

# My Findings: Happiness And Place

Adam Okulicz-Kozaryn, Rutgers-Camden

[adam.okulicz.kozaryn@gmail.com](mailto:adam.okulicz.kozaryn@gmail.com) <http://aok.mooo.com>

## about this project

- ◊ mostly urban sociology and social psychology
- ◊ mostly urbanization and unhappiness: cities are bad
  - published a book; working on 2nd edition
- ◊ comments, please!

palgrave pivot

# HAPPINESS AND PLACE

Why Life Is Better  
Outside of the City

Adam Okulicz-Kozaryn

## outline

why city misery?

my city

exploring urban misery

exploring suburban misery

size fetish

bad city

appendix: statistics, regressions

bonus: endogeneity

## outline

why city misery?

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exploring urban misery

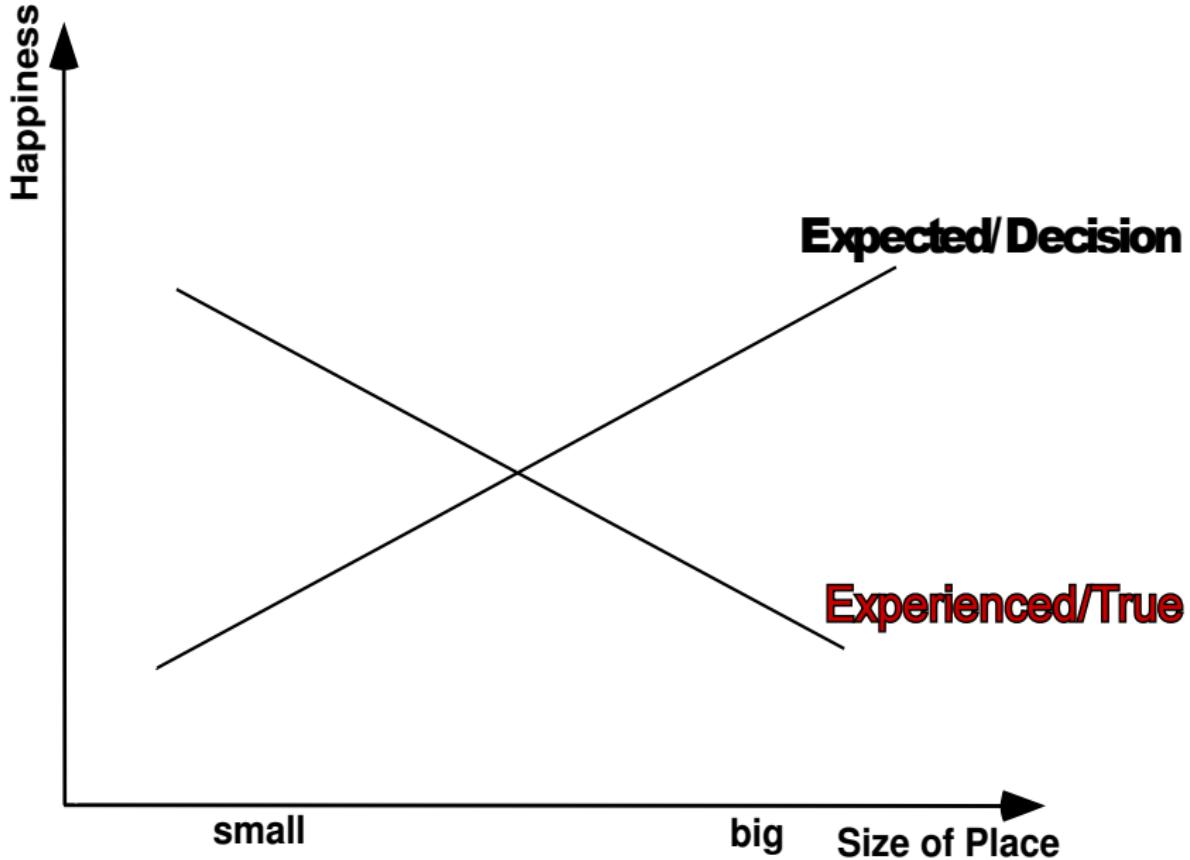
exploring suburban misery

size fetish

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Happiness

