

My Findings: Happiness And Place

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outline

why city misery?

my city

urban misery

suburban misery

size fetish

bad city

appendix: statistics, regressions

bonus: endogeneity

outline

why city misery?

my city

urban misery

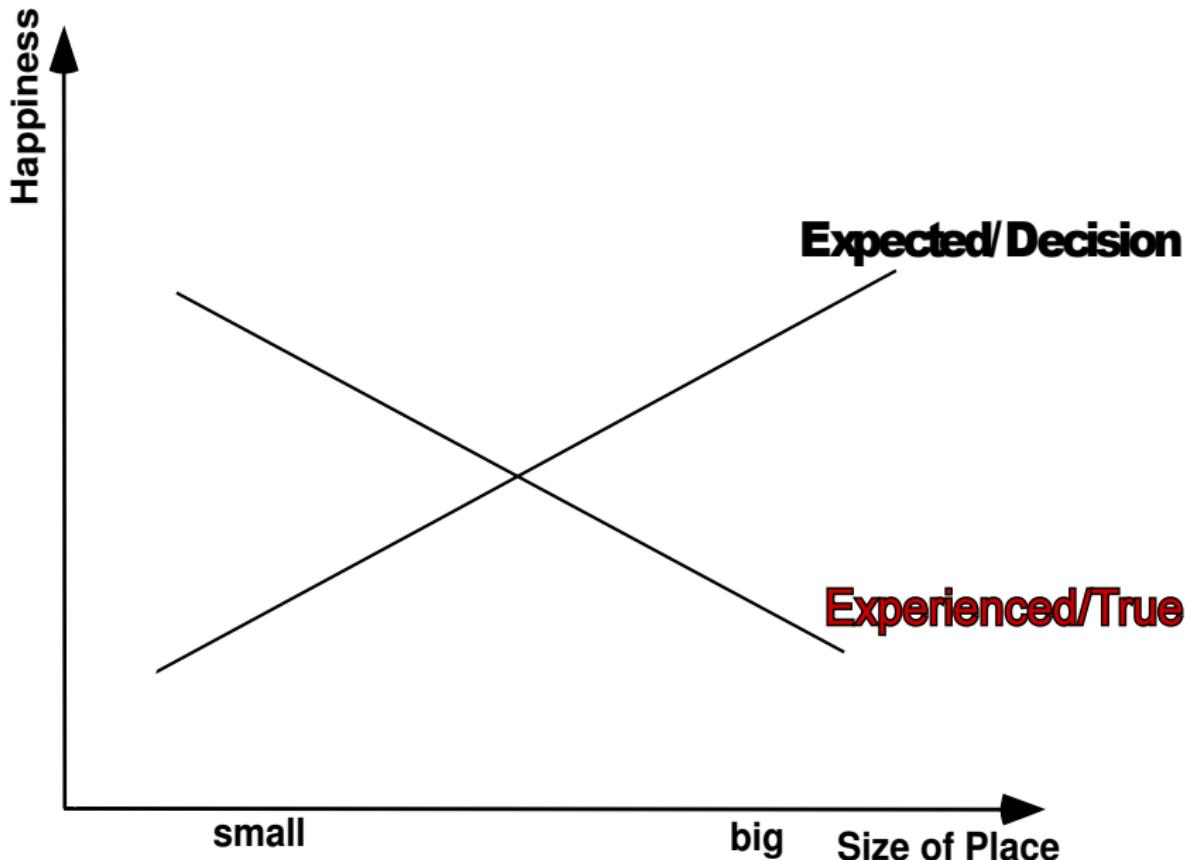
suburban misery

