THE HAPPINESS IMPERATIVE

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY SOCIAL DISCONNECT

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Chern Quang Lim

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Abstract

Today, almost every one of us leads objectively better lives than our parents did. However, along with the dramatic improvements, conveniences, and the freedom that we enjoy, there have been some unintended negative consequences that threaten our quality of life. Marked by a widespread culture of personal pursuits of happiness today, the pursuits of (1) personal strivings, (2) materialistic aspirations, and (3) the satisfaction of short-term affiliative needs are inherently antisocial in nature; and perpetuates our sense of loneliness. Based on recent research findings that identified happiness or positive emotions as a resource that predicts certain life outcomes, rather than following them, I explored the ways in which happiness fits in with the issue of our modern day social disconnect. I identified happiness as the mechanism that (1) maintains our psychological resilience, changes our perception (2) of time and (3) of our social others, and (4) activates our psychological reward systems to translate our intentions for sociality into consequential actions. This theoretical thesis is an attempt to identify the ways in which happiness may reduce today's norm of social loneliness, and reconnect us with our need for belongingness.

PART I

Introduction

"I'll be happy when. . ."

More often than not, that is how people look at happiness in their lives today. We unconsciously obsess over the pursuit of happiness, looking at happiness as an object to attain or a destination to reach. But unfortunately this "happiness" that we know of today is a fleeting concept, because there will always be "somewhere else" that we can go after we have "reached our destination". Moreover, the "happiness" that we tend to value now is one that is largely internal and person-centric, with little extension beyond the self into the real world and with little or no regard for others. It seems inherently natural to value this type of happiness, because ultimately what is important to us is how *we* feel about the lives that we lead. Herein lies the problem, as this form of personal happiness that we pursue may be self-defeating – mainly, I argue that one negative consequence of this self-focus is today's increasing levels of social disconnect. In the attempt to address the issue, I explore the way that our definitions of happiness have shaped the way in which we pursue happiness today, and the impacts of such pursuits.

Research has found that, when asked to define "happiness", many tend to define it with a heavy emphasis on how they <u>feel</u> (E. Diener, 1994). According to the "hedonic principle", pleasure-seeking is the most basic of all motives; wherein people are motivated to pursue pleasure and to avoid displeasure (Higgins, 1997). The theory remains true today, as people seem to yearn for the constant stimulation or gratification of their need for positive emotions (or pleasures). The implications of a heavy emphasis on the hedonic

component as an evaluation of our happiness today (i.e. based heavily on how we feel), is that we essentially become pleasure seekers driven by individualistic hedonism. Although the personal pleasures that we value today can be pursued in several ways, in the interest of simplicity, I focus on the implications and limitations of pursuits of "happiness" through the means of (1) personal accomplishments; (2) material aspirations; and (3) the satisfaction of short-term affiliative needs. While the pursuit of personal pleasures through such means may be rational, and even justifiable, it is accompanied by some unintended consequences.

The widespread culture that emphasises the constant pursuit of personal accomplishment, gratification of materialistic aspiration, and the satisfaction of short-term affiliative needs may be self-defeating and potentially undermines our long-term subjective well-being. In addition to their susceptibility to various adaptive mechanisms that make "happiness" an insatiable and fleeting sensation, such pursuits require certain sacrifices to be made. Nesse and Williams (1994) found that a large proportion of people in modern individualistic societies tend to live alone or displaced in some ways from their intimate social support systems, with these numbers expected to rise. The boom in property development in urban cities lends support for this, as more and more people relocate to bigger cities in pursuit of conveniences or opportunities. This move away from families into urban cities with populations of hundreds of thousands (or even millions, in some), means that people are moving away from socially intimate environments into environments of social anonymity.

In the pursuit of personal happiness, people seem to demonstrate a willingness to forego their intimate social relationships. Not only do people find themselves in the state of social anonymity, the need for accomplishments or materialism is associated with some

antisocial behaviours. Notably, the satisfaction of such needs is essentially competitive in nature, as they are more susceptible to social comparisons; wherein how one feels about their standing or self-worth is often *in relation* to how others fare (i.e. their social rivals) (Oxford Dictionaries). Hence, one would find themselves in a state of competition with others; thus, creating an "us-versus-them" mentality. Indeed, researchers have found that under such conditions, people demonstrate decreased sensitivity towards others and a willingness to derogate or undermine their social rivals for the sake of personal gains (e.g. Buss, 2000; Piff, 2013). These findings suggest that the "output" of our pursuit of personal happiness is social detachment and loneliness.

The implications of this are important, as Maslow (1954) regarded social connections as one of the most basic of human needs in his "hierarchy of needs". Hence, the modern conditions of living seem to interfere with people's fundamental "need to belong" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and cultivate a mentality that social relationships are "expendable". The price of this could be significantly damaging to our long-term well-being, as loneliness has often been associated with many psychological and physiological ills, such as depression, personality disorders, and even weaker physical immune systems (Cacioppo et al., 2008; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Given that loneliness is increasingly becoming our social norm, we need to ask: "What are the sacrifices are we *really* making for our personal happiness?"

Drawing evidence from research in subjective well-being, I attempt to establish how "happiness" fits in with this problem of our modern social disconnect. In contrast with traditional views that happiness is a mere antecedent or consequence of circumstances, recent evidence suggest that happiness is a resource that predicts real measurable

outcomes (e.g. Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Studies such as Isen and Levin's (1972) telephone booth experiment and Isen's (1970) study on effects of positive affect demonstrate that happiness increases our sociality and translate our affiliative intents into consequential actions. The distinction between intent and action is crucial, as intentions or fantasies born from intentions alone are inconsequential and only serve to provide us with temporary satisfaction of our ego needs. Happiness (or even momentary positive affect), then, becomes an important factor that translates our intentions into actions that extend beyond the internal realms of our individual self. In particular, I posit that happiness spurs (affiliative) actions through four main mechanisms.

Positive affect changes our perceptions of the world and our psychological well-being. At the individual level, (1) it helps us maintain positive psychological equilibrium by signalling a sense of safety and maintains effective psychological functioning without threat interference. Secondly, (2) positive affect changes our perception of time and reduces the sense of a time famine that characterises today's society (Droit-Volet & Meck, 2007; Perlow, 1999). It also (3) changes our perception of our social others and influence us to see others in more favourable lights, subsequently eliminating divisive social identities and competitive tendencies. Finally, (4) positive affect activates our psychological reward system that acts as a "hub" in tying these mechanisms together, and creates approach tendencies to social situations. This activation motivates people to approach novel or seemingly unrewarding situations by changing the ways in which such situations are perceived. Positive affect primes people to make linkages between their current situations with similar past experiences that they had previously deemed as rewarding. For example, if someone has not tried a watermelon ice cream before, they may consider the previous times when they

had enjoyed the taste of watermelon and the pleasant sensations of ice cream separately. Positive emotions increase the likelihood that the individual will make such associations, and link them together to form approach behaviours; as opposed to priming people to remember the time when they tasted a rotten watermelon, making them avoid this novel experience.

These mechanisms change the way we perceive our social environment, subsequently influencing the way we behave and interact with our social others. Darley and Batson (1973) found that when people perceive time as abundant, they would be more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours, such as helping others. Similarly, Isen and Levin (1972) evidenced that, when in positive moods, people make more positive judgements of others and demonstrate greater sociability towards others. Hence, this thesis aims to explore the ways in which positive emotions and (1) the maintenance of psychological equilibrium, changing the perception (2) of time and (3) of our social others, and (4) the activation of our psychological reward systems could attenuate the effects of our social disconnect, and reduce the social distance that we experience today. For the ease of the flow of the thesis, I will first define the problem of our modern day disconnect, before defining and exploring the construct of happiness as a resource in helping us ameliorate the effects of our modern day social disconnect.

PART II

Modern Societies – A State of Anonymity and Social Disconnect

The modern world has given us an abundance of conveniences and luxuries. The development of modern infrastructures, technological advancements, and the creation of communication networks has created a world far more dynamic than previously imaginable. Easterbrook (2003) observed that, today, almost every person in the United States and European countries leads a better life than his or her parents did when they were growing up, and this trend is likely to remain true for the future. Today, households in most modern Western worlds own at least two cars; air travel is readily affordable and available to virtually anyone; information is easily accessible at any given time or place; and we now enjoy an unprecedented level of comfort and luxuries that were previously reserved for the rich and the elites (Easterbrook, 2003; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Indeed, compared to 25 years ago, there are now 200 million less people dying of starvation in the world today (Poon, 2015). While the number of hungry people has decreased, we have also observed a dramatic rise in the consumption of luxury goods, not just for the upper class, but also for the majority of the population (Easterbrook, 2003). According to statistics by Bain and Company, a consulting firm, the number of consumers for luxury goods such as jewellery, watches, brand name clothing and such has more than trebled to 330 million people within the same time span (Unger, 2014). This is a new age in which personal liberties are well-exercised by the masses, and individuality is both celebrated and encouraged by society. However, perhaps due to the structure of our human nature, with every old problem that is solved, it seems that a new problem is always created

that counterbalances the good; because although we have experienced such improvements (e.g. socially, politically, economically, technologically, and physically), our levels of subjective well-being have remained stagnant since the 1950s (Easterbrook, 2003; Etcoff, 2004).

As Western industrialised societies become increasingly individualistic, people now experience a greater sense of personal control with the freedom and ability to shape their immediate environments to a large extent. Attracted by modern conveniences and opportunities, people congregate in major cities and metropolises, some for practical reasons and some for the sake of pursuing their goals and dreams (Y. Chen & Rosenthal, 2008). However, although modern societies do offer many benefits that are unavailable in rural areas and undeveloped countries, people in modern industrialised societies run into the risk of becoming less socially embedded and detached from their social networks. As Gregg Easterbrook (2003) lamented, the forces that drove the improvements to our standards of living and longevity also seem to have promoted a culture of loneliness. The author called this the "nice hotel room factor", where he likened life today to being in a really nice hotel room, but not having a good time because no one else came along on the trip. For example, modern improvements or conveniences such as smaller households afforded by prosperity, or instant mediated communication made possible by technology, seem to have resulted in less intimate human interactions. Indeed, research in social psychology lends support to this notion with evidence of an increasing level of social disconnect and sense of anonymity in today's modern industrialised societies, which could account for the torpid state of our subjective well-being (e.g.Nesse & Williams, 1994; Seligman, 1988).

2.0.1. A Decline in Social Connectedness

Nesse and Williams (1994) characterised the conditions of modern living as increasingly anonymous and isolated; where people often do not have sufficient access to the much needed intimate social support systems and interconnectedness that characterised the societies of past generations. In contrast with previous generations, the authors argued that modern day people tend to live in virtual anonymity, underpinned by a sense of loneliness, and removed from the types of social connections that are vital to individual happiness or subjective well-being. Today, most people who live in urban industrialised cities would not even know what their neighbours look like, let alone their names.

Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama (2004) found a tendency for people in modern individualistic societies to define happiness in terms of the personal outcomes. Martin Seligman (1988) termed it "rampant individualism" where he argued that today, the "I" is the only lens through which people view events. As a result of the emphasis on the self and the pursuit of self-esteem, there is a loss of meaning in our modern societies and people no longer have an attachment to something larger than the lonely self. To the extent that the younger generations in the present day no longer share the same level of attachment to their family, their relationships, or their religion, as previous generations did, it would be difficult for them to find meaning in life. Not only that, a preoccupation with individualism means that vast importance is placed on the self and one's life outcomes. Although pure individualism works well if things are going well in one's life, if something is to go awry with his or her life, there is no alternative life facets or counterweight (e.g. friends, family, community, faith, or nation) to balance the bad with the good (Seligman, 1988).

"the self is a very poor site for finding meaning."

- Seligman (1988)

Argyle (2001) argued that highly individualistic modern societies such as the United States of America are characterised by the decline of social networks and social participation by the average individual citizen, such as voluntary work, leisure groups, and involvement in the political climate. Etcoff (2004) found that, despite the increase in societal affluence and personal liberties, the levels of happiness reported by the modern population have remained largely unchanged. Buss (2000) attributed this to people's displacement from their families and extended kin. He argued that modern humans' ability to relocate from one place to another with relative ease today means that, not only are people physically further away from their families, their access to much needed social support or their social networks also tend to be more limited. In contrast with previous generations, who tended to stay close to their immediate and extended families for most of their lives, people in the present day have to rely heavily on indirect means of contact when accessing such networks (Buss, 2000). However, indirect means of contact, such as the highly popular social media and instant messaging, may be poor substitutes for in-person face-to-face communication (e.g. Meade, 2012) and contribute very little to our subjective well-being (Green et al., 2005; Grimm, Kemp, & Jose, 2015).

Having direct access to intimate social networks is important for individual subjective well-being. For example, Lang and Carstensen (1994) found that older adults, from ages 70-104 years old, felt more socially embedded if they were living with nuclear family members (e.g. a spouse or children) compared to those who were not. These adults subsequently reported being emotionally closer to their social partners and rated their social relationships

as more satisfying, whereas those who did not live with family members reported feeling lonely and lowered levels of subjective well-being for greater proportions of their time. The authors posited that such close relationships helped satisfy emotional needs and served to provide affective rewards that are beneficial to individual subjective well-being; conversely, interactions with casual acquaintances only provide such affective gains to a lesser degree. In other words, social engagements with casual acquaintances make little contributions to our long-term subjective well-being.

2.0.2. Conditions of Social Interference

These findings highlight the importance of meaningful social embeddedness, which unfortunately seems to be in a state of decline in modern Western societies. Modern day individuals tend to live in isolated nuclear families or by themselves, and not with extended kin. Myers and Diener (1995) reported that 25% of Americans lived alone, compared to 8% 70 years ago, with numbers expected to rise. Furthermore, a sense of loneliness and anonymity may be perpetuated by the sheer number of people we are surrounded by on a regular basis; this is especially true for people in major industrialised societies, where they tend to live amongst hundreds of thousands, if not, millions of people. Consequently, rarely will an individual see any familiar faces outside of their homes, but are instead encountered with new and unfamiliar faces of strangers on a regular basis. Indeed, an individual could pass by hundreds or thousands of strangers in their commute to work alone. Being surrounded by such a multitude of unfamiliar faces may prompt the realisation that the individual is also merely an unnamed face in the sea of strangers, which could further perpetuate a sense of isolation and loneliness.

Daniel Goleman (2007) suggested that amidst the rush of modern people's everyday lives, people have become preoccupied with thoughts of the self. People are concerned about what they need to do, where they need to go, or how they need to complete their mental checklists. This narrowing of attention to the self could potentially be due to the mind's way of preventing cognitive overload. As Sul, Kim, and Choi (2012) posited, cognitive resources are constantly being depleted with the processing of information. Specifically, processing information about new and unfamiliar faces would result in the depletion of individual mental resources if they were not carefully conserved. This switch from the focus on others to a self-focus could prevent mental fatigue. However, this self-focus could be more detrimental to our psychological well-being than it is beneficial in helping us conserve mental resources. Accordingly, Goleman (2007) and Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that people are inherently social beings who are hardwired with empathy and a need for social connection. A self-focus inadvertently creates a barrier and limits people's ability to make meaningful connections with their social others. Gilbert's (2006) findings that during times of self-reflection and self-focused thoughts, people are more likely to become unhappy. Indeed, a study by Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, and Stone (2004) found that the commute to and from work, noted as the times when self-focused thoughts seem to be most pervasive, were some of the least happy times in an average person's day – one of the symptom that is attributable to one's sense of isolation.

Goleman (2007) called this widespread self-preoccupation the "state of urban trance"; and he illustrated this through the issue of homelessness. In particular, he argued that people today are so preoccupied with their daily rush, that even the rampant epidemic of homelessness has fallen into our peripheral vision, and people are able to ignore this

social problem and remain seemingly unaffected by the sight of homeless people. Not only is this a social problem, it paints a rather grim mental image of the community that we are in; the people who are in most dire need of compassion and assistance are not only abandoned, but sometimes even ostracised by society. Hence, the modern societal conditions where (1) individuals are detached from their familial networks, (2) with a constant need to deal with the sense of social unfamiliarity, along with (3) the tendency for self-preoccupation, and (4) the unfavourable judgments of the community that one is in constitute a poor social environment that could interfere with people's subjective well-being.

2.0.3. The Pursuit of Happiness

Moreover, the modern pursuit of happiness also plays a role in perpetuating the conditions of isolation and loneliness. The means by which happiness is pursued not only reinforce such effects, but also create them. Ryff and Singer (2008) suggested that subjective well-being is intricately linked to six main factors: self acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Life coach Tony Robbins (2006) echoed this theory, arguing that people pursue happiness through the satisfaction of six fundamental human needs: the need for certainty; the need for *un*certainty and variety; the need for critical significance; the need for connection and love; the need for growth; and the need to contribute beyond ourselves.

Here I argue that modern humans pursue the satisfaction of these needs by means of (1) emphasising personal accomplishments; (2) satisfying material needs; and (3) the fulfilment of short-term emotional or affiliative needs. Specifically, (1) critical significance and growth may be pursued through personal accomplishments; (2) certainty and the need

for variety may be pursued through materialistic means; and (3) love and connection could be pursued through sex and relationships. Similarly, Argyle (2001) demonstrated that people found the most common causes of joy in relationship with friends, success experiences, and the physical pleasures of food, drink, and sex; hence, pointing towards a pursuit of happiness dominated by mainly hedonistic aspirations rooted in the individual self. As we will see, it is the conditions of modern living that promote such hedonistic obsessions, with a lack of the final component (i.e. to contribute beyond ourselves). The absence of the final component creates a culture of happiness that is self-centred and antisocial in nature, and subsequently interferes with our own subjective well-being.

2.1.0. The Pursuit of Personal Accomplishments

Since birth we have been taught that we will be happy after we achieve something; that we have to *do* something, so that we can *get* something, so that we can *be* something (Rao, 2009). *If* we work hard, we can be successful and *then* we will be happy, or *if* we receive a promotion and a pay raise, *then* we will be happy, or *if* we have a bigger house, *then* we will be happy. This "*if-then*" mental model has been instilled in us since a very young age. For example, when a child is rewarded for taking their first steps by a parent's warm embrace, it reinforces the "*if-then*" model; wherein affection is perceived to be contingent on the child's ability to achieve. Although this example is crudely over generalised, this mental model is pervasive in most people's lives, as many believe that happiness can only be attained through personal accomplishments – through which we have learnt to be outcome oriented (Achor, 2011; Matthews, 1988; Rao, 2009). Consequently, the model offers an explanation as to why human beings are often obsessed with goal pursuits as a means to evoke the positive emotions associated with them. But as we may have already realised, the conditions in which we receive praise or rewards are constantly being moved up. The warm embrace that used to come after one baby step, eventually only comes after more substantial achievements, like winning a marathon. While having goals are important for improving performance (Mento, Locke, & Klein, 1992), this modern culture that seems to evaluate and reward extrinsic success rather than intrinsic values, as we will see, may be susceptible to a multitude of factors that could interfere with our subjective well-being.

2.1.1. Goal Attainment: Adaptation and Comparisons

A commonly accepted measure for personal accomplishments is through job status or work related achievements. Indeed, jobs play a significant role in one's life, and people derive their sense of identity and meaningfulness from the jobs that they hold (e.g. Argyle, 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008). However, as Brickman and Campbell's (1971) theory of the "hedonic treadmill" explained, achievements or changes in one's life circumstances are highly susceptible to adaptations; where people adapt to changes after the novelty of the situation has worn off. The theory postulates that people eventually adapt to both good and bad events, and return to their hedonic set-points or their original happiness benchmarks, albeit at different rates. For example, Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman (1978) found that lottery winners returned to their original happiness levels 1 year after their lottery win. Therefore, in pursuit of perpetuating the feelings of joy and excitement, one must aim for more and larger winnings. In relation to goal attainments, Achor (2011) argued that the "goalposts" of achievements are always moving further, and we are required to achieve more in order to experience the same joy that achievements seem to elicit. Therefore, when one invests too heavily in goal pursuits and their outcomes – the "*if*," one would often find the joys of such achievements are ever fleeting and bring them little long-term happiness (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Rao, 2009).

E. Diener (2000) posited that this adaptation effect could possibly be explained by the change in individual expectancies and goals in response to new information or circumstantial changes. For example, if an individual receives a pay raise at work, he or she may adjust their aspirations and mentally "spend" the extra disposable income (Judge & Klinger, 2008). In other words, people adapt to the positive changes in their circumstances

by heightening their expectations and adjusting their "needs" to those that are more appropriate to their new circumstances. Indeed, Van Boven (2005) found that people, notably Americans, seem to have adopted a luxurious definition of "needs," wherein people often talk about "needing" new clothes, or "needing" newer cars. Modern societies have seen a substantial rise in the average level of aspirations, as what was once seen as luxury, such as owning two cars, has now become a "necessity" for many (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Although, undoubtedly, there will be changes in terms of people's needs in different life stages, most of us today have adapted to the changing levels of societal affluence and adjusted our "needs" upwards.

However, Veenhoven (2008) argued that adaptation is only a small part of the problem of emphasising goal achievements, as the human mind tends to judge success in terms of a "positional bias", success is therefore defined in terms of its value *relative* to its competitors or peers as opposed to its absolute value. In particular, emphasis on the positional value of valued resources that influence one's survival, reproduction, or access to such resources forms the basis of one's striving for personal gains (Hill & Buss, 2008). Hence, people seem to attend to their relative positions with regard to their surrounding social competitors. This positional bias could explain why homeless people in the U.S. are far less happy compared to those who live in the slums of Calcutta; as the disparity of wealth is much more pronounced in the U.S. than in Calcutta, thereby causing more psychological distress for them than the latter group (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Moreover, it is well established that unemployment is one of the major predictors of unhappiness in modern developed societies. Not only does unemployment perpetuate psychological distress by acting as a constant reminder of one's objectively "inferior" relative standing for

this particular population compared to other people, unemployment is found to be associated with other negative mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and hopelessness – symptoms that also are very pronounced in homeless people in modern developed societies (Argyle, 2001; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Shmotkin, 2005). Above all, these symptoms are not only limited to those in the homeless population, but also to the general unemployed population as well.

