1-1-2012

Assessing happiness in college students

Ross A. McClure

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

THESIS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

An important part of Booth Library at Eastern Illinois University's ongoing mission is to preserve and provide access to works of scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all theses produced at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

By signing this form:

- You confirm your authorship of the thesis.

- You retain the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.

- You certify your compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U.S. Code) and your right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted material included in your thesis.

- You grant Booth Library the non-exclusive, perpetual right to make copies of your thesis, freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including but not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or Internet.

- You acknowledge that by depositing your thesis with Booth Library, your work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library's circulation and interlibrary departmenst or accessed electronically.

- You waive the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis, including your name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois Univerity.

Petition to Delay:

I respectfully petition that Booth Library delay maintenance and reproduction of my thesis until the date specified and for the reasons below. I understand that my degree will not be conferred until the thesis is available for maintenance and reproduction.

Date:

Reasons:

Author's Signature   5/30/12

Author's Signature   Date

This form must be submitted in duplicate.

Assessing Happiness in College Students

(TITLE)

BY

Ross A. McClure

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2012

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

James H. Wallace 5/23/12		*[signature]* 5-30-12
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR DATE		DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR DATE OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE
[signature] 5/29/12		
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE		THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE
Charles G Eberly 5/22/12		
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE		THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

Abstract

The present research was constructed with the aim to assess happiness within college students. The research hypotheses were 1.) Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith, 2.) Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of life satisfaction and purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith. 3.) Students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary happiness, and 4.) Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the weakest grasp of a sense of purpose in their lives. The study was conducted using a mixed-method approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. For the quantitative portion, 3,400 email surveys were distributed; 449 surveys were returned completed. The qualitative portion consisted of 16 one-on-one interviews with participants. The participants for both methods were volunteers from a public, mid-sized, four-year, predominantly white institution. The quantitative results were not statistically significant as religious participants and their frequency practicing their religion was not statistically significantly different than those who were not of faith. The data analysis of Chi-square tests and ANOVA tests affirm these findings.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee members Dr. James A. Wallace, Dr. Charles G. Eberly, and Dr. John H. Bickford for their effort and persistence in helping me learn about the research process and produce a report I am proud of. I would also like to thank my parents for supporting me with their love through two more years of school. I would like to thank Britteny Alspach for being an encourager, challenger, and best friend throughout this process. I would like to thank Jenny Shearer for helping me realize my passion for the subject. Thank you to Levi Kosta-Mikel for being a champion to help me with statistical analysis. And lastly, I would like to thank the participants; without you none of this would be possible.

Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I

Introduction

The pursuit of happiness is all around us. In her hit song "Happy" (Lewis, 2009, track 1), Leona Lewis sings about the potential, and more likely, probable pain in life and how she deals with it. She poses questions which sink to the listener's heart, such as: What if it hurts me? What if I break down? What if the world throws me off the edge? Lewis continues, singing, "I gotta find my place. I wanna hear my sound. Don't care about all the pain in front of me, 'cause I just want to be happy. Yeah, just wanna be happy" (track 1). Clearly from her lyrics, Leona Lewis is searching for happiness. She shares why it is important to her, and so does R. Kelly in "Happy People" (Kelly, 2004, track 11). Unlike Lewis, R. Kelly presented a more global point of view on the importance of happiness.

> Happy people,
>
> (yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)
>
> Keep the world turnin', turnin',turnin'
>
> I'm talkin' about
>
> Happy people,
>
> (yeah, yeah , yeah, yeah)
>
> They keep the world dancin', dancin', dancin'
>
> Happy people
>
> (yeah, yeah , yeah, yeah)
>
> Keep the world steppin', steppin', steppin'

Nothin' but happy people,

(yeah, yeah , yeah, yeah)

Keeps the world groovin', groovin' (Kelly, 2004, track 11).

From his lyrics, the rhythm and blues artist R. Kelly sees happiness and the importance of

happy people in a view that impacts the world. Granted, R. Kelly has penned a fair

number of songs about personal pleasure, but in "Happy People" he communicates the

positive impact happiness has on the world.

While R. Kelly sings about the importance of happy people in society, the motion

picture, *The Pursuit of Happyness* (Alper & Muccino, 2006) depicts happiness as a more

material, comfort-based concept. In this film, the characters Chris Gardner (played by

Will Smith) and his son Christopher (played by Jaden Smith) portray a hard luck family

trying to make it in life. In the movie, the duo's wife / mother has left the two of them

because she is frustrated with their life circumstances. As the movie progresses, Chris

earns an internship with a financial company and eventually lands a fulltime job with

them near the end of the movie. In the fading scene, the writers portray the characters

Chris and Christopher as "happy" because they no longer have a financial burden, have a

place to live, and are a family.

Personal Statement

As I have gone through life, I have always tried to identify people who seemed to

be happy and emulate what I think is the cause of their happiness. As a child, this

ambition surfaced when I saw my friends with new toys that seemed to make them

happy. Every time I brought this desire to the attention of my parents, I was quickly

reminded we did not have the affluence of some of my friends' families. Even when my

parents had the means to purchase one of these toys, I quickly grew tired of it and realized it would not provide a source of lasting happiness.

As I continued to watch my peers and noted what they found enjoyable, my high school years were spent trying to find happiness in the opposite sex and athletics. As I watched my friends, I noticed there was no greater feeling than working hard all week to earn a victory under the Friday night lights of the football field and celebrating the victory with your girlfriend and friends after the game. Initially, my friends proved to be right. We spent tireless weeks preparing to earn a win and the feeling was absolute bliss—on the rare occasion our team actually earned a win. In my three years of high school football, we won 11 games and lost 19. Yet, when one works all week to earn a loss on Friday night and has seemingly nothing to celebrate, the opposite sex and athletics provided more frustrations than happiness.

Upon high school graduation, I ventured off to a four-year college. While observing my peers at college, I soon noticed that money and success were the motivators my peers used to increase their levels of happiness. Knowing this, I became a finance major in hopes of earning great financial stability in a very successful career. I was off to a great start in my pursuits until I took a trip with my finance club to see the financial capital of the world —New York City, NY. During this trip, we had the opportunity to meet with successful alumni who worked on the New York Stock Exchange floor, ran a multi-million dollar hedge fund, or traded and sold vast amounts of real estate in the New York City area. While dining one night with these alumni, they began to share more about their lives; how they worked 10 or more hours a day, commuted over an hour each way, and barely had time for their families or hobbies. They did not appear to be

enjoying life; even as they earned a great deal of money and success, they still seemed empty inside.

After this brief history of searching for happiness in life, I am still searching for lasting happiness. As I continue my search, my curiosity is peaked to understand where today's college students find happiness and what levels of success they are experiencing with this endeavor. I wonder if today's students are experiencing a similar story to what I went through or whether they are having more success at finding happiness in the common themes of their peers. I wonder if today's college students are finding happiness in the toys their peers have, the opposite sex and athletics, or money and academic success.

Pursuit of Happiness

The U.S. Declaration of Independence provides one of the most famous quotations in American history, in which the signatories stated, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Issler & Moreland, 2006 p. 14). While this declaration was lofty, the latter part is often a slippery concept for most Americans to grasp. Happiness is fleeting; it is a feeling that can take effect in an instant and disappear just as quickly. With happiness being such a difficult ideal to attain, it is amazing how much time and resources Americans allocate to the pursuit of their own personal happiness.

Americans, specifically undergraduate students, often spend their free time partaking in alcohol, sex, purchasing new items, eating, socializing with friends, or succeeding in academic endeavors (Carey & Correia, 1997). Some thrive on

competition, an "us against the world" mentality, as seen in the popular classic movie "Animal House" (Hoover, 2008). Each of the aforementioned pursuits are not bad things to experience in and of themselves. However, are they worth being what one solely rests their hope for happiness in life? Can any of these items provide everlasting happiness? Can anything provide a lasting happiness, or is it something we have to work towards within ourselves?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine how undergraduate university students defined happiness and how they experienced happiness in their lives. Specifically, the Principal Investigator (PI) assessed whether university students have a contemporary or classic view of happiness and to what extent and for what reasons they have their viewpoints (Issler & Moreland, 2006). Theoretically, if students have a contemporary view of happiness, it would be useful for researchers and university practitioners to understand what exactly students utilize to provide themselves with a sense of personal pleasure in order to achieve a happy feeling. University practitioners would also benefit knowing whether students experience a classical view of happiness, which rests in a higher calling or a "*for God and country*" mantra, and could provide service accordingly. It would also be useful to determine whether students of religious faith experience higher levels of happiness or a different type of happiness than do students who do not ascribe to a particular religion.

For the purposes of the present study, examining these aforementioned definitions of happiness were conjoined with assessing the extent to which a person is involved with their faith. Questions to be considered include whether students are involved with their

faith for "activity" purposes or "belief" purposes (Alavi, 2007, p. 484). Alavi (2007) noted the differences between religious "activity" and religious "belief" in that both can contribute to increased levels of happiness, but in different ways. For example, religious activity provides a more interconnected lifestyle while religious belief provides a true hope in knowing and serving God. Additionally, utilizing demographic data gathered from questionnaires, information was analyzed in terms of race, class, and socio-economic status.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the present study:

1. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

2. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of life satisfaction and purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

3. Students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary happiness.

4. Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the weakest grasp of a sense of purpose in their lives.

Data Collection

Data for the present study were collected via quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative element consisted of eleven positive statements in which participants were to respond on a 6-point Likert-type scale (Appendix A). The quantitative questionnaire was sent via email to all students who lived on campus at the selected institution and were between the ages of 18 and 23. Students could voluntarily

participate in the study by continuing with the provided link in the email. After voluntarily completing this survey, participants were provided the option to volunteer for further research participation on the subject matter, namely, the qualitative assessment, in one-on-one interviews between the participant and the PI. A total of 447 student responses were obtained from the email solicitation, and qualitative results were obtained for 16 volunteer participants.

The qualitative data includes participants' comments derived from interviews and are used for illustrative purposes to enhance the quantitative results. The primary investigator accepts the qualitative findings are not empirically grounded. This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter VII under the section "Recommendations for future researchers."

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to the present study. One limitation was in terms of the nature of the questionnaire. Happiness is often very difficult to measure because there are generally only two options: self-reporting or physiological observation (Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010). In the present study, the primary investigator (PI) relied on the self-report method which rests on the honesty and self-awareness of each individual completing the survey (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If a PI does not address these factors, the data gathered can be misleading; thus permitting multiple data interpretations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Another limitation to the present study occurred in the qualitative methodology of interviewing participants one-on-one. Although the PI was careful to ask identical questions to each participant with identical voice inflections, any hints or fluctuation in the PI's approach may have influenced how the participants responded.

Additionally, one-on-one interviews are limited because they are completely reliant on disclosure by the interview participant. These interviews also were not coded nor examined further, but instead gathered to provide clarity and depth for the quantitative data.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were adopted to clarify specific terms as they related to the present thesis.

Flow or optimal happiness.

When an individual focuses their energy on a process and finds personal reward in the process while setting their ego aside, this moment of flow or optimal happiness is when they experience deep enjoyment, creativity, and total involvement with life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

Contemporary happiness.

Contemporary happiness is defined as the moment when an individual focuses on personal, pleasurable satisfaction (Issler & Moreland, 2006, p. 26).

Classical happiness.

When an individual focuses on virtue, well-being, morality, or putting others before oneself, especially to serve and love God, the result is defined as classical happiness (Issler & Moreland, 2006). For the present study, the primary investigator adapted Issler and Moreland's definition to refer to serving and loving a higher religious deity, not solely God.

Happiness.

Happiness is defined as an original, firm, and stable pleasure based on human nature and the absence of suffering from worry, anxiety, fear, uneasiness, or depression (Alavi, 2007)

Happiness.

The online definition of happiness is (a): a state of well-being and contentment: joy; *(b)*: a pleasurable or satisfying experience (*Dictionary and thesaurus – Merriam-Webster online*, 2011).

Overview of the Study

The present study was designed to provide the PI with a deeper understanding of the lives of college students and their thoughts and experiences while finding happiness in their lives. The research juxtaposed the perceptions of students of "faith" and "not of faith" regarding their perceived levels of personal happiness (and of what type of happiness) and overall satisfaction with life. Understanding how different students with differing levels of faith perceive happiness will provide university administrators with information on how to help students who may struggle with depression or who lack motivation.