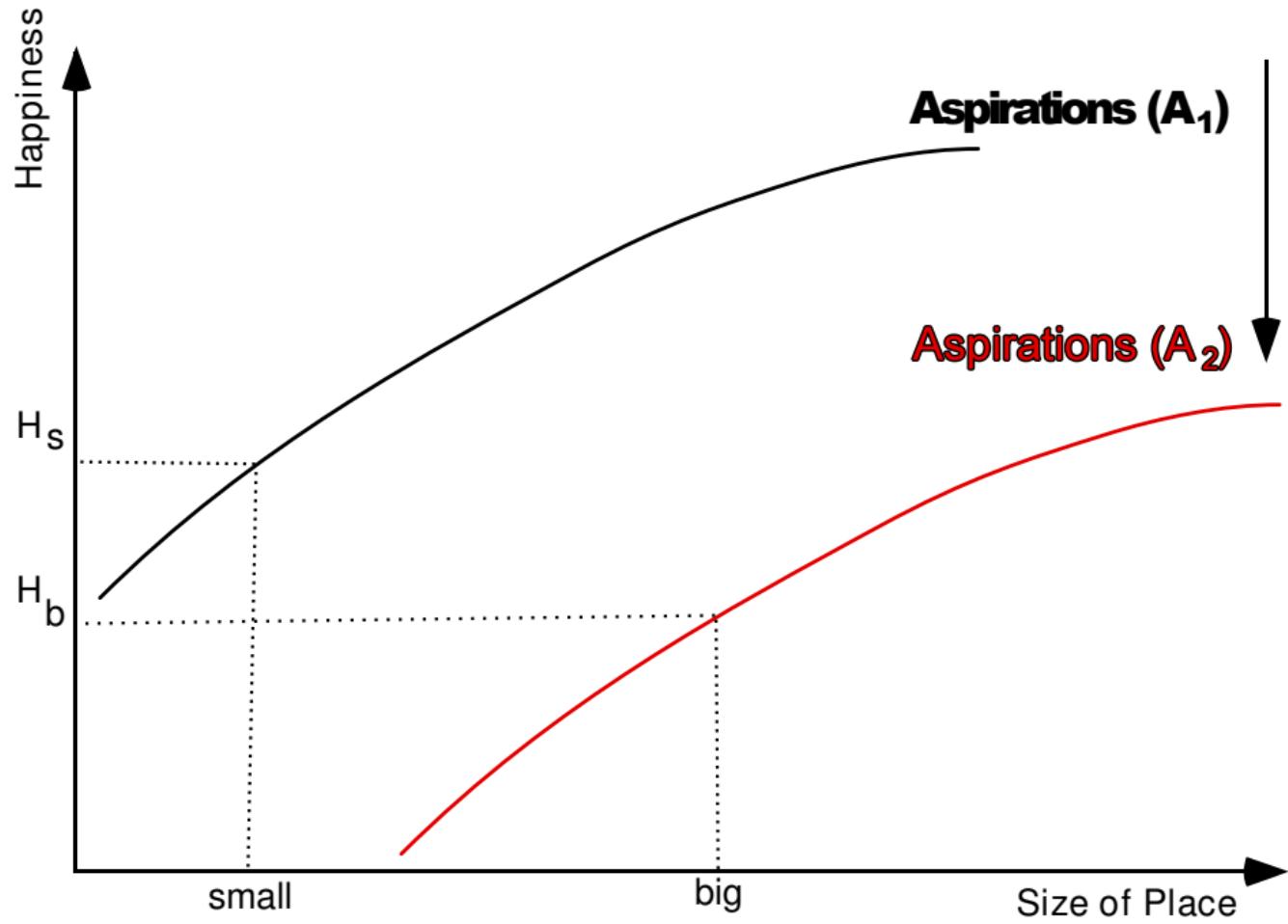
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bad city

appendix: statistics, regressions

bonus: endogeneity





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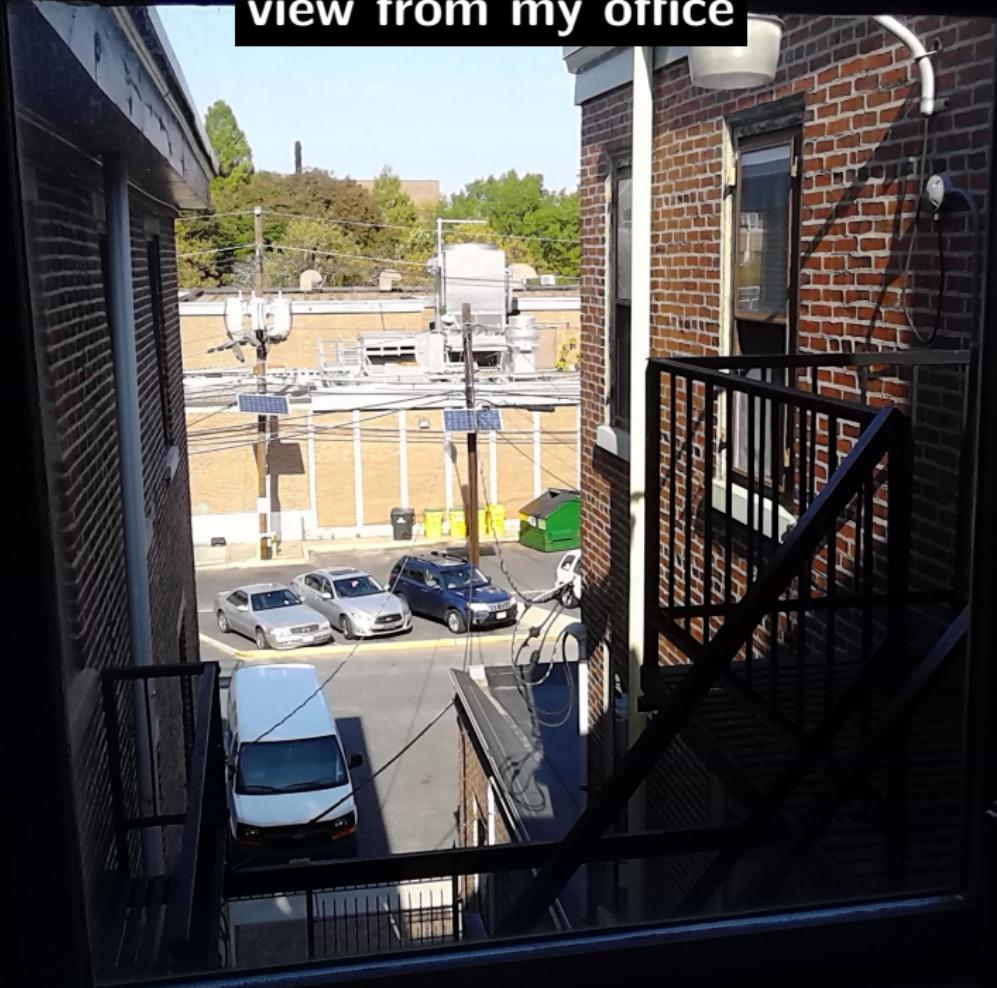
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view from my office