2.1.3. Global Competitive Disadvantage

Loss of self-esteem is further accentuated by the level of competitiveness in the modern world. Globalisation has made the world a much smaller place, the Internet has rendered geographical boundaries virtually obsolete, economies are now much more globally interdependent, businesses are more "glocalised", and cultures now collide with one another at dramatic rates; all these accompanied by a heightened sense of competition between us and everyone else in the modern world. Moreover, the pursuit of happiness through personal or job accomplishments exacerbates people's sense of loneliness and anonymity, as many are required to frequently travel or relocate for employment purposes in order to remain competitive (Hill & Buss, 2008). Having to relocate or travel for one's career means that, not only will people have more difficulty developing and sustaining meaningful relationships with others, they will often find themselves alone and in unfamiliar places. Furthermore, with the advent of the Internet and mobile devices such as the laptop, the firm grip of work today extends far beyond the confines of the workplace and into people's personal lives; work is now a never ending process that has growing power to distract people from their private time if they allow it to. Along with the stressful conditions of working in large corporations, underpinned by a strong sense of powerlessness and "far

removed from the fruits of our labor" (Hill & Buss, 2008, p. 68), the well-being of the people working in such environments is often undermined by a feeling of anonymity, loneliness, and being lost in the systems – all of which are correlates of anxiety and depression (Buss, 2000).

More importantly, people are now required to compete with not only the rest of the world, but also with the best of the world, as opposed to just the direct competitors in their immediate vicinity. Hence, people find it difficult to be a valued member of an enduring social group, as an individual's unique strengths tend to be overshadowed by the awareness of another more desirable or more competent rival elsewhere (Nesse & Williams, 1994). Indeed, Gutierres, Kenrick, and Partch (1999) found that repeated exposures to idealistic self-images tend to have negative effects on one's self-concept. Women subjected to successive images of unusually attractive women subsequently rated themselves as less attractive, showing a marked decrease in self-esteem. Similarly, men who read descriptions of other highly dominant and influential men displayed an analogous diminution of their self-concept. Hence, the modern conditions in which people find it difficult to secure enduring positions as valued members of the society may pose unnecessary threats to one's self-concept.

"The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it."

- Harry Fosdick

While the successful satisfaction of the need for accomplishments and success in outcompeting one's rivals could have positive effects on a person's self-concept and life

satisfaction, and researchers found that 68% of job satisfaction and life satisfaction relationships have a spill-over effect between the former and the latter (Judge & Klinger, 2008), Emmons (1991) found that goal constructs such as an overemphasis on personal strivings for power (desires to control, to impress, or to compete with others) and an outcome orientation were associated with more negative affect and distress, depression, poorer physical health, and lower satisfaction with life. These orientations to power strivings were negatively related to interpersonal events, consequently promoting a single-faceted and highly individual-centric approach to happiness that is consistent with Seligman's (1988) grievance of today's rampant individualism; in which individual happiness is greatly dependent on personal outcomes. Similarly, a study by Cantor et al. (1991) found that women in sororities reported decreased levels of emotional involvement in the tasks at hand and less positive affect in daily life when they evaluated life tasks based highly on the dimension of outcome appraisal. In other words, this heightened concern for the outcomes associated with the tasks meant that they were extrinsically motivated for the task and that their satisfaction was contingent on the outcome and the judgements of others. Although successes could enhance people's self-esteem when appropriately rewarded, failures or lack of extrinsic rewards for these outcome-contingent people could undermine their subjective well-being.

Furthermore, Kasser and Ryan (1993) suggested that when people are extrinsically motivated in their goal pursuits, the way in which such goals are pursued could distract them from self-actualisation and interfere with their personal integration to something meaningful. Others believed that extrinsic rewards could undermine intrinsic motivations to work (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985). Hence, extrinsic goal pursuits may, in itself, be self-defeating.

Not only does the emphasis on the pursuit of external accomplishments distracts one from the intrinsic meaningfulness of the task and offers only short-term superficial satisfactions that are unrelated to our intrinsic needs, it is potentially problematic due to positional bias and its susceptibility to social comparisons. As extrinsic rewards and outcomes are more susceptible to such comparisons, the perceived failures resulting from erroneous comparisons made between the self with the life outcomes of other social rivals and idealised images depicted in the media could contribute to one's sense of helplessness and unnecessarily undermine one's self worth. Due to the availability of such social comparisons, people could be more prone to feeling envy by their comparisons of what "should be" rather than what "is" (Buss, 2000; Hill & Buss, 2008).

"In a society in which individualism is becoming rampant, people more and more believe that they are the center of the world. Such belief system makes individual failure almost inconsolable."

- Seligman (1988)

2.1.4. "Schadenfreude"

Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs (2005) posited that when people's self-concepts or self-esteem are damaged, people may respond with aggression, resulting in a form of aggressive competitiveness. Arguably, certain forms of aggressive competitiveness do have adaptive advantages, as they have ensured the reproduction of our ancestors' genes by motivating them to acquire resources or to enhance personal attributes in order to increase their chances of survival or to gain access to desirable mates (Buss, 2000). However, the notions of natural selection and acquisition of scarce resources inherently

operate on the premise of differential (reproductive) success, where one's gain is often at another person's loss. This is more pervasive in the modern day, as people's obsession with personal gains is underpinned by a strong willingness to forego other people's happiness for the attainment of their own. The simple, albeit indirect, example of queue-jumping is demonstrative of this – where people seem to believe that their time is more valuable than others', and fail to consider the consequences of their actions on other people's lives (e.g. Piff, 2013). Taken to the extreme, Buss (2005) had argued for the usefulness of murder as an adaptive mechanism, wherein people are "wired to kill" to ensure their access to certain resources or reproductive success.

Consequently, the emphasis on self-gain at the cost of others cultivates an "us-versus-them" mentality, as one would inherently see others as direct competitors for the particular valued resources. Such mental models could have negative social impacts, for example, research has shown that when attracting potential mates, in addition to employing various self-enhancing tactics, both men and women also derogate their rivals to help increase their chances of mating success (Buss, 2000). Because there are fewer "high-mate value" mates than there are individuals who seek them, women employ gossip to simultaneously damage the reputation of their rivals and create psychological distress for them, in order to obtain differential access to these "high-value mates". Following the "us-versus-them" mentality, one's victories tend to be built on the failure of others at obtaining the resources that one values: whether it is access to luxury items, attracting sexual partners, obtaining research grants, or outcompeting others for a promotion, the pleasures derived from such successes are often at the cost of others' anguish.

"It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail."

- Gore Vidal

Buss (2000, p. 18) argued that the psychological mechanisms that have evolved to ensure the survival of our ancestors' genes are inherently "designed to inflict costs on others, to gain advantage at the expense of others, to delight in the downfall of others, and to envy those who are more successful at achieving goals toward which they aspire." The German word *Schadenfreude* accurately captures this notion; where the word literally means "harm-joy," it is the feeling of joy or pleasure that arise from the misfortune or failure of others. *Schadenfreude* drives aggressive and unforgiving competition, and further alienates people from one another. Consequently, it adds to the pressure and humiliation if and when one experiences failure. Because if others are seen as taking pleasure from our failures (or even hoping for our failure), it diminishes our sense of community and belongingness, as we would feel isolated and unsupported in our pursuit of happiness. Indeed, researchers found that the priming of happiness goals led people to blatantly disregard other people's feelings (Crocker & Park, 2004); experience decreased levels of social connection; and ultimately feel a greater sense of loneliness compared to the control groups (Mauss et al., 2012). Mauss et al. (2012) found that valuing personal happiness and personal gains at the expense of others can damage social connections as, in most Western contexts, happiness tends to be defined in terms of positive feelings about the individual self. Hence, the more people valued their personal happiness, the lonelier they would feel.

In summation, the conditions of modern society in relation to the pursuit of personal achievements tend to interfere with our subjective well-being. Particularly when people are heavily invested in the outcomes of their pursuit of personal accomplishments, they often

behave in ways that alienate them from the meaningful social relationships that are fundamental to our well-being. Hence, in a way, wanting to be happy by pursuing personal outcomes may sometimes have opposite effects. As we will discuss later, human beings are inherently social beings; our well-being is highly dependent on having access to the people with whom we have deep, meaningful relationships. The modern demands and work environments interfere with these fundamental needs, and are therefore not conducive to our psychological well-being.

2.2.0. The Pursuit of Material Wealth

Another common route for the pursuit of happiness today is through the pursuit of material wealth. Although materialism is not a new phenomenon, it is more widespread today. Whereas a century ago, most economic activity centred on necessities, the reverse is true today: with approximately 70% of economic expenditure centred on discretionary spending (Roberts, 2015). Today there is a culture of overindulgence, not just for the rich, but the middle-class and the poor as well. Easterbrook (2003) posited that almost every person in Western nations today has a common goal of being as physically comfortable as possible at all times; especially relevant today, such comforts can almost always be obtained with money. While most people often claim that money does not make people happier, and that they favour experiences rather than material possessions, their behaviours seem to suggest otherwise. People in the modern industrialised world seem to invest heavily in the accumulation of wealth and the satisfaction of their material needs. Consistent with Rao's (2009) "*if-then*" model, it is reasonable to infer that people believe the production of wealth and the procurement of materialistic goods is the solution to their problems and a means of

making them happy. The widespread participations in lotteries, football pools, and prize incentives are good illustrations of this belief (Argyle, 2001). However, evidence suggests that the pursuit of material wealth is associated with some negative social and psychological outcomes, and the costs of our material aspirations may outweigh their benefits. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi (2004) suggested that the lack of wealth can be a major cause of unhappiness, but the presence of it does not necessarily make people happier.