Chapter I Summary

Chapter I contained the introduction to the study, a statement of purpose, research questions that guided the present study, a list of limitations, and definitions of terms as they relate to the present study. Contained in Chapter II will be a review of related literature regarding happiness holistically. Specific attention is devoted to research studies and books regarding happiness including, but not limited to, the following areas

of concern: student development theories pertaining to faith, happiness, and self-authorship, previous studies examining happiness, and methods and sources previously identified regarding the achievement of happiness.

Chapter II

Review of Relevant Literature

Csikszentmihalyi (2008) begins his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,* with a discussion of the roots of discontentment in our daily lives. The two main obstacles cited that inhibit our happiness are (1) the fact that the universe was not created to answer our needs and (2) we suffer from chronic dissatisfaction; meaning, when our needs are temporarily met, more needs arise. While these two components of human nature are extremely complex, they are simultaneously true. We have no way around them; only ways to cope with them through protective devices in our society, such as religion, philosophies, arts, and comforts. While many of these concepts are good, Csikszentmihalyi (2008) believes none of them will suffice to provide lasting happiness as they will wear out and cease to provide the spiritual sustenance required for happiness. "Without faith, people seek to maximize personal pleasures, usually striving to attain wealth, power, and sex" (p. 8). Csikszentmihalyi (2008) concluded that we struggle to gain happiness when we focus intently on a goal, desire, or "need" while missing out on the path to get to that ideal mark. Our intense focus on getting more of a certain thing often sways the perception of the beholder to think they have very little of the desired object. Simply speaking, the more you want of something, the less you actually have. Csikszentmihalyi (2008) also stated, "Only direct control of experience, the ability to derive moment-by-moment enjoyment from everything we do, can overcome the obstacles to fulfillment" (p. 8).

These two obstacles, the fact that the universe was not created to answer our needs and that we suffer from chronic dissatisfaction, create chaos in our daily lives

unless we face them or cope with them. One coping strategy is provided to us naturally in "cultures which shield members from chaos and reassure them of their importance and ultimate success" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 11). This cultural shield combined with a little luck can provide an illusion of total security for an individual or group, but this is a dangerous mirage. "While everything in shielded cultures combined with luck may seem to be in order, there is in reality a lack of inner order called ontological anxiety or existential dread, which is the fear of being, feeling that there is no meaning to life, and that existence is not worth continuing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 12).

With the two outside obstacles looking too large to defeat and a lack of an adequate coping strategy, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that to boost our happiness, we must reclaim the experience of life because too often we are end focused, not enjoying the path to get to the end. Reclaiming the experience is a proactive approach in which one must become autonomous with their social environment and its rewards and punishments. The challenge, at its roots, seems simple, but is extremely difficult due to the amount of discipline and perseverance required. For one to gain control over experience, a person must have a drastic change in attitude about what is and is not important. Additionally, because social systems tend to use either pain or rewards in order to get people to adapt to cultural norms, individuals must achieve control of instinctual drives in order to maintain a healthy independence from society. In order to emancipate ourselves from societal constraints, an individual must find reward in the moments of each event, instead of the final outcome. When one expends their energy to find personal reward in a process, they often experience a complete involvement in life which produces deep enjoyment and creativity. It is in these moments when individuals experience optimal

levels of happiness; during this time is also when an individual experiences the conscious state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 19).

Issler and Moreland (2006) posited that happiness is not merely how we react to instances or what coping methods we use to shield ourselves from the world, but rather a deep belief and sense of commitment to something larger than oneself. Issler and Moreland focus on happiness being about a higher calling while Csikszentmihalyi (2008) focuses on the path along the way. In *The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, Issler and Moreland (2006) note how greatly the definition of happiness has changed in American culture, especially since the baby boomers came to maturation. Prior to the Baby Boom Era, representing those born post-World War II between the years of 1946 and 1964 in America, citizens believed in something greater than themselves, usually adopting the '*for God and country*' mantra. More specifically, the authors describe the key to happiness as rooted in the King James version of the bible; specifically, Matthew 16:25 (New American Standard Bible) which states, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Issler, & Moreland, 2006, p. 14). In the past century, this definition of happiness has shifted and the contemporary definition is "a sense of pleasurable satisfaction" (Issler, & Moreland, 2006, p. 16). Issler and Moreland believe the definition of happiness has again shifted from serving others to an intense feeling focused on ourselves. However, Issler and Moreland believe in the end, pleasurable satisfaction makes for a very poor lifetime goal. The authors note pleasurable satisfaction is not in and of itself a bad thing, but is a poor primary goal. Instead, it should be left as a beautiful by-product of the former definition of happiness (Issler, & Moreland, 2006).

While our definition of happiness has changed culturally over the years, Issler and Moreland (2006) described the massive effects this shift has had on society in the United States by simply suggesting that our culture is currently filled with empty selves who are defined as:

> ...filled up with consumer goods, calories, experiences, politicians, romantic partners, and empathetic therapists... [The empty self] experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning... a lack of personal conviction with worth, and it embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated emotional hunger (Issler, & Moreland, 2006, p. 17-18).

Additionally, Issler and Moreland identify four main traits as a result of society's shifted definition to happiness: "inordinately individualistic", "infantile", "narcissistic", and "passive" (p. 18-21). While these four traits are the result of an empty self, Issler and Moreland's (2006) solution is for individuals to literally get a life and live for something bigger and more important than pleasurable satisfaction in themselves.

Issler and Moreland (2006) believed self-absorption was not a strategy worth living the daily life and instead offered Matthew 16:24-26 as an alternative.

> [24]Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. [25]For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. [26]For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (p. 24)?

Issler and Moreland believed living one's life for the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a worthy mission. Often this passage is misconstrued to suggest the gospel commends justification by works, self-hatred, or merely sin-management. But instead, if properly understood as authors Issler and Moreland assert, the text can be interpreted as an invitation to a life of happiness obtained in the ways of the ancients, Moses, Solomon, Jesus, Aristotle, and Plato. These historical figures believed happiness to be "a life well lived, a life of virtue and character, a life that manifests wisdom, kindness, and goodness" (Issler, & Moreland, 2006, p. 25). In comparing the contemporary definition (pleasurable satisfaction) of happiness to the classical definition (virtue and well-being), contemporary happiness is described as an "intense feeling"; "dependent on external circumstances"; "transitory and fleeting"; "addictive and enslaving"; and "split off from the rest of self, not coloring the rest of life, and creates a false or empty self" (p. 26). Classical happiness is described as a "settled tone"; "springs from within"; "is more permanent and stable"; "empowering and liberating"; "integrated with one's entire personality"; "colors everything else"; and "creates true self" (p. 26). In summary, the outcomes produce two very different people; contemporary happiness produces a celebrity and classical happiness produces a hero (Issler, & Moreland, 2006). In clarification, Issler and Moreland (2006) explained they did not believe pleasurable satisfaction to be a bad thing. In fact, they believed it a good thing. While pleasurable satisfaction is not a bad thing in and of itself, they believed it a poor ultimate goal. One secular scholar, John W. Gardner, wrote, "Existence is a strange bargain. Life owes us little; we owe it everything. The only happiness comes from squandering ourselves for a purpose" (Issler & Moreland, 2006, p.32).

Happiness in Positive Psychology

Pawelski (2003) worked to understand whether and how character outcomes might be assessed. The author utilized Berkowitz's (2002) definition of character as "an individual's set of psychological characteristics that affect that person's ability and inclination to function morally (Pawelski, 2003, p. 3)." Using this definition, Pawelski sought to understand the material in the field of positive psychology and explored a set of psychological characteristics and how they are understood in the field of positive psychology. Pawelski hoped this would result in improved assessment of character outcomes. The field of positive psychology originated with Martin Seligman in 1998 during his time spent as the president of the American Psychological Association. Since then, it has broadened into a variety of studies and paths, including optimal human experience. In these studies, scientists have undertaken a new project focusing on identifying core virtues recognized and valued across cultures and times (Pawelski, 2003). Seligman and Peterson (2003) created an instrument to assess selected characteristics associated with positive psychology. The Values in Action (VIA) Inventory of Strengths centered on the six virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. While the initial list of six virtues is good, they are difficult to define or measure. The authors created 24 subsets in order to better define each of the main six virtues. In their understanding of the literature, the authors address many of the benefits positive psychologists are making to assess character outcomes, such as defining character in a way that it does not rely on religious or philosophical creeds, but is not separated from them. Additionally, the definition is empirically rooted, begging for others to use it for measurement (VIA Institute on Character). Lastly,

positive psychologists have worked to develop and compile many resources into centralized locations in order to strengthen the field by making resources readily available. One area in which the researchers have worked to improve the field is finding instruments which do not rely on self-report methods as these methods are a challenge to the validity of any study (Pawelski, 2003). Pawelski felt character outcomes can be measured, but the field is far from perfect, leading into an exciting adventure of discovery.

The field of positive psychology is emergent with new research examining interventions that increase happiness levels and provide sustaining results. According to Schiffrin and Nelson (2010), the purpose of happiness is to make life more fulfilling, enhancing human functioning, and ultimately to increase happiness. One result of the growth of positive psychology is an effort to develop interventions that not only increase happiness levels, but provide sustaining results. Schiffrin and Nelson examined happiness along with perceived stress levels in undergraduate students to determine if correlation(s) existed. The researchers believe their study to be important because prior research was unclear in its results. The contemporary American society's common perception seemed to be that stress inhibits happiness and they share an inverse relationship. The inconsistency with previous findings lies in determining whether stress management would be an essential intervention to increase and sustain happiness. In the researchers' review of previous literature, they found results in which happiness and stress can be orthogonal in relationship while other findings do not support happiness and stress as independent experiences (Schiffrin, & Nelson, 2010).

Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) integrated the definitions of three established researchers into their definitions of happiness. Broadly speaking, they defined happiness as positive subjective experiences. One approach, Diener's (2000) model, has three components: cognitive appraisal of one's life (life satisfaction); and positive and negative affect (emotions) which are viewed as two separate dimensions. The second model was proposed by Lyubromirsky and Lepper (1999) in which the method captures the global and subjective qualities of happiness in order to identify the stable characteristics of happiness apart from life experiences. The final model used to conceptualize happiness was proposed by Seligman (2005), which consists of three components: experiencing positive emotion (the pleasant life), being engaged in life activities (the engaged life), and finding a sense of purpose or meaning (the meaningful life). Seligman believed the happiest of people pursue all three pathways while they rely mostly on engagement and meaning (Seligman, 2005).

In this PI's reading of prior research, stress was often measured on the basis of its physiological manifestations, the occurrence of major life events, the frequency of daily hassles, and its cognitive appraisal. Similar to Lyubromirsky and Lepper's subjective well-being model, a person's cognitive appraisal of stress is the most influential factor in conducting a survey. Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) described events as characterized as stressful only when the demands of the experience outweighed the person's resources for handling stress. Stress is challenging to measure due to the fact it is either self-reported or measured by physiological measures. The two possible ways to reduce stress are either a buffering approach or a managing approach. In the buffering approach, individuals utilize positive emotion in order to keep their spirits high during

tough times. The buffering approach has shown itself to be effective in undoing cardiovascular consequences that negative emotions provoke. The second method is managing stress, in which individuals engage in stress relieving activities, such as exercise, meditation, or written expression (Schiffrin, & Nelson, 2010).

In a seminal study in which three models were utilized, Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) examined 100 undergraduate students (72 females and 28 males) at a small, public liberal arts college in the mid-Atlantic region comparing their cognitive appraisal of stress relative to their happiness. The researchers hypothesized they would find an inverse relationship between perceived stress and happiness. In the study, participants completed a set of ten paper and pencil measures over a span of 30 minutes. In order to measure participants' happiness levels, the researchers administered three questionnaires: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993), the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999), and the Authentic Happiness Inventory (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Pavot and Diener's (1993) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) consists of five positive statements rated on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being not at all related and 7 representing absolute agreement. This scale was used to measure an overall life satisfaction score. Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) utilizes comparative statements (e.g., Compared to my peers, I consider myself:) in order to gain a global understanding of happiness. These four statements were rated on a seven-point scale from "less happy" to "more happy." Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson's (2005) Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI) consists of 24 sets of statements with each set containing five statements ranging from feeling like a failure to feeling extraordinarily successful. The participants were asked to choose the statement which

best described them during the week prior. Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) utilized the three scales in order to obtain a holistic view of happiness in the lives of their 100 participants. The researchers compared their findings to the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) in order to measure participants' stressful situations in life. The Perceived Stress Scale consisted of ten questions asking participants to respond with the frequency they experienced each item within the past month. Utilizing linear correlation, Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) found all three instruments displayed a negative, linear correlation with stress SWLS ($r = -.48$, $p\backslash.001$), SHS ($r = -.42$, $p\backslash.001$) or the AHI ($r = -.58$, $p\backslash.001$). They hypothesized there would be an inverse relationship between cognitive stress and happiness and their hypothesis was supported by the findings.

