Journal of Happiness Studies (2005) 6:205–226
DOI 10.1007/s10902-005-5683-8
© Springer 2005

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER, JOAR VITTERSØ and ED DIENER

MOST PEOPLE ARE PRETTY HAPPY, BUT THERE IS CULTURAL VARIATION: THE INUGHUIT, THE AMISH, AND THE MAASAI

ABSTRACT. Diener and Diener (1996; Psychological Science 7: 181–185) suggested that most people are happy, and offered support for this claim from surveys in industrialized societies. We extend their findings to include people who lead materially simple lives and live in cultures far removed from those of typical survey respondents. We found that the Kenyan Maasai, the United States Amish, and the Greenlandic Inughuit, all reported positive levels of life satisfaction, domain satisfaction, and affect balance (more frequent positive emotions than negative ones). Across satisfaction and affect measures, including methods in addition to global self-reports, our 358 respondents from these cultures were one average, positive on all 54 scales, and significantly above neutral on 53 of them. Across all measures and samples 84% of participants scored above neutral. However, nobody was perfectly happy and satisfied, and the groups reported unique configurations of satisfaction and affect. Although all three groups were high in satisfaction with social domains, the Amish reported lower satisfaction with self-related domains, and the Maasai and Inughuit were relatively lower in satisfaction with material domains. All three groups reported frequent positive emotions, but only the Maasai reported frequent feelings of pride. Thus, the fact that most people tend to be moderately happy does not mean that they are ecstatic, or that there is no variation across cultures in happiness.

In 1996 Diener and Diener claimed that most people are happy, and implied that this is a natural state gifted to us by evolution. They reviewed evidence showing that a wide range of people, on average, report positive (above neutral) levels of well-being. From an evolutionary perspective these results make sense: the predominance of pleasant emotions would facilitate approach behaviors, because these emotions lead to the broadening and building of resources (Fredrickson, 2001), and high activation pleasant emotions include facets such as activity and energy that are almost synonymous with approach behavior. The

importance of these approach-oriented behaviors might be particularly beneficial for an intelligent species that can move between new and different environments. This is congruent with Ito et al. (1998) positivity-offset theory, the idea that people have a slightly positive hedonic tone that stimulates approach behaviors when no hedonic stimuli are active.

But, because the data reviewed by Diener and Diener came almost entirely from people in industrialized societies, another explanation is possible: that some factor related to life in industrialized culture contributed to the reports of positive well-being. For example, there could be emotion norms for positivity common to industrial cultures, which tend toward individualistic definitions of self (Triandis, 1995). Another possibility is that people reported happiness because industrial society largely meets human needs. Industrialized countries tend, for example, to have better infrastructure, better health care systems, better human rights records, more formalized social welfare programs, lower unemployment, and higher rates of education for both sexes than their "third world" counterparts. These advantages could lead to an increase in subjective well-being (SWB). In the present article, we extend the analysis of Diener and Diener to cultures that are substantially different from industrialized culture, including collectivisit culture and materially simple culture. We examine the Maasai of Kenya, traditional pastoralists who have few modern amenities and little exposure to western media, the Amish, who consciously reject modern values and technologies, and the Inughuit of Greenland, who live in a harsh environment and retain many elements of a hunting lifestyle.

In addition to sampling culturally distinct groups, we have included several types of measures in our studies to more strongly test the generality of Diener and Diener's conclusions. In terms of content, we examined both cognitive and affective components of SWB including life satisfaction, reports of satisfaction with specific domains (e.g., food, friendships, and physical appearance), and affect balance (positive minus negative emotions). We also employed several different methodologies to assess SWB. In addition to the global self-reports scales that are frequently used in this field, we also measured happiness by the reports of friends and family members of the respondents.

Another measure used with the Maasai (Study 1) and the Amish (Study 2) was based on memory – the degree to which the respondent could remember more positive than negative life events in two separate timed periods. Finally, with the Inughuit (Study 3), we also used the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), in which respondents' moods were recorded at periodic times during the day while the respondents were engaged in various activities. This measure has advantages over global reports in that it records moods in the moment rather than remembered mood states that can be subject to recall (Thomas and Diener, 1990).

The question of whether people are mostly happy is of theoretical importance to several different fields. In the area of emotion scholarship, it is essential to know whether certain moods predominate in people's experience, and whether certain moods tend to occur in the absence of significant events. If positive moods predominate, they certainly deserve more attention from emotion theorists, and exploring the reasons for dominance of pleasant emotions becomes a research priority. For the field of SWB, if most people tend to be above neutral in the absence of significant emotional stimuli, a reframing of issues in this field is in order. The search would be focused not on what makes people happy, but instead on what makes people unhappy, and what moves them up or down within the positive zone. Finally, if people have a tendency to be happy in the absence of hedonic stimuli, this has potential implications for our understanding of human nature in terms of the influence of approach tendencies on human history.

For overviews of SWB, the reader is referred to Diener et al. (1999), and Myers (1992).