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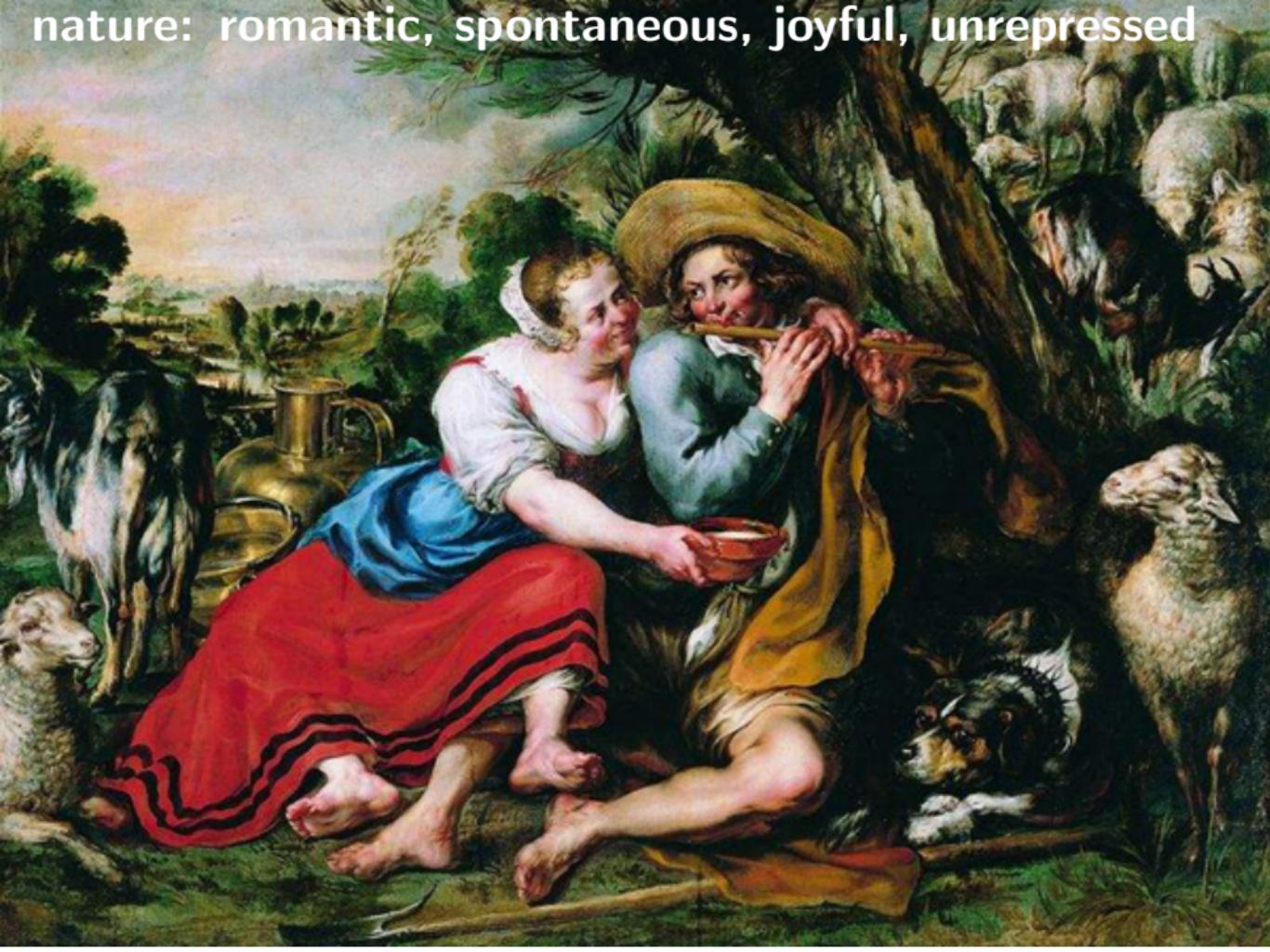
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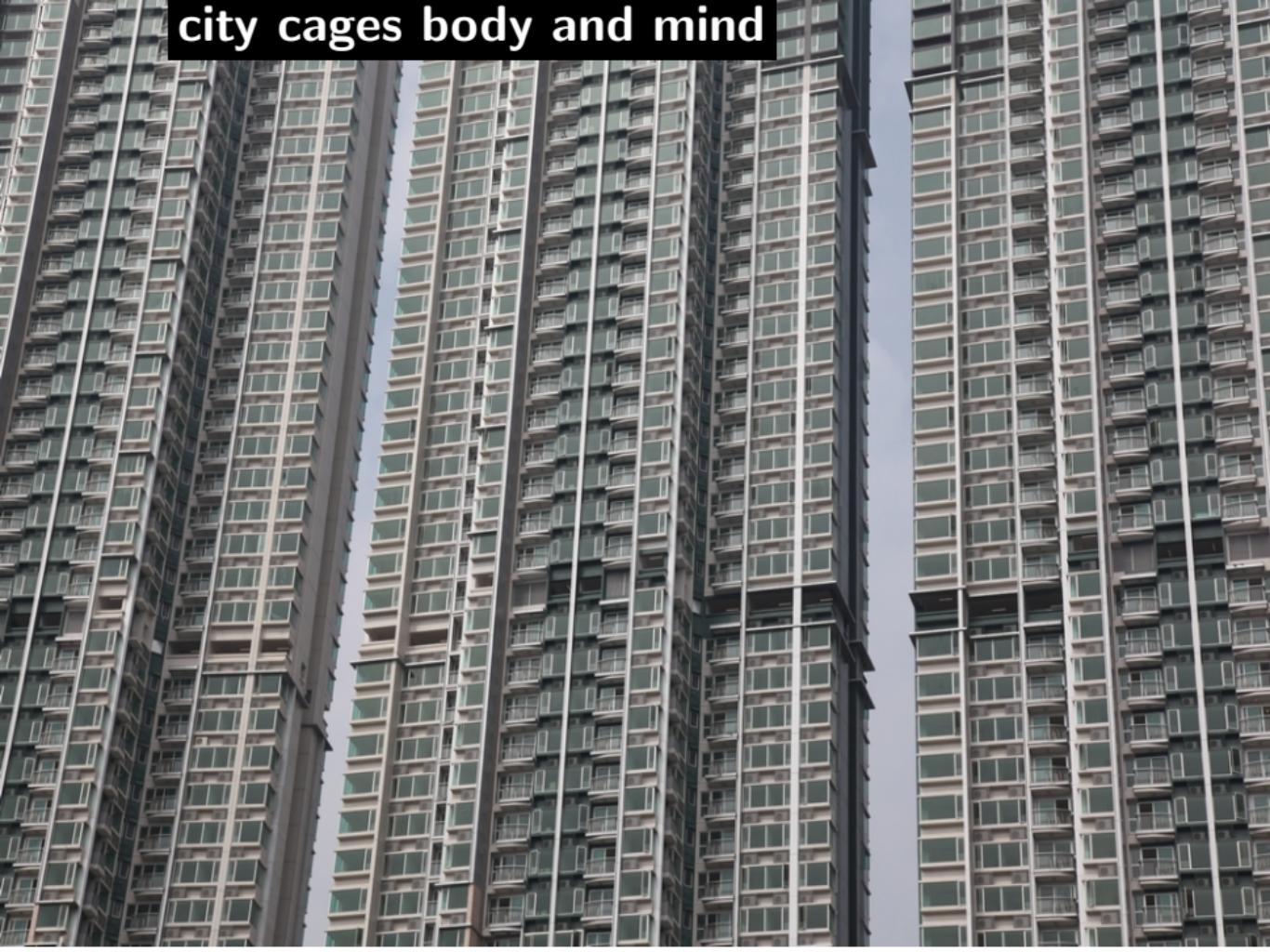
nature: romantic, spontaneous, joyful, unrepressed



