The Pursuit of World Happiness: 2020 - Annotated Bibliography

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, no. 2–3 (June 1990): 295–310.

https://doi.org/10.1177/026327690007002017.

This article explores the different landscapes of global culture that bends toward homogeneity, as defined by and in opposition to ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. Drawing predominantly from examples in popular culture and the academic literature, Appadurai's focus is largely theoretical. The work offers a lens through which we can examine a trend toward homogeneity and the landscapes in which hegemonic culture shapes and is shaped by communities. This is a valuable tool as we take a critical look at polling data in the World Happiness Report and challenge assumptions made in the report that imply universality in happiness without normalizing for the unique communities around the world.

Ford, Brett Q., Julia O. Dmitrieva, Daniel Heller, Yulia Chentsova-Dutton, Igor Grossmann, Maya Tamir, Yukiko Uchida, et al. 2015. "Culture Shapes Whether the Pursuit of Happiness Predicts Higher or Lower Well-Being." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 144 (6): 1053–62.

https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000108.

This journal examines how the pursuit of happiness is dependent on an individual's cultural context. Journalists researched collectivistic and individualistic societies in the United States, Germany, Russia, and East Asia. All participants were undergraduate students from universities in these four geographical locations. Results proved that individualistic societies like the US predicted lower well-being, while collectivistic societies like Russia and East Asia predicted higher well-being. Interestingly, Germany had no association. This resource focuses on the different ways countries perceive happiness. Culture is a fundamental factor in observing happiness around the world and was not included in our dataset explanation. Understanding the correlation can help us understand the missing factors in our research.

Ivlevs, Artjoms, Milena Nikolova, and Carol Graham. "Emigration, Remittances, and the Subjective Well-Being of Those Staying Behind." *Journal of Population Economics* 32, no. 1 (August 9, 2018): 113–51.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-018-0718-8.

The researchers used 2009-2011 Gallup World Poll data about both evaluative well-being (through the ladder score we're also using) and hedonic well-being (through positive affect) to draw conclusions about the relationship between migrant vs. non-migrant workers' family members' well-being. The researchers concluded that while migrant workers' families are more likely to experience stress and depression, they also have a higher evaluative well-being (from statistical analyses). This effect provides us with some evidence that our measurement of "happiness" (the ladder score) could be single-minded — and that perhaps using a ladder to measure happiness insinuates that people must "climb," often to their own detriment. It also shows us another alternative to the WHR's 6 explanatory variables.

Kahneman, Daniel, and Angus Deaton. "High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but Not Emotional Well-Being." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107, no. 38 (September 7, 2010): 16489–93.

https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1011492107.

This research article answers the question of whether "money buys happiness". The answer is no; however, high income buys life satisfaction and low income results in low life evaluation and low emotional wellbeing. Researchers used three factors to evaluate life evaluation and well-being: positive affect, blue affect, and stress. Based on the Cantril ladder of the Gallup World Poll, the United States ranked high on both positive affect as well as stress. The data does not prove that more money brings happiness, but it does show a correlation between lower income and greater emotional pain. This information can help us understand why the GDP per capita factor is not a strong variable to consider when evaluating happiness, but instead, it can be used to explain unhappiness across nations.

Khalil, Elias L. "Wellbeing and Happiness." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 53, no. 4 (December 2018) 627–652.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-018-9678-1.

This journal article argues that a clear distinction between happiness and wellbeing must be made, and that individuals must understand how the two phenomena are produced differently. To support its arguments, it relies on literature and reports that cover the shifting use of the terms "wellbeing" and "happiness," also utilizing principles of Set Point Theory and Positive Psychology. This paper highlights the importance of ontology in shaping our understanding of seemingly similar concepts, revealing that mixing up these two words significantly affects how we quantify them. This article pushes us to explore exactly what "happiness" means to the World Happiness Report's researchers, as

well as what variables are costly to leave out of this report based on its chosen terminology.

Lupton, Deborah. "How Do Data Come to Matter? Living and Becoming with Personal Data." *Big Data & Society*, (July 2018).

https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718786314.

Lupton argues that the quantified self, specifically "small data" individuals keep on themselves can become Big Data in aggregate, both human and nonhuman and constantly changing. She compiles her argument largely from the theoretical literature on feminist materialism, vital materialism, and the anthropology of material culture, and empirical research. Although the article deviates from a macro view of a country's happiness, it is significant in that it engages with how data come to be, how bodies shape data through technological devices and how that data can be interpreted by humans to then shape their bodies. Lupton states that epistemology and ontology cannot be separated and instead focuses on onto-epistemological dimensions of data assemblages, which, "like human bones, digital data only make sense in the contexts in which they are located" (Lupton, 2018, 5-6). Turning from the individual to the collective, we must consider how the Gallup World Poll's results are ultimately circumscribed on a national identity, we must also consider how various national identities in turn comprise these onto-epistemological data assemblages.

