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# Group 27. Let's Measure Your Smile!

## Introduction

If you have 15 mins to spare, here's a video that encapsulates pretty nicely the various themes and factors we're going to discuss



A broad definition has been provided across the literature of personal happiness. Happiness is not just a fleeting mood but an ingrained sense of one's personal well-being; a comprehensive measure of one's satisfaction with life and a general and persistent feeling of emotional well-being (Fordyce,

1977). Essentially it is a comprehensive feeling of overall contentment with life and self. Measuring this scientifically however has proven tricky and Hsee & Tang (2007) argue that in order to achieve this an accurate happiness measure needs to be developed.

# Measuring Happiness: Objective or Subjective?



Is Happiness an objective, tangible entity that can be measured? If so how do we try to measure it? Veenhoven (2003) remarks that since happiness is a conscious state of mind, it can be measured. Many researchers have agreed and developed various measurements to assess a person's 'level' of happiness. Why don't you try one for yourself?

http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/measuring-happiness/

The **Oxford Happiness Inventory** (OHI, Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989) which was devised as a broad measure of personal happiness and this scale has been proven consistent across cultures (Hills & Argyle, 2002) The scale was designed using the Beck Depression Inventory as a template (20 multiple choice questions measured on a scale of 0-3), demonstrating that early conceptions of happiness were that it is simply the opposite of sadness. The first criticism of this questionnaire would be that perhaps happiness should be conceptualised as something more than the opposite of sadness and that to do so is not recognising the unique dimensions of happiness. The second criticism, offered by Hills & Argyle (2002) is that there is a tendency for answers to converge in the middle of the scale, allowing little distinction between 'levels' of happiness.

Hills & Argyle (2002) therefore developed the **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire** (OHQ) in an attempt to address these concerns. The OHQ comprises 29 statements about happiness scored on a 1-6 Likert Scale (negative items are reverse scored). Whilst this expands the scope for distinction somewhat, the statements still seem to reflect the notion that happiness is merely the opposite of sadness. Additionally it also assumes that everyone's notion of happiness is the same, which several studies have demonstrated that it is not.

**Take Home Points: The Oxford Happiness Inventory and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire**

- Likert Scales (is this the best measurement technique?)
- Happiness is the opposite of Sadness (is happiness more than the reverse of sadness?)

Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) remark that, despite a century of research, objective markers such as economic forces (Juster and Stafford, 1985), life events (Headey and Wearing, 1989), and dispositional factors (Costa and McCrae, 1980, 1984) are correlated with happiness less strongly than perhaps our everyday experiences or reason would suggest (Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky and Ross, 1997). Many researchers thus prefer to conceptualise happiness as 'subjective well-being' (SWB) (e.g. Alexandrova, 2008) which is how a person feels their life is going from their point of view. We can all identify people who are chronically happy, even in the face of adversity, or people who are consistently unhappy, despite the best of circumstances (Myers and Diener, 1995).

Alexandrova (2008) suggests that this is because SWB has two components: affective (our happiness is affected by our recent experiences: positive or negative) and cognitive (our happiness is determined by our judgments of the events that happen to us, which reflects our disposition: whether we are an inherently happy or unhappy person). Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999) therefore developed the **Subjective Happiness Scale** (the second questionnaire in the above link) which attempts to encapsulate both of these aspects. Despite demonstrating high internal validity and consistency over time and samples, the scale contains a mere 4 items, which seems far too brief to measure a construct as elusive and complex as happiness.

One of the biggest criticisms of trying to use bounded scales (eg 1-7) to measure happiness is that they are context sensitive and that participant's interpretation of the degree of scales may differ. Hsee and Tang (2007) have thus proposed an alternative method of measurement: **a modulus based scale**. This involves using 0 as a indicator of no emotional feeling (neither positive or negative) and then thinking of an example that represents how happy they are feeling at that time (for example finding a £10 note on the street) which they then assign a value (e.g. 10). This event is called a modulus and they then use this modulus as a reference point to describe the happiness of other events. Hsee and Tang argue that this method combats both of the issues detailed above. Firstly the modulus scale has no boundaries (participants can assign any number, either positive or negative, to events) and because the participants uses a scale personal to them, it eliminates the problem of scale interpretation.

**Take Home Points: Subjective Happiness Scale and Modulus Based Measurement**

- **Need to recognise role of people's individual interpretation of events**
- **This may require a move away from fixed scales**

However in the quest for a scientific measure of happiness, Hsee & Tang's (2007) proposal is clearly a step in the opposite direction. Rather than creating a scale that identifies general indicators of happiness that allows comparison, this measures individual judgments of happiness that provides little scope for such comparison, a fact that Hsee and Tang readily admit to in their conclusion. It seems like one can either measure objective happiness poorly, or subjective happiness reasonably, neither of which are desirable. Alternatively, perhaps objective measures could be used to identify factors that are linked to happiness, and subjective measures could seek to provide further insight into these factors.