2.2.1. The Hierarchy of Needs

In Maslow's (1954) theory of the hierarchy of needs, there is a set of basic human needs that have to be satisfied before one can progress toward the "higher order needs" of love and belongingness, esteem, and finally, self-actualisation. Specifically, he referred to the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs as the most fundamental to human functioning, because intuitively people would find it difficult to develop their higher social and psychological pursuits if they were struggling with starvation or threats to their physical well-being (Biswas-Diener, 2008). In an attempt to extend Maslow's theory, Conley (2010) argued that physiological and safety needs constitute the tangible aspects in the hierarchy of needs, whereas social belongingness, esteem, and self-actualisation constitute the intangible aspects at varying degrees.
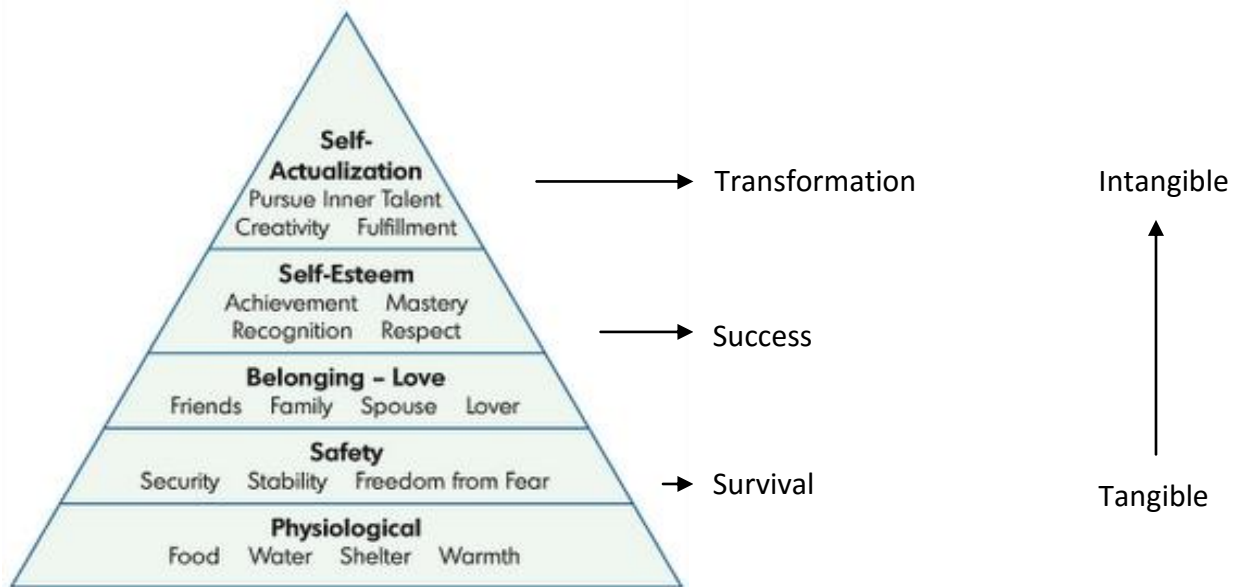
Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, including an illustration of Conley's characteristics of tangibility.

Unfortunately, many of the values emphasised, and even encouraged, by modern society (e.g. monetary wealth and social status) suggest that success and happiness are solely dependent on the satisfaction of tangible lower order needs; with such satisfaction achieved through the procurement of monetary wealth and the "hostile" pursuit of personal goals (Derber, 1979). Since we were young, we have been taught to strive to be better off in hopes of realising joyfulness; our definition of happiness is contingent on our success, which incidentally tends to be defined by how much we can afford (Easterbrook, 2003). Indeed, research in goal attainment has identified getting ahead and obtaining economic status as one of the common personal goals that most people seem to strive for (Braithwaite & Law, 1985; Wicker, Lambert, Richardson, & Kahler, 1984) and financial success was characterised by aspirations to attain wealth and material success (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). In the "Happiness Emotional Equation" by Conley (2010), he lamented that we are a bottom heavy culture, wherein people are heavily concerned with obtaining what they want (i.e.

gratification), rather than appreciating what they have (i.e. gratitude). Hence, research seems to indicate our propensity towards material aspirations above other goals such as social belongingness or other "higher order needs".

$$*\text{Happiness} = \frac{\underline{\text{Wanting what you have (Gratitude)}}}{\text{Having what you want (Gratification)}}$$

Figure 2. Happiness Equation (Conley, 2010)

However, following Maslow's (1954) theory, financial success only leads to partial satisfaction of the lower order needs for physiological processes or security, and is weakly related to esteem needs (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). It is an external reward that is contingent on external sources and offers little benefits to our higher order needs of belongingness, esteem, and self-actualisation. According to Gilbert (2006), if subjective well-being is dependent on the satisfaction of our higher order needs, then wealth and income are poor predictors of subjective well-being. Indeed, he found that Americans who earned $50,000 per year were found to be much happier than those who earned $10,000 annually; however, those who earned $5 million a year were not substantially happier than those earning $100,000 per year. Moreover, the increase in societal affluence observed over time should predict a similar rise in subjective well-being levels; but that has not been the case (e.g. E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Easterbrook, 2003; Etcoff, 2004).

Yet, although financial success contributes very little to the esteem or self-actualisation needs above the lower income levels, there seems to be an overemphasis on, or even an obsession with, the procurement of such external rewards or wealth. Not only

does this obsession potentially pose a threat to one's psychological well-being in the form of worry or disappointment upon failure to attain such success (Fujita, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005), Deci and Ryan (1985) found that the focus on external rewards, specifically money, can also detract one from the intrinsic rewards of the task at hand. For example, the authors found that children who were rewarded with money for completing an activity that they enjoyed, reported a marked decrease in their enjoyment for the task, which subsequently diminished their motivation towards engaging in the activity. On the other hand, children who did not receive any extrinsic rewards did not demonstrate such diminution in intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

2.2.2. Disadvantages of External Goal Focus

Unsurprisingly, the pursuit of material wealth is sometimes viewed as empty and shallow, as it distracts one from truly appreciating the process in striving toward goal aspirations; specifically, through the work that one does. Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that when aspirations for financial success dominate other life goals, such as aspirations for affiliation, community feeling, or self-acceptance, people reported increased feelings of depression and anxiety, and also predicted less self-actualisation and less vitality. Hence, the orientation towards external rewards, specifically financial and material success, is often to the detriment of the self and its development.

Indeed, Piff (2013) found that financially successful people were more likely to demonstrate behaviours that implied their sense of entitlement and investment in their self-interest. For example, in a study by Piff (2013), 100 pairs of participants were recruited to participate in a game of Monopoly, with one player of each pair randomly assigned as the "rich player" with an unfair advantage over their "poor player" partner. Piff (2013) found

that the participants who were assigned to the "rich player" positions displayed more dominance behaviours, compared to the "poor players." Specifically, the randomly assigned privileged players were found to exert their dominance by becoming increasingly demonstrative of their position of power and became increasingly insensitive towards the poor player's feelings by boasting about their superior statuses. Similarly, other studies by Piff (2013) found that financially wealthier people, and even those who were only primed to *feel* wealthy, were more likely to cheat in games to get ahead, were more likely to break the law, and were less likely to engage in pro-social behaviours (Piff, 2013). Therefore, it seems that as a person's wealth increased, the individual gets an inflated sense of entitlement, deservingness, and a rise in their ideology of self-interest; consequently, a diminution in their feelings of compassion and empathy were observed.

In Piff's (2013) Monopoly study, he also explored the effects of wealth on people's consumption behaviours; wherein wealth have been found to significantly increase people's rate of consumption, in this case, the "rich players" consumed significantly more pretzels compared to the "poor players". Congruously, Etcoff (2004) argued that one of the main problems with money is its potential for materialism, and that a marked rise in widespread materialistic consumerism has been observed in our modern societies today. Van Boven (2005) cited Fromm's (1976) sentiment in criticising Western industrialised cultures, especially Americans, for emphasising "having," a consummatory orientation, rather than "being," which is an experiential orientation to life. This culture of pursuing material satisfaction seems to account for the rising aspiration for greater monetary wealth, but to the potential detriment of our well-being. As previously delineated, this "wanting" of money and other material goods could supplant our aspirations for other more important things;

such as love, social relationships, or leisure time (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Etcoff, 2004; Kasser & Ryan, 1993). E. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) argued that materialism has damaging effects on one's social relationships and psychological well-being, as the "wanting" system could potentially derail one's psychological rewards system; the system that would otherwise be satisfied by factors such as meaningful social relationships, personal development, or even altruism.

2.2.3. Consequences of Materialism

Consequently, some studies found that individuals who judged their success by their material possessions reported being less happy and less satisfied with their lives (Argyle, 2001). In the aforementioned "hedonic treadmill" theory, Brickman et al. (1978) found that people tended to adapt to changes in their material circumstances relatively quickly and that newly acquired material possessions often fail to provide enduring pleasures. Not only does adaptation happen quickly for material acquisitions, many purchases tend to be quickly met with disappointment, as people often engage in counterfactual comparisons that could diminish their satisfaction towards their new acquisitions (Schwartz, 2004; Weaver & Brickman, 1974).

Schwartz (2004) and Weaver and Brickman (1974) suggest that many newly acquired things tend to fall short of our (often idealised) expectations, as few things we buy could perfectly meet our expectations. Moreover, when purchases fail to meet expectations, buyers may be prompted to make comparisons between what they have, against their expectations of what they were hoping for and the other available alternatives. And as satisfaction from material circumstances tends to be highly dependent on how well one's possessions fare against their comparison targets, unfavourable comparisons can

subsequently undermine subjective well-being (Argyle, 2001; Gilbert, 2006). In other words, if our purchases are seen as inferior to the alternatives available, of poorer quality compared to those of our peers, or do not meet our expectations, we become less happy with our purchases, feel more disappointed, and regret our purchases – also known as the "buyer's remorse" (Schwartz, 2005). Similarly, Easterbrook (2003) posited that people today experience an "abundance denial" where people feel that they are at a loss or have inferior material possessions because the abundance of alternatives forces them to make unfavourable comparisons that make them feel materially deprived; subsequently diminishing their materialism-based life satisfaction. This is a never-ending process, even if people move up into a different "wealth category" or demographic as they get richer and are able to afford better things, they will never be able to escape social comparisons or the abundance denial; unless they are affluent enough to constantly acquire every single material item that they desire.

Not only do comparisons of material possession undermine individual subjective well-being, the overemphasis on materialism is positively correlated with psychological ills such as depression, paranoia, and narcissism (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Kasser & Ryan, 1993). For example, Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that the more people endorsed materialistic aspirations, the less happy and less satisfied they are with their lives. Subjects reported lower levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction if they endorsed statements such as "Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure" or "Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions". However, Van Boven (2005) posited that such materialistic endorsements could be a two-way relationship; in which materialism influences subjective well-being or that individuals low in subjective well-being may turn to

materialism as a form of gratification. In other words, unhappy people may turn to materialism as an, albeit external, gratification upon their failure to find inner sources of happiness.

This negative relationship between materialism and well-being can be potentially damaging, as materialistic people may incur substantial costs in their attempt to satisfy their materialistic aspirations. For example, J. J. Watson (2003) found that individuals who endorsed materialism owned more credit cards, incurred more finance charges on those credit cards, and were more likely to have loans of more than $1,000. As a result, poor psychological health and materialism seem to drive consumption beyond one's physical means. This is not only toxic to individual functioning, but overconsumption may also negatively impact on environmental sustainability and rapidly deplete our planet of its natural resources (Ricard, 2014). Indeed, the modern culture of overconsumption of resources has been found to outpace their production, so much so that our fixation on satisfying our self-interest is to the detriment of the welfare of future generations.

