Pam Bacon  
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University  
Self-Theories and Well-Being

People tend to think of aspects of the self (e.g., intelligence or personality) as something that is fixed (entity) or malleable (incremental; Molden & Dweck, 2006). These beliefs about aspects of the self have been termed self-theories (Dweck, 2000). Those who hold an entity theory of intelligence believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait that cannot change whereas those who hold an incremental theory believe that their intelligence that is able to change. Past research suggests that holding an incremental theory of intelligence has a positive impact on performance. Incremental theorists are more likely to persist after failure, more likely to seek out challenges, and more likely to learn from mistakes than entity theorists (Dweck, 1999). My student research group wanted to find out if the benefits of holding an incremental self-theory go beyond enhanced performance. Specifically, we wanted to know if people who hold an incremental self-theory experience greater well-being than those who hold an entity self-theory. Our research found that for first-year students, believing that intelligence and personality cannot be changed is associated with more difficulty adjusting to college, less engagement with academic pursuits, fewer friends, and lower well-being. In this talk, I will present the results of our research and discuss our next research questions.

Marge Barrett  
The Loft Literary Center  
A Happy Man

Happiness. Big news these days, from “Are You Happy Now?” in the Star Tribune, summarizing the scientific investigations linking a positive attitude with health, to the New Yorker, reviewing new books across various fields of study: The Politics of Happiness: What Government Can Learn from the New Research on Well-Being; Happiness Around the World: The Paradox of Happy Peasants and Miserable Millionaires; Stumbling on Happiness, researching on how we misjudge our own satisfactions. Then we have the new self-help types: The Nine Rooms of Happiness; Bluebird: Women and the New Psychology of Happiness; Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You on the Road to Real Happiness; Against Happiness; and finally, Gretchen Rubin’s best seller, The Happiness Project, with its 92 resolutions to achieve happiness. As the British pop singer, Leona Lewis’s “Happy” song attests, we seem obsessed with its pursuit: “I just wanna be happy / Ohh, yeah, happy, ohh, happy / I just wanna be, ohh / I just wanna be happy / Ohh, happy.”
Religion and poetry has, of course, always offered opinions, from psalms and proverbs (“Happy is the man …”) to Horace (“It is not the rich man you should properly call happy, but him who knows how to use with wisdom the blessings of the god...”) to John Dryden (Happy the man, and happy he alone / He who can call today his own ...”) to Jane Kenyon:

It comes to the monk in his cell.

It comes to the woman sweeping the street
with a birch broom, to the child
whose mother has passed out from drink.
It comes to the lover, to the dog chewing
a sock, to the pusher, to the basketmaker,
and to the clerk stacking cans of carrots
in the night.

This all preoccupies my thoughts when I consider how literary arts—particularly memoir—can add to the discussion of happiness. When I first began writing—late, in my forties, when my children were in middle and senior high school and not listening to me much anymore, and my parents aging—I knew I wanted to write about family. I felt an urgency to ask my parents questions about themselves and their parents so that I could tell my children. It seemed so crucial at this time in their lives to tell them how these good people helped me form a healthy self-image. How, blessed in nature and nurture, I was, and am, a happy person, an offspring of happy lineage. I had these ordinary people from small towns in Minnesota as models of what I consider the essence of happiness: actively engaged in life, solving problems, caring about others. They struggled to make money, raise and educate their children, make their community a better place to live in. I don't think they asked themselves: Am I happy? But I show in my memoir that they were. I'll share some snippets with you. Because of time restraints, I'll include writing focused only on my father.

Muhammad Faress Bhuiyan
Carleton College

The paper presents a model of interdependent preferences in which utility depends on the individual’s rank within peers, the rank of the peer-group itself, and leisure. It offers explanations to two empirical puzzles - (1) The recent increase in the number of hours worked by the more productive US workers relative to the less productive, and (2) The non-monotonic empirical relationship between happiness and absolute income. The strength of the proposed model, which also nests the classical model of absolute consumption, is its ability to explain two interesting empirical puzzles simultaneously.
Stephen V. Burks  
University of Minnesota Morris and IZA  
Andrew Clark  
Paris School of Economics and IZA  

*What Kinds of Pay Profiles Over Time Make People Happy or Unhappy? Evidence from Truckers*

What kind of pay profiles make people happy or unhappy? In the present paper we maintain the standard economic assumption that we can infer what makes people happy, that is, their preferences over outcomes, from their choices. We examine an unusual and large data set on the weekly behavior of long haul truckers, who are in a piece rate job with high variability in weekly pay and high turnover, and we look at what influence pay profiles have on the decision to quit. Using a multivariate survival model we find that a higher current wage reduces the quit hazard, while a higher past maximum pay increases it (consistent with a ratchet effect), and a higher past minimum pay reduces quits (consistent with bankruptcy aversion). In addition, our truckers appear to be very risk-averse: recent mean pay (last 6 weeks) reduces quits, just as does higher current pay, but high variation in the 6-week mean wage, given its level, is quit-encouraging. Further, our truckers also appear loss-averse. A loss here is earning at least $100 less than the previous week. This loss-aversion holds whether or not we control for the actual variability of wages, so it appears to be a distinct phenomenon. Our data suggest that pay profiles over time matter for the choice to quit, and implicitly, for employee happiness, in significant ways.

