to maintain harmony, as well as reputational concern that involves a fear of exclusion from others. Why do people in Japan place such importance on accommodation and a fear of failing to accommodate or to gauge the mood? One reason could be a lack of social mobility. Japan is a society where major transitions such as moving to a new home or changing jobs are relatively rare. In other words, if you have a poor reputation where you grew up or in your company, your position there is in jeopardy. People in such situations will very likely feel that they have nowhere else to go. This is why they are attentive to their surroundings. This is different from Taiwanese society, where people are protected by strong blood ties.

Since their work is closely tied to the land, people engaged in agriculture do not migrate, and their associates are their neighbors. This is a typical example of a society with low mobility. Our research team sampled approximately 400 communities in western Japan (including agricultural, fishing, and other areas) and conducted an analysis based on questionnaire responses provided by 7,000 residents.[25] The results showed that accommodation in the eyes of others is a trait of agricultural communities in general, including not only farmers but also those not engaged in agriculture. When examining what kinds of towns were more accommodative in

Model of Two-Story Cultural Self-Construal



Source: Yukiko Uchida, *Thinking About the Future of Happiness: A Cultural Psychological Perspective*, Shinyosha.

nature, the research team found that they were towns with high rates of participation in collective activities among all residents.

In Japan's agricultural regions, where farming in rice paddies has flourished, cooperation and coordination between people in activities such as water management are important. As a result, various forms of social activities and interaction, such as the work of neighborhood associations and get-togethers, have been considered a necessity for cooperation within the town. The fact that the high rate of participation in collective activities predicted the high level of accommodation throughout a town suggests that accommodation was not only learned and acquired on an individual basis by those engaged in agriculture, but also became customary as a cultural institution at the local level and entrenched as a reality of everyday life.

Japanese companies have applied this type of collectivity in a number of ways. Employees meet face-to-face for meetings, share the same space, and exchange information while checking each other's progress and status. In Japanese companies, collaborative work is performed in units called "islands" or "lines."

The Japanese mind today is akin to a two-story house. If the first floor represents accommodation/cooperativeness, then the second floor represents independence/autonomy. If the accommodation discussed

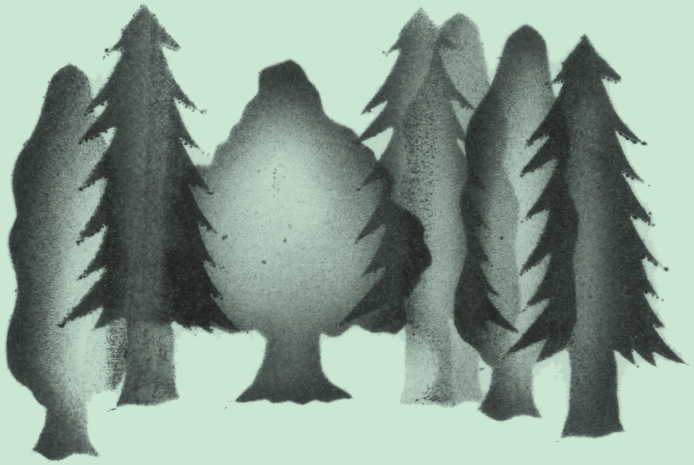
above is the long-present foundation under the first floor, then global competition has led to the construction of the second floor through the introduction of value systems that emphasize individual freedom. Independence/autonomy, which corresponds to fair and free competition or global values, is now considered important as an incentive for workers. As a result, the foundation of the ground floor's accommodation/cooperativeness has weakened, but the remaining framework is still based on concern and anxiety over one's reputation.

The position of accommodative happiness in Japan may be under threat. A lack of mutual trust attributable to weakened social relations is meanwhile creating strain. This research, as well as data collected at companies, show that trust leads people to suggest new ideas without fearing any risk involved. For the sake of accommodation in a good form, there may be a present need to ensure that trust can transform into open, tolerant relationships, without strings attached.

Professor Yukiko Uchida

Chapter 4

Generous Workplaces Enabling Mutual Influence



Q: What Kind of External Environment Brings Happiness?

Japan, Where Going to the Office Every Day and Focusing on One Task is the Norm

In exploring the background behind differences in perceptions and sources of happiness between areas, the previous chapter focused on internal self-construal. This chapter's focus will be on workers' external environments. Let us investigate what kind of environments contribute to worker happiness.

We shall begin by first confirming the current locations of work environments in each area. With regard to how often workers go to the office, the percentage who go every day is particularly high in Taiwan (85%) and Japan (73%), while adoption of remote work is the highest in the U.K. (48%) (Figure 4-1). However, with companies such as Google (Alphabet), Amazon, Goldman Sachs, and other global giants increasingly asking employees to come to the office and monitoring office attendance logs[26)27)28)] (i.e., return-to-office policies), the percentage of employees in the U.S. and U.K. may be even higher now.

In terms of the number of projects that workers join in, Japan has the highest share engaged in only one project (55%), while the U.S. has the highest working simultaneously on multiple projects (60%) (Figure 4-2). Although the Japanese government is promoting side-gigs/second jobs,29 the level is still low from a global perspective. Therefore, we can say that many Japanese workers are engaged in one job at a single company.

Figure 4-1 Weekly Days in the Office

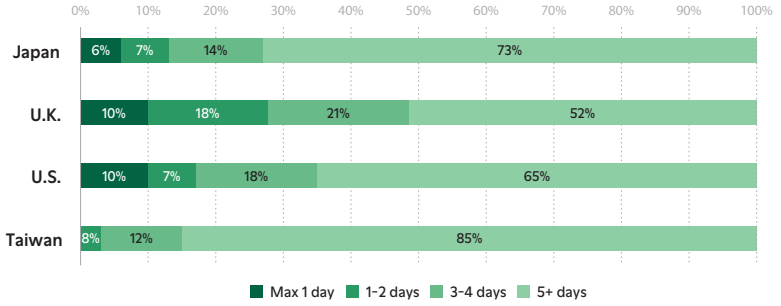
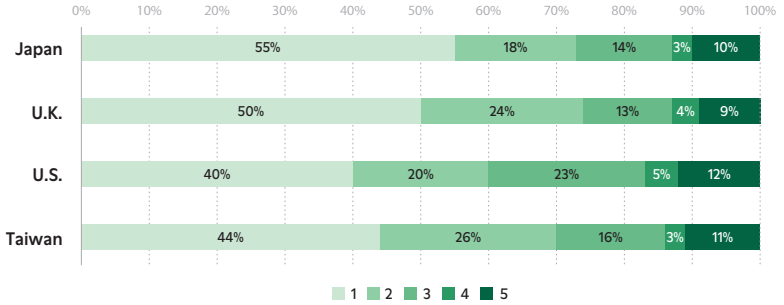


Figure 4-2 Projects Joined by Each Worker

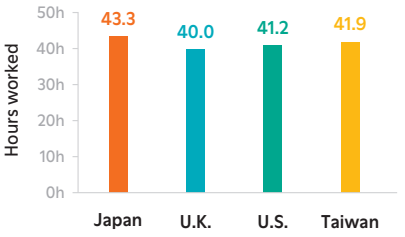


What Is the Meaning of "Work-Life Balance"?

When we then compare working hours, it seems that people in the U.K. work slightly shorter hours and those in Japan work slightly longer (Figure 4-3). Are Japanese people who work long hours therefore suffering from poor work-life balance? This report analyzes work-life balance by dividing it into work's interference with family and family's interference with work (the lower the interference, the better the work-life balance). The analysis finds that according to both indicators, Japan seems to have little difference or a slightly better work-life balance than other areas, or perhaps is even the closest to achieving work-life balance (Figure 4-4).

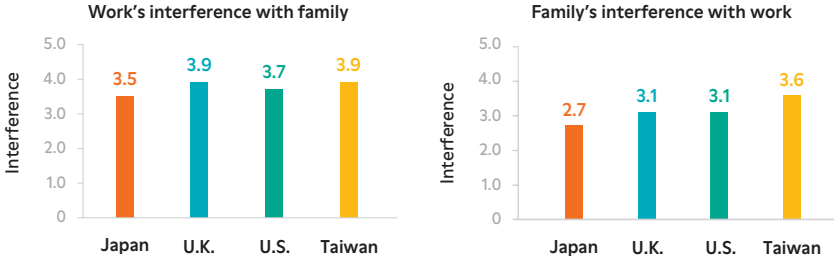
Also of interest is the difference in perceptions of work-life balance that emerges from a comparison of Japan and the U.S. In Japan, there is a certain degree of negative correlation between "work's interference with family" and happiness (Figure 4-5). This means that people tend to feel unhappy when work has a negative impact on their family.