city: mechanistic, automaton, repressive



city cages body and mind



city cages body and mind



city is fake



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suburbs are fake, too



sometimes more nature...



1000 ft
200 m

.but sometimes more concrete and asphalt



1000 ft
500 m

typical suburban fakeness



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city spreads as far as the eye can see



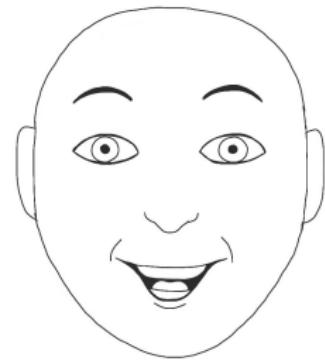
and rises as tall as the eye can see





(a) spectacular, awesome, sexy, fantastic

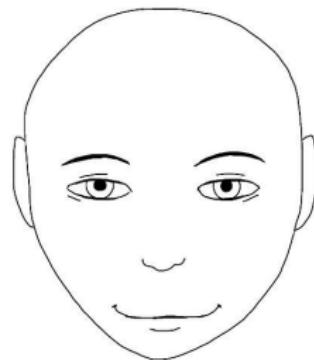
(b) ordinary, dull, normal



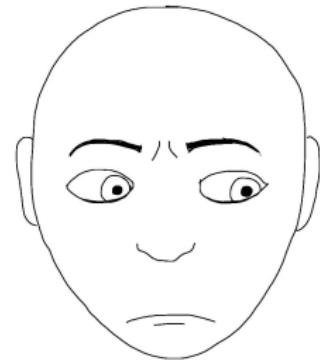
(c) ecstatic



(d) adored



(e) adoring



(f) embarrassed

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Moscow looks like Mordor at night