Mark Chekola  
Minnesota State University Moorhead  

*Problems with Life Satisfaction Conceptions of Happiness*

When social scientists became interested in happiness, starting in the 1970’s and 1980’s, they used subjective conceptions of happiness which could be operationalized for empirical studies. In recent years many philosophers have also used subjective conceptions of happiness, seeing it as having to do with emotion, mood, or attitude, in particular an attitude of being satisfied or pleased with one’s life. Happiness as satisfaction with life overall has become perhaps the most popular way of conceiving of happiness among social scientists and many philosophers.

In this paper I discuss what I see as limitations of the life satisfaction view of happiness. I believe there is a logical or conceptual core of the concept of happiness according to which the happiness of a life involves its (a) having to do with one’s life as a whole; (b) being relatively long-lasting; (c) making one’s life worthwhile; and (d) being desired by everyone. I believe discussions of happiness generally presume the conceptual core of happiness, while holding varying particular conceptions.

I focus on the conception of happiness as satisfaction with life overall and show how it falls short with regard to the conceptual core of happiness. As examples of life
satisfaction views I discuss Ruut Veenhoven and Ed Diener’s analyses of happiness.
I consider some critiques of the life satisfaction view, including those of Fred Feldman and Dan Haybron.

There are features of lives related to happiness that are not adequately captured by subjective views of happiness, such as the life satisfaction view. These include important global desires or goals, and what James Griffin calls “accomplishment.” Happiness depends in part on some “objective” features of the world, not just on subjective states. I consider ways that some holding subjective views deal with this, including appeal to a distinction between psychological well-being (happiness) and prudential well-being, and find them insufficient. Allowing for some “objective” elements of happiness allows for the possibility of mistakes in first-person judgments of happiness, something those who hold subjective views, such as the life satisfaction view, are reluctant do.

I also discuss an interesting view of the nature of happiness judgments put forward by Mariano Rojas, which he calls the Conceptual Referent Theory of Happiness, claiming that people typically have in mind one of a number of philosophical views of happiness when making self-appraisals regarding happiness.

Karen L. Erickson  
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University  
The Unintended Consequences of Living in the Moment  

Living in the moment comes highly recommended these days in the domains of health and healing. Medical personnel have begun incorporating counseling, meditation, and guided imagery to help cancer patients live in the moment, and thereby avoid the extensive anxiety that a cancer diagnosis frequently provokes. Leaning into our difficulties is recommended by psychologists, religious leaders, and writers in the burgeoning area of self help, as a way to move through challenge, rather than avoiding it and becoming stuck. We take for granted that there is a qualitative difference between being fixated, repressed, or blocked and being in the moment, in the flow, entirely present, mindful. These approaches can indeed help people live with greater happiness, peace, and well-being, providing a corrective to the hectic pace of daily life. On the other hand, this advice invites, and at times requires, a simple view of time and of perception; it seldom takes into account the complexities of narrative and human experience or the consequences of adopting the linear view of time that most successfully allows us to identify the “moment” in the first place.

In this paper, I consider the insights we gain into the quality of well being by looking at narrative strategies--the ways we tell and consume stories about ourselves and the world around us. I begin with Kafka’s puzzling conversation in “On Parables”:

Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. [...] All these parables really set out to say that the incomprehensible is
incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.

Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.

I continue with brief references to other texts presenting layers, predictions, prophesies, and allusions. I focus on habits and preferences regarding literary closure in order to engage these questions: What is the relationship between closure and the moment? Do we conceive the moment as having a setting as well as a temporal existence? Does this rely on a linear, chronological view of time, which is certainly not the only way humans experience existence? What are the consequences of any success we might have at resisting the lure of the “not now”? I hope my comments on narrative time-keeping and literary closure will help us examine the many shifts—with both positive and negative outcomes, expected and unintended consequences—that occur when we seek to live in the moment. I argue that to understand staying in the moment we need to consider our concept of time. To be mindful of now, we need to grapple with the complex, multi-layered set of often competing moments that are part of that now.

Anthony T. Flood
Cardinal Muench Seminary
Happiness and Moral Obligation: a Consideration of Aquinas’s Account

In this paper, I wish to address some of the connections between happiness and morality. I will argue that moral obligation arises from our desire for happiness and that, among other things, we have an obligation to govern our own lives and to do it well. I proceed with an interpretive analysis of the ethical framework of Thomas Aquinas. I interpret him to hold that moral obligation arises from the twofold consideration of the will’s necessary desire for happiness and the fact that there are action-guiding principles whose function it is to demarcate true from merely apparent goods.