The aforementioned empirical study focused on the idea of hope. Weldy (2011) cited one area in which hope was being used frequently, and this was in President Barak Obama's 2008 campaign for the presidency. During this time, many individuals took from Obama's campaign slogan that hope was equated to change. The author argued hope does not have to equal change, especially for college students. Weldy (2011) asserted the fact that a student is in college provides hope because they are at a place that typically boosts self-esteem in individuals and provides opportunity for individuals to reach their dreams. As Weldy gathered data from current students, a variety of sources for hope arose in the findings. These sources covered family, friends, good times, success, and faith. On faith, one participant said:

> To be very real with you, my source of hope comes from Jesus Christ, and
> the fact that He died to reconcile me (and everyone else who accepts him)
> to right relationship with Himself. The economy and today's condition are

not permanent. By trusting in the Lord, and acknowledging what He wants

for me and where He is leading me, the next steps in my life are nothing to

be concerned about. The times ahead may be / look a little rocky ahead

with the recession and all, but "God works all things for the good of those

who love Him and have been called according to His purpose" (Romans

8:28, New International Version) (Weldy, 2011, p. 3).

As Weldy (2011) concluded, mention is made of the results not being groundbreaking,

but interesting in the fact that students had a generally positive outlook on life even when

they were aware of the economic downturn and struggles in the United States.

Additionally, when students were asked if they were confident in achieving their goals,

they overwhelmingly said "yes," but when asked to define their goals, many struggled to

do so.

Levine and Cureton (1998) interviewed a nation-wide sample of college students

to inquire about their hopes and fears. Their research took place during the early 1990s

during which a variety of economic struggles, social problems, and environmental crises

were causing college students to cling to their dreams. The authors concluded that

students were too pessimistic about the future. For instance, they did not expect to have

better lives than those of their parents and they believed they would have to really drive

to be successful. Little did these college students know at the time about the pending

economic turnaround to come in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Crosby and Dalton

(2009) cited Levine and Cureton in their subsequent work because they noticed many

similarities in the attitudes and outlooks among contemporary college students in the

aftermath of the economic downturn which started in 2008. For instance, due to college

and university tuitions rising three times faster than the median family income and

student borrowing for college doubling in the past ten years, a four-year degree is

becoming less and less affordable to students, blurring their sight set on their hopes and

dreams (Lewin, 2008). Crosby and Dalton (2009) believed college students were living

in a time when hope and fear were colliding and students needed to possess a mindset of

hopefulness.

With this outlook, Crosby and Dalton (2009) suggested a critical aspect of college

student development was the idea of establishing a sense of sustaining hope. The authors

also proposed that with the pressures mounting greatly on the hopes, dreams, and

ambitions of college students, experiencing uncertain dreams or losing prized hopes can

be detrimental to the development of a student in college. Students who give up hope or

withdraw their dreams inwardly experience less challenge or public view. These students

are more likely to drop out or settle for less satisfying jobs for the sake of security

(Levine & Cureton, 1998). Levine and Cureton believed one of the greatest services an

academic institution could provide was an education and experience that fostered a sense

of hope in college students. For clarification, they did not believe hope was simply a

positive attitude or wishful thinking, but a deep conviction and belief that they would

persevere in their deepest passions and life goals. Transforming hope is what taps into

the energy needed to face the opposition in the world and continue into self-growth and

development (Crosby & Dalton, 2009).

Additionally, Crosby and Dalton (2009) made links to Seligman's (2002) positive

psychology in believing traits of transformative hope and positive psychology aligned

well. For instance, one of the six main human virtues Seligman's research mentions is

transcendence. This virtue allows an individual to appreciate beauty, feel gratitude, and experience awe. One key aspect to transcendence is hope which affirms personal goals, passions, and future ambitions. Crosby and Dalton (2009) believe using positive psychology mixed with transforming hope, one can tap into the inner core of a college student and help them develop at a deep level. This is a central task for educators, whether they work in the classroom or outside of the classroom (Crosby & Dalton, 2009).

Alavi's (2007) main research goal was to determine and assess the correlates that can increase or improve happiness by utilizing university students because they were perceived to be in a crucial developmental stage and decisive age in their lives. Specifically, Alavi wanted to understand the extent to which the current educational system and its elements cultivated and detracted from happiness in university students. Alavi theorized that finding these factors would enable university officials to improve the general level of happiness in their student body. Alavi described factors related to happiness from a religious viewpoint, specifically in Islam and Christianity. In Islam, according to the Qur'an, human happiness is derived from a combination of the following factors: "believing in God and Last day", "working righteousness", "following God's guidance", "expending one's wealth in the way of God", "performing prayer and paying alms", "being God fearing", "being among God's friends", "doing good", "not devouring usury", "being patient and steadfast", and "struggling in the ways of God"(p. 481-2). Islam also believes that evildoers and sinners will not prosper; thus, never truly know happiness (Alavi, 2007). Christianity, viewed through the Bible, believes the following factors to be influential in finding happiness: "fearing God", "trusting the Lord", "wisdom and understanding", "righteousness", "endurance", "having mercy on the poor",

"keeping the law", "being hopeful in the Lord", "mourning", "being merciful",

"purifying one's heart", and "being a peacemaker"(p. 482). Christianity, like Islam,

believes the wicked and the ungodly will not prosper and thus, not experience happiness

(Alavi, 2007).

Alavi (2007) also examined happiness through the viewpoint of popular

philosophers. For example, Ibn Sina (cited in Alavi) attested that the wise know

happiness is not found in things that are perishable, but that real happiness is attained

through speculative and practical powers and achieving intellectual pleasures. Ghazzali

(cited in Alavi) believed true happiness a direct result of knowledge combined with

knowing God and His worship and servitude; religion was the way of happiness.

Socrates believed happiness was obtained in man by avoiding carnal desires. He also

believed obtaining knowledge, piety, and virtue were the origins of happiness and

promoted through doing what is right. Finally, Alavi notes, Aristotle believed happiness

was seen to be the soul's activity in accordance with complete virtue and could be

attained through morality.

Alavi (2007) noted people who follow a religion generally have more positive

emotions about life while having a lower suicide rate and typically greater longevity of

life. Research has also revealed that people practicing religion have shown evidence of

enjoying health benefits and well-being. Religion practitioners are also known to

practice their faiths with a sense of purpose, especially for religions which assure an

afterlife, an eternal happiness. Alavi noted the differences between religious "activity"

(p. 484) and religious "belief" (p. 484) in that both can contribute to increased levels of

happiness, but in different ways. For example, religious activity provides a more

interconnected lifestyle while religious belief provides a true hope in knowing and serving God. In terms of connectedness, Alavi also noted that interpersonal relationships, especially close ones, can increase happiness levels. Money is often sought after to provide happiness, but psychological wealth tends to affect happiness more than material wealth. Research has also shown that when individuals make wealth, fame, or physical appearance their ultimate goal, they tend to have poorer mental health than those who have goals requiring them to serve others or develop close relationships (Alavi, 2007). Alavi also mentioned that married people tend to be happier than their single counterparts, but research also shows happier people tend to marry more often. He also noted that older people tend to be more satisfied with their lives than do younger people.

After considering prior research, Alavi (2007) hypothesized a relationship between the scientific attitude, scientific behavior, artistic attitude, artistic behavior, moral attitude, moral behavior, religious attitude, religious behavior, and individual characteristics (e.g., kind of university, faculty, etc.) and the happiness of the university student. "Happiness" in this research is defined as "an original, firm, and stable pleasure based on humans' nature. Therefore, every fleeting and superficial pleasure has not been considered as happiness" (p. 489). The findings of this research were based on a sample of 573 students from Iranian universities who completed questionnaires designed by the researcher who utilized a Likert-type response scale. The results showed the degree of happiness in 18 (3.1%) students very low, in 56 (9.8%) students low, in 264 (46.1%) students moderate, in 165 (28.8%) students high, and in 70 (12.2 %) students very high. The results showed the more suitable the attitude and behavior for the given variable, a higher level of happiness was reported.

Banchoff, Cox, and Jones (2012) set out to understand the makeup of the millennial generation group and their thoughts surrounding religion, values, and politics in the United States. Their methodology was to conduct the 2012 Millennial Values Survey in conjunction with the Public Religion Research Institute and Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. They sampled, randomly, 2,013 adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years old and were a part of the Knowledge Networks' Knowledge Panel. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish with a margin of sampling error for the whole study at +/- 3.3 percent at the 95% confidence level.

The millennial generation was defined my Howe and Strauss (2003) as a generational cohort born between 1982 and 2002. Banchoff, Cox, and Jones (2012) found that overall, the millennial generation was more diverse than previous generations, stating that 57% of millennials identified as white compared to 72% who identified as white in the general population. Additionally, when asked to describe themselves compared to their parents' generation, millennials described themselves as tech-savvy, lazier, less religious, more open-minded, and independent. Politically speaking, the millennial generation typically leans toward the Democratic Party as 61% are registered to vote, but only 46% say they plan to vote in the upcoming 2012 election.

Religiously speaking, millennials report significantly lower levels of affiliation. College-age millennials are less likely to be religiously affiliated, especially with white evangelical Protestant or white mainline Protestant religions, than the general population. Banchoff, Cox, and Jones's 2012 study also shows that millennials hold a less traditional or orthodox view of religion, citing 23% believe the Bible is the word of God and should

be taken literally, 26% believe the Bible is the word of God, but not everything should be taken literally, and 37% say that the Bible is written by men and not the word of God. In terms of the American dream of working hard and you will get ahead, millennials are split on whether they believe the dream still holds true. Additionally, college-age millennials see a need for economic change and reform in order to bridge the gap between the rich and poor economic classes.

Chapter II Summary

Chapter II contained a review of relevant literature ranging from theoretical pieces, research studies, and opinion pieces. This review of relevant literature laid the foundation for the present study. Chapter III will contain an explanation of the present study including: the research hypothesis, methodology for data collection, methodology for data analysis, and structure of the present study.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

In the present study, the PI sought to understand happiness in the lives of college

students through the implantation of a PI developed a measure which had both

quantitative and qualitative elements. The PI used a researcher modified instrument based

on the work of Diener et al. (1985) in order to gain quantitative data and developed 8

interview protocols in order to gain qualitative data. These protocols were broad

questions about happiness developed by the PI.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the present study:

1. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than

    will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

2. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of life satisfaction and

    purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

3. Students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary

    happiness.

4. Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the

    weakest grasp of a sense of purpose in their lives.

Site

The present study was carried out at a mid-sized, predominantly white, public

institution located in the mid-west United States. The institution enrolled 9,657

undergraduates at the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year. Amongst these

students were 2,114 freshmen, 1,814 sophomores, 2,431 juniors, and 3,298 seniors. Graduate students numbered 1,521 (University Marketing and Communications, 2011). Of the total number of students, 6612 were female and 4566 were male.

Instrumentation

Data for the present study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. Quantitative data were collected using a researcher modified instrument based on Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). The modified instrument will be signified as SWLS(mod). The qualitative data were collected using a researcher developed semi-structured interview protocol (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) designed to enable participants to identify the current sources of their personal sense of happiness (Appendix B).

Quantitative.

The instrument developed for the purposes of the present study was an adaptation of Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS is a free, open-market survey that can be used without restrictions. As originally created, the survey consisted of five statements in a similar positive tone to which respondents represented their current sense of "life satisfaction as a cognitive-judgmental process" (p. 71) on a Likert-type scale from one to seven. Using a sample of 176 undergraduate students, "the two-month test-retest correlation coefficient was .82, and coefficient alpha was .87" (p. 72).

