

## Chapter 4

# CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS<sup>1</sup>

---

- 4/1 **Discipline**
- 4/2 **Subject matter**
  - 4/2.1 Global subject classes
  - 4/2.2 Detailed subject classification
- 4/3 **Type of document**
- 4/4 **Happiness measure used in reported study**
  - 4/4.1 Time frame of happiness data
  - 4/4.2 Happiness variants measured
  - 4/4.3 Acceptable measure used or not

Appendix A: [Blank Publication notation form](#)

Appendix B: [Example of a completed Publication notation form](#)

---

All promising titles are read to see whether they contain information on happiness in the sense of the 'subjective enjoyment of one's life as a whole', cf. [Chapter 2](#) of this introductory text. Typically, about half the publications gathered is about something else called by the same name and are for that reason not included in this Bibliography.

The publications that **do fit** our concept of happiness are described in the following ways:

- Global characteristics of the text
  - Discipline
  - Subject category
  - Type of document
- Specific subject matters addressed, using a detailed subject classification.

If the publication reports an empirical investigation on happiness (type of document), this text is further classed for:

- Time frame of happiness (past, present, future, perceived change)

If the research report deals with present happiness, the next class is:

- Whether or not the measures used in that research fit our concept of happiness adequately. This selection on validity of the measures of happiness used is

---

<sup>1</sup> Last update 1-1-2020 by Ruut Veenhoven

discussed in chapter 5 of this introductory text. Only findings of studies that pass this test are eligible for inclusion in the finding collections of this data base.

These properties are recorded using a notation form, a blank version of which is presented on the next page. The entries on that form are explained in the following sections of this chapter. In Appendix B, an example of a completed notation form is presented. A numerical account of the classifications is presented in the following sections.

#### 4/1 Discipline

Publications are characterized as belonging either to the field of 'philosophy', 'social sciences' or 'medical sciences'. This classification works for the bulk of the studies considered, but there are some cases where the classification is debatable. For example, in studies on the relationship between happiness and longevity both biological and psychological processes are involved. In such cases two disciplines will be mentioned. Most of the literature reviews cover more than one discipline.

**Table 4.1**

**Scientific publications on happiness by discipline:** count 1-1-2018

<i>Field</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
Philosophy	336
Social sciences	11.293
Life sciences	206

As can be seen in table 1, the great majority of the studies in this bibliography come from the social sciences. Much of these are psychological studies. There are also several sociological publications, from the field of Social Indicator Research. The number of publications on happiness economics began to grow from the 2000s onwards. Curiously, there are very few anthropological studies on happiness.

## 4/2 Subject matter

Though all publications are about 'happiness' they do not address this topic in the same way, some focus on methodological issues, such as the measurement of happiness and others on substantive matters such as on particular determinants of happiness like income. The 'subject' matters are grouped in two ways: first by 5 general subject classes and next by detailed subject classification.

### 4/2.1 General subject classes

Topics are characterized using five key words: 'concept' of happiness, 'measurement' of happiness, 'determinants' of happiness, 'consequences' of happiness and 'views' on happiness.

#### *Concept*

All publications on happiness say something about the concept. Hence, this description is used only when conceptualization is a main topic.

#### *Measurement*

Likewise, all empirical studies involve measures of happiness. This description is applied to the publications that focus on measurement problems in the first place or involve unusual methods of measurement.

#### *Determinants*

Many studies focus on causes of happiness: either causal conditions or causal processes. These studies are typified as focusing on 'determinants', even though most of them work with correlational data that often allow another interpretation.

#### *Consequences*

Some studies consider the effect of enjoying life or not: for example, whether a positive appreciation of life adds to good health and responsible social behaviour. Many studies involve relevant data for the answering of such questions, but in this context only those studies are mentioned that enter the matter explicitly.

#### *Views on happiness: beliefs and ideals*

In addition to studies on actual causes and consequences of happiness, there are also studies about what people think about happiness, and how valuable they deem it to be as a goal.

**Table 4.2.1****Scientific publications on happiness by general subject: count 1-1-2018**

<i>Language</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
Concept	518
Measurement	1.406
Determinants	9.695
Consequences	571
Beliefs and ideals	726

## 4/2.2 Detailed subject classification

In addition to the general sorting of subjects, a detailed subject classification is used for describing the contents of the gathered scientific publications on happiness. To date (January 2018) this classification involves some 1300 categories.

The main categories of this classification are presented in table 4.4.2.a. An example of further details within one of these main subject categories is presented in table 4.2.2b.

### *Development of this classification*

This subject classification has been developed over time in an incremental way, following the topics addressed in the research literature. It is not a systematic account of all possible subjects; hence this classification shows which subjects have been addressed in happiness research so far, but it does not reveal which topics have been ignored.