A basic *modus ponens* argument best represents how obligation follows from these two notions.

**P1:** If human beings desire to be happy, then they ought to perform those actions and develop those character traits that are conducive to happiness and avoid those actions and traits that are a hindrance to happiness.

**P2:** All human beings desire happiness in virtue of the rational will.

**C:** Therefore, human beings ought (have a moral obligation) to perform those actions and develop those character traits that are conducive to happiness and avoid those actions and traits that are a hindrance to happiness.

The consequent of premise 1 is a summary of Aquinas’s account of human nature with respect to action. There are certain activities, objects, and states that are really good for human beings, that is, there are certain activities, objects, and states that produce or lead to happiness. The means of obtaining them are sufficiently constant
as to be summarized in terms of precepts or principles, namely the principles of natural moral law. The antecedent of the same premise is automatically discharged in virtue of the rational will, which of necessity seeks happiness. Hence, all people have an obligation to perform the appropriate actions.

Moreover, I contend that for Aquinas the only way to achieve happiness is to actively direct and govern oneself. Happiness both presupposes and includes the governing of one’s own actions through one’s own counsel and motivation. Because we have a moral obligation to do those things that are truly conducive to happiness, it follows we have an obligation to govern our own lives. Specifically, we have the obligation to govern ourselves well.

The second part of the paper is a defense and extension of Aquinas’s views above. I will argue that typical adult persons do have a foundational desire for happiness and anything else relevant to decision-making, particularly moral obligation and the nature of moral principles, is shaped by that desire. Furthermore, I will defend, through basic thought-experiments, the contention that a necessary, though not sufficient, condition to happiness is the personal ownership of one’s own decision-making. This condition for happiness makes evident the importance of choosing well.

Father Emery de Gaál
University of St. Mary of the Lake

Happiness in Late Antiquity

An examination of the concept of Happiness in Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy shows a surprising congeniality with what revealed Jewish and Christian faith(s) in the first centuries AD formulate as happiness. Nonetheless, different terms are employed both to show points of convergence, but also to express the radical novelty of Judeo-Christian revelation vis-à-vis what human reason thinks and intends on its own. Last but not least, such veracious realism is helpful in sobering the current theism/atheism discussion in Western Europe and North America.

Rod Greder
Augsburg College
True Happiness Has No Cause

Much research, anecdote and speculation exist about causes of happiness. Schools of thought focus on relationships and personal bonds, purpose and meaning, material trappings, savoring experiences, learning and curiosity, and of course heredity and upbringing.

Happiness that is ‘caused’ can lead to dependency. Caused happiness can be short-lived and suffer from diminishing returns. True sustainable happiness is uncaused. True happiness is our original state when all ego judgments, irrational fears and
overzealous evolutionary survival instincts are recognized and appropriately categorized.

True happiness comes from distinguishing and accepting ‘what is’ and living in the present moment. While Eastern spiritualists have advocated this approach for many years, Western science is now confirming the results with brain imaging, behavioral analysis, long-term longitudinal studies and through statistically-valid controlled experiments.

Our understanding of neuroscience, psychophysiology, evolutionary biology, emotion regulation and biofeedback have developed to a point where we can now intentionally use diagnostic and restorative technologies to support proven therapies and drug regimes, and even lead to breakthrough standalone ways to help us uncover the happiness and well-being that is originally at our core.

Daniel Groll
Carleton College

Happiness, Morality and the Good Life

What is the connection between a happy life, a moral life and a life that is good for the person living it? Anyone who has had the pleasure of asking a room full of undergraduates this question is likely to have come across the following two theses, which command near universal assent amongst students:

1. **Immoral Person can be Happy (IPH):** A life can be happy and immoral. That is, an immoral person can lead a happy life.

2. **Happy Life is Complete (HLC):** A person with a happy life lacks for nothing. That is to say, any happy life is better than any non-happy life for the person living it.

Combined, the IPH and HLC yield the following conclusion:

3. **Immoral Life can be Complete (ILC):** An immoral life can lack for nothing for the person living it (inasmuch as it is a happy life).

On the face of it, the ILC is rather compelling: it is not very hard to think of actual people who seem happy & are immoral and it seems even easier to imagine such a person.

Nonetheless, there are philosophers who deny ILC. Philippa Foot has offered a particularly nuanced argument against it, while also explaining its appeal. According to Foot, the appeal of ILC depends on equivocating on what we mean by “happiness”. Specifically, Foot argues that the kind of happiness that makes IPH true, renders HLC false, while the kind of happiness that makes HLC true, renders IPH false.
The purpose of my presentation is threefold. First, I reconstruct Foot’s argument for the rejection of ILC elucidating, along the way, the three concepts of happiness she discusses. Second, I argue that Foot overreaches: the kind of happiness that, according to Foot, makes IPH false is not really a kind of happiness at all. In other words, I argue that for any non-stipulative or plausible conception of happiness, IPH is true. Finally, I argue that while Foot is wrong to reject IPH, she has still left us with the resources to reject ILC because, it turns out, HLC is false: an immoral happy life lacks for something for the person living it, namely virtue, and that this missing element in the good life is more important for the goodness of a person’s life (for that person) than happiness.