# History Of Happiness Measurements

### Sex and Marriage to Education and Personality - The Development of Subjective Measures

In all 3 of these cases, the use of happiness measurements appears to be in the domain of **social psychology** - studying social behaviours, interactions and predicting social relationships.

*Factors in the sex life of twenty-two hundred women* (Davis, 1929). This was one of the first studies to be conducted that used **subjective measures** of happiness. It was conducted by **Katherine Bernent Davis**, who was interested in finding correlations between **women's sex lives and general aspects of their lives**. One of the questions in her study was:

> "Do you consider your life on the whole (a) happy, satisfactory, successful; (b) unhappy, unsatisfactory, unsuccessful? In each case why?" (p. 89)

The use of this question by Davis was one of the first subjective measures used to define and measure happiness in psychology. It also **marked the importance of happiness in daily life.**

In the 1930s, Terman et al. conducted a study into **marital happiness** (1938). He used subjective measures, asking participants (792 married couples) to **rate how happy their marriage was** on a scale from 1 to 7. Burgess & Cottrell (1939) developed Terman's study, using a happiness score based on couples self-report questionnaire to **predict the success or failure of marriages**, and determine how long a marriage will last.

Another notable study was conducted by **Goodwin Watson (1930)** into the **happiness of students** at Columbia University where he was a professor:

*"By means of a self-rating form, 388 graduate students of education, who averaged 30 years of age, recorded their estimates of their own happiness."*
*(taken from the Abstract)*

Watson conducted his study by using subjective means of collecting data to measure student happiness, as well as to understand what made students happy and unhappy. Watson found that family sizes, age, IQ and school grades, among others, did not predict happiness in students. Factors that were related to happiness were, surprise surprise, **sex and marriage**. (Note the recurring theme here...). Two things that Watson believed predicted happiness (from a much longer list) was marriage and the ability to talk to high school students about sex. **Hartmann (1934)** used subjective measures to find correlations between **personality traits and happiness.** However, Hartmann found there to be **no link**, which was something that Watson (1930) also found.

*'Physics Envy' - The Push towards Objective Measures*

As the push for psychology to be accepted as a science grew, as did the push for studies in the area to **use more objective measures** such that were used in other disciplines such as physics and chemistry. A combination of researches from Duke University invented the **Euphorimeter**. The scale was intended to be an **objective and valid scale** which could be used by researchers and the general population. The units on the scale were **Euphor-Units** where, the higher above the mid point, zero, the scale went, the happier the individual was, and the lower down the scale below zero, the more unhappy the individual was.

In the 1960/70s there was a number of papers that wanted to find **social indicators** of quality of life. A review paper (Schneider, 1975) divided the objective social indicators into **6 categories**: 1) income, wealth and employment; 2) the environment (i.e. housing); 3) health (both physical and mental); 4) education; 5) social disorganization (crime, social pathologies such as alcoholism, drug addiction, etc.); and, 6) alienation and participation. Schneider (1975) decreed that any **research into the area must be in one of those 'key' areas**.

From this growth in social indicators research, the idea of the **economics of happiness** developed. This is the idea that happiness is correlated with income, wealth and profit, and therefore can be measured by recording these (Morawetz et al, 1977; Ng, 1978).

# Modern Happiness Theories and Empirical Evidence

**Happiness** is one of the key interests of positive psychology and since the conception of this school of thought in the twenty-first century there has been much debate and research carried out in order to understand happiness. However, theories of happiness have been around for much longer than positive psychology and scientists and philosophers have been analysing happiness since the third century B.C. Since **"happiness" is not a neutral term** at an individual or cultural level, several theories have been developed in an attempt to define and describe happiness in order for psychologists and other scientists to study it.
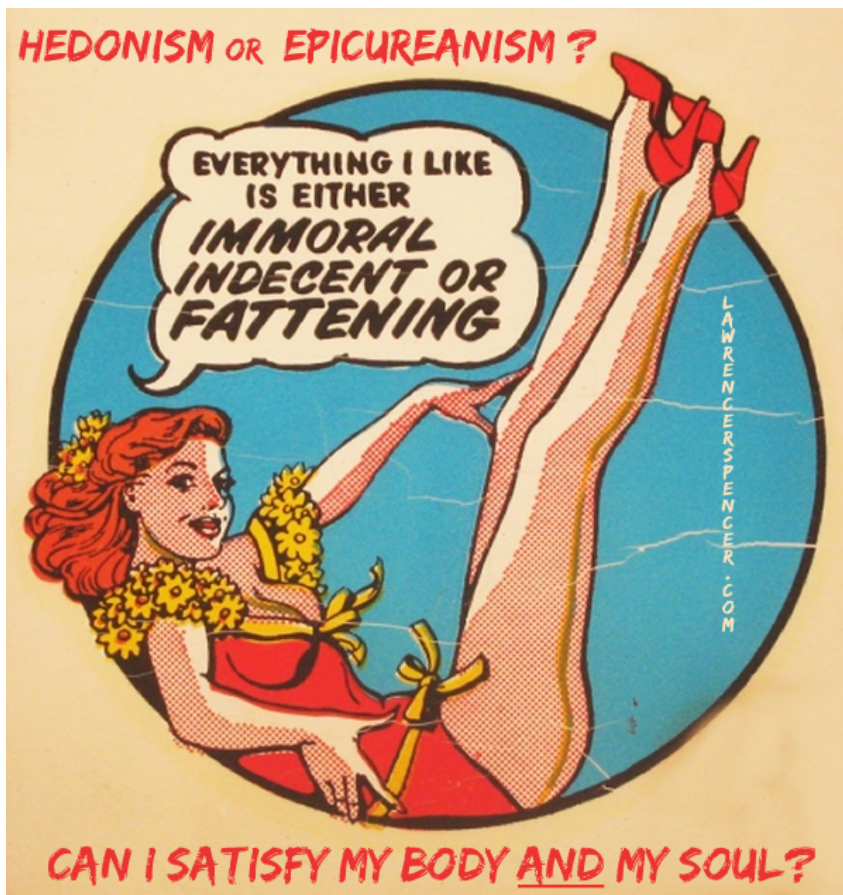
The two most dominant and prevalent of these theories are Hedonism and Eudaimonism: both are rooted in Greek philosophy and have been at odds with each other since their conception. The hedonic view of happiness is based on individual needs over needs of the community and is the pursuit of pleasure, comfort and enjoyment. It comes from a theory coined by Greek philosopher Epicurus who claimed that people desire pleasure and avoid pain and discomfort.