not much friendlier during the day



a vampire sucking up physical and psychic energy



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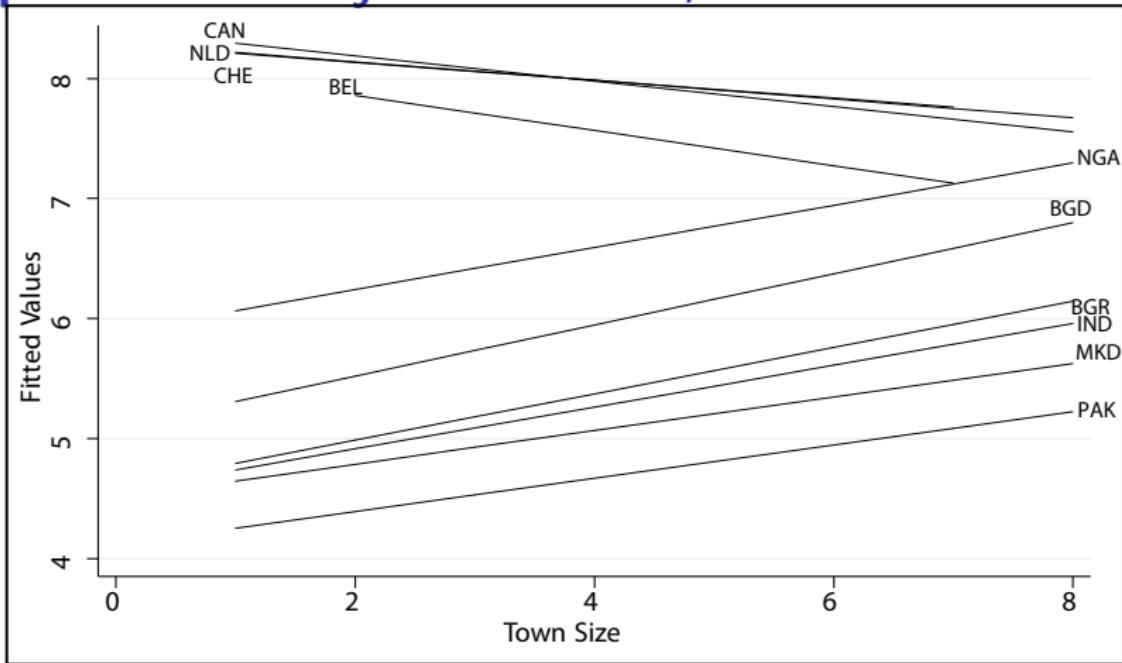