Linda LeGarde Grover  
University of Minnesota Duluth  
Minonow e Hewin: Making Someone Happy Ojibwe-Style

An old Ojibwe word that I have not heard used in quite some time is “minonow e Hewin,” which translates into the English “to good cheek”. The origin of this term comes from the way in which facial muscles raise and expand the cheeks when a person is smiling; the implication is that the smile is in response to a gift of praise or honor (which can be words, a good deed or a tangible object). To “good cheek” someone is to make that person happy.

In traditional Ojibwe philosophy there is little mention of the pursuit of individual happiness. Ojibwe people who endeavor to walk the good road don’t concern themselves with their own happiness; instead, their life journey is one of personal development in the living of traditional tribal values. The Ojibwe term for the living of a good life based upon traditional values is Mino bimaadiziwin. Ojibwe values include but are certainly not limited to gratitude, modesty, generosity, and the acknowledgement of our relationship to the Creator as well as the past, present and future of the world around us, spiritual and tangible. A statement of Ojibwe philosophy might be that 1) we understand that everything is a gift from the Creator; 2) we acknowledge this and are thankful; 3) we realize that all that we have been given has made us rich in many ways; and 4) we are rich enough to be generous, which includes cultivating a generosity of spirit.

Using both literary and research works, this paper will explore the role of generosity and encouragement in Ojibwe cultural practices that include, directly and indirectly, deliberately and otherwise, the development of individual and group happiness.

John Hasselberg  
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University  
How Can We Manage to Be Happy?

People. Organizations. World. When at its best, management seeks to integrate these three, to create bridges between people through organizing effectively and
thus enabling us to build sustainable systems and societies that foster human flourishing. In the liberal arts education milieu, this is central to our work in the discipline of management. Happiness must be values-grounded in order to be sustainable and must include all aspects of life, particularly whatever we see as our “work”.

The Bhutanese prefer their country be judged by how high they are on a Gross Happiness Product index rather than a Gross Domestic Product index. As more people ask of what value is an aggregate statistic of production if it does not reflect the sustained happiness of the people of a society, this approach to socio-economic valuation is gathering growing attention in other nations. Recent surveys have concluded that it is the Danes who are the happiest workers in the world. Are the Danes thus the best embodiment of what W. Edwards Deming called the fundamental job of management: to ensure that everyone experiences joy on the job? And how could such a philosophy emerge from a Columbia University statistician, the father of statistical process controls and the godfather of modern Japanese manufacturing successes? To what can we attribute these emphases on happiness in two so disparate parts of the world? How much is derived from cultural mores and theological presuppositions and how much, for the Danes, intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of typical work environments in Denmark? Contemporary management and organization theories may provide some insights into these circumstances and some tools with which to enhance their spread.

We are at our best when we are happiest and we are happiest when we are at our best. How can we manage our lives and work to best enable this state of being? David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University is the lead developer of “A positive revolution in change: Appreciative Inquiry”. As he and his colleagues define it, “Appreciative Inquiry is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them.” Can this recent evolution in post-positivist thinking, Affirmative Inquiry, provide further insight into and be a viable tool for building happier organizations and societies?

By integrating and applying the work of W. Edwards Deming and David Cooperider, this paper will explore these and related and derived questions as we consider just how it may be possible to manage to happily find joy in our work and to help those whose work we are responsible for coordinating to also find joy in theirs. It will address how we can live happier and more fulfilled lives simply through fostering an abundance attitude rather than succumbing to a deficit mentality and it will explore the organizational and conceptual frameworks involved in fostering such a shift.

Marcy Young Illies  
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University  
**Happiness at Work: A Theory Approach to Employee Satisfaction**

Happiness in the workplace is an important topic to management researchers.
This form of happiness, called job satisfaction, has been researched extensively in the management field due to its relation to other important management topics. Research has shown that people who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have higher organizational commitment and higher productivity (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), both of which are important in creating successful organizations.

This presentation will address some of the classic theories of job satisfaction starting with job satisfaction at the organizational level, addressing aspects of organizational culture that make people most satisfied with their jobs. Herzberg (1968) suggested that satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace are caused by different entities. He states that extrinsic factors such as pay, policies, or the work environment make people unsatisfied with their job, while intrinsic factors such as autonomy, responsibilities, recognition, and challenge make people satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, in order to have satisfied employees, an adequate level of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors must be met.

Second, job satisfaction will be evaluated at the job level, particularly addressing ways in which organizations can create jobs that are more satisfying for employees. Hackman and Oldham (1976) suggested that five components of a job can affect an employee’s job satisfaction. These are autonomy, skill variety, task significance (job importance), task identity (the ability to complete the whole job), and feedback. Hackman and Oldham suggested that people are more satisfied with jobs that contain larger amounts of these characteristics compared to jobs that contain a smaller amount of these characteristics. However, they also suggested that in order for these characteristics to affect job satisfaction, a person’s overall need for these characteristics must be taken into account.