Morrison, Mike, Louis Tay, and Ed Diener. 2011. "Subjective Well-Being and National Satisfaction." *Psychological Science* 22 (2): 166–71.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610396224.

In this research report, socioeconomic wealth is the leading factor that causes differing perspectives on subjective happiness. They use 10 variables to evaluate well-being of an individual: life satisfaction, national satisfaction, standard-of-living satisfaction, health satisfaction, job satisfaction, household income, household conveniences, residential mobility, GDP per capita, and region. Their dataset also stemmed from Gallup World Poll. Results show those in the poorest countries with the least amount of income and fewest household conveniences, individuals had greater life satisfaction. With this information, the variable, GDP per capita, in our World Happiness dataset may not be an accurate representation of happiness. Thus, our data can be skewed.

Ogihara, Yuji, and Yukiko Uchida. "Does Individualism Bring Happiness? Negative Effects of Individualism on Interpersonal Relationships and Happiness." *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (March 2014).

https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00135.

The authors of this study argue that certain types of societies are not conducive to happiness when implemented in their opposite society, namely, that individualistic ideals lead to less subjective well-being in nations that identify more as collectivist. To back up their argument, Ogihara and Uchida conduct two studies to explore the relationship between individualistic values and their effect on the number of close friends and subjective well-being in Japan, a nation known to skew as more collectivist. This resource is important because it explores cross-cultural differences in happiness by taking a closer look at how certain social values (e.g. the individualism of Western cultures) allow individuals to fare when they are implemented in a society opposite of those values (e.g. the collectivism more frequently observed in East Asian cultures). As a result, this resource backs up our hypothesis that there is a lack of universality in the measuring and reporting of happiness, as the World Happiness report seems to convey, since happiness is shown to be very much contingent upon both social/cultural ideals at a national and individual level within a country's culture.

Oishi, Shigehiro, Selin Kesebir, and Ed Diener. "Income Inequality and Happiness." *Psychological Science* 22, no. 9 (August 12, 2011): 1095–1100.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611417262.

Researchers looked at the Gini coefficient (which measures income inequality) and compared it to the answers of an evaluative happiness question on the GSS (General Social Survey) from 1972-2008 to conclude that Americans tended to be happier the years the Gini coefficient was lower. The GSS's well-being/happiness score is only a three-point indicator however, with a much different question from the Cantril ladder indicator that our data set uses. Nonetheless, this resource is valuable because it points us towards other explanations for national happiness beyond the 6 provided by our data set, which we wish to look beyond.

Park, Nansook, and Christopher Peterson. "Suicide in Happy Places Revisited: The Geographical Unit of Analysis Matters." *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 6, no. 3 (June 30, 2014): 318–23.

https://iaap-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/aphw.12030

The researchers here criticize studies that relate countries' (or U.S. states') suicide rates to their high evaluative happiness scores (measured through a similar ladder to Cantrill's) while ignoring geographic variation. The researchers here show through statistical analysis that (American) cities ("municipalities") may be the most important unit of

measurement — not states or countries — as "most compare and contrast themselves to family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors." The impacts of social comparison on happiness/suicide are perhaps better seen within cities. This translates to our dataset well, as we are also measuring well-being in terms of country lines, which encompass a wide population living very far apart. Our data set doesn't even contain a measurement of variation among citizens (such as standard deviation). Perhaps data with city-centric data could have been better for comparing.

Robinson, Anthony, Aaron Bonnette, Krista Howard, Natalie Ceballos, Stephanie Dailey, Yongmei Lu, and Tom Grimes. "Social Comparisons, Social Media Addiction, and Social Interaction: An Examination of Specific Social Media Behaviors Related to Major Depressive Disorder in a Millennial Population." *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research* 24, no. 1 (2019).

https://doi.org/10.1111/jabr.12158.