For the purposes of the present study, the PI added six additional items to the five used in the SWLS. The first five items in the modified instrument were the original five items used by Diener et al. (1985). Items six to 11 added for the purposes of the present

study were (1) My life has purpose and meaning, (2) I am proud of myself, (3) Time passes quickly during most of the things I do, (4) I have a good amount of enthusiasm, (5) I am optimistic about the future, and (6) My life is a good one. The response scale was also changed to six options to remove the possibility of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement as an attempt to minimize ambivalence among respondents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Following the 11 items of the modified SWLS scale, participants were asked to complete six demographic items for purposes of data analysis. Demographic items were not asked until after the SWLS(mod) items were completed by respondents so that the chance of a demographic question revealing the purpose of the study was minimized. The six demographic questions were designed to obtain information about gender, race, socio-economic status, major in school, religious affiliation (if any), and self-reported active religious practices (Appendix A).

Based on the present response from 449 undergraduate students, Cronbach's alpha for the five original items in the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) with a six point Likert-type scale was .868, nearly identical to the .87 Cronbach's alpha reported for 176 undergraduate students at a state flagship institution using a seven point Likert-type scale. For the modified 11 item SWLS used in the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was .906. The modified scale is usable for further statistical analysis purposes.

Qualitative.

The semi-structured interview protocol (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) included eight questions (Appendix B), the descriptions of which are described below.

What makes you happy?

This first statement was designed to open conversation and let the participants' minds go where their priorities took them. The PI wanted to see what types of happiness inducing things the participant seemed to gravitate towards.

What boosts your self-esteem?

The PI asked what specifically boosted the respondents' self-esteem in order to ascertain what the participants felt they received as value. The PI wanted to see if their self-esteem and happiness sources were in harmony with each other.

What decreases your happiness the most?

The PI wanted to understand whether participants thought their happiness was decreased by the polar opposite of what increased their happiness. Doing so was meant to give the PI an understanding of if and how the polarity between the presence and absence of happiness played out in the lives of the participants.

If you could give advice to someone in search of true happiness, what would you tell them?

Asking respondents to give advice to another was utilized to understand what the participants did for themselves to find happiness. This advice was rooted in the participants' life experiences and thus, designed to see how they pursued happiness.

Does happiness come naturally to you? Please explain.

The PI wanted to know whether participants felt happiness was natural or something to be worked for. The PI also wanted to utilize this protocol to see the overall belief of where happiness came from in the participants.

When you think of "happy" people, what common traits do you notice?

The PI asked about the common traits of happy people to learn if participants could recognize whether someone was truly happy or what happiness was perceived to look like from the respondents' point of view.

In your free time on the weeknights or weekends, what do you spend most of your time doing?

Understanding how participants spent their time related to happiness in the sense that what one does with their time is generally connected to what gives them pleasure. The PI wanted to use this content to see whether participant responses aligned with what made participants happy in life.

Is there anything you wish you spent more time doing?

The PI wanted to see what types of pleasurable events / activities participants wished they had more time for and if what they described seemed to align with contemporary or classical happiness.

Participants

All 3,400 undergraduate students between the ages of 18-23 living on campus at the institution described above were included as potential participants for the purposes of the study. From this pool of possible respondents, a total of 449 people completed the survey and provided usable responses. Of these participants, 336 were female, 111 were male and 2 respondents did not provide their gender. The distribution by race / ethnicity was 8.7 % African-American (n = 39); 0.7% American Indian or Alaskan Native (n = 5); 82% Caucasian (n = 368); and 2.4% Hispanic (n = 11); 0.2%

Quantitative Data Collection

The email solicitation (Appendix C) for research sent to all 3,400 on campus

undergraduate students on November 11, 2011 was arranged by the use of QuestionPro [©]

survey technology. Informed consent to participate in the survey was implied when

students elected to volunteer to take the survey instrument. A total or 449 useable

responses were generated from the solicitation. No follow up requests were made for

purposes of data collection. In the email, students were offered the incentive of being

entered into a drawing to win one of two $25 gift cards to the University Union bookstore

if they clicked on a separate link not associated with data collection.

Qualitative Data Collection

The benefits of using qualitative inquiry include having the PI serve as the

instrument for data collection. Qualitative inquiry for the present study permitted the PI

to provide illustrative, clarity-seeking data to add depth to the quantitative data gathered.

Quantitative inquiry permits the researcher to have internal validity, external validity and

generalization, reliability, and objectivity in the data gathering process. By utilizing both

approaches, the PI was able to collect sufficient data to examine which items provided

statistical data that could be coupled with the personal *"voices"* of participants.

Students who voluntarily signed up to further engage in the research project after

having filled out the initial questionnaire were invited to participate in one-on-one

interviews. Informed consent was managed by each participant being provided a copy of

the consent statement(Appendix C) prior to the start of the individual interview. The form

contained details about the safety of information provided by the participant during and

after the interview. Signed forms and audio recording of each interview were kept secure

under lock and key. All data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2009) in order to present descriptive demographic data, and analyze the resulting SWLS(mod) scores compared with levels of happiness. The PI converted the raw quantitative data into the z-score scale in order to force the data towards a more normal distribution. After converting the data, the PI separated the normalized data into three sectors—high, middle, and low. These sectors in the converted data were utilized to perform Chi-square analysis between the each demographic factor of socio-economic status, religious affiliation, and frequency of practice of affiliated religion with the overall satisfaction with life scores. In addition to examining the Chi-square analysis, the PI performed one-way ANOVA tests between each reported religion and the frequency of practice. The qualitative portion of data analysis involved transcribing the student interviews and completing data analysis by item in order to provide depth to the quantitative data. These narrative findings were crucial in providing explanatory depth to the statistical data gathered via the survey instrument. Obtaining in-depth spoken perceptions from student participants provided the PI with detailed descriptions of happiness as experienced by each research participant and in-depth knowledge to use while interpreting the quantitative data gathered via the survey instrument.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the present study. One limitation was the nature of the quantitative survey. Happiness is often very difficult to measure because there are generally only two options: self-reporting or physiological observation (Schiffrin, & Nelson, 2010). In the present study, the PI relied on the self-report method; this method rests on the complete honesty and self-awareness of each individual completing the survey (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Another limitation to the study can occu in the qualitative interviewing process. Although the PI was careful to ask identical questions to each participant with identical voice inflections, any hints or fluctuation in the PI's approach may have influenced how the participants responded. Additionally, one-on-one interviews are limited because they are completely reliant on disclosure by the interview participant.

Confidentiality

The only identifier the emailed QuestionPro© survey had was a section asking if the student was willing to participate in further research (i.e. the qualitative interview). The link to persons who volunteered for individual interviews was recorded separately from survey responses and stored in a separate data bank; thus maintaining names and identifiable information separate from each individual's responses to the survey. Upon transcribing the student interviews, the PI edited the students' names out of the transcription and the electronic recordings were stored in a privately owned safe. The only person(s) to have access to the data were the PI and the thesis chair, upon request. Students who withdraw from the study had their data stored in a separate folder noting they voluntarily withdrew from the research project. Once the required 3-year waiting

period has elapsed, all data will be destroyed. The participants in the interview setting were audio-taped so the PI has an accurate transcription of what was said. If the participant was not audio-taped, the research collected field notes during the 45-60 minutes interview. The audiotape ensured the PI directly quoted the participant instead of trying to recall details from memory. This data will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone else.

Chapter III Summary

As Chapter III contained the research design, instrumentation, methodology of data collection, plan of data analysis, confidentiality measures, participant description, and limitations to the study, the following chapter, Chapter IV, will contain an in depth statistical analysis of the present study's email survey findings. Chapter V is a narrative of the emerging themes from the qualitative interviews. Chapter VI will integrate the quantitative data with the voices of respondents reported in Chapter V. Chapter VII is a discussions of results, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Chapter IV

Survey Findings

Introduction

This chapter contains findings to the present study's email survey. The survey's

intent was for on-campus students to have the opportunity to self-report their satisfaction

with life in an electronic survey and will be analyzed quantitatively. This chapter will

contain tables based on survey responses to report outcomes for the quantitative analysis

of survey data only.

The Survey

The QuestionPro© email survey used for the present study was an adaptation of

Diener et al.'s (1985) "The Satisfaction with Life Scale" (SWLS). Diener et al.'s survey

is a free, open-market survey and can be used by anyone with no restrictions (Appendix

A). Diener et al.'s survey was originally comprised of five statements with similar

positive tone in which the participant would represent their feelings on a seven-point

Likert-type scale that included a middle "neither agree nor disagree" response option.

The PI added six additional statements, totaling eleven statements, with similar tone in

order to gain a more indepth understanding of on-campus students' satisfaction with life

and ultimately happiness based on the literature reviewed for the purposes of the present

study.

Survey statements 1-11 were written with similar positive tones and the

participants were asked to respond on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The even numbered

response scale was used in order to eliminate the middle number which typically is

assigned to the emotion "neither disagree nor agree" in order to minimize ambivalence in

the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Statements 1-6 and 11 were designed to understand students' outlooks on their lives while questions 7-10 were designed to understand students' views on their self-esteem. Immediately following the electronic administration of the modified Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), participants were electronically administered six demographic questions. This order was intentional, so no demographic factor would affect or tip the student off to the intent of the study. The six demographic questions were designed to obtain information about gender, race, socio-economic status, major in school, religious affiliation (if any), and frequency practicing said religious affiliation (if any) for purposes of data analysis.

Demographic Results

Of the 449 reported participants, 336 were female, 111 were male, and 2 chose not to answer. Of the participants, 39 (8.7%) were African American, 3 (0.7%) were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5 (1.1%) were Asian, 368 (82%) were Caucasian, 11 (2.4%) were Hispanic, 1 (.2%) was native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 16 (3.6%) reported to be multiracial, and 6 (1.3%) were listed as other.

Socioeconomic Status.

Students were asked to self-identify their family's socio-economic status based on family yearly income, and if they were not certain, to estimate as close as possible. One area of interest was the number of participants who reported their families earned less than $20,000 per year, which was 62, or 13.8% of all respondents (Table 1).

Table 1

Family Socio-Economic Status of Participants

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Less than $10,000 per year	26	5.8
$10,001-$20,000 per year	36	8.0
$20,001-$50,000 per year	120	26.7
$50,001-$100,000 per year	168	37.4
$100,001-$250,000 per year	78	17.4
Greater than $250,000 per year	14	3.1

Religious Identification.

Of the participants, 1 (.2%) identified as a Buddhist, 337 (75.1%) identified as a Christian, 1 (.2%) identified as a Hindu, 67 (14.9%) identified as nonreligious or an atheist / agnostic, and 41 (9.1%) identified as other (Table 2).

Table 2

Religious Identification

Religious Identification	Frequency	Percent
Buddhist	1	0.2%
Christian	337	75.1%
Hindu	1	0.2%
Nonreligious, Atheist, or Agnostic	67	14.9%
Other	41	9.1%

After participants were asked their religious affiliation, they were asked to self-report the frequency in which they engaged in the practices of their religion. This was clarified to be anything such as reading a holy book, attending a religious service, praying, fasting, etc. Ninety-three participants (20.7%) reported practicing their religion daily, 37 (8.2%) practiced their religion three times a week, 69 (15.4%) participants practiced their religion once a week, 20 (4.5%) practiced their religion bi-weekly, 62 (13.8%) participants practiced their religion monthly, 36 (8.0%) participants practiced their religion every six months, 37 (8.2%) participants practiced their religion yearly, and 89 (19.8%) participants practiced their religion less than once a year.

Table 3

Frequency Practicing Reported Religion

Frequency practicing religion	Number of participants	Percent
Daily	93	20.7%
Three times a week	37	8.2%
Once a week	69	15.4%
Bi-weekly	20	4.5%
Monthly	62	13.8%
Every six months	36	8.0%
Yearly	37	8.2%
Less than once a year	89	19.8%

Findings

As the literature review implied, happiness is often sought after, yet tough to harness or grasp. An adaptation of Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale was administered in this study in order to understand college students at the selected university with regard to their satisfaction with their life, overall happy, and if any of the demographic qualifiers were significantly positively correlated to happiness levels in participants. Specifically, through the quantitative responses, the survey was intended to seek understanding on research hypotheses 2 and 4, which state, "Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of life satisfaction and purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith" and "Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the weakest grasp of a sense of purpose in their lives", respectively.

