A Study on Subjective Well-Being between Chinese and Japanese Adolescents

Introduction
Since psychology is the scientific study of humanity, "what is the good life" is one of the most important topics needed to be debated and discussed (Ueda, Yoshimori & Yukura, 1992). One approach to defining the good life is happiness. Recently, major progress has been made in conceptualization of "Subjective Well-Being" (commonly abbreviated as SWB), which means exactly the same thing to happiness.

Clearly, there are substantial differences in the mean levels of SWB reported by different national and cultural members. Furnham & Cheng (1999) examined personality as predictor of happiness in Britain, China and Japan among comparable groups. It indicated that compared to similar groups in China and Japan, British participants reported higher levels of happiness. Though personality predispositions appear to be one of the strongest factors influencing SWB, there are also some researches argued that happiness is not completely based on inborn temperament, typically accounts for no more than 30% of the variance on SWB measures. Moreover, the investigations reported so far mainly conducted in western countries, little is known about the differences in SWB of adolescents living in Asian. In response to this situation, the first purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences in SWB between China and Japan.

In this study, adolescence in the life cycle was focused on. School as a major domain of adolescence life has been widely known. Thuneberg (2007) proposed that schools exist because society needs an effective organized way to teach its principles and essential skills to youngsters. It is suggested that feeling adjustment in school cannot be ignore in evaluating students' life. Moreover, Yamamoto & Wapner (1992) found that the balance in the transaction process which people affected by environmental aspects and people make themselves actively capable to cope with an environment called "adjustment state". Therefore, there is a literature on the feeling of school adjustment trait correlations of SWB which need to be investigated. The second purpose of this study investigates the relationship between SWB and feeling of school adjustment.

Method
Participants
STUDY 1 In total, 113 students participated in this study, of which 47 Chinese college students studying abroad at Japan, and 66 Japanese college students.

STUDY 2 In total, 1132 students participated in this study, of which 183 Jr. high school students, 184 high school students, and 202 college students from China; 212 Jr. high school students, 160 high school students and 191 college students from Japan.

Measures
The first questionnaire asked for background information including gender, age and grade. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ; Hills & Argyle, 2002) and Students Adjustment Scale (SAS; Asakawa, Ozaki & Kogawa, 2003; Yoshida, Suzuki, Kogawa, Asakawa & Azuma, 2002) were used.

Results
STUDY 1
Factor analysis with varimax rotations and the request command of extracting three factors was
The factors were labeled “Self-efficacy”, “Positive affect” and “Life satisfaction”.

The total and subscale scores of OHQ were further analyzed with analyses of variance (ANOVA) aimed at detecting the differences in country and feeling of school adjustment level. The analyses revealed no significant effects of country in total scores of OHQ, but in subscales. Chinese students showed more self-efficacy than Japanese students. Japanese students showed more positive affect and life satisfaction than Chinese students. There was also a significant effect of feeling of school adjustment level. The students in higher level showed happier than those in the middle and lower level.

STUDY 2

The SWB scores were analyzed with analyses of variance (ANOVA), in which the independent variables were country, grade and feeling of school adjustment level for the between groups measure. A three-way interaction was significant. Jr. high school and high school students showed happier than college students in China. Chinese students showed happier than Japanese students in middle and lower level of school adjustment.

Multiple regression analyses using the stepwise method were conducted to examine which subscales of feeling of school adjustment affected each grade of SWB. Significant standardized partial regression coefficients were seen for frequency of contact on each grade, suggested that SWB in any grade is contingent upon feeling of school adjustment. For Chinese Jr. high school students, relation to family members had a strong effect. For Chinese high school students, interpersonal relation to friends was significant explanatory variables. For Japanese Jr. high school students, academic activity and SWB were related, while interpersonal relation to friends had a strong effect in high school students.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to clarify SWB in Chinese and Japanese students. As Furnham & Cheng (1999) pointed out that, Chinese and Japanese showed similar in overall level of SWB. Comparing to their conclusion, the results of this study apply another viewpoint of SWB. It indicated that there is difference in perception of SWB in Chinese and Japanese adolescents as the feeling of school adjustment invested to be the influence factor of SWB in this study.

The results from two countries indicated differences in multiple regressions. In Jr. high school, relation to family members is more important to Chinese students’ SWB, while academic activity had a strong effect for Japanese students. The difference in parent-child relationship between two countries was partly attributed to Chinese one-child policy.

However, in high school, interpersonal relation to friends seems to be most important in both Chinese and Japanese students. Kitayama & Markus (2000) indicated that happiness is constructed as realization of social harmony in Asian culture.

Since school adjustment invested to be one of the influence factors of SWB in this study, the hypothesis that higher level of school adjustment would relate positively to SWB was upheld. However, it indicated that compare to Japanese students, Chinese students showed stronger dependence on school. That may be another explanation for the difference of SWB between Chinese and Japanese students.

Last but not least, except school adjustment, more elements should be considered in the future research. Beside, fieldwork will produce more informative composite, the strengths of the different types of research methods are often complementary to each other. For this reason, fieldwork should combine with one-time questionnaire in the future research.