METHODS

Respondent Samples

Research participants in our three studies responded to questions related to subjective well-being. Respondents answered questions relating to cognitive self-appraisals of psychological well-being, including general life satisfaction and specific life

domain satisfaction. In addition, they reported their frequency of experience of positive and negative affect. The respondents also provided general demographic information (e.g., age, education, and income) and information related to their life circumstances (e.g., number of people sharing their home, exposure to western media, and a short biography). In two of our studies (Study 1 and 3) peer reports were obtained for general life satisfaction and affect. We were able to obtain a limited amount of experience sampling data from the Inughuit (Study 3).

Study 1: The Maasai

Our sample of 127 Maasai came from 10 villages in four locations in Southwestern Kenya. The Maasai are traditional pastoralists, who have been living in Northern Tanzania and Southern Kenya since around A.D. 500 (Galaty, 1986). The Maasai resisted colonial incursions into their culture and retain most of their pre-colonial language, values, and practices. They commonly practice circumcision on young adults, engage in polygamy, arrange marriages, conduct child marriages, and require a period of warriorhood for young men. They maintain a form of political-religious leadership, embodied in the ''Laibon'' (medicine man). Maasai society is structured around age groups, or generations, that advance together across common developmental milestones (e.g., warriorhood, young elders, senior elders). Most traditional Maasai do not have paying jobs, but instead do gender-specific tasks related to cooking, child rearing, and herding. The Maasai have no running water or electricity, live in simple houses made from sticks, mud, and dung, and exist largely outside the cash economy of Kenya. The ''morani,'' or warriors, still use traditional weapons such as bow and arrows, spears, and clubs. The Maasai diet consists largely of milk, tea, cornmeal, and limited amounts of meat. Few of the respondents in the current study spoke English or Swahili, had attended school, or had been exposed to modern media such as magazines or television. Past research suggests that despite obvious cultural differences, there are also certain similarities between Maasai and other cultures such as male-biased attitudes and the perception of time (Cronk, 1999).

The Maasai were recruited through word of mouth, and villages were given a small monetary contribution for participation in the research. After obtaining consent to conduct research from village leaders, the researchers requested and were granted access to a demographically diverse sample including men and women, as well as adults of varying ages. Because, we interviewed between 10 and 22 people in each village (where total populations, including children, averaged about 30) we were able to guard against selection biases. No one refused to participate in the study. Because, the Maasai are largely illiterate, questions were administered orally, in interview format by translators trained in psychological interviewing. For questions requiring a scale response, scales were presented graphically as segmented bars on a sheet of Paper. The use of scales was explained and interviews did not begin until each respondent understood their use. Previous research has been conducted with the Maasai (e.g., Kirk, 1977; Ma & Schoeneman, 1997), including a pilot study by the current authors in 1997, that suggests the Maasai are capable of understanding psychological concepts and can effectively participate in structured research. In an effort to make the respondents more comfortable with the research setting we included general, qualitative questions at the beginning of the interview. To alleviate possible concerns related to confidentiality, the interviewers were Maasai from a nearby region who had no social connections to the respondents or their friends and family members. All materials were translated from English to Maa by a native Maa speaker and key words and terms were back-translated by an independent native Maa speaker. In the infrequent case of translation disagreement a suitable word was arrived at after discussion between the principle investigator and both translators. Discussions included equivalency of concepts as well as local lexical norms.

Study 2: The Amish

We studied 52 people from an Old Order Amish community in central Illinois and a New Order Amish settlement in southern Illinois. The Amish are a conservative religious order tracing their spiritual roots to the Anabaptist movement in Reformation-era Europe (Hostetler, 1993). The earliest Amish

immigrants to the United States came from Switzerland, and members of Amish society continue at home to speak "Pennsylvania Dutch," a German dialect, in addition to English. The Amish focus on "gelassenheit," or submission to God, guides their rituals, values, and behaviors (Kraybill, 1989). Food, health, and family unity are viewed as gifts from God. Although the Amish can be friendly to outsiders, their basic view is one of detachment from the outside secular world. In an effort to avoid the "perils of worldliness" the Amish widely shun automobiles, tractors, telecommunications, electricity, and other modern technologies. Although the New Order Amish take a more liberal view of the use of electricity and telephones, they retain the same strict moral, social, and spiritual values as their Old Order counterparts. Both communities are particularly suspicious of the potential negative social impact of mass media technologies such as television and the Internet. Most Amish children are educated no further than the eighth grade in Amish-only schools with a Christian curriculum.

Old Order Amish research participants were recruited by word of mouth and through classroom presentations. To gain the trust of this relatively closed community the principle investigator spent time visiting with Amish families, and obtaining the consent of community leaders to conduct the research. In the New Order Amish community, the principle investigator stayed with the local bishop and was introduced to potential research participants. Because, social introductions were necessary for recruitment purposes, the sample was largely one of convenience. However, the principle investigator actively requested introductions to Amish participants representing distinct demographic variables such as marital status, occupation, and age. Only three people refused to participate in the study. In an effort to introduce the research in an ecologically valid way, the principle investigator ate meals with many research participants and spent time answering questions after the research was concluded. Some respondents were recruited through school presentations, where the principle investigator discussed world cultures with the schoolchildren and their parents. The research materials were presented in English, in written form, and were completed at home, with the principle

investigator available to answer questions. In some cases, respondents were allowed to complete surveys on their own and mail them back to the researchers after promising to complete them alone, and in a single sitting. The Amish are educated through grade school and are familiar with modern testing procedures.