**Aspirations ( $A_1$ )**

**Aspirations ( $A_2$ )**

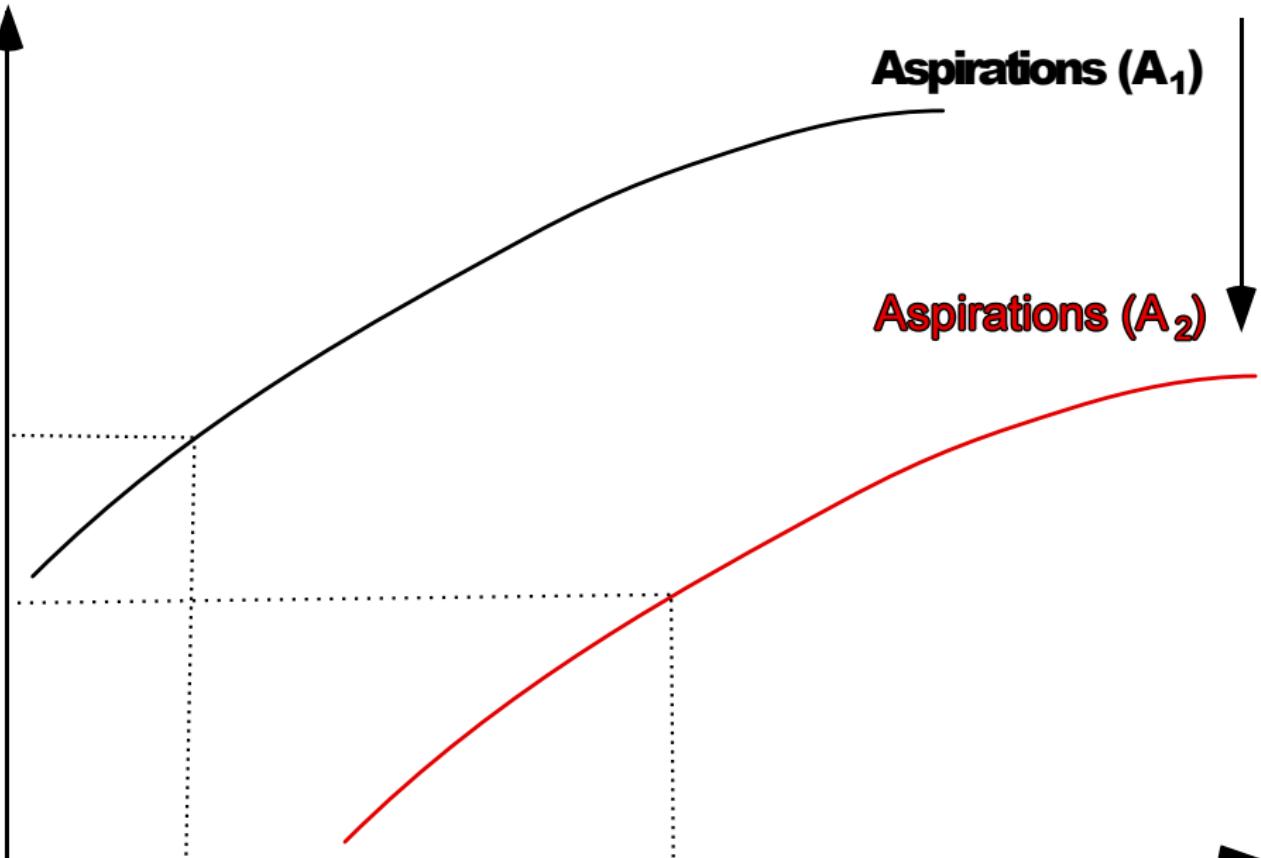
$H_s$

$H_b$

small

big

Size of Place



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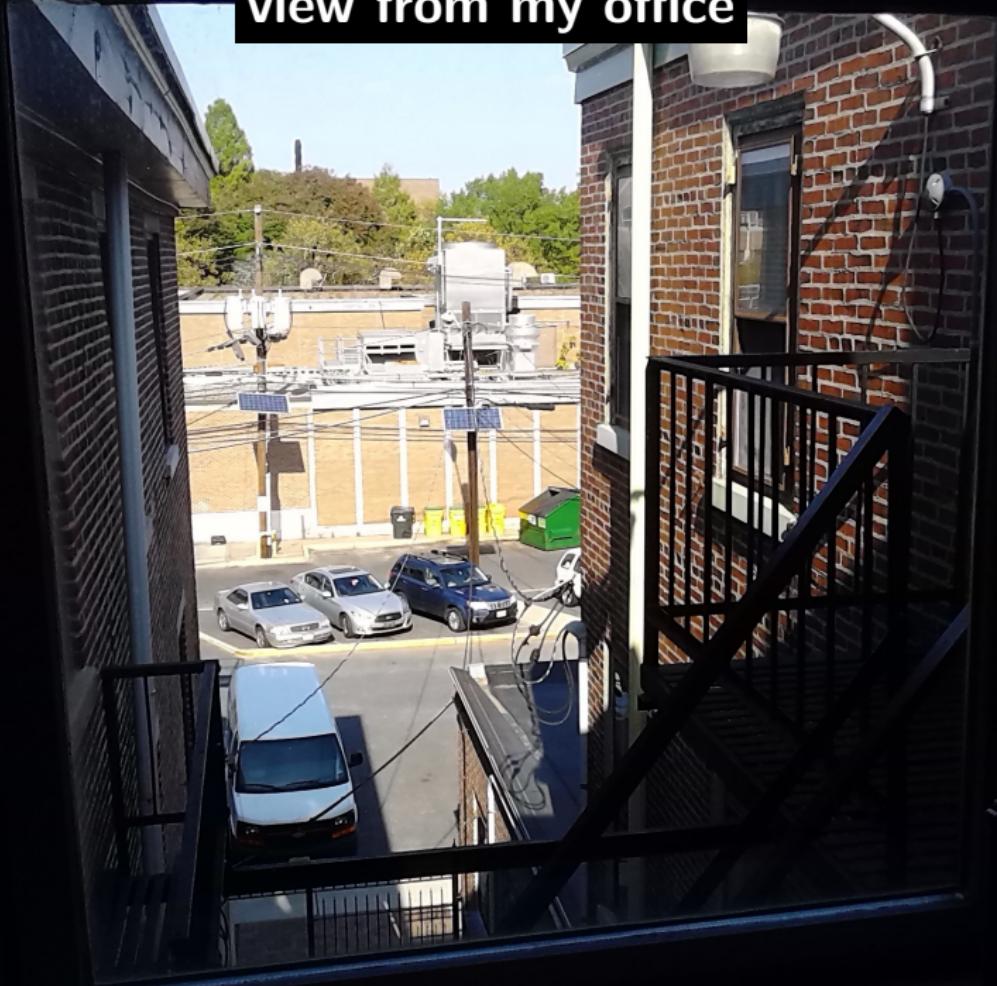
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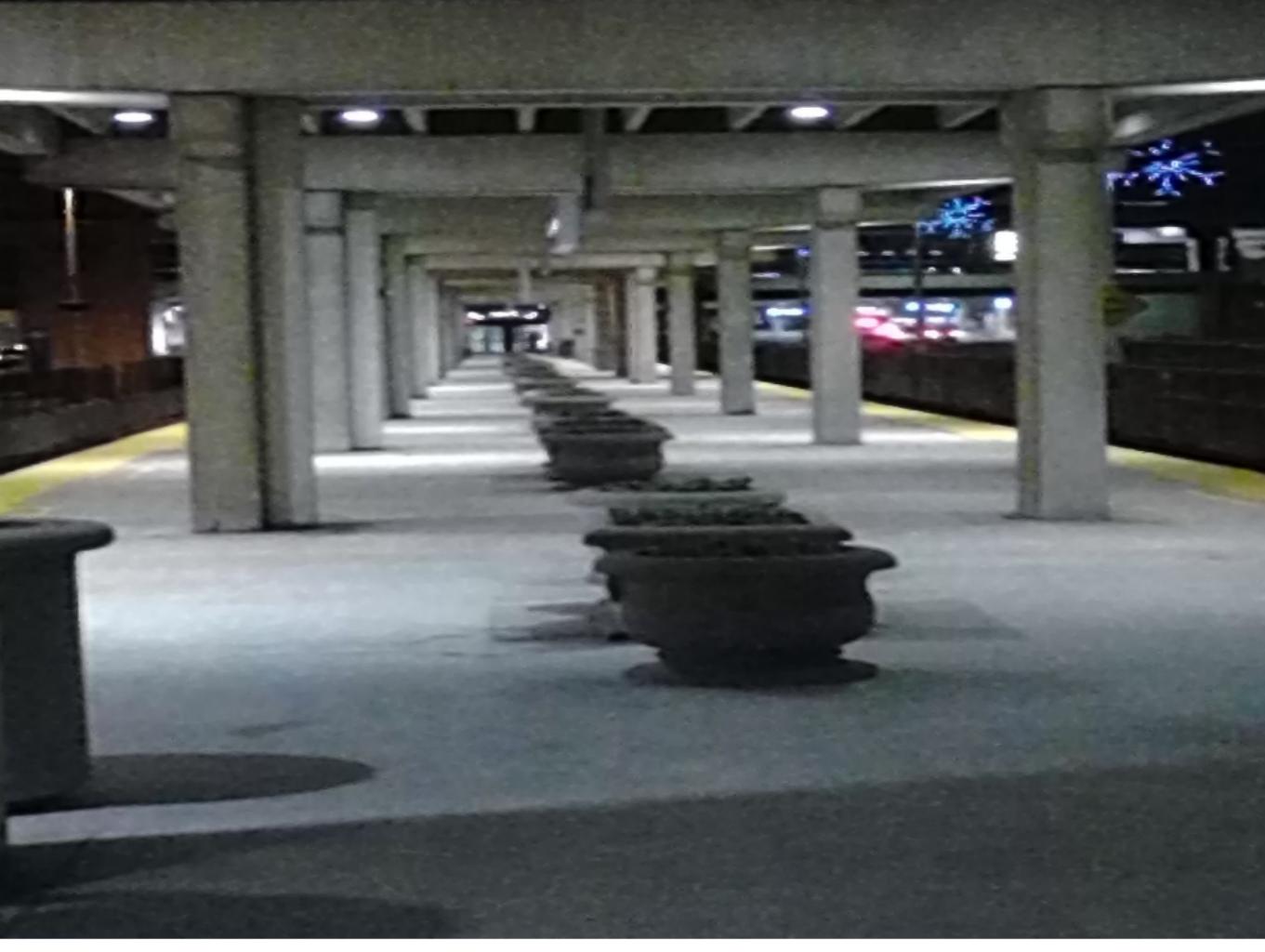
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**view from my office**







