

WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

Continuous register of research on subjective appreciation of life

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ABSTRACT

The World Database of Happiness is an ongoing register of scientific research on subjective appreciation of life. It brings together findings that are scattered throughout many studies and prepares for research synthesis. The database stores research findings and presents these in standardized abstracts. This system differs from bibliographies that store publications and data-archives that store investigations. The system prepares for synthetic analysis by capitalizing on conceptual selectiveness, comparability and completeness. As the method is new, there is no common word for it. It is called a finding-browser.

The data system consists of five related inventories: 1) a focused bibliography, 2) a catalog of valid indicators, 3) two catalogs of distributional findings, 4) a catalog of correlational findings and 5) a directory of investigators in this field.

Selection of the data involves two steps: first selection of research reports on the basis of fit with a definition of the subject matter and second by restricting to findings yielded with indicators that pass a validity selection. The thus selected findings are described in standard abstracts that use a common terminology and statistics.

The database allows selection of findings by a) indicator used, b) public, time and place, c) methodology of the investigation. The correlational findings can also be found on subject.

The system prepares for synthetic studies, in particular for reviews and meta-analyses. The system facilitates comparison across time and nation. When applied on a well-defined field, it allows a better accumulation of available knowledge and a better focusing of new research.

The data-system serves to cope with the following problems of research integration, a) chronic confusion of tongues, b) growing mass of research findings; c) scattered publication of findings, and d) selective reviewing and retrieval of findings.

The database is freely available on the Web. The Internet address is:

<http://www2.eur.nl/jsw.eur.nl/research/happiness>

1 INTRODUCTION

Happiness is defined as the subjective 'enjoyment of one's life as-a-whole'. In other words: how much one likes the life one leads. Current synonyms are 'life-satisfaction' and 'subjective well-being'. This concept is delineated in more detail in the basic work 'Conditions of happiness' (Veenhoven 1984) and more recently in a paper entitled 'The four qualities of life' (Veenhoven 2002).

1.1 Interest in happiness

Happiness as defined here is a highly valued matter. In utilitarian moral philosophy it ranks as the highest good, and recent survey studies also show high rankings in the value hierarchy of the general public. Consequently there is broad support for public policies that aim at greater happiness for a greater number.

The relevance of happiness as a goal of social policy is growing. The better we succeed in eliminating pressing problems such as hunger and plagues, the more we move to abstract goals such as happiness. Individualization and post-modern relativism also press for higher ranking of happiness. One of the manifestations of this development in health care is the growing emphasis on 'quality-of-life', rather than mere quantity of life years.

The higher happiness ranks on the public agenda, the greater the demand for scientific information on the matter. To promote happiness we must know its main determinants. We must also have a view on consequences of happiness to detect possible self-destructive effects and to appraise synergy with other values.

There is also a rising interest among individual citizens. Because happiness is becoming ever more prominent in the personal life of many people, there is a great demand for explanation and advice. The number of 'how to be happy' books increases and the contents have shifted gradually from matters of morals and mental hygiene to the 'art of living'. The greater the choice of life-styles in modern society creates greater demand for solid information about the consequences for health and happiness.

1.2 Rise of empirical research on happiness

Over the ages the subject has absorbed a lot of thought. Happiness was a major theme in early Greek philosophy and gained renewed interest in the later West-European Enlightenment. The philosophic tradition has produced a lot of ideas, but little operational knowledge. In fact, philosophers have raised more questions than they have answered. Most of the controversies they have raised could not be solved by the logic of reasoning. Settlement on the basis of reality checks has long been encumbered by lack of adequate research techniques.

The advent of the social sciences promised a breakthrough. New methods for empirical research opened the possibility to identify conditions for happiness inductively and even to test theories. This instigated a lot of research, most of which has been embedded in the newly established specializations of 'social indicators research' and 'health related quality of life research'.

In the 20th century more than 3000 empirical studies have dealt with the matter; in the beginning mainly as a side issue in studies about health and aging, but currently also as a main subject. This stream of research is growing. Reviews can be found with Diener (1999) and Veenhoven (1996, 1997).

