Chapter 3
COLLECTION OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS ON HAPPINESS[1]

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The scientific literature is combed in various ways to find publications on happiness. All texts are read to assess whether they deal with happiness as defined here, the 'subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole (cf. Chapter 2). Only publications that address this subject are added to this bibliography**.**

3/1   How publications are gathered

The following bibliographical sources are scanned periodically

Abstract systems
Several international abstract systems were used in the late 1990s, the Psychological Abstracts, the Sociological Abstracts, the International Dissertations Abstracts and the Educational Resources Information Center's abstract system. Since the 2000s we periodically scan electronic databases and since 2005 Google Scholar in particular.

A broad range of key words is used in the searches. These key words are: *adjustment (general, life, personal) affect (general, level), attitude (life), contentment, elation, evaluation (life), happiness, hedonic (affect, experience, level, mood), morale, satisfaction (emotional, general, life) and well-being (inner, psychological, general).*

Titles are screened and the full text of each abstract and index.

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[1] Last update 1-4-2020 by Ruut Veenhoven

Libraries

Catalogues of university libraries have been scanned in several nations (Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, USA), looking for works that carry the word happiness or a synonym in the title and books in related fields. Promising books are called up and inspected before being added to or rejected for this bibliography.

Investigators

When research findings are entered in the findings archive of this database, the authors of the research report are invited to check our input, they are also asked whether there are any other publications on happiness from their hand, not yet included in the Bibliography of Happiness. Incidentally, the Directory of Investigators on Happiness is used for a mailing with a call for updates about their work.

Reference lists

Reference lists of gathered publications are inspected and promising titles called in.

Announcement services

Today, many papers on happiness are brought to our attention by services such as Academia and Research Gate. We also profit from specialized repositories such as New Economic Papers (NEP) on Happiness and from subject specific alerts mailed by publishers, such as Springer Alert.

3/2   Selection on concept

All publications are read to see whether they contain information on happiness in the sense of the subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole. See Chapter 2 of this introductory text. Typically, about half of the texts appear to be about something else, mostly about the different notions of well-being enumerated in section 2.3 of chapter 2.

The share of publications in which the word 'happiness' is used for another matter than defined here is rising with the growing popularity of the topic. Several phenomena called by other names in the past, are now presented as 'happiness', e.g. positive mental health, which today is often referred as (eudaimonic) 'happiness'.

Publications about these related matters are **not** included in this bibliography. Consequently, the research findings reported in these texts are **not** included in this database either.

Selection on one *concept* of happiness', rather than on the *word,* is essential for this database. For that reason, this World Database of Happiness is also known as a (conceptually) 'focused findings archive'.

3/3   Number of publications found

To date (January 2020), this Bibliography of Happiness lists some 14.000 scientific publications on happiness. Most of these are fairly recent as can be seen below in Table 3.3

Table 3.3
Scientific publications on happiness by decade of publication: count 1-1-2018

Decade	*Number of publications*
Before 1900	1
1900s	3
1910s	7
1920s	12
1930s	26
1940s	25
1950s	55
1960s	174
1970s	779
1980s	1616
1990s	1853
2000s	3844
2010s	3460
2020s	…

3/4   Coverage

It is estimated that about 95% of English language articles, books and research reports have been traced. German and Dutch language publications on happiness are also fairly completely covered, however, there is a serious lack of reports in French, Japanese and Spanish. Third world publications on this subject are probably scarce, but it is not unlikely that there are more than we have found.

An automatic scan for missing publications is planned. Since we have a list of accepted publications (this bibliography) and also a list of considered, but rejected publications (on our 'working list'), we can run searches in electronic databases, such as Scopus, using the search terms mentioned above and excluding the publications we have considered before.

Table 3.4
Scientific publications on happiness by language: count 1-1-2018

Language	*Number of publications*
English	10811
Dutch	366
French	57
German	520
Italian	7
Spanish	44
Other	50

3/5   Process of continuous collection

Problem of keeping track of the literature
Gathering the scientific literature on happiness was not too difficult at the start of this research strand in the second half of the 20 century. Pioneers in this field made bibliographies in 1982 (Diener), 1984 (Veenhoven) and 1997 (Cummins). See subject section of this Bibliography, STUDY of HAPPINESS >> Reviews of the literature on happiness >> Bibliographies.