Figure 4-3 Hours Worked (Weekly)



* Full-time employees only
* T-test differences: Japan > U.K.***, Japan > U.S.**, U.K. < Taiwan* (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Figure 4-4 Degree of Work-Life Balance

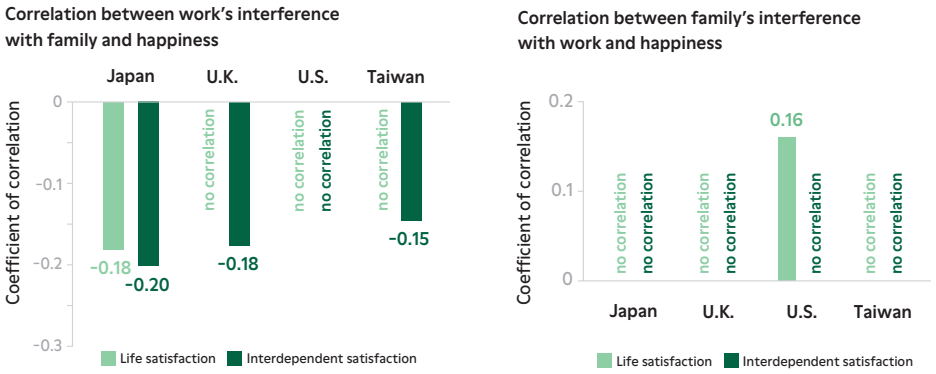


* Interference: On a scale of 1 to 5. The larger the number, the greater the negative impact.
* T-test differences (left chart): Japan < U.K.*, Japan < Taiwan* (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)
* T-test differences (right chart): Japan < U.K.**, Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan***, U.S. < Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

While we do not observe such a trend in the U.S., there is a slight positive correlation between "family's interference with work" and happiness (i.e., life satisfaction). In other words, devoting oneself to family so much that it has a certain negative impact on work can be interpreted as bringing personal happiness (i.e., life satisfaction). In the U.S., self-esteem is considered more likely to contribute to happiness,[30] which may be the result of elevated self-esteem arising from renewed self-perception of one's own struggle for the sake of family, which is an important part of one's life. The correlation may also be related to the fact that, if forced to choose between their own happiness and that of their family, many people in the U.S. would prioritize the latter.[31]

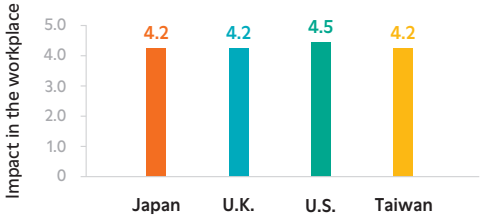
A comparison between Japan and the U.S. suggests that different cultures perceive work-life balance differently. In Japan, work-life balance is seen as working without negatively affecting family (i.e., a weak emphasis on one's personal life), while in the U.S., work-life balance is seen as making efforts to fulfill one's family, regardless of the implication for one's work (i.e., a strong emphasis on one's personal life). Perhaps Japanese people pay too much attention to their jobs and co-workers. Millennials and Generation Z members are said to, rather than adhering to traditional career paths and ambitious success,[32] value work-life balance that allows them to focus on self-fulfillment, not only work.[33] Work-life balance means different things to different generations. Therefore, teams must recognize the individual attitudes among members.

Figure 4-5 Correlation between Work-Life Balance and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

Figure 4-6 Impact in the Workplace

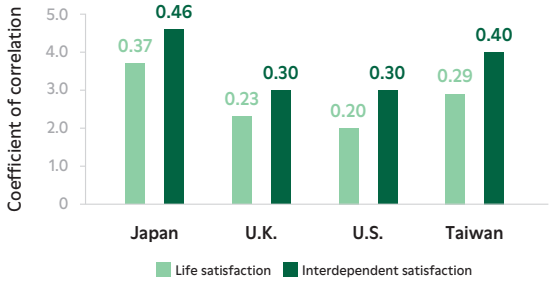


* Impact in the workplace: On a scale of 1 to 7. The larger the number, the greater the impact felt.
* T-test differences: U.K. < U.S.*, U.S. > Taiwan* (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Effect Over Authority

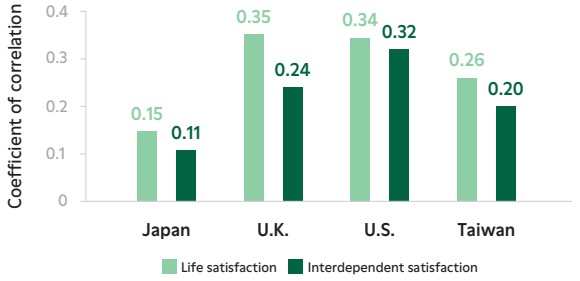
Influence in the workplace is a key factor within an employee's work environment. This influence is the ability to earn respect for one's opinions and wishes, with which one influences the workplace. While one might think that wielding this sort of influence would be difficult in Japan, in fact, there is no difference between Japan and other areas, other than a somewhat stronger tendency in the U.S. (Figure 4-6).

Figure 4-7 Correlation between Impact in the Workplace and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

Figure 4-8 Correlation between Career Advancement (Seniority) and Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

However, when we explore the correlation between influence in the workplace and happiness, we find that the relationship between the two is relatively strong in Japan (Figure 4-7). This result means that in Japan in particular, the more respect for one's opinion and influence in the workplace, the more likely one is to feel happy. If so, the matter is not so simple that workers with more senior positions, and thereby more likely to have influence in the workplace, are happier, but rather, in Japan, there seems to be a weaker link between senior positions and happiness (Figure 4-8).

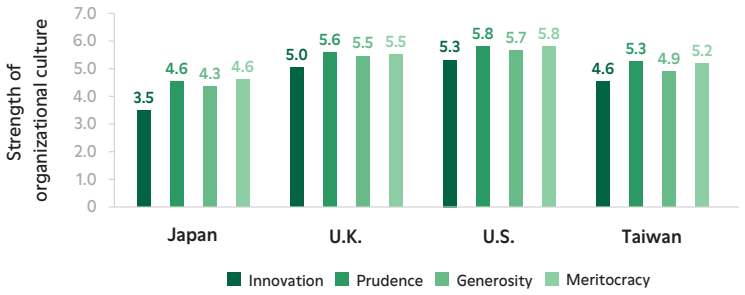
In sum, regardless of one's position, opportunities for one's opinions and actions to have a positive impact on other people boosts happiness at work in Japan. In other words, being a cog in the wheel that experiences no influence on the workplace, and excessive job fragmentation that numbs the impact which the worker has on society, seem to depress happiness in Japan.

Figure 4-9 Four Elements Constituting Organizational Culture

Innovation	Prudence	Generosity	Meritocracy
Exploring Adventurous Spirit	Attention to details	Calm and composed	High expectation for good performance
Not risk-averse	Emphasis on accuracy	Generous	Emphasis on results
Innovative	Prudent, with great deliberateness	Ideas encouraged than rejected	Value placed on performance and results
Proactive and ambitious	Analytical, rather than general, approach		

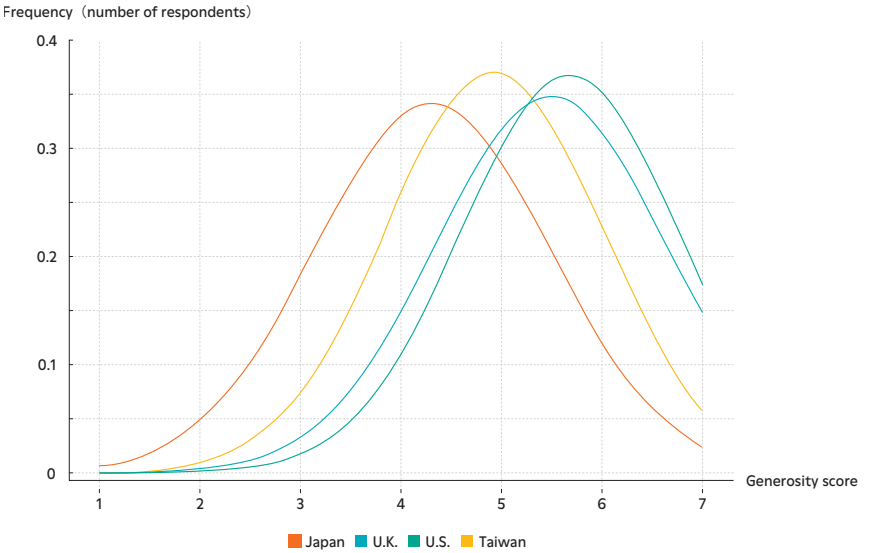
* Results of factor analysis by maximum likelihood method and promax rotation

Figure 4-10 Strength of Organizational Culture



* Organizational culture score: On a scale of 1 to 7. The larger the number, the greater the perception of a strong organizational culture.