Last, certain work benefits that lead to job satisfaction will be discussed. Although satisfaction due to benefits is most likely affected by gender, age, family status, etc; work arrangements and salary tend to be important for all employees. Research suggests that flexible work arrangements tend to lead to greater satisfaction among employees. One reason for this may be that flexible work arrangements build in autonomy, which seems to be important in creating job satisfaction. Although salary is important in many jobs, research indicates that salary may not be as important as believed. Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, and Diener (2004) argued that salary is not one of the leading indicators of happiness on the job. Other researchers have indicated a salary threshold exists, a point at which salary is no longer related to job satisfaction (Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich, 2005).

In general all of this research may indicate that creating jobs that people like, including jobs with autonomy, variety, and challenge, may be more satisfying to employees than other external factors. However, this does not explain why many companies are putting so much emphasis on external benefits. This possible contradiction will also be explored within the presentation.
Mary Lenzi  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
*John Rawls, the “Aristotelian Principle” and the Pursuit of Happiness*

John Rawls’ so-called ‘Aristotelian Principle’ poses a challenging dilemma on which any inquiry into the good life (*eudaimonia*) hangs: How does personal choice of a life plan intersect with, or block the broader political path toward a good, happy life shared with others? In his pivotal work *Theory of Justice*, Rawls redefines our sense and reasoning about the connections between justice and happiness in a contemporary liberal tradition. Almost as an aside, however, he presents a hypothetical case of a mathematical genius who freely chooses to abandon his successful career and way of life. To an outsider, his mind and choice seem incomprehensible. His new-found project becomes that of spending his days finding ‘splendor in the grass,’ literally by counting blades of grass in the glade of his home. Does this qualify as a rational choice for an individual’s rational life plan, granted that it is his legal, moral right to so choose? At first blush, a Rawlsian might argue that individuals in a liberal just democracy must be left alone to make and implement their plans. Yet intuition suggests something is not right or rational, that he could be so much more—happy, virtuous, and productive. Curiously, an Aristotelian too would question whether we can call such a [hu]man “happy” during one’s lifetime? If not in one’s lifetime, then when and where: ‘If someone claims to be happy, and such is one’s good life (freely chosen), then how can others (fairly) judge otherwise?’

My paper examines whether we can simply say one’s choice of a good life is fitting and just only for the individual, particularly if, arguably, the person could live a much better life, e.g., as a mathematical genius. In no small way, the choice of one’s life plan has weighty implications for furthering or impeding the goods and happiness of others. Yet, if we cannot accept such individual choices, then (post-Rawls) it remains difficult to configure new meanings and values for conceiving and finding a good, happy life in conjunction with others.

This exploratory paper finds individuals embroiled in the act of balancing, correcting, and resetting their life plans to adjust private inner conditions to outer conditions and various socio-political predicaments. Individual rational and felt adjustments may be in response to sharp, or vague, inner and outer perceptions of reality. Undue measures or strains operate in their lives and world. Thus, their personal choices and life plans may result from imbalance—excesses or defects in their intersections with others, at certain dicey crossroads between self, others, and the political state. States of awareness, such as, ‘what if’s,’ regrets, guilt, shame, victimization, oppression, lack of fairness, unjustly deserved goods or evils are the very things thwarting happiness, peace, and virtue in pursuing a worthy and shareable good life. Such are the elemental aspects of happiness and goodness for Aristotle, Rawls, and our present Sympsiasts.
One of my favorite songs of all time in Spanish is called “Happiness”. My rendition of it in English goes:

Happiness, today I find you again/for so long you were hiding from me/today the dawn has come and the sun is so bright/it’s the same blue sky in a different light/nothing’s new: just that, I met you.

The “I met you” at the end of the song could have the obvious connotation of a boy meets girl kind of happy ending; however, to me personally, it has the meaning of finding yourself, as in seeing yourself in the mirror for the first time and liking what you see; at the same time, it can have the meaning of seeing the other, or the others in your life for the first time and being able to appreciate them.

In this presentation, I address two films, one from Spain and another one from Argentina, two of the countries that have produced some of the best recent movies in Spanish. In the two films I address here, I find some common characteristics.

First, there is a recurrent topic of the search for identity, not just as an individual, internal quest of self-awareness, or of acquiring power and success through fame and money; instead, it means finding a community by establishing connections, while becoming independent.

Second, I chose these two films because most of the other films in my favorites list have to do with dictatorial regimes, and therefore with direct economic and political oppression. My students complained about this, so I set out to find more accessible films they could relate to. These two jewels are about a woman and a man of the middle class, in post-dictatorship Spain and Argentina, respectively, who unknowingly embark on a journey of self-discovery that leads them to happiness, defined in essence as simple day-to-day fulfillment and peace.