To our knowledge, only Veenhoven's bibliography has been continued and that is the bibliography described in this introductory text. Why have other bibliographies been discontinued? The main reason seems to be that the exponential growth of scientific publications on happiness makes it ever more difficult to keep a bibliography up to date. As we will see below, the maintenance of this bibliography requires currently about 2 full time staff. This capacity problem will be more pressing when the conceptual scope is loose, which implies that the survival of this bibliography is at least partly due to its strict conceptual focus.

Another reason for the discontinuation of earlier bibliographies could be in the appearance of electronic databases such as Google Scholar. Why sink time in maintaining a bibliography when a selection on the word happiness appears on your screen in a split-second? Probably, the limitations of such searches were not well recognized at that time. One limitation is that selection on words does not always provide a selection on concept, and that this is particularly so in the case of happiness (cf. section 3/2). A related limitation is that this results in unmanageable numbers of publications. A search on 'happiness' in Google Scholar yielding some 2 million hits.

Future developments automatic identification of the contents of scientific publications may allow selection on concepts used and can even sort selected publications on happiness by subject and methodology. Yet for the time being, we must do with this men-made bibliography.

Procedure

To keep the bibliography up to date the following nine steps are taken:

1. Identifying scientific publications that could deal with happiness using the sources mentioned in section 3/1.
2. Calling in texts of these, though the university library of downloading from internet
3. Filing incoming texts on a working list
4. Preparing texts for selection and coding: Adding a notation sheet to a writable pdf version of the text
5. Selection and coding by senior staff.
   a. Texts are close read, focusing on
      o Whether it deals with happiness as defined in chapter 2 of this introductory text
      o If so, whether the text reports an empirical investigation on happiness
      o If so, whether an acceptable measure of happiness has been used, which makes the results eligible for entering in the findings archive (cf. chapter 5 of this introductory text).
   b. All publications are coded for subject, using the most recent subject classification. When a new subject appears in a publication, this is added to that classification
   c. In case of eligible publications, measure codes are noted next to description of questions on happiness. The most recent classification of happiness measures is used for that purpose and new measures are added.
   d. Findings to be entered in the findings archive are marked in the text, typically by encircling rows of collumns in tables
   e. Reference lists are screened for promising titles, not yet on the working list and entered in step 1
6. Entering of selected publications in the Access database.
   Notation of relected publications (not about happiness) on the working list
7. Adding full texts of selected publications to the Access database, in pdf version with notations (for intern use only)
8. Adding a copy of all selected texts to a file in which selection on words is possible
9. Upload of the Access database to Azure (cloud) and from to the website of this World Database of Happiness

Team

This work is currently done by a team of 8 persons, consisting of 7 volunteers supported by one paid staff–member. The volunteers work one or two days in the week and typically take responsibility for one of the steps in the above described

workflow. Most of volunteers are pensioners recruited from students of the Erasmus Academy of higher education for elderly people HOVO. Together the workforce involved in maintenance of this bibliography equals some 2 full time equivalents. The people currently involved in the maintenance of this bibliography are listed here and people who contributed to this collection it in the past are listed here.

3/6   Development history

1984
Part II of the Data-book of Happiness, which described 150 reports of empirical investigations between 1911 and 1978, in which a valid measure of happiness was used

1993
Book 'Bibliography of Happiness', which described 2472 contemporary studies on subjective appreciation of life. All publications on happiness are included, not only the ones that report an empirical study using a valid measure of happiness. A first subject classification is added

1998
Initial presentation of updates of this book on internet, using an FTP platform

2000
Entering in an Access data and subsequent uploading to the website of the World Database of Happiness

2007
Integration with other collections of the World Database of happiness

Since
Continuous addition and development, lastly (2020) revision of the subject classification

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