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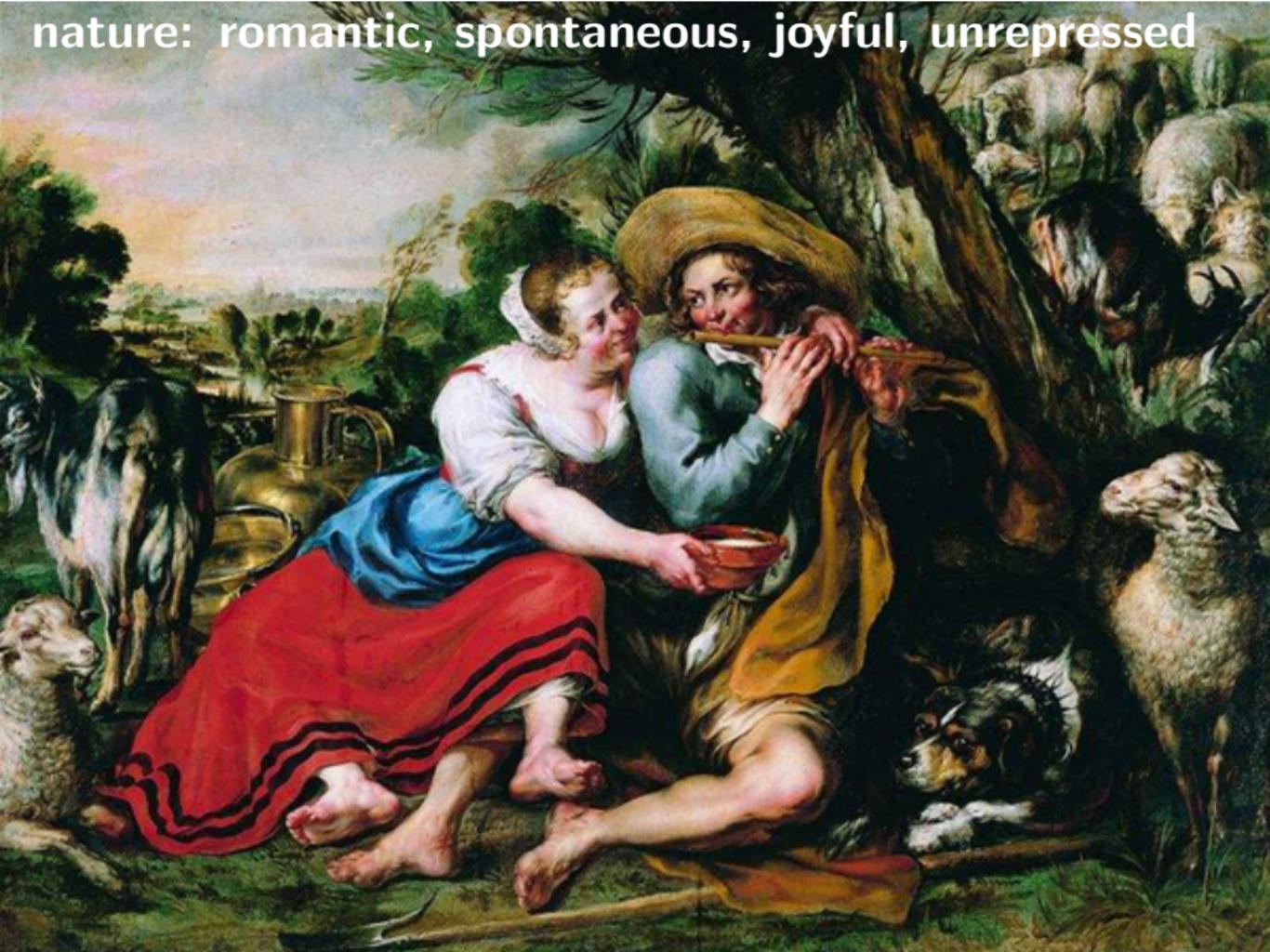
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nature: romantic, spontaneous, joyful, unrepressed