Materialism, therefore, may be the symptom of the psychological ill of a preoccupation with the self. Notably, those who endorse materialistic aspirations seem to demonstrate heightened concern for the self and the gratification of their self-interest. This gratification manifests itself in the form of a fixation on the satisfaction of physiological comforts and pleasures (i.e. lower order needs), through external gratifications such as luxurious material consumables. Given the vast improvement of the human conditions today (e.g. advancements in technology, the environment, entertainment etc.), the lines that distinguish physiological comforts and psychological pleasures have become increasingly blurred. For example, video games played in the comforts of an individual's own

home (i.e. physiological and safety needs) may offer him a sense of belonging (e.g. to the gaming community) and builds his esteem (e.g. winning the game). Therefore, consumables today tend to take into account and aim to satisfy a simulated form of psychological pleasures that once could only be achieved through real actionable pursuits. This illusion of Conley's (2010) "survival" and "success" in satisfying social belongingness and esteem needs may detract people from the more important, intangible higher order needs (i.e. self-actualisation).

Furthermore, it is fair to consider that the satisfaction of such lower order needs of physiology and safety (i.e. the tangible needs), and some esteem needs are grounded in the individual self, and thus represents a selfish orientation. Thus, although this "me" emphasis is not exclusively limited to materialism, materialism is a prominent way in which this self-focus manifests itself. As previously discussed, people who emphasise materialistic endorsements tend to exhibit symptoms of narcissism, self-entitlement, and lowered levels of compassion and empathy (Piff, 2013), all of which perpetuate the sense of social isolation and disconnect that underpins today's Western industrialised societies. Hence, in addition to the negative effects of adaptation and the susceptibility of materialistic possessions to comparisons, materialism or material security provides an illusion of physiological comforts and psychological pleasures that interferes with individual subjective well-being, produces social disengagement and distracts from self-actualisation needs.

"We live in a favored age yet do not feel favored. What does this paradox tell us

about ourselves and our future?"

\- Easterbrook (2003)

2.3.0. Social Relationships and the Pursuit of Immediate Gratification

The modern world is vastly different from the one that our predecessors grew up in. Ever since the advent of the World Wide Web into our everyday lives, our world has experienced an accelerated growth in the accessibility of media and information. Whereas previous generations were reliant on technologies and communication networks that had relatively delayed response rates (e.g. the television, newspapers, or conventional postal mail), today, the time spent waiting between demand and supply has been significantly reduced. The accessibility of the Internet from virtually anywhere in modern industrialised cities, as well as some developing worlds, at any time has cultivated an unprecedented level of immediacy and connectedness (Meade, 2012); now there is no longer a delay between the demand and the supply (or gratification) of information or entertainment media. Businesses perpetuate this expectation of immediacy by selling us the illusion of the shortcut to "the easy life"; every day we are bombarded with get-rich-quick schemes, advertisements that try to sell us a "happy lifestyle" or television commercials that offer us access to new and better sexual partners at just the click of a button. Roberts (2015) lamented that society is almost too good at giving us what we want, as and when we want them. Although the scientific evidence regarding our shift in abilities to delay gratification is rather limited, there is an observable movement towards a culture of instant gratification which we cannot ignore (Honoré, 2004; Roberts, 2015). As we will see, this culture of instant gratification is pervasive, not only in terms of our consumption behaviours, but also in shaping the dynamics and our expectations of modern social relationships.

2.3.1. The Mediated World

Today, our lives are becoming increasingly mediated through the Internet. In 2012, at least 85% of adults in America under the age of 65 years and, of those, approximately 95% of adults aged between 18 to 34 years old, own a cell phone (Chen, 2012, as cited in Pomerantz, 2013). Ownership of smart phones, which are cellular phones with both traditional and non-traditional telephone services (e.g. with Internet access), has skyrocketed; the annual sales for smart phones for the year of 2014 stood at approximately 1.2 billion – a more than ten-fold increase compared to 2007 (Statista, 2015). As previously delineated, this boom in smart phone and Internet technology has afforded us instant access to virtually any kind of information or media entertainment whenever we want them, from wherever we are, with minimal effort. As the Internet became more assimilated into our daily lives, the modern culture rapidly became wrapped around the notion of speed and instant gratification. Pomerantz (2013) cited Lenhart's (2010) finding that 90% of adults between ages 18 to 29 years old sleep with their cell phones. People with their eyes "glued" to the screen of their smart phones while walking down the street is an unsettlingly common sight today – suggesting an addiction or dependency on this medium of immediate gratification. Moreover modern Western cultures, particularly Americans, are especially eager to embrace the "trend" of instant gratification; indicating a movement towards expectations of immediate gratification that pervades most modern societies today (Roberts, 2015).

In Carl Honoré's (2004) book "In Praise of Slowness," the author argued that the modern society is obsessed with speed; the idea that to improve something is to make it faster. We want faster cars, shorter recovery time from illnesses, quicker Internet speeds,

and instant access to whatever information or media we desire. Tobin and Graziano (2010) argued that this culture of instant gratification is about expecting and obtaining satisfactory results in the shortest amount of time possible; even at the expense of genuine progress (Roberts, 2015). Indeed, modern humans try to cram as much as possible into shorter amounts of time, so much so that there is a cultural taboo in slowness (e.g. people who act slow or finish slow are seen as lazy or stupid).

"These days even instant gratification takes too long."

- Carl Honoré (2005)

2.3.2. The Influence of Cultures

According to Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, the theory suggested the environments in which we immerse ourselves in can have profound effects on our behaviour, learning, and expectations; whereby an environment heavily centred on the notion of instant gratification may create a generation of instant gratification seekers (Bandura, 1986; Meade, 2012). In the case of media consumption, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's (1974) Uses and Gratification framework describes why and how people actively seek out particular media for the satisfaction of specific needs. In particular, the theory postulates that specific media become the origins of certain social and psychological needs, which in turn generate expectations of the mass media and other sources, leading to differential patterns of exposure to the particular medium, subsequently resulting in the gratification of needs and also other unintended consequences. In other words, media and the Internet have the ability to create and satisfy the expectations of immediate gratification (of social and psychological needs), which in turn influence how and why

people select the consumption of the particular medium; thereby creating a self-perpetuating cycle.

As the Internet and media have become so embedded in our daily lives, we may inadvertently come to expect the same immediate gratification from other areas of our lives. Consequently, when modern humans come to expect immediate gratification of whatever needs that arise, we may become unnecessarily frustrated when we do not receive instant gratification (Shepherd & Mullane, 2010). In other words, whereas in previous generations, delay of gratification was necessitated by limitations in circumstances, due to the conveniences today, we have "developed" the inability to delay gratification of our immediate wants or momentary needs.

2.3.3. Delay of Gratification

Originally proposed by Freud in his theory of the Id, the Ego, and the Superego, Tobin and Graziano (2010, p. 48) defined delay of gratification as "a set of motivational and cognitive processes related to choice of a later or more distant goal at the expense of an immediate goal." In simpler terms, it is the ability to control our impulses and delay pleasure. This ability has been shown to have profound impacts on our life outcomes. The often cited Stanford Marshmallow experiment by Mischel, Ebbesen, and Raskoff Zeiss (1972) found that, children who were able to delay gratification when a pleasurable outcome was already immediately attainable, demonstrated more successes later on in their lives. Specifically, these children demonstrated fewer behavioural issues or disruptive behaviours, better coping ability and stress management, superior standardised SAT test scores, and greater social competencies, compared to the children who were unable to delay gratification (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988). The inability to delay gratification has

been found to be associated with further behavioural problems such as substance abuse, and gambling problems (Wittmann & Paulus, 2008). In fact, a common symptom of addicts is an inability to delay gratification (Miller, 2010, as cited inMeade, 2012). Kirby and Maraković (1996) pointed out that individuals who are able to delay gratification have a focus on the temporal future, and the belief that their temporary sacrifices and self-control will result in larger rewards in the future; whereas their less successful counterparts have a "now" focus that emphasises gratifying their immediate psychological or physiological needs without regard to later consequences. This future-focus subsequently makes the former group more adept at delaying gratification, compared to the latter.

2.3.4. The Price of Immediacy

However, the culture today seems to value impulsiveness and encourage the propensity for instant gratification – "Speed is sexy" (Honoré, 2005). Indeed, research has shown that even the mere exposure to fast food symbols subsequently reduced people's willingness to save and led them to prefer immediate gains over greater future returns (Zhong & DeVoe, 2010). Hence, our environment is not conducive to delay gratification, as we have been socialised for its polar opposite. This preference for immediate gratification inadvertently comes with a significant cost to our psychological well-being. Honoré (2004) argued that life on the fast lane takes a toll on our health, our work, our social relationships, on the environment, and our community. In the pursuit to achieve more with less, people neglect an important contributor to their subjective well-being – notably leisure activities and time spent with friends and family. This obsession with cramming more into our daily lives could account for popularity of social networking sites and applications, such as Facebook and instant messaging mobile applications. Ironically, research has found these to

offer little contribution to our subjective well-being, despite the large proportion of time that we spend on them on an average given day (Green et al., 2005; Grimm et al., 2015).

These forms of social media are responsible for the propagation of mediated relationships in the modern world; wherein mediated communication (e.g. via e-mails, chat rooms, and instant messaging) are sought due to their ease of access and lack of accountability, and provide us with the illusion of an immediate gratification of our needs for affiliation. Interestingly, Green and Brock (2008) found that, although mediated communication may not be the most affectively rewarding medium of communication, it is still frequently sought and chosen as the primary means of communicating with our social others. This led Meade (2012) to posit that instead of an individual waiting to see particular people, social media are sought for their immediate gratification of social needs with minimal effort. Rather than expending the effort to engage in face-to-face interaction with a social other, people have been able to "short cut" their social engagements; subsequently decreasing people's physical human interactions. As a result, people "collect" superficial "friendships" rather than cultivating meaningful relationships.

As MacRae (2010) argued, social networking and the Internet may detract us from forming meaningful relationships and from deriving deeper meaning from a topic of interest, as it encourages us "to think shallowly rather than deeply, in order to quickly move on to the next topic." Therefore, people seem to have adopted a quantity over quality mentality, and a tendency for immediate gratification rather than long term investment. This mindset could have deleterious effects on our social relationships, as people are disillusioned into believing that relationships are "not worth the trouble" at the first sign of problems. Konrath, O'Brien, and Hsing (2011) found that highly empathetic individuals are

also more likely to score highly in their abilities to delay gratification. This has particularly important implications for social relationships, as empathy and patience play important roles in helping us sustain our social relationships, and their lack could have potentially damaging effects. Unfortunately, the authors also found that there has been a marked drop of empathy after the year 2000, suggesting a possible decline in the social climate as a result. Moreover, along with the decline in empathy and patience, the popular notion of "love at first sight" or expectation of friction-free relationships that seems to pervade our lives today could exacerbate the already-deteriorating state of our social connectedness.