### *Ordering of topics*

We use common notions in the social sciences to denote topics, such as 'personality' and 'social status'. When no such guiding concepts are available, alphabetic ordering is used.

### *Keywords*

Names used for subject categories can be arbitrary, when synonyms are available. For example, the category we name 'social status' could also be labeled 'social rank', 'class' and 'position' or could be classified as a sub-category under 'social stratification'. We deal with that problem adding such terms as keywords to subject categories. Searches on keywords will bring users to the subject they were looking for, even if that category is labeled with another term than they had in mind.

### *Interlinks in this classification*

Any classification involves a choice of ordering topics in one particular way, for

example, 'income' can be sorted under the wider category of 'social status' or sorted under 'resources'. We deal with that problem by inter-linking related subjects. For example, 'personal income' is linked to 'national income' and to 'beliefs about the effect of income on one's happiness'. As such the users get a view on a network of related factors.

**Table 4.2.2a**

**Scientific publications on happiness by main subject of the subject classification: count 1-1-2020**

<i>Name of subject category</i>	<i>N sub-categories</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
Study of happiness	20	444
Concept of happiness	24	519
Measurement of happiness	82	9667
Modes of research on happiness	83	9648
Prevalence of happiness	60	1910
Correlates of happiness		
• Situational	598	8511
• Personal	556	5456
• Behavioral	147	2252
Determinants of happiness	79	1172
Consequences of happiness	153	702
Pursuit of happiness	150	1085
Views on happiness		
• Views on one's own happiness	26	810
• Views in public opinion	64	766
• Views in philosophy	58	670
Totals	<b>2100</b>	<b>43612</b>

**Table 4.4.2b****Examples of a sub-division in a main subject category: count 1-1-2020**

<i>Name of subject category</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
<b>HAPPINESS AND CHILDREN</b>	17
<b>Having children</b>	103
Adoption of a child	0
Birth of a child	32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy</li> </ul>	4
Childlessness	50
Number of children	17
Kind of children	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopted children</li> <li>• Adult children</li> <li>• Foster children</li> <li>• Grand children</li> <li>• Step children</li> </ul>	0 2 6 4 2
Leaving home of children	16
Planning of children	0
<b>Contacts with children</b>	30
Contacts of adult children with their parents	2
Custody of divorced parents	1
Frequency of contacts	2
Quality of contact	12
<b>Characteristics of children</b>	17
Age of children	2
Distance to adult children	1
Family situation of children	33
Well-being of children	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>

#### 4/3 Type of document

The studies in this bibliography are characterized by the scientific approach followed. Three types are discerned, 'treatise', 'policy paper', 'empirical study' and 'literature review'.

##### *Treatise*

A study is characterized as a 'treatise', if it is largely based on theoretical speculation and does not involve empirical checks of these using happiness measures. An example of such a treatise is MacKaye's 'Economy of Happiness' (1906), which argues that free enterprise is likely to make the life of the average man more satisfactory in the long run, but does not provide any direct evidence for this claim. Speculative studies were the rule, until survey data became available in the 1950's.

##### *Empirical study*

All studies that involve empirical assessments of happiness are characterized as 'empirical'. Obviously, such studies also involve theoretical notions. In some cases, the theory is more prominent than the data. Among the empirical studies, four methodological variants are noted, that are particularly relevant for the identification of the causes and consequences of happiness. These are 'longitudinal' studies (including studies that involve time sampling), 'experimental' studies, 'cross-national' studies and 'meta-analytic' studies. The other empirical studies are 'descriptive' or 'correlational'.

##### *Literature review*

Most review studies focus on one particular issue in the study of happiness: on a particular theory, (i.e. comparison theory) or on a particular determinant (i.e. social prestige). These studies are characterized as *special subject* reviews. Literature reviews that aim at a complete picture of happiness-research are denoted as *general* reviews.

Most publications on happiness involve some reference to the literature, the description 'review' is used only for studies in which a literature survey is central.

The characterization of the studies in this bibliography is listed in table 4.3. The great majority are empirical studies.

**Table 4.3****Scientific publications on happiness by type of document: count 1-1-2018**

<i>Type</i>		<i>Number of publications</i>
Treatise		701
Policy paper		38
Literature review		
	General review	261
	Special subject	1.042
Research report	Dataset	193
	Meta-analysis	378
	Single study	9288

#### 4/4 **Happiness Measure**

In the case of a 'single study' the measures of happiness used are described in some detail, and it is established whether the temporal perspective is in the present, and if so, what variant of happiness is measured. Then it is determined whether the measures used validly measure happiness. Only studies that validly measure happiness, are deemed acceptable for further meta-analysis, and are included in the finding collections of the World Database of Happiness, that is, the Collection of Distributional Findings and/or the Collection of Correlational Findings.