Figure 4-11 Distribution Curve of Organizational Culture (Generosity) Score



* Generosity is measured on a scale of 1 to 7. The larger the number, the greater the organizational culture's generosity.
* The curve is a normal distribution, with the apex of the curve representing the average value.

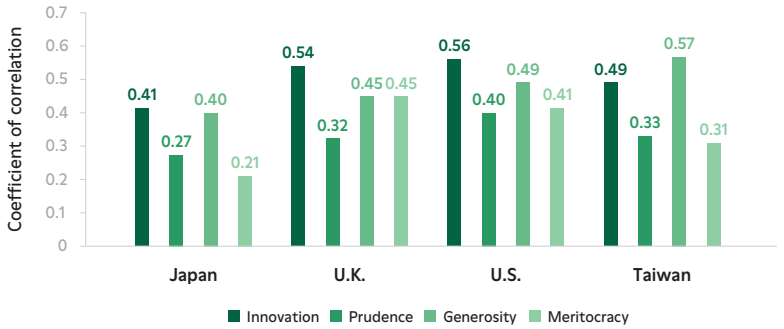
Japanese Organizations with Ambiguous Culture

The finding that influence in the workplace is related to happiness suggests that happiness may also be influenced by the relationship between the individual and the workplace. Therefore, the next section will inquire into elements of happiness based on the relationship between individual traits and organizational culture (i.e., atmosphere and culture in the workplace).

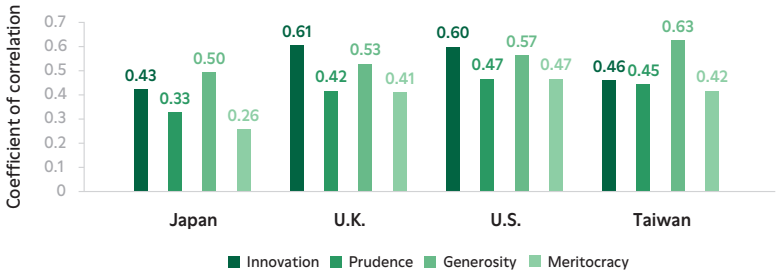
As a preliminary step, let us first define "organizational culture." Based on a factor analysis of questions that were designed by referencing prior research,[34)35)] four elements that constitute organizational culture were derived. Those elements are innovation, prudence, generosity, and meritocracy (Figure 4-9). They are in place in similar ways in all areas, with prudence, meritocracy, and generosity being perceived fairly equally, while innovation has somewhat lower recognition (Figure 4-10).

Figure 4-12 Correlation between Organizational Culture and Happiness

Correlation with life satisfaction



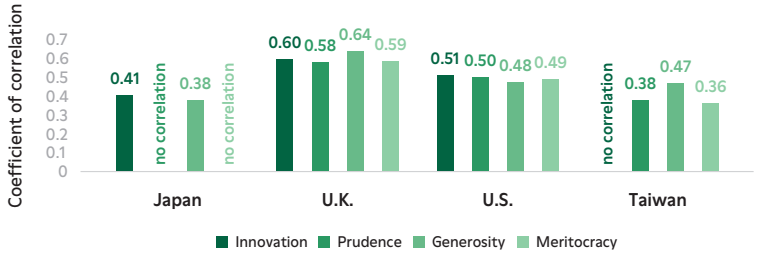
Correlation with interdependent happiness



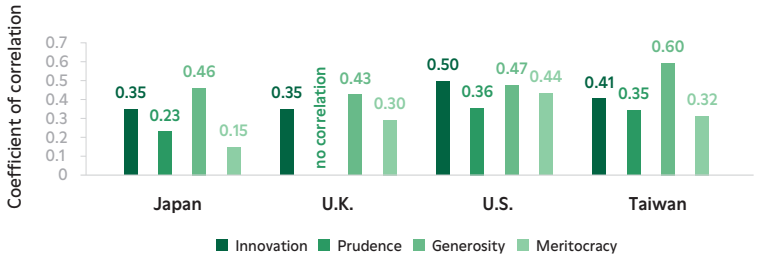
* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

Figure 4-13 Organizational Culture and Correlation with Interdependent Happiness (by Self-Construal Cluster)

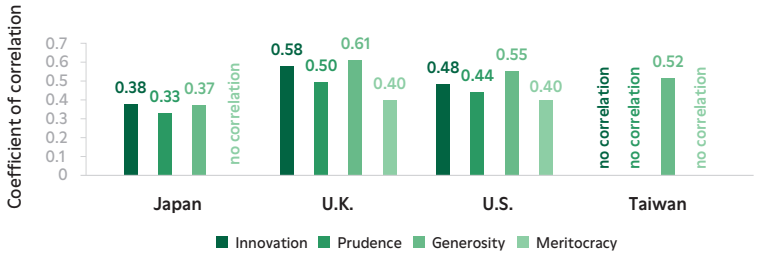
Synergy Pioneer (Cluster 1)



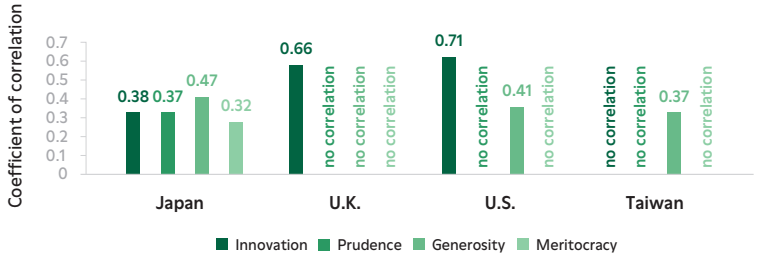
Bridge Builder (Cluster 2)



Solo Explorer (Cluster 3)



Harmony Keeper (Cluster 4)



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

However, it is important here to emphasize that the strength of Japan's organizational culture is moderate in each of these elements. The strength of each organizational culture is scored on a scale of 1 to 7. When we look at the responses for generosity, for example, Japan's scores tend to skew toward the middle of the range, which is also true for the other organizational culture elements (Figure 4-11). Of course, the strong tendency toward middle-of-the-way responses to questionnaires may be a factor, but the fact that Japanese respondents give middling responses (i.e., "not sure") to items in these questions concerning an objective assessment of the environment indicates that they do not have a good understanding of organizational culture. In other words, Japanese workers are unaware of where they are in terms of organizational culture. This may be the reason why the organizational culture reforms being called for in Japan are not progressing well. For example, even if an organization advocates a policy to increase innovation, it may be unclear what to change, how, and to what extent relative to current behavior, thus potentially confusing workers.

How, then, can we break through this situation? One conceivable example would be to offer alternate paths, based on different perspectives, as ways to put the organizational culture into practice. These could be the history of the organization or team, the standards of behavior it currently values, or the direction it seeks to take in the future. It should explicitly state what past, present, and future organization will help employees recognize an organizational culture possessing that history, values, and vision. For example, McDonald's head office in Chicago facilitates understanding of its organizational culture through offices that express who McDonald's is by displaying Happy Meals from around the world and spatial design featuring logos and frying baskets.[36] Another example is Zappos, which produces a "culture book" that describes the company's core values and history. Each employee uses this book to show that their action is in line with the organizational culture.[37] In addition to communication by senior management, places and tools can serve as a way to show what the organization is about.

Organizational Culture that Cultivates Happiness

What, then, are the characteristics of organizational culture that have a positive impact on happiness? In all areas, innovation and generosity are likely to contribute to happiness, with generosity having the greatest impact in Taiwan and Japan, and innovation having the most in the U.S. and U.K. (Figure 4-12). Since organizational culture tends to have similar effects on life satisfaction and interdependent happiness, and since the correlation with organizational culture is greater for interdependent happiness, this chapter will delve deeper into the relationship between interdependent happiness and organizational culture (Figure 4-13).

