

Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS

Ruut Veenhoven

Last chapter in ' Conditions of Happiness '

Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1984, Dordrecht Netherlands ISBN 90-277-1792-3 pp. 374-404

The aim of this study was to identify the conditions that favor a positive appreciation of life. To that end I took stock of the results of empirical investigations on happiness. After a laborious search and a sharp selection I was able to lay hands on 150 publications up to 1975, reporting altogether 156 usable research projects covering 245 populations. Close reading of the reports brought some four thousand findings to light; for the major part correlational ones. In the foregoing three chapters I presented these findings. The question is now whether that left us any the wiser.

At first sight the answer is: not much. Though the data are abundant, their quality is rather poor. Much of it is based on happiness indicators that are not ideal. More often than not there was doubt about the reality value of the correlations and it was characteristically unclear to what extent correlates represent causes.

Yet we are not entirely empty handed. Section 9/1 will show that there is at least reasonable certainty about the effects of some nineteen factors. These findings are largely new and several of them are relevant to policy decisions. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that the inventory provides a good starting point to sketch out the field. As such it will appear a help in viewing the variety and interactions of factors affecting happiness and it will prove useful in selecting goals for further research. Even more important is that the data allow a thorough review of current beliefs about happiness. In section 9/2 I will expose several myths, some of which are deeply entrenched in public opinion and scientific thought. A better understanding of happiness begins with the correction of misconceptions.

9/1 CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS

The foregoing chapters confronted the reader with a host of findings and discussions. Such a torrent of information is not easy to mould into an overall picture. I therefore made a four-page synopsis. See [exhibit 9/1.1](#) This synopsis is inevitably a rather global one. The matter is in fact too complex to be caught fully in a few catchwords and symbols. The reader is warned to use it as a guide to the text, rather than as its substitute.

Correspondence: Prof. Dr. Ruut Veenhoven Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences,
P.O.B. 1738 3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven
Printed version: www.SpringerLink.com

With the help of this summary I will first take stock of the factors that appeared to effect the appreciation of life (Section 9/1.1). Next I will consider whether any of these represent universal conditions of happiness. (Section 9/1.2). Then I will try to organize the data in a meaningful way. I will do so by proposing a model which allows a tentative positioning of the variables at hand and a view of their interactions (Section 9/1.3). The discussion will end with an enumeration of some promising directions for further research (Section 9/1.4).

9/1.1 Which correlates represent causes?

Exhibit 9/1.1 lists 48 variables, 42 of which were found to be statistically linked with happiness in some condition. These correlational findings help a great deal in identifying the factors that favor a positive appreciation of life. Yet they are not sufficient for that purpose. Correlates do not necessarily represent causes. Hence one cannot escape estimating the degree to which they actually do. Such estimates are hard to make; especially when having to use zero order correlations based on synchronic data. However, I tried to make the best of it. In most cases I did so by considering the possibility that the correlations are due to other effects: to statistical distortion or to effects *of* happiness. In a few cases I found indications about causality in the stray longitudinal data. My tentative conclusions on the matter are summarized in the exhibit as well.

9/1.1.1 Which correlations are sufficiently reliable?

Correlations can in fact be statistical artifacts. Several sources of distortion may be involved: ‘parallel response bias’, ‘contamination’ and, particularly, ‘spuriousness’. In the foregoing three chapters I inspected all correlations for traces of such distortion. With the help of the literature I constructed hypotheses about possible distortions. The cases where distortions could well be involved are marked with a question-mark in the exhibit (‘?’). Where distortion was deemed impossible, the question-mark is crossed with a thick line to the left. When distortion was not impossible, but not that likely, it was crossed with a thin one. In all cases where distortion was considered possible I assessed the tenability of the charges raised. In some instances I did indeed find evidence for my suspicions. The question-mark was then printed thickly (‘?’). More often I found evidence to the contrary. Where at least one of the several charges was rebutted I crossed the question-mark with a thin line to the right; where all evident charges were dismissed, with a thick one.

A glance at the exhibit shows that most correlations are not beyond doubt. The scheme is in fact powdered with question-marks, only a few of which are crossed thickly. The correlations that seem most sound are the ones with ‘gender’ (section 6/2.1), ‘age’ (section 6/2.2), ‘ethnicity’ (section 6/2.3d), ‘income’ (section 6/3.4), ‘marital status’ (section 6/4.1a) and ‘having children’ (section (6/4.2). Yet even in these cases there is no absolute certainty. Alongside the few evident charges that were checked, there are usually other possible sources of distortion.

9/1.1.2 Which correlations are due to effects of happiness?

In as far as they are not due to statistical distortion, the correlations can be taken to reflect a causal relationship. Yet they do not necessarily reflect causal effects of the correlated factors on happiness. Causality can usually work in two directions, so that correlations may also reflect influences of happiness on the correlated factor. So the following step was to estimate the degree to which causality worked in either of these directions. Again I considered all appreciable

positive or negative correlations; once more largely by constructing hypotheses about the effects responsible and then by checking these as far as I could.

In some instances it was quite clear that effects of happiness could not be involved. The unhappiness of Black people in the US in the 1960's (section 6/2.3d) was evidently not a case of dissatisfaction darkening one's skin. These cases are marked with a left pointing arrow crossed with a left leaning line in thick. In some other cases one could imagine influences of happiness, but seemed such theories rather far-fetched. For example, the correlation between the average happiness of citizens and the economic prosperity of the nations (section 6/1.1a) can hardly be explained as the result of selective migration or as a consequence of the greater productivity of happy people. These few cases are indicated with a left pointed arrow crossed with a thin line to the left. Mostly effects of happiness did not seem improbable at first sight. I marked these cases with a left pointing arrow and then searched for evidence that such effects were actually involved. Where some such evidence was indeed found I printed the arrow thickly. Where I found evidence to the contrary I crossed it; where only some of the possible effects were eliminated, with a thin line to the right and where most were refuted with a thick one. Once again the latter sign does not guarantee that not any effect of happiness was involved.

As can be seen in the exhibit, most correlations might be due to effects of happiness. In four instances there is evidence that such effects were actually involved, namely the cases of 'age' (section 6/2.2), 'intimate ties' (section 6/4), 'health' (section 7/1.1) and 'activity' (section 7/1.4). However, it has not been ascertained to what extent these effects are responsible for the correlations. Demonstration that the effects of happiness were involved does not imply that the correlations do not reflect any effects of the correlated factor *on* it. In the cases of 'intimate ties' and 'health' there is even evidence that causality worked the other way as well, while in the cases of 'age' and 'activity' such effects are at least plausible. In several cases I met with arguments for doubting that happiness exerts any appreciable effect: for example in the case of 'political unrest' (section 6/1.2c), 'social rank' (section 6/2.7) and 'retirement' (section 6/3.1b). Mostly there was no evidence at all, either for or against the suggested effects of happiness.

9/1.1.3 Which of the correlations reflect effects on happiness?

