

5 CLASSIFICATION OF HAPPINESS MEASURES

Ruut Veenhoven¹

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Accepted measures of happiness are classified in two ways: first by the substantive meaning they tap and second by their methodological characteristics.

The categorization of meaning involves the kind of happiness the question focuses on, for instance whether the focal point is on pleasant mood or on contentment. This is called the *focus* of the question. Further the questions are also classified by the period considered. For example, whether a question on happiness pertains to the last few years or to the mood of the moment. This is referred to as the *time frame* of the question.

The classification of methodic aspects starts with the technique by which happiness is assessed. Questioning is the most common method, but affect level can also be assessed by behavioral observation (cf. [Section 4/2](#)). Next to direct questioning, there are also indirect techniques, such as content analysis of diaries. These assessment methods are referred to as the question

¹ Text: Ruut Veenhoven. Last update May 2015

mode.

All assessments of happiness are scored in a way that allows a ranking. Mostly this is done by using numerical scales, but scores are also recorded on verbally labeled scales or on graphic scales. So the next subject of classification is the *rating-scale* used. Both the scale-type and the scale-range are recorded.

Given the many sub-divisions within these five classifications (to be shown below), the number of possible combinations is enormous, however in reality we see only a limited amount of configurations. Many of the measures fit the same characteristics. The most common measure is a direct question on current life-satisfaction, rated on a numerical 10-step scale. Still such items often differ slightly in wording. To keep these differences in mind all question-codes have an extension, which indicates the variant. This extension a character, where 'a' signifies the first (and often only) *variant*, and 'd' means that there are at least four variants of that question in the catalog.

The classification is presented on [scheme 5](#). The details of this classification system are explained in the next sections.

[Section 5/1](#) presents the rubrics used to determine the *focus* of items. This classification departs from the above distinction between overall happiness and its two 'components', that is, affect level and contentment. Not all the items fit this conceptual tri-partition; hence there is a fourth category for 'mixed' items.

[Section 5/2](#) presents the ordering of *time-frames*. A distinction is made between the period referred to in estimates of average happiness, and periods over which change in happiness is followed.

The categorization of *modes* is given in [section 5/3](#). The major distinction made is between self-reports of happiness and estimates by others. As noted above, other ratings are only accepted for assessment of affect level.

Next an ordering of *rating-scales* is provided in [section 5/4](#) and in [section 5/5](#) I outline how is dealt with similar items that differ only in wording.

5/1 Classification by focus

Kind of happiness addressed

5/1.1 Focus on Overall happiness

Keyword happiness

O-HL Overall: Happiness in Life
O-HP Overall: Happy Person
O-H? Overall: Happiness: question not reported
O-HV Overall: Happiness: Various items

Keyword life-satisfaction

O-SLu Overall: Satisfaction with Life (unspecified)
O-SLC Overall: Satisfaction with Life-Course
O-SLL Overall: Satisfaction with Life one Leads
O-SLS Overall: Satisfaction with Life-Situation
O-SLW Overall: Satisfaction with Life-as-a-Whole
O-SP ~~Overall~~ Overall: Satisfied Person
O-SL? Overall: Satisfaction with Life: question not reported
O-SL* Overall: Satisfaction with Life: various items

Keyword quality of life

O-QL? Overall: Quality of Life, text not reported
O-QOL Overall: Quality Of Life
O-SQL Overall: Satisfaction with Quality of Life

Further keywords

O-DT Overall: Delighted vs. Terrible life
O-GBB Overall: Good-Bad Balance
O-LWL Overall: Life Worth Living
O-QLS Overall: Quality of Life-Situation
O-V Overall: Various items
O-* Overall: Mixed items, transformed to same scale

Sum-scores

O-Sum Overall: Summed overall appraisals of life-as-a-whole

5/1.2 Focus on Hedonic level of affect

Self estimated average

A-AOL Affect: Average Overall Level

Computed average

A-AA Affect: Average during Activities
A-ARE Affect: Average Repeated overall Estimates (time sampling)
A-APA Affect: Average over Particular Activities
A-ASA Affect: Average over Specific Affects

Computed Affect Balance (positive minus negative affects)

A-BB ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Bradburn)
A-BBr ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Brenner)
A-BC ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Cohen)
A-BD ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Diener's Daily Mood Form; 3 variants)
A-BDe Affect: Balance (Derogatis)
A-BH Affect: Balance (Huelsman)
A-BL ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Lichter)
A-BK ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Kamman)
A-BL Affect: Balance (Lyubomirski)
A-BM Affect: Balance (McNear POMS)
A-BMc Affect: Balance (McGreal, Depression-Happiness)
A-BS ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Balance (Schultz)
A-BW Affect: Balance (Watson, PANAS)