First, let us compare the four self-construal clusters in Japan. Interestingly, in all clusters, the relationship between meritocracy, an element of organizational culture, and interdependent happiness is small (and unrelated in some clusters). Since the 1990s, Japanese organizations have been searching for ways to implement and strengthen meritocracy in the style of American employee review systems, but at present, meritocracy does not seem to be a high priority in these organizations. In fact, some have pointed out that an extreme meritocracy may inhibit cooperation with and interdependence for others in the pursuit of results for oneself.[38] However, this is not a general criticism of meritocracy. Rather, in Japan, where interdependence and harmony are valued, it may be preferable to use employee reviews that emphasize team performance rather than incorporating individual performance into the reviews.

In addition, when we compare the areas in the graphs for Clusters 3 and 4, we find differences in organizational culture that tend to influence happiness between Japan on the one hand and the U.S. and U.K. on the other. For Solo Explorers (Cluster 3), who have a strong inclination for independence and autonomy, innovation tends to be slightly more influential in Japan, where generosity tends to be so in the U.S. and U.K. On the other hand, for Harmony Keepers (Cluster 4), who value harmony with others, generosity tends to increase happiness in Japan, while innovation tends to do so in the U.S. and U.K. In other words, we can see that people with the same self-construal may find a better cultural fit depending on the area. Although this makes the matter more complex, it seems we can say that individual characteristics (self-construal) and organizational characteristics (organizational culture) do not correspond universally, but rather require fine-tuning in response to the social and organizational backgrounds.

Chapter 4 — Summary

Perceptions of work-life balance vary between areas. In Japan, it seems that work-life balance is seen as working without negatively affecting family (i.e., a weak emphasis on one's personal life), while in the U.S., work-life balance is seen as making efforts to fulfill one's family, regardless of the implications for one's work (i.e., a strong emphasis on one's personal life).

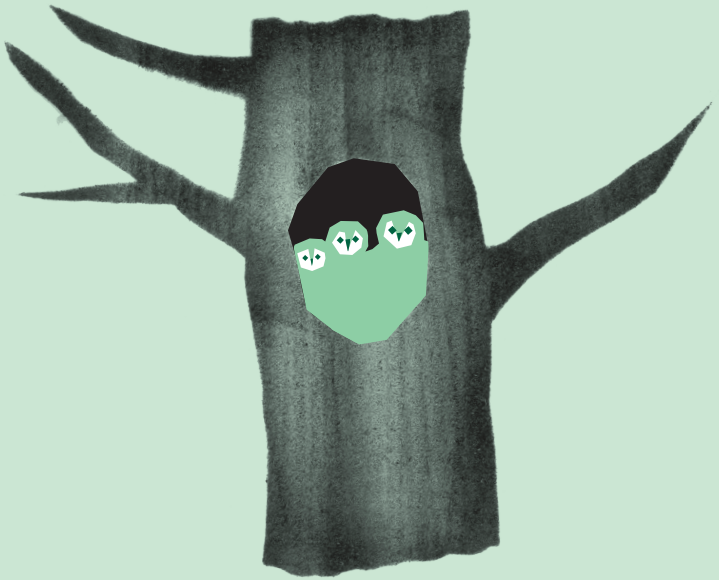
Regardless of one's position, opportunities for one's opinions and actions to have a positive impact on the team and co-workers can easily enhance happiness at work in Japan.

In Japan, organizational culture is ambiguous and difficult for workers to recognize. Therefore, it requires clarification.

An organizational culture characterized by generosity in Taiwan and Japan, and one characterized by innovation in the U.S. and U.K., can easily enhance happiness. Strictly speaking, however, the way to achieve a cultural fit is dependent upon the accompanying self-construal and the social context.

Chapter 5

A Sight of Hope in Close Co-workers



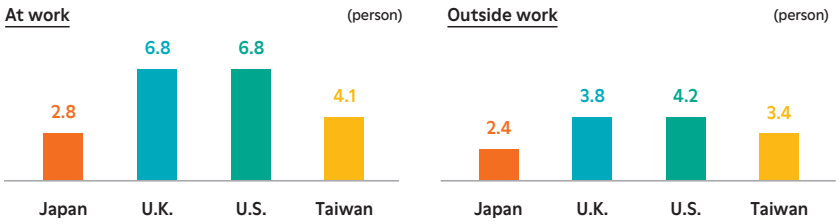
Q: In Japan, where accommodativeness and harmony are valued, how should we boost happiness at work?

Japanese Workplaces Devoid of Heartfelt Communication

How many people can you confide in about your problems at work or share your joys with? Sadly, Japanese workers seem to have few such associates. In Japan, workers only have two or three people, whether at or outside of work, with whom they feel comfortable discussing their problems. This is far fewer than in the other three areas, indicating the difficulty workers have in Japan consulting with their peers on important matters (Figure 5-1). Workers in the U.S. and U.K., for example, have around seven such people at work and four outside of work. Taiwanese workers have fewer than those in the U.S. and U.K., but still seem to have more than their Japanese counterparts.

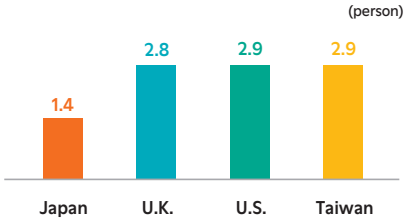
Similarly, workers in Japan have a strikingly low number of co-workers with whom they have a close friendship (Figure 5-2). Some say that as we pass through adulthood, we tend to associate more with colleagues at work than with old friends from our school days, but it may be that family-like friendships with co-workers are now a thing of the past. From an international perspective, Japanese workers have fewer friends on whom they can rely, especially among the elderly and men.[39] Furthermore, Japan has little regional interaction, especially in urban areas,[40] and the rising rate of adults who never marry[41] suggests that family

Figure 5-1 Number of Readily Available Confidantes



* T-test differences (at work): Japan < U.K.***, Japan < U.S.***, U.K. > Taiwan***, U.S. > Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)
* T-test differences (outside work): Japan < U.K.***, Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

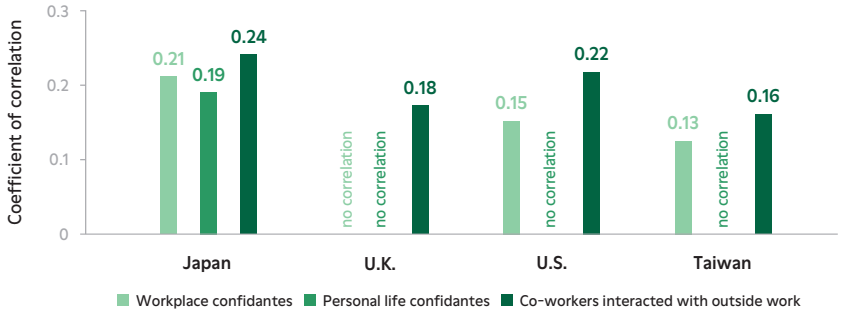
Figure 5-2 Close Personal Friendships with Co-workers



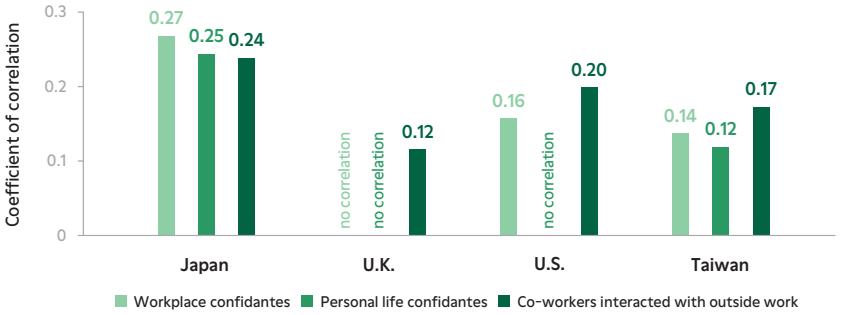
T-test differences: Japan < U.K.***, Japan < U.S.***, Japan < Taiwan*** (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.00)

Figure 5-3 Correlation between Number of Close Friends and Happiness

Correlation between Number of Close Friends and Interdependent Happiness



Correlation between Number of Close Friends and Construal of Accommodative Happiness



* Coefficient of correlation: On a scale of -1 to +1. The closer to +1, the stronger the positive correlation. The closer to -1, the stronger the negative correlation.

interaction may also be on the decline. In other words, Japan has a crisis of a lack of close relationships providing opportunities to confide in others. The Japanese government has followed the U.K.'s lead in addressing social isolation by creating the post of Minister of State for Measures for Loneliness and Isolation,[42] but given the seriousness of the situation, workplaces may also need to play a role in creating social ties between employees.

