

Culture and Personality:
Adult development in Japan and the U.S.

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- Cultural shaping of personality
 - Modal personality traits may vary across cultures
 - McRae & Costa (near-universality of big-5 traits, A, C, E, N, and O)
- Two new questions
 - Age trajectory
 - Health correlates
- General Themes
 - Culture matters.
 - Person matters.
 - Biology matters

Personality change across the life span: Insights from a cross-cultural, longitudinal study

William J. Chopik¹  | Shinobu Kitayama²

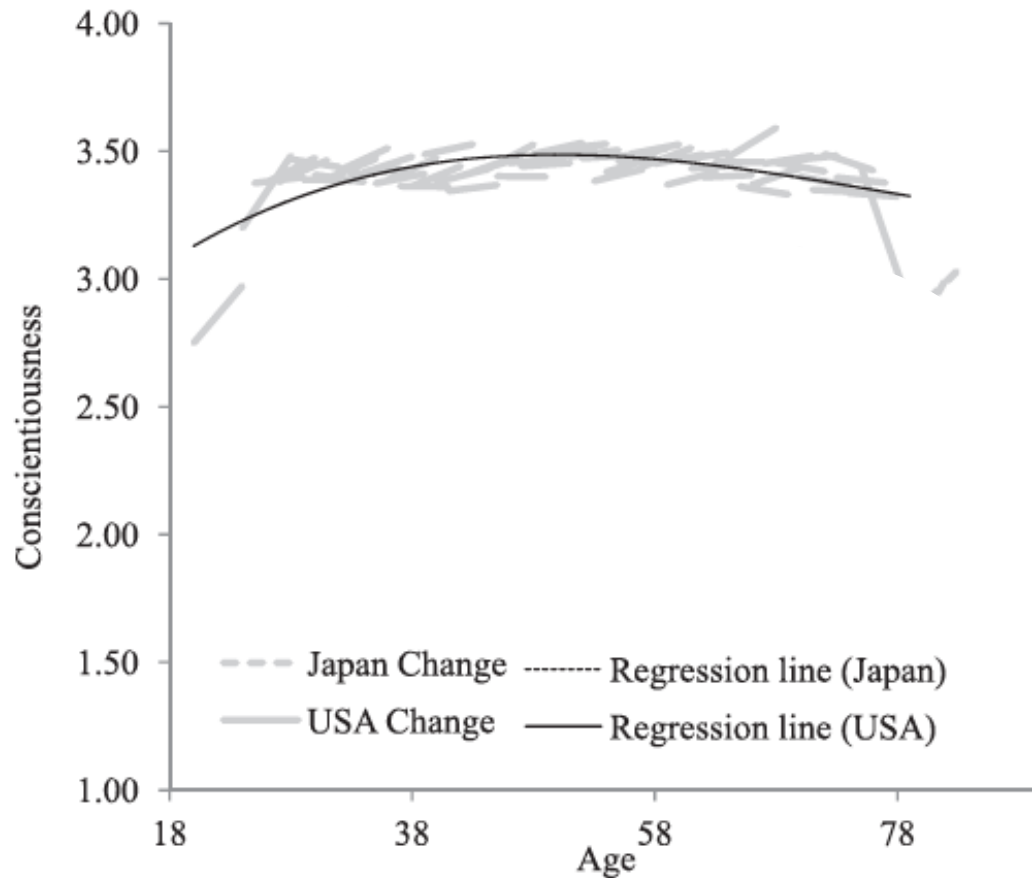
Journal of Personality, 2018

	European Americans (MIDUS)	Japanese (MIDJA)
Respondents	6,259 adults(20-75 years of age)	1,021 adults (39-79 years of age)
Age	46.84 (SD = 12.91)	54.28 (SD = 14.10)
Gender	Female 53%	Female 51%
Education	Two-year of college or vocational degree	One-year of college (no degree)

- Big five personality traits
 - Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to experience
- Twice with an interval of either 10 years (MIDUS) or 4 years (MIDJA)
- Analysis
 - Longitudinal change → Model fitting

Conscientiousness

(organized, responsible, hardworking, careless)



