Growing Up in a City Will Make You Unhappy For The Rest of Your Life

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Abstract

This study adds new evidence of urban malaise (unhappiness) hypothesis. A new key finding is added: people who grew up in cities are less happy later in their lives above and beyond unhappiness associated with currently living in a city. Strikingly, the negative effect of urbanicity in one's youth is about as strong statistically and practically (effect size) as effect of urbanicity of current place. We add one more new finding: there may be a happiness benefit to growing up at a farm. The present study is inspired by Lederbogen et al. (2011) who showed that growing up in a city has a negative lasting effect later in person's life. This study concerns the US, and results may not generalize to other, especially developing, countries.

KEYWORDS: SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING, HAPPINESS, LIFE SATISFACTION, CITY, URBANISM, MIGRATION, GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY (GSS)

What we know so far: urban malaise

There is a longstanding thesis of urban misery or malaise. Early sociologists theorized and observed urban malaise (Simmel 1903, Tönnies [1887] 2002, Park 1915, Wirth 1938). The thesis of urban malaise is well articulated in classic "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (Wirth 1938). Sociology interest in urbanism and wellbeing, however, ended early, too. The topic was abandoned in 1970s with a series of works by Fischer (1972, 1973, 1975, 1982). While sociology has abandoned this line of research, other disciplines continued taking various perspectives on the topic and mostly focusing on size of a place. By now a consensus has emerged confirming early sociological research: people are unhappy in cities (Balducci and Checchi 2009, Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2009, 2011, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2015, 2016, Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2016, Morrison 2015, Morrison and Weckroth 2017). There is also a consensus that the opposite of urbanicity, naturalness, is related

to happiness (Pretty 2012, Frumkin 2001, Wheeler et al. 2012, White et al. 2013a,b, Tesson 2013, Maller et al. 2006, Berman et al. 2008, 2012).

Urban malaise is universal in the developed world.[1] The largest American city, New York City, is the least happy or one of the least happy places in America (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2016, Senior 2006). London is the largest and least happy place in the UK (Office for National Statistics 2011, Chatterji 2013). Toronto, the largest metropolitan area in Canada, is second least happy in Canada, only Vancouver (third metropolitan area) is less happy (Lu et al. 2015). Helsinki is the largest and least happy place in Finland (Morrison 2015). Bucharest is the largest and least happy place in Romania (Lenzi and Perucca 2016). Australia's largest city, Sydney, is least happy (cited in Morrison 2011), and so forth. Arguably it is not self-selection–it is not that unhappy people move to cities. If anything, people with higher ability (Jokela 2014) move to cities (for education and jobs) and then out of cities to raise family, and it may be happier people that are willing to migrate in general (Bartram 2013). Urban unhappiness is not only due to urban problems such as crime and poverty. Cities themselves, their core defining characteristics, size and density, are related to unhappiness (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2016).

Perhaps, the best example of urban malaise is Singapore, by many standards, one of the best, if not the best place in the World. It has World's third highest (after Qatar and Luxembourg) Gross Domestic Product per Capita Purchasing Power Parity adjusted (IMF 2017). It has also third highest (after Monaco and Japan) life expectancy in the World (Central Intelligence Agency 2017), second highest economic freedom (Heriatge 2017). Its kids score best on educational tests (Coughlan 2017), it is making greatest progress in health (Fullman et al. 2017), has the World's fastest internet (McSpadden 2015). It even has world's strongest passport (Chandran 2017). In short, one could say that Singapore is one of the best, if not the best place in the World.

Of course, a distinctive feature of Singapore is that it is a nation-city: it is almost only urban, a third (after

[1]Some social groups, however, are not least happy in the largest cities–American Millenials is one example (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2018a).

Monaco and Macao) most dense country in the World (`https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp`). And according to Glaeser (2011), it is triumphant: "Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier."

Surely, if Singapore is not the very happiest country in the World, it must be in top 1 percent or at very least top 5 percent. It doesn't make it to the top quartile (Veenhoven 1995).[2]

Urban migrants

There are studies tracing person's Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) as she moves. And there is a substantial economic literature on rural-urban migration (e.g., Lall et al. 2006)–but it doesn't concern itself with SWB. Most SWB-across-urbanicity-migration studies studies look at rural-urban migration, and only one study at urban-rural migration (Alcock et al. 2014). There are also other SWB-across-urbanicity-migration studies but they are not systematic. For instance, Tesson (2013) describes his own story–he moved from urban world to wilderness and became happy. Pretty (2012) discusses similar cases, e.g., people who first suffered from an illness and then recovered faster in greener area.

There are many movies telling a story of a usually young, energetic and ambitious person, who was born and raised "in the middle of nowhere," in a village or small town, or perhaps in a larger town but in a "rural state" such as Wyoming or Nebraska, and then she wants to be better than that and do something with her life, achieve the American Dream, and what she does? She moves to a big city, typically New York, Los Angeles, Chicago or one of the handful of others, and then she faces some hardship, usually makes it, but then realizes she's unhappy there and moves back to the middle of nowhere where she came from and leads a happy life there.