However, there is supposed to be a strong sense of interdependence in Japan,. The lack of friends to confide in, despite the emphasis placed on harmony with others (as discussed in Chapter 3), suggests that people in Japan may be too considerate of each other, avoid getting deeply involved in others' affairs, and keep their work relationships superficial. Compared to Taiwan, which, like Japan, emphasizes relationships, Japanese workers are more likely to be circumventive so as to not become too deeply involved in others' affairs and cause problems, while the more prevalent trend in Taiwan is one of approachable accommodation that builds close relationships with co-workers, family, and friends so as to help one another.

A Place to Form Close Relationships Nurtures Happiness in Japan

Yet this data has not been presented with the intention of creating gloom. While the idea of close friends presents a challenge in Japan, it also offers hope. This is because in Japan, having more close friends is likely to contribute to more happiness. The correlation between the number of close friends and happiness in Japan tends to be somewhat stronger than in the other areas (Figure 5-3). In other words, although the number of close friends is still low, there is room to increase happiness in Japan by expanding circles of such friends.

Thus far we have examined the elements of happiness from various perspectives. In Japan, the factors that increase happiness include good relationships with customers, work having minimal impact on one's family, and wielding influence in the workplace, but these factors seem to be reinforced by closeness with co-workers. When problems or difficulties arise at work, closeness with co-workers can lead to mutual assistance, thus reducing the number of problems that one must handle alone and that interfere with family life (while at the same time boosting productivity for the organization as a whole). In addition, influence in the workplace is not found through superficial relationships, so in this sense, rapport with co-workers is essential. Given this, a fundamental measure to increase happiness at work in Japan would be to increase the number of close co-workers.

Note the consistent addition of the word "close." This is because what is important to happiness is not the number of superficial acquaintances, but rather the expansion of close, quality relationships. Follow-up research at Harvard University revealed that good relationships are the biggest factor in happiness.[43] In other words, close relationships that have a positive impact on one's life and work enrich life itself. Such relationships may be easier to build with school friends or with family members and relatives, but, assuming that, with changes such as the end of mandatory retirement ages, workers will spend much of their lives working, Japan's workers would likely be happier if they could form close relationships with fellow employees in the workplace.

Chapter 5 — Summary

Japan stands out for having few close co-workers to confide in about work.

However, since the number of close co-workers one has in Japan is likely to contribute to happiness, opportunities to become more involved in each other's lives should foster happiness here.

Column C

Happiness as a Social Creature

Individual happiness finds support from "places:" one's social situation, or familiar groups such as the family, workplace, or community. It is important that the social situation functions to support individual happiness, and that happy individuals support each other in the same way that they try to uphold that society. In the community, we must consider what the predictors are of what we call "a comfortable place to live" or "comfortable living." In the workplace, we must examine job satisfaction.

In any domain, social capital seems valuable. Local social capital can be an important source of support, especially for those who do not belong to any groups outside the local community, such as the elderly. There are, though, differences between individuals: those who are more open-minded and seek new relationships associate happiness with having a large number of acquaintances, while those who value stable relationships associate happiness with the comfort provided by those relationships.[44] In addition to this individual variation, an important perspective to consider is that social capital is nurtured in "places." As Putnam, a proponent of social capital, has shown in a series of studies,[45] in towns with low crime, for example, many people know each other's faces and talk to each other, while towns with high crime have a paucity of such social relationships. Assuming a constant number of personal acquaintances, living in a town with high social capital, where people know each other's faces and talk to each other, provides benefits in terms of health and happiness.

Although social capital is important for happiness, it is difficult to put into practice. Many people may wish for the happiness of their family members and others close to them, which makes it easy to put out the effort to maintain relationships with them. However, this is difficult to do so with someone who is a little more distant. Unless we are provided information that enables us to empathize with the other person, we tend to imagine that the other person has completely different preferences and ideas from our own, making it difficult to act with the happiness of that person in mind. When urging others to consider happiness in places, the author is at times asked how we should accept the negative aspects of human nature. However, there may be a state in which one can feel that one's own happiness and the happiness of others are connected. Our group examined this point through a large-scale survey.[46] The research involved the analysis of data from a questionnaire survey conducted in 408 small communities (averaging approximately 100 households each) in western Japan. The results revealed the following. There was a loose positive correlation between self-assessments of happiness (on a scale of 1 to 10) and assessments of other people's happiness in one's community. This essentially means that one's happiness is not unrelated to the happiness of other community members, but rather, one feels that personal happiness and the happiness of neighbors are at the same level. Interestingly, the strength of this correlation varied depending on the state of social relations in the community, with a stronger connection in areas where

social capital among residents was relatively high. In this case, to measure the general strength of connections within a community, social capital among residents was quantified as an average at the local level, based on factors such as trust in other community members and the strength of impressions that community members try to help each other.

Naturally, such places do not always have a positive effect. There are likely both benefits and disadvantages to a state in which one feels a connection between one's own happiness and the happiness of others. The benefit is the reassurance of mutual aid in times of need. However, if these kinds of relationships are limited to within the community, in conjunction with impediments to the freedom to associate with people outside the community or closing off the community itself, they can produce a disadvantage in that people feel trapped by these "shackles" or a "sense of obligation." In other words, in order to make a place in a good state, one can say that it is important to ensure openness, as well as diversity, so that diverse others can adapt and modify how they connect with each other and lead their lives.

Professor Yukiko Uchida

Conclusion

What Is Happiness at Work in Japan?

Framework for Happiness in Each Area

	Perceptions of happiness [Chapter 1]	Happy events [Chapter 2]	Perceptions of self in society (self-construal) [Chapter 3]	Workplaces that produce happiness [Chapter 4]
Japan	- Happiness accompanied by calmness - High happiness in old age (60+)	- Relationships with others (customers) - Lasting nostalgic memories	- Foundation of interdependence/cooperativeness(emphasis on cooperation/harmony with others) - Independence/autonomy tend to accumulate with experience - Importance of independence/autonomy that does not conflict with interdependence/cooperativeness	- Work-life balance in terms of work not interfering with family (weak emphasis on personal life) - Influence in the workplace (an environment where everyone has influence regardless of position) - Strong organizational culture of generosity
U.K.	- Happiness accompanied by high arousal emotion - High happiness in adulthood (20s)	- Individual advancements (meaningful work, career advancement) *However, there are various kinds of happy events within the U.K.	- Foundation of independence/autonomy (respect for individual autonomy/independence) - Strongest awareness of self-construal in one's 30s	- Influence in the workplace, including career advancement - Strong organizational culture of innovation
U.S.	- Happiness accompanied by high arousal emotion - Higher happiness in adulthood (30s)	- Individual advancements (meaningful work, career advancement) *However, there are various kinds of happy events within the U.S.	- Foundation of independence/autonomy (respect for individual autonomy/independence) - Strongest awareness of self-construal in one's 30s	- Work-life balance in terms of contributing to family even if it interferes with work (strong emphasis on personal life) - Influence in the workplace, including career advancement - Strong organizational culture of innovation
Taiwan	- Happiness accompanied by high arousal happiness - Higher happiness in old age (60+)	- Relationships with others (co-workers, family) - Continuously experienced events	- Foundation of interdependence/cooperativeness (emphasis on cooperation/harmony with others) - Independence/autonomy tend to accumulate with experience	- Strong organizational culture of generosity

No Single Standard for Happiness

This report has employed a comparison of four areas with different cultures as a starting point for a discussion intended to unravel the nature and requirements for happiness in Japanese society and workplaces in the future.

First and foremost, there is no single framework for happiness. Happy events and environments, as well as the way we feel happiness when we come across them, vary between areas and between people (i.e., self-construal). Therefore, it is important to search for the sources of happiness that are unique to the individual, rather than trying to replicate another person's happiness. For the same reason, no single country, company, or person should impose a specific form of happiness on an individual.

Let us refer to the table above, which provides an overview of each area's characteristics as covered in this report, to introduce the three key points for fostering happiness at work in Japan.

Daily Awareness of Relationships

The first key point is to make happy events more frequent. In Japan, events from the relatively distant past tend to shape current happiness, but happiness is likely to increase if it is also found in events that occur on a frequent daily basis (see Chapter 2). In other words, we should direct more attention to daily events and lower the hurdle for perceiving them as happy.

For example, in Japan, where people tend to weave happiness into their relationships with others, an effective way to establish a mutual support system is to exchange advice and words of gratitude with co-workers and customers. There are numerous studies showing that gratitude has a positive effect on health, such as by reducing stress and facilitating recovery. Surprisingly, gratitude has a similar effect not only on those who give and receive it, but also on those who witness it.[47] In other words, one person's gratitude spills over into another's happiness through the office or groupware. These acts of gratitude should be performed in an open setting.