Obviously I also checked the possibility that the correlations represent what I actually sought; conditions that favor a positive appreciation of life or are detrimental to it. Contrary to the foregoing case, such effects were never incomprehensible and the hypothesis of their existence not even farfetched. This is hardly surprising because investigators tend to select promising variables. Anyway, it was possible to mark all with an arrow pointing to the right, only one of which could be characterized as improbable, and crossed with a left leaning line (the case of longevity). Then I had to assess whether there are indications that such effects were indeed involved. I met with three kinds of clues on the matter.

Firstly, there are indications in the few longitudinal data. In India, in 1962 there was for instance a drop in happiness right after the outbreak of skirmishes at the Chinese border. (Section 6/1.3). There is little doubt that the threat of war caused this decrease. Longitudinal observations also suggest effects of 'losing one's job', and 'retirement'. (Some becoming happier, others unhappier as a result; section 6/2.4). Comparison through time demonstrated also influence on happiness of 'health' (negative effect: section: 7/1.1) and of increased 'fate control' (positive effect: section 7/2.1). These cases are marked with a thick arrow pointing right.

Secondly, I found unmistakable hints in the results of some statistical elaborations. E.g. the correlation between happiness and 'education' disappeared largely when checked for 'income'

(section 6/2.5), whereas checking the correlation between happiness and ‘income’ for ‘education’ did not change much (section 6/2.4). This means that education probably affected happiness by providing better income chances. (To some extent also that financially well off people enjoyed better educational opportunities). A similar reasoning applies in the case of ‘immigrants’ in the US. The lower happiness of these people appeared also largely a matter of ‘income’ (section 8/1.2b), indicating that immigrant status reduced economic opportunities and thereby the appreciation of life. In the same vein it can be argued that the degree of ‘economic affluence’ of nations affected the happiness of their citizens in some cases. Where poverty involved large scale malnutrition, there is at least little doubt about adverse effects. These cases are also marked with a right pointed arrow in this.

Thirdly, effects of happiness can be demonstrated by eliminating the possibilities that correlations were caused otherwise. The alternative explanations are that the correlations were due to statistical distortion and/or to effects of happiness. All findings have already been considered for these explanations, hence we can now read in the exhibit in what cases neither of them applies. These cases are the ones with both the question mark and the arrow pointing left crossed thickly. There are seven such cases: once more a rather accidental collection. Two of these concern past living conditions: ‘death of one or both parents before age of 15’ (among adult Americans: section 8/1.1b) and ‘earlier imprisonment in a German deathcamp’ (among Jewish survivors of World War II; section 8/1.2c). There is little doubt that these conditions are responsible for the relatively low happiness of the people concerned. One case concerns an earlier personal characteristic: namely ‘good looks’ at highschool age (among middle-aged American females: section 8/2a). The characteristic at hand here is probably responsible for variations in happiness as well. The remaining cases concern present living conditions: ‘threat of war’ in India in 1962 (negative effect on happiness: section 6/1.3), ‘Black-White’ difference in the postwar US (negative effect on the happiness of Blacks, the most successful in particular: section 6/2.3d) and ‘occupational prestige’ (positive effect of happiness: section 6/2.5). The last in this row is the case of ‘gender’ (section 6/2.1). Here we meet with a non-correlation; no statistical distortion or effect of happiness being involved here, we can be reasonably sure that the chances of pleasure in life are not appreciably different for males and females in contemporary society.

In several instances alternative explanations cannot be ruled out completely, but are not very likely to have played any dominant role. This is the case with most of the social system characteristics (‘affluence’, ‘income inequality’, ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and ‘political unrest’) as far as western nations are concerned (section 6/1). Alternative explanations were also considerably curtailed in the cases of individual ‘income’ in western nations in the postwar decades (section 6/2.4) and in the case of the earlier ‘divorce of parents’ among Americans (section 8/1.1b).

Lastly the case of ‘age’: here we can infer that a negative effect on happiness is involved. The non-difference between old and young being reliable and a positive effect of happiness on longevity having been demonstrated, we cannot fail to conclude that aging influences (overall) happiness slightly negatively (section 6/2.2).

The variables that passed this test are printed thick in [exhibit 9/1.1](#), nineteen in total. There being forty-eight main variables involved, this is more than one-third. In the other cases it remains unclear whether causal effects on happiness were involved or not. This lack seriously limits the usefulness of the other two-thirds of the findings. Yet it does not render them worthless. At least

they mark promising variables and can thus guide further research.

9/1.2 Variations in correlations.

Several investigators hoped to identify ‘the’ matters that make for happiness. Yet we have seen that the correlations were often not identical in all situations. The following differences stand out:

Differences between societies

Quite notable differences appeared between the poor and the rich parts of the world. ‘Income’ mattered more for happiness in the former than in the latter; ‘national income’ (Section 6/1.1a) as well as ‘personal income’ (section 6/2.4). Independent there of ‘education’ also seemed more significant in the poor countries (section 6/2.5). Part of these differences was reflected in the finding that rural people in poor countries were typically less happy than their compatriots living in towns, while in the rich countries no such differences appeared (section 6/1.4b,c).

Within the rich world we met with yet another difference. The ‘presence of a lifepartner’ appeared more crucial in the most modern western nations than in more traditional ones (section 6/4.1c).

Differences through time

The last mentioned cross-national difference has manifested itself cross-temporally as well. During the postwar decades, happiness grew more dependent on the ‘presence of a lifepartner’; both in the Netherlands and the US (section 6/4.1c).

Another trend to note is that correlations with ‘income’, ‘education’ and ‘occupational rank’ decreased in several western nations. In some instances the correlation dropped from + .30 or more around 1950 to about zero in the 1970’s (section 6/2.7f).

A similar decrease was observed in the correlation between happiness and ‘religiousness’. A once strong link largely disappeared, both in the Netherlands and the US (section 7/5.2).

The most striking time difference is undoubtedly that Blacks were almost as happy as Whites in the US in 1946, while in 1966 they were found to be less happy, particularly the most emancipated Blacks (section 6/2.3).

Differences between social categories

The case of Black-White differences in post-war US also illustrates that things can pan out differently in one social category than in another. Happiness dropped most dramatically among well-educated Blacks with well paying jobs, especially among those living in cities in the liberal North. Young Blacks were also more afflicted than elderly ones.

Further differences between age categories appeared in the correlations with ‘employment status’ (section 6/3.1), ‘friendship’ (section 6/4.3) and ‘religiousness’ (section 7/5.2). In the last case there was also a noticeable difference between males and females.

Variations with personal preferences

Though the matter has not yet been investigated systematically, it is clear that the impact of conditions depends largely on what people want. ‘Unemployment’ appeared for instance more detrimental to the happiness of people who enjoyed working than of those who missed the shop

rather than the job (section 6/3.1).

Universal conditions?