**Eudaimonism** on the other hand equates happiness to "**human flourishing**" through pursuing goals which are meaningful not only to the individual but to the society they live in through good functioning in terms of growth opportunities, effort, and commitment to achieving goals.
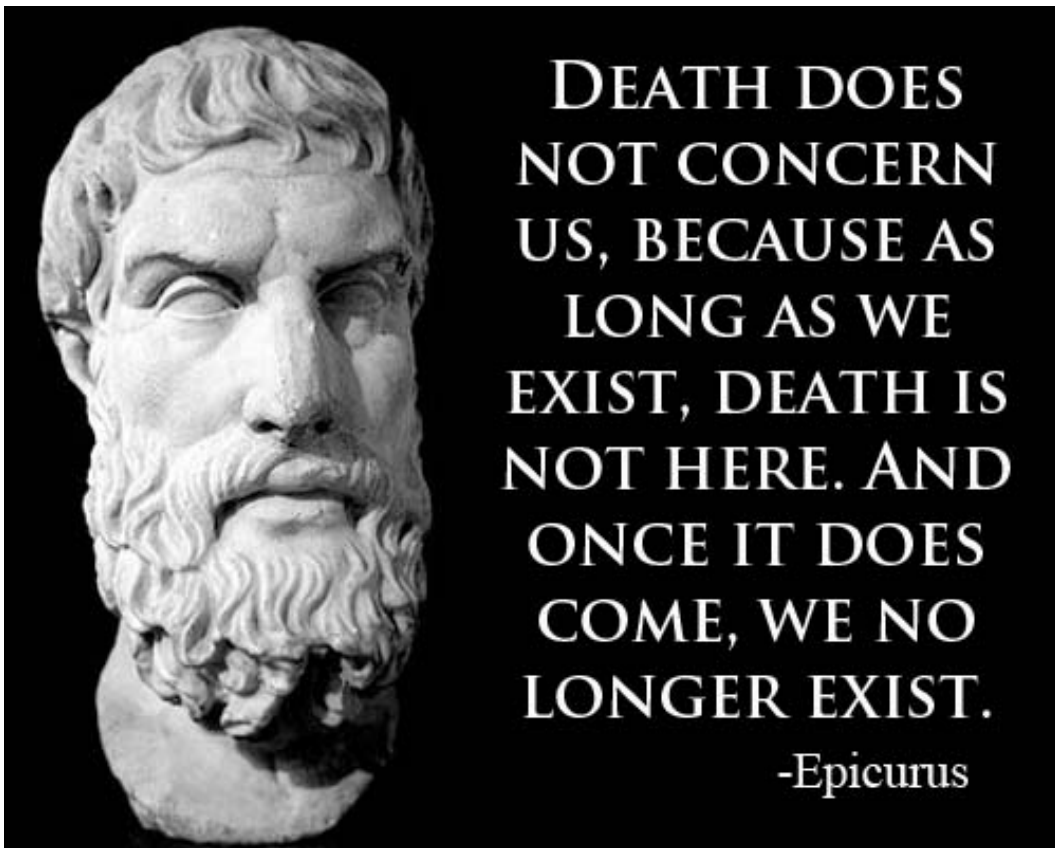
In 1989 psychologist C. D. Ryff highlighted the distinction between these two theories by suggesting that **Eudaimonic well-being** equated to psychological well being whilst **Hedonic well-being** equated to pleasure, and used eudaimonic theory to produce her well known six-factor model. This theory and Ryff's ideas about hedonism and eudaimonism are still widely debated, but they allow us to see a clear distinction in the fundamentals of the two theories. Further to this distinction, in 2008 Delle Fave & Bassi stated that hedonism and eudaimonism are **fundamentally different** in three major polarities:

- State vs process.
- Feeling vs Functioning.
- Personal fulfillment vs "Integrated fulfillment".

