

MARRIAGE AND HAPPINESS IN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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This study examines the effects of marital status and pro-marriage attitudes on happiness in Japan and the United States. We draw on theoretical constructions of happiness that frame happiness in terms of “personal achievement” for Americans versus a “realization of social harmony” for Japanese. Data come from the United States General Social Survey (GSS) and the Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS). Results from generalized ordered logit models show that while marriage tends to promote happiness in both countries, the divorced and widowed are least happy in the U.S. whereas the never married, especially those who hold pro-marriage attitudes, are least happy in Japan. There is some support for the idea that social harmony is more important to happiness in Japan.

One might make the case that everyone wants to be happy and that happiness is a universal value. Nevertheless, there may be substantial cultural differences in the concepts and meanings of happiness and well-being (Kitayama and Markus, 2000). Indeed, Americans tend to report feeling more positive emotions than Japanese (Kitayama *et al.*, 2000). Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama (2004) posit that Asians may focus more on collective happiness while Americans pursue personal happiness. These different orientations may have consequences not only for levels of happiness but for determinants of happiness. In this paper, we use data from the General Social Surveys in Japan and the United States to examine the effects of marriage on happiness in these two countries. We draw on Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama’s (2004) construction of happiness as a contrast between “social harmony” in the East and “personal achievement” in the West, which would suggest the greater importance of marriage for happiness in Japan than the United States.

The link between marital status and happiness in the United States is well known. An earlier study using the General Social Survey found that marital status was one of the most significant predictors of happiness (Davis, 1984). Using data from the 1990s, Waite and Gallagher (2000) also found that married people are considerably happier than the unmarried. On the other hand, there is little direct evidence regarding the relationship between marriage and happiness in Japan, especially at the national level. In a study of one Japanese city, Nobe (1999) found an association between marriage and happiness for older women. Expanding on this analysis, we seek to understand this relationship in Japan using national data. In addition, there are relatively few comparative studies of marital status and happiness (Stack and Eshleman, 1998). Therefore, the present study examines the relationship between marriage and happiness in both Japan and the United States, seeking to further our knowledge of this dynamic in Japan in comparison with the United States.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF HAPPINESS IN THE EAST AND WEST

In this section we provide a theoretical framework in which to consider determinants of happiness in Japan and the United States. Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama (2004) discuss cultural constructions of happiness, focusing on differences in meanings in the East and West. They argue that two alternative constructions of happiness exist in Eastern and Western societies. In Western societies, "personal achievement" is seen as the basis of happiness. The emphasis placed on independence and self autonomy in American middle class culture suggests that the self is "the center of thought, action, and motivation" (p. 225). Self-autonomy and the pursuit of one's desires are central to Americans' happiness (Lu and Gilmour, 2004). Even social relationships are seen as being based on individual choices. Indeed, Americans see the maintenance of one's independence as important for a good relationship (Kitayama and Markus, 2000; Lu and Gilmour, 2004). Therefore, happiness is seen as a personal pursuit.

On the other hand, Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama (2004) posit that "realization of social harmony" is seen as the basis for happiness in Eastern societies. Much of this is based on the idea that interdependence and connectedness characterize East Asian cultures. Personal selves are constructed through interactions with others. Individuals are socially oriented and commit themselves to social roles, obligations, and expectations. Indeed, personal happiness may be considered incomplete, and as such, "happiness is seen as an inter-subjective state that is grounded in mutual sympathy, compassion,

and support" (p. 226). In other words, happiness is more of a social pursuit, one that is more dependent on relationships with others. Lu and Shih (1997) find that social relationships are a key element in the Chinese conception of happiness. Furthermore, the connection between people and their ability to achieve interdependence are seen as necessary for good social relationships (Kitayama and Markus, 2000; Lu and Gilmour, 2004), which suggests that the nature of social relationships is important for happiness. If social harmony is more important to happiness in East Asian cultures than in America, we would predict that social relationships, particularly marriage, and the importance placed on these relationships would be more important to happiness in Japan than in the United States.

Studies find that the effects of individual factors and social factors on satisfaction and happiness vary. Diener and Diener (1995) find that self-esteem is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in European and American cultures than in East Asian cultures while Suh *et al.* (1998) find that social factors, including fulfilling relational commitments, are better predictors of happiness in East Asia than in North America. Since individual factors seem more tied to happiness for Americans and social factors for Japanese, we ask whether marriage and children have a greater impact on the happiness of Japanese individuals.