The majority of participants believed their life was ideal. As the data indicates, 56.1% "strongly agree" or "agree" their life was ideal while 79.9% "somewhat agree," "agree," or "strongly agree" their life was ideal. The largest group of participants selected the "agree" option, indicating that their life was ideal. While a majority (79.9%) were in some kind of positive agreement, 20.1% of the participants were in disagreement that their lives were ideal (Table 4).

Table 4

Item #1: "In most ways my life is ideal."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	48	10.7
Agree	204	45.4
Slightly Agree	107	23.8
Slightly Disagree	53	11.8
Disagree	29	6.5
Strongly Disagree	8	1.8

Statement #2 says "the conditions of my life are excellent. For this statement, the majority of participants selected "slightly agree" or "agree" which totals 69.1% for the statement "the conditions of my life are excellent." Adding the 11.6% who strongly agreed makes for 80.7% who had a positive valence toward the statement. The number of students who "strongly disagreed", "slightly disagreed", or "disagreed" with the statement totaled 7.8% (Table 5).

Table 5

Item #2: "The conditions of my life are excellent."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	11.6
Agree	188	41.9
Slightly Agree	122	27.2
Slightly Disagree	52	11.6
Disagree	27	6.0
Strongly Disagree	8	1.8

Of all participants, a majority (83.8%) agreed with the statement, "I am satisfied with my life" to some extent, while 65.3% either indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" with the given statement. Twenty-two point three percent of the respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their lives. Fifteen point six percent of the respondents disagreed with the statements to some extent, while 6 (1.3%) strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with their lives (Table 6).

Table 6

Item #3: "I am satisfied with my life."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	100	22.3
Agree	193	43.0
Slightly Agree	83	18.5
Slightly Disagree	47	10.5
Disagree	17	3.8
Strongly Disagree	6	1.3

Continuing with what has been displayed thus far among survey participants, the overwhelming majority (83%) agreed to some extent that they had gotten what they want out of life, the largest of this group being the respondents who "agree" (169 or 37.6% of the participants). Sixty-six (14.7%) disagreed to some extent, while 6 (1.3%) strongly disagreed with the given statement (Table 7).

Table 7

Item #4: "So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	89	19.8
Agree	169	37.6
Slightly Agree	115	25.6
Slightly Disagree	43	9.6
Disagree	17	3.8
Strongly Disagree	6	1.3

In the responses to the statement "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing," the majority still agreed to some extent with the statement, which was less at 63.2% as opposed to the nearly 80% reported for the previous statements. Of the respondents who agreed to some extent with the statement, those who selected "agree" comprised the largest grouping at 123 respondents (27.4%). Additionally, 36.7% of the respondents disagreed with the statement to some extent. Thirty-two or 7.1% of respondents strongly disagreed that they would change almost nothing about their lives (Table 8).

Table 8

Item #5: "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	58	12.9
Agree	123	27.4
Slightly Agree	103	22.9
Slightly Disagree	80	17.8
Disagree	53	11.8
Strongly Disagree	32	7.1

In comparison to previous tables, statement #6 "my life has purpose and meaning," brought more optimistic results. For statement #6, 94.8% of the respondents agree to some extent that their life had purpose and meaning (Table 9). This figure is above the 80% mark noticed in the previous tables.

Table 9

Item #6: "My life has purpose and meaning."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	198	44.1
Agree	173	38.5
Slightly Agree	55	12.2
Slightly Disagree	15	3.3
Disagree	4	0.9
Strongly Disagree	3	0.7

Statement #11 says "my life is a good one." To this statement, 94.4% of the respondents agreed to some extent that their life was a good one. The highest total of the respondents were in agreement was the "agree" response which received 199 (44.3%) of the total responses. There were 23 (5.2%) students who disagreed to statement #11 whereas 3 strongly disagreed (Table 10).

Table 10

Item #11: "My life is a good one."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	164	36.5
Agree	199	44.3
Slightly Agree	61	13.6
Slightly Disagree	16	3.6
Disagree	4	0.9
Strongly Disagree	3	0.7

Statements numbered 1-6 and 11 were designed to seek an understanding of the students' overall satisfaction with their lives. The following statements, 7-10, were designed to understand elements of self-esteem and level of positivity. These findings are presented in tables similar to those previously for statements 1-6 and 11.

In response to statement #7, "I am proud of myself", respondents showed a high level of self-esteem as 413 (91.9%) reported they agreed to some extent with the statement, "I am proud of myself." The highest responses were those of students who agree with the statement and they numbered 181 (40.3%) of the total responses. Thirty-four (7.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement while 5 (1.1%) strongly disagreed (Table 11).

Table 11

Item #7: "I am proud of myself."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	142	31.6
Agree	181	40.3
Slightly Agree	90	20.0
Slightly Disagree	20	4.5
Disagree	9	2.0
Strongly Disagree	5	1.1

As noted in Chapter 2's review of relevant literature, Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) concept of flow focuses on living within the moment, not the end goal. Csikszentmihalyi speaks of being so lost in the moment, that pride, outcome, and all other things seem to wash away and one is left with just experiencing the moment. This is what he describes

as optimal experience and the PI has used this description as an understanding of happiness for the present study. In response to statement #8, which says "time passes quickly during most of the things I do", 398 participants (88.6%) reported agree to some extent that time passes quickly during most things they do. Forty-seven (10.5%) disagreed to some extent while 3 (0.7%) strongly disagree to the presented statement (Table 12).

Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" can be difficult to measure. This statement could measure whether individuals are experiencing flow, but more realistically measure a positive attitude in the activities in which respondents participated.

Table 12

Item #8: "Time passes quickly during most of the things I do."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	114	25.4
Agree	186	41.4
Slightly Agree	98	21.8
Slightly Disagree	26	5.8
Disagree	18	4.0
Strongly Disagree	3	0.7

Statement #9, "I have a good amount of enthusiasm", was designed to provide the PI with understanding students' levels of positivity in their lives. The responses to this statement yielded 415 (92.5%) who agreed to some extent that they had a good amount of enthusiasm. The largest group was comprised of those in the "agree" category at 192 participants or 42.8%. These statistics show that students at the selected university felt

they were overall enthusiastic about life. Twenty-eight students disagreed to some extent, while 2 (0.4%) stated they strongly disagree with the presented statement (Table 13).

Table 13

Item #9: "I have a good amount of enthusiasm."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	140	31.2
Agree	192	42.8
Slightly Agree	83	18.5
Slightly Disagree	18	4.0
Disagree	8	1.8
Strongly Disagree	2	0.4

Statement #10, "I am optimistic about my future", was designed to provide the PI with an understanding of the level of positivity among the 18-23 year old on-campus students at the selected institution. Of the respondents, 415 (92.4%) agreed to some extent that they were optimistic about their futures. Thirty-three (7.3%) participants disagreed to some extent, while one individual strongly disagreed about being optimistic about his / her future (Table 14).

Table 14

Item #10: "I am optimistic about my future."

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	146	32.5
Agree	193	43.0
Slightly Agree	76	16.9
Slightly Disagree	23	5.1
Disagree	9	2.0
Strongly Disagree	1	0.2

While student responses seemed overall optimistic regarding their satisfaction with life, self-esteem, and optimism, one area the present study was intended to investigate is whether there were any significant differences in demographic data factors and students' levels of reported happiness, mainly those who were students of faith. In examining this, the present study focused on the self-reported levels of happiness for students who were of faith vs. students who did not claim to be of faith.

Happiness by Faith Category

One area of intended study focused on a comparison of happiness levels for students of faith and not of faith. The frequency in which faith was practiced in selected ways (Table 15) was taken into consideration. The PI sought to distinguish between practicing faith and claiming religion as statistical analyses were calculated. Students of faith self-reported a mean SWLS(mod) score of 53.17, 2.28 points higher than did students not of faith who self-reported a mean of 50.89.

Table 15

Students of Faith vs. Students not of Faith – Group Statistics who Practice Religion Three Times a Week or More

Faith Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Of Faith	127	53.17	8.00
Not of Faith	318	50.89	8.79

When the SWLS(mod) data were organized by students who practiced faith daily, three times a week, and once a week, the gap between the mean scores narrowed to 1.45. Participants of faith reported a mean score of 52.93, while participants not of faith reported a mean score of 51.48 (Table 16).

Table 16

Students of Faith vs. Students not of Faith – Group Statistics who Practice Religion Once a Week or More

Faith Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Of Faith	182	52.93	8.35
Not of Faith	153	51.48	7.81

The Chi-square test for significance for the data group comparing the socio-economic status of a participant's family and their overall satisfaction with life score was run with a 95% confidence level which requires significance to be found at or below .05 (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) (Table 17). There was no statistically significant

relationship found between socio-economic status and the life satisfaction of participants

χ^2 (6, 442) = 10.267, p = .114).

Table 17

Chi-Square Comparing Participants Standardized Life Satisfaction with Socio-Economic Status of Their Families

Socio-economic status	Low	Middle	High	Total
Less than $20,000 per year	20	21	21	62
$20,001-$50,000 per year	36	51	33	120
$50,001 - $100,000 per year	45	64	59	168
Greater than $100,001 per year	15	39	38	92
Total	116	175	151	442

One aspect of the demographic data was religious affiliation. The range of responses between the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of each religion was computed. Buddhism and Hinduism only had one participant each. The table that follows shows that all three of the listed standard deviations are high, indicating the data points were spread far from the mean. Of the listed standard deviations, Christianity had the lowest, implying data points closer to the mean (Table 18).

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics Range, Mean, and Standard Deviation for each Religion Reported

Religion	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Buddhist	1	46	46	46	-
Christianity	337	17	66	52.2819	8.10978
Hinduism	1	42	42	42	-
Non-religious	67	11	66	48.9104	10.29229
Other	41	18	62	50.2195	8.83604

The PI utilized a Chi-square test to analyze whether religious affiliation had a significant relationship to low, medium, or high scores on the SWLS(mod) (Table 19). The data showed $\chi^2 (4, 445) = 6.924$, $p = .140$. The data did not show a statistically significant relationship.

Table 19

Chi-Square Test for Religious Affiliation and Low, Medium, and High Life Satisfaction

Religion	Low	Medium	High	Total
Christian	78	133	126	337
Non-religious, atheist, or agnostic	25	24	18	67
Other	12	19	10	41
Total	115	176	154	445

In order to determine whether there was a statistical significant relationship between religious affiliation and religious practice, a Chi Square test was performed on the three main groups listed as religions—Christianity, Non-religious/atheist/agnostic, and Other (Table 20). The data showed χ^2 (4, 441) = 114.396, p = .000, meaning the Chi-square test did not show a statistically significant relationship.

Table 20

Chi-Square Comparing Religious Affiliation to Religious Practice

Religion/Frequency	Christian	Non-religious, atheist, or agnostic	Other	Total
3+ times a week	120	3	6	129
Once a week – monthly	136	3	12	151
Every 6 months or more	79	59	23	161
Total	335	65	41	441

Religious Frequency ANOVA

The PI utilized three ANOVA tests in order to analyze whether the frequency of participating in practicing a reported religion was significant compared to other groups. Participants who practiced "other" faith showed no statistically significant data between groups, F = (22, 18) = 0.898, p = 0.6 (Table 21). The data showed frequency does not affect scores on the SWLS(mod).

Table 21

ANOVA for Frequency of Practicing "Other" Faiths

Other Religion's Frequency	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22	11.485	0.522	0.898	0.6
Within Groups	18	10.467	0.581		
Total	40	21.951			

The second ANOVA test utilized by the PI compared non-religious, atheist, and agnostic participants between groups to test for significance. Participants who were non-religious, atheist, or agnostic showed no statistically significant differences between groups, $F_{(29, 35)} = 0.69$, $p = 0.845$ (Table 22). The data showed that frequency does not affect scores on the SWLS(mod).

Table 22

ANOVA for Frequency of Practicing "Non-religious, Atheist, or Agnostic" Faiths

Non-religious Frequency	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29	5.004	0.173	0.69	0.845
Within Groups	35	8.75	0.25		
Total	64	13.754			

The final ANOVA test utilized by the PI entailed comparing participants of the Christian faith between groups. The data approached statistical significant by registering at 0.093, but it is not significant, $F_{(40, 294)} = 1.336$, $p = 0.093$ (Table 23). The data showed frequency does not affect scores on the SWLS(mod).