Another thing the two films have in common is that both are parodies of Hollywood film genres: the melodrama and the chick flick. However, as I constantly remind my students, these two films go much deeper than those they parody, because their happy endings are only a new beginning of a different sort than the one idealized in romantic stories old and new.

Rodger Narloch, Katherine A. Kenefick, Alexandra L. Lenzen, Jennifer M. Anderson, Katie C. Brown, Kelly A. Ebner, Mikaela R. Dunn
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University

Is It Good to Choose the “Best” Identity? Maximization Decisional Tendencies across Identity Styles: Implications for Happiness and Regret

Schwartz, Ward, Monterosso, Lyubomirsky, White, and Lehman (2002) described maximization as an examination of all possible alternatives to ensure the best
decision is made. Satisficing means "looking for something that crosses the threshold of acceptability, something that is good enough" (p. 1179). Schwartz et al. (2002) studied the tendencies of individuals to maximize or satisfice decisions in regard to consumer products. They found that the more people maximize in their decision making, the higher they score on measures of regret and depression and lower on measures of life satisfaction, happiness, optimism, and self-esteem. While Schwartz et al.’s (2002) maximization scale purports to measure this construct as reflected in one’s overall decision making, they admit that maximization tendencies may differ across the various kinds of decisions. The present study examines the relationship between maximization for identity-related decisions and Berzonsky’s (1989) identity styles. Identity styles are tendencies people have regarding how they process information relevant to their self-theories. Those with an informational identity style actively seek out such information and revise their self-theory accordingly. Those with a normative identity style create their self-theories by adopting values and beliefs from significant others (i.e., parents). Those with a diffuse-avoidant identity style are reluctant to confront or process identity-related information and, therefore, are likely to procrastinate forming a coherent theory of self. To expand this base of knowledge, we developed alternative measures of maximization which assess these tendencies within particular domains, specifically, the identity-related decisional domains of career direction, religious beliefs, and political views.

Using a cross-sectional design, 236 CSB/SJU undergraduate students completed an anonymous online survey assessing their identity style, maximization tendencies, and levels of regret and happiness. We found that domain-specific maximization significantly differed across identity styles for career, religious beliefs, and political views, while general maximization did not differ across identity styles. For each decisional domain, the informational identity style showed a statistically significant tendency to maximize identity-related decisions than normative and diffuse-avoidant styles, which did not differ. Furthermore, we found differences in regret and happiness across identity style. Those with an informational style experienced more regret than normative, and normative was happier than diffuse-avoidant. Although the informational style may have benefits, it appears the normative identity processing style shows the best outcomes for regret and happiness, perhaps due to the tendency of the informational style to maximize their decisions.

Elizabeth Jean Nelson
University of Minnesota, Duluth

Rhetorical Bases in the Sciences of Happiness: An Inquiry

“Happiness” has been the object of study among scholars of philosophy, theology, and "humanities" for centuries. The U.S. Declaration of Independence identifies “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as an “inalienable right,” though scholars observe that this phrase was Thomas Jefferson’s re-write of the more common phrase, “life, liberty and the pursuit of property,” which was penned by Major John
Sullivan in the 1774 “Declaration of Rights and Grievances” delivered to the First Continental Congress. According to Harvard University Professor Howard Mumford Jones, even before 1774, the expression of “pursuit of property” over “happiness” was articulated in the writings of such philosophers as John Locke, and Adam Smith. Jefferson’s expression, which some attribute to Samuel Johnson in his 1759 novel, Rasselas, discursively elevates “happiness” to a theretofore unprecedented value. Jefferson did not, alas, clarify with any detail what “happiness” might mean.

More recently “happiness” has become the object of study within various scientific disciplines. In the last decade, scholarly discourses treating the phenomenon called “happiness” have proliferated in scientific discourses. The efforts to define, quantify, and prescribe the “measurable” and “neural” conditions associated with happiness have emerged in discourse from the fields of medicine, evolutionary psychology, cognitive neuroscience. While not altogether rejecting external conditions of happiness, scholars such as these emphasize the role played by “internal” processes of neurology and brain chemistry. Other, “external” accounts for happiness appear in the scholarship from fields such as economics, positive psychology, social and cultural psychology.

Popular media have wasted no time in disseminating this burgeoning body of research for general consumers of information while maintaining the “internal” and “external” distinction, though not self-consciously so. For example, the January 17, 2005, Time magazine was a “special mind and body issue,” devoted to “The Science of Happiness.” In a popular venue, Time brought forth questions that have fostered discussions among scholars in the humanities, the social sciences, and the hard sciences for decades. Here Time addressed such diverse questions as “are humans genetically programmed for a specific range of happiness (internal),” “what can the field of psychology add to our understanding of happiness (internal and external),” “what role does religious faith play in individuals’ happiness (internal),” and “to what extent does economic prosperity – or lack thereof -- lead to happiness (external)?”

