

Ideal Types of Well-Being - Over Fifty Countries Research Into Culturally Sensitive "National Accounts of Well-Being"

Happiness isn't good enough for me. I demand euphoria!!!
Calvin talking in "Calvin and Hobbes" by Bill Watterson

Umm... I never thought about such a thing in my whole life.
Japanese adult, asked whether he is happy

Project goal: All cultures deserve their well-being theories. While pursuing high levels of happiness is common in societies labelled as WEIRD—Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic, people in other cultures prioritize different ideals of a good life or well-being. Across cultures, well-being is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, with a sense of meaning, a sense of harmony, a sense of spirituality, a sense of happiness, and other senses being variously composed into what people idealize as a good life. So far, however, there has been little bottom-up research devoted to the diverse ways in which people across cultures imagine their ideal good life. The proposed project addresses this gap.

Description of research: In a large cross-cultural scheme (i.e., data collection will cover at least 50 countries), combined with a series of in-depth experimental studies, I will: (1) study *ideal* types of well-being, (2) investigate the consequences of fit between an individual and his or her cultural context for this phenomenon, (3) seek antecedents of the main variable of interest in macro-social and psychological variables and its consequences for individual- and country-level *actual* well-being. In the search for explanatory variables, my particular interest will be directed towards values, cultural models of selfhoods, sense of responsibility, and psychological motives. Crucially, (4) learning from findings from the above studies, I am planning the special research task targeted at preparing and testing the methodology for a culturally sensitive version of the National Accounts of Well-being.

Reasons for attempting a particular research topic: Being happy or satisfied is one of many ways of being well, and its dominance among well-being constructs seems to be a characteristic of European-heritage societies and academia. Empirical cross-cultural studies are needed to go beyond the dominance of WEIRD concepts in well-being research and to better understand what constitutes an ideal type of a good life across cultures.

Substantial results expected: I intend to set up a new research group conducting the project that will result in a significant contribution to the cross-cultural knowledge on ideal types of well-being. A new research group will be established as a part of the Cross-Cultural Psychology Lab, Institute of Psychology, Polish Academy of Science. The research group will map ideal types of well-being around the globe, and acquire knowledge on the role of values, cultural models of selfhood, sense of responsibility, and psychological motives in shaping ideal types of well-being, and their interaction. We will elaborate upon the methodology for a culturally sensitive version of National Accounts of Well-being.