The Context of Marriage in Japan and the US: Fewer Americans are marrying (US Census Bureau, 2001) and norms supporting marriage have waned (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). While levels of divorce have stabilized they remain high, suggesting that marriage is becoming a less central adult role (Amato *et al.*, 2003). At the same time, delayed marriage and non-marriage have increased in Japan (Raymo, 1998; Raymo, 2003; Raymo and Iwasawa, 2005; Retherford *et al.*, 2001) and the divorce rate has been increasing (Retherford *et al.*, 2001). Nevertheless, it is estimated that about 20 percent of marriages in Japan will dissolve (Retherford *et al.*, 2001) compared to a divorce probability between .43 and .46 for the United States (Schoen and Cannadas-Romo, 2006). In addition, Japanese marriage still remains qualitatively different from American marriage as there continues to be a strong emphasis on marriage as a route to economic and social status (Iwao, 1993).

Marital Status and Happiness: Past research shows that married individuals are generally happier than those who are not married (D'Arcy and Siddique, 1985). In their 42-nation study, Diener *et al.* (2000) find a similar relationship between marital status and subjective well-being throughout the world. However, there are some variations in the effect of marriage. For example, collectivist countries experience a stronger positive relationship

between marriage and life satisfaction than individualist countries (Diener *et al.*, 2000). Stack and Eshleman's (1998) 17-nation study finds that marriage is associated with increased happiness in 16 of the 17 countries, including Japan and the United States. While Ryan, Hughes, and Hawdon (1998) find a significant effect of marital status on life satisfaction in seven of eight modernized countries, including the United States, they suggest that the lack of a relationship in Finland may be a sign of the decreasing importance of marital status.

Nevertheless, more recent data from the United States indicates that marital status still has a strong influence on personal well-being (Kim and McKenry, 2002). Dush and Amato (2005) find that married people experience higher levels of subjective well-being than those who are not married. The findings are similar in other Western countries. In a study of nine advanced European countries, Gundelach and Kreiner (2004) find that those who are in a stable relationship are happier than those who are in unstable relationships or no relationship. In a study of life satisfaction in Australia, Evans and Kelley (2004) find that married men and women report greater life satisfaction than those who are not married. Fewer studies examine marriage and happiness in Eastern societies. Rather, the importance of kin relations for well-being is often emphasized (e.g., Moore *et al.*, 2005). Nobe (1999) finds that close immediate family relationships, including marriage, have an important influence on the happiness of older Japanese women. While there is more limited evidence regarding Japan, we expect marriage to have a positive impact on happiness in both countries.

On the other hand, those who are not married tend to experience lower levels of psychological well-being than the married (Gove and Shin, 1989). Booth and Amato (1991) find that divorced persons suffer more stress than married persons. Indeed, marital disruption is associated with depression (Aseltine and Kessler, 1993). Williams and Umberson (2004) suggest that the strains of marital disruption are more important than the benefits of marriage itself in determining mental well-being. Therefore, we expect that marital dissolution will be negatively related to happiness.

It is possible that attitudes toward marriage as well as marital status would have an impact on happiness. In a society where marriage is more or less the dominant form of intimate relationships, a positive attitude toward the institution of marriage will boost the sense of happiness for those who are actually married, while there may be the opposite effect for those who are not married. Because married people are expected to endorse pro-marriage attitudes more than the unmarried (Oropesa, 1996), the gap in the level of

happiness between the two groups is likely to widen further due to this attitudinal factor. Meanwhile, in a society where various alternatives to marriage are possible and accepted, positive attitudes towards the institution of marriage may do little to enhance one's sense of happiness. Or worse, this attitude could make individuals feel rather unhappy to the extent that it is out of sync with general public perceptions of intimate relationships. In the U.S., norms supporting marriage have waned (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). Thus, we expect an interaction effect between attitudes toward marriage and marital status. That is, the positive effect of being married on happiness is expected to be greater for those with strong pro-marriage attitudes.

Gender: There may be gender differences in levels of happiness or the effects of marital status on happiness. Easterlin (2001b) finds that there are no consistent gender differences in happiness over time but that women's happiness has declined relative to men's happiness. While women were generally happier than men in the 1970s, men were somewhat happier than women by the 1990s. Nevertheless, women and men may derive happiness from different sources. Crossley and Langridge (2005) find that women perceive having a "close family" as a more important source of happiness than men. Reid (2004) also finds that relationship harmony is a better predictor of women's well-being than men's. On the other hand, studies consistently note the greater benefits of marriage for men than women (Nock, 1998). Further, men's well-being is weakened by marital dissolution while women's well-being is unaffected (Williams and Umberson, 2004).

In summary, previous studies have generally found a positive relationship between marriage and happiness. The evidence is more mixed regarding the effects of children on happiness. Few studies focus on Japan, a society characterized by collectivism. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of signs of harmony, particularly marriage, on happiness in Japan. We hypothesize that marriage will increase happiness in both Japan and the United States, but that pro-marriage attitudes will be less important in the United States, a society in which personal pursuits are emphasized and the institution of marriage is seen as increasingly unnecessary. Furthermore, we consider the differential impact of family status on men and women's happiness in both countries.