1.2.1 *Intriguing findings*

This new line of research has produced several unexpected results, such as:

- Happiness is not relative. Enjoyment of life appears not to depend on comparison, in particular not on social comparison. This finding contradicts cognitive theories of happiness and supports affective explanations (Veenhoven 1991, 1996).
- Happiness is not very trait like; over a lifetime it appears to be quite variable. This finding does not fit notions of stable personality in psychology (Veenhoven 1994b, Ehrhardt et al 2000).
- The majority of mankind appears to enjoy life. Unhappiness is the exception rather than the rule. This is at odds with the results of misery counting in sociology (Veenhoven 1993).
- Happiness tends to rise in modern societies. This contradicts longstanding pessimism about modernization (Cummins 2000).
- In modern western nations happiness differs little across social categories such as rich and poor or males and females. The difference is rather in psychological competence (Headey and Wearing 1992). This result is at odds with current sociology of deprivation.
- Differences in happiness within nations (as measured by standard deviations) tend to get smaller. This contradicts notions about growing inequality in sociology. (Veenhoven 2000c.)
- Liberalist intuition is confirmed in the finding that people tend to be happiest in individualistic society, but the socialist expectation that people will be happier in a welfare state is not corroborated. (Veenhoven 1999, 2000b)

1.2.2 *Stagnating progress*

Still, all this empirical research on happiness has not yet crystallized into a sound body of knowledge. Preliminary questions about conceptualization and measurement are now fairly well solved, but the understanding of determinants and consequences of happiness is still very incomplete and tentative. There are several reasons why the growing stream of empirical research has not yet brought greater understanding. In addition to complexities in the subject matter, there are several practical problems.

Lack of overview

The first and most simple reason for the stagnation is lack of coordination. There is high redundancy in the research effort; the same issues are investigated over and over again, in the same way. As a result, the range of variables considered is still rather small and methodological progress slow. A related problem is that research findings are very scattered. Most observations are in fact bibliographically irretrievable. Consequently, many of the findings get lost.

Conceptual confusion

The second reason is the confusion of tongues. As there is no consensus on use of words, it is quite difficult to select the data that pertain to happiness as defined here. Moreover the matter is measured in different ways. Getting an overview of the research findings requires first of all selecting studies that measured happiness as defined here, and next a grouping by comparable indicators.

Little view on contingencies

A more basic reason for the stagnation lies in the dominant research approach. The bulk of empirical happiness studies consist of cross-sections in particular countries. Typically investigators try to identify universal conditions for happiness using their local correlates. For instance, the observation in American studies that the happy tend to have high incomes is seen to mean that money buys happiness everywhere and that the basic underlying mental process is social comparison.

Yet, conditions for happiness are probably not the same at all times and at all places. Neither are its consequences. Though there are obviously universal requirements for a happy life (such as food and possibly meaning), some seem to be contingent on characteristics of the person and situation. For instance, happiness correlates strongest to income in poor and socially unequal countries, and most so among materialistic persons. Usually, such contingencies cannot be detected in single studies in one country. They can be identified only if many studies are compared in a systematic meta-analysis. This requires first of all that the available findings be compiled.

No view on macro level

Further, correlational studies within nations cannot grasp macro-social conditions for happiness. As their focus is on differences in happiness within nations, they are blind to variation in happiness across nations. Therefore, current research has as yet little relevance for major political discussions such as the priority of continuous economic growth, preserving the welfare state or promoting social coherence. Investigation of such matters requires cross-national studies, preferably in a semi-longitudinal design. Such studies are scarce as yet, but we can do a lot by comparing the available one-nation studies. Again this requires compilation of the available findings.

Little view on causality

Lastly, correlations say little about cause and effect. If rich Americans tend to more happy, this does not prove that money buys happiness, because happiness can also boost earning chances. Separation of cause and effect requires panel studies and experiments. Such studies are scarce as yet, and the results difficult to retrieve. Progress requires at least that these scattered findings be brought together.

1.2.3 Growing need for research compilation

A main priority is therefore to gather the available research findings on happiness and to present these in a comparable format. Without a complete and detailed view on the available data, there will be little cumulation of knowledge. This need for a focused catalog of research-findings becomes ever more pressing. The higher the pile of research reports, the greater the need for a good overview of findings.

Now more than 3000 studies have been published on happiness, the heap of findings has grown too big to be handled by narrative research reviews. At the same time the stockpile becomes ever more suitable for quantitative meta-analysis. Yet meta-analysis requires much investment in gathering of relevant research and in homogenizing the findings. Investment is particularly high if one wants to cover all the world's research. Such investments are made in capital-intensive fields such as pharmacological research, but uncommonly in this field. The few meta-analyses of empirical happiness research are based on small collections, e.g. Stock et. al. (1983). As yet, all have been one-time shots, leaving no common database to build on. Hence each new investigator has to make a new start. Not surprisingly few do so.

1.3 Aims of the database

The World Database of Happiness is meant to overcome these problems.

First of all its Bibliography of Happiness provides a fairly complete inventory of contemporary publications. This may help to get an overview of the field and to trace literature on specific issues. I hope this will reduce redundancy somewhat.

Secondly, the database provides two homogenous selections of research findings; a selection of correlational finding in the Catalogue of Happiness Correlates, and a selection of distributional findings in the Catalogue of Happiness in Nations. Both selections are based on the same concept of happiness and consequently on the same array of happiness indicators.