Age x culture, $p < .001$
Age2 x culture, $p < .004$
Age3 x culture, $p < .001$

Peak

US: Middle age

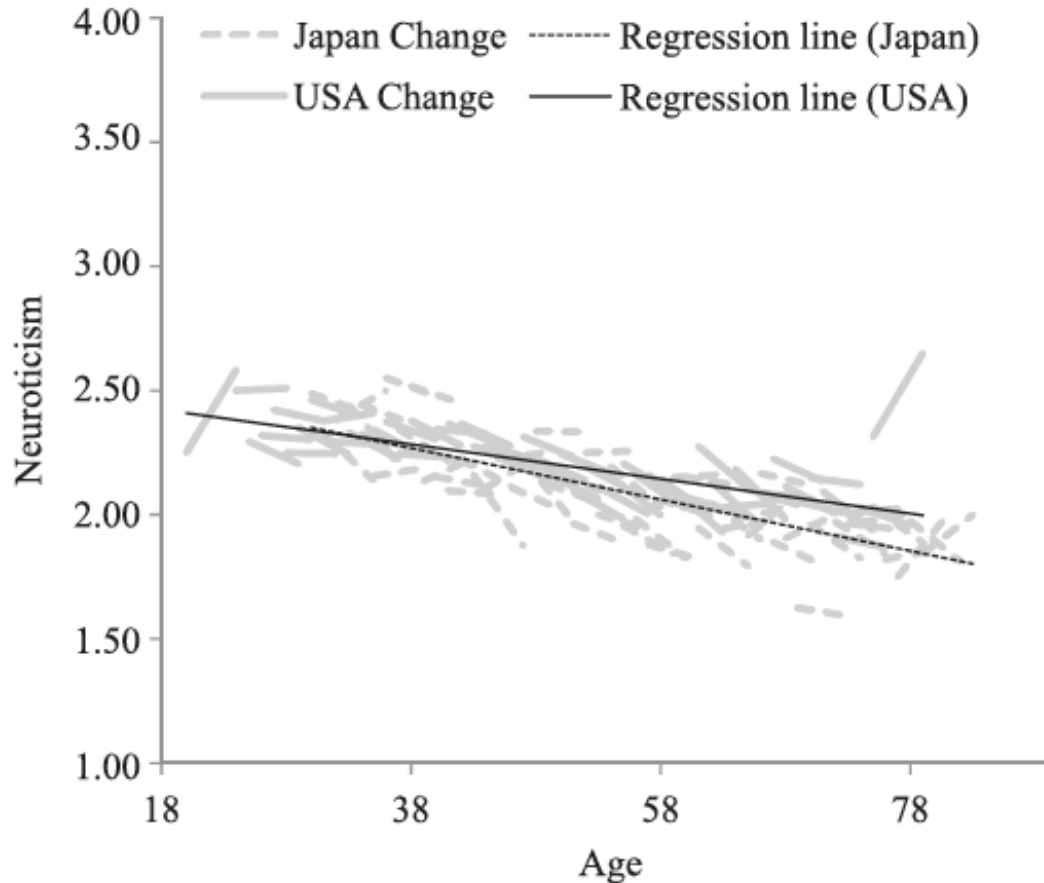
JPN: Older age

Individual difference

Larger in J than in the US

Neuroticism

(moody, worrying, nervous, calm)