City dwellers may appear happy and small area dwellers may appear unhappy–yet city happiness is fake–it is just a smile (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017), pride (Balducci and Checchi 2009), or a similar

[2]Veenhoven (1995) is a generic reference to the World Data Base of Happiness. Actual data are at `http://www.worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/nat_fp.php?mode=8`.

appearance, slapped to a face, but urbanite typically is miserable (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2015). The problem is that a poor rural person may think that urban flourishing is real, and then she migrates to a city, and then often ends up unhappy, too. Worse, she may falsely think she is better off in a city, while she is not–it may be false consciousness. Indeed, there is evidence supporting such bias (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017, Balducci and Checchi 2009). Rural-urban migrants think they are happier after the move, and yet their mean happiness scores are lower than those of rural dwellers (at least in China) (Knight and Gunatilaka 2010). Other Chinese evidence suggests that rural-urban migration may work for one's SWB as long as the city is not large (Chen et al. 2015). US urban immigrants are also often unhappy–indeed, they were labelled "the marginal man" (Park 1928). Immigrants move largely into cities, and overall they tend not to do well (Malanga 2006, Hymowitz 2017).One problem with largest cities, especially recently, is that most people cannot afraid to live there comfortably (Florida 2016).

Migrants are usually arguably irrational–because people who have migrated, tend to be unhappy (Knight and Gunatilaka 2010, Bartram 2014, Baltatescu 2007, Hendriks et al. 2014, Jong et al. 2002)–perhaps transitoriness,[3] detachment, too much Gesellschaft (Tönnies [1887] 2002) kill happiness; migrant is a just a marginal man (Park 1928).

In general, locals tend to be happier than migrants–locals spend time on more happiness generating activities than internal migrants (Hendriks et al. 2014). Migrants often increase heterogeneity and heterogeneity has many negative consequences in general (Alesina et al. 1999, Alesina and Ferrara 2000, Putnam 2007), including lowered SWB (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2010, 2011, Herbst and Lucio 2014, Vogt Yuan 2007, Postmes and Branscombe 2002).

There is also a handful of studies using the same data and variable that we use and studying how upbringing might have affected tolerance (Stephan and McMullin 1982, Tuch 1987). Following these studies, size of place where one grew up may affect one's happiness later in life just as it affects tolerance. The logic

[3]Per turnover/stability: in poor areas turnover is good; in rich it is bad for happiness (Ross et al. 2000). And there are many studies focusing on the role of relative deprivation for migration (e.g., Stark and Taylor 1991), but they are beyond the scope.

is as follows: size of a place is not only a situational but also a socialization variable. That is, people are not only unhappy in cities because they live there but also because they learned certain ways of life by growing up there. Socialization (social learning) is extensive in humans, because humans have long juvenile period during which childhood play and socialization prepares them for adult roles in society (Eagly and Wood 2010). "You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy."

What we do not know yet

There are important gaps in our knowledge–again most studies take static contemporary view–how urbanicity now affects SWB now. Line of research about migration across places of differing urbanicity mostly does not take into account SWB, and studies that do, almost only consider rural-urban migration and only one study considers urban-rural migration (Alcock et al. 2014). Hence, there are either studies about current urbanicity or about migration across degrees of urbanicity. Our study is not about migration. It is about urbanicity in childhood, where a person grew up, and how it affects her SWB later in life. No study so far has considered jointly urbanicity of a place where a person has grown up and current urbanicity: does urbanicity of a place where a person has grown up affect her SWB above and beyond urbanicity of a place where she currently resides? This study will try to answer this question. This study is inspired by Lederbogen et al. (2011) who showed that growing up in a city has a lasting negative effect later in person's life.

Data and model

We use the US General Social Survey (GSS) cumulative dataset containing about 60,000 observations from 1972 to 2016 from

`gssdataexplorer.norc.org`. GSS is collected face-to-face and is nationally representative. Since 1994 GSS is collected every other year (earlier mostly annually). The advantage of GSS is that it contains a question

about person's residence where she grew up, variable RES16: "Which of the categories on this card comes closest to the type of place you were living in when you were 16 years old?":

1. nonfarm (or country)
2. farm
3. town $<$ 50,000
4. 50,000 - 250,000
5. big-city suburb
6. city $>$ 250,000

One obvious caveat is that a person could have moved during her childhood. We make an assumption that a place where a person lived when she was 16, is a place where she grew up, which sometimes is not the case. Still, the variable arguably has adequate precision: it captures urbanicity for at least a significant part, and usually majority of childhood–it is unlikely that a person lived in a place of very different size for most of her childhood than a place where she lived when she was 16. Other studies using this variable also make this assumption (Stephan and McMullin 1982, Tuch 1987).