The Catalogue of Happiness Correlates provides an assortment of comparable correlational findings that is ordered by subject matter. The collection provides a convenient overview of the available research and can serve as a basis for meta-analysis. Because the collection covers data from different nations and social categories, meta-analysis can reveal universal patterns as well as contingencies.

The Catalogue of Happiness in Nations provides a collection of comparable observations about level and dispersion of happiness in nations. First of all, the data on the average level of happiness serves to identify the macro-social factors that mark off more and less livable societies. The data is also of use for monitoring progress and decline. The data on dispersion of happiness in nations can be used in comparative studies of inequality in life chances.

Thirdly, the cross-national analysis of these findings is facilitated by a database of societal characteristics of nations and change in these characteristics over time. Part of the findings on happiness in nations is already entered in that database called 'States of nations'

Lastly, the Directory of Investigators lists addresses of scientists who have published on happiness. It is meant to facilitate communication in the field.

2 STRUCTURE OF THE DATABASE

2.1 Type of source

This database differs from common bibliographies, abstract systems and data banks in that it provides direct access to the outcomes of empirical investigations. The core of this source is a collection of standardized descriptions of research findings. It is therefore called a 'finding browser'.

2.2 Inventories

The Database consists of five inventories, which are mutually linked: 1) a bibliography of scientific publications on happiness, 2) a directory of investigators in this field, 3) an inventory of acceptable measures of happiness (test bank), 4) an inventory of distributional findings yielded with these indicators (in general population samples in nations and among special publics) and 5) an inventory of

correlational findings. The cross-national analysis of these findings on happiness is facilitated by an additional database of nation characteristics.

Scheme 1 depicts the way in which these inventories are linked

2.3 Data gathering

The data for these collections are largely drawn from publications on happiness in books and journal articles. However, this database is not limited to findings that reached 'authorized' publications. Grey reports and mere data-files are included as well.

One reason for this strategy is that the original investigator does not publish many findings that may be relevant in a meta-analysis because they appeared not to be relevant in the context of his report. Another reason is that the publication process involves some systematic biases, one of which is under-report of non-correlations.

By deliberately including 'unpublished' data this database allows a more realistic view of conditions for happiness. Therefore, meta-analyses based on this database can yield conclusions that differ from impressions based on narrative literature surveys.

2.4 Funding

This system was developed at Erasmus University of Rotterdam since 1984 and is also funded by the Dutch science foundation NWO.

3 COMPONENTS OF THE DATABASE

3.1 Bibliography of Happiness

All publications on happiness are entered in the 'Bibliography of Happiness', which involves a detailed subject index. This listing allows an overview of the field and helps to trace literature on specific issues.

Most publications in the bibliography are books and journal articles; however, the collection is not limited to 'authorized' publications. Grey reports are also included. The main reason is that the publication process involves some systematic biases, one of which is under-reporting of non-correlations. By deliberately including 'unpublished' findings, this database allows a more realistic view of conditions for happiness. Therefore, meta-analyses based on this database can yield conclusions that differ from impressions based on narrative literature reviews.

Reports of empirical investigations are selected from this collection. Research reports are indexed by their methodological characteristics. This helps to single out suitable studies, for instance, to trace the scarce panel studies and experiments that bear information about causality. The next step is selection of investigations that used acceptable indicators of happiness. This selection is based on the above concept of happiness and consequently on an assortment of indicators that fit this concept. Results of the selected studies are entered in the research inventories.

Scope

Any research report that refers to the subjective appreciation of life-as-a-whole, even if this subject is only a side issue. Not included are related fields like 'mental health', 'social adjustment' 'alienation' and satisfaction with 'domains of life'.

Coverage 1-9-2003:

- 3874 titles.
- Almost complete coverage of the social-science literature up to 2000 in English, German, and Dutch.
- Includes not only journal articles, but also books, dissertations, conference papers and unpublished research reports.

Contents:

- Title descriptions involving:
 - Author, title, publisher or journal, year of publication
 - Language of the report
 - Type of study
- Subject classification (388 subject categories)
- Data classification (empirical studies only)
 - Time frame: past / present / future / perceived change
 - Variant measured: overall happiness / hedonic level / contentment
 - Included or not in the finding catalogs ('Distributional Finding' or 'Correlational Findings'), depending on whether the happiness measure fits our conceptualization.

Search facilities

- Search: on co-author, on words in title
- Select: on year of publication, on type of study, on data-type (time-frame, variant of happiness)

3.2 Directory of Happiness Investigators

Names of interested scholars are stored in the 'Directory of Happiness Investigators', which now contains 5818 names, and some 3000 recent addresses. The directory is linked to the bibliography, which is indexed by subject. Therefore one can easily select specialists. Because the bibliography is also indexed by year of publication, one can also identify the currently most active researchers.