Age, $p < .001$

Age x culture, $p < .04$

Decline as a function of age

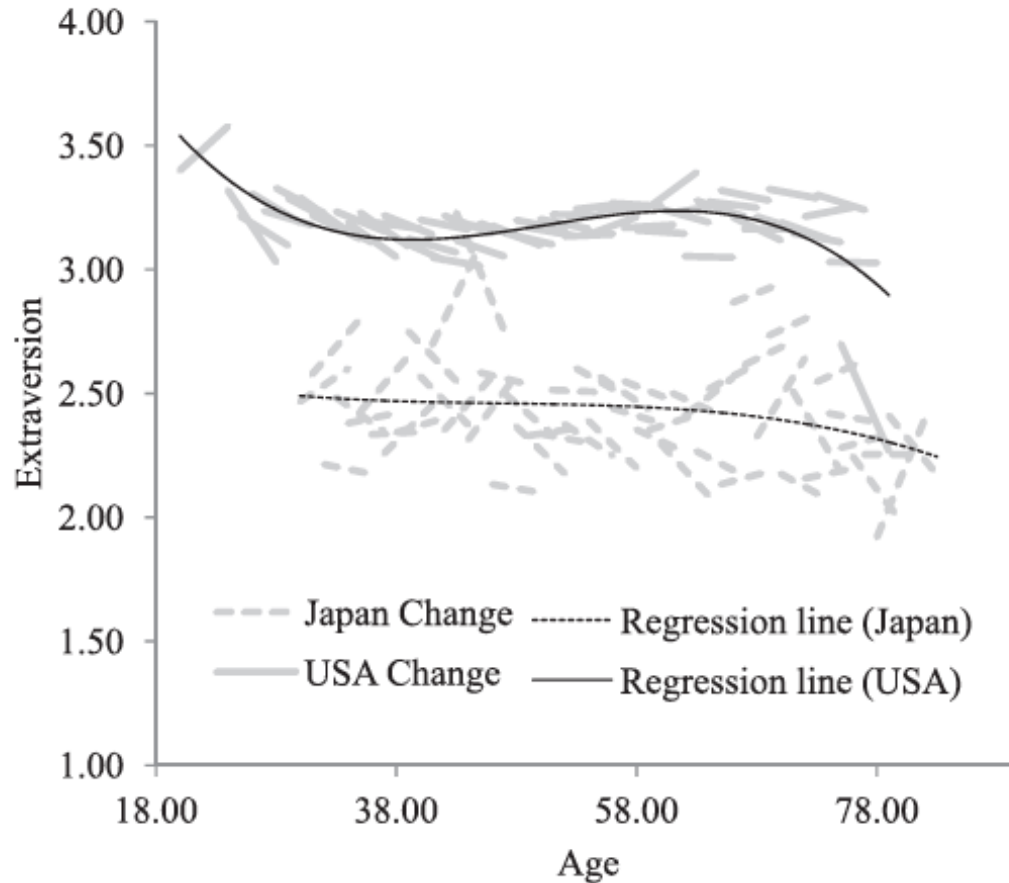
More pronounced in J

Individual difference

Larger in J than in the US

Extraversion

(outgoing, friendly, lively, active, talkative)



Age2 x culture, $p < .001$

Age3, $p < .001$

Age3 x culture, $p < .01$

Decline in old age

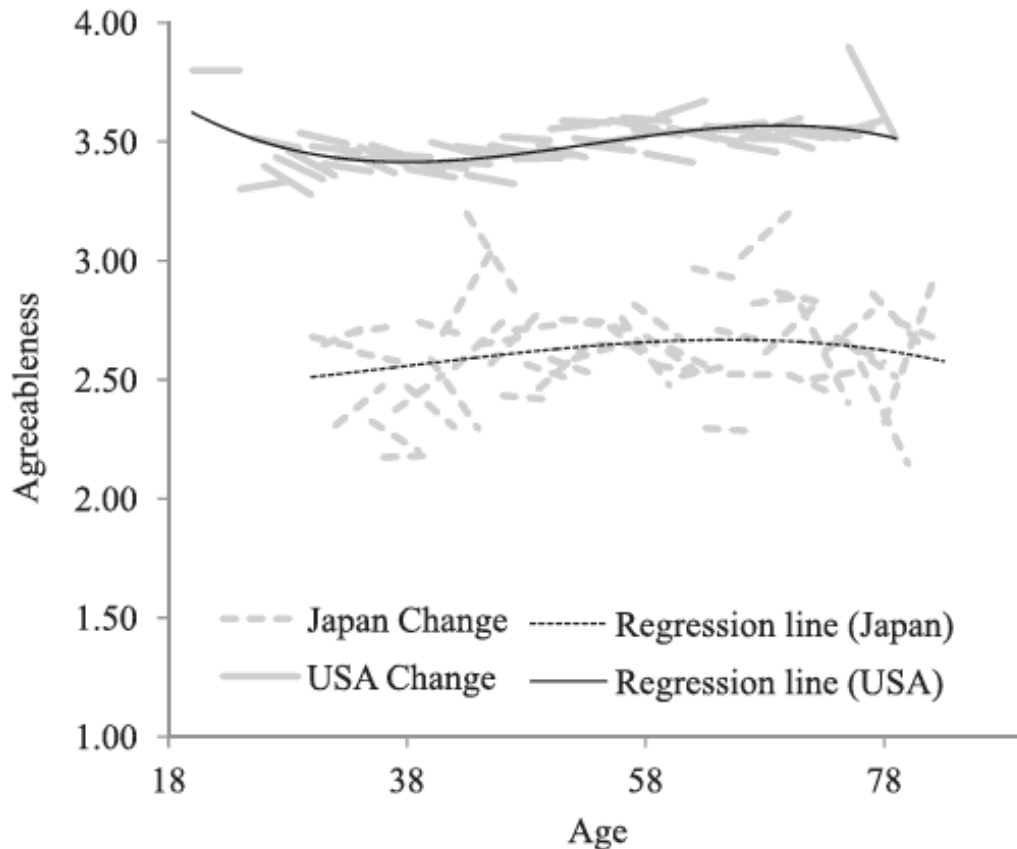
Pronounced in the US

Individual difference

Larger in J than in the US

Agreeableness

(helpful, warm, caring, softhearted, sympathetic)