##### 4/4.1 **Time frame of data on happiness**

###### *Past happiness.*

Some studies assess happiness retrospectively, for example by inquiring about one's happiness in one's youth or about the happiest time of one's life up to the present. These studies are denoted 'past'. Follow-up studies are not denoted as such: although these studies also assess earlier happiness, this happiness was 'present' at the time of its assessment.

###### *Present happiness.*

All studies that assess current satisfaction with life are denoted as 'present'. The main goal of this bibliography is to gather empirical studies on present happiness. Hence reports of happiness in other temporal perspectives are not included in the finding collections of this database.

###### *Expected happiness*

Some studies assess how happy people think they will be in the future: mostly in the



next five years. These prospective studies are characterized as pertaining to 'expected' happiness. Expected happiness is not the same as present happiness. In fact, presently unhappy people tend to console themselves with optimistic projections of their futures.

#### *Perceived changes in happiness.*

There are also studies that inquire about retrospective and prospective changes in happiness, in particular studies that use life-graph methods. These studies must be distinguished from longitudinal studies that assess actual change in happiness through time. To date (January 2018), there are only a few studies of this kind. See table 4.4.1

**Table 4.4.1**

**Scientific publications on happiness by time frame: count 1-1-2018**

<i>Temporal perspective of happiness measure used in reported study</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
Past	266
Present	8.714
Future	194
Perceived change over time	122

#### **4/4.2 Happiness variant addressed**

In [Chapter 2](#) of this Introductory Text, on 'conceptual scope' we distinguished between *overall happiness* and *components of happiness*, assuming that in evaluating our life as-a-whole, we draw on two sources of information: 1) how well we feel most of the time and 2) to what extent we perceive that we are getting what we want from our life. The former sub-appraisal is called 'hedonic level of affect' and is seen as the 'affective component of happiness', while the latter evaluation is called contentment and is seen as the cognitive component of happiness.

All publications are screened for the variant of happiness used, typically by looking at the measures used. Frequencies of the variants of happiness addressed in the publications on present happiness are presented below in table 4.4.2.

**Table 4.4.2****Scientific publications on happiness by happiness variant: count 1-1-2018**

<i>Type of happiness measured in reported study</i>		<i>Number of publications</i>
Overall happiness (life satisfaction)		7.497
<i>Components of happiness</i>	<i>Affective component</i> Hedonic level of affect	1.973
	<i>Cognitive component</i> Contentment	348

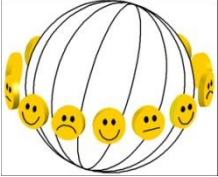
**4/4.3 Acceptable measure or not**

The prime aim of this database is to gather research findings on present happiness and prepare these for synthetic analysis. Research synthesis makes sense only if based on studies that measure the same thing. In this case, that requires that it is happiness in the sense of the subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole (cf. chapter 2) not something else. Therefore, all measures of happiness are carefully inspected. This crucial check for face validity is reported in detail in [Chapter 5](#) on 'Selection for inclusion in the findings archive'.

REFERENCES


MacKaye, J. (1906)  
*The economy of happiness*  
Little & Brown, Boston, USA

**Appendix A:** Blank publication notation form

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bibliography of Happiness</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PUBLICATION NOTATION FORM</b></p>
---	---

**Author/ year:** Pdf copy available**Discipline**
 philosophy     social sciences     life sciences
**Subject matter**
 concept     measurement     determinants     consequences     beliefs and ideals
**Type of document**
 treatise     policy paper     literature study     general review     special subject  
 report of empirical research     single study     meta-analysis     data set
**Time frame of data on happiness**
 past     present     expected     perceived changes in happiness
**Happiness variants measured**
 overall     hedonic level     contentment
**Inclusion in findings archive**
 yes: at least one valid measure of happiness used     no: no valid measure of happiness used  
 no: no new data reported
**Subject categories addressed in this publication:**

## Appendix B: Example of a completed Publication notation form

	<b>Bibliography of Happiness</b> <b>PUBLICATION NOTATION FORM</b>	Id number
---	--	-----------

Author/ year:

Loewe 2015

 Pdf copy available*Discipline*
 philosophy  social sciences  life sciences
*Subject matter*
 concept  measurement  determinants  consequences  beliefs and ideals
*Type of document*
 treatise  empirical research  literature review  
 policy paper  single study  general review  
 meta analysis  special subject  
 data set
*Time frame of data on happiness*
 past  present  future  perceived changes in happiness
*Happiness variants measured*
 overall  hedonic level  contentment
*Inclusion in findings archive*
 yes: at least one valid measure of happiness used  no: no valid measure of happiness used  
 no: no (new) data
*Subject categories addressed in this publication:*

Modes / topics / moderators  
 Correlates / perceived / views /  
 satisfactions / with work  
 Correlations / behavioural / work /  
 self employed