The directory is available on request to peer researchers. In the last few years it has been of great help in creating research networks around this theme. Obviously it is also a good help for bringing this database to the attention of the field.

Scope:

- Address data of scientists who have published on the subject of subjective appreciation of life. Includes most authors of works in the 'Bibliography of Happiness'.
- Research groups that focus on the quality-of-life.

Coverage at 1-9-2003:

- 6938 names
- About 2500 recent addresses, of which some 1100 with e-mail.
- Mainly investigators who published after 1975.
- Fairly complete up to 2003.

Contents:

- Name
- Institution
- Address
- Year of publications on happiness
- Link to publications

Availability:

- The addresses are available to peer-researchers for scientific purposes only.
- The list (or selection on subject, countries) is send on request as an E-mail attachment or paper print (labels). Investigators can be selected by subject or by nation.

Search facilities

- Search on, name, years, institution
- Select on subject matter

3.3 Happiness Queries (test bank)

All the acceptable indicators are listed in the 'Catalog of Happiness Queries'. This catalog orders the indicators by happiness-variant, time reference and method of assessment. It provides full text of questions and observation schedules, and summarizes the available psychometric data. The catalog links to the studies that used these measures, and thereby provides an easy overview of the scores yielded by the same indicators in different populations. The catalog is quite useful for selecting indicators and for comparison results afterwards. It is also a valuable tool for identifying instrument effects.

Scope:

Valid measures of happiness:

Coverage at 1-9-2003

689 measures, mainly single questions

Contents:

- Full description classified by:
 - Happiness variant
 - Time reference
 - Method of observation
 - Rating of responses
- Full text in English, occasionally in other languages
- Reference to
 - Observed distribution of responses
 - Observed reliabilities

Search facilities

- Search on word
- Select on variant, time reference, method of observation, and rating scale used

3.4 **Distributional Findings**

Findings about the distribution of happiness are recorded in an inventory that summarizes population and sampling and provides the full frequency distribution of responses, as well as means and standard deviations. Comparison is facilitated by additional transformation of means and standard deviations to a common 0-10 scale and by presenting the 95% confidence interval around the central tendency statistics. The inventory can be searched on methodology of the investigation, for example one can easily get to the distributions observed with a particular indicator of happiness, or compare findings yielded with face-to-face interviews to self-administered reports.

3.4.1 ***Distribution of happiness in nations***

This inventory has a special section for results of studies in representative nation samples. This 'Catalog of Happiness in Nations' lists the distribution of responses to acceptable questions on happiness in nationwide samples. As such it provides a basis for an international statistics of happiness. The data are ordered by question type and by year and nation. Thus the catalog allows comparison across nations and through time.

The data on *average happiness* serve to identify the macro-social factors that mark off more and less livable societies. These data are also of use for monitoring social progress and decline. The data on *dispersion of happiness* in nations can be used in comparative studies of inequality in life chances. The uses of these data are spelt out in more detail elsewhere (Veenhoven 1993 chapter 8, Veenhoven 2002).

Scope:

- Distributions of happiness in nations, as observed in representative samples of the adult population.
- Only findings based on survey questions that validly tap an individual's 'overall appreciation of his own life-as-a-whole'.

Coverage at 1-9-2003

- 2165 distributions in 112 countries between 1945-2002.
- Time series for 15 countries of twenty years and more.
- Mainly first world countries, but also data from some third and second world nations.
- Fairly complete up to 2002.

Contents:

- Standard abstracts of findings involving:
 - Happiness indicator: full description.
 - Statistics: frequency distribution in %, mean and standard deviation. Comparison is facilitated by transformation of all scores to range 0-10.
 - Number of respondents, non-response.
 - Bibliographics: author, title, year of publication, page reference.
 - Survey name: name of survey program or institute, location of data file.
- Summary reports of nation rankings and trends over time.

Search facilities

- On nation and year
- On happiness measure

3.4.2 *Distributional of happiness in Special Publics*

This inventory can be searched on characteristics of the population; for instance, one can easily select all the findings on happiness among handicapped people.

Scope:

- Distributions of happiness in special publics, such as aged or handicapped people.
- Only findings based on survey questions that validly tap an individual's 'overall appreciation of his own life-as-a-whole'.

Coverage at 1-9-2003

- 772 studies in 97 nations between 1911 and 2000.
- 1133 distributional findings in 149 different publics.
- Mainly first world countries, but also data from some third and second world nations.
- Fairly complete up to 2000.