Urbanicity is measured using a set of dummies for XNORCSIZ variable which provides a fine classification according to density and size. Additional results using alternative urbanicity measures are in appendix.

All variables are defined in table 1 below. Table 1 also lists typical controls used in the SWB literature (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2016, Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). Distributions of all variables are shown in appendix in figure 1.

Table 1: Variable definitions.

name	description
SWB	GENERAL HAPPINESS "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?"
place when 16 yo	"30. Which of the categories on this card comes closest to the type of place you were living in when you were 16 years old?"
xnorcsiz	EXPANDED N.O.R.C. SIZE CODE (see appendix for details)
family income in $1986, millions	Income variables (INCOME72 , INCOME , INCOME77 , INCOME82 , INCOME86 , INCOME91 , INCOME98 , INCOME06) are recoded in six-digit numbers and converted to 1986 dollars. The collapsed numbers above are for convenience of display only. Since this variable is based on categorical data, income is not continuous, but based on categorical mid-points and imputations. For details see GSS Methodological Report No. 64.
female	RESPONDENT'S SEX
unemployed	"Last week were you working full time, part time, going to school, keeping house, or what?" "Unemployed, laid off, looking for work"
age	age of respondent
highest year of school completed	HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED A. "What is the highest grade in elementary school or high school that (you/your father/ your mother/your [husband/wife]) finished and got credit for? " CODE EXACT GRADE.; B. IF FINISHED 9th-12th GRADE OR DK*: "Did (you/he/she) ever get a high school diploma or a GED certificate?" [SEE D BELOW.]; C. "Did (you/he/she) complete one or more years of college for credit–not including schooling such as business college, technical or vocational school?" IF YES: "How many years did (you/he/she) complete?"
white	RACE "What race do you consider yourself?"
married	MARITAL STATUS "Are you currently–married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?" NOTE: variable recoded to 1 if married, 0 otherwise
number of children	"How many children have you ever had? Please count all that were born alive at any time (including any you had from a previous marriage)."

Also, there are regional or cultural differences in just about anything, hence, we include dummies for census regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, E. Nor. Central, W. Nor. Central, South Atlantic, E. Sou. Central, W. Sou. Central, Mountain, and Pacific. Since we use pooled GSS data, we include year dummies.

We use ordinary least squares (OLS) to analyze our data. Although OLS assumes cardinality of the outcome variable, and happiness is clearly an ordinal variable, OLS is an appropriate estimation method to use in this case. Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters (2004) showed that results are substantially the same to those from discrete models, and OLS has become the default method in happiness research (Blanchflower and Oswald 2011). Theoretically, while there is still debate about the cardinality of SWB, there are strong arguments to treat it as a cardinal variable (Ng 1996, 1997, 2011). Nonetheless, as a robustness check we also ran multinomial logit regressions, and included the results, which are substantially the same, in the appendix.

Results

All results are in table 2. First column is a simple regression of SWB on PLACE WHEN 16 YO. Base case is "country, nonfarm" Only two extreme categories are significant: "farm" is positive and "250k-" is negative. Addition of income in column a2 makes all the categories negative except "farm"–growing up in any larger place than "nonfarm" or "farm" is associated with lower SWB. Also, all coefficients are now larger. Addition of other sociodemographic controls in a3 diminishes effect sizes only slightly. So does controlling for region and year dummies in a4. Last addition is XNORCSIZ in a5: now, again, as in the beginning, only extreme categories "farm" and "250k-" remain significant. Effect of current place, XNORCSIZ, is as expected (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2016), the larger places are significantly less happy.

What is worth highlighting, and what is arguably unexpected, is that the statistical significance and effect size of PLACE WHEN 16 YO is about as large as that of the current urbanicity XNORCSIZ.

It is instructive to focus on an interplay between PLACE WHEN 16 YO and XNORCSIZ–we will approach model elaboration differently–we start with XNORCSIZ and then see how it changes when adding PLACE WHEN 16 YO in columns b1 and b2. Comparison of a1 and b1 reveals that the largest places now, "gt 250k," have about twice as strong effect on SWB as largest places "250k-" when one was 16. Controlling for PLACE WHEN 16 YO in b2 somewhat attenuates estimates on XNORCSIZ as compared to b1. And again, in full specification a5, the effect sizes become about the same. Robustness checks and supplementary results are in appendix.