All this variation does not imply that there are not any general requirements for a positive appreciation of life. Obviously human functioning sets some minimal bio-psychic demands. Several students of motivation tried to identify these ‘basic human needs’. See e.g. McDougall (1908), Maslow (1954) and Wentholt (1975). Though one may object to particular theories specifying *which* needs are universal, there is no doubt *that* all humans share some basic needs, which make themselves felt in all situations and cannot be completely overruled by acquired preferences and convictions. As happiness is likely to depend to some degree on the gratification of such universal needs it is also likely that there are universal conditions of happiness.

The empirical demonstration of those universals is difficult, however. So far we have found evidence for only one; the rather obvious requirement that people be ‘sufficiently fed’. There is also considerable evidence that people cannot enjoy life in a ‘hostile social environment’: particularly when no ‘safe intimate networks’ exist. Yet this has not been convincingly demonstrated. Neither is there any cross-cultural evidence for the equally obvious assertion that happiness is favored by ‘good health’.

Though questions about universal requirements for happiness have figured at all times in the history of western thought, definite answers are still absent.

9/1.3 The correlates in context

So much for the enumeration of issues that appeared to influence happiness in various conditions. It is a bare catalogue. **Exhibit 9/1.1** lists detached factors as if there were no interrelations, and it presents all variables in the same way whereas they are obviously not all of the same order. The question is how one should organize the data in a more meaningful way.

The discussions in the preceding chapters allowed a glance at the interrelations between the variables at hand. While exploring the possible causal effects involved, we met with several variables that had also appeared to be related to happiness. The negative effects of ‘war’ for instance were attributed to consequences of five variables in the present collection: to the reduction of ‘economic affluence’, the curtailing of ‘freedom and democracy’, to the disorganization of ‘intimate networks’, to damage to ‘health and mental effectiveness’ and to shaking of ‘control beliefs’ (section 6/1.3). In some instances it was possible to substantiate such hypotheses empirically. There was for instance evidence that the lower appreciation of life in the poor countries was at least partly a result of the greater prevalence of ‘health problems’ there (section 6/1.1a). It was also demonstrated that the greater happiness of US-born and well-educated Americans is largely a matter of their better ‘income’ chances (section 6/2.1b, respectively 6/2.5). Some variables were attributed with an intermediate role more often than others. The most frequently mentioned were ‘physical health’, ‘mental effectiveness’ and ‘self-esteem’. ‘Intimate ties’ popped up in several explorations as well.

So there is certainly some coherence in the seemingly loose collection of correlates at hand. Yet it is difficult to map the network of interrelations more completely. Working with a single data set one could to some extent demonstrate the various interrelations empirically. Advanced statistical techniques, such as LISREL, allow the charting of quite complex causal patterns. See

among others Ormel (1980, ch. 8) for an attempt to order a dozen correlates in this way. Whatever the merits of this approach, it is of little help here. The collection draws on 245 different data sets. Interrelations between variables cannot therefore be computed in most cases.

If better empirical ordering is beyond our reach, would it not perhaps be possible to bring more organization into the data by placing them in some theoretical framework? Though there is not yet any comprehensive theory of happiness, there are at least various ideas about the processes or interaction-patterns involved. Some attempts have been made to integrate such notions in so-called ‘models’ of happiness. Referring to various theories of happiness Shin & Johnson (1978:490) grouped various correlates in three categories: resources’ (in my terms ‘social-positional’ variables), ‘assessment of needs’ (in my terms ‘life-aspect appreciations’) and ‘comparisons of life’ (in my language ‘past’ and ‘expected’ happiness). They demonstrated that each of these categories of variables had some independent relation to happiness. Similar models were proposed by Pommer & van Praag (1978:11) and by Kennedy (1978:446). Though better than nothing, these models are still very simple. Organizing the rich data on that basis would involve a great loss of information.

9/1.3.1 *A model of happiness*

A more elaborate arrangement is proposed in [exhibit 9/1.3](#). It provides a global reflection of several theoretical relationships featuring in the foregoing discussions. The model depicts happiness as the result of various interactions between characteristics of the individual and his environment. It outlines the main variables that appeared to influence happiness (printed in non-italics) and it suggests some intermediating links (printed in italics).

9/1.3.2 *Global classes of determinants*

The model is based on the well-known distinction between ‘living conditions’ and ‘individual characteristics’: in other words between ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ determinants of happiness. On that basis it further distinguishes between four main fields of conditions of happiness: at the environmental level between *socio-structural* variables and *cultural* ones and at the individual level between *competences* and *motivations*. These terms appear in capital letters at the corners of the exhibit; at the top and at the bottom respectively.

The findings are positioned in this context; the same findings as summarized in [exhibit 9/1.1](#). As it is impossible to print all in full detail, it suffices to indicate the main ones in headword. The words in big letters refer to the global categories of determinants involved and the words in small letters to the factors actually found to be related to happiness. Where there was evidence for causal effects, the latter ones are printed thick.

The distinction between two classes of environmental conditions and two classes of inner ones is a good help to indicate some of the differences between the variables at hand. Yet there is little sense in trying to squeeze all into a strict four-fold pattern. Not all living conditions can be classified as either ‘socio-structural’ or ‘cultural’ (for example not ‘ethnicity’ and ‘gender’), nor do all individual characteristics either belong to the realm of ‘competences’ or ‘motivations’ (e.g. not ‘activity level’). The distinction between ‘living conditions’ and ‘individual characteristics’ (the upper and the lower half of the exhibit) is sometimes even problematic. The effects of ‘age’ draw for instance both on the bio-psychical consequences of aging and on social reactions. Another thing to note is that not all fields are equally well fitted. The square of cultural variables is left blank on the exhibit. As noted earlier, there are several promising variables in this field (e.g. ‘ideological anchors for meaning’, ‘conceptions of the good life’, ‘ideas about equity’), but their relationship with happiness has not yet been empirically explored.

9/1.3.3 *Links to happiness*

As happiness is an ‘evaluation’, effects on it are largely mediated by perceptive and evaluative processes of the mind. For the time being it is largely unclear how the factors that influence happiness enter into these processes. Several suggestions have been raised; some of which were noted in passing in the foregoing sections. These presumed intermediating variables and processes are indicated in italics in the exhibit.

Life chances

Starting from the center of the exhibit we meet first of all with the term ‘life-chances’. It symbolizes the effects living conditions (in particular socio-structural conditions) have on the realities the individual considers in evaluating his life. These chances not only concern matters of ‘money’ and ‘prestige’, but also the ‘predictability of one’s environment’, links with ‘meaningful tasks’ and ‘variation’ in one’s life.

Frames of reference

Next to their effects on the quality of life as such, living conditions may also influence the appreciation of it. They do so partly by their consequences for collectively held ‘frames of reference’, which guide both the individual’s perception of reality and the standards by which he judges his life. Frames of reference figure not only in explicit ideologies. They are also embodied in fictional themes, in common sense and even in language. Frames of reference sometimes differ across the social categories that mark variation in life-chances.