**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**

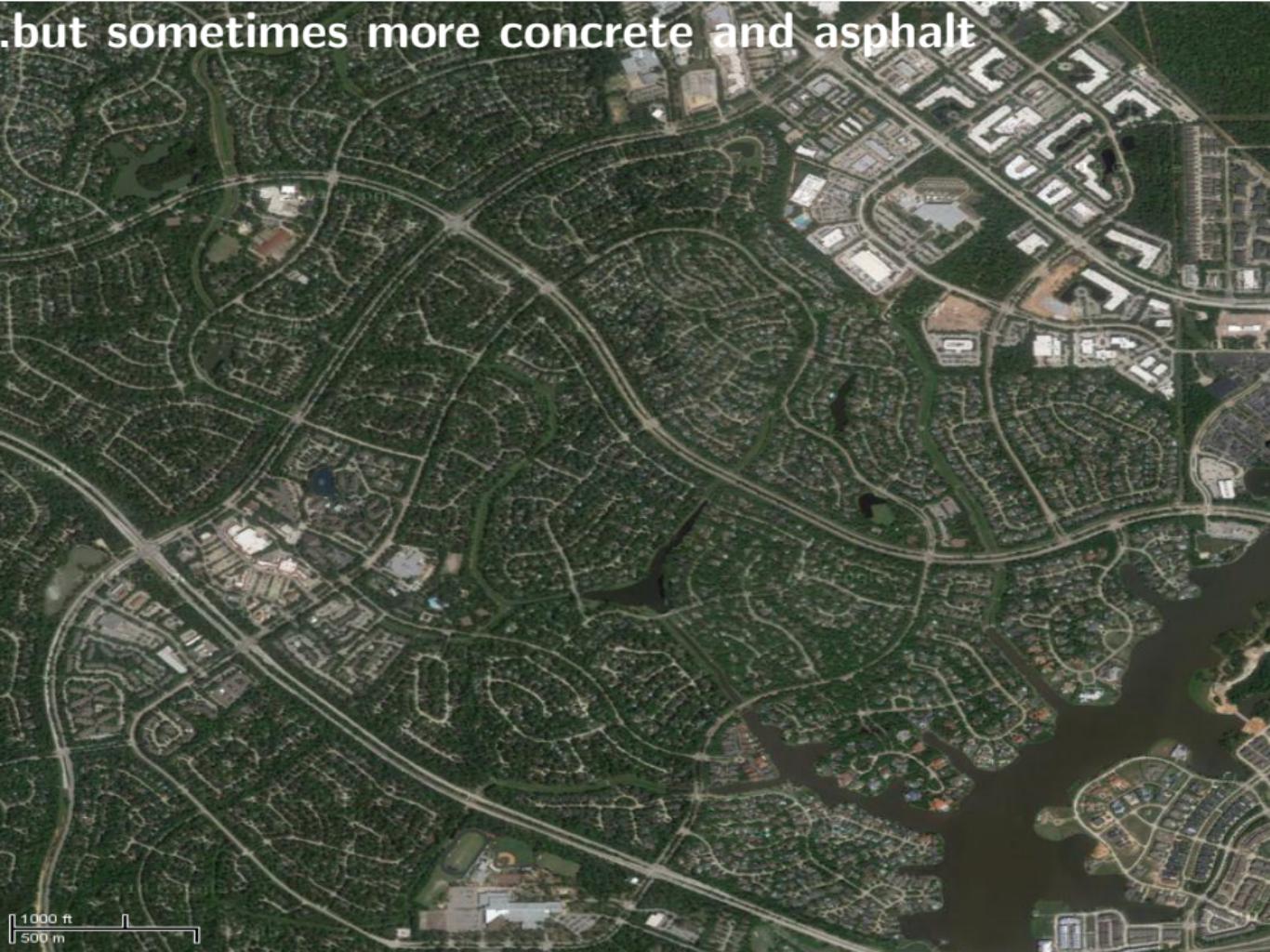


sometimes more nature...