Table 2: OLS regressions of SWB. Beta (fully standardized) coefficients.

	a1	a2	a3	a4	a5	b1	b2
place when 16 yo (base: country, nonfarm):							
farm	0.028***	0.032***	0.025***	0.018**	0.017**		0.027***
-50k	-0.001	-0.012+	-0.014*	-0.014*	-0.012+		0.004
50k-250k	-0.005	-0.018**	-0.013*	-0.012*	-0.008		0.006
city sub	0.006	-0.021***	-0.017**	-0.013*	-0.009		0.014*
250k-	-0.035***	-0.047***	-0.031***	-0.027***	-0.020**		-0.013*
xnorcsiz (base: country):							
lt 2.5k					0.008	0.007	0.007
2.5-10k					-0.002	-0.009+	-0.007
10-50k					0.000	-0.011*	-0.008
uninc med					-0.001	0.004	0.006
uninc lrg					-0.011*	-0.005	-0.001
med sub					-0.011+	-0.014*	-0.010+
lrg sub					-0.018*	-0.025***	-0.017*
50-250k					-0.012+	-0.038***	-0.033***
gt 250k					-0.024***	-0.078***	-0.067***
family income in $1986, millions		0.180***	0.097***	0.100***	0.102***		
female			0.031***	0.031***	0.031***		
unemployed			-0.060***	-0.058***	-0.058***		
age			-0.346***	-0.335***	-0.333***		
age squared			0.373***	0.367***	0.366***		
highest year of school completed			0.066***	0.069***	0.070***		
white			0.047***	0.046***	0.043***		
married			0.208***	0.206***	0.204***		
number of children			-0.019***	-0.020***	-0.021***		
year and region dummies	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no
N	57613	51952	51687	51687	51687	57709	57613

*** p<0.001 ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1; robust std err

Conclusion and discussion

This study is not about migration; it is about urbanicity in childhood, where a person grew up, and how it affects her SWB later in life. Findings are striking: the effect of urbanicity of a place where a person grew up is as strong as the effect of current urbanicity.

The study has found that size of a place where one grew up affects her SWB in addition to urbanicity of the current place. But also there is a flipside: this study also found that current size of a place affects our happiness net of where we grew up and what we may understand as normal based on childhood experience. This is an important point: people in largest cities are unhappy regardless of where they gre up.

Urbanization is arguably the most significant change of human habitat in our species history. It is happening now at an unprecedented scale: each year cities balloon by tens of millions of people (`https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup`). It is probably easier to imagine and understand by giving some thought to cement

use in China, country that currently urbanizes most people: between 1900 and 1999 the US consumed 4,500 million tones of cement; between 2011 and 2014 China consumed 6,500 million tones of cement (Harvey 2016).

Perhaps even more worrying is academic support for urbanization. One Harvard professor has recently written a book titled "Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier" (Glaeser 2011). It turns out that not only living in a city is associated with unhappiness, but even worse: growing up in a city will make you unhappy for the rest of your life.

Changes in one's neural processing are one pathway between urban upbringing and adult wellbeing (Lederbogen et al. 2011). Another pathway may simply have to do with negative consequences of urbanism: isolation, anomie, deviance, vice, crime, conspicuous consumption, pollution, noise, crowding, and poverty[4] take the toll on children who grow up there. Still, it is probably largely unexpected that the urban upbringing disadvantage is felt later in adult life–it should be a sobering finding especially amidst current pro-urban fashion.

Size of a place is clearly an ecological and situational influence on SWB as shown by previous research. This study's results are consistent with hypothesis that size of a place has some socialization influence on SWB, if such socialization results in lowered SWB. Results are against socialization hypothesis that urban upbringing makes one happier in today's urban world, say by preparing one better to live in cities. There is no such adjustment. Neither farm upbringing decreases one's happiness in today's urban world. If anything, it actually makes one happier later in life. The positive effect of growing up on a farm is not robust to inclusion of additional controls in appendix, however. Hence, caution in interpretation is needed.

Another area to be cautious is over-time changes–the rural advantage may be slipping away and rural misery coming in as the smaller places are being forgotten and left behind (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2018b,a, Hanson 2015). It is hard to imagine flourishing happy rural life amids increasing urban assault not only grabbing

[4]For a classic statement of urban problems see Wirth (1938), Park (1915), Park et al. ([1925] 1984), Tönnies ([1887] 2002), Simmel (1903), and for modern statements see White and White (1977) and Okulicz-Kozaryn (2015).

more land but also forcing urban way of life and killing rural jobs. It is perhaps easiest to understand the sentiment in words of a rural person–one rural Californian complains:

> We run this state like it's one size fits all. You can't do that [...]
>
> In the rural parts of the state we drive more miles, we drive older cars, our economy is an agriculture- and resource-based economy that relies on tractors. You cant move an 80,000-pound load in an electric truck.
>
> They've devastated ag jobs, timber jobs, mining jobs with their environmental regulations, so, yes, we have a harder time sustaining the economy, and therefore there's more people that are in a poorer situation. (Fuller 2017)

