SWB:

history and philosopy

major theories

measurment

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outline

why study happiness ?

history and philosophy

can we study it scientifically?

five major theories [will be coming back to it over next weeks!]

bonus/if time: common and ancient wisdom (related to the five theories)

bonus: the scientific literature and illustrative findings

please read the papers

- please read the papers under discussion on canvass

today

- we'll properly motivate "why happiness?"
- "prove" it is science
- cover the 5 theories, which we will use over next weeks
- if time, bonus sections:
  ○ review some of the common and ancient wisdom
  ○ have a snapshot of history and philosophy
  ○ additional findings

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why?

- "a prince who will not undergo the difficulty of understanding must undergo the danger of trusting"
- so if you want to be happy, better understand what makes people happy

why?

- end in itself / the ultimate outcome of interest
- a measure of
  utility/well-being/quality of life/standard of living
- a better, more comprehensive and precise measure than
  individual or national income/consumption

the question

- if the human wellbeing (SWB) is the end goal
- then the question in this class is:
- extreme weather$->$SWB
- when, how, etc

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history

- SWB in history: McMahon D "Happiness: A history"
  ○ From beginnings we were interested in happiness:
  ○ essentially two ideas, "good life" v "happy life/pleasure"
- kind of like Apollo v Dionysus:
  ○ Apollo: rational thinking and order, and appeals to logic, prudence and purity.
  ○ Dionysus, the god of wine and dance: irrationality and chaos, and appeals to emotions and instincts.
  ○ but more currently:
- Aristotelian Eudaimonia (good life, living well)
- Benthamite Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number

Aristotelian Eudaimonia

- Eudaimonia=good life: virtue, good spirit Aristotle's
  Nicomachean Ethics:
  Eudaimonia (happiness) = active, complete life
  inclusive of all that has intrinsic value

- perfection in respect of virtue; resources sufficient for a
  living creature

○ https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/eudaimonia/

○ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eudaimonia

Benthamite Greatest SWB for the Greatest Num

- more pleasure than pain for as many as possible

- hedonic calculus: seek pleasure, avoid pain:

○ happiness = pleasure - pain

- have political and legal reforms to produce

○ Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number

- this is what we're witnessing today!

○ early political advocates (Stiglitz et al., 2009) and now even Sachs!

○ UK, New Zealand, UAE/Dubai, OECD, Bhutan, etc

Epicurus

- all pleasure is good! (Annas, 1987)

- but not unnecessary desires (consumerism!), rather simple and frugal life; desire only the very basics, otherwise setting up yourself for hedonic treadmill (Weijers, 2011)

  ○ overindulgence often leads to pain

  ○ achieve inner tranquility

- http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/epicurus/

Dionysus aka Bacchus

- god of the grape-harvest, wine making and wine, of fertility, ritual madness, religious ecstasy and theater
- `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus`

- and on hedonism, pleasure
- eg see doctoral thesis by Dan Weijers: `http:`

  `//researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10063/2370/thesis.pdf?sequence=2`

and the winner is...

- which one do you like? Bentham or Aristotle?
  ○ pleasurable life or good life?
    (a fascinating philosophical debate (Nussbaum, 2005))

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but it is in the clouds

- the first question or criticism i always get
- when i say i study happiness
- is that we cannot really measure it
- specifically:
- happiness is something different for everyone
- one moment i am happy, another moment i am unhappy
- happiness doesn't really matter; it's just a silly emotion

in the clouds?

- seems like intangible concept
- everybody seems to be happy with something else
- not really ! (few exceptions, eg diff cultures)
- a new field – economics of happiness recently developed
- (earlier psychology, soc ind res: 50s, 60s; took off in 90s)
- now, we can define and measure SWB

definition

- self-reported

- subjective

- sometimes surprising

- life satisfaction$\approx$ utility

- max(life satisfaction) $\approx$ utilitarianism

- life satisfaction$\neq$happiness

  affect$\neq$cognition

- here, use interchangeably but remember distinction

○ SWB (subjective wellbeing) is another popular term

measurement

- wvs question: "all things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" (1 to 10)

- gss question: "taken all together, how would you say things are these days - would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" (1-3)

- these measures were cross-validated using other measures: suicide, PET scans , other people ratings (Layard, 2005, Di Tella and MacCulloch, 2006)

validity (Diener et al., 2013)

- even though self reported and subjective, valid (people know whether they are happy) (Myers, 2000) and some reliability (precision varies)
- closely correlated with similar objective measures such as brain waves (Layard, 2005)
- unhappiness strongly correlates with suicide incidence and mental health problems (Bray and Gunnell, 2006)

how?