Study 3: The Inughuit

Our sample of 179 Inughuit were contacted in the Greenlandic villages of Qaanaaq, Qeqertaq, and Siorapaluk, as well as in nearby hunting and fishing camps. The Inughuit, the name of the local Inuit tribe, live at 79 degrees latitude, the most extreme latitudes of any traditional human society. The surrounding landscape is largely rock, sea, and glacier, with few large plants and no possibility for sustainable agriculture. The sun remains above the horizon 24 h a day during the summer months and never rises during the winter months. Many Inughuit are predominantly hunting-minded and their basic values are still anchored in the cultural traditions of a sharing ideology commonly found in hunting societies (Ingold, 1986). Historically, the Inughuit lived in virtually complete isolation, but today are increasingly exposed to western life, with modern jobs and a cash economy. Although many lnughuit homes have recently been modernized to include electricity, running water, and central heating, people typically live in crowded conditions and without flush toilets. It is common to see a hunter carving a seal or caribou on the kitchen floor, as children watch television. We have some indications that recent technological changes have not dramatically altered Inughuit life satisfaction. One of us (JV) conducted field-work in Siorapaluk in 1989–1990, when neither electricity nor television were available. In 1989, a single life satisfaction item, using a 1–7 scale, was used yielding a sample mean of 5.0 ($n = 19$). Thus, it seems unlikely that the level of satisfaction obtained from our current study is due the transformation to a more modern life style, because the life satisfaction reported in the current study is identical.

Most participants in this study were recruited in Qaanaaq, the administrative center for the municipality (population 620; Statistical Yearbook, 2000). In Qaanaaq, participants were

recruited from bulletin board advertisements, announcements in the local radio, and by word of mouth (in the settlements we conducted a door-to-door invitation procedure). In addition, we travelled to the most popular whale hunting and fishing camps to recruit individuals who were actively engaged in these endeavors. Our response rate in the settlements was close to 100% and about 80% in the hunting and fishing camps. Respondents were offered small monetary compensation for participation in the study. All materials were presented in written form, in Greenlandic (two surveys were presented in English and Danish), and completed in a quiet setting where the researchers were available to answer questions. In Qaanaaq, participants were asked to return to the research cite the following day to complete additional surveys (peer report forms). The surveys were originally translated by a professional translator and key words and phrases were back-translated by an independent professional translator. The two translations were found to be equivalent. In addition, a small number of Experience Sampling Method data were collected through random visits to participants (see below).

Measures

Respondents from all three cultures answered the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Pavot and Diener, 1993) and has been used widely across cultures (e.g., Diener et al., 2000). Participants from all three cultures also rated satisfaction with 14 life domains (e.g., family, food, and intelligence) using a 7-point satisfaction scale on which 7 was ''Totally Satisfied,'' 4 was ''Neutral,'' and 1 was ''Totally Dissatisfied.'' Identical domain satisfaction questions have been used cross-culturally in previous research (Napa-Scollon et al., in press). Domain satisfaction measures augment general life satisfaction measures, because they can be more closely tied to concrete experiences, and are less global than life satisfaction (Schwarz and Strack, 1999). Participants in all three cultures also indicated how frequently they felt various emotions during the past month, and for this report we analyzed four positive (joy, affection, pride, and contentment) and four negative emotions

(guilt, sadness, anger, and worry) that were common to all three sample surveys, The emotion frequency scale varied from 1, ''Never,'' to 7, ''Always.'' All respondents also provided basic demographic information.

For the Maasai (Study 1) and Amish (Study 2), we employed a memory-based method to assess saliency of positive memories and the predominance of positive over negative memories. In this method, respondents were asked to list as many positive and negative memories as they could remember in separate, timed one minute sessions. The order of positive and negative memory tasks was alternated for every-other participant to control for order effects. The Maasai were asked to list memories aloud, while the Amish were asked to write them down. Later, we computed a memory balance score, subtracting the total number of negative memories from the total number of positive memories. These types of memory measures have been used previously in cross-cultural research (e.g., Balatsky and Diener, 1993) and have been found to show convergent validity with other measures of SWB (Sandvik et al., 1993).

Finally, with the Inughuit (Study 3), we collected ESM data from 22 respondents. We did this by approaching research participants at random times throughout the day, as they were engaged in various tasks, and asked them to report how much they were currently feeling on the eight emotions on a scale ranging from not at all to extremely intensely. Although a zero to six scale was used, we transformed it to a $1-7$ scale for presentation purposes in this paper, so that it would be equivalent to other Measures. Although 55 respondents originally agreed to participate in this phase of the study, we could not find many participants on the 12 occasions we searched for them, and some participants decided to withdraw from this part of the study. We elected to retain the 22 respondents who had 8 or more reports, because this number seemed adequate to obtain a somewhat stable and representative affect balance score for them. Participants were paid 50 Danish Kroner (approximately US$ 7.00) for a full set of 12 responses. ESM data has the advantage of assessing ''in the moment'' mood states and computing average moods based on these reports rather than on recall. Robinson and Clore (2002) have shown that people use

heuristic shortcuts, not memory, to report their moods when longer periods of time such as a month or more are reported.

RESULTS

The basic demographic composition of the samples in the three studies can be seen in Table I. The table also shows life satisfaction and domain satisfactions for the three groups.