There is a curious result of greater happiness later in life for people who grew up at a farm. It is not necessarily unexpected–farm kids after learn real life skills and are "tougher" than suburban kids.[5] At the same time, farm life does not corrupt and make one deviant as cities do (Wirth 1938, Park et al. [1925] 1984). Yet, these days farming not only does not make much money but typically looses money and New York Times is accordingly warning "Don't Let Your Children Grow Up to Be Farmers" (2017)–not only urbanization is rampant, but also farming is struggling–unfortunately, capitalism and market economy often, if not usually, promote ways of life that do not lead to happiness (Kasser 2003, Marcuse 2015, Lane 2000, Scitovsky 1976, Klein 2014).[6]

It is worth reciting that while urbanites are less happy than rural folks, they think that they are more happy (at least in China) (Knight and Gunatilaka 2010). Part of the explanation may be money illusion–tendency to think in nominal rather than relative terms (Shafir et al. 1997)–people are lured to cities with higher earnings, but they do not realize the cost of living. In a similar way, many people want to live in California thinking about life style, climate and other amenities, but not appreciating living expenses, and

[5] For instance, see a series of simple and short but arguably to the point articles: Farmer Talk (2014c,b,a).

[6] Also see Kasser and Ryan (1993), Schmuck et al. (2000), Okulicz-Kozaryn and da Rocha Valente (2017), Harvey (2014, 2016), Stefan (2010), Vohs et al. (2006), Schor (2008), Engels ([1845] 1987), LaMothe (2016). Also note that in American past, when there was less commodification, commerce, market economy and capitalism, farming was a more well-regraded pursuit (De Crevecoeur 1981, Fischer 1991).

accordingly California is one of the lest happy states in the US (Oswald and Wu 2009, Schkade and Kahneman 1998).

Urbanicity and SWB research is important–it helps a person to make a decision–what would happen if I lived in urban or rural area. You can call it evidence based pursuit of happiness. If you care about your own happiness, and happiness of your children, you should avoid cities. Of course, city avoidance is not a new strategy–despite rampant urbanism, Americans have preferred less dense areas (Fuguitt and Brown 1990, Fuguitt and Zuiches 1975) and they still do (YouGov 2012). They tend to settle outside of cities, but close to them, and hence, suburbanization, which in effect, at the end, just enlarges existing cities. Perhaps, the best solution to fight ever-present and ever-increasing urbanization is to consume less and degrow economy–for discussion see (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2015, Kallis et al. 2012).

ONLINE APPENDIX

[note: this section will NOT be a part of the final version of the manuscript, but will be available online instead]

Variables' definitions, coding and distributions

```
Variable xnorcsiz : EXPANDED N.O.R.C. SIZE CODE
Literal Question
NORC SIZE OF PLACE
PostQuestion Text
a A suburb is defined as any incorporated area or unincorporated area
of 1,000+ (or listed as such in the U.S. Census PC (1)-A books) within
the boundaries of an SMSA but not within the limits of a central city
of the SMSA. Some SMSAs have more than one central city, e.g.,
Minneapolis-St. Paul. In these cases, both cities are coded as central
cities.
```

b If such an instance were to arise, a city of 50,000 or over which is not part of an SMSA would be coded '7'.

c Unincorporated areas of over 2,499 are treated as incorporated areas of the same size. Unincorporated areas under 1,000 are not listed by the Census and are treated here as part of the next larger civil division, usually the township.

The source of the data is the 1970 U.S. Census population figures published in the PC (1) -A series, Tables 6 and 10. Practically, the codes '6' and '10' are localities not listed in Table 6 (Population of Incorporated Places and Unincorporated Places over 1,000). For the 1980 frame cases analogous tables from the 1980 Census were used.

Descriptive Text

See Appendix T, GSS Methodological Report No. 4.

The following figures show variable distributions. If a variable has more than 10 categories it is classified into bins.