- quantitative data analysis; eg correlation, regression.
- we have quantitative (numerical) data on happiness, so we have data on income, marital status, age, and so forth.
- then we investigate who the happy people are:
  - the rich? educated? females?
  - guess who? ideas?
- and of course we have great data about weather!

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five major theories

- genes/set point (eg Schnittker, 2008)

- adaptation/adjustment; hedonic treadmill (Brickman et al., 1978)

- needs/livability (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt, 1995)

- comparison/discrepancies (Michalos, 1985)

- happiness just a motivator (Carver and Scheier, 1990)

genes/set point theory

- genes explain about half of everything (eg Schnittker, 2008)

- incl happiness!

- but have bad rep in soc sci bc of Eugenics, Nazi, etc

- some are just happy no matter what and some miserable

- this is also called a set point theory: you win lottery, lose a limb, doesn't matter, your swb comes back to its set point we downplay the genes and some would outright deny they exist (Pinker, 2003, Haidt, 2012)

- one reviewer told me that race is purely socially constructed, no genetic component to it!

adaptation theory (Brickman et al., 1978)

○ [related to genes/set point]

● adjustment to external circumstances

● 'hedonic treadmill'

● *the more one has the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs* (Durkheim, [1895] 1950)

● human adaptation is astonishing:

○ winning millions in a lottery, losing limbs, etc

○ about 1b people live in poverty and they somehow manage and don't commit suicide; people can adapt to just about anything

needs/livability theory (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt, 1995)

- humans, like other animals have certain needs
- physiological needs like water, food, sleep; and other needs:
  ○ eg contact with other living organisms (biophilia, social capital, nature, etc)
  ○ and higher (human) needs eg belonging, selfactualization
- kind of like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- if needs are satisfied, then happiness follows
- then there are attr of places, environment, or ecology (weather!)
- if it is "livable" then happiness follows

comparisons/discrepancies

- multiple discrepancy theory (Michalos, 1985)

- social comparison, eg co-workers, high school friends, relatives

- comparison to various standards, eg clothes, car expected in a given profession

- over-time: your swb now is determined by how you were doing in the past and what you expect in the future

○ eg losing may be more felt than gaining (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979)

- "it is better to be a big frog in a small pond than a small frog in a big pond" (Davis, 1966)

happiness just a motivator (Carver and Scheier, 1990)

- SWB merely signals that task at hand has been accomplished
- then it dissipates and pain settles in
  so that the signal is that I can move to another task!
- Earth is not for comfort (or happiness)
- it's for struggle, and pain has its motivating place
- happiness-seeking/pain avoidance is complacence

happiness equation

- happiness =

  achievement or experience − expectations or aspirations

-

- that's one reason why educ doesn't help with happiness

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carpe diem

- "Happiness, not in another place but this place...not for another hour, but this hour." Walt Whitman

money

- Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment. Samuel Johnson, 1776

- People who claim that money can't buy happiness just don't know where to shop. Anonymous

- A wealthy man is one who earns $ 100 a year more than his wife's sister's husband. H.L. Mencken

- If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches but take away from his desires. Epicurus

civilization

- "Happiness," said Freud, "is no cultural value."
- (civilization is based on suppressed or delayed gratification/happiness)
- Freud defined happiness as the "subsequent fulfillment of a prehistoric wish. That is why wealth brings so little happiness: money was not a wish in childhood"

work

- "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful" Herman Cain

- "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied." ?

welfare/redistribution

- No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged.

  Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Bk. 1, Ch. 8.

bad capitalism (more on capital later)

- "Greed, envy, sloth, pride and gluttony: these are not vices anymore. No, these are marketing tools. Lust is our way of life. Envy is just a nudge towards another sale. Even in our relationships we consume each other, each of us looking for what we can get out of the other. Our appetites are often satisfied at the expense of those around us. In a dog-eat-dog world we lose part of our humanity." _{Jon Foreman}

- "If you're not a leftist or socialist before you're 25, you have no heart; if you are one after 25 you have no head"

  (Apocryphal)

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what predicts happiness

- biological needs (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2002)

- personal income (and personal income change) (Diener et al., 1999)

- goals vs. needs (Diener and Seligman, 2004)

- leisure (Diener et al., 1999)

- personal characteristics (Diener et al., 1999)
    - personality
    - education

- social capital ('the need to belong') (Myers, 2000, Diener and Seligman, 2004)
    - religion
    - marriage

what predicts happiness cont'd

- pcgdp, ppp (Alesina and Ferrara, 2000)

- unemployment and inflation rates (Di Tella et al., 2001)

- life expectancy at birth (Di Tella and MacCulloch, 2005)

- income inequality (?)

- political freedom (Veenhoven, 2000)

- political stability and security (Helliwell, 2006)

- gender equality (ratio of average male and female earnings) (?)

- family life (divorce rate) (Di Tella and MacCulloch, 2005)

