Defining & measuring happiness

TRUE HAPPINESS

BOB AND HIS BIKE
• Is this person happy?
  – Employed
  – Above average income
  – Single
  – Home owner
  – No chronic health conditions
  – No mental disorder
Incomplete picture

• Objective indicators might tell the “facts” of a person’s life, but they do not tell how a person thinks and feels about these facts

• Weakly related to people’s own judgements of their well-being (Diener, 1984)

• Can you have it all but be unhappy?
“have it all” but unhappy?
“have it all” but unhappy?
“have it all” but unhappy?
“have it all” but unhappy?
“have it all” but unhappy?
Subjective Well-being (SWB)

• Own judgements based on own criteria
• Why gather SWB data?
  1) People react differently to the same circumstances. Even if all the components may still not be happy
  2) Info on happiness/life satisfaction important in its own right! Most important goal to most people (7000 students in 42 countries)
Societal level: WB measures

- Asking people if they are happy offers important info
- Correlate and use these data (e.g., policy-making)
- E.g., Gallup World Poll
WB data to improve society

- E.g., Urban design
- University of Waterloo
  - Looking around & completing well-being measures
  - Aiming to make a “happy city”
  - “All of a sudden it opened the door to me: you can change the city for happiness? It became an obsession,” Montgomery says.
Positive psychology

- Subjective well-being (SWB)
- Eudaimonic well-being
SWB/”happiness”

• *Subjective* well-being (or “happiness”)
• 3 components
  – Positive affect (high)
  – Negative affect (low)
  – Life satisfaction (high)
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

- Represents one’s assessment of one’s own life
- Satisfied (dissatisfied) where there is little or no (substantial) discrepancy between the present and an ideal/deserved situation
The Satisfaction with Life Scale

DIRECTIONS: Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

___ 1. In most ways my life is close to ideal.
___ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
___ 3. I am satisfied with life.
___ 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
___ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
SWB/”happiness”

- Each with distinct contribution
  - PA & NA - affective judgement
  - Life satisfaction – cognitive judgement
Gallup World Poll: Outcomes

• Swiss versus Latin Americans!

• How you feel in your life:
  – Frequency of smiling and laughing, experiencing enjoyment – Latin Americans

• How you think about your life:
  – Rate your life based on best to worst possible life - Swiss
Biases in SWB measures

• What we expect: Reflect on all pos’t and neg’t experiences and make a reasoned judgement about overall happiness

• What actually happens??
  – Distortions in memory
  – Parsimonious indicators
Memory distortion

The retrospective judgment of happiness often differs greatly from the extrapolated total of experienced happiness
‘Peak-end rule’ on people’s memory of experiences

‘Peak-end rule’

We judge our past experiences almost entirely on how they were at their peak and how they ended.

Net pleasantness or unpleasantness, or the length of the experience is almost entirely disregarded.

Source: ‘Peak End Rule’ Danny Kahneman, Nobel Prize Winner
Making choices

• We make choices based on our memory of previous experiences...
Winter holidays
(Wirtz et al., 2003)

• Predicted (2 weeks & 2-4 days before trip)
  – Predicted PA, NA, & global satisfaction (“I will be satisfied with this vacation”)

• Experience
  – Experienced Sampling Method: 7Xs per day
  – Actual PA, NA, & global satisfaction (“I am satisfied with this vacation”)

Winter holidays
(Wirtz et al., 2003)

• Remembered (2-4 days & 4 weeks after trip)
  – Remembered PA, NA, & global satisfaction (“I was satisfied with this vacation”)

**** Future choice item (5 weeks after trip)

“Would you take this vacation again?”
Winter holidays

• Experiencing & predicted did not predict the desire to repeat the experience
• Remembered directly predicted the desire to repeat
Biases in SWB measures

• What actually happens??
  – Distortions in memory
  – Parsimonious indicators
Parsimonious indicators

Schwarz & Clore (1983)

• People use their momentary mood state as information in evaluating the quality of their lives
Parsimonious indicators

• Called respondents on sunny or rainy days
• Assigned to conditions:
  – 1) don’t mention the weather
  – 2) mention weather (“By the way, how is the weather?”)
• Assessed SWB
Is happiness enough for a good life?
Hedonism theory

- Maximizes pleasure, minimizes pain
- Roots in utilitarianism (Bentham, 1978)
- Wishing someone a happy life: May you accumulate many pleasures
Hedonism exercise

Nozick's (1974) experience machine – constant state of cheerful happiness, no matter what happens
Rejecting hedonism: Why?