This research article aims to examine the correlation between social media behaviors and major depressive disorder (MDD) in young adults, hypothesizing that millenials who meet the criteria for MDD use social media in a more mentally harmful way than those who do not meet the criteria. Robinson et al. conduct a study with 504 undergraduate students to examine this relationship across multiple social media platforms. From their study, they find that the individuals who meet criteria for MDD showed results such as significantly fewer followers on Instagram, being more likely to focus both on others they thought were better than them, a higher propensity to be addicted to social media, and a significant difference in their online and offline identities. As a result, this study's importance can be found in how it highlights the negative effects social media can have on happiness, such as fixating on comparisons between oneself and others, having a lack of friends, or censoring oneself despite it being a means for communication. Thus, this source supports our beliefs that there are important oversights in variables that should have been captured during data collection, such as social media, to serve as alternative explanations for the differences in happiness exhibited in the World Happiness Report.

Slife, Brent D., and Frank C. Richardson. "Problematic Ontological Underpinnings of Positive Psychology: A Strong Relational Alternative." *Theory & Psychology* 18, no. 5 (October 2008): 699–723.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354308093403.

In this paper, the field of positive psychology is criticized for its problematic ontology of abstractionism, suggesting the use of a more relational approach instead. Its authors use the findings and arguments of abstractionists, relationists, political philosophers, and

positive psychologists to construct their stance. This article's importance lies in the fact that it brings two important ontologies into conversation, stressing the harmful effects of utilizing the wrong one in certain situations. In doing so, it strengthens our thesis and reveals the tendency for abstractionist ontology to examine human occurrences from a culturally-, historically-, and physically-lacking perspective.

Smith, Thomas S.J., and Louise Reid. "Which 'Being' in Wellbeing? Ontology, Wellness and the Geographies of Happiness." *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 6 (December 2018): 807–829.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517717100.

Smith and Reid utilize this article to explore the limited nature of the available scholarship of wellbeing, arguing for a reconstructed ontological approach. Predominantly a literature review, the authors pull from a wide variety of sources and discuss Gallup's poll as well as the concept of Gross National Happiness. The chief contribution of the article is an examination of the ontologies of wellness in the existing literature, in particular arguing that the gaps in wellbeing coverage, even those extending into empirical studies, "indicate an insensitivity to place and context, a determined humanism" (Smith and Reid, 2018, 816). In doing so, this article works with our thesis to ponder over the problematic nature of trying to quantify happiness under certain ontologies, revealing the power in guided perceptions of wellbeing.

Smith, Thomas S.J., and Louise Reid. "Which 'Being' in Wellbeing? Ontology, Wellness and the Geographies of Happiness." *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 6 (December 2018): 807–29.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517717100.

Smith and Reid offer a broad overview of wellbeing research and its origins, and ultimately, the limitations of wellness research. Predominantly a literature review, the authors pull from a wide variety of sources and discuss Gallup's poll as well as the concept of Gross National Happiness. The chief contribution of the article is an examination of the ontologies of wellness in the existing literature, in particular arguing that the gaps in wellbeing coverage, even those extending into empirical studies, "indicate an insensitivity to place and context, a determined humanism" (Smith and Reid, 2018, 816). Our thesis aims to examine these limitations and how the research can examine individual experience without having access to the individuals surveyed.

Snyder, C.R., Shane J. Lopez, and Jennifer Teramoto Pedrotti. 2011. “Chapter 2: Eastern and Western Perspectives on Positive Psychology.” In *Textbook- Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths*. SAGE Publications.

https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/64379_Lopez_Chapter_2.pdf.

Analyzing the differences in Western and Eastern perspectives on positive psychology, this chapter reveals the historical and philosophical traditions that influence cultural philosophies for attaining a “good life.” In individualistic societies like the United States, an individual’s happiness derives from self-fulfillment and personal gain. In collectivist-oriented societies like China, individuals are more selfless and pay more attention to the needs of their community. This background knowledge provides insight into how cultural differences influence the ways in which happiness is pursued and achieved. According to our dataset, happiest countries are indeed in the East because the six variables in the Gallup Poll are strongly correlated to collectivist ideals, specifically social support and generosity. Since qualities of happiness are not universal, the dataset we are analyzing may be biased.

Solnick, Sara J., and David Hemenway. “Is More Always Better?: A Survey on Positional Concerns.” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 37, no. 3 (November 1998): 373–83.

https://doi.org/10.1016/s0167-2681(98)00089-4.