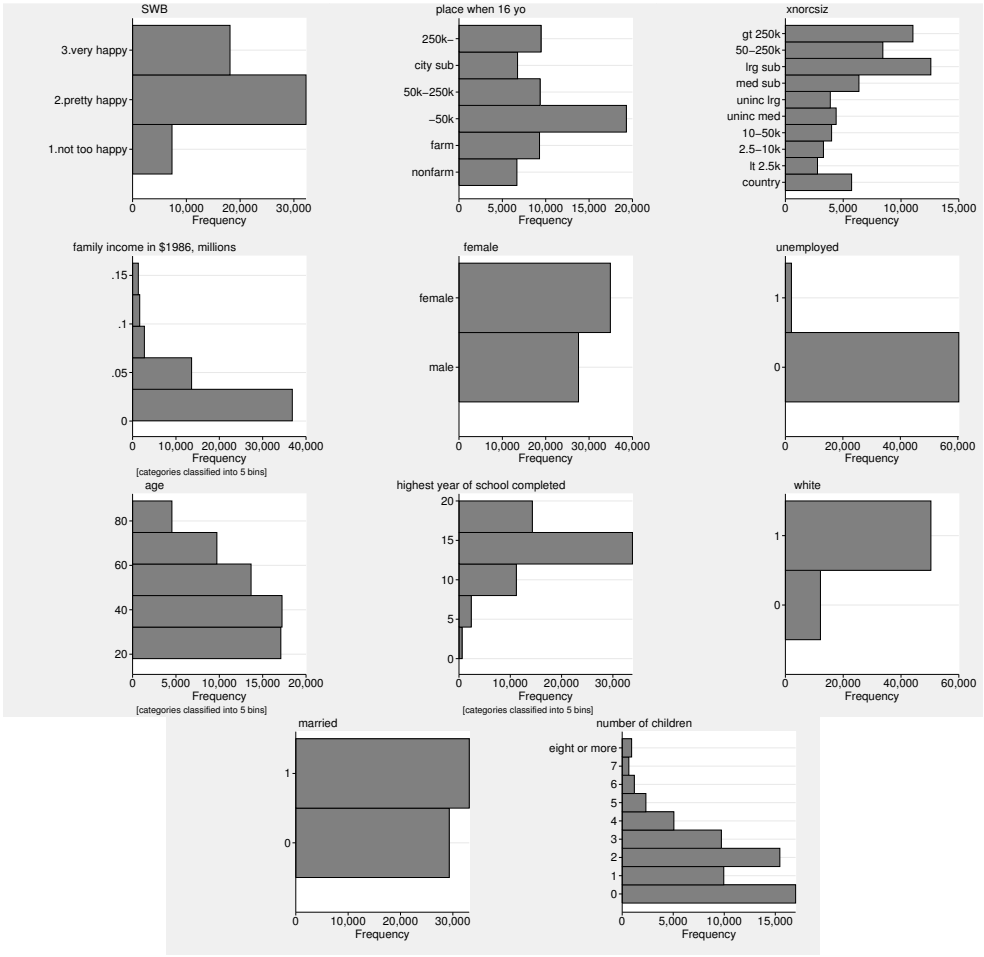

Figure 1: Variables' distribution.

Endogeneity, Causality, Self-Selection, Robustness

This study is relatively immune to many of the internal validity threats due to clear temporal precedence of cause before the effect: no reverse causality–growing up precedes adulthood; no self-selection either. Even relatively mobile Americans, virtually never select themselves into a place at age of 16.

Unobserved heterogeneity or left out variable bias can always be a problem in data that is not an experiment or a strong quasi-experiment. No amount of statistics can completely remove the problem. However, we

tried to include at least the most important variables and we controlled for a number of happiness predictors.

The key for solving the puzzle of endogeneity is to be able to argue that variation in main variable of interest, PLACE WHEN 16 YO, is random (Sorensen 2012), at least random or exogenous with respect to other key variables in the model. Again, we feel quite confident that it is the case here–a 16 year old person has virtually no influence over her place of settlement, and hence, place of settlement is virtually unrelated to person's characteristics–the other variables in the model.

To further boost our inference we conduct few robustness checks using triangulation–using alternative measures of key concepts; and we add self reported health and occupational dummies. We postponed discussion of these two variables till the end because they are missing for about half of the sample and there is a debate about whether health is endogenous (Diener et al. 2017, Diener 2015, Liu et al. 2016). Occupational dummies are rarely used in the literature as predictors of SWB, but we think they can add in robustness, as occupations clearly correlate with size of a place, and arguably people are happier in some occupations than other, and hence, omission of this variable may lead to biased results.

Two alternative size of a place variables are: SIZE DECILES, deciles of population size of a place of residence; and SRCBELT, which distinguishes between medium and large suburbs and metropolitan areas. Their full definitions follow.

```
Variable size : SIZE OF PLACE IN 1000S (Note, the study uses deciles of the variable)
Literal Question
Size of Place in thousands
A 4-digit number which provides actual size of place of interview
(Cols. 166-169). Remember when using this code to add 3 zeros. Listed
below are the frequencies for gross population categories.

Descriptive Text
This code is the population to the nearest 1,000 of the smallest civil
division listed by the U.S. Census (city, town, other incorporated
area over 1,000 in population, township, division, etc.) which
encompasses the segment. If a segment falls into more than one
locality, the following rules apply in determining the locality for
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which the rounded population figure is coded.
If the predominance of the listings for any segment are in one of the localities, the rounded population of that locality is coded.
If the listings are distributed equally over localities in the segment, and the localities are all cities, towns, or villages, the rounded population of the larger city or town is coded. The same is true if the localities are all rural townships or divisions.
If the listings are distributed equally over localities in the segment and the localities include a town or village and a rural township or division, the rounded population of the town or village is coded.
The source of the data is the 1970 U.S. Census population figures published in the PC (1) -A series, Tables 6 and 10. For cases from the 1980 and 1990 frames analogous tables from the 1980 and 1990 Censuses were used. See Appendix N for changes across surveys.

Variable srcbelt : SRC BELTCODE

Literal Question

SRC (SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN) NEW BELT CODE

Descriptive Text

The SRC belt code is described in Appendix D: Recodes. See Appendix N for changes across surveys. See Appendix T, GSS Methodological Report No. 4.

Intent of Recode

The SRC belt code (a coding system originally devised to describe rings around a metropolitan area and to categorize places by size and type simultaneously) first appeared in an article written by Bernard Laserwitz (American Sociological Review, v. 25, no. 2, 1960), and has been used subsequently in several SRC surveys.
Its use was discontinued in 1971 because of difficulties particularly evident in the operationalization of "adjacent and outlying areas."
For this study, however, I have revised the SRC belt code for users who might find such a variable useful. The new SRC belt code utilizes "name of place" information contained in the sampling units of the NORC Field Department.

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Method of Recode


This recode assigns codes to the place of interview. City
characteristics were determined by reference to the
rank ordering of SMSAs in the Statistical Abstract of the United
States, 1972, Table 20. Suburb characteristics
were determined by reference to the urbanized map in the U.S. Bureau
of the Census, 1970 Census ofPopulation, Number of Inhabitants, Series
PC (1) -A. The "other urban" codes were assigned on the basis of
county characteristics found in Table 10 of the 1970 Census of
Population, Number of Inhabitants. For cases
from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 frames analogous tables from the 1980 or
1990 Census were used.
```