• Cheerful reaction to diversity of life events impoverishes our experience of life

• Need fear for survival

• Positive emotions to reflect real positive qualities & behaviours
Positive psychology

1) Subjective well-being

2) Eudaimonic well-being
Aristotle’s Eudaimonia

• Deemed happiness to be “vulgar idea”, stressing that not all desires are worth pursuing because, even though they produce pleasure, they do not produce wellness

• Aristotle introduced Eudaimonia
• “true happiness” is realizing your human potential (daimon = true self)
Eudaimonia: Contemporary

Actualizing tendency – a fundamental motivation toward growth (Rogers, 1961)

“...directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life – the urge to expand, develop, mature – the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism and the self.”
Eudaimonia: Contemporary

Waterman (1993)

• “eudaimonic happiness” occurs when engaged in activities that fit & express deeply held values and sense of who we are
• Feels like: fulfillment, meaningfulness, being intensely alive
• “This is who we really are and who we were meant to be”
PP: Psychological Well-Being

• Well-being is more than happiness with life
• Missing a conceptualization of *positive functioning* & *actualizing potentials* (personal strengths, striving, growth, mental health)
Ryff’s PWB

- 6 aspects of positive functioning and actualization of potentials that are the basis of PWB
  - Self acceptance
  - Purpose in life
  - Environmental mastery
  - Positive relationships
  - Autonomy
  - Personal growth
Self-acceptance

*High*: You possess a positive attitude toward yourself; acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of yourself including both good and bad qualities; and feel positive about your past life.
Purpose in life

**Strong**: You have goals in life and a sense of directedness; feel there is meaning to your present and past life; hold beliefs that give life purpose; and have aims and objectives for living.

Everyone has a purpose in life... a unique gift or special talent to give to others. And when we blend this unique talent with service to others, we experience the ecstasy and exultation of our own spirit, which is the ultimate goal of all goals.

— Deepak Chopra —
Environmental mastery

• *High:* You have a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; control complex array of external activities; make effective use of surrounding opportunities; and are able to choose or create contexts suitable to your personal needs and values.
Positive relationships with others

*Strong:* You have warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; are concerned about the welfare of others; are capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; and understand the give and take of human relationships.
Autonomy

*High*: You are self-determining and independent; are able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulate behavior from within; and evaluate yourself by personal standards.

“I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!”
Personal growth

*Strong*: You have a feeling of continued development; see yourself as growing and expanding; are open to new experiences; have the sense of realizing your potential; see improvement in yourself and behavior over time; are changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.
Ryff’s scale

- 84 questions (long form), 54 questions (med form), 42 questions (short form)
- Rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6
- 6 totals – indicates mastery versus struggling with that domain
Can Happiness and Eudaimonia exist together?
Happiness and Eudaimonia

• Personally expressive activities also generate hedonic joy (at least half the time)

• Still distinctions:
  – Hedonic joy activities provoke relaxation, excitement, happiness
  – Personal expressiveness activities provoke feelings of challenge, competence, personal growth
BREAK
Who is happy? The “facts”

*Exploring age, gender, marital status*
Objective indicators & happiness

Objective indicators are descriptions independent of personal judgement.

Some believe that particular combos of “facts” are happier (Young, educated, married, rich, etc.)
Objective indicators & happiness

Researchers often ask:
To what extent is an individual’s happiness (SWB & PWB) linked to demographics?

Age
Gender
Marriage

Demographics are responsible for 8-20% of people’s levels of happiness
Happiness & age

• Little relationship to happiness
• < 1% of happiness
• 80% of all age groups “happy” (16 nations)
• NA declines (20-60 yrs), then levels off or slight increase in very old age
Why so stable?

Genetics influence WB

- 40% PA, 55% NA
- Appear to inherent an emotional “set-point”
- Not one genetic pathway
Why so stable?