METHODS

Data: The data source for Japan is the 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS), and for the United States the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). In both countries, data were collected from adults (aged

20+ for Japan and aged 18+ for the US) selected for a multistage national random sample. In our data analysis, standard errors are adjusted for within-cluster correlations using Sata's cluster function (Sata, 2003). The JGSS, which started in 2000, is relatively new to researchers outside Japan. Its design was based on the US GSS although Japan's unique social context was taken into account in designing questions and response categories (Iwai, 2001). For the JGSS, the response rate ranged from 55% in 2003 to 65% in 2000 (Tanaka *et al.*, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003), while for the 2002 GSS, it was 70% (NORC, 2006). Ideally, the time frames and sample sizes should be more comparable between the two countries. However, while the JGSS asked about perceptions toward the importance of marriage for happiness, one of our key variables, for consecutive years from 2000 to 2003, in recent years (since 1994) the GSS did so only in 2002 (Sample B). After deleting cases from the initial sample due to missing data, we obtained analytical samples of 4646 men and 5527 women for Japan, and 477 men and 663 women for the US.

Measures: Our dependent variable is *happiness*, which is measured with a single-item question. In Japan, respondents were asked: "How happy are you?" Responses ranged from 1 (very happy) to 5 (very unhappy). We combine the categories 3 through 5 to form a new category "not very happy" because there are relatively few Japanese respondents who chose the responses 4 and 5, and to parallel the measurement of the US happiness measure. In the US, respondents were asked: "Taken all together, would you say you are...?" While a 3-point scale item (1=very happy; 2=pretty happy; 3=not too happy) is the typical measure of happiness in the GSS, a 7-point scale item (1=completely happy; 2=very happy; 3=happy; 4=neither happy nor unhappy; 5=unhappy; 6=very unhappy; 7=completely unhappy) was used in Sample B of the 2002 GSS. For our study we combine the categories 1 and 2 to form a new category "very happy," recode the category 3 to indicate "pretty happy," and aggregate the categories 4 through 7 to form a new category "not very happy." The scales were reversed so that higher scores indicate greater happiness. Thus for both countries the happiness variable takes on three discrete values.

The main independent variables are marital status and pro-marriage attitude. *Marital status* is measured with three categories: 1=divorced/widowed, 2=never married, 3=married (referent). For Japan, *pro-marriage attitude* builds on a 4-point single item concerning the belief that "man's (or woman's) happiness lies in marriage." For the US, the same variable is based on two 5-point scale items concerning the perceptions that "married people are generally happier than unmarried people" and that "it is better to have a bad marriage than no marriage at all." The original codes were reversed so that higher scores

indicate stronger pro-marriage attitude, and for the US, the mean of scores on the two items was computed.

Previous studies indicate mixed results regarding parenthood and well-being, with some finding a positive relationship (Burton, 1998), some a negative relationship (Hughes, 1989) and others no relationship (Ross *et al.*, 1990). Presence of *children* by age group is a binary variable (1=have children of a certain age group, 0=otherwise). Three age groups are considered: young children (< 6 years), preteen children (6-12 years), and older children (13-17 years). Unlike Japanese GSS, US GSS only provides the number of household/family members who belong to a certain age group. We use information on the above three age groups from the US GSS as proxies of the presence of young children, preteen children, and older children, respectively. Our proxies are limited in that these family members could be respondents' co-residential siblings or some other type of relative. To minimize these limitations, we adjust the original measures by recoding cases with positive numbers in any of these three age groups into zero if respondents indicated they have never had any children.

Numerous studies have found that married people have higher incomes, but Peiro's (2006) recent study finds a weak relationship between income and happiness. Total *family income* is expressed in one hundred thousand yen for Japan, and in thousand dollars for the US. For both countries cases with missing income data are substituted with a median income value. An indicator variable (1= missing 0= non-missing) is also considered. Studies generally find that employment is positively associated with well-being and happiness among men and women (Pugliesi, 1995). Yet, part-time work may enhance women's happiness more than full-time work (Barker, 1993). *Employment status* is measured with two dummy variables: full time employment status (1=employed full time, 0=otherwise) and part time employment status (1=employed part time, 0=otherwise). Education may increase happiness (Diener *et al.*, 1999) and reduce depressive symptoms, especially among women (Schieman, 2002). For the US sample, *education* is coded in years of schooling, while for the Japanese sample, it is measured on a six-point scale (1 = elementary school, 2 = junior high school, 3 = senior high school, 4 = junior college and vocational school, 5 = college, 6 = graduate school).