As such, these theories are different enough that they are considered **two distinct, sometimes opposing perspectives which share a common interest.**  Hedonism and eudaimonism will be explored further, in more depth and with a critical eye on actual empirical evidence for each theory in this article.

### _The Hedonic View of Happiness_

The modern hedonic view of happiness proposed by **Diener** in 2000 is the **Subjective Well-being theory (SWB)**.

DEATH DOES NOT CONCERN US, BECAUSE AS LONG AS WE EXIST, DEATH IS NOT HERE. AND ONCE IT DOES COME, WE NO LONGER EXIST.

-Epicurus

SWB consists of three components:

- · Life satisfaction
- ·The presence of positive mood
- ·The absence of negative mood

Together, these three components are often summarized as happiness. SWB is evaluated using self report measures such as the **Positive and Negative Affect Scale** and the **Satisfaction with Life Scale**. Research has shown that people view themselves as being generally happy and that their subjective well-being tends to be constant or at least fairly stable over time and as such happiness is considered a **stable individual trait**. This has been illustrated in several studies showing that although people tend to react to positive or very negative events at first, they will adapt and quickly return to their original happiness levels.

This notion has been challenged however, subsequent research has shown that some life events do in fact have a lasting effect on some individuals. For example:

- Mehnert et al in 1990 reported that some people do not habituate completely to some conditions even after several years, the example given in their paper was reports of lower levels of subjective happiness in individuals with congenital disabilities than in those without such disabilities.
- Another example reported by Bloom in 2007 stated that after cosmetic surgery patients

happiness increased and stayed higher even years after surgery.
- Schmidt, Shernoff and Csikszentmihalyi also in 2007 found that fluctuations in emotional state over the course of a day could be attributed to external context.

Another claim made by those in favour of subjective well-being theory was that an individual's health was **positively influenced** directly and indirectly by subjective well-being. However, empirical evidence suggests that this connection may be more **complex** than it claims to be. Individuals with poor health have reported high subjective well-being and individuals with low subjective well-being have reported good health. Deci et al in 2001 suggested that rather than the current claims, these findings can be interpreted better as results of individual interpretive styles and meaning-making processes.

### *The Eudaimonic View of Happiness*



*Happiness* does not consist in pastimes and amusements but in virtuous activities.
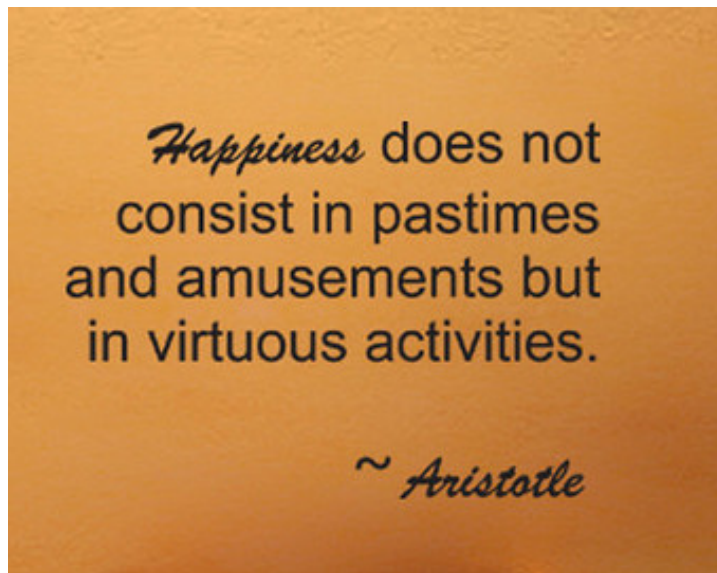
~ *Aristotle*

**Aristotle** considered hedonic happiness to be a vulgar ideal, making humans slaves to and followers of their desires. He suggested that instead, true happiness is found in the **expression of virtue**, that is doing what is worth doing. All eudaimonic theories emphasise the importance of the meaning of the "**journey**" in that happiness is a process, goals and the search for meaning are stressed in order to have a good life. The term "eudaimonia" itself is an important one as it means **well-being and happiness are actually separate things.** This is means that eudaimonic theories are different to hedonic theory in that they suggest that acting on all desires is not a requirement for happiness and in fact some outcomes of the pursuit of happiness would not be good or result in well-being. For this reason the eudaimonic theory is that a good life and therefore long term happiness and well-being is **objective as opposed to subjective.**

Unlike hedonism, **eudaimonism is much more complex**, rather than the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake, eudaimonistic theory involves:

- Personal growth
- Meaning finding
- Purpose
- Autonomy
- Competence
- Self-realization
- Mindfulness
- Self-acceptance
- Authenticity
- Values congruence
- Social connectedness

As such, it has been criticised as it is **difficult to translate to one single all encompassing theory**, this lack of clarity has impeded scientific research and prevented simple, valid comparisons between empirical results.