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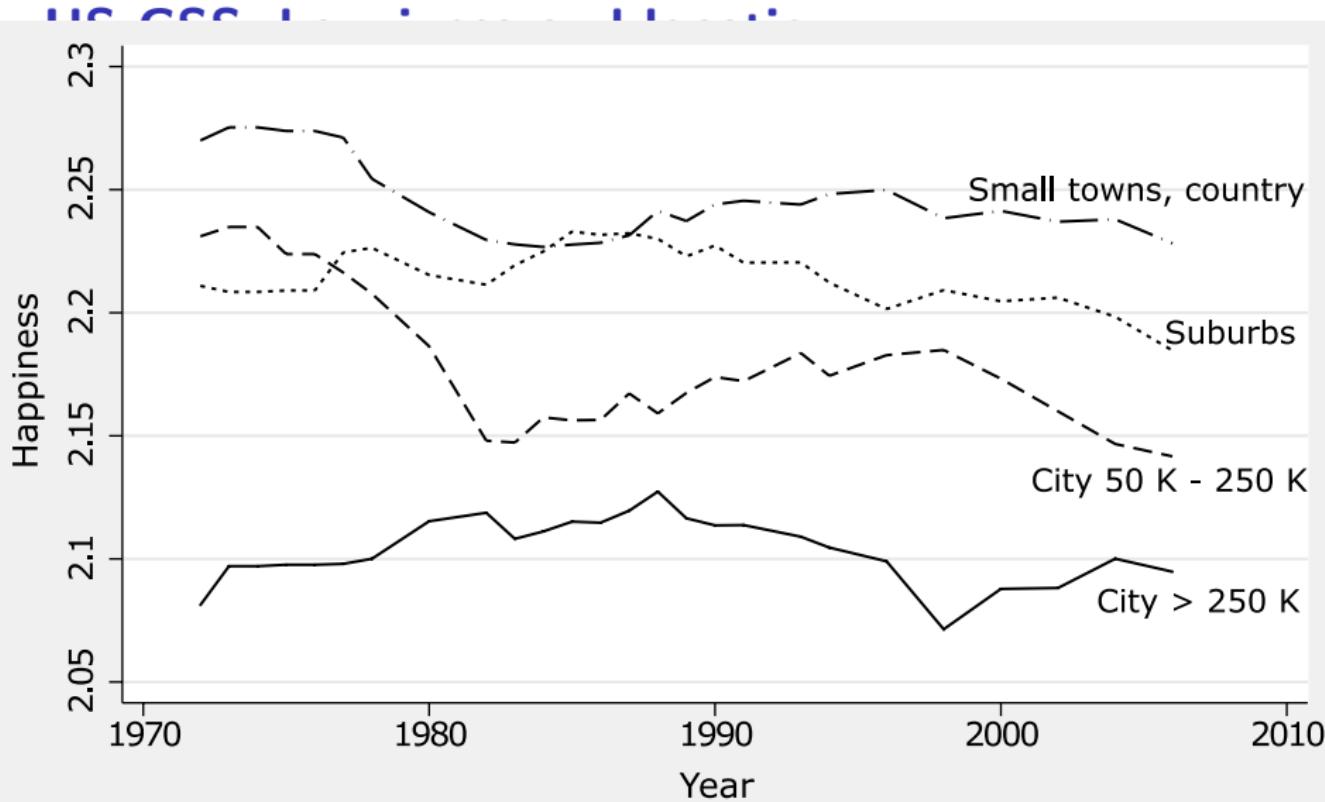
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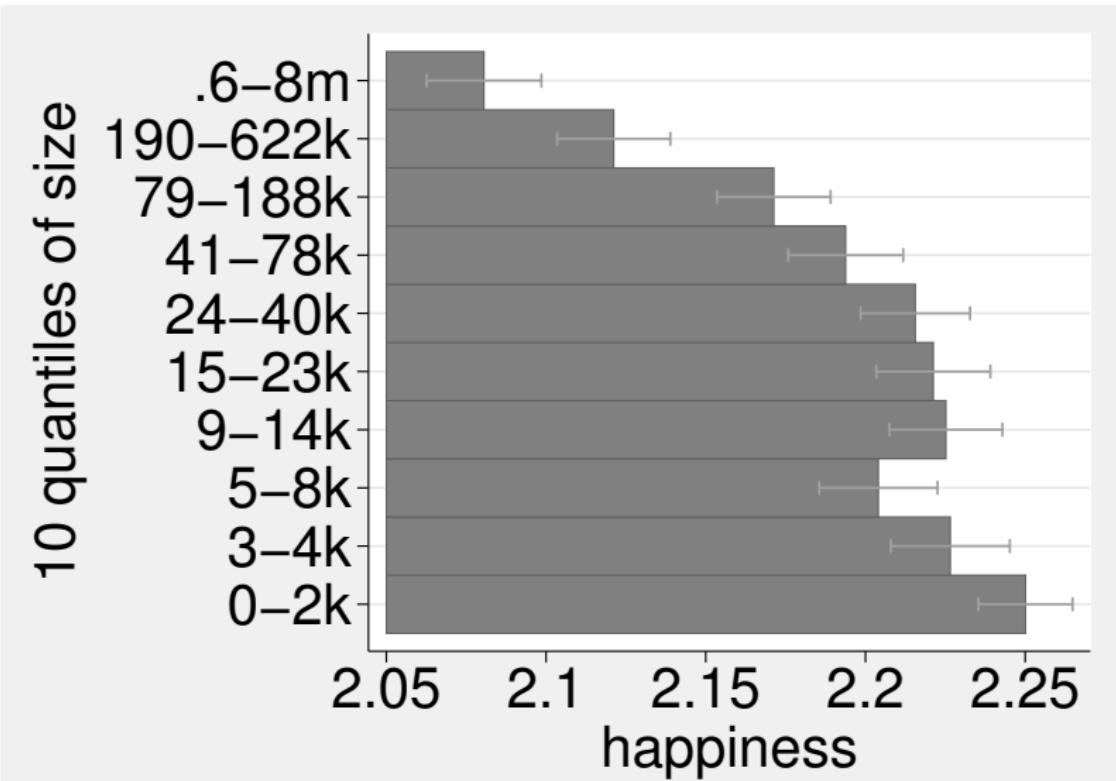
a puzzle from my dissertation; 2008!