Age3, $p < .001$

Lower among early middle age Americans

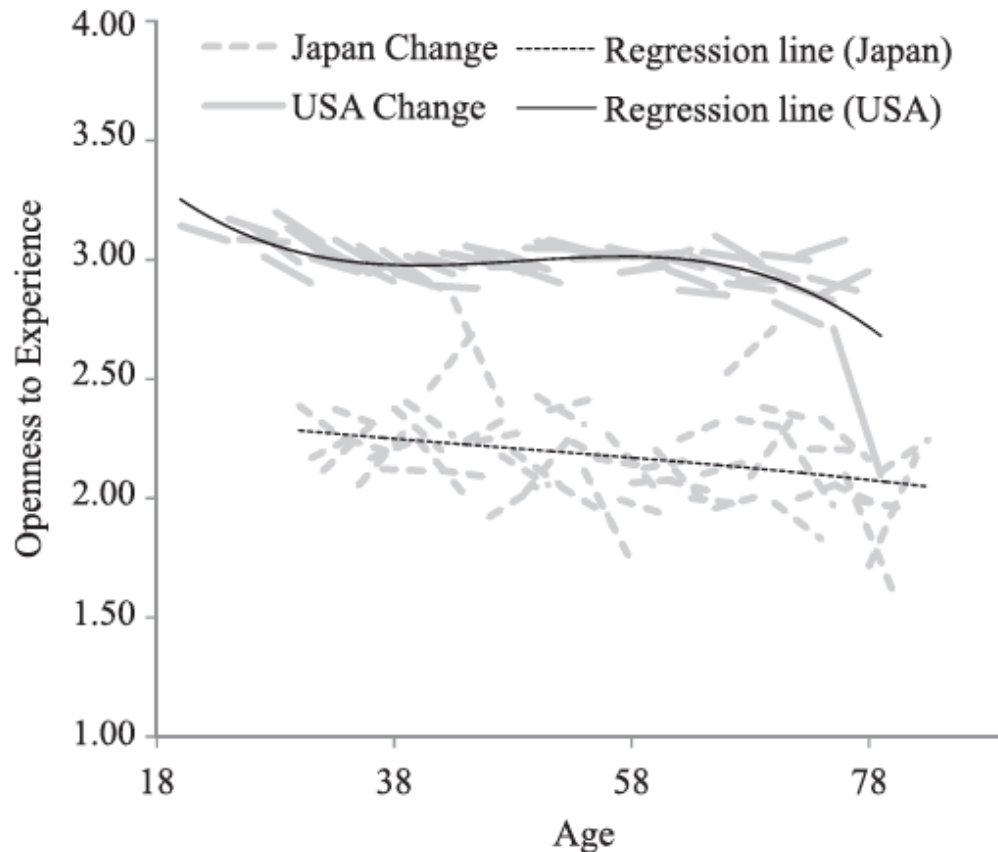
Statistically negligible

Individual difference

Larger in J than in the US

Openness to experience

(creative, imaginative, intelligent, curious, broad-minded, sophisticated, adventurous)



Age3, $p < .001$

Decline in older age only in A
Statistically negligible

Individual difference
Larger in J than in the US

To summarize

- **Conscientiousness**
 - Peak appears in middle age in A, but in older age in J
- **Neuroticism**
 - Age-related decline more pronounced in J than in A.
- **Extraversion**
 - Age related decline more pronounced in A than in J
- **Agreeableness and openness to experience**
 - No evidence for cultural difference
- **Individual differences in age-related trajectory**
 - Much larger in J than in A

Friedman & Kern, 2014

Annual Review of Psychology

- “Assumptions that **neuroticism** leads to disease have existed since ancient medicine, with excessive melancholic and phlegmatic humors believed to cause depression, cancer, rheumatism, fevers, and other disease”
- “Perhaps the most exciting recent discovery to emerge in the area of personality, well-being, and health is the lifelong importance of **conscientiousness**. Individuals who are conscientious—that is, prudent, dependable, well organized, and persistent—stay healthier, thrive, and live longer.”

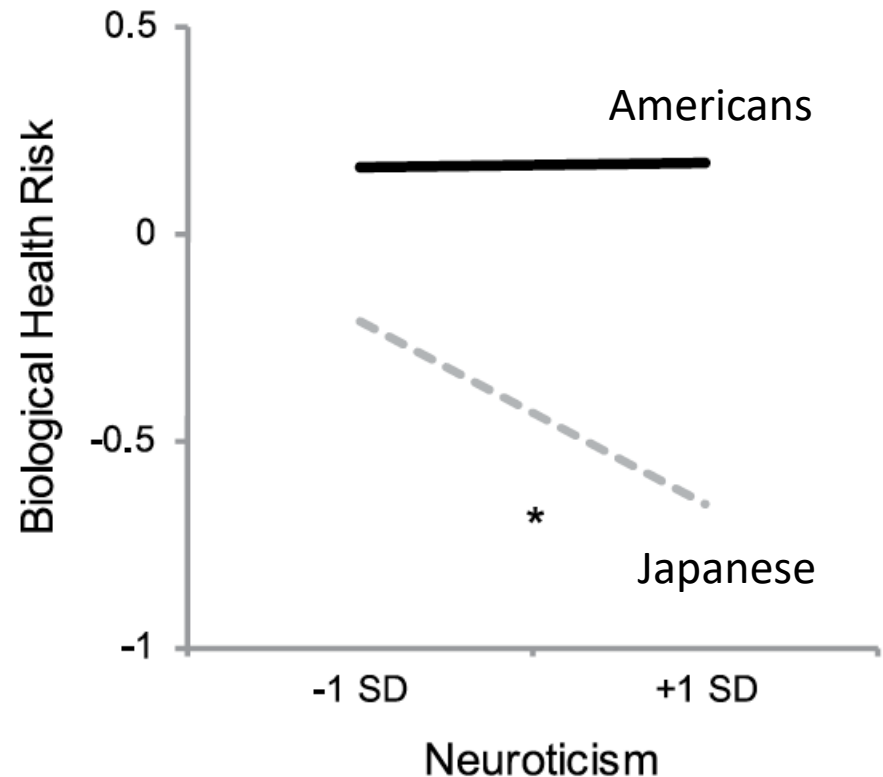
	European Americans (MIDUS II)	Japanese (MIDJA)
Respondents	976 adults (age: 35-86)	382 adults (age: 31-80)
Age	58.36 (SD = 11.69)	55.47 (SD = 14.04)
Gender	Female 55%	Female 56%
Education	Two-year of college or vocational degree	One-year of college (no degree)