Table 23

ANOVA for Frequency of Practicing "Christian" Faiths

Christian Frequency	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	40	29.845	0.746	1.336	0.093
Within Groups	294	164.137	0.558		
Total	334	193.982			

Chapter IV Summary

Chapter IV contains a variety of results, focused around the majority of students who were 18-23 years old and lived on campus at the selected institution. The majority of students indicated a high satisfaction with life and overall happiness. Additionally, students self-reported high levels of self-esteem, high levels of time passing quickly during an activity, and high levels of overall positivity. The second half of the data includes an analysis of students practicing faith vs. students who did not practice faith. This analysis showed a statistically significant difference of higher reported mean levels of happiness for students who practice faith than did those who do not practice faith.

Chapter V

Interview Findings

Introduction

The current chapter contains the findings of interviews conducted for the present study. Data from the qualitative portion provide significant insight to happiness among 18-23 year old, on-campus student at the selected university. The present chapter contains direct quotes from students who agreed to take part in one-on-one interviews with the PI. Not every interview will be quoted for each question. Some quotes will be given as an example representative of the majority of the group.

Findings

Sixteen students, four from each standard grade level (freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior) were asked to participate in an interview which consisted of 6 published questions and 2 additional questions the PI felt necessary to provide in-depth follow-up. The students were recruited via a quantitative email survey discussed in chapter IV. Each student voluntarily contributed their thoughts. The questions were designed to be intentionally broad in scope but focused on happiness in order to allow students to respond with whatever came first to mind. This allowed the PI to perform a content analysis by item to be compared among the participants in order to provide depth to the quantitative data. All interviews were conducted privately in closed quarters. Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to each interview being audio recorded. Additionally, after written consent was obtained, the PI requested each participant to fill out the same demographic data questionnaire which has earlier been filled out in an online version (Appendix A). After the interview was concluded, the PI

asked each participant if they had any thoughts or reactions they would like to share before they left the interview room.

The PI interviewed 16 students in total, 4 from each class standing and typically 2 from the male and female genders (Table 24). The PI allotted an option on the demographic data for a student to choose not to answer to the gender information request in order to provide privacy and comfort for the interview participant.

Table 24

Demographic Data for Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Family Income (In thousands)	Religion	Frequency practicing religion/week	Class
1	Male	Caucasian	$50-$100	Christianity	0-1	Sophomore
2	Male	Caucasian	$20-$50	Unitarian Universalism	2-3	Freshman
3	Female	Caucasian	$50-$100	Christianity	2-3	Junior
4	Female	Caucasian	$100-$250	Christianity	10+	Senior
5	Male	Caucasian	$20-$50	Christianity	0-1	Senior
6	Male	Hispanic	$50-$100	Christianity	2-3	Senior
7	Female	Caucasian	$100-$250	Christianity	2-3	Sophomore
8	Male	Caucasian	$20-$50	Jewish	0-1	Junior
9	Female	Caucasian	$20-$50	Christianity	0-1	Sophomore
10	Male	Caucasian	$20-$50	Christianity	10+	Sophomore
11	Choose not to answer	Caucasian	$50-$100	Christianity	4-5	Senior
12	Male	African American	Less than $20	Christianity	6-7	Junior
13	Female	Caucasian	$50-$100	Christianity	0-1	Junior
14	Female	African American	$20-$50	Christianity	0-1	Freshman
15	Female	Asian	Less than $20	Non-religious	0-1	Freshman
16	Male	Caucasian	$100-$250	Non-religious	0-1	Freshman

Interview Question #1: What makes you happy?

In response to this question, many students excitedly spoke of spending time with their friends or family. Participant 1 spoke highly of spending time with his friends when he returns home:

> I enjoy hanging out with my friends and playing sports and getting out.
>
> When I'm at home, I spend a lot of time outside in the woods and stuff
>
> like that. Basically, anything that keeps my mind occupied. So, just
>
> hanging out with friends and chillin' with the family sometimes.

Participant 3 expressed similar sentiment as she described what made her happy in life, specifically focusing on being a very family oriented individual:

> I really am family oriented. We have a big age difference between
>
> siblings and we are spread out around the United States, but I really enjoy
>
> when we get to spend time together. I also really enjoy hanging out with
>
> friends.

In a similar fashion, participant 7 shared her enjoyment in being with friends. More specifically, she spoke of sharing laughter with friends and the impact this has on her happiness:

> I think people make me happy. I'm generally a people person. I love
>
> being around people who laugh. I made some new friends on my floor
>
> this year and they always crack me up. I go back to my room and think to
>
> myself, "that's why we're best friends; they always make me laugh.

Participant 5 took a different approach to where his happiness lies. While many participants focused on family and friends, Participant 5 spoke to happiness stemming from joy in his faith in Christ:

> The core of my happiness I consider joy and joy I believe only comes from Jesus Christ. Earthly things bring me happiness, but nothing like joy.

Interview Question #2: What boosts your self-esteem?

In response to this statement, many participants expressed their self-esteem to be boosted by either compliments or doing well with work or homework. Participant 15 discussed doing well on homework assignments:

> I want to get good grades in school, because I came here to study. I want to get good grades because I want to get a good job. I do what the teachers expect and I like to meet that goal.

Similar to participant 15, participant 16 commented on how finishing work and providing good quality boosts her self-esteem:

> . . . Completing anything I want to accomplish. I like to set a goal and finish it. For instance, I am doing a big paper right now and when I get that done, I'm going to feel extremely good about myself.

Participant 7 took a different approach to what boosts their self-esteem. While participants 15 and 16 spoke of achieving good grades and completing quality homework, participant 7 gave an example of what compliments do to her self-esteem:

> Probably compliments. I know that sounds conceited, but it's a self-esteem booster. It doesn't have to be appearance-based. For instance, my

English teacher complimented on how much I have improved in my

quality of work and it was a huge self-esteem boost.

Similar to participant 7, participant 11 felt the need for compliments in order to boost her

self-esteem.

Lately, I have been having self-esteem issues, to be honest. I think being

congratulated for things is nice. I don't like the attention, but subtle

compliments are nice. For instance, I won an award and my adviser

announced it to everyone and it was overwhelming. But at the same time,

I posted it on Facebook and got like 50 "likes" and was very happy.

Interview Question #3: What decreases your happiness the most?

When asked about what decreases their happiness the most, many students talked

about people who break trust, are negative, or belligerent. For example, participant 1

spoke about people who have broken trust in his life:

I guess, when people lie to me and stuff, that makes me unhappy. I'm

really good at getting over things. So, I mean, 'yeah, somebody lied to

me'. Whooptie do. Yeah, I'm hurt now, but there's no sense getting

worked up about it. It happened, it's done, over. If somebody hurts me

personally, somehow, whether it's like going behind your back or

something like that, that's the only thing I can really think of that would

make me unhappy.

Similar to participant 1, several participants spoke toward people breaking their trust

resulting in feelings of unhappiness. One student mentioned not having experienced

much trust in life due to the inability of some people to honor their commitments yet and really valued it when they experience it:

> Having people you count on not be there for you. That's a bad thing that brings me down a lot. That's a huge negativity in my life.

Participant 2 expressed his frustration when, in conversation, someone gets belligerent. His statement was a follows:

> I don't like having to deal with belligerent people a lot. I'll be honest, that's my biggest annoyance in life. Not just people who won't listen, but also won't walk away from something. It's not the persistence of it, but there is no real need to continue arguing. I've seen it enough in my life and I've seen it here. It's tough for me to understand why they would want to make both sides unhappy to just prove themselves right.

Similar to belligerent people, participant 3 spoke of how negative people impact them to decrease their happiness:

> I don't like when people attack people on physical traits or set standards based on physical things like weight or looks. It breaks me down because I just want to prove to them how wrong they are. I just feel let down that society is like that and feel bad for them being negative.

Interview Question #4: If you could give advice to someone in search of true happiness, what would you tell them?

As participants responded to interview question #4, their results tended to encompass three themes: (1) Not sweating the small stuff, (2) Doing what makes you

happy, and (3) Having a relationship with God. Participant 6 encourages others to find what they like to do in order to find happiness:

> Do what you like. If you like board games, find a club for that. If you like a religious thing, find that. When I first started [college], I didn't know my niche, so I got in touch with my faith and it spurred me to get connected and eventually involved on campus.

Participant 14 would give similar advice, telling people to be themselves in order to be happy; in the belief that if one has internal conflict, they will not be happy:

> I would probably tell them to always be themselves. If you spend time trying to be somebody else just because you think you'll fit in or that's what people are looking for, you're going to end the day in conflict with yourself.

One very interesting response came from participant 5 who expressed his understanding of personality traits, such as introversion and extroversion, and using that to find happiness within someone. This participant also mentioned pursuing your interests:

> I would say first start with their interests. I would then ask if they are an introvert or an extrovert and have them spend time, or not spend time, with others accordingly.

Participant 10 expressed a different, yet heartfelt approach by discussing their own journey to discovering faith and how important God was instrumental in changing them from a negative person into someone who has happiness and joy:

> I know it's going to sound really cliché, but live through the word of the Bible. That's what I tell my friends who are seeking happiness, especially

those who know me as angry and pissed off. They always ask what happened and I tell them God changed me. Some of my friends think I'm stupid, but I know what it has done for me.

Interview Question #5: Does happiness come naturally to you? Please explain.

When gathering responses for interview question #5, many of the participants seemed to fall into one of three categories: first, were their family has taught them how to be happy; second, they have to really work at being happy; or third, they rely on God to fill them with happiness. Take for example participant 9 who believed happiness does not come naturally to anyone:

> These past few years, I've had a lot of bad events happen and it's just stuff you can't control. So, probably not [happiness does not come naturally]. It's something you have to learn to deal with. I don't think it comes naturally to anyone. They're just people who have learned how to deal with those situations.

In contrast to participant 9, participant 13 believed their family helped them be a naturally happy person:

> I think so because for my entire life, my family has been constantly overcoming obstacles. I have just been raised to look at the positive side of things. It was never like "Oh, look how bad we have it. We have a child with a disability." I was always raised in an environment to look at the glass as half full.

Participant 12 believed happiness to be given from God. They do not think it is natural or rely on family to give it to them because their past has been without much family:

> I believe it comes to people naturally, but I believe for me, I was blessed with it. I believe God gave it to me. In my life, I've been through so many bad things like with foster care and everything that I believe God got me through it. I learned God put a fire in my heart to keep me happy and alive. He put it in me to look to Him instead of other people to make me happy.

Interview Question #6: When you think of "happy" people, what common traits do you notice?

When asked to describe what common traits people notice about happy individuals, the majority of the group answered with responses about someone always smiling. Yet, one individual had a more cynical view and thought people who are always smiling were fake and hiding something inside of themselves:

> This might sound really cynical, but a lot of times when people tell me they're happy, I don't think they are. I think the popular consensus is when people pursue each other or love for happiness, it usually ends in ruin.

Participant 15 was less cynical and said you can notice happy people by an easy-going, positive attitude stating, "They are always really easy-going, have a positive attitude, they are nice people." Similarly to participant 15, participant 3 saw happiness on the faces of people with a particular facial expression and described them as someone who always seemed to be smiling, even when not:

I notice people smiling when they're not smiling. I can look at them and see they smile often. Some people's faces may droop like they're frowning a lot. Happy people seem to have a light or vibrancy coming from them.

Participant 11 noticed a smile much like participant 3. They both believed happiness is best noticed through a continuously smiling face:

Happy people, to me, look like they're smiling, even when they're not. Their eyes just come alive. I have a friend who may not be happy all the time, but their eyes show there is something in their head that just keeps them going.

Interview Question #7: In your free time on the weeknights or weekends, what do you spend most of your time doing?

When asked to respond how they spend the majority of their leisure time, the two main aspects of their lives the participants discussed were spending time with friends or spending time achieving comfort. The comfort solutions included catching up on sleep, watching television, reading, etc. Participant 14's response was typical yet representative of the group when he talked about what he did in his spare time:

Probably watching TV. On the weekends, it's kind of boring. During my free time, I usually spend time watching my favorite TV shows or watching a new movie. I used to read, but I don't have time anymore for that.