Appears the same across ages, but covers up vast differences

• Teens – intense NA & PA emotional experiences
• Adults – more stable; life experiences mitigates emotional reactivity to temporary events
Why so stable?

People at different ages may be equally happy, but for different reasons

- Socioemotional selectivity theory
- Shift priorities from future to present circumstances
Happiness and gender
Happiness and gender

• Minuscule differences in overall happiness
• < 1% of happiness
• But significant differences in the emotional lives of men and women...
Happiness and gender

- Negative emotions: Women
  - experience/express more negative emotions (sadness, fear, shame, guilt)
  - Higher prevalence of internalizing disorders (depression/anxiety)
Happiness and gender

• Negative emotions: Males
  – More anger/aggression in unprovoked or neutral situations
  – Higher prevalence of externalizing disorders (acting out of emotions; drug abuse, antisocial personality, difficulties with anger)
Happiness and gender

• Positive emotions
  – Inconsistent, mixed results
  – One consistency: Females = greater expression of positive emotions (love, joy, happiness, smiling) in observational studies
Happiness and gender: Paradox

• Explaining the paradox (same levels, but diff emotional lives)

• Theories:
  – Women “more emotional” but averages out
  – Stereotypes may influence outward expression more than actual inner experience
    • Momentary mood measures (similar levels) & global mood recall (women > men)
Happiness and marriage
Happiness and marriage

- Marriage does impact happiness
- Strong predictor of well-being
- Happier than never married, divorced/separated, widowed

“A bad marriage is worse than no marriage at all”
Happiness and marriage

Host of benefits:

– Fulfill need for belonging (basic need)
– Companionship, love, intimacy, support
– Opportunities for personal growth
– Health benefits: lower depression, loneliness, physical & mental problems, higher longevity
Marriage & Long-term happiness

Is marriage a long-term increase, or do people return to pre-marriage levels?

When someone is murdered, the police investigate the spouse first.

And that tells you everything you need to know about marriage.
Marriage & Long-term happiness

• German study – 24,000 people (1,012 married)

• Interviewed & rated SWL over 15 yrs (pre-marriage, post-marriage, years later)
Marriage & Long-term happiness

Small & short-term effect of marriage (1/10\textsuperscript{th} of a point on an 11-point scale)
Marriage & Long-term happiness

• Overall picture misleading
• Exploring individual variation
  – $\frac{1}{2}$ happier after marriage and this continued throughout
  – $\frac{1}{2}$ less happier after marriage and this continued throughout
• Many show long-term baseline changes
Happy (SWB) or healthy (PWB) marriage?

- But not be “overly happy” but may have a healthy relationship
- Resolving differences & reconciling – enhances the relationship, leads to personal growth, increases confidence dealing with life
Decline in the assoc.

• Evidence of a decline in the strength of the relationship between marriage-happiness (e.g., Lee et al., 1991)

• Less happy marriage group (more people with subsequent marriages)

• More happy people in non-marriage group (co-habitating couples)
Gender differences in marriage benefits

• Who benefits most?
• Popular culture/fantasy:
  • Females: Ultimate female desire!
  • Men: depicted as commitment phobic, conned into marriage, dragged to alter, promiscuous nature
Gender differences in marriage benefits

- Shakes out a bit differently!!
- Evidence that men benefit more
- Health & happiness (PA)
  - Married men > Married women
  - Married men > single men
Rosenfeld (2015)

• Women initiate separations only for marriages (69%), not other relationships

• Why?
  – “the stalled gender revolution”
  – High expectations
  – Fathers stay
Single people doomed?

• DePaulo’s research on singles & mental health
  – “singlism” – stigmatizing, interpersonal exclusion, presumptions, economic disadvantage
  – Fair better than we would expect
Single at heart

• Not grudgingly single, single by circumstance, but instead, *single at heart*
  – Creative & intellectual potential of solitude
  – Greater sense of autonomy in life choices
  – More likely to engage in meaningful work
  – Choice in companionships & solitude
Next week

• Traits and characteristics of happy people
  – Personality/temperament: extraversion, optimism, self-esteem
  – Character traits: wisdom, temperance, humility, etc.