Of course, we must note that although setting gratitude and praise as the goal may lead to the ultimate form of heteronomy, doing so can reportedly lead to productivity gains[48] and facilitate closer relationships while fostering a sense that others care about you.[49] Millennials and Generation Z particularly stand out in that 78% of both groups tend to seek out frequent advice and praise from their superiors.[48] Especially for anxiety-prone Japanese workers (see Chapter 2), if gratitude, praise, and advice were given on a routine basis, they would be reassured, as well as feel happiness through positive relationships.

From Conformity to Mutual Influence in the Workplace

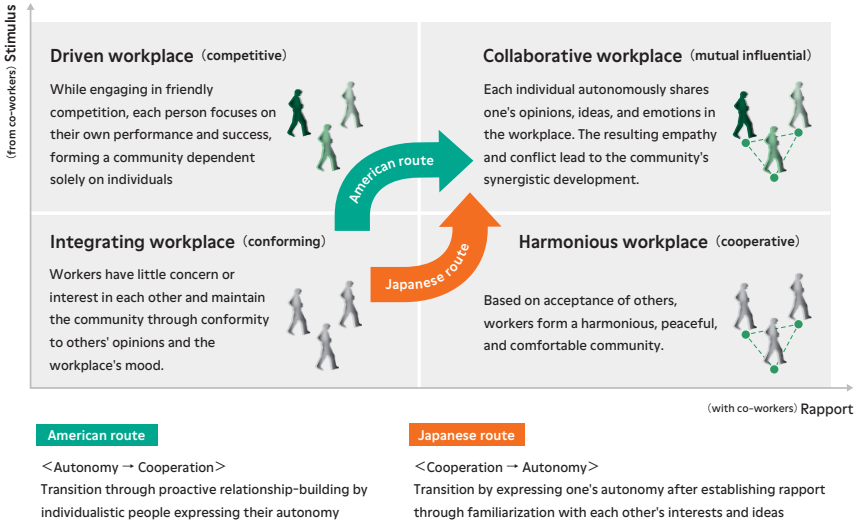
The second key point is to change from an integrating workplace to a collaborative workplace. The former is a workplace where relationships are maintained through conformity with co-workers, superiors, and the prevailing mood, while the latter is a workplace where relationships are developed through mutual influence as each individual expresses one's own opinions and ideas and challenges those of other people (see Chapter 3).

Japan is said to have a high-context culture in which communication is premised on information and context that is implicitly shared with groups and other people.[50] When this culture is allowed to take its course, it leads to conformity and conjecture about those who wield authority or power and who set the tone in the workplace. This in turn stifles the independence and autonomy of the individual. In other words, the workplace tends to become an integrating workplace. However, because independence and autonomy have a significant impact on elevating happiness, it is important to transform it into a collaborative workplace where people can express their opinions and ideas without hesitation (see Chapter 3).

However, there is a high hurdle for workers accustomed to conformity to develop autonomous speech and behavior. Moreover, when compared to the U.S., where autonomous behavior is considered a positive expression of individuality, the challenge is even greater in Japan, where such behavior tends to be seen as selfish and leads to exclusion (see Chapter 4). Therefore, in Japan, we must first foster sufficient rapport within teams and create an environment that is welcoming to each individual's autonomous speech and behavior (i.e., a collaborative workplace via a harmonious workplace). Another way to describe this is the creation of a workplace with a high level of psychological safety, allowing each individual to feel reassured about speaking and acting.[51] Such an environment should encourage happiness and the feeling that one's speech and behavior are respected and have a positive impact on the team, regardless of one's position (see Chapter 4).

Opening Up to Form Close Relationships

In other words, as a steppingstone from an integrating workplace to a collaborative workplace, it is important in Japan to foster rapport with colleagues. Although one might think that Japanese people are adept at interdependence and build close relationships with co-workers, the reality is that the number of co-workers with whom one can casually discuss important matters is extremely small (see Chapter 5). In short, we tend to be too considerate of those around us and are slow to step forward and disclose our opinions and thoughts to others.[52] This results in our relationships remaining impersonal and superficial. While these circumstances may have upheld workplace norms in some respects, increasing the number of close co-workers who are open to deeper conversations would contribute to happiness at work in Japan (see Chapter 5).



American route

<Autonomy → Cooperation>
Transition through proactive relationship-building by individualistic people expressing their autonomy

Japanese route

<Cooperation → Autonomy>
Transition by expressing one's autonomy after establishing rapport through familiarization with each other's interests and ideas

How, then, can we increase the number of close friends? One way could be to familiarize ourselves with the subjectivity of other people (e.g., their opinions, ideas, passion). This should develop the superficial and functional workplace relationships into close ones (although this familiarization can of course lead to conflict).

However, when a person is engaged in one's tasks and is suddenly asked for an opinion or thought, it is not easy to expose oneself to another's subjectivity. Instead, the person will only refer to what they've heard from the media or superiors. The proposal here, then, is to catch a glimpse of each other's subjectivity through activities conducted on the environment's periphery. For example, Kokuyo collaborated with artists to prototype a diary of the future created by AI trained on calendar data from individual people and a board game that allows players to experience a life that is not real but could have been.[53] The diary allows people to learn what others think an ideal future is, which people are normally reluctant to discuss but an AI speaks about without hesitation. Meanwhile, the choices and decisions made in the board game show players what other people think. This sort of play is one way to learn about others' subjectivity. In addition, Viettel, a Vietnamese telecom that was named one of the best companies to work for in Asia, has a program in which students and employees learn from each other through projects,[54] while Adobe employees join in local community and volunteer activities.[55] These are examples of why it is a good thing for employees to join their peers in learning and interacting with communities in order to deepen their mutual understanding of each other.

Some research has shown that groups of friends (who have close relationships) are superior to groups of acquaintances (who have superficial relationships) when it

comes to decision-making, as well as executing tasks that require effort.[56] Teams of close friends can be beneficial to an organization, though of course, budding romantic relationships are undesirable in these scenarios.

In addition, Chapter 5 addressed loneliness in Japan, and given that loneliness contributes to an increased risk of early death,[57] it seems to be one of the most important social issues. Reportedly, one in three people are lonely today, while the rate of loneliness among young people, especially those familiar with social media, is as high as 40%.[58] With the development of online tools and generative AI coming into practical use, it is becoming easier and easier for people to work alone, but when we consider research showing that coming to work less than two-and-a-half days a week has a negative impact on interpersonal relationships,[59] the importance of running offices as places for building close relationships and relieving loneliness should become more apparent.

More Sustainable Projects by Combining Subjectivity and Organizational Culture

A collaborative workplace that combines the freedom of subjectivity and close relationships also creates opportunities for innovation. Since a new project will encounter a number of obstacles in the execution process, project members' enthusiasm and attitudes are considered key to keeping the project going.[60] In this sense, subjectivity can be a requirement for innovation, but without subjective speech and actions that encapsulate the objectives and characteristics of colleagues and the organization, the project will likely stray into self-indulgence. That is why it is important for each individual to be aware of the organization's characteristics (e.g., the organizational culture) and to nurture and renew one's subjectivity in light of these characteristics.

In Japan, however, organizational culture is generally vague, and workers are not fully aware of it (see Chapter 4). They are good at sensing the mood of the place at a given moment but seem to lack an understanding about the nature of the organization as a whole. Therefore, the organization must clearly present supplementary information so that its members can figure out what the organizational culture is. This information can include the organization's history, the values it presently emphasizes, and what the organization wants to become in the future. This is the third key point. If the organizational culture is unclear, day-to-day shifts in the approaches and feelings of those in charge may create confusion that gets in the way of new ideas. A clearly defined organizational culture will create a common understanding about the subjective speech and action from those in authority, thereby encouraging a collaborative workplace and innovation.

The Structure of an Autonomous Cooperative Society

To summarize these three key points, we can say we can increase worker happiness by creating a collaborative workplace where people recognize each other's subjectivity through support such as advice and gratitude, as well as through collaborative activities on work's periphery, and where the autonomous speech and behavior of each individuals are accepted and encouraged. In other words, collaborative activities, including those outside of work, foster close relationships, which in turn lead to a chain of autonomous yet accepted speech and action, accompanied by further collaboration.

When we consider Kokuyo's goal of an autonomous cooperative society, it seems to be the idea of a society in which autonomy and cooperation are intertwined in a chain of events based on (loose) cooperation. We can use symbols to represent the concept another way: cooperation → autonomy ⇄ cooperative society. In this sense, achieving something closer to an autonomous cooperative society will nourish happiness in Japan.