Demands

Facing ‘frames of reference’ we meet with the term ‘demands’. It depicts a common element in most of the individual characteristics figuring in the lower half of the exhibit; all the things a person consciously or unconsciously wants and which for that reason play a role in his evaluation of life. Individual demands are obviously linked with socio-cultural frames of reference. Yet they are not the same. Demands are to some extent dictated by universal bio-psychic requirements for functioning and to that extent are largely independent of culturally variable standards. They are moreover in some degree ideosyncratic; though the motivational variation which our existential condition leaves us is largely filled with socially defined demand we also develop preferences by ourselves; sometimes even quite bizarre ones. The greater part of what is called ‘demands’ here is implied in more specific ‘longings’ and ‘convictions’. Yet the other personal characteristics may involve ‘demands’ as well and to some extent different ones. ‘Lifestyles’ and ‘resources’ may (each on its own or in interaction) result in tasks or strivings which do not crystallize into conscious preferences but which nevertheless play a role in evaluations of life.

Reality command

Finally we meet with the term ‘reality command’. This is the degree to which the individual is able to take advantage of the life-chances allowed by the environment and hence to turn things to his demands. In mutual interaction ‘life-chances’ and ‘reality command’ shape the realities of life that are subject to evaluation. It is clear that several of the personal characteristics that influence happiness do so because they involve a better reality command. That is particularly

clear for the factors labeled as ‘resources’ and also for some of the ‘personality traits’ (‘perceived fate control’ and ‘defensiveness’). In some instances ‘lifestyles’ and ‘convictions’ may have consequences for reality command as well.

Past evaluations

All four of these intermediating effects on happiness are indicated with arrows (not dotted). A fifth arrow, right in the middle of the exhibit, depicts an intermediating variable of an other kind. It acknowledges that evaluations of life tend to draw on earlier ones and that happiness is in that respect self-perpetuating to some extent; at least as far as no great changes occur. This effect was discussed in section 8/2c.

9/1.3.4 Indirect effects

The above discussion focused on more or less direct effects of the factors under review on the appreciation of life. Yet this is not the whole story. Various indirect effects are involved as well. In the exhibit these are indicated with dotted arrows.

Effects of outer conditions on inner determinants of happiness

In the first place the various outer living conditions not only affect happiness by their consequences for ‘life chances’ and ‘frames of reference’, but also by their impact on the development of inner characteristics that matter. The various ‘traits’ and ‘resources’ as well as the ‘lifestyles’, ‘convictions’ and ‘longings’ are largely the result of developmental and learning processes which took place in a socio-cultural scene, determined by such matters as ‘rank’, ‘intimates’ and ‘religion’. Both short-term influences and long-term molding processes are involved.

An example may clarify the difference between ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ effects of outer conditions on happiness: remember the illustrative case of the US Blacks described in section 6/2.3c. In spite of improving life-chances (decreasing discrimination) they became less satisfied with life between 1946 and 1966. This seemed partly to be a result of unexpected ‘direct’ effects; in particular of effects on frames of reference. Successful Blacks became more inclined to see themselves and their situation through White eyes, because they came in closer contact with White middle class culture, while at the same time accompanying ideological changes undermined the belief systems that had once reconciled Uncle Tom with his lot. To some extent the drop in happiness also seemed due to the ‘indirect’ effects of emancipation and acculturation: to the effects of this social change at the level of personal characteristics; on ‘*self esteem*’ in particular. Though discrimination lessened actually, increased contacts made it felt more painfully, while the loosening of ties to authentic Black subculture made emancipating Blacks more vulnerable for assaults on their self-respect. Acculturation may also have involved the adoption of less satisfying ‘*lifestyles*’.

Effects of inner characteristics on outer determinants of happiness

Similarly, the model depicts two main ways in which personal characteristics influence happiness. They not only set the scene with ‘demands’ and ‘reality command’, but — as the result of long term coping processes — they also affect various ‘living conditions’. Individual ‘abilities’ in particular determine to some extent what ‘social position’ one achieves and the quality of one’s ‘intimate network’.

Let me illustrate the matters by referring to the earlier discussion on effects of ‘mental effectiveness’ in section 7/1.2. Several rather ‘direct’ effects were mentioned in that context. It was for example noted that mentally effective people tend to set more realistic demands and that their interpretation of reality is characteristically less distorted by defensive tendencies. As for the ‘indirect’ effects it was suggested that mentally effective people achieve better living conditions for themselves in the long run. Though individual effort cannot change things like ‘social injustice’, ‘age’ or minority status’, it does affect ‘educational and economical achievement’, ‘involvement in worktasks’ and the ‘quality of one’s intimate network’.

Interactions between environmental variables

One further thing to note is that there are obvious interrelations within the various living conditions. It is for instance clear that the ‘economic affluence’ of the country is not without consequences for the size of ‘income differences’, which in their turn affect chances for ‘education’ and ‘marriage’ for example. These interactions are referred to as ‘*allocation processes*’.

Interactions between inner characteristics

As in the case of living conditions there are evident interactions between several of the personal characteristics as well. Not only do they result from the same developmental^{X?} and learning processes in earlier phases of life, but to some extent they continue to influence each other. Changes in ‘physical health’ for instance often have consequences for one’s ‘lifestyle’ and ‘longings’ whereas these, in their turn, focus ‘perceptions’ and mould ‘abilities’.

Circular effects

Apart from the various effects *on* happiness, the model also acknowledges the potential effects *of* happiness. Remember that a positive evaluation of life was shown to involve favorable effects on some living conditions (e.g. greater ‘acceptance by intimates’) as well as on some individual characteristics (among other things: ‘health’ and ‘activity level’). This means that various feedback loops play a role. These effects are symbolized by two dotted arrows in the exhibit: one pointing from happiness to the upper half and the other from happiness to the variables figuring in the lower half.

9/1.3.5 Limitations

Though useful as a guide to one’s analytical thinking, models like these can never depict the complexities of reality in sufficient detail. Not only are variables and interrelations too varied to be mapped out two-dimensionally, but also the patterns are probably not identical in all populations. Hence there is little hope that social-psychologists will ever develop models of happiness comparable to the (far from perfect) models by means of which economists calculate the effects of policy alternatives on economic growth.

Though not ideal, this model is nevertheless useful at the present stage of knowledge. It provides a broader scope and more detail than any other comprehensive model proposed so far. If not beyond question, it at any rate induces more systematic reflection on the nature of the variables concerned and in particular on their interactions.

9/1.4 Some lines for further research

All this shows that the abundant data allow merely a very tentative and very incomplete chart of the conditions of happiness in contemporary society. At the same time it is also clear that there is no need to give up trying to chart it better. Modest advancement has been achieved. Some contours emerged on the map and the requirements for its further completion are now more clear-cut than before. The shortcomings that appeared so poignantly, themselves dictate a program for further research. The following promising lines can be noted.