The Maasai, Amish, and Inughuit were significantly higher than the neutral point on all measures ($p < 0.001$ – for all), with the exception of the Amish ratings of the "Self" domain (NS). In all groups, the vast majority of respondents scored above neutral on the global SWB measures. Similarly, the affect balance score, the difference between positive and negative

TABLE I
Demographics and satisfaction with life and domains

	Maasai		Amish		Inughuit	
N	127		52		179	
Percent females	52		44		59	
Mean age	32.7		42.2		39.3	
Satisfaction Scores						
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Life satisfaction	5.4	0.6	4.4	1.0	5.0	1.0
Percent of sample above neutral	98%		61%		83%	
Domain Satisfaction						
Self	6.6	0.6	4.2	1.3	5.7	1.1
Romantic life	6.4	0.9	6.1	0.7	5.4	1.8
Health	6.4	0.9	5.7	1.0	5.7	1.3
Attractiveness	6.4	0.8	5.1	1.3	5.2	1.4
Intelligence	6.3	0.8	4.7	1.3	5.1	1.4
Family	6.3	0.8	5.9	1.1	6.1	1.1
Friends	6.1	0.8	6.1	0.9	5.5	1.6
Morality	6.0	1.0	5.3	1.1	5.0	1.6
Social life	5.9	1.0	5.7	1.0	5.9	1.1
Housing	5.9	1.1	5.7	1.0	5.3	1.7
Material goods	5.9	1.0	5.6	1.1	4.9	1.6
Privacy	5.8	1.0	5.6	1.3	4.7	2.0
Food	5.4	1.0	6.4	0.7	5.8	1.2
Income	5.2	1.3	5.5	1.3	4.1	2.0

TABLE II
Measures of effect

	Maasai		Amish		Inughuit	
Emotions	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Affection	6.3	0.9	4.9	1.1	5.2	2.0
Joy	6.4	0.8	4.8	0.9	5.1	1.8
pride	5.4	1.4	2.3	0.8	2.9	1.7
Contentment	6.4	1.0	5.1	1.0	4.8	1.9
Anger	2.1	1.0	2.4	0.6	2.7	1.4
Sadness	1.7	0.9	2.7	0.7	2.9	1.6
Guilt	1.7	1.0	2.4	0.7	2.9	1.7
Worry	2.2	1.2	2.8	0.9	2.8	1.5
Affect balance	4.2	1.0	1.6	0.7	1.7	1.9
Percent Above neutral	100%		100%		79%	
Peer reported affect balance	3.8	1.0	1.8	0.7	2.1	1.8
Percent above neutral according to peers	100%		89%		85%	
Memory balance percent above neutral	1.74 87%		2.75 95%			
Experience sampling percent above neutral					2.60 95%	

emotions (shown in Table II), was significantly above zero ($p < 0.001$ – for all) in all three groups, indicating greater experience of pleasant than unpleasant emotions. Using informant reports also shown in Table II, we found that an overwhelming majority believed their peers have more frequent positive than negative emotions, and the informant affect balance scores were all significantly greater than zero ($p < 0.00.1$). The memory balance score, the difference between positive and negative memories (Table II), used in Studies 1 and 2, was significantly above zero ($p < 0.001$ – for all). Last, the ESM scores (Table II) collected from the Inughuit (Study 3) were all significantly above zero ($p < 0.001$ – for all). Besides analyses at the group level, we also computed the percent of individuals in each group who were above neutral, with neutral and negative being the complementary category. Only for the Amish satisfaction with "Self" was the percent below half (40%), and the average across all 54 groups and measures was

84%. Thus, not only do groups on average score above neutral, but most individuals do so as well.

The results from all measures suggest that people are happy; but how happy? We examined the number of individuals in each sample who was at the top of each scale. One Amish respondent reported perfect life satisfaction, but nobody in this sample reported feeling only positive affect and no negative affect. In the Maasai sample two individuals reported always feeling positive emotions and never feeling negative emotions, but no respondent reported perfect life satisfaction. Among the Inughuit, two individuals reported always feeling positive and never feeling negative, and an additional three reported perfect life satisfaction, but no respondent reported both perfect life satisfaction, and perfect affect balance. Thus, respondents were happy, but nobody was perfectly so.

In order to visualize how far the group scores were above neutrality, we recalibrated each of the scores on a 0 (neutral) to 100 (perfectly happy or satisfied) scale. In other words, we computed, how far each mean score was between the neutral point of the scale and the top of the scale, and converted this to a score that could range from 0 to 100. For the domains, we averaged the 14 satisfaction values for each group. The recalibrated scores are shown in Figure 1. Note that recalibrated scores could not be computed for the memory measure because the top of the scale is unbounded. As can be seen in the figure, all scores were above neutral, but none approached the top of the scale. The scores varied from slightly positive to very positive, with the highest score being only 70 out of 100. Thus, there is substantial room for even happy groups to increase on subjective well-being.

Sex and Age Differences

Women were significantly more satisfied ($p < 0.001$), and had higher affect balance ($p < 0.05$) among the Maasai, but men had higher affect balance among the Inughuit ($p < 0.05$). Age correlated inversely with affect balance among the Maasai ($r = -0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Neither age nor sex produced significant effects among the Amish.