CARE Places to Foster Happiness at Work in Japan

This report concludes by suggesting a way to turn superficial relationships into close ones and lure people to collaborative workplaces: CARE (Culture, Advance, Relationship, Encounter) places, which incorporate the key points to happiness at work covered thus far so as to provide places that initiate chain reactions of cooperation and autonomy.

The first component, Culture, creates a place to experience a clearly defined organizational culture. Here, an individual can interact with the organization's past, present, and future to determine what direction one should take. It is also a place where a person can express and renew one's individual subjectivity.

The second component, Advance, makes this a place for colleagues to learn from each other and improve themselves. Learning opportunities away from work provide an opportunity to express and discover one another's interests and ideas, as well as to build close relationships with co-workers. While consideration for others and trying not to overstep one's bounds may be an attitude that helped shape the group-oriented order in Japan, it seems to have produced the side-effects of loneliness, lower productivity, and reduced capacity for innovation in a society where the future is uncertain. Solutions require intervention in other people's affairs, albeit in a positive sense. The first step may be a difficult one if it concerns one's life or career. Therefore, a good way to start may be by exploring the inner traits and subjectivity of other people while learning from each other on the assumption that we know nothing of each other (which is a kind of weakness).

The third component, Relationship, makes this a place for community activities of mutual influence and mutual aid. After meeting with colleagues with similar interests and who can share their subjectivity with each other, we must create a place where their relationships can become closer. This is a place where differing opinions can form the basis for developing new projects, and where individuals can find peace of mind and social connections.

However, simply arranging a space where members can gather is not sufficient. For example, as Microsoft has done with project rooms that are custom-

Culture

A place to experience a clearly defined organizational culture

Keywords: representing the organization's history, providing behavioral guidelines, clarifying the desired state/vision, experiencing co-workers' enthusiasm

Advance

A place to learn from each other and improve ourselves

Keywords: learning from each other, shared growth, expression and discovery of subjectivity (individual thoughts and opinions), a place away from work, a safe place to reveal each other's ignorance

Relationship

A center for community activities of mutual influence and mutual aid

Keywords: a place where subjectivities clash, highly heated discussions, colleagues helping each other, a place to feel settled (club room/project room), a place representing the personality of members

Encounter

A place to meet new people and find new information

Keywords: meeting people with different expertise and interests, chance encounters, glimpses of other teams' discussions and processes, acquisition of peripheral information

izable according to members' activities and ideas,[61] we must create spaces that reflect the subjectivity of individuals and teams so that they can feel settled in the place, rather than feeling assigned to it. In addition, as in the case of the Dutch investment bank ABN AMRO, which made a facility for dialogue about the circular economy with local residents,[62] another way to make people feel settled in the place is to embed it with significance so that members can embody, along with their co-workers and the local community, the society to which they aspire. Reflecting such individual, organizational, and local community aspirations in the place will strengthen its sense of community.

The fourth component, Encounter, creates a place to meet new people and discover information. When a person builds close relationships with certain colleagues, one runs the risk of becoming trapped in a bubble of uniform information and ideas. Therefore, it is important for the community's sustainability that each individual remains unique and is continually exposed to stimuli from the periphery. In addition, since broad and shallow connections in various fields (i.e., weak connections) are effective at addressing Japan's issues concerning productivity, innovation, and job mobility,[63] we should create opportunities to form weak connections in addition to close relationships (i.e., strong connections).

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, some have pointed out that connections with people outside beyond close team members (i.e., secondary networks) became diluted, siloing off individuals and teams and thereby stifling innovation.[64] Therefore, places that support secondary networks and weak connections have likely taken on even greater importance. For example, NTT West is increasing opportunities for employees to receive stimulus outside of work and their areas of expertise by creating a facility that brings in outside business people, startups, and experts so that employees can learn and put co-creation programs into practice.[65] Another interesting case is an attempt to expose employees to ideas and approaches taken by people in different teams by stocking an office library with books containing writings by employees of their impressions, thus serving as an alternative to face-to-face exchanges.[66]

These four components make up the acronym CARE. A CARE place is one that is welcoming to close relationships through mutual influence with the organization and with colleagues. It should be a collaborative workplace that fosters happiness at work in Japan.

However, the organization's strategy and the challenges it faces determine which facilities should host such places. One option is to set up everything in an office, but if the criteria for what makes a relationship is to extend beyond the office and into the community, some functions could be transferred to co-working spaces or public facilities. Another option could be digital spaces. And even if a place is arranged in an office, we must not forget to establish who has access to it. Providence Mount St. Vincent, a nursing home with a daycare center in Seattle, somewhat recently garnered attention as a place where the elderly and young children can mingle and enhance the meaningfulness of each other's lives.[67] Providence Mount St. Vincent is an example of how breaking the stereotype that nursing homes are for old people can create new types of connections and happiness. Conversely, if, for example, we cast away the assumption that the office is a place for employees and form an alumni organization of former employees who can visit the office, the organization may find it easier to sustain itself in a future of greater job mobility.[68]

Happiness Sprouts from Interaction

It was about ten years ago that in Japan, we began to hear the terms "happiness" and "well-being" in the context of work. In the time since, it seems that many of the measures taken have focused on the physical and mental health of individuals, as exemplified by the "health management" concept. Examples include normalizing long working hours, encouraging exercise, conducting mental health training, providing learning support, and telecommuting. It is obvious that these efforts are important in making work and life easier for individual workers. However, given this report's findings that adding more close friends encourages autonomous and subjective self-expression and can enhance individual and organizational sustainability in terms of happiness and innovation, when we consider Japan's future happiness, even more importance should be placed on measures that focus on relationships.

With regard to measures focused on relationships, there have been cases in recent years where too much emphasis was placed on normative acceptance (such as the advice that one should first listen to the other side's opinion, perhaps out of concern for harassment), resulting in unexciting workplaces where employees "bore out" due to a lack of rewarding work or that cause young workers to quit.[69] Kindness alone will not bring happiness at work (especially when it is kindness out of self-preservation). One also needs stimulation. However, stimulation unaccompanied by kindness may cause burnout due to exhaustive competition. Therefore, the editor of this report, Yasuhiro Tanaka, believes that workers need a place where they can feel stimulation (not necessarily through exercising autonomy or a clash of subjectivities) based on kindness toward (and not necessarily rapport with) their peers.

Although happiness has been the basis of the discussion in this report, some hold a critical opinion about the feasibility of a scientific approach to studying happiness.[70] Among the main critiques are political and social stances that call on citizens and employees to be happy for the purpose of increasing the nation's strength or productivity, while using the findings of research on individuals' positive psychological states and happiness to assert that happiness is an individual issue for which each person should take responsibility. The author does not advocate making happiness the responsibility of the individual, but rather believes that happiness is nurtured through interaction between the individual and the environment, because, as explained earlier in this report, happiness varies according to environmental factors, such as societal or organizational culture. This is why the author would like to emphasize the importance of organizations exploring how to arrange workplaces by examining what kind of happiness is best suited to their employees. What kind of workplace should your organization create?

Afterword

Consistent with prior findings, this report highlights Japan's tendency toward interdependence and ways to seek stable, low arousal happiness. Meanwhile, some new and interesting findings emerged. They stem from comparing Japan with Taiwan, which produces different insights, particularly from comparisons with the U.S. and U.K. In contrast to these other two areas, Japan and Taiwan are both interdependently oriented societies. On the other hand, the comparisons between Taiwan and Japan reveal what we can term "approachable interdependence" and "avoidance interdependence." People in Taiwan, perhaps due to the cultural background, places a strong emphasis on mutual support in close relationships. This seems to be based on the assumption that people help each other, rather than being deferential or simply inquiring about other people's situations, as people in Taiwan seem to have large concentric circles of family members, relatives, friends, and workplace colleagues. This approachable interdependence is observable not only in Taiwan, but also other parts of Asia and in South America.