Control for spuriousness

Many of the question marks in [exhibit 9/1.1](#) can be eliminated through simple checks. For the greater part these can be performed on the basis of existing data sets. Glenn & Weaver's (1979) elaboration of the relation between happiness and 'having children' may serve as an example in this context.

Assessment of causality

It is more difficult to assess to what extent correlated variables do actually influence happiness. Longitudinal investigations are required for that purpose and such investigations are not easy. Yet one broad longitudinal study could teach us more than a dozen synchronic surveys. It would seem to be profitable to follow a panel from youth to adulthood, the impact of differences in living conditions probably being most pronounced in the first phases of life.

Explanation of effects

Even more difficult than demonstrating influence is the indication of dynamics. Mostly I could do little better than make educated guesses. The understanding of happiness would be advanced a great deal by checking these empirically. This would require broad data sets and multi-variate analyses. As in the above case of checking for spuriousness, it would help a great deal to re-analyze existing files. Such research can profit from the global sketch of interrelations provided in the foregoing section.

Other populations

The greater part of the investigations having been performed in western nations, there is as yet little to say about the extent of cultural relativity of the findings. The few cross-cultural investigations were quite enlightening. Further studies of this kind will be fruitful as well, not only surveys in non-western nations, but particularly studies in isolated communities where present-day western standards of the good life have not yet caught on. At the same time one must not forget that present day knowledge of western society is still quite limited. Many variables have been studied only in specific populations. Most data about personality variables come for instance from investigations among American students.

Further variables

[Exhibit 9/1.1](#) probably just represents a random dip into the wealth of issues effecting happiness in contemporary society. In the preceding chapters I mentioned several more promising ones incidentally. At the social system level for instance I referred to various *cultural characteristics* of society: the 'meaning' they provide, the 'individuality' they allow and the degree to which they 'accept pleasure'. As for one's place in society, cultural matters deserve more attention as well. The dominant 'outlook on life' in one's social milieu, the 'modes of expression' it

provides, the degree of ‘conformity’ it requires, etc. I would not be surprised if happiness was more closely linked to subtle matters as these rather than to ‘hard’ variables like ‘gender’, ‘age’ and ‘income’.

The *individual characteristics* have evidently not been exhaustively explored either. For example it is not defined whether the currently praised traits of ‘assertiveness’ and ‘individualism’ actually add to the appreciation of life in modern society, whether the accessibility to so-called ‘top experiences’ actually plays the role Maslow (1968:209) suggests and whether the often mentioned ability to ‘delay gratifications’ is really that important. A more basic question that is left unanswered it to what extent organically based dispositions are responsible for differences in hedonic level, for example the degree to which depressed affect can be due to endocrine disturbances: either inherited or resulting from illness.

Unexplored variables are even more numerous where *antecedents* of happiness are concerned. Apart from a few observations among babies we know nothing of the effect on happiness of differences in ‘style of upbringing’. Neither are there any systematic observations on the long term consequences for happiness of ‘serious illness in youth’, of ‘rejection by peers’ and of ‘failure in school’, not to mention more subtle matters, such as a ‘narrow petty bourgeois climate’ in the milieu of origin or ‘religious fundamentalism’.

Apart from these white spots on the map, there are also various grey ones. Many variables in [exhibit 9/1.1](#) are still awaiting more detailed examination, among other things ‘work’ and, in the realm of personal characteristics, ‘defensive strategies’ and ‘aptness to like things’.

9/2 MYTHS ABOUT HAPPINESS

Though the data do not provide a full picture of current determinants of happiness, they do at least allow the correction of various misunderstandings on the matter. Four main categories of misconception are concerned. Firstly, there are several misconceptions surrounding the myth that modern society is typically a sink of unhappiness; these will be discussed in section 9/2.1. Secondly, there are various inaccurate notions about the things that still provide the best chance of enjoying life in the present day western world; they will pass the scene in section 9/2.2. Thirdly, there is the erroneous notion that living conditions do not matter; it will be discussed in section 9/2.3. Finally we will meet with the myth that happiness is of no significance. (Section 9/2.4).

It is curious that so inaccurate ideas could persist so long on so intensely studied an issue.

9/2.1 The myth that modern western society is a sink of unhappiness

Several social critics stressed the perils of modern western society: the alienation involved in its automated mass-production, the loneliness in its expanded towns, the irrationalities of its bureaucratic institutions, etc. Some doubted whether humans are biologically capable of bearing such stresses. Being designed for a rather relaxed life as food-gatherers in small bands, people, they claim, go to pieces when pressed into the hurried routine of specialists in anonymous mass organizations. High rates of ‘insanity’, ‘suicide’ and ‘drug-addiction’ are referred to in support of

this view. Not all authors in this tradition give explicit opinions on happiness. One who does is Kerr (1962) in his book on 'The Decline of Pleasure'. Another one is Ostow (1970:1), who opens his 'Psychology of Melancholy' with the contention that present-day Americans are typically unhappy.

These notions are linked with long lived romantic ideas that life is better in 'primitive societies'. The rosy descriptions of some anthropologists encouraged that view. They also tied up well with tendencies to glamorize the 'good old days', which takes its inspiration from roseate historiographics of traditional western society. Though not unquestioned scientifically, these romantic notions enjoy considerable public support. When asked whether people were happier during the horse-and-buggy days, two thirds of the Americans answered in the affirmative. (AIPO-poll in 1939, cited in Nettle, 1976:20). The ambivalence towards modern society seems at least partly responsible for the rather pessimistic view of the future of the western public opinion in the late 1960's (Ornauer & Galtung, 1976:75).

Unhappiness does not prevail in modern western society

Though it is evident that modern western society labors under serious problems, there is no reason for believing that it marks a historical nadir of unhappiness. Inhabitants of modern western nations appeared quite satisfied with life for the greater part. Typically more than half of them identify themselves as 'very happy', while generally less than 10 percent claims to be 'unhappy'. Remember section 6/1. As we have seen, there is little reason for doubting their words. Most objections to the validity of self-reports on happiness were not confirmed empirically, including the objection that these reports are grossly inflated by 'defensive denial' and 'social desirability bias'. See the sections 3/1d and 3/1f respectively.

No less happy in developed nations

In spite of the evident perils of industrialization and economic growth, people in developed nations are generally happier than people in underdeveloped countries. Remember exhibit 6/1a. This lead is at least partly due to the affluence provided by mass production, so disapproved of by critics of modern society. (Demonstrated in section 6/1.1 a).

No less happy in big towns

Contrary to the 'urban malaise theory', people in the country are no more satisfied with life than people in towns. (Shown in section 6/1.4b). Neither are the inhabitants of small towns happier than people living in big cities. In developing nations the reverse is rather the case. Life in the abhorred boom-towns is clearly more satisfying than in the rural villages. (Section 6/1.4c).

No unhappiness because of hurry

Linder (1970:25/26) warned that too hurried a pace of life threatens the happiness of people in modern western countries. Yet the ones who feel most harassed do not take less pleasure in life. See section 7/2.4d.