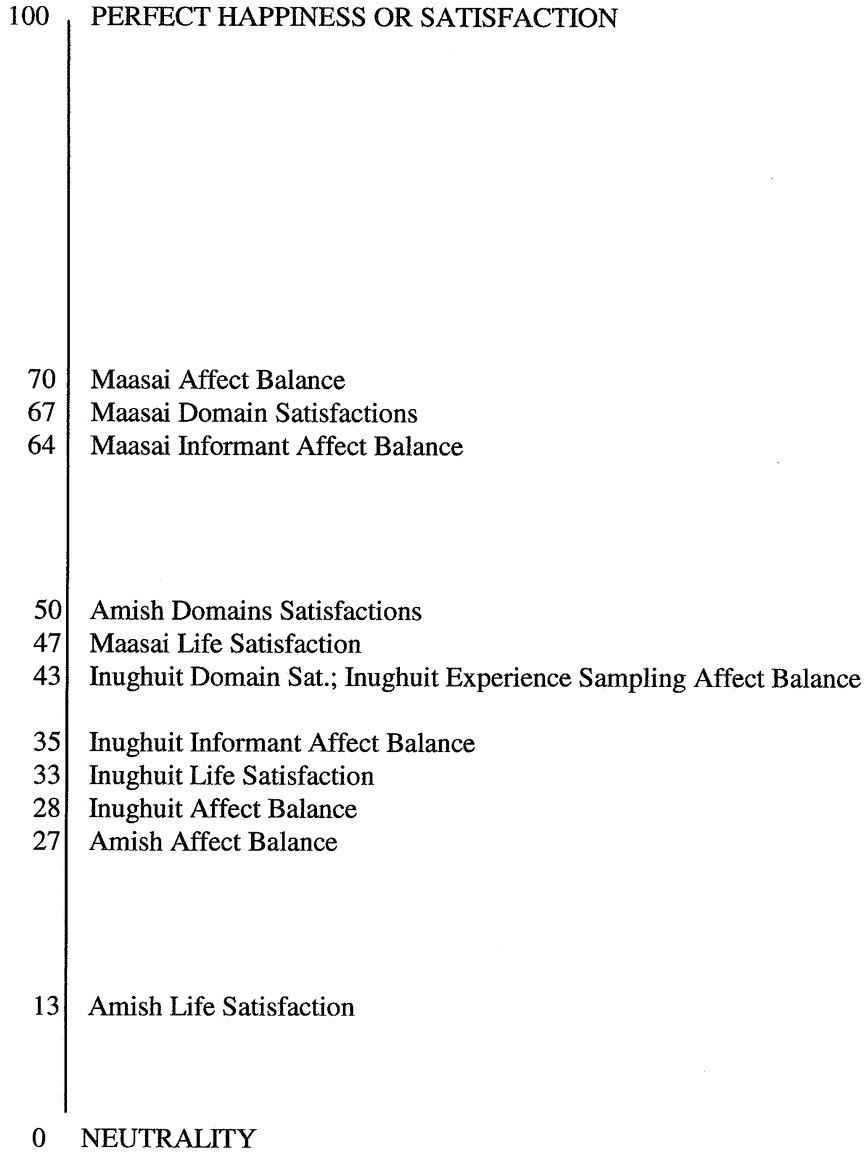


Figure 1. Recalibrated subjective well-being scores.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study strongly support Diener and Diener's (1996) conclusion that most people are happy. It

should be noted that in this study we conceptualized the colloquial term "happiness" to include both the cognitive (life satisfaction) and affective (pleasant and unpleasant emotions) components of SWB rather than a mood state alone. By employing measures of both, we were able to capture a fuller picture of our respondents' well-being. That said, the consistency of our results in terms of demonstrating that most people are happy is impressive. For satisfaction ratings of domains, 42 out of 42 measures (14 domains for each of the three groups) were all significantly positive. Similarly, all six global measures (affect balance and life satisfaction for the three groups) were significantly positive. When we turn to the additional measures — memory, informant, and experience — sampling, they too were all positive. Fifty-three out of the 54 measures we employed were significantly above neutral, and at the individual level the majority of people were above neutral on 53 out of 54 measures. Across all measures and all groups, five out of six respondents scored in the positive range. This is a level of data consistency that is virtually unheard of in psychology. Given the extraordinary diversity of our samples, it is clear that there is a broad and consistent phenomenon here.

Although the pattern of findings strongly supports the fact that most people are happy, the data do not indicate that everyone is ecstatic. Instead, most people are mildly happy and satisfied, and only rare individuals approach the tops of the scales. Across the samples in our three studies only one or two percent of respondents tended to score at the peak of the scales, and no respondent out of 358 scored at the top on all such scales. Among those many people who reported moderate happiness, we still found individual variation in satisfaction across life domains. Finally, there were those in our samples, who were either unhappy or dissatisfied. These individuals might be undergoing a set of difficult life events such as the experience of widowhood, which might make them unhappy for several years (Lucas et al., 2003), or have a predisposition to depression. The presence of a minority who are dissatisfied or unhappy is consistent with past research showing that a few individuals and groups living in dire circumstances report subjective well-being below the neutral point. For example, we found that homeless people

in California are on average dissatisfied with their lives (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2003, in review). Thus, our claim is not that there is no societal or individual variation in happiness, but that people living in societies where their current social and physical needs tend to be met, and where no large negative events have recently occurred, will be happy.