On the other hand, Japanese interdependence seems to be somewhat idiosyncratic. Due to interdependence's importance, there is a strong sense that one should stay out of other people's affairs. If you watch old Japanese movies, you will notice scenes of people asking what seem today to be peculiar questions, such as, "Since we're friends, it's OK to ask for your favor, right?" In the current Japanese society, however, such interpersonal relationships are difficult to form. Even among family members, there is a sense that one should maintain good manners in a proper way. Furthermore, when asking a neighbor or friend for help, a person will wonder whether asking for the favor is appropriate. Even when a person offers assistance on one's own initiative, it is provided so as to avoid entanglement in the matter at hand or to avoid causing any inconvenience.[52)71)]

This report reminds the author (Uchida) of a personal experience. When I came down with influenza while in the U.S., I did not ask anyone for help directly. I did not want to cause an inconvenience by infecting another person, especially since they were busy and had things to do. A Taiwanese friend who heard that I was lying in bed sick sent a message informing me that this friend had left some food at my front door. The friend added, "Japanese people are really bad at relying on each other, aren't they? In Taiwan, it's normal to help each other out."

This report shows that in Japan, personal happiness is something people try to make complete through small actions that only concern themselves. This does not mean they are individualistic. This action is confined to defining their happiness as a personal matter because doing so is itself an interdependent way of thinking style, aiming at not disturbing others. This behavior sometimes has positive effects (e.g., discipline, normative consciousness). On occasion, however, instead of keeping your happiness to yourself, it might be better to share it with people around you. Many Japanese adults say they have no friends. Getting involved in other people's affairs is worrisome and troublesome. However, in an interdependently oriented society, the starting point for happiness lies in socializing with other people. In order for anyone to take the first step, one must form reassuring relationships. For this purpose, this report proposes CARE places, a concept which organizations should seriously consider for their workplaces. We should create places which we can perhaps best describe with the term "psychological safety," in that they are places where people do not have to be afraid to share their experiences and happiness with other people, or even to delve somewhat into their feelings.

The normative consciousness of "not wanting to inconvenience others" often results in an intolerance of others who inconvenience us. Thus, in turn, strengthens societal norms and atmospheres that are intolerant of other people's words and actions. In the workplace, there are many tasks that cannot be accomplished alone. Workers often need to help and cooperate with each other. If someone asks you for

help, it is okay for you to ask someone else for assistance as well. Can your company nurture such mutual tolerance?

Efforts to align with societal norms and to be like those around us have had a certain positive impact on maintaining order and standards in Japan. However, to shift the Japanese approach to work towards well-being, it is beneficial for each person to be aware that it is okay to be different from others and that diversity is valuable. In fact, whole conforming to others is often emphasized, the exact target or method of conformity is not always clear. Instead, we tend to share an illusion of what we think should be, and this shared illusion often becomes reality.

I also find myself in situations where I can speak my opinion directly, but at other times, I says things similar to others to avoids making waves. In maintaining this balance, we avoid being criticized by others by conforming without much though, and we find relief by denouncing those who do something unique and different from the group. Well-being cannot be achieved, in such a mean-spirited environment, where this kind of critical attitude toward others is prevalent.

There is one thing organizations can immediately put into practice in the workplace: evaluating employees based on what they have done well, not what they have done wrong. In other words, offer praise. This research has also shown that customers are valued in Japan, perhaps because they directly express their gratitude to us when they say, "Thank you." If workplace communication can include more phrases such as "Thank you," "Good job," and "Do you need help with anything?" (even if it starts with a superficial matter because Japanese people tend to be uncomfortable providing praise in the first place, meaning that some awkwardness is to be expected), then perhaps the mood can change little by little.

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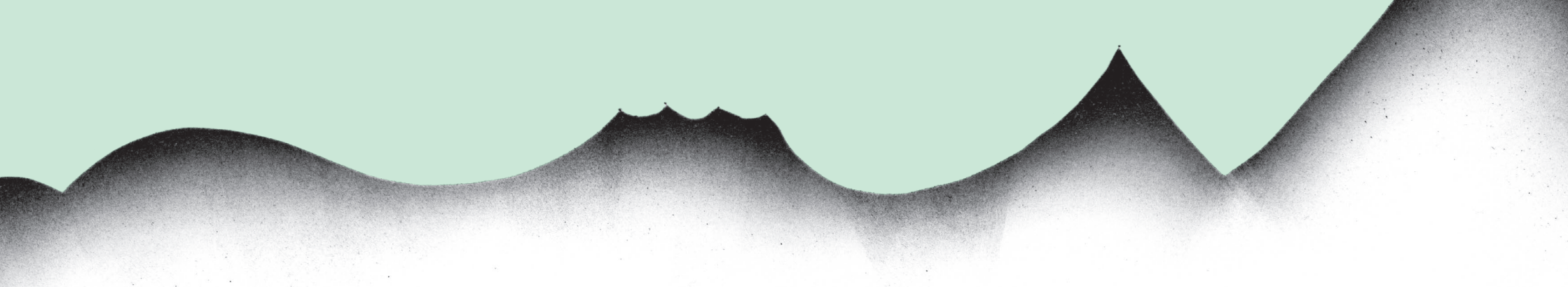

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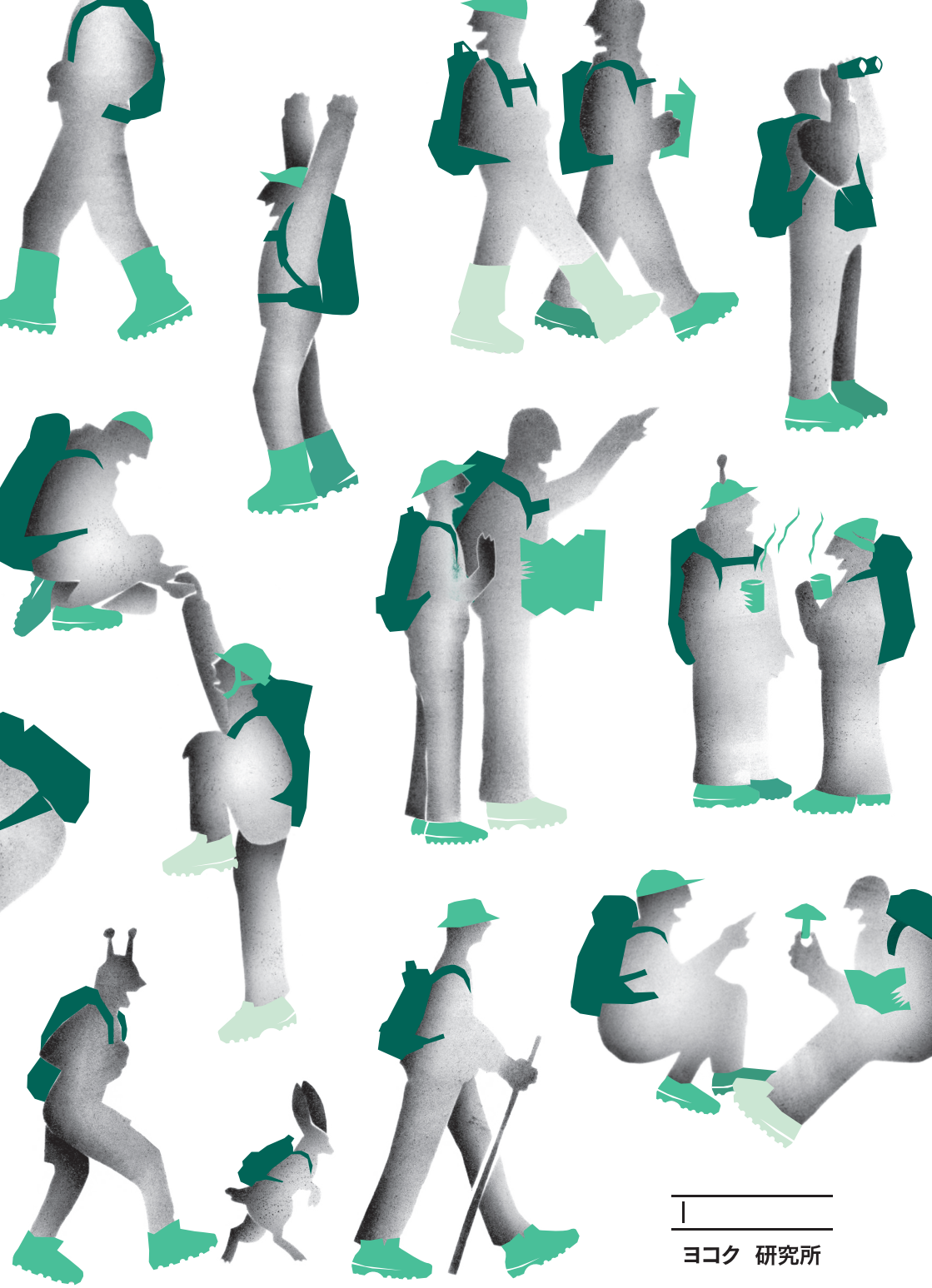

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