Solnick and Hemenway argue that the positional concerns of social comparison is dependent on the goods and attributes being observed, whether they are good or bad in nature, and the relative position of an individual to everyone else. Following a literature review regarding the topic of relative standing, a survey study that positioned respondents to have more than others, or less than others but both parties had more overall, explored these hypotheses. From the surveys, they found that half of the respondents would rather have half of real purchasing power as long as they were higher in relative income than others, and were okay with less relatively when it came to leisure, as long as they had more than they would when better off relatively. As a result, this study shows that absolute and relative positions matter to people when considering their happiness, as well as for the goods or attributes that are being compared, which may provide interesting implications for the effect of social comparisons on happiness within and between countries.

Srinivasan, Ramesh. “Re-Thinking the Cultural Codes of New Media: The Question Concerning Ontology.” *New Media & Society* 15, no. 2 (March 2013): 203–23.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812450686.

Srinivasan argues that new media has largely built ontologies that assume Western representations of knowledge are privileged over those from developing countries. This article examines ethnographic literature that reveals forms of information exchange not codified in the dominant value systems in the digital world. Srinivasan's "fluid ontologies" allow for participation of and classification by the communities surveyed, rather than an imposition of Western ontology based on hierarchical relationships not present in non-Western communities. "Fluid ontologies" offer a lens through which we can view the World Happiness Report, but it also offers a concrete recommendation for future polls that can help normalize the polling data to determine happiness based on the factors that are important to the communities surveyed rather than defined by the surveyors. This helps expose the ways in which Gallup's survey can ultimately create a neo-colonialist narrative of wellbeing and happiness that is limited in its ontological scope and inherently exclusionary.

Stone, Arthur A, Christopher Mackie, in, Committee on, Division on, and National Research Council. "Conceptualizing Experienced (or Hedonic) Well-Being." Nih.gov. National Academies Press (US), December 18, 2013.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179216/.

This section of a larger body of work addresses the concept of subjective well-being -- the way researchers describe happiness and the way it's experienced. This text focuses on the ways we should and could measure happiness and suffering in terms of affect, which is one end of the spectrum of how subjective well-being could be defined. The introduction to this chapter was extremely influential in helping us develop our view of SWB as a spectrum that cannot be fully measured or analyzed through metrics. This is crucial to our project, as we navigate given definitions for feelings that are argued perhaps should not be measured in a vacuum at all.

Sweeney, Paul D., and Dean B. Mcfarlin. "Social Comparisons and Income Satisfaction: A Cross-National Examination." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 77, no. 2 (2004): 149–54.

https://doi.org/10.1348/096317904774202117.

This article argues that there is a degree of social comparison among countries that can explain income satisfaction within them. The authors use results from a cross-cultural survey among 12 countries that reports on respondents' income satisfaction and pay comparisons with various types of "others" (e.g. people in their country, people with the

same level of education, and people with similar jobs). The authors find that even across countries, pay comparisons still happen and are indeed predictive of pay satisfaction, even when accounting for comparisons to people in one's home country. However, these pay comparisons are not limited solely to actual pay. As such, this study is important to our thesis as it supports the idea that basing happiness on one's pay is not a true measure of it; there is a component of social comparison, even among nations, that plays a role in life satisfaction.

Veenhoven, Ruut. "Measures of Happiness: Which to Choose?" *Happiness Studies Book Series*, 2017, 65–84.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61810-4_4.

Veenhover, one of the pioneers of happiness research, argues for the use of thoughtful definitions and measures for happiness. He analyzed some 5,000 different metrics used by researchers to quantify happiness (ranging from individual questions and whole questionnaires). He emphasizes the importance of question subjectivity (whether a metric is this a measure of an individual's happiness, or happiness relative to something else. (The latter is, he argues, invalid.) This intensive look into defining and measuring happiness is invaluable to our project, and helped us form our critical angle toward the defining and measurement of happiness.

Ye, Dezhu, Yew-Kwang Ng, and Yujun Lian. 2014. "Culture and Happiness." *Social Indicators Research* 123 (2): 519–47.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0747-y.

Human happiness depends on quality of life. Universally, economic or material satisfaction causes happiness; however, this article explores the "comparison theory" and Maslow's "needs theory" to evaluate how differing cultural needs affect happiness. This research uses the dataset from the World Values Survey in which interviewed approximately 1,400 individuals in various nations. They used three variables: happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being. All respondents were to evaluate each variable on a personal 1-10 scale. Using this dataset, researchers came up with additional 9 cultural indices that may impact one's happiness: in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, power distance, gender egalitarianism, uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, and performance orientation. From the ordinary least square regression, power distance and gender egalitarianism are two factors that strongly affect happiness. Similar to the perception of corruption, power distance in countries have inequalities such as social status, prestige, wealth, and civil rights that lead to unhappiness.