Contents:

- Happiness indicator: full description.
- Statistics: frequency distribution in %, mean and standard deviation. Comparison is facilitated by transformation of all scores to range 0-10.
- Number of respondents, non-response.
- Bibliographics: author, title, year of publication, page reference.
- Survey name: name of survey program or institute, location of data file.

Search facilities

Select on public type, country, time and happiness query

3.5 *Correlational Findings*

Next to these distributional findings, the database provides an inventory of correlational data. The research findings are condensed in standard abstracts, which provide detail about measurement, population and time. These abstracts are ordered by subject matter. For instance, there are 204 abstracts of research findings on the relation between happiness and 'age'. These abstracts are easily retrieved.

This collection of well comparable research findings provides a basis for synthetic analysis of past research. It facilitates both narrative reviews and quantitative meta-analysis. The collection also helps to guide future research, by marking white spots. As the collection covers data from different nations and social categories, it can reveal universal patterns as well as contingencies.

Scope:

- Empirical research findings on co-variants of happiness. Not only factors found to be statistically associated to happiness, but also non-correlates.

- Only findings yielded by indicators that validly tap happiness as the 'overall appreciation of one's life-as-a-whole'.
- All findings that could be traced. Not only the ones that reached scientific journals.

Coverage at 1-9-2003:

- 772 Studies in 97 nations between 1911 and 2000.
- 8132 correlational findings.

Contents:

- Standard abstracts of correlational research findings ordered by subject, country and time. The abstracts include detail about:
 - Bibliographic source: author, year, page reference
 - Study design: population, sample, number of subjects, year
 - Co-variate: label, measurement, subject-category.
 - Happiness-measure: type
 - Statistics: association, significance
 - Elaborations of the statistical relationship
- Text reports of findings by subject category, such as 'age' or 'income'. These reports are in pdf and can be downloaded.

Search facilities

- Search on keyword
- Select on subject class, happiness query, public nation and time

3.6 States of nations

Comparative analysis of the above findings is facilitated by a data file that involves both findings on happiness and characteristics of the nations in which these results were found.

Scope

Characteristics of nations that are relevant for the cross-national analysis of findings on happiness

Coverage at 1-9-2003

- 78 nations, among which all Western nations and Latin American nations
- Time series from the 1960s on

Contents

- Societal characteristics such as wealth, individualism and religiousness
- Findings on happiness in these nations, both distributional and correlational

Availability

- The codebook is available on the web and can be browsed with keywords.
- The SPSS data file is available on request

website

The database is free available on Internet. The address is: www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness. The start page is depicted on [scheme 2](#).

On this site you can browse the various inventories. You can also download text reports of findings. These are reports on distributional findings in nations and reports of correlational findings by category. These reports are refreshed periodically.

4 USES OF THE DATA-COLLECTION

The data-collection on happiness will first of all be used for scientific purposes, for a better understanding of happiness and related matters. The collection will also facilitate policy orientation and public enlightenment.

4.1 Scientific understanding of happiness

When all the results of the 20th century's research are entered, this database will be a true treasure trove. The collection provides opportunities that exceed the separate data. This collection of research findings can improve our understanding in the following ways.

Inductive illumination

One way to understanding is to go through the facts and consider their theoretical relevance. This can be called a 'drag-net method'. In that metaphor the facts stand for fish and is the net the whole of explanatory notions. This method does not only detect the findings that fit preexisting theories; it also makes us aware of phenomena we cannot easily explain. A systematic application of this approach can be found in Veenhoven 1984.

This collection of findings is quite suited to this method. Firstly it provides a broader scope than separate primary studies can offer. Secondly, the abstracts of research findings provide more condensed information than most reports of primary studies do. Thirdly, the collection brings unexpected findings to light, often findings that were marginal in the original investigation and hence not saliently reported.

For example, if we go through the rich data on the relationship between happiness and age, we see easily that there is a universal pattern of non-difference in overall life-satisfaction. This is at odds with current theorizing about both age-deprivation and cultural specificity. At a closer look we can also see that contentment rises with age, while mood tends to decline. This bears an important suggestion about variability in the way we strike the balance of life.

Deductive theory testing

Another road to understanding is to derive predictions about happiness from a theory and then test these inferences. Such tests can be performed on the findings in this collection. An example is the above-mentioned test of the theory that happiness is relative. Ideally one might prefer tests on primary data that are especially gathered for a particular test, but practically test on such secondary data is often the best feasible, especially when the test requires costly comparison across time and nations.

Synthesis of past research

Both approaches figure in current techniques for research synthesis, in narrative review studies as well as in quantitative meta-analyses. The greatest problem for such studies are to get a focused view on all the relevant research, and that is precisely what this collection of findings provides.