Further criticism comes from Kashan et al in 2008 who stated that eudaimonic theory was inappropriate for psychological science as it had inherent **moral judgements** which were not consistent with the beliefs and morals of diverse world populations.

With regards to long term **lifelong happiness**, Delle Fave and Bassi in 2009 called to attention their research in which it was stated that an individual could be healthy and functioning well within society but not feel good in their life, effectively **living the good life but not achieving happiness or well-being**. This goes against one of the fundamental claims of the eudaimonic theory of happiness.

### _Going forward..._

These seemingly large gaps between theory and empirical result have more recently been addressed in the conception of a few "**hybrid theories**" which suggest that hedonism and eudaimonism, although distinct in their claims, are actually **complementary theories** which work best when combined.

In recent research by Keyes and Annas in 2009 it was reported that individuals with high levels of both subjective well-being and eudaimonic well-being were said to be "**flourishing**" in comparison to those who were high in one or the other. This suggests that the **when working together**

**hedonism and eudaimonism produce the greatest long term and short term benefits.**
However, these hybrid theories are relatively new and as such much research is still underway.

*__Key Paper__*



"Dan Gilbert, author of Stumbling on Happiness, challenges the idea that we'll be miserable if we don't get what we want. Our "psychological immune system" lets us feel truly happy even when things don't go as planned." (ted.com, 2012)

# Cultural/National/Religious views of Happiness Measurements

Different cultures view happiness in widely different ways. **Ideas of what happiness is**, and thus measurements of this concept, **vary across religions, ethnicities and cultural types**. While modern, western, industrialised societies consistently rank personal value such as self-actualisation and autonomy as happiness priorities, other cultures such as Japan, place an emphasis on social

relationships and interpersonal connections (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014). Understanding the **cultural context of** what **happiness** means to people is the first step in creating a measurement that can be used to compare happiness across the globe.

## *Collectivist versus Individualistic cultures*

Psychologists have noted differences in many areas (including cognition, perception and social dynamics) between **individualistic** cultures (of the west) and **collectivist** societies (of the east) (Singelis, Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, McCrae, 2004). (Please note: "collectivist" is also referred to as "interdependent" in the literature.)

As happiness and well-being have different meanings across languages Veenhoven proposed sub-questions in order to assess whether happiness differs across cultures.

*"Do all humans appraise how much they like their lives?*
*Do they appraise life on the same grounds?*
*Are the conditions for happiness similar for all humans?*
*Are the consequences of happiness similar around the globe?*
*Do all humans seek happiness?*
*Do humans seek happiness in similar ways?*
*Are humans equally happy in all cultures?"* (Veenhoven, 2012)

Answering these questions for different cultures can serve as a starting point to measure happiness across the world. Studies investigating distinctions in happiness in these cultures have found that the idea of **social relationships** is seen as a minor point in individualistic cultures, while they are considered a **major source of happiness** for people residing in **collectivist** societies (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014).

The emphasis for context and relationships in collectivist nations has been shown in studies investigating visual biases and aesthetic preferences (Masuda et al, 2008). It is argued that this factor needs to be accounted for in happiness measurements utilised in the East, as **cultural comparisons are impossible without acknowledging cultural variation.**

The need for culturally sensitive happiness measurements becomes even more apparent when considering a study by Ogihara and Uchida (2014), in which the researchers show that a person's individualistic orientation is associated with lower well-being and fewer friends in a collectivist society. Their results show that the **misalignment of cultural values and personal disposition** can have **detrimental effects** on individuals.

The **bulk of happiness research** has been carried out in countries that are traditionally seen as **individualist.** The findings have revealed the importance of personality, self-efficacy and job satisfaction on measurements of happiness (Strobel, Tumasjan, Spörrle, 2011; Bowling, Eschleman, Wang, 2010; Lu et al, 2001). Since most measurements have been created by western researchers on individualistic samples, the findings are best extrapolated to other western countries.

*Collectivist values*

Research into happiness in collectivist societies is more scarce, yet has been steadily on the rise since the 1990s. Japanese researchers have investigated factors that contribute to subjective well-being in collectivist societies. Values that have been identified include: **harmony, sound social bonds and friendly feelings towards others** (Kitayama et al, 2006). Critics have claimed that traditional measures of happiness fail to assess these variables. In response to this lack of culturally sensitive measurement a new scale of happiness has been designed specifically for people in cultures that are considered "interdependent" (Hitokoto, Uchida, 2014).

*Key paper:*

Hitokoto, H., & Uchida, Y. (2014). Interdependent Happiness: Theoretical Importance and Measurement Validity. Journal of Happiness Studies, 1-29. doi:10.1007/s10902-014-9505-8

In this paper the authors eloquently outline the difficulty with testing "happiness" across cultures. They point out that definitions of happiness may be different for people in collectivist and interdependent cultures. They propose a new way of measuring happiness in eastern countries: **The Interdependent Happiness Scale (IHS).** Their scale includes multiple items, such as: "I make significant others happy" and "I can do what I want without causing problems for other people." (p.11). In multiple studies the researchers use this new method to assess subjective well-being in a variety of contexts. They find that **social harmony is important not only to people from collectivist cultures, but also to individualists** (though to a smaller extent). This paper is recommended for a critique of uni-cultural measurements of happiness.