In a realm in which nobody can be perfect, not only are these expectations (or daydreams) damaging, they may also discourage people from investing in their social relationships, and rob them of "critical incidents" that are crucial to the development of deep and meaningful relationships (Buss, 2000). Critical incidents, such as solving adaptive problems with friends, or reconciling with loved ones after an argument are important in allowing us to build deep emotional bonds with our social others (Buss, 2000). Furthermore, such incidents also allow for more accurate assessments as to who is sincerely engaged in our welfare and to differentiate them from "fair-weather" friends. Without critical incidents, relationships may be more easily broken due to their lack of meaningful emotional depth. Instead, the modern culture of immediate gratification and the availability of alternative social relationships cultivate impatience and short-term fulfilment. Specifically, the inability to delay gratification in the social realm would push people to choose the most immediate reward even though it may be of a lesser value; for this case, the inclination to choose the superficial excitement of a new love/friendship, rather than to work on building a long-term meaningful relationship despite of hardships. And because phases of well-being (i.e. feeling

happy) tend to be of short duration, people run into the risk of finding themselves in a state where they need to perpetually seek new gratifications or excitements (e.g. in the form of new sexual partners) in order to prolong their feelings of "well-being"; which could be to the detriment of our long-term meaningful relationships (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011).

"the idealized images of romantic partners in entertainment and advertising can make a date, or a life, with an admirable but not-extraordinary person seem a disappointment rather than a privilege."

- Easterbrook (2003)

Moreover, because of this generation's heightened expectations of immediate gratification, researchers have found a high level of attachment anxiety among members of the Net Generation (Pomerantz, 2013). Specifically, Pomerantz (2013) found that when engaging in instant messaging with social others, whereas prompt response engenders comfort and relationship security by reinforcing mutual connectedness, delays in reply often lead to feelings of insecurity or distress; the absence of an immediate response seems to signal to people a problem that foster feelings of rejection and worry about the relationship. As a result, our experience of relationship attachment today may have been significantly shaped by our modern day expectations of immediacy. Hence, the modern culture that emphasises immediate gratification seems to interfere with the satisfaction of our need for meaningful affiliation with our social others, and perpetuates a sense of superficiality, attachment anxiety, and social disconnect.

2.4.0. Loneliness and "the Pleasant Life"

The pursuit of happiness through the satisfaction of the aforementioned (1) needs for accomplishment, (2) materialism, and (3) instant gratification of short-term affiliative needs is in line with attempts to pursue what Seligman, Parks, and Steen (2004) identified as the "constituents of happiness". Specifically, the three constituents of happiness proposed by the authors are: (1) pleasure or positive emotions (i.e. "the pleasant life"); (2) engagement (i.e. "the good life"); and (3) meaning (i.e. "the meaningful life"). Here, I argue that there are limitations to the "routes" of happiness discussed above, as the pursuit of happiness through such routes (i.e. accomplishment, materialism, instant gratification and short-term affiliative needs) only serves to satisfy the first two of the three constituents of happiness. While one can argue that there is nothing wrong with fulfilling our needs for positive emotions and engagement by pursuing gratifications and accomplishments, such fulfilments, especially the heavy focus on "the pleasant life", constitute a short-term self-focus that could perpetuate our sense of loneliness. Self-focused pursuits of personal happiness detach us from our fundamental need for social connections and our need to contribute beyond our lonely selves. Consequently, loneliness has been found to be a major predictor of unhappiness and psychological ills (Cacioppo et al., 2008; Etcoff, 2004; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Winch, 2014).

According to Seligman et al. (2004), happiness is separable to three distinct types corresponding to the three constituents described above. Specifically, "the pleasant life" refers to the pursuit of basic pleasures or positive emotions; "the good life" corresponds to engagement in the pursuit of goals and self-improvement; whilst "the meaningful life" refers to meaningful happiness via living a life of purpose. At the most basic level, "the

pleasant life" is concerned with the gratification of the hedonic component of our happiness profile; in which one emphasises on the experience of positive emotions and relates to the momentary psychophysiological pleasures (Seligman et al., 2004). This hedonic happiness is primarily concerned with seeking pleasant feelings, and avoiding unpleasant ones (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Higgins, 1997). When asked if one is feeling happy, this is the level that is most commonly referred to when one is evaluating his or her happiness state. For this reason, the pleasant life constitutes the most common route that people pursue when seeking happiness today. Indeed, Deci and Ryan (2000) and Seligman et al. (2004) argued that modern Western societies, like America, tend to value upbeat dispositions and encourage the individual pursuit of positive emotions such as joy, amusement, and excitement; to the extent that elation is, at times, a "necessity" (see also, Fredrickson, 2009). This type of positive affect can be predominantly pursued through activities that focus on momentary hedonic satisfaction, like playing games, eating, or sex. Within limits, this form of happiness can be increased by: (1) cultivating positive emotions about past events (e.g. being grateful for a past event), (2) attending to or pursuing positive emotions in the present (e.g. enjoying a positive activity, savouring the experience, or being mindful), or (3) building positive emotions about the future (e.g. through hope and optimism). This form of happiness is personal, largely internal, mainly concerned with hedonic gratifications, and does not extend beyond the individual.

2.4.1. The Constituents of Happiness

However, in contrast with "the good life" and "the meaningful life," there are clear limitations to the pursuit of "the pleasant life". Specifically, while it is possible to increase our moment-to-moment happiness, our positive affectivity (or emotional baseline) is

profoundly constrained by our genetic predispositions; where it has been argued that up to 50% of our emotional setpoints are heritable and attributable to genetics (Cacioppo et al., 2008; E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Seligman et al., 2004). These setpoints determine the range in which our daily emotions can fluctuate; hence, while it is possible and worthwhile to increase the amount of positive emotions in our own lives (see also, positivity ratio by Fredrickson, 2009), the emotional setpoint places a limit on the extent in which such emotions can be increased through hedonic means. Furthermore, if and when a person's positive affectivity does not fit in with the environment they are in (e.g. a calm and serene type of positive emotion while they are in an environment that promotes upbeat dispositions), the individual might be prompted or tempted to feel discouraged, or even defective (Easterbrook, 2003; Seligman et al., 2004).

Conversely, the "engagement" route to happiness is not constrained by genetic setpoints as it is primarily concerned with engagement, self-improvement, and esteem "gratification" from engaging in certain activities. While we can take shortcuts to attain hedonic pleasures (e.g. eating ice cream or using illicit drugs), the pursuit of "gratification" requires complete engagement with task goals (e.g. learning to play the guitar, or meeting a target at work) and total immersion in such tasks. Csikszentmihalyi (2004) called this state of total immersion a state of "flow." When one is fully immersed in the activity that draws on character strengths (e.g. creativity, intelligence, and perseverance), people lose their sense of self and time. While "flow" states tend to be regarded as enjoyable in retrospect, the engagement in the activities may not necessarily be accompanied by positive emotions. For example, when a pianist is fully absorbed in playing a melancholic piano piece, she may experience a spectrum of negative emotions, but may regard the engagement as a positive

experience after the music is over. "The good life" is therefore not confined by the limitations of our physiological affectivity, but the individual's cultivated character strengths and psychological capacity to find engagement in his or her life.

Finally, the "meaning" route to happiness comes from the utilisation of character strengths in service of something larger than our individual selves. It is a meaningful pursuit that uses our unique strengths to contribute to a greater purpose beyond our self-interest, such as making a difference to our family, community, politics, justice, or a higher spiritual power. Aristotle (as cited in Shmotkin, 2005) and researchers (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 2000; Haybron, 2008; McMahon, 2008) referred to this as "Eudaimonia." It is inherently selfless in nature, and this fulfilment of one's longing for purpose in service of others tends to bring about more enduring positive emotions that extend beyond momentary happiness. Arguably, whereas "engagement" is neither entirely hedonic nor entirely eudaimonic in nature (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005), the "meaning" route to happiness has the capacity to transform our mental models of the world by changing how we interpret our environment and the people surrounding us. Moreover, as the pursuit of the meaningful life extends beyond the self, it bears real world consequences that literally transform the world around us through our actions in the service of others. While eudaimonic happiness is commonly related to psychological growth, flourishing, and meaning in life, a hedonistic orientation in life can be selfish and shallow with no intrinsic value (Grimm et al., 2015). In regards to the pursuit of happiness by means of personal accomplishments, material satisfaction, and instant gratification, these pursuits are consistent with only "the pleasant life" and "the good life." Subsequently, these provide little enduring meaning, and are concerned with the individual's self and short-term fulfilment of their internal needs. In his

definition of "the full life," Seligman (2004) argued that the pursuit of pleasure has almost no contribution to our life satisfaction without both engagement and meaning. In other words, the happiness that one can derive from "the pleasant life" and "the engaged life" tends to be self-focused and fleeting; only happiness that comes from contributing to a larger purpose beyond our individual self that it becomes "meaningful" and enduring.

2.4.2. The Costs of the "Pleasant Life"

As previously delineated, self-focused pursuits that heavily emphasise hedonism (i.e. positive emotions) or individual engagement have been associated with deleterious effects on our physical, social, and subjective well-being. Etcoff (2004) illustrated this with a study performed using laboratory rats; where electrodes were surgically inserted into the pleasure centres of the subjects' brains which could be stimulated by pressing a button located in their cages. Once the rats learned that the button press was linked to hedonic gratification or the stimulation of their pleasure centres, the rats continuously pressed the "pleasure button" even to the detriment of their own physical health. Specifically, they persisted on hedonic gratification at the cost of their physical well-being; neglecting fundamental biological needs such as eating and sleeping. Consistent with that study, human beings have been found to engage in activities that could have detrimental effects on their well-being in attempts to fulfil such hedonic needs. For example, "sensation seekers" strive to satisfy their need for arousal by engaging in dangerous or "extreme" sports that are accompanied with significant amounts of risk to their physical welfare.

Similarly, other researchers demonstrated that such feelings of euphoria or joy were sometimes pursued through harmful means, such as illicit drug use or alcoholism (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). These behaviours, including those mentioned in previous sections,

are inherently private and potentially anti-social in nature, as they focus on the gratification of one's personal desires. Not only that, these behaviours or activities can be highly toxic to our social relationships (e.g. alcohol fuelled domestic abuse). As a consequence, the pursuit of "the pleasant life" and "the good life" could potentially perpetuate our sense of isolation and loneliness. This could be detrimental to our subjective well-being, as loneliness may affect a number of emotional and cognitive processes and outcomes. For example, studies have linked loneliness to personality disorders and psychoses, depressive symptoms, suicide, addictions, and even increased risks of Alzheimer's Disease (Cacioppo et al., 2008; Cacioppo, Hughes, Waite, Hawkley, & Thisted, 2006; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

2.4.3. Loneliness

As defined by researchers, loneliness is a mismatch between one's needed or desired relationships, and his or her actual social relationships; it is a distressing feeling that accompanies the perception that one's social needs are not being met by the quantity or especially the quality of one's social relationships. It is the social equivalent of feeling unsafe, physical pain, hunger, and thirst (Cacioppo et al., 2008; Cacioppo et al., 2006; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). However, although the English language tends to treat them as synonymous, it is important to distinguish between "loneliness" and "aloneness" as they bear vastly different meanings here. Specifically, the term "loneliness" refers to a sense of incompleteness, an absence, a pain, or a need that is unfulfilled. In contrast, "aloneness" refers to a joy of being, a sense of fullness where one feels complete without the need for someone else to fill a certain void. When discussing the potential downsides of the "pleasant life", I refer specifically to the former (i.e. loneliness). This experience of loneliness is a relatively common experience, as most of us experience loneliness at some points in our

lives. Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) found that as many as 80% of people under the age of 18 years and 40% of adults over 65 years of age reported feeling lonely at least sometimes, with levels of loneliness gradually diminishing through middle adult years, and then increasing again in old age, notably above 70 years old.