easterlin's paradox
income in the us, 1947-98 (Diener and Seligman, 2004)
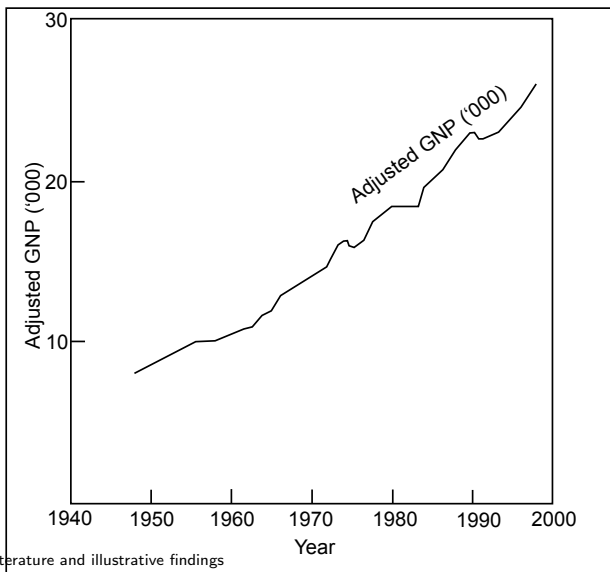
easterlin's paradox
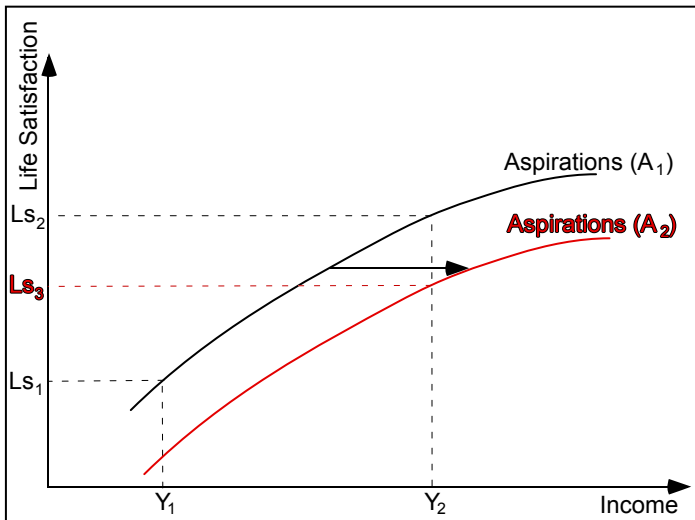happiness in the us, 1947-98 (Diener and Seligman, 2004)
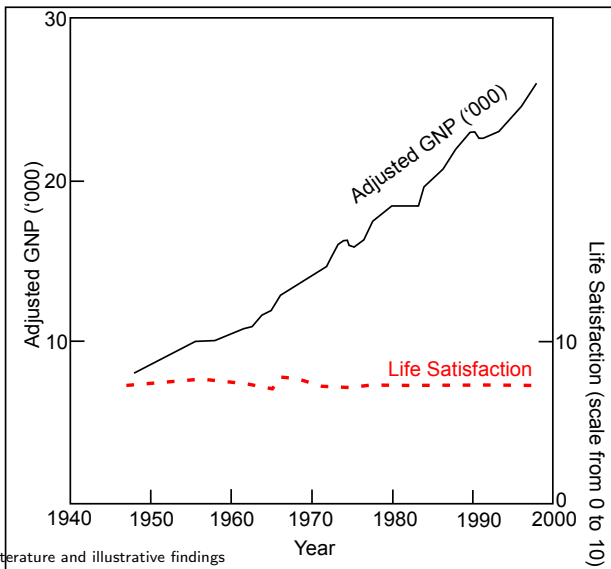
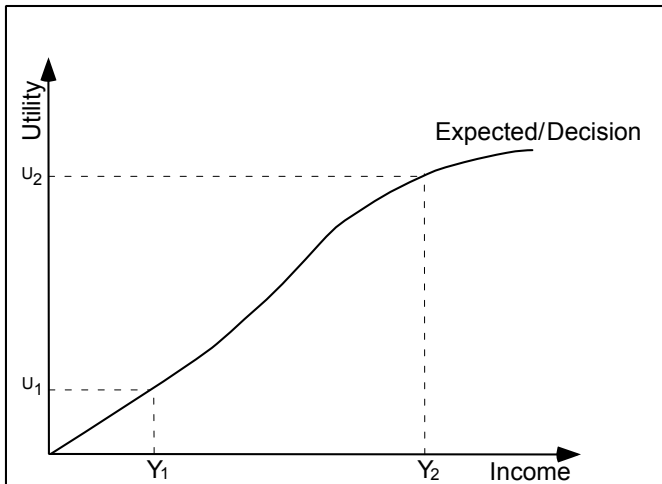## income increases happiness, but...
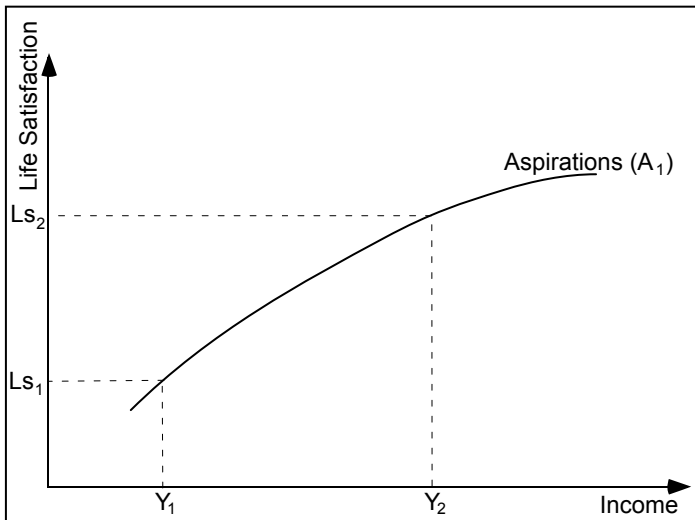
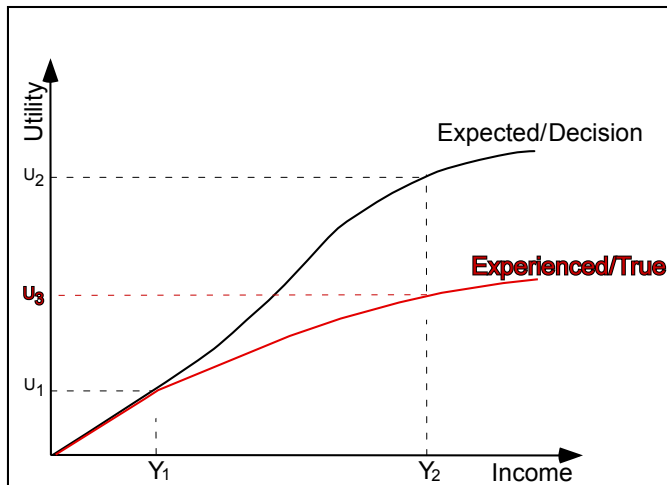# income increases happiness, but…
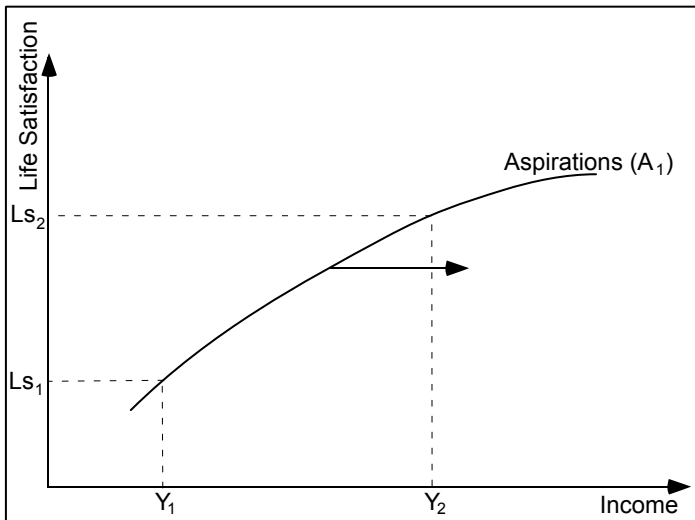
income increases aspirations, too