Scholarship in Communication has been spotty in its approach to happiness. Rhetorical critics may observe the role that “happiness” plays as a warrant for political action. Communication researchers employing social scientific methods might note that “satisfaction,” “well-being” or “happiness” influence individuals’ interpersonal choices in relationships. Mass media scholars have identified the role played by audiences’ anticipations of “happiness” in responses to advertising and have theorized the “gratification” that comes from watching television and films. There has been, however, no systematic account of the role of happiness in communication, nor of communication in happiness. My project constitutes an effort to theorize happiness in a systematic way.

Under the auspices of “The Rhetoric of Inquiry,” I propose to address “happiness” as it is presented in various discourse forms. “The Rhetoric of Inquiry” is a sub-discipline within communication that has sought to understand the role that
rhetorical practices play in discourses not generally considered to be within the realm of “rhetoric” per se, the most prominent example of which scientific discourse. According to Nelson, Megill and McCloskey, key theorists in the rhetoric of inquiry, “Scholarship uses argument, and argument uses rhetoric. The ‘rhetoric’ is not mere ornament or manipulation or trickery. It is rhetoric in the ancient sense of persuasive discourse. In matters from mathematical proof to literary criticism, scholars write rhetorically. Only occasionally do they reflect on that fact.”

Rhetorical scholars have critically engaged discourses from mathematics, medicine, biology, genetics, physics, etc., with an eye to understanding how non-specialized audiences (i.e., audiences who are not steeped in scientific methods and language) make sense of popularly disseminated scientific information. The Rhetoric of Inquiry thus serves at least three functions. It elucidates the rhetorical in the scientific discourse, it facilitates the explanation of scientific discourse for non-scientist audiences, and, based on the foregoing, enlightens our understanding of social and political issues that result from a particular scientific enterprise. In this paper, I will employ the precepts of the rhetoric of inquiry in an analysis of the various “sciences” of happiness.


Garry Pech
St. Catherine University
Ludwig Wittgenstein’s miserable, wonderful life

By all accounts, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein led a life full of misery. He expressed that misery, or remarked on it, on a number of occasions. As one example, he felt alienated from contemporary culture, its music, its architecture, and its sense of progress. That alienation included his relation to the mainstream philosophy of his time and to its practitioners, or most of them. The following is from a draft for a forward to a book.

This book is written from those in sympathy with the spirit in which it is written. This is not I believe the spirit of the main current of European and American civilization.

Self-doubt and self-criticism accompanied him throughout his adult life. And often enough, so did depression. He sometimes felt on the edge of suicide and often he despaired of being able to live a decent life. Some of his remarks suggest that at
times he viewed himself with disgust, or something close to it. He believed that he had committed sins. This weighed on him; so much so that once he confessed them to an acquaintance. He needed the friendship of others, but believed he was incapable of being a good friend. This too weighed on him. And he sometimes worried that he was losing his intellectual powers. Given this, it is easy to accept that in the following remark Wittgenstein could be thinking of himself.

The horrors of hell can be experienced within a single day; that’s plenty of time.

All of this suggests that Wittgenstein is an extreme case of an unhappy person, the poster child of a tormented soul. But according to a friend, Wittgenstein, when near death, said: “Tell them I’ve had a wonderful life.” Taken in a straight-forward way, Wittgenstein’s remark raises several important issues in understanding happiness. One question that arises is how the remark is to be characterized. Is it best taken as a kind of all-things considered assessment of his life? If the remark is best understood as expressing a kind of pro-attitude to his life, how is that attitude to be characterized? Related to this is the issue of how to understand the connection of the “wonderful life” remark to those aspects of his life that suggest Wittgenstein was a tortured soul. Is what is wonderful about his life what is left, so to speak, when the misery is “subtracted out”? That is, is his wonderful life to be understood as being acquired in spite of the misery? Or is the relation between the two aspects of his life more complicated than this characterization suggests?

This paper investigates the place Wittgenstein’s remark may have had in his life. Employed as a case study, Wittgenstein’s life allows us to raise some central issues in thinking about happiness and to comment on some current accounts of what constitutes happiness. And it will allow us to think about the distinction between saying of a life that it is happy and saying that of a person.

Steven Penick
Stearns History Museum

Observations On Happiness: Using American History To Improve Our Well-Being

The desire for human happiness has been around for a long time. Americans throughout their history have deemed the pursuit of happiness an individual right, as written in the Declaration of Independence. The Founding Fathers recognized that happiness was important. As thinkers, they incorporated this sentiment into a document that not only declared independence from Great Britain but allowed citizens an opportunity to attain their own hopes and dreams.

The Observations on Happiness presentation features American history as a vehicle for healthy, happy living. First, history provides resources for gathering information on the human experience. These sources are adaptable to fit the individual. People have an opportunity to choose many different models as a way to add meaning to
their lives. Secondly, a community influences how you feel about yourself. Our acquaintances, family and peers provide feedback on our actions. This network truly affects our level of happiness. Finally, attaining happiness is a life-long process. Family history is an important element in this quest. The journey starts immediately as our parents provide the foundation for our attitude. As one ages, we absorb or repel personality patterns from our parents in how we approach life.