Participant 9 also spent time searching for things that provided him comfort in his free time. He spent time either going out (partying) or staying in and playing video games. As with other participants, the following statement was typical:

> I go out a little bit, but if I get the chance to get my room to myself for the night, I stay in and play a lot of [video] games. I like my alone time as well.

Instead of seeking comfort from things, participant 16 said he spent a lot of time between friends, family, and his girlfriend:

> It's a tie between a few things, because my girlfriend is at home and we've been together for four years, so she's obviously a big part of my life. I don't get to see my mom or brother too often so I try to balance between family and girlfriend. A lot of my friends are at different colleges so I have to manage time between the three aspects. My dad is out of the picture so that's out of the question.

Participant 7 was very similar to participant 16 in that they spend a lot of their free time with friends. They valued this and sought it as an area to provide happiness for their daily lives:

> In addition to my studies, I spend time being with my friends. Sometimes, one of my friends has a car so we will go to Tuscola or something. Or, on Fridays, we will go to the coffee shop in [a nearby town]. We also spend time just hanging out and talking about things to do.

Interview Question #8: What do you wish you spent more time doing?

When asked what they wished they spent more of their time doing, their answers were fairly diverse, but two popular ones were doing homework and serving or volunteering. Take for instance Participant 1, who wishes to spend more time doing homework:

> I don't really know. I feel like I have a pretty good balance with my time. Obviously, I don't want to do homework as much, so I feel like I always spend too much time on that, even though I know I don't spend enough on that. So, I feel like I should spend more time on homework, but I think I have my life pretty balanced out right now to where I know what I need, when I need it. So, I don't regret the time I spend somewhere.

Participant 6 agreed with participant 1 in wishing they would spend more time doing homework. This is an area which was tough for participant 6 due to their high levels of involvement:

> I wish I focused more on school subjects, especially homework. I tend to procrastinate on homework and wish I applied myself more there.

Instead of wishing they spent more time doing homework, participants 4 and 15 both wished they spent more time giving themselves, their effort, and time serving others and volunteering for things they were passionate about. For example, participant 15 said:

> I wish I could have more time so I could do more volunteer work because I do not really have the time to do that.

On volunteering, participant 4 said:

I wish I spent more time in relationship with people. I do give a lot of time to people, but a lot of time it's selfish time, rather than giving back time. I wish I volunteered more. I wish I had time to sit in conversations with people that needed it. I wish I spent time with children in Charleston that don't have good home lives. I wish I could make someone's day every day in whatever capacity that was. I wish I could go on more mission trips a lot more.

Chapter V Summary

The qualitative data portion of the present study was meant to focus on research hypotheses 1 and 3 which state students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith and students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary happiness, respectively. In general, all participants, except for participants 4, 10, and 12, provided responses which align with the provided definition of contemporary happiness. Additionally, looking at the demographic data, these individuals either claimed to be non-religious, or practiced their religion with minimum frequency. Their responses towards happiness typically revolved around achieving personal pleasure. Participants 4, 10, and 12 provided a majority of answers which aligned more with classical happiness, providing responses around a higher calling and receiving happiness from God. From the qualitative data, research hypotheses 1 and 3 were upheld.

Chapter VI

Comparing and Contrasting Findings

Introduction

The current chapter contains a comparison contrasting the findings from the two

methods of data collection (quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) displayed in

Chapters IV and V, respectively.

Chapter IV contains findings from the electronic survey completed by 445

participants who were between the ages of 18-23 and lived on-campus. Chapter V

contains interview results from 16 students who were in the same qualifications as other

participants in the electronic survey. Four students from each class standing were

represented (2 males and 2 females) for a total of 16 participants. Individual interviews

lasted approximately 10-30 minutes and were conducted in a private setting. Their

responses were only accessible to the interview participant and the PI. Before conducting

the interviews, the PI obtained signed consent forms (Appendix C) for the information to

be audio recorded and used in writing without identifying attribution to the participant

beyond gender. Interview protocols for Chapter V were established by the PI with the aid

of thesis committee members. The eight interview questions were designed to help the PI

explore research hypotheses 1 and 3. These protocols were delivered in one-on-one,

private interview sessions between the PI and each participant.

Survey statements in Chapter IV were developed from an adaptation of Diener et

al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale by the PI and thesis committee members. Items

1-6 and 11 were focused on understanding the participant's happiness with life while

questions 7-10 were designed to permit understanding of each participant's level of self-

esteem and overall optimism in life. The six items added to the original instrument were included because in the judgment of the PI, their content related directly to the focus of the thesis. The Cronbach's alpha test of internal consistency reliability indicated that the items did not detract from the original SWLS scale's reliability of .87 (Diener et al., 1985), and in fact, improved overall internal consistency slightly, to .91.

Comparison and Contrasts

Research hypotheses that guided the present study were as follows:

1. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

2. Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of life satisfaction and purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

3. Students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary happiness.

4. Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the weakest grasp of a sense of purpose in their lives.

Through both methods of data collection, overall, participants provided positive responses. In the quantitative study, this was portrayed through 80%-95% of respondents agreeing to some extent to all 11 of the survey statements. While the survey was not designed to measure classic happiness, understanding respondents' overall happiness levels was important. Examining the quantitative data for all 16 participants; 5 (31.25%) reported having to work on being happy in their lives, leaving 11 (68.75%) participants who believed happiness came naturally to them. These numbers show that the majority

of participants were positive, but the numbers were nearly 12%-27%, on average, different. While this statistic is not measured in significance, it is interesting in context.

When examining the qualitative data collected, participants 4, 10, and 12 reported the three highest frequencies of practicing their faith by doing so greater than 7-10 times per week. These three students talked about happiness in ways routed in their faith; specifically, God of the Christian faith. On the other hand, participants who claimed 0-1 time per week practicing their faith, or not practicing faith if they were non–religious, found their happiness rooted in self-pleasure and satisfaction. Their happiness and involvements seemed to revolve around them instead of a higher calling. This is interesting in comparison to the findings of the quantitative survey which showed students of faith self-reporting happiness levels 2.2786 points higher, scoring a mean of 53.1654 out of 60, in comparison to a mean of 50.8868 for students not of faith on the same scale. Thinking about the responses of Participants 4, 10, and 12, one could conclude these students rated themselves higher on the Satisfaction with Life Scale than did those who practiced their faith 0-1 times per week based on the data provided in the quantitative measures.

While participant 4 mentioned wishing to spend more time serving others in need, participant 15 also mentioned wishing s/he could spend more time volunteering. The main difference between these two participants is that participant 4 was a student who practiced his / her faith 10 times or more each week while participant 15 was a student who claimed to be non-religious. Before conducting the study, the PI anticipated only hearing such focus on others from students who practiced faith with high frequency. While there is a difference in the participants' frequency or claim of faith, there are also

other factors present which may impact why the data displayed this sentiment. While both participants were female, participant 4 was a Caucasian from American culture while participant 15 was an international student from an Asian culture. These cultural differences could make an impact on a participant's desire to serve others. Additionally, it is interesting to note that participant 4 was a senior nearing graduation while participant 15 was a freshman to the institution.

Chapter VI Summary

Chapter VI contained areas in which the qualitative data bolstered the quantitative data. Chapter VII contains a discussion of the findings of the present study, recommendations for the institution, and recommendations for future researchers.

Chapter VII

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of the present study was to explore happiness in the lives of college students who were 18-23 years of age and lived on campus at a public, mid-sized institution in the Midwest. The study focused on implementing an adaptation of Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale in order to examine a variety of demographic correlates; specifically, students who claim faith and practice it with a certain frequency. In the second portion of the present study, the primary researcher conducted 16 one-on-one interviews in which participants provided opinions on a variety of questions regarding happiness. Contained within the present chapter is a comparison of prior research to the findings in the present study from both survey and interview components. In addition to the discussion of research and current findings, this chapter contains recommendations for institutional leaders and anyone wishing to participate in future research of the given subject. The chapter closes with a section including a few final thoughts from the PI.

Discussion

Research Hypothesis #1: Students of "belief" faith will experience higher levels of classic happiness than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

Issler and Mooreland (2006) discussed the shifts in society regarding where happiness is rooted for individuals. In the 1950s, happiness was found in serving God and country and was rooted in a higher calling for individuals. Issler and Mooreland (2006) stated this happiness has changed and is currently defined as self-seeking or bringing pleasure to oneself. They described the former as "classical happiness" and the

latter as "contemporary happiness." Research hypothesis #1 was designed to be measured classis versus contemporary happiness through the one-on-one interview portion of the data collecting. Distinguishing between "belief" faith and "activity" faith was rooted in the research of Alavi (2007) who determined that "activity" faith is a practice for those who attend faith or religious events solely for the communal benefits. Alavi (2007) described individuals who have "Belief" faith as those who practice faith or religion due to their deep conviction of the god or God of their faith.

Overall, the participants who were of "belief" faith demonstrated deep levels of classical happiness. Their responses revolved around God in their lives and finding happiness rooted in him and things of their faith, not seeking pleasurable satisfaction for one's life. The only student who was not of faith to have an element of classical happiness was participant 15 who mentioned s/he wished to spend more time volunteering. Overall, research hypothesis #1 was supported by the qualitative data gathered.

Research Hypothesis #2: Students of "belief" faith will report having experienced higher levels of life satisfaction and purpose in life than will students not of faith or of "activity" faith.

Research hypothesis #2 was grounded in the researcher of Alavi (2007) and designed to be answered through the implementation of an adaptation of Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale and the demographic data. The data were gathered utilizing a combination of participants who claimed belief faith with a certain frequency. Distinguishing between "belief" faith and "activity" faith was rooted in the researcher of Alavi (2007) who described "activity" faith as a practice for those who attend faith or

religious events solely for communal benefits and ascribed "belief" faith as those who practice faith or religion due to their deep conviction of the god or God of their faith.

In analyzing the data displayed in Chapter IV, the Chi-square of the religion vs. religious practice and noting the significance values of the three main religious categories in the ANOVA tests show that none of these tests were significant, thus the hypothesis was not supported by the data.

Research Hypothesis #3: Students not of faith will experience the highest levels of contemporary happiness.

Research hypothesis #3 was rooted in Issler and Mooreland's (2006) in which is discussed the shift in society wherein happiness is rooted for individuals. In the 1950's, happiness was found in serving God and country; happiness was rooted in a higher calling for these individuals. Issler and Mooreland (2006) stated this happiness has changed to be defined as self-seeking or bringing pleasure to oneself. They described the former as "classical happiness" and the latter as "contemporary happiness." Research hypothesis #3 was designed to be measured through the one-on-one interview portion of the data collecting.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 all provided responses to interview protocols designed to measure happiness which resulted in a contemporary view of happiness. Many of the participants described things they do for fun as comforts of self. Additionally, participants also stated some of their happiest moments were when they realized what they needed, whether being with friends, family, or alone, as a means of understanding how to be happy. In comparing this finding to the results of research hypothesis #1 and the students of "belief" faith, the students of "belief" faith experienced

happiness that was defined by Participant 4 as joy; it was something provided and lasting, not wavering like earthly things. Research hypothesis #3 was supported.

Research Hypothesis #4: Students not of faith will have the least overall satisfaction with life and have the weakest grasp of a sense of purpose.

Research hypothesis #4 was built upon the research of Issler and Mooreland (2006) and administered through the implementation of an adaptation of Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale and the demographic data provided by student participants in the present study. Issler and Mooreland (2006) discuss contemporary happiness being found in individuals not of faith. Additionally, they believe those who experienced contemporary happiness the most would have the least sense of direction and purpose in their life and overall, less satisfaction with life.

In analyzing the data displayed in Chapter IV, the Chi-square of the religion vs. religious practice and noting the significance values of the three main religious categories in the ANOVA tests show that none of these tests were significant, thus the hypothesis was not supported by the data.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

There are several limitations present due to the nature of the study. One limitation comes in terms of the nature of the questionnaire. Happiness is often very difficult to measure because there are generally only two options: self-reporting or physiological observation (Schiffrin, & Nelson, 2010). In the present study, the research gathered relied on the self-report method; this method relies on the complete honesty and self-awareness of each individual completing the survey. If a researcher cannot verify these factors, the data gathered might be skewed, thus permitting more than one

interpretation of the findings of the data. Another limitation to the study could have occurred in the qualitative portion of interviewing subjects one-on-one. The PI was careful to ask identical questions to each participant with an identical tone. Any hints or fluctuation in the researcher's approach could have influenced how the participants respond. Additionally, one-on-one interviews are limited because they are completely reliant on disclosure by the interview participant. With these limitations, it would behoove the future researcher to devote time to physiological observation. For the sake of time in the present study, the PI relied on self-reported methods to understand and examine happiness in the traditional college aged student who lived on campus.