Table 2. Intercorrelations Among the Four Biomarkers for Americans and Japanese

Sample and measure	<i>n</i>	Correlations		
		2	3	4
Americans				
1. Log IL-6	1,044	.49***	.13***	.11***
2. Log CRP	1,040	—	.15***	.19***
3. Log SBP	1,053		—	.13***
4. Log total/HDL cholesterol	1,043			—
Japanese				
1. Log IL-6	382	.50***	.38***	.25***
2. Log CRP	382	—	.27***	.28***
3. Log SBP	382		—	.32***
4. Log total/HDL cholesterol	382			—

Neuroticism and Biological Health

- N is widely seen as unhealthy
- But it could also be adaptive
 - N may be more adaptive when people are capable and willing to adjust their behaviors to “problems” and various “threats.”

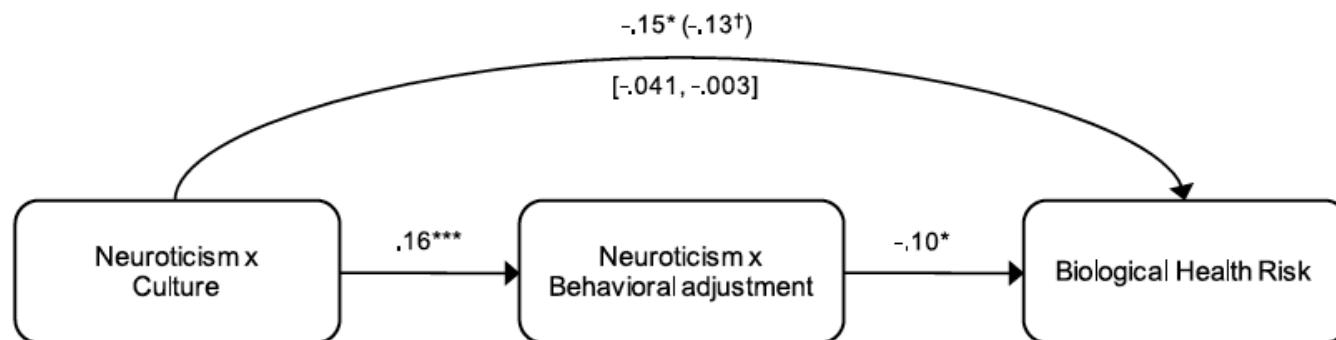


Behavioral Adjustment Scale

1. I usually follow the opinions of people I can respect.
2. When people have an opinion different from mine, I can adjust mine to theirs.
3. When values held by others sound more reasonable, I can adjust my values to theirs.
4. Once something has happened, I try to adjust myself to it because it is difficult to change it myself.
5. It is useless to try to change what is going to happen in life because it is impossible to predict it.

Behavioral adjustment x N interaction

- N is “healthy” for those sufficiently high in BA
- J is higher in BA than A
- N is “healthy” in A, but not A
- Among A who are especially low in BA, N is “unhealthy.”



The cover of Science magazine features a photograph of a rice paddy field. The water in the field is a deep, rich orange-brown color, creating a textured surface with ripples and reflections. Several farmers, wearing traditional wide-brimmed hats and work clothes, are seen working in the field. One farmer is in the upper center, another is to the right, and a third is in the lower center. The overall scene is a rural agricultural landscape.