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**



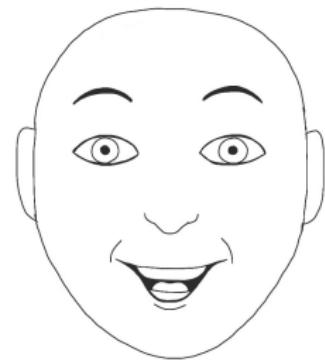
**and rises as tall as the eye can see**





(a) spectacular, awesome, sexy, fantastic

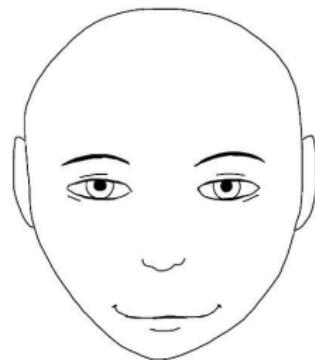
(b) ordinary, dull, normal



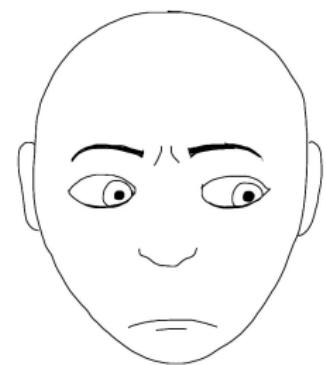
(c) ecstatic



(d) adored



(e) adoring



(f) embarrassed

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**omnipresent: city seduces with its size**