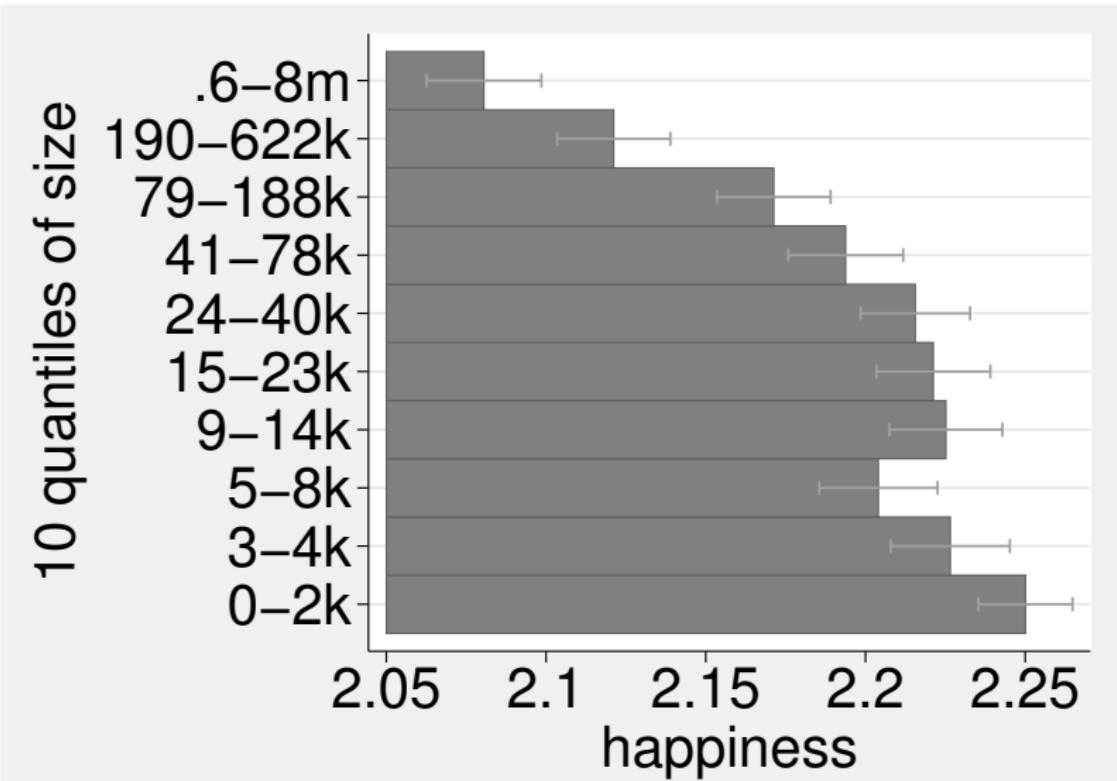
*a hamburger can kill you in NYC and
save your life in Addis Ababa (?)*



US GSS: gradient smooth except 3rd decile



happiness gradient smooth except 3rd decile



most miserable and happiest counties from BRFSS



county	density	happiness
St. Louis city MO	5.7k	3.18
Bronx NY	>30k	3.18
Kings NY (Brooklyn)	>30k	3.2
Johnson KS (close to Kansas city)	1.1k	3.51
Shelby TN (some of Memphis)	1.2k	3.54
Douglas CO (borders Denver)	.3k	3.56

most successful cities less happy than non city avg!

- ◊ avg for counties that are nonmetropolitan areas: 3.41
- ◊ Economist's Quality of Living; Mercer's Best cities
- ◊ Boston; Suffolk County MA: 3.29
- ◊ NYC; NY County (Manhattan): 3.31
- ◊ Chicago; Cook County IL: 3.39

US GSS: ologit of happiness (OR). base>250k

city 50k-250k	1.15***	1.12**
suburbs	1.18***	1.12***
small towns,	1.25***	1.15***
country		
NW Europe		1.17***
Mediterranean		1.08
Africa		0.81***
time fe	yes	yes
region fe	yes	yes
ind. controls	yes	yes
observations	32073	25219

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

ind. controls: age, marital status, size of a household , employment status, income, whether a person was born in the U.S.