Regular state-of-the-art reviews are essential for the cumulating of knowledge on happiness. Yet such studies have become scarcer over the years because the field is ever more difficult to oversee. This collection of research findings solves that problem largely, because it presents a complete overview of the available findings in a well-accessible format.

On several subjects the data are sufficiently rich and homogenous to allow quantitative meta-analysis. This is for instance the case with data on the relationship of happiness to 'sex', 'age' and 'income'. Meta-analytic techniques allow a better estimate of general tendencies and of differences across time, nation and social categories.

For these purposes it is important that the collection is complete and well indexed. If only half the available research is covered, reviewers still have to go through the entire literature. Completeness is also important for keeping sight of exceptional findings and of methodologically outstanding studies.

Comparative studies

The data-collection is quite suited to grasp differences in happiness and its determinants across time and culture. Comparison of the many observations of average happiness in nations helps to identify macro variables that render society more or less livable. Comparison of the rich correlational data enables distinction between universal requirements for happiness and cultural specific conditions. Size and homogeneity of the collection are crucial for this purpose.

Orientation for new research

Further the database will improve the yields of further research. Research will at least be more innovative, because the white spots are better visible, and research will be better comparable because investigators have a more complete view of the measures used in earlier research. Hopefully research questions will also be better focused as a result of improved understanding. Completeness of the collection is most important for this purpose.

4.2 Policy information

Happiness is of relevance in various policy issues and gains an ever more prominent place on the agenda. In social policy, happiness is at least one of the goals. In some of the care domains it is even a quite important goal, for instance in palliative healthcare and in psychotherapy.

Social policy

Findings on happiness can serve social policy in several ways. First they can help to identify pockets of dissatisfaction that are not recognized in the political process, or reversed, dismiss the exaggerations of lobbyists. Secondly, the findings provide clues about the probable effects of interventions, such as income suppletion, job creation and housing schemes. Lastly, the findings bear information about the relative

effectiveness of the policy regime as-a-whole. This use of the findings is discussed in more detail in Veenhoven 1993b, 1996 and 2000b.

Part of the research on happiness has been instigated for these reasons, but the use of the outcomes has been limited so far. One reason is that voiced demand still carries more weight than silent suffering. Another reason is that some policy makers are disenchanted with the results, for instance, that people thrive equally well in nations with modest social security. This does not mean that happiness is insensitive to all policy. The findings suggest that happiness is quite responsive to improvements in legal security, interest articulation and tolerance.

Though apparently unwelcome in some circles, the message is still relevant. Sooner or later the findings will find their way in the policy process, in particular when cuts in social expenditure requires real priority setting.

Therapy

Findings on happiness can also guide therapeutic interventions at the individual level, both in curative medicine and in psychotherapy. Happiness is also a criterion for evaluating the long-term effectiveness of treatments. The need for monitoring quality-of-life outcomes is now widely recognized in the therapeutic professions and has given rise to a broad stream of research, with its own journals and research associations. In that tradition quality of life is typically measured using multi-dimensional inventories. These inventories tap not just subjective enjoyment of life, but also performance status and that practice devoids the findings of a clear meaning. Therefore the field can profit very much from the selection of findings on happiness in this collection. Though this selection comprises less than 10% of the research effort, it is still considerable because this research is so voluminous.

Care

Happiness is a more prominent aim in the care professions and is particularly relevant when chances for autonomy and improvement are small. Hence happiness is an important outcome variable in this trade. At the individual level it can serve to monitor the treatment of particular patients. At the organizational level it informs about the performance of clinics and departments. In this field there is also an established tradition of quality-of-life monitoring, but again the measures used for that purpose lack a clear meaning. Again a lot of more focused findings on happiness can be plucked from this research. When made well accessible for professionals, that information will give voice to the needs of clients.

4.3 Public enlightenment

Journalists often use the collection and this use will probably increase in the future. As noted in the introduction, there is an increasing demand for information about happiness for personal clarification and for orientation in lifestyle choices. This demand materializes in a continuous stream of documentaries on happiness, both ego-documents and popularizations of scientific research. Such use of the collection will increase when its availability and accessibility is improved.

5 WIDER USES OF THE DATA-SYSTEM

Though developed for the study of happiness, this findings-browser can also be used for synthetic studies on other subjects. The basic software can be applied in quite

different fields, such as in medical research or in cross-cultural psychology. Field specific elements, such as the classification of indicators and the list of statistics can easily be adapted. When applied on related matters, such as depression or self-esteem, the current classifications can be largely copied.

Synthetic studies will yield ground in the future. As the pile of research data is growing, synthesis becomes ever more profitable. Consequently there will be a greater need for systems that prepare for that. In the practice of research synthesis the greatest problem is not in the analysis, but in the preparation of the data.