**omnipotent:** power, status, prestige, freedom, etc



Moscow looks like Mordor at night



not much friendlier during the day



a vampire sucking up physical and psychic energy



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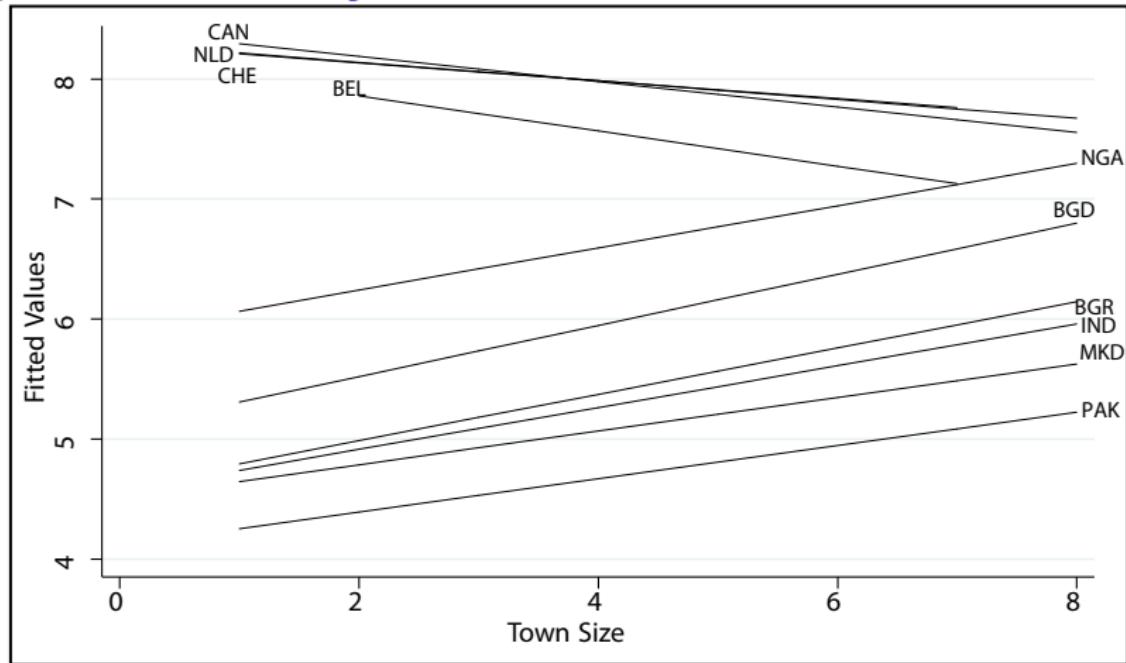
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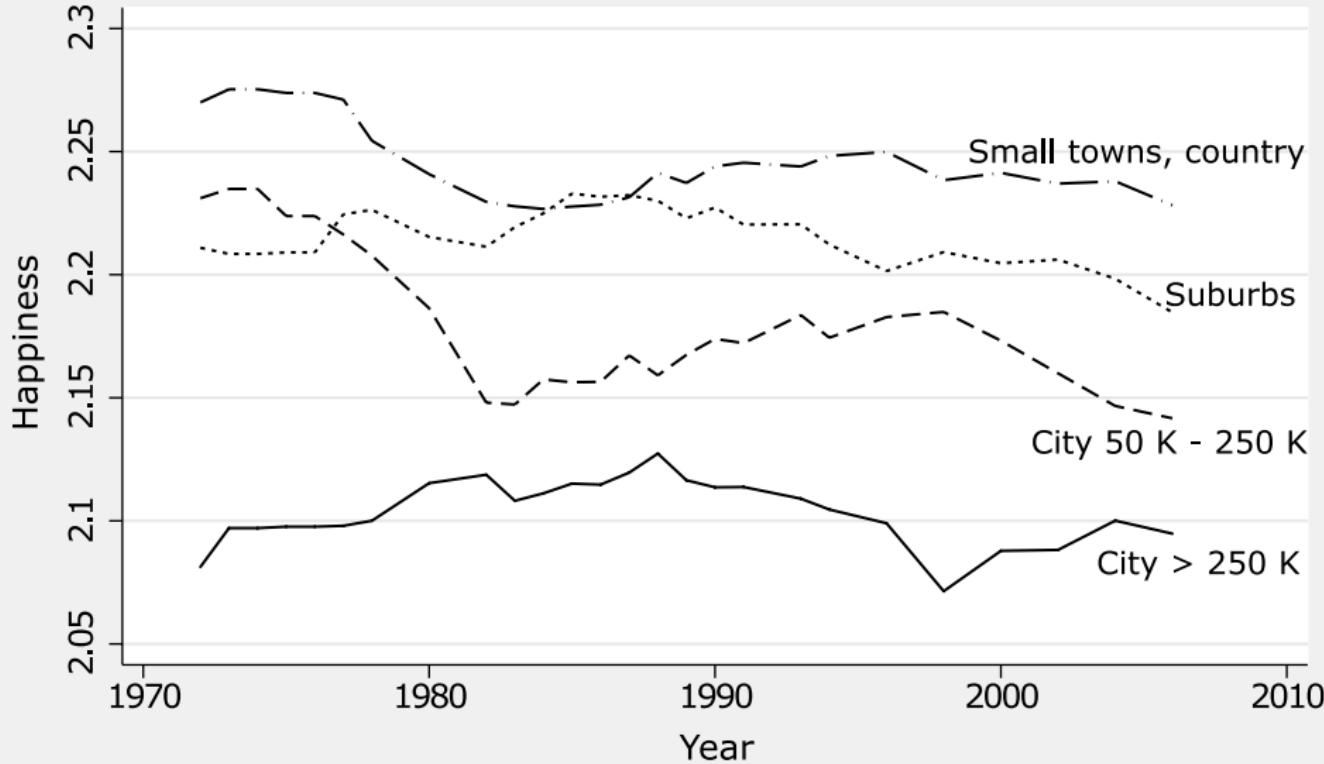
bonus: endogeneity