To suggest that most people are happy does not mean that we can ignore cultural variations in happiness. For example, Triandis (2000) suggests that cultural factors such as tightness and complexity might influence subjective well-being. The Maasai scored the highest of the three groups on most measures, perhaps due in part to the high regard they have for their own group, as well as the stability of their culture. We also found variations across our three samples in the average levels of specific domain satisfactions, perhaps reflecting differences in local cultural norms or access to social and material resources. For example, the Maasai (Study 1) reported the least amount of satisfaction with domains related to material resources. This could reflect part of a larger cultural phenomenon consistent with a traditional group, whose ability to meet their basic material and social needs can be dramatically affected by ecological change. It could also reflect local expectations and standards for evaluating specific areas of life. The influence of norms on emotions, as discussed in Eid and Diener (2001), also seems apparent in our data. The Inughuit and Amish, for example, both reported low levels of pride. In many cultures, pride is regarded as undesirable (Shimmel, 1992), and this seems to influence how individuals in these groups label their feelings. In Inuit culture, for example, downplaying achievement is an important part of the socializing process (Briggs, 1985). For the Amish humility is an important virtue (Kraybill, 1989), a fact reflected, perhaps, in our sample's low levels of reported satisfaction with domains relating to "Self". Thus, there is cultural variability that is superimposed on the overall pattern of moderate positive subjective well-being.

What are the reasons for the fact that most people experience moderate subjective well-being? Diener and Diener (1996) suggested that we are pre-wired to experience positive well-being, because this tendency facilitated approach behaviour

during our evolutionary history. Although our data are consistent with the idea that people are ''built'' to be mildly happy, other explanations besides an evolutionarily-based genetic propensity are able to explain our findings. It could be that socialization pressures lead people to report and even experience happiness, at least in western cultures where sociability is prized. Perhaps people are socialized to be happy, or act happy, in order to facilitate smooth social functioning. Another possibility is that people are on average happy, when they live in conditions that are favourable to human needs, and that even the relatively poor, societies we studied are able to meet basic needs for housing, social support, respect, food, and so forth. The idea that positive emotions in many situations are beneficial to successful functioning (see also Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirsky et al., 2003) is consistent with an evolutionary argument, but also with socialization and basic need fulfilment explanations as well. Thus, the reason underlying our findings awaits further study.

The finding that most people are happy is consistent with earlier work on the Pollyanna Principle, which was reviewed by Matlin and Stang (1978). These authors proposed that there is a broad tendency for people to be ''Pollyannas,'' able to more accurately and efficiently process pleasant than unpleasant or neutral items. They reviewed evidence showing that this tendency is reflected in language, perception, learning, memory, and cognition. For example, people rate stimuli such as political figures as more positive than negative (Sears and Whitney, 1972), perceive and remember more positive than negative events in their lives, respond with more positive than negative words in a free – association task, and react more quickly to positive words than to negative words. Interestingly, Matlin and Stang note that most people think they are not only happier than the average person, but also are currently happier than they themselves typically are! They also report that people tend to remember events as more pleasant with the passage of time. We suggest that the extensive findings on positivity reviewed by Matlin and Stang are consistent with the argument we make here – that most people are happy. Indeed, the two phenomena – people tending to experience pleasant moods and emotions

and evaluations of their lives, and also tending to interpret other stimuli in a positive way – are so closely intertwined that it is impossible at this point to suggest that one is the cause of the other. Instead, cognitive and affective positivity appear to be two sides of the same coin.

Are people truly happier, or do they only avow happiness for self-presentational purposes? Our use of multi-method measurement to some degree supports the former. Not only did our respondents report positive levels of subjective well-being on broad interview items, but their friends also overwhelmingly thought that they were happy. In addition, the Inughuit reported high levels of happiness when contacted at random moments in time. Further, our respondents were able to remember more positive than negative events from their lives. None of these measures is definitive in showing that the respondents were "truly" happy. Nonetheless, taken together they do suggest that the findings are not merely based on self-presentational style in an interview setting. People's friends think they are happy, respondents remember more good than bad events from their lives, they rate the domains of their lives as positive, and they report more positive than negative experiences when contacted in their everyday lives. Although these findings do not conclusively prove that people actually experience a preponderance of happiness, they are certainly suggestive in this regard. If it turns out, however, that most people merely avow happiness to others, this would be an important finding in itself.

How do we reconcile the fact that most people are happy with the idea that losses loom larger than gains (Kahneman and Tversky, 1990). In recent years, a number of scientists have commented on the fact that humans react more strongly to negative stimuli than to positive stimuli (e.g., Rozin and Royzman, 2001). One solution comes from related ideas advanced by Taylor (1991), who proposed that although people react strongly and quickly to negative stimuli, this mobilization is followed by responses that damp down the impact of the event. Taylor also presented evidence that the mobilization-minimization function is stronger for negative than positive stimuli. A similar idea was presented by Ito et al. (1998), who suggested that there is a "positivity offset" in the presence of neutral stimuli, despite the

fact that reactions to negative stimuli are stronger than those to positive stimuli. Thus, people appear likely to react strongly to bad events, but over time tend to recover from them. Furthermore, people are likely to feel positive in the presence of positive or neutral stimuli.