Age, health, and religiosity are included as controls because of their expected links to happiness, and to the key covariates. Age is coded in years. The effect of subjective health on happiness appears to be robust: healthier people are significantly happier (Diener *et al.*, 1999). Meanwhile, married people are generally healthier, although the causal relationship can go both

ways (Waite and Gallagher, 2000). *Subjective health* is measured on four- and five-point scales for the U.S. and Japan, respectively, with higher scores indicating greater health. Religiosity may not only increase individuals' emphasis on the importance of marriage (Kaufman and Goldscheider, 2007), but it also tends to be similar to marriage in its positive effect on well-being (Waite and Lehrer, 2003). For Japan, *religiosity* is based on a single item question, "How would you describe yourself as a religious follower?" Responses range from 1 (very devoted) to 3 (not very devoted). The additional code 4 is added for those who said they had no religion, which is a large proportion. These codes were reversed so that the higher score indicates greater religiosity. For the U.S., religiosity is based on a question "How often do you attend religious services?" with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 9 (several times a week).

Analytic Strategy: We estimate generalized ordered logit models to examine the effects of marital status, pro-marriage attitude, children, and other variables on the level of happiness since our dependent variable takes on three discrete ordinal values: The values 1 (not too happy) and 2 (pretty happy) serve as threshold scores to divide respondents into two groups, i.e., one group with happiness scores that exceed the threshold score and the other group with happiness scores that do not. An ordered logit model can be thought of as a group of $k-1$ (i.e., the number of discrete ordinal categories minus one) equations where the dependent variable is continuous but unobserved (Winship and Mare, 1984). For our study, there are two equations to be estimated: one contrasting happiness score 1 with scores 2 and 3, and the other contrasting happiness scores 1 and 2 with score 3. Equations in an ordered logit model in its conventional form are assumed to have different intercepts and the same set of slope coefficients. Error terms in these equations are also assumed to be perfectly correlated.

In our preliminary analysis, we estimated the conventional ordered logit models. However, specification tests suggested that for some covariates, it is inappropriate to assume the same slope coefficients across equations. (These results are available upon request.) The violation of this so-called parallel-slope assumption in our preliminary analysis led us to estimate the generalized ordered logit models where slopes are allowed to vary across equations. We use STATA's `gologit2` program, written by Williams (2006), to estimate our generalized ordered logit models. Results reported in Tables 2 and 3 can be interpreted as a series of binary logistic regressions. Equation 1 predicts the chance of being "at least" pretty happy and Equation 2 the chance of being very happy.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results: Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and ranges of our variables for Japan and the US. For each country, *t*-tests were conducted in order to determine significant gender differences in the means. Data are weighted for Japan only. USS GSS documentation suggests that it is not necessary to use weights in analyses singly using the 2002 GSS (Davis *et al.*, 2005).

Although U.S. men and women report similar levels of happiness, in Japan women report significantly greater happiness than men. The distributions of marital status categories are different between the countries: Japanese men and women are more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced, widowed, or never married than their U.S. counterparts. The two countries are similar, however, in that men are more likely than women to be never married and women are more likely than men to be divorced/separated/widowed. Japanese men are also more likely than Japanese women to be married. In both countries, regardless of gender, married persons are happier than either divorced/separated/widowed persons or never married persons. In the U.S., divorced/separated/widowed women are less happy than never married women, whereas in Japan, never married women are less happy than divorced/separated/widowed women (results not shown). In Japan, men and women have similarly high levels of pro-marriage attitudes. Meanwhile, men in the U.S. are significantly more pro-marriage than women.

In the U.S. sample, women are significantly more likely to have young and preteen residential children, while there is no comparable gender difference in the Japanese sample. This is not surprising since single parent families are extremely rare in Japan. In the U.S. sample, scores on happiness do not vary by the presence of children as much as they do in Japan. In the U.S., men with young children are happier than men without young children. In Japan, for both genders, those with young children are happier than those without young children; while men with preteen children are happier than men without preteen children (results not shown).

In both Japan and the U.S., men report higher household incomes than women, but this gender difference does not reach significance. Yet, there is a gender difference in reporting income in Japan, with women significantly more likely to have missing information on income. The levels of missing income are generally larger among the Japanese sample. In both countries, men are more likely to be employed full time while women are more likely to be employed part time. In Japan, men are significantly more educated than women. In Japan, the female average age is higher. In the U.S., women report greater

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics by Gender and Country, Weighted