9 May 2014 | \$10

Science

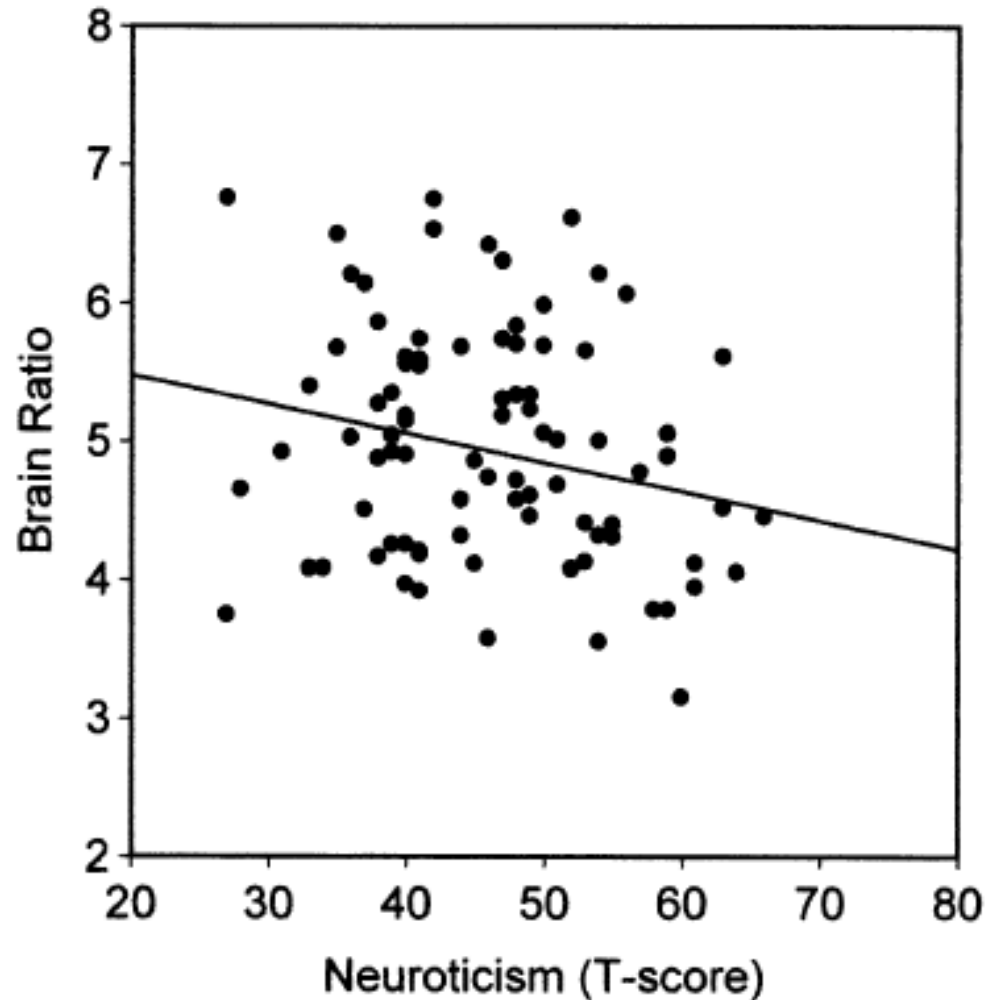
Cultivated Minds

How Rice Farming Has
Shaped Psychology

AAAS

Is N linked to “de-regulation” of negative emotion?