Further items

A-CP ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Cheerful Person
A-CA ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Affect: Cheerful Appearance
A-TH Affect: Time Happy
A-? Affect: question not reported
A-* Affect: various items

Sum-scores

A-Sum Affect: Summed appraisals

5/1.3 Focus on Contentment

Overall self estimate

C-A Contentment: Accomplishments in life
C-BW Contentment: Best -Worst possible life
C-RA ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Contentment: Realization of Aspirations
C-RG Contentment: Realization of Goals
C-W Contentment: getting things Wanted

Computed average

C-ASG Contentment: Average Success in Goals
C-P Contentment: Person

Various items

C-? Contentment: question not reported
C-* Contentment: various items

Sum-scores

C-Sum Contentment: Summed appraisals

5/1.4 Mixed measures

Ambiguous items

M-TH ~~AAAAAAA~~ Mixed: Time Happy
M-PL ~~AAAAAAA~~ Mixed: Pleasure in Life
M-FH ~~AAAAAAA~~ Mixed: Feel Happy

Mixed multiple items

M-AO Mixed: Affect + Overall
M-AC Mixed: Affect + Contentment
M-CO Mixed: Contentment + Overall
M-ACO Mixed: Affect + Contentment + Overall

5/1.5 Happy Life Years

Combinations of happiness and longevity

Y-LA Years Lived in high Affect
Y-LH Years Lived Happy
Y-LS Years Lived Satisfied

5/2 Classification by timeframe

Period of happiness addressed

-	various time frames (in case of mixed measures)
?	time frame not reported
c	currently (presently, today, these days)
cm	last month, last few weeks
cq	last quarter
cw	last week
cy	last year
g	generally
h	hitherto
l	over lifetime
ly	last year
m	momentary, now
md	last day
mh	last hour
mi	last instant
mp	last part of the day
se	since event
u	time frame unspecified
yd	yesterday

5/3 Classification by observation mode

Method by which happiness is measured

5/3.1 Self reports

Single closed questions

sq	1 question
sqt	1 question, asked twice (in same interview)
sqr	1 question, repeated (in successive interviews)

Multiple closed questions

mq	<1 questions
mqt	<1 questions, asked twice (in same interview)
?q	<1 questions, number not reported

Open questioning

oq	open question
pq	projective questioning
fi	focused interview

Content-analysis of ego-documents

cr	life review
cd	dairies

5/3.2 Ratings by others

Ratings based on clinical contact

rc	rating by clinician
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Ratings based on daily contact

rdp	rating by peers
rdn	rating by nurses
rdt	rating by teachers
rdf	rating by family
rdv	rating by various

Ratings based on systematic observation

ri	rating by interviewer (of happy appearance)
st	sorting task
tsb	time sampling of happy behaviors

Miscellaneous

*	Multiple observation methods
?	Observation method not reported
yh	years lived happy

5/4 Classification by rating-scales

How observations are scored

5/4.1 Scale type

Verbal scales

v verbal: each response option labeled

Numerical scales

n numerical: only extremes defined

Graphical scales

c circles

f faces

l ladder

lg Life-graph (happiness plotted on a time-scale)

m mountain scale

ol open line scale (responses categorized afterwards)

t thermometer scale

Miscellaneous

%t % time happy

rs rank-order of subjects

? rating scale not reported

* various rating-scales combined

5/4.2 Scale range

The number of steps indicates the scale-range. Some examples:

verbal scale

very, pretty, not: 3 step

numerical scale

1-10 10 step

0-10 11 step

5/5 Notation of variants

If a combination of the above characteristics is unique, the code gets an extension a. If there are more items of the same kind that differ only in wording, these variants are indicated with further letter extensions, following the alphabet. If a question-code has an extension 'd', this means that there are at least four variants of that question in the collection.

Scheme 5
Classification of happiness measures

<i>Substantive meaning</i>	<u>Focus</u>	The kind of happiness addressed.
	<u>Time frame</u>	The period considered
<i>Method of assessment</i>	<u>Mode</u>	The technique by which happiness is assessed
	<u>Scale-type</u>	How the observation is scored
	<u>Scale range</u>	Number of degrees of happiness distinguished
<i>Sub-variant</i>	<u>Wording</u>	Variation in phrasing of otherwise equivalent question

Example of classification of a single question:

'Taken all together, how would you say things are these days? Would you say that you are....?'

- 3 very happy
- 2 pretty happy
- 1 not too happy

This question is classified as follows: O-HL/c/sq/v/3/aa