## National Happiness Measurements

Some have put forth the idea that the **well-being of citizens should be the ultimate goal of governments** (Duncan, 2013). Both Bhutan and Britain have begun to take serious steps in measuring their national happiness levels. Through the use of surveys the nations are attempting to **quantify and track well-being.** On a global level the "World Database of Happiness" continuously concerns itself with happiness of many nations and regions.

<u>*World Database of Happiness*</u>

The University of Rotterdam has been tracking multiple nations on a number of variables that relate to happiness. These variables are**: average happiness, inequality of happiness, happy life years, and life expectancy.** The database states that they define happiness as being "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of her/his life as-a-whole favorably". In their concept of happiness the database also draws a distinction between "**hedonic level of affect**" and "**contentment**", which they judge to be the key components of happiness. The measures the group use to determine happiness are self-reports of levels of happiness on multiple items. The group prides themselves in their **numerical response system** (0-10, rather than verbal responses) and **longitudinal data collection** (Veenhoven, 2013).

The World Database of Happiness collects research on happiness conducted across the globe and currently "involves some 18,000 findings" (Veenhoven, 2012). The database also keeps track of correlational factors of happiness, enabling precise research.

The collective findings have yielded results about the global spread of happiness and some of the findings are illustrated in the map below.Their most recent findings reveal that **Costa Rica ranks as the "happiest**" country in the world, with **Denmark and Iceland in second and third** place respectively. **Togo, Tanzania and Burundi** have the **lowest** levels of **mean happiness**.

Average Happiness in 149 Nations, 2000-2009: "How much people enjoy their life-as-a-whole on a scale 0-10" (Source: World Database of Happiness)



Average happiness
2.61999988555908   8.5
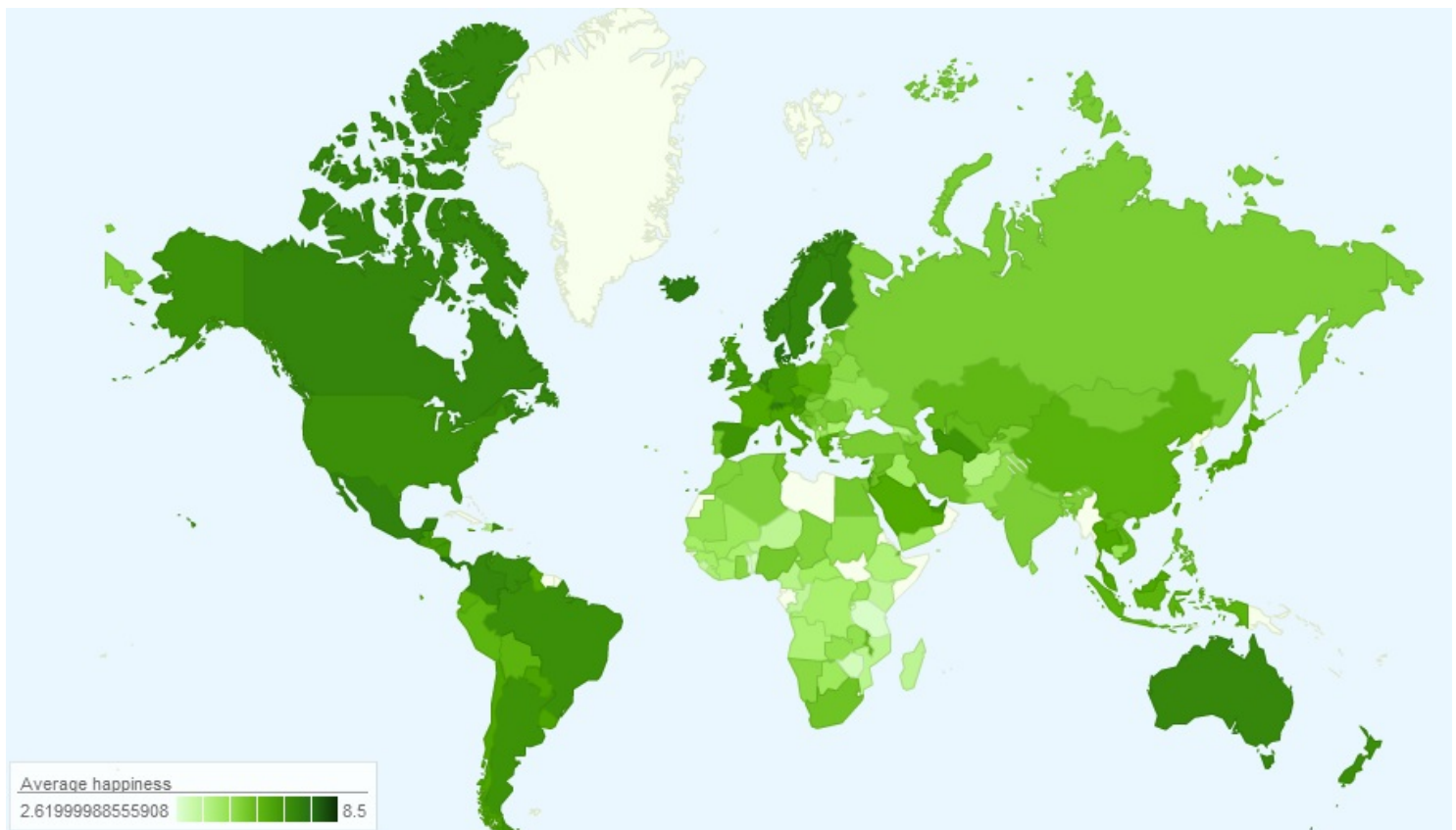
The Kingdom of Bhutan has a measurement of Gross National Happiness, which began in 1972. However, the concept of the government becoming involved with its citizens' well-being has a long history. In **1729 the legal code of Bhutan** decreed that "if t**he Government cannot create happiness** (dekid) for its people, there is **no purpose** for the Government to exist."