Knutson et al., 2001
Biological Psychiatry



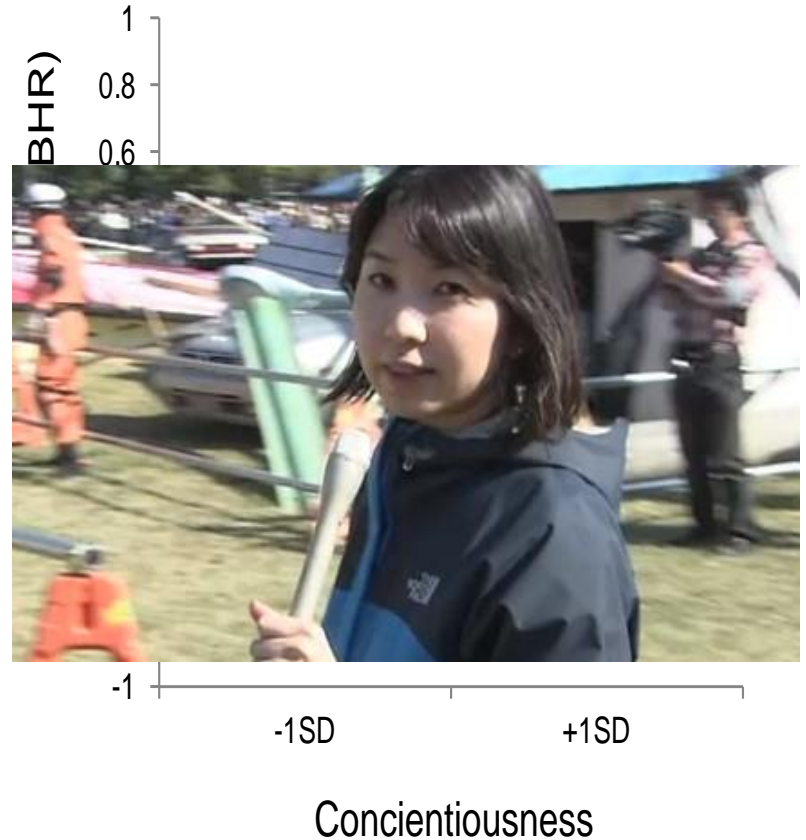
Friedman & Kern, 2014

Annual Review of Psychology

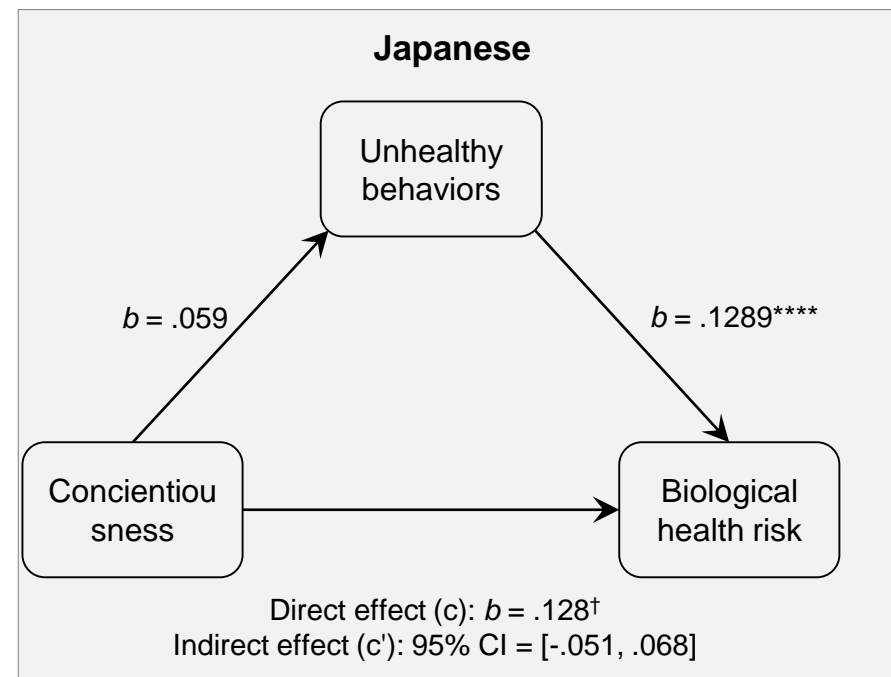
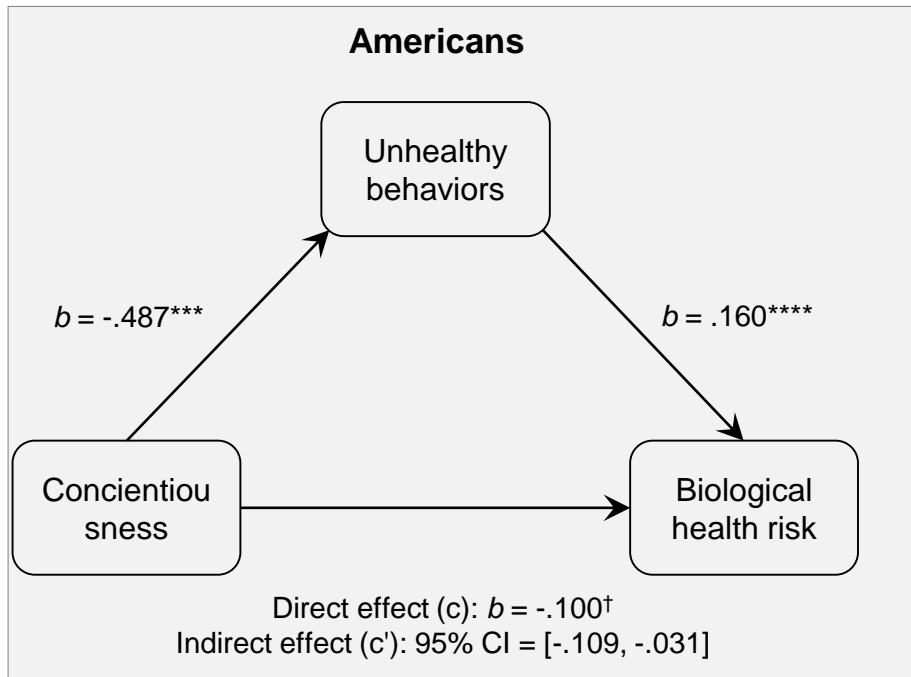
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Conscientiousness and Biological Health

- C is widely seen as healthy
 - But the primary function of C is to promote norm-congruous behavior; if so, C could be unhealthy depending on the nature of norms.
 - Independence and promotion of *personal* welfare vs. interdependence and promotion of *societal* welfare



How can the American effect be explained?



How can the Japanese effect be explained?