In addition to considering changing the observation method from self-report to physiological observance, a future researcher may want to include off campus students in their target population of measurement. Doing so could provide valuable data and allow comparison between students in two different groups for more in-depth analysis. For instance, instead of polarizing students of faith and students not of faith, a future researcher could see if there were any significant or contextual differences between students of faith who live on and off campus or students not of faith, similarly. This type of in-depth study would provide extra data for comparison amongst the student body.

In order to find another area of in-depth findings, future researchers may want to include class standing or exact age in the demographic data distributed during the email questionnaire. This could provide more groups to compare and contrast and justify tests for significance. Doing so will provide the researcher with extra clout for any findings which result in significance.

Future researchers may want to consider utilizing Diener et al.'s (1985) original design with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The PI for this study added six additional items in order to gain further clarification from the data, but it appears this effect did not occur from the data. While the Chronbach's alpha increased by 0.04 points due to the addition of the additional items, the extra data may have masked what was actually happening in Diener et al.'s original instrument.

Recommendations for the Institution

Aside from providing a venue which fosters academic success, holistic student development must rank high in terms of priorities for institutions. One area in which many students have room to develop during their undergraduate years is in understanding their passion and happiness. While customer service, especially student happiness, has become a main goal of many higher education institutions, professionals are playing into their contemporary happiness. Often professionals fail to give students anything beyond temporary pleasurable satisfactions instead of helping them find happiness that will be rooted in something lasting.

Additionally, based on the quantitative data found in the present study, with students of faith reporting a higher mean score on average by 2.2786 points higher; scoring a mean of 53.1654 out of 60 in comparison to a mean of 50.8868 for students not of faith on the same scale, the institution could consider having more faith-based conversations. While the quantitative data only showed it was heading towards the direction of significance, it did not reach the mark. This is a difficult task to ask of a public institution in higher education due to a push for political correctness and a holistic support of the entire student body. However, the numbers point to a valid argument for

faith and frequency practicing faith being a more central conversation piece in order to boost student happiness as a whole.

On the contrary, if an institution is satisfied in trying to foster student happiness by providing venues to serve contemporary happiness, the institution should make more of an effort to provide attractions on campus and off campus. There are many bodies that provide activities for students to do on week nights and weekends, but as a whole, students at many higher education institutions tend to partake in alcohol consumption as a pleasurable satisfaction. If institutions were to provide students with assistance in making them happier through contemporary measures, they might also consider providing safer and more constructive options to foster this contemporary happiness.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand what, if any, correlates have an impact on student happiness. Through quantitative data, the primary researcher discovered a difference in self-reported happiness levels between students of faith who practice it with a frequency of 3 times or more each week from did those students who were not of faith, but the difference was not significant. Additionally, utilizing the ANOVA test, the only religion practiced with frequency who neared the mark of significance compared to the other religions was Christianity. Understanding this possibility was the primary focus in the development of the research hypotheses for the PI. Results from the qualitative portion indicated students of faith with a high frequency of involvement in their faith experienced a more classical view of happiness, believing in God and country, than did participants who were not of faith or practiced their faith with minimal frequency. The latter students experienced high levels of contemporary

happiness. It is reasonable to conclude that faith is something worth mentioning when discussing happiness with college students or professionals.

References

Alavi, H. (2007). Correlatives of happiness in the university students of Iran (A religious

approach). *Journal of Religion & Health, 46*(4), 480-499. doi:10.1007/s10943-

007-9115-4.

Alper, D., (Producer) & Muccino, G. (Director) (2006). *The pursuit of happyness* [motion

picture]. United States: Columbia TriStar Motion Picture Group.

Banchoff, T., Cox, D., & Jones, R.P. (2012). *A generation in transition: Religion,*

values, and politics among college-age millennials. Retrieved from Public

Religion Research Institute website: http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-

content/uploads/2012/04/Millennials-Survey-Report.pdf.

Carey, K., & Correia, C. (1997). Drinking motives predict alcohol-related problems in

college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 58(1), 100-105.* Retrieved from

http://www.jsad.com/jsad/downloadarticle/Drinking_Motives_Predict_AlcoholRe

lated_Problems_in_College_Students/448.pdf.

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress.

Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24, 385–396. doi:10.2307/2136404.

Crosby, P.C. & Dalton, J.C. (2009). Hoping in hard times: The transformative power of

hope in college student development. *Journal of College and Character. 10*(3),

1-6. Retrieved from

http://journals.naspa.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=jcc

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* New York:

HarperCollins.

Dictionary and thesaurus – Merriam-Webster online. (2011). Merriam-Webster,

Incorporated.

Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a

national index. *The American Psychologist, 55*(1), 34–43. doi:10.1037/0003-

066X.55.1.34.

Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life

scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49(1),* 71-75.

doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13.

Hoover, E. (2008). 'Animal House' at 30: O Bluto, where art thou? (Cover story).

Chronicle of Higher Education, 55(2), A1-A36. Retrieved from

http://chronicle.com/article/Animal-House-at-30-O-Bluto/28169/.

Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2003). *Millennials go to college: Strategies for a new*

generation on campus. Washington, D.C: American Association of Collegiate

Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Issler, K., & Moreland, J. (2006). *The lost virtue of happiness.* Colorado Springs:

NavPress.

Kelly, R.S. (2004). Happy people. On *Happy people/U saved me* [CD]. New York City,

New York: Jive/Zomba Records.

Levine, T. , & Cureton, J.S. (1998). *When hope and fear collide: A portrait of today's*

college student. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lewin, T. (2008, December 3). College may soon be unaffordable for most in US. *The*

New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com.

Lewis, L., Teddar, R., & Bogart, E. (2009). Happy. On *Echo* [CD]. London, England: Syco/J Records.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research, 46,* 137–155. doi:10.1023/A:1006824100041.

McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Parker, S. (2010). Research in Fowler's faith development theory: A review article. *Review of Religious Research, 51*(3), 233-252. Retrieved from http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/journal/13644.

Pavot, W., & Diener, E. (1993). Review of the satisfaction with life scale. *Psychological Assessment,* 5(164–172). doi:10.1037/1040-3590.5.2.164.

Pawelski, J.O. (2003). The promise of positive psychology for the assessment of character. *Journal of College and Character, 4*(6), 1-7. Retrieved from http://journals.naspa.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1361&context=jcc.

Schiffrin, H., & Nelson, S. (2010). Stressed and happy? Investigating the relationship between happiness and perceived stress. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 11*(1), 33-39. doi:10.1007/s10902-008-9104-7.

Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment.* New York: Free Press.

Seligman, M.E.P., & Peterson, C. (2003.) Values in action (VIA) classification of

strengths manual. Retrieved from www.positivepsychology.org/taxonomy.htm.

Seligman, M.E.P., Steen, T.A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology

progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *The American Psychologist, 60,*

410–421. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410.

University Marketing and Communications (2011). *EIU enrollment down: Officials*

looking for answers. Retrieved from www.eiu.edu.

Weldy, A.C. (2009). In the midst of winter, hope springs eternal. *Journal of College and*

Character. 10(3), 1-4. Retrieved from

http://journals.naspa.org/jcc/vol10/iss3/17/.

Appendix A

Below are eleven statements adapted from Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale, that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 6 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 6 - Strongly agree
- 5 - Agree
- 4 - Slightly agree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

_____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

_____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

_____ I am satisfied with my life.

_____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

_____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

_____ My life has purpose and meaning.

_____ I am proud of myself.

_____ Time passes quickly during most of the things that I do.

_____ I have a good amount of enthusiasm.

_____ I am optimistic about the future.

_____ My life is a good one.

Demographic information: Please respond to the best of your knowledge.

1. What is your gender?
    A. Female
    B. Male
    C. Chose not to answer

2. What is your race? Choose all that apply.
    A. African American
    B. American Indian/Alaskan Native
    C. Asian
    D. Caucasian
    E. Hispanic
    F. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
    G. Other (please specify) _____

3. What is your family's average annual income?
    A. Less than $20,000 per year
    B. $20,000 - $50,000 per year
    C. $50,000 - $100,000 per year
    D. $100,000 - $250,000 per year
    E. Greater than $250,000 per year

4. What is your major? Please fill in the blank.

_____

5. What is your religious affiliation (if any)?
    A. Buddhism
    B. Chinese Traditional
    C. Christianity
    D. Hinduism
    E. Islam
    F. Non-religious (atheist/agnostic)
    G. Other (please specify) _____

6. With what frequency do you engage in practices of your religion during a normal week? This could be reading a holy book, attending a religious service, praying, fasting, or anything similar.
    A. 0-1 times a week
    B. 2-3 times a week
    C. 4-5 times a week
    D. 6-7 times a week
    E. 8-9 times a week
    G. Greater than 10 times a week

Appendix B

Interview Protocols

1. What makes you happy?

2. What boosts your self esteem?

3. What decreases your happiness the most?

4. If you could give advice to someone in search of true happiness, what would you tell them?

5. Does happiness come naturally to you? Please explain.

6. When you think of "happy" people, what common traits do you notice?

7. In your free time on the weeknights or weekends, what do you spend most of your time doing?

8. Is there anything you wish you spent more time doing?

Appendix C

Forms of Consent

Dear EIU Student:

You are invited to participate in a survey research study conducted by Ross McClure, a graduate student in the Department of Counseling and Student Development, and under the supervision of Dr. James Wallace. The survey is titled, "Satisfaction with Life Scale" Life satisfaction and happiness is very important to college students. By providing your responses, you will be helping the primary researcher notify trends in student happiness and enable the primary researcher to provide feedback on how to better serve our student population. Knowing what makes our students happy and the level of satisfaction from it will enable faculty, staff, and administrators to aid in motivating and encouraging students.

If you complete the survey you will be given an option to enter your email address into a drawing to win one of two $25 gift cards to the Union Bookstore. However, your email address will not be linked in any way to your survey responses.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University. Your survey responses will be anonymous and strictly confidential. If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to respond to series of statements and rank them on how they relate to your life. It will take you approximately 5-10 minutes to complete the survey.
There are no known risks associated with this research, nor will you benefit directly from your participation in this study. This research may help us understand factors that motivate and encourage undergraduate students.

You may end your participation at any point during the survey by exiting your web browser. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Ross McClure at rmcclure@eiu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 217-581-8576 or by e-mail at eiuirb@eiu.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

By clicking on the link below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand

that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any given time. I also can print out a copy of this informed consent letter should I wish to do so.

Please start with the survey now by clicking on the link below.

If you are interested in providing further information in a one on one interview with the primary researcher, there will be an opportunity at the end of the survey to provide your name and email address. This information will be submitted independently of your responses to the survey.

Dear EIU Student:

You are invited to participate in an interview research study conducted by Ross McClure, a graduate student in the Department of Counseling and Student Development, and under the supervision of Dr. James Wallace. The questionnaire will be focused on student happiness and life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction and happiness is very important to college students. By providing your responses, you will be helping the primary researcher notify trends in student happiness and enable the primary researcher to provide feedback on how to better serve our student population. Knowing what makes our students happy and the level of satisfaction from it will enable faculty, staff, and administrators to aid in motivating and encouraging students.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University. Your interview responses will be anonymous and strictly confidential. If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to respond to series of questions about happiness. They interview will take 45-60 minutes and will be audio-recorded for future reference of the primary researcher. These recordings will be kept secure for your privacy.

There are no known risks associated with this research, nor will you benefit directly from your participation in this study. This research may help us understand factors that motivate and encourage undergraduate students.

You may end your participation at any point during the interview by asking the primary researcher to stop the interview. They will willingly do so at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Ross McClure at rmcclure@eiu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 217-581-8576 or by e-mail at eiuirb@eiu.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

Participant Signature & Date_____

Primary Researcher Signature & date _____