9/2.2 Myths about things that make for happiness in western societies.

There is a rich folklore about the things that make for happiness. The available data enabled me to check part of it. Most beliefs turned out to be invalid. This suggests that current beliefs on happiness are based on presupposition rather than on accumulated experience.

Women no less happy than men

Contrary to current beliefs, women do not take less pleasure in life than men in contemporary western society. Neither are full-time housewives less happy than working women. See sections 6/2.1 and 6/3.1c respectively.

Income not that important anymore

A relatively high income is generally seen as an important factor in happiness. Yet happiness is not very dependent on relative income level in western nations and there are indications that its effect decreased. See section 6/2.4.

Education matters little, intelligence seems to make no difference

Educationalists claim that school education paves the way to a more satisfying life. In western nations its net effect appeared mostly small, however, and on the decline. Insofar as education contributed to happiness, it did so largely by opening doors to better paying jobs. Claimed benefits in the realm of personality formation have not yet been demonstrated. See section 6/2.5 Test-intelligence appeared essentially unrelated to happiness. (Section 7/1 .3b).

Social rank not decisive

Happiness is currently associated with social success. In line with this view, people at the top of the social ladder generally appeared more satisfied with life than people at the bottom. In modern western nations the difference is not very pronounced, however. In the Netherlands it even disappeared altogether in the post-war decades. See respectively section 6/2.7a and 6/2.7d.

Unemployment not detrimental for everybody

Work is considered quite essential to happiness. Not only because of the money it provides, but also because of its immaterial rewards in the realm of 'contact', 'respect' and 'meaning'. Unemployment is therefore expected to be detrimental to happiness. Yet it appeared to be so only among people who were eager to work. Unemployed workers who did not enjoy their former job were not found to be particularly unhappy. Similarly, retirement was shown to set in a drop of happiness only for people who had liked to continue working, but a rise for those who missed the shop rather than the job. Negative effects of retirement moreover appeared to be temporary. In the same vein working outside the home did not turn out to be a guaranteed recipe for happiness as far as married women were concerned.

Single living does not become more satisfying

Modish talk about the decline of the family holds that single living is becoming increasingly rewarding in modern society. (E.g. Adam's (1976) 'Single Blessedness'). The reverse is the case, however. Singles take less pleasure in life than people living with a steady partner and the differences grew larger rather than smaller during the post-war decades. A bond with a spouse is in fact one of the most essential conditions of happiness in modern western society. Friendships do not seem able to compensate its absence completely. See section 6/4.1.

Children do not add to happiness

Children are typically depicted as a source of ‘joy’, ‘meaning’ and ‘social respect’. Notions about a procreating instinct further suggest childlessness to be frustrating in the long run, particularly for women. However, married people with children did not appear any happier than married people without. Parenthood rather seems to dampen joy in living slightly, probably because the presence of children reduces intimacy between spouses somewhat. See section 6/4.2.

Ascetic living not more rewarding

Contrary to suggestion of ascetic moralists, happy people did not distinguish themselves from the unhappy by a ‘hardworking life’, ‘sober living’ and ‘aptness to renounce pleasures’. They rather appeared to have an open eye for joy. See section 7/3d.

Only-children not predisposed to unhappiness in adulthood

Many pedagogues bemoan the lot of only-children. They are thought to fall victim to overprotection and indulgence and to miss the link with peers. Whether true or not, this does not materialize into a lower appreciation of life in adulthood See section 8/1.1b.

9/2.3 The myth that living conditions do not matter

Several investigations which tried to identify the socio-economic conditions of happiness discovered that happiness does not depend all that much on such matters in western society. These findings raised much misunderstanding, some investigators jumping to the conclusion that all living conditions are irrelevant to happiness everywhere.

9/2.3.1 Not just a matter of standards

Most confusion was created by Easterlin (1974) who claimed to have demonstrated that happiness does not depend on the economic level of the nation, but rather on the degree to which one earns more than one’s compatriots. On the basis of these observations he argues that happiness is essentially relative: that happiness depends on comparative standards rather than on living conditions as such. This view is largely shared by Brickman & Campbell (1971). These authors enumerate the various standards that may be involved and raise the question of whether the continuous adjustment of standards does not neutralize all advancement towards the good society.

There is no doubt that (social) comparisons do play a role in the evaluation of life. The model in [exhibit 9/1.3](#) showed that living conditions influence happiness largely through ‘perceptive and evaluative processes’ which are to a considerable extent dependent on given standards of comparison. These standards being subject to social influence, and hence rather variable, the effects of living conditions are variable as well. The effect of living conditions is moreover dependent on rather ideosyncratic standards, such as personal tastes and past experiences. Yet this is not the whole story. The model also showed that ‘reality command’ and ‘demands’ draw to some extent on universal human characteristics. In this respect appraisals are less variable. Our cognition is not built to adapt entirely to trendy frames of reference; the faculty having been developed to allow us a stable grip on reality. Hence seriously ill people usually go on noticing the discomforts of their illness, even when they have been hospitalized for a long time and

compare themselves with fellows in misfortune. Similarly, nature has not fitted us out with indiscriminating motivation. Our psychological demands, and hence our evaluations, are at least partly dictated by basic bio-psychic requirements for functioning, such as ‘food’, ‘protection’ and ‘social contact’. Social influence may minimize such needs, but cannot erase them.

Consequently, it appeared that several differences in living conditions do matter for happiness. Easterlin was simply incorrect in his contention that people in poor countries are as happy as people in rich ones. ‘Poverty’ matters, specifically where it involves ‘malnutrition’. Such deprivation is not softened by comparison with an equally deprived neighbor. See section 6/1.1a. It also appeared that people do not acquiesce in ‘political repression’, ‘unrest’ and ‘war’. See respectively the sections 6/1.2a, 6/1.2b and 6/1.3. Nor are we able to do without ‘intimate support’; not even where single living is accepted and glamorized. See section 6/4.1. Differences in living conditions influence happiness at least to the extent to which they matter for the gratification of bio-psychic minimum needs. The challenge is to identify such conditions. Writing off the matter altogether is scientifically shortsighted and politically quite dangerous.

9/2.3.2 Not just a matter of personality and hence insensible to amelioration or deterioration of external conditions

A related misconception is that happiness is exclusively a matter of psychology. This myth originated from the observations that happiness correlates quite strongly with ‘soft’ variables, but not with ‘hard’ ones. See for instance Ormel (1980). It is indeed true that inner characteristics can be quite decisive. See once more the model in [exhibit 9/1.3](#). Competent people tend to take more advantage from life than incompetent ones. (Remember section 7/1.2 on ‘mental effectiveness’ and section 7/1.3a on ‘social ability’.) A tendency to see things from the bright side may help as well, though effects of that kind have not been demonstrated up till now (section 7/2.4). Yet it is clear that some conditions are simply too hard to bear, whatever the buoyancy and the optimism of the individual. The case of the concentration camps (section 8/1.2c) is an extreme example. The stresses of ‘war’, ‘discrimination’, ‘widowhood’ and ‘divorce’ seemed to exceed the resilience of most people as well. Remember the sections 6/1.3, 6/2.3d and 6/1.4a respectively. To some extent living conditions determine the very characteristics that soften their effects in later phases of life. Remember the ‘molding processes’ indicated in the model. Chapter 8 left no doubt that these influences are strong enough to affect the appreciation of life lastingly.

