**Experiment 1: Life Lines**

In this experiment we will show you the ‘life lines’ of different people. On the y-axis, we will plot how fulfilled they felt, and on the x-axis we will plot their age in years. Therefore, the overall life line shows how fulfilled they were at each age of their lives.

Just to make sure you understand the basic idea, please answer the following questions about the following plots:

How old was this person when they felt the most fulfilled in life?



How fulfilled did this person feel when they were 20 years old?



Which is true of the following person’s life?



* They were highly unfulfilled early in life, then highly fulfilled later in life
* They were highly fulfilled early in life, then highly unfulfilled later in life
* They were highly fulfilled both early in life and later in life
* They were highly unfulfilled both early in life and later in life

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Now, we will show you the life lines of 27 different people, and ask you to rate how **meaningful their lives** were **on the whole**, i.e., taking into account their entire life line. We will also ask you how much you would like it if **your** life line looked like theirs.

[Each of the 27 plots is presented (randomized order within-subjects), followed by following two questions]

**Questions**

[Each question is followed by a 100-point slider]

How meaningful was this person’s life overall? [1=Least meaningful life possible, 100=Most meaningful life possible]

How much would you like for your life line to look like this [1=Not at all, 100=Very much]

Comprehension checks at end of experiment

1. You just saw many plots. What was labeled on the y-axis:

* Disappointment
* Fulfillment
* Meaningfulness
* Age

2. What was labeled on the x-axis:

* Disappointment
* Fulfillment
* Meaningfulness
* Age

3. The first question after each plot asked you to assess the following about the person’s life line:

* Disappointment
* Fulfillment
* Meaningfulness
* Age

Ideas for follow up measures/experiments:

Followup to E1

- I can see us following up on E1 by collecting some higher-order features (e.g., annotated by RAs or Turkers) that are not so easy to measure in an automated way, such as:

*How much did this person’s life improve over the years?*

*How interesting was this person’s life?*

*To what extent did this person overcome challenges?*

*How unique was this person’s life?*

*etc.*

Do such features predict meaningfulness better than the lower-level features?

E2: Cutoffs

- See the cutoff plots in the ‘e2\_early\_cutoffs’ folder. The obvious prediction for these is that people make ratings by extrapolating the (cut off) lines. If so, we might even expect the original (not cutoff plots) to predict meaningfulness better than the cutoff versions.

- I imagine that an important factor is how much participants expect that the person’s life would have (counterfactually) improved in the future, since cutting off the line is missing out on this (extrapolated) potential. We should also ask how tragic the death was.

E3: Generation v. Evaluation

- Participants could initially draw their ideal life line, then we show them all 27 plots and they pick the one that best matches their initial drawing (the drawing is only to help prevent them from lying about what they initially dreamt up as their ideal life line). Then, we could ask them if they would like to change their answer, by picking one of the other plots we showed them.

- It’s interesting if participants change their choices at all, since one would think that people have thought in enough about meaning in life to have settled on an ideal life line.

- If there’s a discrepancy between generation and evaluation, why? One possibility is that people are not used to evaluating their lives at such a high-level, but are generally more focused on proximate next goals at the span of at most 5 years [e.g., *How often do you consider your life at the following scales*(hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, weekly, entire life).] Even when people strive for goals that will take many years to realize, they might not be thinking so much of the overall trajectory, as much as just focusing on the goal as some kind of fuzzy peak.

- Also, if there’s a discrepancy then participants might have learned something about themselves:

*How much fun was this experiment?*

*How much did you learn about yourself?*

*Given what you learned, do you think you will live your life any differently?*

*Do you think that this life line activity could be useful to others?*