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**Cohort**: (Francom, French, McMahan)

*In what follows, reflect on your learning and personal growth at this point in our course. Consider this week’s readings, multimedia sources, presentations, discussions, activities, etc. To your best ability attempt to integrate these experiences into our own developing understanding of the ‘Good Life’.*

This week, I read Chapter 1 of our book, which focused on the Netherlands and how the culture there plays a role in how happy an average person is. One concept that I found particularly interesting was the café culture in Europe. Europeans will spend hours inside cafés, chatting with friends and family, removing themselves from the rush of daily responsibilities. As someone who grew up in New York, I have never known a life where I have hours of my day to set aside and enjoy this so-called café culture. Whether it was schoolwork or swim practices I was always on the go while growing up in New York.

One idea that researchers like Ruut Veenhoven have discovered is the paradox of some of the "happiest" countries in the world having high suicide rates. This particular paradox left me intrigued. Why is this so? After taking some time to think about this statistic, I believe that this concept is similar to the effects that social media has on people’s mental health. People living in these "happy" countries feel the need to constantly be happy and that everyone else is content with their lives. People who are struggling with their mental health in these countries think they are alone because “everyone” must be satisfied. Looking at social media, people typically only post the best moments of their lives- parties, vacations, friends, family, etc. Others can feel down about their lives after seeing post after post of people on luxurious vacations or constantly surrounded by friends and feel like they aren't doing enough with their lives or aren’t as popular as others, when this is simply not the case.