There were several limitations to out studies. The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alphas) were lower for most measures in our three samples than they typically are in samples in modern societies. This suggests that our participants responded less consistently, perhaps due to their unfamiliarity with surveys or their lack of introspection about their own feelings. Thus, the consistency of the findings is even more impressive, because of the random error introduced by unfamiliarity with surveys.

An important distinction in the emotion literature is between moods and emotions. Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to make this distinction in our respondent's experience. Perhaps the most important limitation is one that points to future research: we do not know the range of conditions and circumstances under which people are happy. Although our current results show that that diverse people are happy, supporting the conclusions of Diener and Diener that were based on broad surveys of nations from around the globe, we also know that some individuals and a few groups are unhappy. A priority for future research is to determine the conditions that are necessary to make entire groups unhappy.

Finally, there were unexplained differences in our measures in the percentages of the samples that were in the positive range. Although the Maasai (Study 1) were highly positive on most measures, the Amish (Study 2) varied from Affect Balance to Life Satisfaction. On the former 100% of the Amish scored in the positive range, whereas on the latter only 61% did so. The Inughuit (Study 3) scored more consistently across the types of measures. We do not have a ready explanation for why many Amish would be happy in terms of Affect Balance, and yet dissatisfied with their lives. Perhaps their norms for humility are more likely to influence their satisfaction reports. In any event, this discrepancy in the two types of measures, even though both support the general idea that most people have positive SWB, will be important to explore in the future.

If there is a positive offset for happiness, perhaps the affect balance scores are the most direct reflection of this because life satisfaction only indirectly relates to emotions (Suh et al., 1998; Schimmack et al., 2000), and because life satisfaction can be influenced by many kinds of standards and survey characteristics. It is also interesting to note that all three groups score higher in average domain satisfaction than they do in life satisfaction. Perhaps there are a few negative areas of their lives that carry heavy weight in their overall evaluations. The reason for the higher domain scores than life satisfaction scores is an intriguing avenue for future research.

There are a number of far-reaching implications of our findings. In terms of scholarship on emotions, our findings imply that pleasant emotions must receive equal study with unpleasant emotions. In addition, researchers need to search for the reasons that pleasant emotions seem to predominate in experience. In the field of subjective well-being, the findings are important, because they suggest that the phenomena in this area must be understood against a positive backdrop. People tend to be positive unless there are strong reasons to be negative, and circumstances and personality seem to primarily move people up and down within the positive zone. This framing of the phenomena in this field helps explain why conditions often do not account for substantial amounts of variance in subjective well-being measures. Our findings also indicate that just because well-being scores are positive, whether they be happiness self-ratings or ratings of societal conditions, it does not mean that the targets of the ratings are excellent-people appear predisposed to give positive ratings. Thus, scores perhaps might be high to reflect positive conditions that go beyond the tendency to perceive even neutral things as positive. In other words, positive happiness ratings do not indicate that conditions are excellent or that the society need not be improved.

The findings also point to research in the fields of cross-cultural and developmental psychology. Although our studies used samples from three widely different cultures, we do not fully understand how socialization might influence the positivity of happiness reports, even if there is an evolutionary predisposition toward happiness. Could it be, for instance, that there are

socialization practices that can lead to most people being unhappy? Finally, the results are germane to clinical psychology because they imply that perhaps the natural state of people is to be happy, and that deviations from this must result from unusual conditions.

Take-Home Message

Diener and Diener (1996) reviewed evidence suggesting that most people are happy – they tend over time to be above neutral in their affect and satisfaction. In this paper, we extended this finding to rarely studied groups outside of industrial societies, and we used additional measures beyond global self-reports of happiness with these respondents. The findings were striking in their consistency – 53 out of 54 of our measures showed that most people were significantly above neutral in affect balance and life satisfaction. Despite the consistency of the findings, only a handful of our 358 respondents scored at the top of the scale on either affect balance or life satisfaction. People are happy, but not overwhelmingly so. Furthermore, people's satisfaction with various life domains varied depending on life circumstances. Thus, a template for happiness might arise from genetics, socialization, or circumstances, but cultural and individual differences in subjective well-being nevertheless have an influence.

REFERENCES

Balatsky, G. and E. Diener: 1993, 'Subjective well-being among Russian students', Social Indicators Research 28, pp. 225–243.

Biswas-Diener, R. and E. Diener: 2005 (in press), 'The Subjective well-being of the homeless, and lessons for happiness', Social Indicators Research.

Briggs, J.: 1985, 'Socialization, family conflicts and responses to cultural change among Canadian Inuit', Arctic Medical Research 40, pp. 40–52.

Cronk, L.: 1999, That Complex Whole: Culture and the Evolution of Human Behavior (Westview Press, Boulder, CO).

Diener, E. and C. Diener: 1996, 'Most people are happy', Psychological Science 7, pp. 181–185.

Diener, E., R.A. Emmons, R.J. Larsen and S. Griffin: 1985, 'The Satisfaction with Life Scale', Journal of Personality Assessment 49, pp. 71–75.