9/2.4 The myth that happiness is not a significant matter

As noted in the introduction to this book, there is considerable doubt about the significance of happiness. Though the Utilitarian philosophers praised happiness as the highest good, several other theories of value rated it low. This reservation about happiness is partly a matter of taste. Yet it is argued on factual grounds as well. Two main objections are being raised, which are both open to empirical falsification.

9/2.4.1 Experiential happiness not a far cry from real well-being

The first objection holds that experiential happiness is typically a ‘psychological surface phenomenon’ and is, as such, a far cry from ‘real’ inner well-being, and may even be a ‘false’ one. This objection is the crux of several more detailed arguments. One of these is that happiness

is too fleeting an experience to be of lasting significance: another that it depends on modish notions about the good life rather than on things that really matter. A variant of this latter argument is the above mentioned theory that happiness draws largely on comparison; comparison with one's neighbors, comparison with one's earlier living conditions, comparison with one's expectations, etc. As such it is claimed to have no link with any real well-being either. The same conclusion is embodied in the argument that evaluations of life tend to stabilize in fixed ideas. Though possibly indicative of true well-being in some early phase of life, happiness judgements are claimed to become increasingly less indicative of the actual welfare of the organism. I tried to check these claims with the help of the available data.

Not a fleeting matter

Happiness as defined here is not a short lived and variable thing. The appreciation of life stands out as a rather stable attitude. Though it does not always figure in the front ranks of consciousness, people are able to talk about it at any time. Their statements on the matter do not differ from one day to the other. If no major life-changes occur, they remain essentially similar over the years. Remember the sections 3/1c and 8/2c.

Not a mere reflection of modish opinion

It would seem evident that evaluations of life draw heavily on current beliefs about the things that make for happiness. Yet we saw above that things pan out differently in several cases. People in big cities are believed to be relatively unhappy and even think so themselves, but actually they are not. Likewise the lot of full-time housewives is often bemoaned, notwithstanding the fact that they are in fact as happy as their working colleagues. Several more such examples were mentioned above in section 9/2.2, the most remarkable of which is that single living is believed to have become more gratifying in the Netherlands, while in fact singles became increasingly less happy relatively.

Not wholly relative

Evidently comparison processes play a role in the evaluation of life. Yet happiness is not simply a matter of being better off than one's neighbors. 'Malnutrition', 'repression' and 'war' do hurt, even if the neighbors are more afflicted. People do not get used to these deprivations either, not even when they have never known better. In section 9/2.3 I discussed this matter in more detail. Moreover, we have seen in chapter 7 that happiness draws on stable personal resources, such as 'health', 'mental effectiveness' and 'perceived fate control'. These qualities would add little to happiness if it depended entirely on casual comparison.

Not an 'idée fixe'

Like most established attitudes happiness is not very liable to change. People tend to stick to their view on life, particularly when it is positive. Yet this does not mean that they lose touch with reality completely. It means rather that they adjust their evaluations only when major changes are at hand. The few longitudinal studies leave no doubt that adjustments do occur. Willing workers who were forced to retire went through a temporal drop in happiness (shown in section 6/3.1b) and health problems rendered people less happy as well (section 7/1.1b).

Not merely a matter of surface resignation

People adapt to inevitable sufferings to some extent. This was particularly evident in the case of

the Blacks in the US in 1946 and in the case of the aged in western society. See respectively the sections 6/2.3 and 6/2.2. Yet in the latter case the limits of acquiescence were manifested in a decline of hedonic level (section 6/2.2). It is moreover clear that people take no pleasure in life in countries where ‘malnutrition’ is the rule and where ‘political unrest’ prevails (section 6/1).

Not unrelated to ‘real’ well-being

Consequently, experiential happiness appeared not to be unrelated to states figuring in current ‘object’ views of the good life. Happiness was for instance shown to be linked with ‘physical health’, and to be predictive for ‘longevity’. Remember section 7/1.1. Though the correlations were modest, they demonstrate that happiness is more than a mere reflection of surface concerns. It rather sounds out things that matter for life or death. Similarly, happiness appeared strongly related to various indicators of ‘mental effectiveness’ (demonstrated in section 7/1.2). At least part of this correlation must be interpreted as signifying that unhappiness signals serious shortcomings in the individual. Happiness judgements do therefore have something to say about the actual weal and woe of people.

9/2.4.2 The appreciation of life is not without consequences.

The second objection holds that happiness is of no consequence. Though most people want to be happy rather than unhappy, unhappiness is claimed not to be really harmful; either for the individual himself, or for the society of which he is a member. Unlike other valued matters such as ‘creativity’ and ‘freedom’, happiness, it is claimed, does not contribute to higher causes: Some people believe rather that *unhappiness* stimulates improvement in the long run. There is considerable evidence against these views

Not without consequences for the individual

Happiness not only signals actual well-being, but to some extent adds to it as well. There are indications that a positive appreciation of life fosters ‘physical health’ and postpones ‘death’. (Demonstrated in the sections 7/1.1c and 7/1.1e respectively). Insofar as hedonic level is concerned, it also stimulates ‘activity’ and facilitates ‘social contact’, ‘intimate contacts’ in particular (See sections 7/1.3 and 6/4.1). In other words dissatisfaction with life tends to produce apathy and isolation and can thereby wreck people.

Not without consequences for society

The above mentioned effects of happiness obviously matter at the social level as well. The more healthy and active the citizens and the smoother their contacts, the greater the chance that society flourishes. Moreover, widespread dissatisfaction with life tends to act as a bomb under the social system. Though unhappiness may block political action to some extent, the presence of many unhappy persons in a society provides a willing public for radical reformers and may thus cause ‘upheaval and violence’. It may even give way to spirits of ‘war’. In a similar way it can also limit the political room for ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’. Remember the discussion in the sections 6/1.2 and 6/1.3. Though probably limited, these effects should not be neglected. At the same time they should not be over-estimated either, the (western) societies where happiness is currently most prevalent are obviously not without problems.

These few effects are probably only the top of an iceberg. The consequences of happiness have not been investigated systematically as yet. Still these few findings may sufficiently demonstrate that happiness matters for more than merely its own sake.