- Social obligation

- Family

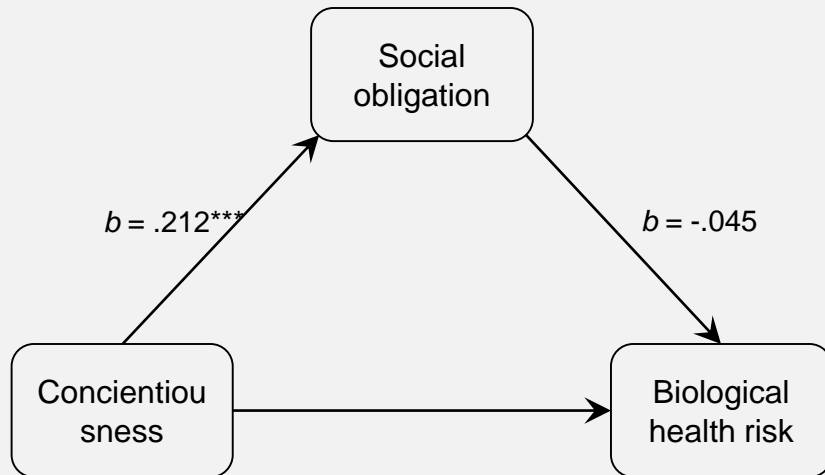
- “I feel obligated to drop plans when members of my family seem very troubled.”
- “I feel obligated to contact family members on a regular basis.”
- “I feel obligated to give money to a friend in need, even if this makes it hard to meet my own needs.”
- “I feel obligated to take my divorced or unemployed adult child back into my home.”

- Good work

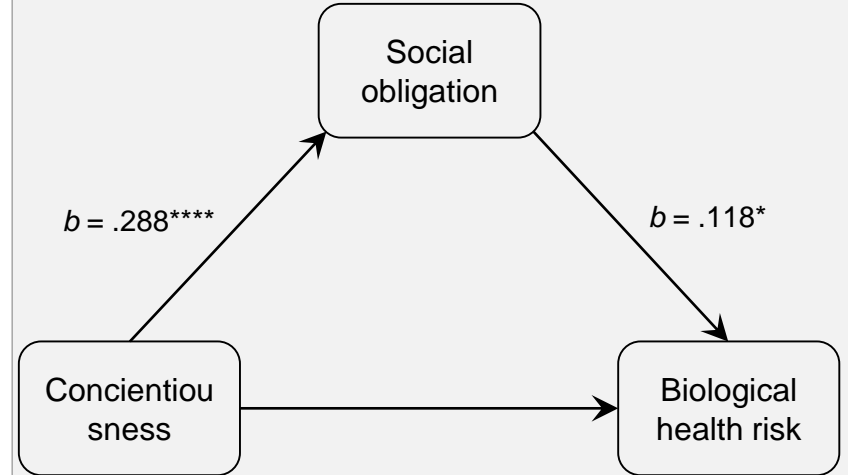
- “My work makes the world a better place.”
- “I think about the harm my work might do to other people.”
- “I help out my colleagues/coworkers at work.”
- “I am the one to volunteer to do unwanted tasks at work.”
- “I am known for my honesty and integrity at work.”

How can the Japanese effect be explained?

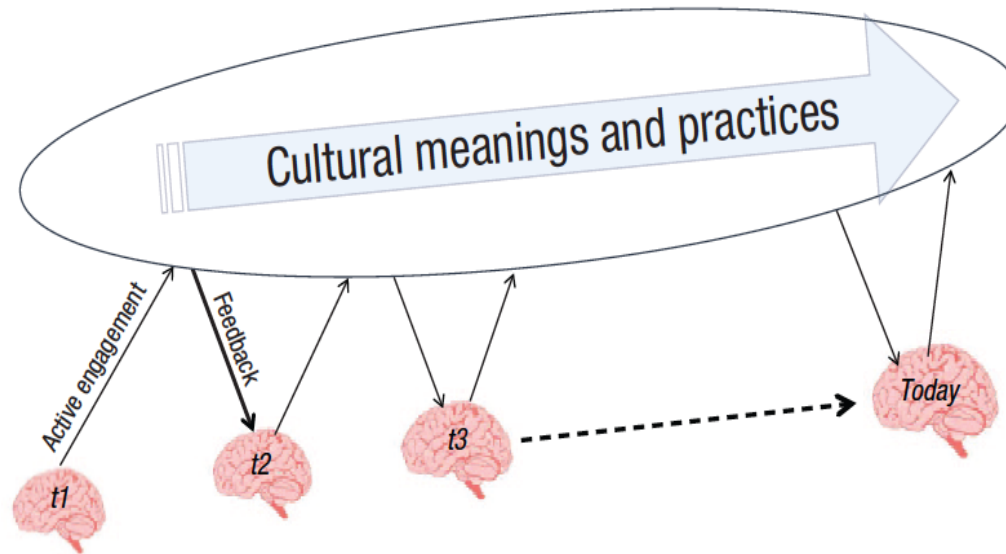
Americans



Japanese



Cultural Neuroscience: How is nature nurtured?



Kitayama & Salvador, 2017, *Perspectives in Psychological Science*

- Culture matters: Providing semiotic context.
- Person matters: Guiding actions-in-context.
- Biology matters: Repository of past experience.