Variables	Men		Women		M:F:MM
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Japan					
Happiness [1,3]	1.848	0.780	1.956	0.851	***
Marital Status					
Married [0,1]	0.725	0.432	0.680	0.480	**
Divorced/widowed [0,1]	0.047	0.205	0.166	0.382	***
Never married [0,1]	0.228	0.406	0.155	0.372	***
Pro-marriage attitude [1,4]	2.620	0.868	2.564	0.948	
Presence of children					
Have young children [0,1]	0.105	0.297	0.100	0.309	
Have preteen children [0,1]	0.114	0.307	0.112	0.325	
Have teenage children [0,1]	0.090	0.277	0.089	0.293	
Socioeconomic characteristics					
Income in ¥100,000s [0,207.5]	60.351	31.835	57.019	34.619	
Income missing [0,1]	0.291	0.440	0.379	0.499	***
Full-time employment [0,1]	0.681	0.451	0.297	0.470	***
Part-time employment [0,1]	0.095	0.284	0.221	0.427	***
Education [1,6]	3.473	1.169	3.141	1.044	**
Control variables					
Age [20,89]	47.737	16.309	49.796	18.309	**
Health [1,5]	3.434	1.088	3.477	1.197	
Religiosity [1,4]	1.397	0.666	1.463	0.815	
n	4646		5527		
United States					
Happiness [1,3]	2.423	0.677	2.490	0.666	
Marital Status					
Married [0,1]	0.483	0.500	0.478	0.500	***
Divorced/widowed [0,1]	0.222	0.416	0.314	0.464	***
Never married [0,1]	0.295	0.456	0.208	0.406	**
Pro-marriage attitude [1,5]	2.564	0.820	2.279	0.841	***
Presence of children					
Have young children [0,1]	0.094	0.292	0.161	0.368	**
Have preteen children [0,1]	0.109	0.312	0.179	0.384	**
Have teenage children [0,1]	0.090	0.286	0.124	0.329	
Socioeconomic characteristics					
Income in \$1,000s [452,198,268]	53.264	53.855	49.289	49.285	
Income missing [0,1]	0.063	0.243	0.086	0.280	
Full-time employment [0,1]	0.621	0.485	0.421	0.494	***
Part-time employment [0,1]	0.092	0.289	0.148	0.355	**
Education [1,5]	2.542	1.194	2.486	1.099	
Control variables					
Age [18,99]	44.623	16.322	45.570	17.434	
Health [1,4]	3.186	0.849	3.149	0.819	
Religiosity [1,9]	4.098	2.622	5.089	2.730	***
n	478		663		

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (all values are for two-tailed tests).

religiosity than men. There is no significant gender difference in health in either country.

Multivariate Results: Tables 2 and 3 show the ordered logit models of happiness by country and gender. The first model includes marital status, presence of children, economic characteristics, and control variables. The second model adds pro-marriage attitude for both countries and the interactions of marital status and pro-marriage attitude for Japan. The interactions of marital status and pro-marriage attitude were also considered for the U.S. sample, but none of the interactions were significant. As stated before, Equation 1 predicts the chance of being at least pretty happy while Equation 2 predicts the chance of being very happy compared to being otherwise. For each national sample, we tested statistical significance of gender differences in the effects of all independent variables included in the analysis.

Overall, marriage increases happiness in both countries, but there are some gender and cross-national differences. In Japan, both men and women who are never married are significantly less happy than those who are married. Among men, the effect of being never married varies in size by threshold. That is, being never married reduces the chance of being very happy more than the chance of being at least pretty happy. Those who are divorced or widowed are also less happy than their married counterparts, though the difference in happiness between the two groups is not as great as that between never married and married individuals. For men, the difference in the effect of being divorced/separated/widowed and being never married is borderline significant under Equation 1 and statistically significant at 0.01 level under Equation 2, and for women it is significant at the 0.001 level. The gender difference (Models 1 versus 3) in the effect of being never married under Equation 2 is borderline significant (Chi-square 3.61 (d.f.=1), p-value=0.0574). Once pro-marriage attitudes and interactions are added to the model, the effect of being divorced or widowed is reduced to non-significance while the effect of being never married is reduced in size but remains significant. In the U.S., the effect of divorce is also negative and significant for both genders. The negative effect of being never married is only significant for American men in Equation 1. One could loosely interpret that never having married does not affect the level of happiness for those men who are already pretty happy, but it significantly reduces the chances that men who are not very happy already will become happier. In addition, being never married has no effect on American women's happiness in any model.

While pro-marriage attitude generally promotes happiness among the Japanese, it has the opposite effect for those who have never been married

Table 2
Generalized Ordered Logit Models Predicting Happiness In Japan

	Men (n=4646)				Women (n=5527)			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)
Marital status (reference=married)								
Divorced/widowed ^d	-0.992*** (.184)	=	-0.701 (.479)	=	-0.406*** (.071)	=	-0.109 (.176)	=
Never married ^d	-1.541*** (.169)	-1.765*** (.166)	-0.650* (.298)	=	-1.094*** (.106)	=	-0.477** (.164)	=
Pro-marriage attitude			0.244*** (.042)	0.327*** (.041)			0.276*** (.024)	=
Pro-marriage interactions								
x Divorced/widowed			-0.095 (.144)	=			-0.090 (.071)	=
x Never married ^f			-0.372*** (.086)	-0.488*** (.099)			-0.262** (.089)	=
Presence of children								
Have young children ^c	0.338** (.105)	-0.041 (.115)	0.363** (.109)	-0.033 (.112)	-0.066 (.140)	=	-0.035 (.139)	=
Have preteen children ^{df}	0.074 (.069)	=	0.071 (.071)	=	-0.043 (.136)	-0.248* (.120)	-0.034 (.140)	-0.257* (.130)
Have teenage children	-0.091 (.091)	=	-0.104 (.092)	=	-0.115 (.086)	=	-0.104 (.085)	=
Economic characteristics								
Full time employment	0.053 (.100)	=	0.068 (.101)	=	-0.191** (.068)	=	-0.173* (.069)	=

table contd.