Bhutan has **distanced itself from** traditional, **western measurements** of subjective well-being, stating that this concept is too narrow. Instead, the governmental survey focuses on more **collectivist values** and the multidimensionality of happiness using items to measure "harmony with nature" and "concern for others" (among others) (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, Wangdi, 2012). The government solidifies this concept by stating:

*"Ultimately, **a happy society is a caring society,** caring for the past and future, caring for the environment, and caring for those who need protection." (Bhutan National Human Development Report 2000)*

The surveys carried out in Bhutan assess topics such as **psychological well-being, health, education, cultural diversity and community vitality**. Respondents are recruited from urban and rural areas and are encouraged to share their insights. It is the government's aim that this type of information will help **guide development**, provide insight into factors in need of **resources** and **compare progress across the nation** (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, Wangdi, 2012).

Although Bhutan has received praise for its approach to citizens' well-being, some **critics** have pointed out that **larger societal issues in Bhutan persist.** Ethnic struggles and social hierarchies are part of both Bhutan's history and current political landscape (Hutt, 2003). Some claim that failing to acknowledge these realities would **undermine the gravity of Bhutan's issues** as well as **oversimplifying** the concept of **national happiness** (Zurick, 2006).

The United Kingdom is attempting to quantify well-being in order to increase public happiness and productivity. The decision to monitor national well-being was made in 2010, with Prime Minister Cameron stating:

*"We'll start **measuring our progress** as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving; not just by our standard of living, but by our **quality of life**." (Cameron, 2010)*

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has declared that factors of interest in the national measure are: "**economic performance, the state of the environment, sustainability, equality, quality of life**, as well as **individual well-being**" (ONS, 2011). The organisation encouraged people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and location to submit opinions about factors related to well-being. Using this information, the government devised surveys that measured national happiness. The findings reveal that **over 70% of people** over 16 were **largely satisfied with their lives**, a number which is slightly higher than a European comparison (Randall & Corp, 2014).

Governmental measurements of happiness typically serve as identifying factors that are causing problems in public well-being and health. By isolating factors that improve well being the government can **increase economic output and decrease spending** (in areas like mental health).

The Department for Culture, Media & Sport is conducting research into the areas of sport and culture and estimating their **"monetary values" on subjective well-being**. The report published in 2014, finds that art, library and sports involvement are associated with higher levels of well-being. The report also includes information about the monetary value of these past-time activities as indicated by participants in the study (Fujiwara, Kudrna, Dolan, 2014). The inclusion of this information shows that governments have a vested interest in the subjective well-being of their citizens.

## _Religion and happiness_

The following religions share the importance of **spirituality, thankfulness, relationship with a supreme being** and rejection of earthly sin. Most religions **don't have formal ways of measuring happiness.** Religious texts share some insight into where followers of the religion should seek happiness, however, **no attempts to quantify happiness** are made. The Qu'ran for example makes it clear that happiness comes from embracing religion stating: "the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allah. [71, 72 Al-Tawbah]". It is also stated that "whoever turns away from the Quran, [...] will have a hard life" (20:124), meaning that religion is necessary for a happy life. In this religion, happiness would be synonymous with an embrace of Islam.

Happiness is also an essential facet of the practice of judaism. Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov has claimed that "joy is considered a mitzvah", meaning a commandment of God. Celebrating jewish holidays with glee is actually considered to be part of Jewish tradition according to the Talmud. Prayers also need to be carried out joyfully in order to be impactful and serve God.

Perhaps the clearest connection between happiness and spirituality is made by Buddhism and Hinduism. The concept of Nirvana, which is the achievement of escaping the circle of birth and death, is described in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. It is possible to reach Nirvana through

great discipline and by ridding oneself of desire and selfishness.