Longitudinal research indicated that loneliness is predictive of increased morbidity and mortality in adults (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). For example, subjects who reported feeling lonely for a greater number of periods in their lives (i.e. during childhood, adolescence, and at age 26 years) were found to have greater cardiovascular health risks; notably higher levels of stress hormones (i.e. cortisol), higher systolic blood pressure (SBP), and obesity. This could be attributable to multiple factors associated with loneliness. In a sample of middle aged and older adults, greater loneliness was associated with less effort applied to the maintenance and optimisation of positive emotions. Passive engagement in emotional regulation could translate to decreased likelihoods of performing physical activities, such as exercise, and increased consumption of passive activities, such as eating and watching television, which offer few enduring affective benefits. Notably, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) demonstrated that people tend to be half asleep while watching television; and that those who watch a lot of television tend to be less happy than others (L. Lu & Argyle, 1993). Other studies have found loneliness to be associated with alcohol abuse, poorer health behaviours, and more difficulty in sleeping (Cacioppo et al., 2006).

More importantly, studies have found that loneliness has been associated with mental and personality disorders, psychoses, suicide, and impaired cognitive performance. A longitudinal study by Cacioppo et al. (2006) found a causal link between loneliness and depressive symptoms – with the former predicting the latter. Whereas loneliness predicted

the increases in depressive symptoms over a 1-year interval, depressive symptoms did not significantly predict loneliness over the same intervals. Moreover, this relationship between loneliness and depressive symptoms appears to be relatively stable, even when demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, education, and income are controlled for (Cacioppo et al., 2006); hence, highlighting loneliness as a specific risk factor for certain mental and personality disorders.

Furthermore, Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) emphasised that depressive symptoms could perpetuate a loneliness loss cycle that is hard to break; in which depressed people's negative cognitive biases might influence them to perceive heightened levels of social isolation, subsequently further reinforcing their damaging cognitive biases. Lonely and/or depressed individuals might see the world as a more threatening place, expect more negative social interactions, and tend to remember more negative social information. These beliefs could subsequently elicit behaviours from others that reinforce the lonely person's expectations; creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of social alienation. Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) found that this hypervigilance for negativity is often accompanied by feelings of hostility, stress, pessimism, anxiety, low self-esteem and low perceived social value. Hence, such cognitive biases could potentially create social avoidant behaviours, and reduced social activities (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010), thus perpetuating the sense of social isolation and elevating feelings loneliness via the loneliness loss cycle.

"Loneliness creates deep psychological wounds, one that distorts our perception and scrambles our thinking. It makes us believe that those around us care much less about us than they do. It makes us afraid to reach out in fear of rejection and heartache."

- Winch (2014)

Cacioppo et al. (2008) argued that only perceived social isolation, but not objective social isolation, can cause psychological distress. Indeed, the authors explained that objective social isolation is not predictive of our subjective well-being as one can live a relatively solitary life and not feel lonely, whilst others can live ostensibly rich social lives and nonetheless still feel lonely. Computer text analysis for suicidal poets found that increased use of singular "I", "me", or "mine" predicted suicide, demonstrating the deleterious impacts of perceived isolation on individual well-being, as opposed to objective circumstances (Etcoff, 2004). Here, I argue that the objective conditions of modern living may unnecessarily influence people's perception of social isolation. The lack of access to friends and extended kin while being constantly surrounded by strangers could serve as a less subtle reminder of our state of loneliness. Such conditions of social anonymity and loneliness could be to our detriment, as previously discussed; loneliness is a major predictor of depressive symptoms, psychological distress, and suicide (Etcoff, 2004). By 2020, depression could become the second largest cause of disabilities; higher than cancer, cerebrovascular disorders, and road-traffic collisions (Williamson, in press). Left untreated, perceived loneliness and the new norm of loneliness could have severely damaging effects on our society.

2.4.4. Loneliness Interventions

Happiness interventions almost always involve a social component (e.g. Seligman, 2004), however, research on loneliness interventions has found limited support for the success of the mainstream interventions in ameliorating loneliness: notably interventions that focus on enhancing social skills, providing social support, increasing opportunities for social interaction, and addressing maladaptive social cognition (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

In studying the effects of the said interventions, Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) found no significant changes in perceived loneliness ratings for all but one of these interventions. In particular, the authors found that only interventions that addressed maladaptive social cognition were fruitful in eliciting behavioural changes. However, possessing the knowledge or skills for social competence does not necessarily mean the utilisation of such knowledge, and therefore, will not translate into reduced loneliness. Here, I argue that happiness or positive subjective well-being, or even momentary positive emotions, can have profound influences in translating such knowledge and intentionality into actions that could potentially address the modern day social disconnect and ameliorate our sense of loneliness.

PART III

A Fundamental Need for Social Relationships

Whereas loneliness is associated with depression, suicide, addictions, increased morbidity, and other psychological disorders, the satisfaction of social relatedness needs has been found to be positively related to psychological and subjective well-being. Indeed, researchers have argued that social relationships are fundamental intrinsic needs that are critical to human development and effective functioning (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Maslow, 1954), and are often considered an important component of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1995). In this section, we explore the role of social relationships, and discuss their effects on our physical and psychological well-being.

3.0.1. A Fundamental Need to Belong

It has been long theorised that social relationships are a fundamental human need; that people have a strong "need to belong" and to love (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1954). Kasser and Ryan (1996) related the needs for affiliation, affection support, interpersonal concern, and community feeling aspirations as part of Maslow's (1954) need for social belongingness. Similarly, Bowlby (1969) argued that human beings have evolved to establish and maintain social relationships, notably through the use of emotions as communicative mechanisms. Babies are able to use facial expressions as a signal of their emotional state before their eyesight is sufficiently developed, suggesting that this is an innate behaviour (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). These manifestations of emotion, such as smiling and laughter, serve as signals for social intimacy and also increases the likelihood

of the baby's survival; as they encourage nurturing and protective behaviour by the caregivers (Argyle, 2001; Bowlby, 1969; Mauss et al., 2011). Furthermore, such facial expressions are social signals that communicate the absence of aggression, subsequently communicating affiliative intent and approachability (Mauss et al., 2011); for example, "play faces" that are exhibited by animals disarm hostility even across different animal species (Argyle, 2001; Brown, 2008; Fredrickson, 2009). Human emotions function in similar manners to help communicate our internal states to others, and facilitate social interactions and connectedness.

Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) argued that our social predispositions have strong adaptive implications; citing Wilson (2007), the authors explained that the hostile physical environments in the past have resulted in the natural selection of those who had opted for social group living. Understandably, individuals who lived in isolation from others would have been much more susceptible to attacks from predators and less equipped to fend off such attacks due to their limited capacity; hence, were less likely to have survived or reproduced. Indeed, connections with others at both individual and collective levels would have improved the chances of our ancestors' survival in hostile or difficult conditions. Moreover, reproductive success not only depends on humans procreating with one another, but also on ensuring that their offspring survive to reproductive ages. Therefore social connections with a mate, a family, or a tribe would foster social affiliative behaviours, such as cooperation and altruism, which would subsequently enhance the chances of the offspring reaching their reproductive ages, thus ensuring the survival of one's genes. Hence, one could argue that human sociability is wired into our genetic codes.

Indeed, even in modern individualistic societies people spend almost 80% of their waking hours surrounded by others. However, only time spent with known acquaintances (e.g. friends, relatives, spouse, children, or co-workers) was found to be more inherently rewarding compared to time spent alone (Kahneman et al., 2004). Similarly, according to Baumeister and Leary's (1995) position on the human's fundamental need to belong and to form and maintain interpersonal relationships, there are two criteria for satisfying such needs: first, it is necessary for people to have frequent and affectively rewarding personal interactions with others; second, people must perceive such interactions with others as stable and enduring, and display reciprocal affective concern for each other's well-being. These needs were echoed by Schutz (1966, as cited in Pornsakulvanich, 2005), who postulated that this orientation towards social others is based upon needs for inclusion (i.e. to belong and to feel included), control (i.e. the power to exert influence over others and over their own future), and affection (i.e. to love and to be loved by others). Failure to satisfy such affiliative needs (i.e. a perceived loneliness) would subsequently cause psychological deprivation/distress and ill effects on one's health and well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

3.0.2. Positive Consequences of Social Relationships

As previously discussed, life satisfaction amongst the extremely poor in undeveloped countries – for example, prostitutes, homeless people, and those living in the slums of Calcutta is within the positive range (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Specifically, these groups were fairly satisfied with their lives despite the adverse conditions of living. Social relationships appear to be the major determinant of their positive outlook in life, as those who reported greater satisfaction with friends, family, and romantic relationships rated

more highly on measures of life satisfaction, compared to those who did not have such satisfying social ties. In contrast, homeless people in the United States who frequently reported negative social conditions (e.g. extreme social isolation, and lack of social support) experience significantly lowered levels of subjective well-being. This led E. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) to conclude that strong social relationships and support provided by family and friends in the Calcutta sample group acted as a buffer against the negative effects of extreme poverty. Indeed, M. L. Diener and McGavran (2008) reported that people with close relationships tend to be better at coping with stresses. Echoing this, Myers's (2000) review of studies on the correlates of subjective well-being found social support to be beneficial for subjective well-being and predicted better stress coping. Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, and Ryan (2000) showed that reported satisfaction with the intrinsic need of relatedness was predictive of the daily fluctuations in individuals' positive affect. In other words, increases in perceived satisfaction with relatedness predicted the increase in daily positive affect. Congruously, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) demonstrated that the most important life satisfaction domains were those that involved social relationships; particularly friends, family, and marriage. By exploring these three domains, we uncover the connection between social relationships and subjective well-being.

(i) Friendship

"Friendship" is defined as the voluntary interdependence between two individuals that includes the experience and satisfaction of various provisions to varying degrees (Hays, 1984, 1988). Notably, these provisions address the need for companionship (and sharing activities together), utility (or consideration for one's well-being), emotional security (or expression of affection towards one another), support (and instrumental help), and self-

validation by reinforcing one's sense of identity (Demir & Davidson, 2012; Hays, 1984; Ratelle, Simard, & Guay, 2012; Shmotkin, 2005). Studies on subjective well-being have consistently documented the robust association between various friendship indices (e.g. having a friend, number of friends, frequency of interactions, friendship satisfaction, friendship support and intimacy, overall friendship quality) and individual subjective well-being that pervades across age, ethnicity, and culture (Demir & Davidson, 2012). Whereas those who emphasised aspirations for friendship and intimacy tend to enjoy greater levels of subjective well-being (Emmons, 2003), Perkins (1991) found that participants who reported a preference for high incomes and occupational success at the cost of their close friendships and marriage were more likely to describe themselves as unhappy. Hence, preference for affiliation, and increases in friendship satisfaction and intimacy are associated with increases in individual subjective well-being.