	Men (n=4646)				Women (n=5527)			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)
Part time employment	-0.087 (.112)	=	-0.093 (.104)	=	-0.142* (.061)	=	-0.122* (.060)	=
Income	0.008*** (.001)	0.004*** (.001)	0.008*** (.001)	0.004*** (.001)	0.008*** (.001)	0.005** (.001)	0.008*** (.001)	0.005** (.001)
Income missing	0.054 (.076)	=	0.056 (.073)	=	-0.099 (.066)	0.104 (.073)	-0.105 (.064)	0.095 (.069)
Control variables								
Age ^{df}	-0.117*** (.012)	=	-0.116*** (.012)	=	-0.132*** (.013)	-0.078*** (.018)	-0.128*** (.013)	-0.075*** (.018)
Age squared	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001*** (.000)
Education	0.152*** (.032)	-0.053 (.036)	0.167*** (.032)	-0.031 (.036)	0.176*** (.034)	0.021 (.035)	0.201*** (.035)	0.044 (.035)
Health	0.499*** (.026)	=	0.498*** (.027)	=	0.545*** (.027)	=	0.543*** (.027)	=
Religiosity ^e	0.202*** (.044)	0.099* (.042)	0.191*** (.045)	0.082 (.043)	0.113** (.034)	=	0.092** (.033)	=
-2*Log likelihood	9170.153		9112.724		11161.444		11098.470	

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. Other variables included in analysis are year dummies.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two tailed)

- (a) Equation 1 estimates the chance of being in the middle or the highest category for happiness rather than in the lowest category.
 (b) Equation 2 estimates the chance of being in the highest category for happiness rather than in the lowest or middle category.
 (c) Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 1, Eq. 1
 (d) Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 1, Eq. 2
 (e) Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 2, Eq. 1
 (f) Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 2, Eq. 2

Table 3
Generalized Ordered Logit Models Predicting Happiness In The United States

	Men (n=478)				Women (n=663)			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)
Marital status (reference=married)								
Divorced/widowed	-0.744** (0.248)	=	-0.753** (0.251)	=	-0.754** (0.219)	=	-0.768** (0.225)	=
Never married	-0.948** (0.354)	-0.186 (0.254)	-0.970** (0.369)	-0.218 (0.258)	-0.165 (0.253)	=	-0.184 (0.271)	=
Pro-marriage attitude			-0.228 (0.120)	=			0.213* (-0.470)	0.002 (0.108)
Presence of children								
Have young children ^{cdef}	0.934* (0.376)	=	0.905* (0.373)	=	-0.031 (0.268)	=	-0.043 (0.277)	=
Have preteen children	0.282 (0.289)	=	0.297 (0.300)	=	-0.251 (0.246)	=	-0.257 (0.249)	=
Have teenage children	-0.397 (0.334)	=	-0.385 (0.333)	=	0.074 (0.292)	=	0.06 (0.293)	=
Economic characteristics								
Full time employment	-0.187 (0.288)	=	-0.204 (0.290)	=	-0.17 (0.178)	=	-0.191 (0.179)	=
Part time employment	-0.158 (0.427)	=	-0.173 (0.429)	=	-0.202 (0.257)	=	-0.21 (0.255)	=
Income	0.006** (0.002)	=	0.006** (0.002)	=	0.004 (0.002)	=	0.004 (0.002)	=
Income missing	1.144* (0.485)	=	1.213* (0.508)	=	0.107 (0.338)	=	0.086 (0.334)	=

table contd.

	Men (n=478)				Women (n=663)			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)	Eq. 1 ^a (1 vs. 2/3)	Eq. 2 ^b (1/2 vs. 3)
Control variables								
Age	-0.024 (0.044)	=	-0.023 (0.045)	=	-0.012 (0.032)	=	-0.01 (0.033)	=
Age squared	0.000 (0.000)	=	0.000 (0.000)	=	0.000 (0.000)	=	0.000 (0.000)	=
Education	0.040 (0.094)	=	0.026 (0.092)	=	0.017 (0.082)	=	0.021 (0.083)	=
Health	0.541*** (0.147)	=	0.532*** (0.150)	=	0.62*** (0.109)	=	0.624*** (0.111)	=
Religiosity	0.051 (0.041)	=	0.062 (0.043)	=	0.109*** (0.026)	=	0.112*** (0.026)	=
-2*Log likelihood	819.884		816.308		1096.13		1087.23	