The additional variables are defined in a table 3 below, and their histograms are in the figure 2 further below.

Table 3: Variable definitions.

name	description
health	CONDITION OF HEALTH "Would you say your own health, in general, is excellent, good, fair, or poor?"
1 digit occupation	RESPONDENT'S OCCUPATION, 1988 CENSUS; NOTE: collapsed to 8 major sectors
srcbelt	SRC BELTCODE (see appendix for details)
size deciles	deciles of SIZE variable "Size of Place in thousands-A 4-digit number which provides actual size of place of interview." (see appendix for details)

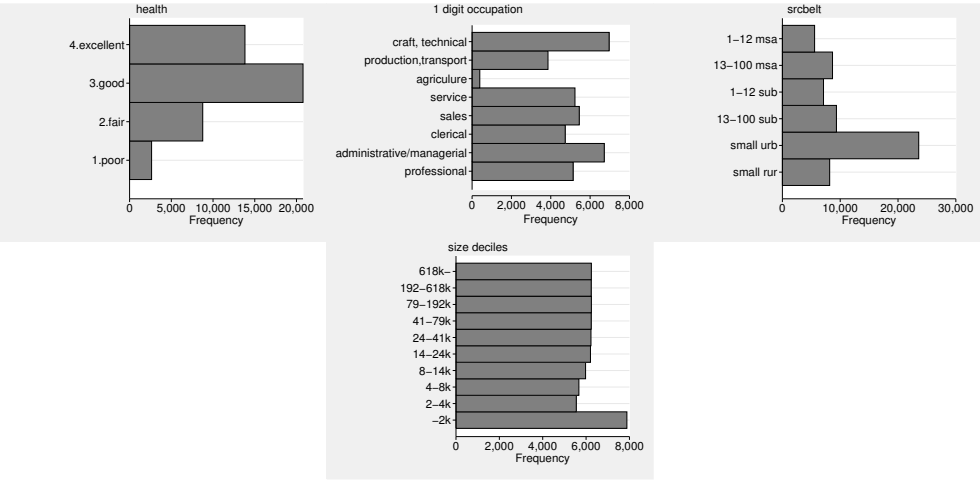

Figure 2: Variables' distribution.

Finally, we turn to regression results. Table 4 starts with a full model from the body of the paper and repeats regressions for the other two alternative measures of urbanicity. Results are similar in columns c1 through e1. Column f1 is the same model but uses a continuous measure of size and treats PLACE WHEN 16 YO as continuous as well. What is worth highlighting is that the effect is very strong statistically: t-value of -6, even in this full specification. And PLACE WHEN 16 YO has stronger size effect than current size of a place now, about twice as strong. And in f2, the effect size on PLACE WHEN 16 YO is three times of that on SIZE OF PLACE. Perhaps, it indicates that there is more continuity on PLACE WHEN 16 YO, the effect is more monotonic than current size variables, and hence, it is so much stronger when treating size variables as continuous.

Subsequent models #2 repeat previous models but are over-saturated with self-reported health and occupational dummies controls. One clear difference is that for the key variable of interest, PLACE WHEN 16 YO, "farm" is no longer significant. We still report the finding of "farm" as a happy place in the body of the paper, but we caution, that the result may not be very robust. The results on largest category "250k-", on the other hand, are larger in models #2, and so are results on each respective largest place where a person

is living currently.