utility (Kahneman et al., 1997)

- decision utility ≈ expected happiness

  "weight of an outcome in a decision"

- experienced utility ≈ happiness

  "hedonic quality"
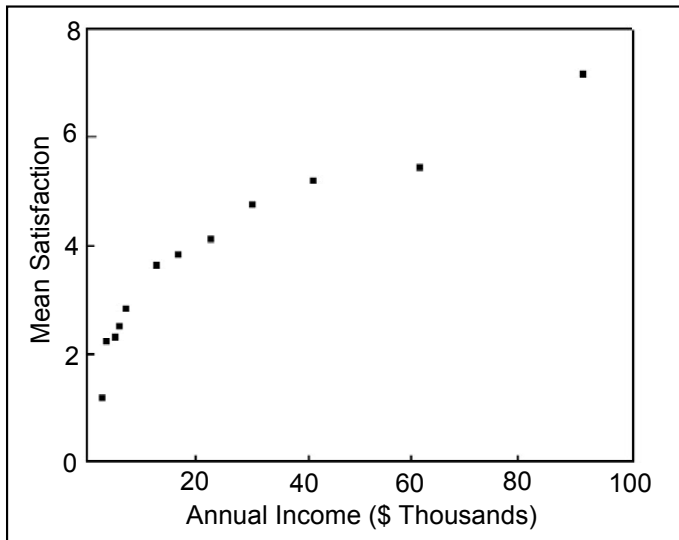
- decision utility ≠ experienced utility
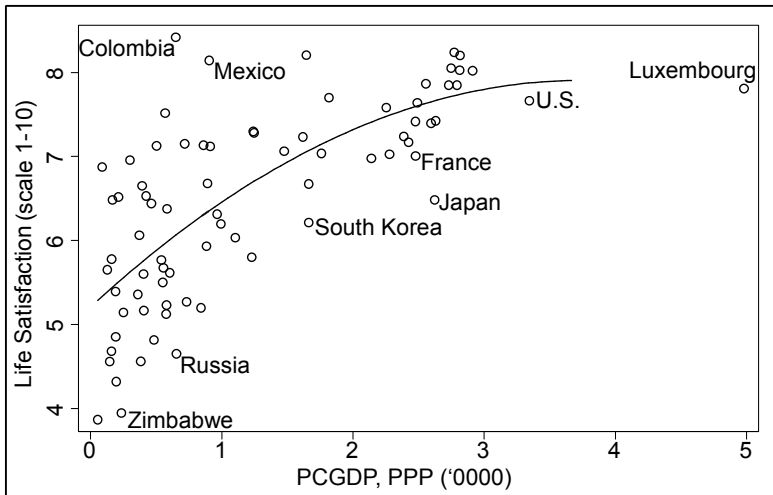
expected vs. experienced utility
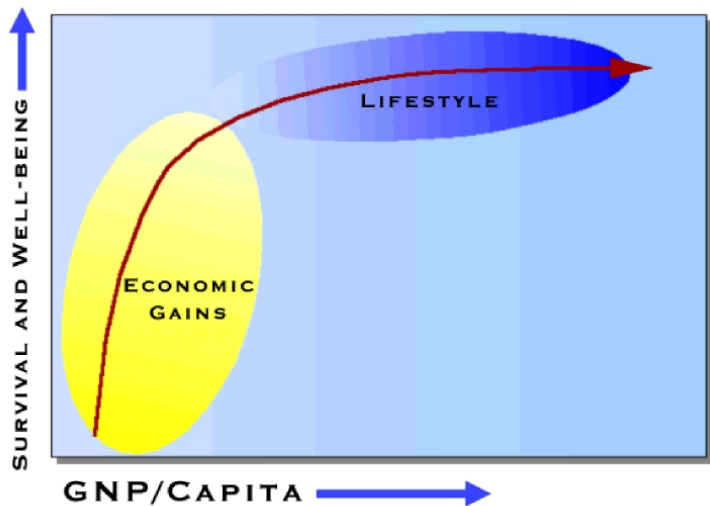
expected vs. experienced utility