US,

	mentally unhealthy days	physically unhealthy days	years lost	% birth- weight	low
population/(land area*10,000)	0.14***	0.23***	3.38**	-0.04	
no social-emotional sup- port	0.04***	0.02***	0.30**	0.01	
Index crime rate (per 100,000 persons), 2004	0.00**	0.00	0.00***	0.00***	
% obese	0.00	0.00	1.25***	-0.01	
gini	0.02**	0.04***	1.26***	0.05***	
% uninsured	-0.03***	-0.04***	-0.52***	-0.05***	
% college	-0.00	-0.02***	-0.41***	-0.03***	
◇ % unemployed	0.01	0.03	0.64	-0.03	
persistent poverty	0.01	0.29***	8.95***	0.14	
%> 65	0.02***	-0.01	0.23	0.01	
% black	-0.01***	-0.02***	0.12*	0.06***	
2003 ERS Rural-Urban Continuum Code	-0.01	0.03**	0.95***	0.01	
% smokers	0.04***	0.03***	0.98***	0.01*	
per capita personal in- come (USD 1,000)	-0.02***	-0.02***	-0.24**	0.00	
constant	2.35***	3.03***	10.66	6.43***	

BRFSS: county FE

- ◊ see <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0042098016645470>

i have a real panel too

- ◊ add health
- ◊ only using first 2 waves: (1994, 1995) and 1996
- ◊ $[pweight = GSWGT2]$
- ◊ DV: CES-D, following De Neve and Oswald (2012)
- ◊ no block gr id–std err unclustered!

endogeneity

- ◊ i have endogeneity...
- ◊ so what ?
- ◊ almost all studies have it (except experiments)
 - (no, panel data and iv are out of fashion, too)
- ◊ but since many of you are economists
- ◊ and economists are obsessed with endogeneity
- ◊ let's discuss it

the obsession

- ◊ seems that economists think that every single study must tackle endogeneity
- ◊ but then all studies ideally should be experiments!
- ◊ and indeed we have outpouring of experiments
 - including silly ones where a person imagines she is a company
- ◊ but a better view is that a study should contribute
 - contribution can be novelty, theory, etc
 - only in areas that have been studies over and over again
 - we must improve the method, otherwise we do not contribute

causal mechanism or causal pathway

- ◊ there are good theories for city misery
- ◊ city living overburdens one's brain ([Simmel, 1903, Lederbogen et al., 2011](#))
 - city living is mentally unhealthy—it wears you down
- ◊ it is unnatural!
 - evolution made humans and other animals to live in nature
 - not amongst concrete and asphalt
- ◊ visual stimulation and comparison ([Simmel, 1903](#)), conspicuous consumption ([Veblen, 2005a,b](#)) and resulting relative deprivation ([Frank, 2012](#)) are most likely to happen in urban areas; and we know that they are bad for us

cities cause misery (partly, at least)

- ◊ it is not something only about selection, cities do it, too
- ◊ cities have effect on humans
 - one view is that they act as magnifying glasses bringing out the worst and best (eg innovation and crime) at rate of 1.15 ([Bettencourt et al., 2010](#), [Bettencourt and West, 2010](#), [Bettencourt et al., 2007](#))
- ◊ eg, cities may intensify the pecuniary and consumerist orientation in people, and make them more stressed and overworked
- ◊ that is, many urban dwellers would not be that way outside of the city

cities cause misery (partly, at least)

- ◊ simply speaking, density and size causes changes
 - just like it causes rats to be aggressive and kill ([Calhoun, 1962](#))

reverse causality, self-selection

- ◊ do miserable people chose to live in cities? don't think so !
- ◊ if anything, most energetic and able folks that move to cities
- ◊ and people who cannot do anything about their life stay in rural areas
 - maybe except that deviant/unconventional types choose city ([Wirth, 1938](#))
- ◊ neither it is reasonable to think that happy people would move out of cities
- ◊ perhaps miserable people are stuck in city but i control for income, poverty

reverse causality, self-selection

- ◊ but definitely it is reasonable to think that
 - moving out of city will make you happy
 - this is where life (incl animals and humans) belongs
 - or moving to city will make you miserable
 - (noise/air pollution, stress, congestion, cognitive overload, housing prices, etc)

the bottom line: is var in T random?

- ◊ the bottom line with endogeneity is to answer
- ◊ whether variation/selection into T (urban v rural) is random (like in experiment)
- ◊ to large degree...
 - people just happen to be born in cities or outside of them
- ◊ you may counterargue that:
 - perhaps their parents self-selected; and then genes
 - and many move-moving could be self-selection
 - (i have a working paper where i control for moving; results persist)

the bottom line: is var in T random?

- ◊ importantly, growing up may define what is 'natural' – perhaps growing up in Manhattan would make city 'natural';
- ◊ in a working paper i control for one's location during growing up
 - results persist

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