# Clinical Applications

Harris (2013) has noted that whilst many therapists are skilled at decreasing a client's depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders, few have the skills, training or clinical prowess to increase a client's happiness. Accurate measurement tools for happiness could therefore provide a useful tool to inform and guide psychologists, therapists and other mental health professionals' attempts to increase client's happiness.

Service users have reported that the subjective wellbeing of people with psychosis can make a huge difference to tackling the exclusion, stigma and discrimination associated with the disorder (Campbell, 2007). Chadwick (1997), has argued that people diagnosed with schizophrenia have virtues as well as deficits, and that psychology has to focus on these strengths to increase dignity and SWB of those with psychosis.

The Department of Health (2007) recommended that assessments of people with mental health should be more holistic and recognise their strengths and skills as well as their problems and deficits. This need had already been recognised in positive psychology , with Carr (2005) arguing that clinicians should help clients identify their talents and strengths and use this knowledge to facilitate positive experience and social inclusion.

Happiness measurements could therefore first aid clinical treatment by identifying a client's current happiness/well-being. As noted earlier, some people can have positive outlooks despite being in a negative condition or having negative experiences. A more positive demeanour increases the likelihood that a clinical intervention will be successful (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). To help clients not experiencing such positivity, happiness measurements could be altered. Instead of just measuring happiness in a non-specific manner, questionnaires could be tailored to identify particular hobbies or activities that make a particular client happy.

Harris (2013) has suggested that Behavioural Activation is an intervention that could be easily modified and transformed into an intervention to increase happiness. One of the primary focuses of Behavioural Activation is to assist clients in exploring and pursuing educational and vocational goals (Jakupcak, Wagner, Paulson, Varra & McFall, 2010), as well as identifying enjoyable activities to engage and participate in (Jakupcak Roberts, Martell et al., 2006). Ben-Shahar (2007) has also suggested that clients make a list of activities that make them happy, record the amount of time they spend doing those activities and seek to cut out anything that interferes with spending time on those activities. Happiness measurements could thus be altered to help people identify what these activities might be.

**\*Why don't you try this right now?\*** Get a piece of paper and write down the five activities that give you the most joy in life. Then record how often, on average, you spend doing these activities each week. Is it as much as it could/should be? What holds you back from doing these activities? Is it genuine commitments elsewhere, or is it wasting time on things that aren't important?

Finally, whilst happiness measurement was so far been described with a view that happiness is desirable, a small number of scholars have highlighted that happiness may in fact be detrimental to health. (For further information you may wish to read the wiki on the 'Dark Side' of Happiness). Bentall (1992) argued that extreme happiness should be classified as a psychiatric disorder as extreme sadness is similarly classified as depression. Bentall notes that happiness can be induced by stimulating subcortical areas of the brain just as it is possible to produce schizophrenic symptoms by stimulating the parietal lobes (Rolls, 1979). Bentall uses further cognitive evidence to suggest that happiness is a detrimental disorder by highlighting that happy people, compared to miserable or depressed people struggle to retrieve negative events from long-term memory (Williams, Watts, Macleod, & Matthews, 1989). Happy people have also been shown to exhibit various biases of judgement that prevent them from acquiring a realistic understanding of their physical and social environment. For example there is evidence that happy people overestimate their control over environmental events (believing random events were influenced by them); give unrealistically positive evaluations of their own achievements, believe that others share their elated opinions about themselves, and show a general lack of evenhandedness when comparing themselves to others (Alloy  & Abramson, 1979).

Bentall also points out the behavioural implications of happiness, specifically impulsivity, which can lead to excessive eating and drinking and result in obesity and/or alcoholism. He also presents the argument that happiness is statistically abnormal in the same way that a psychiatric diagnosis is, and therefore excessive happiness should be viewed with suspicion.

Well what do you think of that? Is Happiness not just an unachievable but also dangerous goal? Is a pessimistic outlook both more practical and more advantageous? It's certainly food for thought. Perhaps there is no need for happiness measurements, and we should all just embrace our miserableness because it allows us to get more things done.
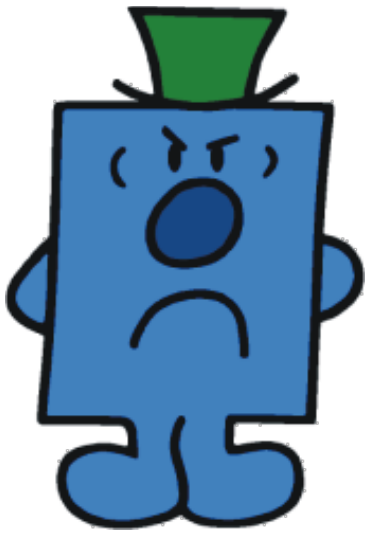
# Practical Exercises

Fancy having a go at measuring your own happiness? Just click on one of the links below:

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: http://www.meaningandhappiness.com/oxford-happiness-questionnaire/214/

Subjective Happiness Scale: http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/subjectivehappinessscale.pdf

Pursuit of happiness - happiness quiz: http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/happiness-quiz/

Happy Habits - this link also gives you ways to help you increase your happiness: http://dsd.me/happy-habits-quiz/

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