7   USES OF THIS COLLECTION OF HAPPINESS MEASURES

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 This collection stores all the measures of happiness ever used that passed the selection for face validity. The compendium provides full text of each measure and links to the findings observed with them. The collection can be searched from several angles. It can facilitate research in various ways.

7/1 Options

There are two version of this collection, the original MS-Access database and a simplified version on the web. Both versions provide a view of the number or items in the various classification categories. Both versions also allow access to the full text and provide links to the findings.

There is a difference in search options. On the web this collection can be searched only top-down, that is starting by focus and then selecting further within a particular focus category for e.g. a ten step numerical rating scale. The Access database allows searches at all levels, for instance one can select all the question that use a ten step numerical rating scale, irrespective of the focus.

7/1.1 Select a measure

The collection first provides an overview of the available methods for measuring happiness, and then on this basis various selections can be made.

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Overview of measures
This collection provides an overview of the main types and their variants. This overview appears in the classification on the search screen. From here one can get to the variations and next to the full text of unique questions. Remember that unique variants are indicated by a letter extension at the end of the item-code. On the search-screen, the numbers behind the classes indicate the number of variants in that class and the number of studies where this kind of item has been applied.

Selecting similar measures
Using this collection one can easily select similar survey question, for instance all the questions that focus on hedonic level of affect (code A) in the present (code c). One can further refine this selection, for instance by selecting only those that use a numerical rating scale (code n). Preference may depend on the number of available cases. The numbers at the right on the search-screen indicates these.

Searching often used measures
The search-screen also shows the number of studies in which a particular question has been used. This information may be useful in selecting a question that is sufficiently current to allow comparison. Note that the data collection is not complete.

7/1.2 Show use in earlier studies

Another utility is the link to other collections in this database. This brings the user to the studies which used a particular measure, or a selection of similar measures, and finally also to the findings.

Link to studies
Once one has picked an item, one can get to the studies that used that item. Clicking the study codes presented on the screen does this. The study description gives short information about the design of the study and full bibliographic detail. Note that there are some measures on the list that have been used only in studies that have not been entered as yet or that have never been applied in empirical research. These cases are indicated by a zero for the number of studies in on the search-screen.

Link to populations
For a given measure (or class of measures) one can also list the populations for which that indicator has been applied. For instance one can search the (few) populations in which hedonic level was assessed using experience sampling (codes 'm' and 'sqr'). Reversibly the system also allows selection of survey questions that have been used in a specific group. For example one can list the happiness questions used in studies among mentally handicapped people.

Link to correlational findings
Likewise one can get to all the variables ever related to scores on a particular happiness indicator. For instance the correlates of happiness as assessed by experience sampling. Again one can also select the other way around, for example to select the questions that have been used in studies on the relation between happiness and intelligence.

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7/2 Applications

These options can be quite helpful in research on happiness, as they provide easy access to information that would otherwise be unavailable in a practical form.

7/2.1 Orientation for new research

When an investigator decides to include happiness in a new study, the problem is typically to find a good measure of happiness. Since time restraints often preclude a thorough literature study, the choice is commonly rather haphazard and this regularly causes problems when one comes to analyzing the data: the indicators appears to tap something different after all, are not suited for comparing with most other studies on the subject, etc. This catalog facilitates the search for a good item in several ways.

One, this collections provides the investigator with an easy overview. A look at the classification gives a general outlook and browsing the records held in this database provides a quick route to the details. A glance at the introductory text will also help the investigator to sharpen the concept.

Two, this collection allows for a better-informed selection. Since measures are linked to the studies held in the wider database of happiness, an investigator can select the measures that have been used on the kind of public at aim. For instance, if the focus is on the elderly, one can select all the questions ever applied on that population in a few mouse clicks. Likewise one can also find questions that have been used in earlier studies on the same variable. For example, if the aim is to assess how strongly happiness is linked to income, one can easily get to the questions used in earlier studies on this relationship.

Further this collection provides information about earlier assessments of psychometric properties and provides available translations for other languages than English.

7/2.2 Interpretation of findings

The collection also provides help for the analysis phase by providing the investigator with easy access to comparison data.
Observed responses to a question on happiness make more sense when compared to the scores in other studies that used the same item. Comparison can tell whether one's respondents are relatively happy or unhappy and may alert to possible error. Distributional findings are readily available in the database and can be reached from the particular item in this catalog.
Correlational findings also make more sense in a comparative perspective. Not only can this show us whether the observed correlation is in the normal range, it can also hint at differential effects across conditions, for example a stronger effect of income in poor nations. Since differences in correlations are mostly small, such comparisons require that measurement error be reduced. One way to do this is to restrict to results found using similar or identical happiness measures. This collection provides easy access to such findings.

7/2.3 Method development

This collection is also a useful tool for improving techniques for measuring happiness as it provides an overview of the available methods and sets the scene for systematic exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of these methods.

Stock taking
Development starts typically with taking stock. What methods have already been tried and where are the white spots? Usually this requires time consuming literature research, which always leaves an investigator uncertain about whether he might have missed some of the main measures. This collection provides complete information in a minute. The classification gives a systematic overview. Though the classification does not catch all the relevant aspects, this is at least a good start. Since the catalog presents full texts one can next scan the collection for further dimensions.

Evaluation
A next step is to consider the weak and strong points of particular measures. One way is to compare observed reliability, for instance by looking at earlier assessment of overtime correlation or inter-item consistency. The collection provides the accidental findings that are available on this matter. Another approach is to compare predictive power, for this purpose one can use the links to correlations and compare which items perform best on comparable indicators. Such analyses require a rich data collection and this is a strongpoint of this database.

Presentation of improvements
Stocktaking and evaluation may result in the development of new measures. If so, this collection can also serve to bring these to the attention of the research community. Not only are new indicators readily included in the collection, but also proof of better quality is added in the box on psychometric qualities.