income v happiness in the us, 1981-4 (Diener et al., 1993)

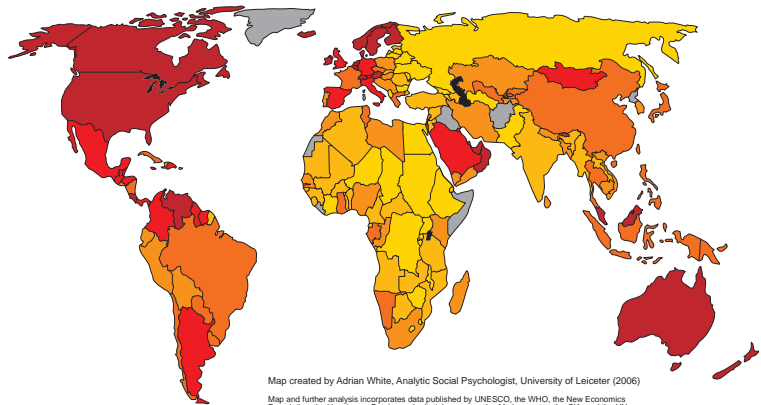# income v happiness in the world, (wvs) 1996-2004

income v happiness across countries


Source: R Ingelhart, 1997

world happiness

A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being:
The First Published Map of World Happiness

Map created by Adrian White, Analytic Social Psychologist, University of Leicester (2006)

Map and further analysis incorporates data published by UNESCO, the WHO, the New Economics
Foundation, the Veenhoven Database, the Latinbarometer, the Afrobarometer, the CIA, and the UN
Human Development Report.

Happy ---------------- Average ---------------- Unhappy

Cartographic Unit • University of Leicester

happiness is contagious (Fowler and Christakis, 2008)
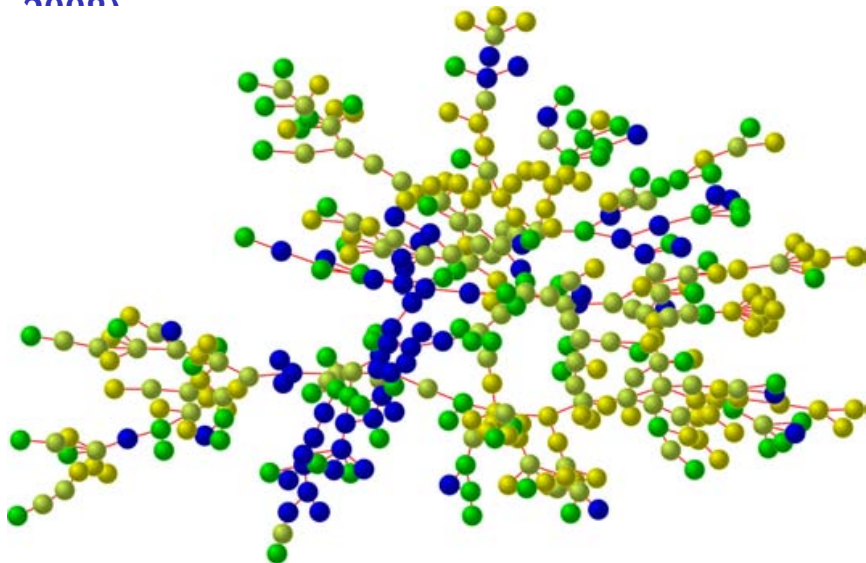
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