American history is an excellent tool to use for exploring how humans interact with each other. The founders realized it took effort to generate personal happiness. For example, Benjamin Franklin developed guidelines to attain happiness, friendship and healthy living through his “Art of Virtue”. Like his peers, Franklin started with himself reflecting on his own behavior and isolated any shortcomings. He then concentrated on reducing the frequency of these weaknesses from occurring, especially among the company of others. Franklin’s model provides an outstanding example to adapt to our own lives.

Our communities themselves can influence personal attitudes. Minnesota architect, designer and author Glanville Smith (1901-1987) provides a twentieth century interpretation on being happy while constantly working on self-improvement. His thoughts for “An Ideal Day” suggested various ways to keep his life engaging and stimulating. He wrote, “What a happy life I could lead, like Adam, in a garden, trying new things, and sowing seeds from the old.” His philosophy centered on a network of friends that continually grew throughout his life. Like Franklin, he used history to look back at his own actions and continuously worked to improve on any failures. This left him essentially very satisfied.

Family history in many ways is at the root of our happiness. This final example stresses how upbringing influences our ability to generate satisfaction. Parents, grandparents and siblings shape our attitude during the formative years of our life. We adopt variations on their belief systems upon reaching adulthood. What do we like about parents and family? What would we change? Does our family define who we are? Answering these questions links our behavior and our sense of contentment. Franklin noted the task was not easy. Through self-reflection, discipline and persistence, we can overcome many obstacles in our pursuit of happiness.

James H. Read
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University
Happiness and Power

This paper will examine the complicated relationship between happiness and power—power here understood as the capacity to realize some aim or desire. Happiness and power are certainly not identical: one may be powerful enough to achieve aims that, once realized, fail to make one happy. But happiness and power cannot be cleanly separated either: chronic powerlessness and unexpected loss of power typically produce misery, not happiness. The question of happiness and
power bears an obvious kinship to the question of happiness and money; but money is only one source of power, not the whole of it; and money’s function as power depends on how money is used.

In particular the paper will consider three very different hypotheses about the relation between happiness and power. The first hypothesis is one classically characterized by the Stoics, but of much wider resonance and not restricted to that philosophical tradition. This hypothesis is that happiness is realized by reducing one’s aims and desires to a limited set of goods (like personal virtue) that lie within one’s power. Happiness on this theory is not achieved by expanding one’s power to achieve aims, because aims and desires are infinitely expansive and will always outstrip one’s capacity to achieve them. Here the relation between happiness and power, beyond the healthy minimum, is negative: more power brings less happiness.

The second hypothesis is one expressed most forcefully by Thomas Hobbes. In chapter 11 of Leviathan Hobbes defined happiness, or “Felicity” to use his term, as “Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires – that is to say, continual prospering.” Because happiness for Hobbes is no more or less than continually getting what one wants, there is a close and direct relation between happiness and power. Power for Hobbes means one’s present capacity to attain some future “apparent good.” Because of the close relationship between happiness and power, Hobbes posits as “a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.”

The third hypothesis is expressed in starkest form by Friedrich Nietzsche, who asserts not merely that power is a means to happiness, but that power – understood as actively overcoming resistance – is happiness. In The Antichrist Nietzsche asks the question, “What is happiness?” and answers: “The feeling that power is growing, that resistance is overcome.” For Nietzsche (in contrast to Hobbes) happiness is not “attained” by achieving one’s aims. The specific aims themselves are of little significance for Nietzsche; achieving a particular and transitory aim contributes to happiness only by temporarily providing the will with some resistance to overcome, thus awakening the feeling of power and producing happiness.

I find all three of these hypotheses about the relation between happiness and power deeply problematic, for reasons to be set forth in the paper. By exploring these three unsatisfactory hypotheses the paper hopes to discern a better way conceiving the relation between happiness and power.

Rick Saucier and Steve Schwarz
College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University
Are Marketers Responsible for Consumer Happiness?

What drives Americans to shop and spend so much? People often believe that purchasing products will make them happy. The percentage of Americans who described themselves as happy actually peaked in 1957 and has fallen steadily over
the last half century despite the fact that Americans have twice as many possessions as they did then. Other studies show that people with materialistic values are less satisfied with life, experience more anxiety, experience poorer relationships, contribute less to their communities, and tend to have more anti-social behaviors.

What ethical responsibilities does a company have in the American dream to pursuing a lifestyle where materialistic possessions theoretically define consumer happiness? Should a company's marketing communications take into consideration the social responsibility or an organization’s obligation to the society in which they conduct business? This study proposes to examine how the marketing profession has learned to apply the power of emotion to their marketing actions, the consequences that lead to the American materialistic culture, and the resultant duty to behave in an ethical manner.