6 HOW TO INCLUDE YOUR WORK

This database is updated continuously. If you deem your work relevant to this bibliography of happiness, please send a copy to the address below. 'Grey' papers are also welcomed.

- All scientific work on subjective appreciation of life-as-a-whole will be included in the bibliography.
- Results of empirical work will also be summarized in the catalogs (Happiness in Nations, or Correlates of Happiness), provided that the measures of happiness used fit our validity demands.
- Not all the work eligible for the catalogs is entered at the moment. About 500 reports wait for extraction
- You can speed up inclusion of your work if you enter the results on an electronic form. That form can be downloaded from the website

Send your work to: World Database of Happiness, c/o Prof. Ruut Veenhoven,
Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences
POB 1738, NL 3000 DR Rotterdam, Netherlands, e-mail: veenhoven@fsw.eur.nl

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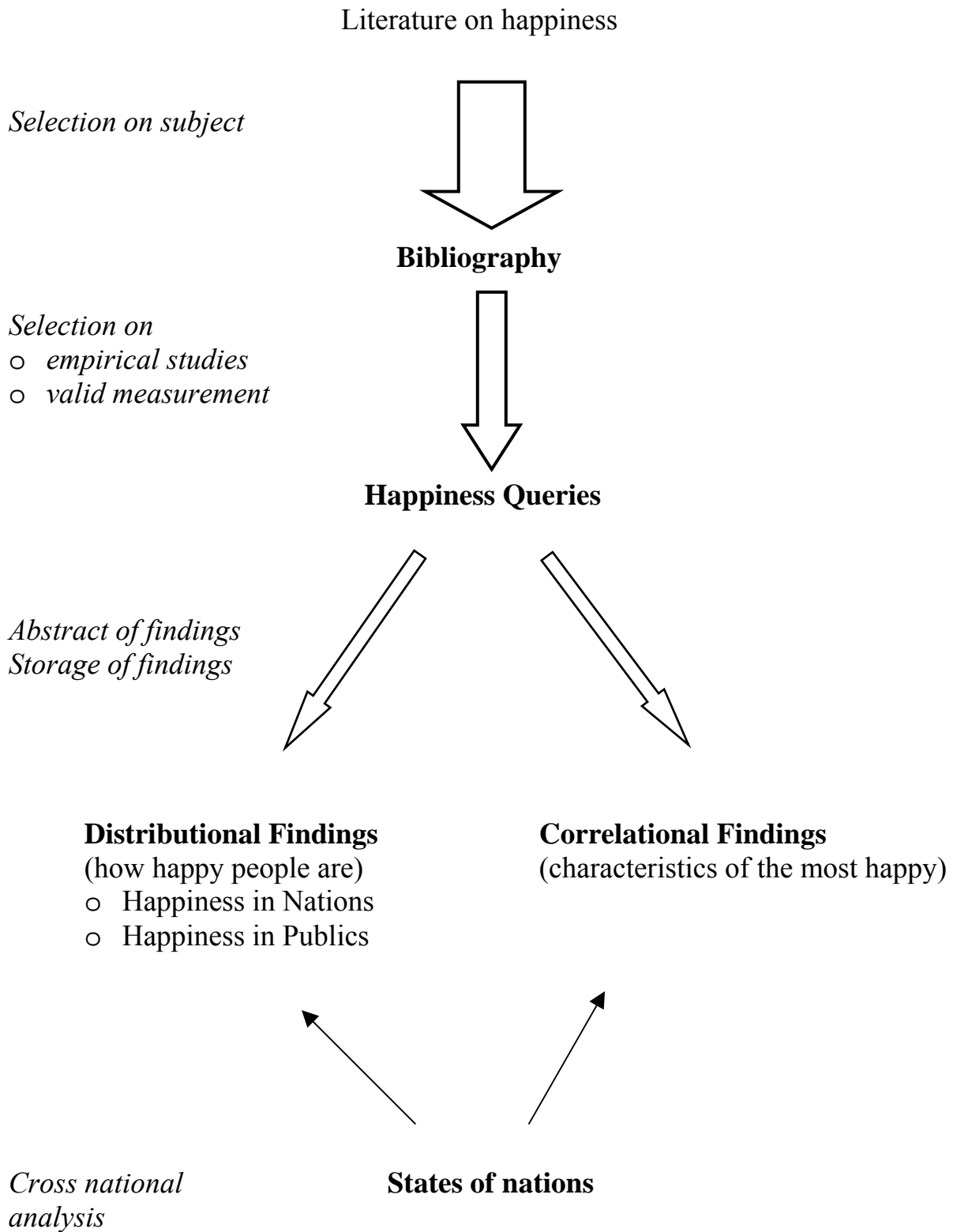
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Scheme 1
Flow chart