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. Other variables included in analysis are year dummies.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two tailed)

- Equation 1 estimates the chance of being in the middle or the highest category for happiness rather than in the lowest category.
- Equation 2 estimates the chance of being in the highest category for happiness rather than in the lowest or middle category.
- Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 1, Eq. 1
- Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 1, Eq. 2
- Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 2, Eq. 1
- Gender difference significant at < .05 level in Model 2, Eq. 2

(Models 2 and 4, Table 2). For instance, among never married men, a unit increase in pro-marriage attitude reduces happiness by 12% ($(1 - e^{0.27}) * 100$) (Model 2). The negative interaction between holding pro-marriage attitude and being never married is stronger for men, although this gender difference is insignificant. As noted above, once the interaction of pro-marriage attitude and marital status is considered, the effect of being divorced or widowed is no longer significant. Contrary to its generally positive effect on Japanese happiness, pro-marriage attitude has a significant negative effect on American women's happiness.

The effect of children on happiness varies by gender. Both Japanese and American men with young children report greater happiness than those without young children. This effect is more consistent for American men. For Japanese men, young children increase the chance of being at least pretty happy compared to not very happy but do not increase the chance of being very happy. Whereas older children have no effect on men's happiness regardless of threshold, preteen children significantly reduce Japanese women's chance of being very happy.

Income generally has a positive effect on happiness. Among Japanese respondents, income greatly promotes happiness across all models for both genders. Also across all models, the size of the effect of income significantly varies by threshold. For instance, for men, a unit increase of income raises the chance of being at least pretty happy by 0.8%, but only raises the chance of being very happy by 0.4%. In the U.S., income significantly increases men's happiness but not women's. Unlike in Japan, in the U.S., the effect of income does not vary by threshold. In addition, American men who do not report their income are much happier than those who do report their income. This may be due to the tendency of the wealthiest not to report their incomes.

Both full-time and part-time employment are significantly and negatively associated with Japanese women's happiness, while Japanese men's happiness is not affected by employment status. Meanwhile, employment has no significant effect on the happiness of American men or women. Interestingly, education is a better predictor of happiness in Japan than the U.S., where there is no significant effect. Nevertheless, the significant positive effect only appears in Equation 1 of the Japanese models. Therefore, Japanese men and women who are more educated tend to be at least pretty happy, but no more likely to be very happy.

The effects of our control variables are largely as expected or insignificant. One exception is the effect of age among Japanese. In Japan, while age has a negative effect, age squared has a positive effect, suggesting that happiness

declines with age up to a point, levels off and might even increase. For women, the size of the effect of age varies by threshold: the chance of being at least pretty happy declines with age more than the chance of being very happy (this does not show in Table 2 due to rounding). In the U.S., there is no significant effect of age on happiness.

In both countries, subjective health has a significant positive effect on happiness. This effect is strong and consistent across all models. In Japan, greater religiosity generally contributes to greater happiness. The only exception is the effect of religiosity on men's happiness in Equation 2 of Model 2. Once pro-marriage attitudes and interactions are controlled, greater religiosity increases the chance of being at least pretty happy, but not necessarily the chance of being very happy. While in Japan religiosity increases happiness for both genders, in the U.S., it only enhances women's happiness.

DISCUSSION

In general, Americans report higher levels of happiness than Japanese. This is consistent with Kitayama *et al.*'s (2000) finding of differences in positive emotions between Americans and Japanese. However, it is not clear that marriage and children are more important for Japanese happiness than American happiness. Based on Uchida *et al.*'s (2004) discussion of the cultural constructions of happiness, we expected social relationships, including marriage and children, to be more important in determining happiness among Japanese. In our findings, marriage is related to happiness in both Japan and the United States. However, whether one is single due to marital dissolution or not having married in the first place is a distinguishing factor in this cross-country comparison. In Japan, while married people are happier than others, this happiness gap by marital status is largely due to the contrast between married versus never married people. In other words, never married Japanese are significantly less happy compared to not only those who are married, but also those who are divorced, separated, or widowed. Unlike in Japan, the divorced and widowed make up the unhappiest group in the U.S.¹ For those in the United States, it may be the emphasis placed on the marital relationship itself. This would suggest that individuals derive happiness from being married. Once a marriage is over, the individual can no longer look to that union for personal fulfillment. Previous studies find that marital disruption has a negative effect on psychological health (Amato, 2000; Liu and Chen, 2006). Meanwhile, American women who have never married may find that they can draw on other resources (Keith, 2004), which may account for the non-significant impact of the never married status on American women's happiness. On the

other hand, marriage may provide only an entry to happiness for those in Japan. Those who have never married may feel more socially isolated. Yet, those who have married and later experienced the dissolution of their marriage may still feel socially connected to other family members. In this interpretation, social connections may indeed provide a buffer for Japanese who lose a spouse.