Diener, E., C.K.N. Scollon, S Oishi, V. Dzokoto and E.M. Suh: 2000, 'Positivity and the construction of life satisfaction judgments: Global happiness is

not the sum of its parts', Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Periodical on Subjective Well-Being 1, pp. 159–176.
Diener, E., E.M. Suh, R.E. Lucas and H. Smith: 1999, 'Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress', Psychological Bulletin 125, pp. 276–302.
Eid, M. and E. Diener: 2001, 'Norms for experiencing emotions in different cultures: 1nter-and intranational differences', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 81, pp. 869–885.
Fredrickson, B.: 1998, 'What good are positive motions?', Review of General Psychology 2, pp. 300–319.
Fredrickson, B.: 2001, 'The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions', American Psychologist 56, pp. 218–226.
Galaty, J.G.: 1986, Introduction, in T. Saitoti (ed.), The Worlds of Maasai Warrior: An Autobiography of Tepilit Ole Saitoti (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
Hostetler, J.A.: 1993, Amish Society 4 (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore).
Ingold, T.: 1986, The Appropriation of Nature (Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK).
Ito, T.A., J.T. Cacioppo and P.J. Lang: 1998, 'Eliciting affect using the International Affective Picture System: Trajectories through evaluative space', Personaility and Social Psychology Bulletin 24, pp. 855–879.
Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky: 1990, Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk, in P.K. Moser (ed.), Rationality in action: Contemporary approaches, pp. 140–170.
Kirk, L.: 1977, 'Meaning and context: A study of contextual shifts in meaning of Maasai personality descriptors', American Ethnologist 4, pp. 734–761.
Kraybill, D.B.: 1989, The Riddle of Amish Culture (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore).
Lucas, R.E., A.E. Clark, Y. Georgellis and E. Diener: 2003, 'Re-examining adaptation and the setpoint model of happiness: Reactions to changes in marital status', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 84, pp. 527–539.
Lyubomirsky, S., L. King and E. Diener, 2005 (in press). Happiness as a strength. A Theory of the Benefits of Positive Affect. *Psychological Bulletin,* conditional acceptance.
Ma, V. and T.J. Schoenemann: 1997, 'Individualism versus collectivism: A comparison of Kenyan and American self-concepts', Basic and Applied Social Psychology 19, pp. 261–273.
Matlin, M.W. and D.J. Stang: 1978, The Pollyanna Principle: Selectivity, Language, Memory and Thought (Schenkman, Cambridge, MA).
Myers, D.G: 1992, The Pursuit of Happiness (William Morrow, New York).
Pavot, W. and E. Diener: 1993, 'Review of the Satisfaction with Life Scale', Psychological Assessment 5, pp. 164–172.

Robinson, M.D. and G. Clore: 2002, 'Episodic and semantic knowledge in, emotional self-report: Evidence for two judgment processes', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 83, pp. 198–215.
Rozin, P. and E.B. Royzman: 2001, 'Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion', Personality and Social Psychology Review 5, pp. 296–320.
Sandvik, E., E. Diener and L. Seidlitz: 1993, 'Subjective well-being: The convergence and stability of self-report and non-self-report measures', Journal of Personality 61, pp. 317–342.
Schimmack, U., S. Oishi, E. Diener and E. Suh: 2000, 'Facets of affective experiences: A framework for investigations of trait affect', Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 26, pp. 655–288.
Schwarz, N. and F. Strack: 1999, Reports of subjective well-being: Judgmental processes and their methodological implications , in D. KahnemanE. Diener and N. Schwarz (eds), Well-Being: The Foundations of Alphabet Hedonic Psychology (Russell Sage Foundation, New York), pp. 61–84.
Scollon, C.K.N., E. Diener, S. Oishi, and R. Biswas-Diener: 2005, 'An experience sampling and cross-cultural investigation of the relationship between pleasant and unpleasant affect', Cognition and Emotion 19, pp. 27–52.
Sears, D.O. and R.E. Whitney: 1972, Political persuasion, in Pool (ed.), Handbook of Communications (Rand McNally, Chicago).
Shimmel, S.: 1992, The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Nature (Free Press, New York).
Statistical Yearbook for Greenland: 2000, (Gronland, 2000. Statistisk Arbog). Nuuk, Greenland. The Home Rule Government.
Suh, E., E. Diener, OishiS. and H. Triandis.: 1998, 'The shifting basis of life satisfaction judgements across cultures: Emotions versus norms', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 74, pp. 482–493.
Taylor, S.E.: 1991, 'Asymmetrical effects of positive and negative events: The mobilization – minimization hypothesis', Psychological Bulletin 110, pp. 67–85.
Thomas, D.L. and E. Diener: 1990, 'Memory accuracy in the recall of emotions', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 59, pp. 291–297.
Triandis, H.C.: 1995, Individualism and Collectivism (Westview Press, Boulder, CO).
Triandis, H.C.: 2000, Cultural syndromes and subjective well-being, in E. Diener and E.M. Suh (eds), Culture and Subjective Well-being (MIT Press, Cambridge Mass), pp. 13–36.

Address for Correspondence:
ED DIENER
Department of Psychology
603 E Daniel Street
Champaign, IL 61820
USA

Email: ediener@cyrus.psych.uiuc.edu