World Database of Happiness - Netscape

Edit View Go Communicator Help

Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Shop Stop

Bookmarks Location: <http://www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness/index.htm> What's Related



WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

Continuous register of scientific research on subjective appreciation of life

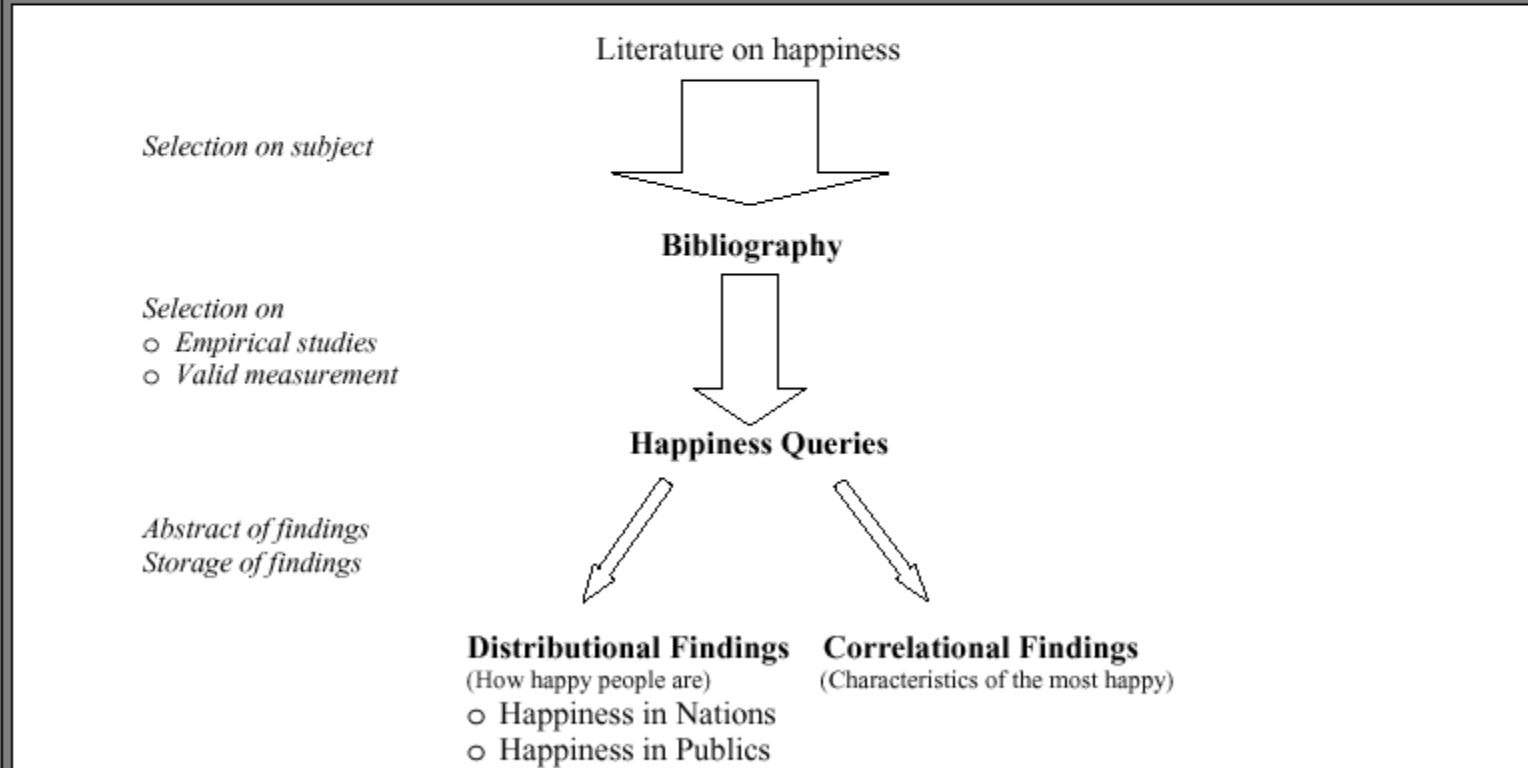
directed by [Ruut Veenhoven](#), [Erasmus University Rotterdam](#)

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graph TD; A[Literature on happiness] --> B[Bibliography]; B --> C[Happiness Queries]; C --> D[Distributional Findings]; C --> E[Correlational Findings];
```

Selection on subject

Bibliography

Selection on

- Empirical studies
- Valid measurement

Happiness Queries

Abstract of findings
Storage of findings

Distributional Findings
(How happy people are)

- Happiness in Nations
- Happiness in Publics

Correlational Findings
(Characteristics of the most happy)

Flowchart World Database of Happiness

90% 1 of 1 11,69 x 8,26 in