Attitudes toward marriage further complicate our comparison. Unlike in Japan where pro-marriage attitude is a key correlate of happiness, in the US, the effect of this attitude is negative for women. American women who emphasize the importance of marriage may find themselves disappointed if they cannot find the "right" partner or find that the reality of marriage does not meet their expectations. In Japan, those who hold pro-marriage attitudes are generally happier, and may simply have more positive outlooks on life. Nevertheless, the interaction effect shows that pro-marriage Japanese who are never married are less happy, further bolstering the idea that never married Japanese are an unhappy group. These men and women may have a strong desire to marry but their inability to marry has created a great deal of unhappiness. Again, these individuals may be lacking the social harmony that is seen as so important for Eastern constructions of happiness (Uchida *et al.*, 2004).

Children, at least young children, have a similar positive effect on men's happiness in the United States and Japan. This is contrary to previous studies in the US, that find little effect of children on men's happiness and well-being (Kohler *et al.*, 2005; Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2003). It may be that the birth of a child and the presence of young children represent a particularly important symbol of the continuation of family for men in both the US and Japan. On the other hand, any increased happiness for women may be offset by the additional work they engage in to care for their children since caregiving tends to be associated with depression symptoms (Marks *et al.*, 2002). Indeed, Japanese women with preteen children are less happy than those without children in this age category, consistent with Kaufman and Taniguchi's (2009) finding regarding school-aged children and Japanese women's marital happiness. This may suggest some role incongruence (Caspi, 2004). Alternatively, role overload may contribute to lower levels of happiness. Japanese mothers are often labeled "kyoiku-mama (education mother)" because of their involvement in children's education, and these mothers may experience increased stress as their children begin formal education.

Socioeconomic characteristics appear to have a stronger impact on Japanese happiness, particularly for women. The fact that the negative effect of employment on happiness is limited to Japanese women suggests that

gender role expectations may be strong in Japan. Employed Japanese women may prefer not to work, either because they would rather be at home or because they dislike the activities involved. Japanese workplaces may provide women with little opportunity for job autonomy and non-routinized work, characteristics that tend to decrease depressive symptoms among Canadian women (Schieman, 2002). In contrast, employed American women do not differ significantly from non-employed women in terms of happiness, which may indicate that work has become an accepted and integral part of American women's lives.

Income increases happiness for Japanese men and women and American men. This finding gives some sense of the general importance of material comfort in promoting happiness. Nevertheless, it seems that American women look less to materialism for happiness, possibly because they are more focused on family and relationships (Crossley and Langdridge, 2005; Reid, 2004). Education also seems to have a greater effect on Japanese happiness than American happiness. Japan tends to place more emphasis on status differences, which may lead to differences in happiness. This pattern may suggest higher levels of happiness for Japanese women in the near future as trends show sharp increases in educational levels among Japanese women (Ishida *et al.*, 1997).

Overall, age appears to matter less in the US, than in Japan. This difference in the age effect between the two countries may be due to the fact that Japanese society is more age-graded than the US. Health has possibly the most consistent effect across all models for both countries. The link between health and happiness may very well be universal. Finally, religiosity tends to increase happiness for Japanese men and women and American women. In the US, women tend to be more religious than men and this in turn may further widen the gender gap in happiness. Even though religiosity significantly increases happiness among Japanese, most Japanese are not particularly religious, at least in the Western sense, and thus, religion is likely to play only a modest role in Japan.

There are some limitations to the current study. While both samples are nationally representative, the US sample is smaller and more restricted due to our focus on pro-marriage attitudes. Related to this, our data covers approximately the same time period though not exactly the same years. We were able to gain a larger sample for Japan by using four consecutive years from 2000 to 2003, but we were restricted to using the 2002 GSS since this was the only recent year in which the question on pro-marriage attitudes was included. In addition, the precise comparison of happiness scores between

the two countries is impossible because the three ordinal values assigned to the happiness variable build on a 5-point scale item for Japan but a 7-point scale item for the U.S. The cross-sectional nature of our data limits our conclusions about causality. Nevertheless, Dush and Amato (2005) find that increasing commitment increases happiness but that increasing happiness does not increase commitment, suggesting that marriage may be more of a cause than effect. Our study is also limited in the degree to which we consider important social relationships. Future studies should examine other family relationships as well as friendships. Marital relations, interactions, and roles should also be considered in future comparative studies of Japan and the United States.

In conclusion, individuals in the United States may base their personal happiness more on the success of relationships and how these relationships or lack thereof make them feel. Meanwhile, individuals in Japan may focus more on the social aspects of their marriage and children. Future studies should examine the relationship between family characteristics and happiness across several countries.

Note

1. We should note that a greater proportion of U.S. respondents in the divorced/widowed category are divorced, whereas a greater proportion of Japanese respondents in the same category are likely to be widowed.

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