Exhibit 9/1.1 continued

PRESENT INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS				PAST INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS			
RESOURCES	HEALTH 7/11			MENTAL EFFECTIVENESS 7/2			ABILITIES 7/13
	physician rated	+/0	↔	impairment	---	?	social ability
	self rated	++	↔	positivesigns	++	?	intelligence
	complaints	—	↔	mental maturity	++	?	
PERSONALITY	RICH EXPERIENCE 7/1.5						ACTIVITY 7/1.4
	rich affect	0	↔				actual activity
	rich cognition	0	↔				appetite for harassment
PERSONALITY	FATE CONTROL 7/2.1			DEFENSES 7/2.2			APTNESS TO LIVE THINGS 7/2.3
	belief in	+	↔	turning against	—	?	pleasant
				projection	—	?	associations
				repression	0	?	appreciation of odours
LIFESTYLE	LEISURE 7/3a			CONSUMPTION 7/3b			TIME ORIENTATION 7/2.4
	activity in	++/+	↔	eating habits	0	?	time expansion
				smoking/drinking	0	?	temporal emphasis
				drug use	—/0	?	organization
LONGINGS	CHANGE OR NOT 7/4a			OBJECTS 7/4d			AGNETIC LIVING 7/3d
	wants change	—	↔	values/character	+	?	laborious living
				family	+	?	sober living
				health	+	?	renouncing fun
CONVICTIONS	ETHICAL VALUES 7/5.1			RELIGION 7/5.2			LIFEGOALS AT AGE 20 8/2b
	emphasis on	0/+	↔	religiousness	0/+	?	work study
	sharing with intimates	0/+	↔	denomination	0/+	?	intimate ties
	value priorities	—/0/+	↔				ideals
APPRECIATIONS SATISF ACTION WITH ASPECTS OF LIFE 7/5							achievement
	intimate ties	+++ ↑	↔				pleasure, lan
	income	+++	↔				health
	oneself	+++	↔				
	leisure	++	↔				
	work	++	↔				
	health	++	↔				
	living environment + country	+	↔				

Thickly printed factors: causal effect demonstrated
 Not thickly printed factors: causal effect not (yet) demonstrated

STRENGTH OF CORRELATIONS	CHANGE IN CORRELATION
++ strong positive	↑ increased
+ modest positive	constant
0 no correlation	
— modest negative	
--- strong negative	↓ decreased

CHANGE THAT CORRELATIONS ARE DUE TO:

statistical effect of	effect on
↔	distortions happiness
↔	happiness
?	impossible
↔	hardly possible
↔	possible but unproven
↔	possible and proven to be involved
↔	possible but some evidence against
↔	possible but strong evidence against

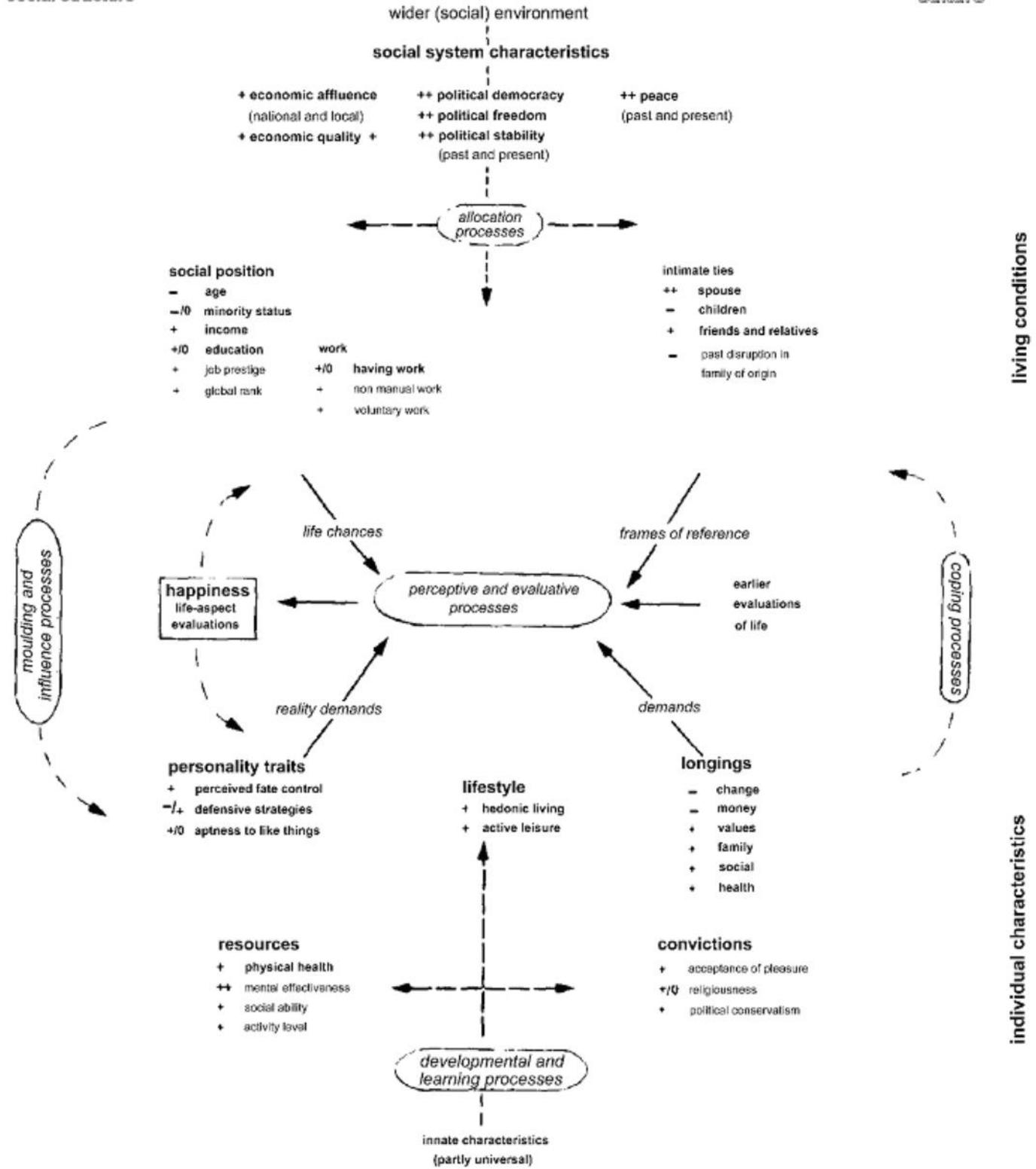
POPULATION:

- W: World, several developed and underdeveloped countries
- D: two or more developed nations
- U: two or more underdeveloped nations
- US: United States of America
- EC: European Community
- I: India
- N: The Netherlands
- ': no general population samples but specific ones mostly students

A tentative ordering of demonstrated correlates of happiness in contemporary western society.

social structure

culture



competences

motivations

IN CAPITAL LETTERS:
In big thick letters:

In small thick letters:

In small thin letters:

In italics:

global classes of determinants
 global categories of demonstrated correlates of happiness (drawn from exhibit 9/1.1)
 specific variables shown to effect happiness in contemporary western society
 specific variables shown to be correlated to happiness in contemporary western society
 intermediating links

—————▶ 'direct' effects

- - - - -▶ 'indirect' effects