Background & Perspective

Cultural Difference in the Impact of Self-Esteem

- Self-esteem (SE) has been found to be a strong predictor of subjective well-being (SWB) (e.g., Campbell, 1981).
- However, cross-cultural studies have revealed that the strength of the SE-SWB relationship varies across cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995; Kwan et al., 1997; Uchida et al., in press).
- SE is more important in societies high in relational mobility (e.g., the US) than in societies with lower relational mobility (e.g., Japan).
- It is good for you to seek better relationships outside of the current ones.
- However, even if you approach strangers who have good qualities, it is not guaranteed you will be accepted by them because you must compete with others. Your attractiveness, or social standing, determines if you will be accepted or not.
- Thus, your self-esteem, or your social standing, predicts your success in the interpersonal market (making friends with attractive others).
- SE has strong impact on SWB.

Society High in Relational Mobility (such as the US)

- Relationships and groups are exclusive and closed for outsiders.
- The opportunity to form new relationships is scarce.
- You cannot escape from the current relationships and groups.
- The quality of current relationships has strong impact on SWB.

Society Low in Relational Mobility (such as Japan)

- Relationships and groups are exclusive and closed for outsiders.
- The opportunity to form new relationships is scarce.
- You cannot escape from the current relationships and groups.
- The quality of current relationships has strong impact on SWB.

Methods

- Sampling method: Stratified two-stage random sampling
- Mode of data collection: Face-to-face interview & self-administered questionnaire
- Population: Men and women aged 20-79 living in Japan
- Sample size: 1,266 (685 females & 601 males)
- Response rate: 64.7%