## a puzzle from my dissertation; 2008!

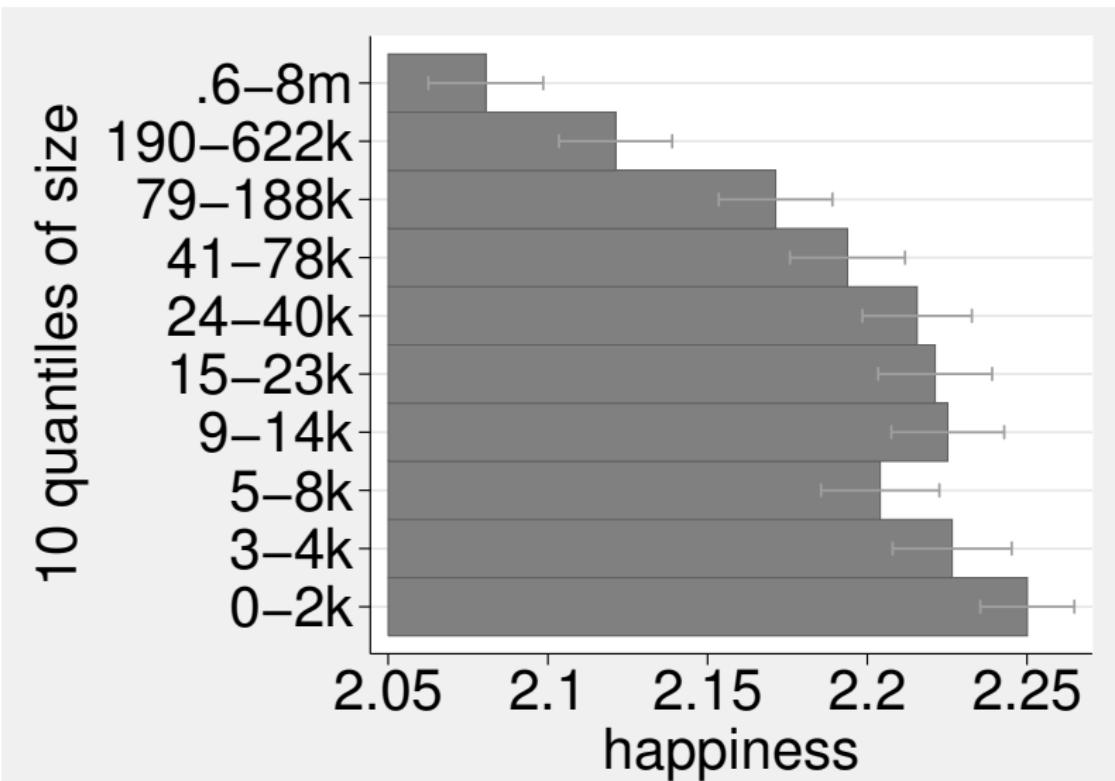


*a hamburger can kill you in NYC and  
save your life in Addis Abeba (?)*

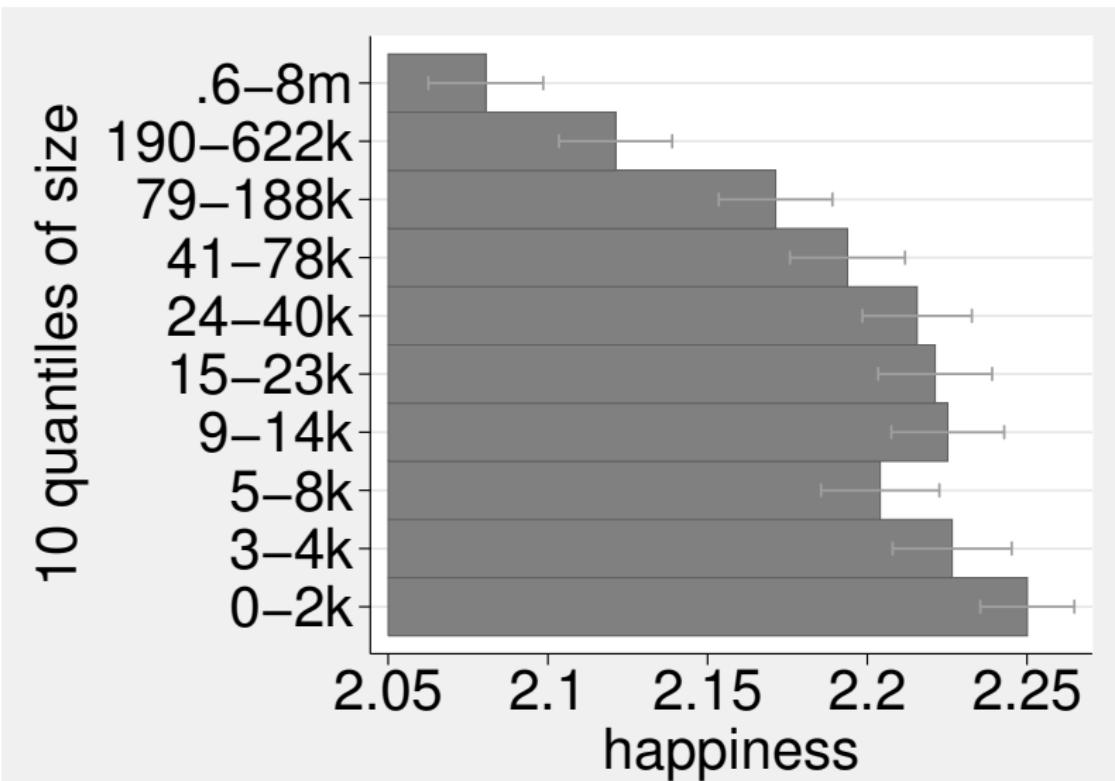
## IIS GSS: happiness and location



## 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	% low birth- weight
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

## 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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