Table 4: OLS regressions of SWB. Beta (fully standardized) coefficients. All models include year and region dummies.

	c1	c2	d1	d2	e1	e2	f1	f2
place when 16 yo (base: country, nonfarm):								
farm	0.017**	0.002	0.018**	0.003	0.017**	0.002		
-50k	-0.012+	-0.017	-0.012+	-0.017+	-0.012+	-0.016		
50k-250k	-0.008	-0.017+	-0.009	-0.018*	-0.008	-0.017+		
city sub	-0.009	-0.011	-0.009	-0.012	-0.010+	-0.013		
250k-	-0.020**	-0.027**	-0.021**	-0.028**	-0.021***	-0.029**		
place when 16 yo							-0.027***	-0.030***
xnorcsiz (base: country):								
lt 2.5k	0.008	0.010						
2.5-10k	-0.002	-0.013						
10-50k	0.000	0.001						
uninc med	-0.001	-0.005						
uninc lrg	-0.011*	-0.015+						
med sub	-0.011+	-0.011						
lrg sub	-0.018*	-0.031*						
50-250k	-0.012+	-0.016						
gt 250k	-0.024***	-0.033**						
srcbelt (base: small rur):								
small urb			-0.001	-0.006				
13-100 sub			-0.006	-0.016+				
1-12 sub			-0.018**	-0.026**				
13-100 msa			-0.013*	-0.026**				
1-12 msa			-0.016**	-0.018*				
size deciles (base: first decile):								
2-4k					-0.013*	-0.017*		
4-8k					-0.017**	-0.018*		
8-14k					-0.008	-0.016*		
14-24k					-0.015**	-0.018*		
24-41k					-0.017**	-0.028***		
41-79k					-0.018***	-0.020*		
79-192k					-0.017**	-0.027**		
192-618k					-0.024***	-0.034***		
618k-					-0.025***	-0.031***		
size of place in 1000s							-0.015**	-0.010
family income in $1986, millions	0.102***	0.071***	0.102***	0.071***	0.101***	0.069***	0.100***	0.068***
female	0.031***	0.014*	0.031***	0.014*	0.031***	0.014*	0.030***	0.014*
unemployed	-0.058***	-0.049***	-0.058***	-0.049***	-0.058***	-0.049***	-0.058***	-0.050***
age	-0.333***	-0.258***	-0.334***	-0.259***	-0.334***	-0.262***	-0.333***	-0.260***
age squared	0.366***	0.310***	0.367***	0.311***	0.367***	0.313***	0.368***	0.312***
highest year of school completed	0.070***	0.019*	0.070***	0.019*	0.070***	0.019*	0.067***	0.018*
white	0.043***	0.026***	0.042***	0.026***	0.042***	0.025***	0.044***	0.030***
married	0.204***	0.208***	0.204***	0.208***	0.204***	0.207***	0.205***	0.209***
number of children	-0.021***	-0.010	-0.021***	-0.010	-0.021***	-0.010	-0.020***	-0.009
health		0.239***		0.239***		0.239***		0.239***
occupational dummies	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
N	51687	21840	51687	21840	51687	21840	51687	21840

*** p<0.001 ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1;
robust std err

Future research

There is much more to be found: sample could be split by year and cohort–again we know that recently people are not unhappy in largest cities anymore <MASKED FOR PEER REVIEW>–this is very important–does place of growing up does not affect Millenials?

And one could explore patterns of migrations and interactions between current place and place earlier.

The goal of this study was to show the basic main relationship; we leave it for the future to look at the details.

Again, a limitation is that a place at age 16 is a proxy for growing up–a person could have moved. Again, for most people, it is reasonable to assume that a place where a person lived when she was 16 was a type of a place where a person spend most of her childhood. Still, future research can improve by using more precise information and possibly taking into account moving.

Growing up on a farm resulting in later life happiness is a curious result that would be a fascinating topic for the future research. In particular, research could investigate an interplay with one's health and occupational choices, as these variables seem to explain away the effect of farm upbringing as shown in robustness checks.

Moving has arguably different effects on different people. Schoenbaum (2017), for instance, makes several convincing points–females often move due to husband's job, but they benefit less, or indeed, lose. Kettlewell (2010) argues almost the opposite: there is no SWB effect for males, but positive effect for females.[7] People in low-paid jobs, such as janitors, are better off in smaller places, even economically–low paid jobs are not much better paid in big cities, but the cost of living is much bigger (Schoenbaum 2017, Irwin 2017).

I have focused on urbanicity, but thinking about place, one can also think about a region, and US is very diverse across its regions. Indeed, one can have an impression that US is a collection of different countries, just like European Union–future research should investigate by region.

[7]We find this argument somewhat less persuasive: there is just a handful of movers for each gender, Australia has a peculiar geography and rural areas may be unwelcoming, perhaps especially for females. Also, we do not understant why SWB is log-transformed, and we note that at least some analyses appear to be done in excel, while it is well known that excel causes bad science, see for instance `http://www.statisticalengineering.com/Weibull/excel.html`.

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