(ii) Family

Analogous to the relationship between friendship indices and individual happiness, E. Diener and Diener (1996) found that satisfaction with family was related to individual subjective well-being across 31 nations. Indeed, the authors found that satisfaction with family life was an even stronger predictor of life satisfaction, compared to satisfaction with friends. Furthermore, a study by Huebner (1991) found that satisfaction with family life was significantly related to their participants' global life satisfaction, whereas their recent school grades, parents' occupational status, and other demographic characteristics were not significantly related; underscoring the importance of close familial relationships for children's life satisfaction. The most significant familial bonds are those between parents and child, and parent-child relationships are one of the strongest predictors of individual life

satisfaction. For example, M. L. Diener and McGavran (2008) reported a significant association between parent-child relationship quality with individual subjective well-being. A perceived secure attachment between parent and child was correlated with positive self- and world-view, and greater individual self-esteem in the subjects, compared to those who were insecurely attached.

The relationship between parent and child also predicted both parent's and child's subjective well-being across different life periods as well; where high-quality parent-child relationships predicted positive life satisfaction for both the parent and the child, from childhood through to adolescence and adulthood (M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008). In a study of a national sample of young adults, Amato (1994) found that closeness to both parents made unique, independent contributions to one's happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological distress. In contrast, poorer quality parent-child relationships and involuntary childlessness were significantly predictive of greater loneliness and depression for both men and women aged between 50 to 84 years old (Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002). These studies consistently found the quality of the relationship as the most important predictor of people's happiness, as the quantity of contact between parent and child was only weakly related to subjective well-being. Therefore, it appears that greater subjective well-being is conditional on having good-quality relationship between parent and child, not on the quantity of the interactions. Researchers of the topic also examined the association between sibling relationships and subjective well-being. Analogous to parent-child relationships, sibling emotional closeness predicted better stress coping abilities, less depression, and less negative affect in both men and women. For example, Cicirelli (1989) found that closeness with sisters was related to less depression in both men and women,

although closeness with brothers was associated with less depression for men, but not for women.

(iii) Marriage

One of the most well studied domains in the realm of social relationships and subjective well-being is that of romantic relationships. It is well-documented that romantic relationships, especially marriage, are related to greater subjective well-being compared to being never-married, divorced, separated, or widowed (Argyle, 2001; E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; E. Diener, Gohm, Suh, & Oishi, 2000; E. Diener & Seligman, 2002; M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008; Myers & Diener, 1995). Indeed, data from the World Values Survey II showed that married people experienced greater life satisfaction, more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions than divorced people, and this finding was consistently replicated across 43 nations that were examined (E. Diener et al., 2000). In a cross-sectional study by Kamp Dush and Amato (2005), the authors found that being in a romantic relationship (i.e. with a spouse, a cohabiting partner, or a steady dating partner) was associated with higher levels of subjective well-being, compared to single individuals who were not dating or individuals who had multiple dating partners. Consequently, the authors identified that relationship meaningfulness and commitment were important predictors of individual subjective well-being; the greater the commitment and emotional investment in the relationship, the greater the association between the romantic relationship and subjective well-being.

Research in marital status and subjective well-being also evidenced a bidirectional effect between the two variables. M. L. Diener and McGavran (2008) and Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, and Diener (2003) found a selection effect when it came to relationships. In

particular, the authors argued that people have certain trait psychological characteristics that may predispose them to experience certain marital events, such as marriages and divorces. M. L. Diener and McGavran (2008) posited that happy people may be more likely to successfully attract and retain a mate, while their unhappy counterparts may be less likely to find a mate or experience difficulty in maintaining their relationships. Findings by Mastekaasa (1992) and Lucas (2005) converge, where the authors found that people who were satisfied with their married life demonstrated similar levels of life satisfaction pre-marriage; whereas chronically unhappy people during singlehood subsequently predicted divorces later on.

However, E. Diener et al. (2000) found some cultural differences in the association between happiness and romantic relationships. The benefits of being married over divorced were less in collectivist societies than in individualist countries. The difference in effects could be attributable to the amount of familial support that one receives in collectivist cultures regardless of one's marital status. Hence, although romantic relationships were consistently found to be a significant predictor of happiness, the effects are moderated by other factors, in this case culture.

3.0.3. Functions of Social Relationships

Several mechanisms come into play in influencing individual subjective well-being through social relationships. Demir and Davidson (2012) postulated that friendships satisfy individual needs for perceived mattering, responses to capitalisation attempts, and psychological needs satisfaction. These needs are interpreted as: (1) perceived interpersonal mattering is the "psychological tendency to evaluate the self as significant to specific other people" (Marshall, 2001, p. 474); (2) capitalisation refers to "the process of informing

another person regarding the occurrence of a personal positive event and thereby deriving additional benefit from it" (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004, p. 228), and (3) the satisfaction of psychological needs such as the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Demir and Davidson (2012) subsequently found that, while all three constructs were significantly related to individual subjective well-being, the psychological needs satisfaction was found to be the most important relationship experience for predicting subjective well-being. Other researchers found that relationships have various other important functions; they are important sources of emotional support, companionship, and instrumental help when needed to resolve adaptive complications (Argyle, 2001).

While familial relationships are important to ensure the survivability of the offspring, they also facilitate emotional regulation and socialisation (Bowlby, 1969; Thompson, 1998). In particular, Bowlby (1969) and Thompson (1998) posited that one of the most important things that we learn from the parent-child relationship is how to interpret, express, and cope with the emotions experienced in intimate relationships. Such socialisation is important, as it affects all our future relationships, both romantic and non-romantic. Similarly, M. L. Diener and McGavran (2008) argued that, within sibling relationships, individuals may learn to negotiate conflict and competition, as well as experience companionship and warmth. Incidentally, close sibling relationships predict greater emotional regulation, notably, less physiological reactivity to conflicts and stresses. Hence, these relationships help with the building of social competence which ultimately determines the individual's ability to forge and maintain meaningful social bonds with others.

Finally, romantic relationships provide a combination of the benefits found in friendship and familial relationships; such as the satisfaction of psychological needs, material support, companionship, stress buffering, and as an important source of shared enjoyable activities (M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008). In addition, romantic relationships also have a social role; whereby marital status could bring about certain support networks, and expectations (or burdens), depending on the cultural contexts. Adversely, an unmarried status could be associated with certain types of hardships, such as the lack of social support, companionship, and financial difficulties. Whereas married people may have greater practical and emotional support from the wider community (e.g. from the government or church groups), divorced people may experience some unfavourable social stigma that is accompanied by reduced social support networks and greater financial strains. Indeed, such support networks are important, as Landau and Litwin (2001) found that social network supportiveness significantly predicted life satisfaction, even after controlling for demographic factors.

3.0.4. The Ups and Downs of Relationships

As we all know, relationships are not always positive. Just as many of our greatest joys in life tended to arise from social interactions, many of the greatest conflicts and sorrows that we experience come from our relationships too. Poor quality relationships characterised by negative interactions and conflicts are often found to be associated with negative emotions, stress, depression, anxiety, and ultimately lowered levels of subjective well-being (Antonucci, Akiyama, & Lansford, 1998; M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008). Research has found that men and women report diminished happiness if they deem their social networks as "too demanding" or "got on their nerves" (Antonucci et al., 1998).

Moreover, one of the greatest predictors of long-term unhappiness is the failure or dissolution of relationships. Divorce, widowhood, or the death of a child were found to produce long-term negative affect and lowered positive affect, from which some people never seem to recover (Lucas et al., 2003).

Although negative social events could reduce our long-term subjective well-being to an extent, the benefits of social relationships tend to outweigh their costs. Moreover, many have argued that most important contributors to life satisfaction as a whole tend involve social relationships (e.g. friendships, family life, and marriage) (Campbell et al., 1976). Indeed, in a study by Diener and Seligman (2002), the authors found that the very happy individuals in their study tend to be the ones who spent less time being alone and had satisfying social relationships. Even introverts were more likely to report feeling happier when they are with others (Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990); leading researchers to consider social relationships as an important component of psychological well-being (Keyes, 1998; Ryff, 1995).

As previously discussed, present day social interactions have become increasingly mediated by the Internet and communication networks. Although mediated communication may not be the most affectively beneficial form of communication, it is still frequently sought and chosen as the primary communication medium today due to its ease and availability (Green & Brock, 2008). This could be potentially problematic as mediated social interactions may not necessarily yield the same benefits as face-to-face interactions, and are insufficient in satisfying our need for social relatedness.

3.1.0. Where Happiness Fits In

As previously discussed, modern humans are obsessed with the pursuit of happiness and have built their lives around the idea of becoming happy. Etcoff (2004) cited Miller and deBaca's idea of the "quantum change"; where people experience changes in their values across the span of their lives as they age. For example, men may experience changes from valuing material wealth to valuing spirituality, or women may change from valuing independence to appreciating self-esteem. However, regardless of the quantum changes that happen, both males and females were found to value "happiness" across their lifespan – suggesting its prominence in people's lives. Furthermore, this preoccupation with happiness is so pervasive that many have argued that we are hardwired to pursue happiness and "to want more and more of it" (e.g. Etcoff, 2004; Gilbert, 2006). The popularity of the "blockbuster drug" known as Prozac illustrates people's ceaseless attempts at pursuing personal feelings of happiness and at eliminating unhappiness – as of 2004 there were over 120 million prescriptions for antidepressants like Prozac (Etcoff, 2004).

3.1.1. Defining Happiness

While the term "happiness" holds different meanings to different people, most philosophical literature and scholarly works tend to define happiness as synonymous with "positivity" (Fredrickson, 2009), "life satisfaction" (Veenhoven, 2008), and "subjective well-being" (E. Diener, 1984; Haybron, 2008), indicating a subjective evaluation of one's quality of life and mental health. Naturally, in the field of psychology, "happiness" is regarded as a psychological phenomenon, representing a relatively stable mental concept (E. Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Happiness is identified with one or more of the emotions of what Fredrickson (2009) called the ten forms of positivity; wherein it is postulated that happiness

is separable into ten distinct forms: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

Incidentally, these ten forms of positive emotions are consistent with E. Diener's (1984) definition: where "happiness" or "subjective well-being" is found to be a superordinate construct consisting of a hedonic (i.e. emotional or affective) and a psychological (i.e. cognitive) component. Referencing the most commonly used definition in the psychological literature, here I define positive subjective well-being as a consistent trait that is characterised by the experience of (1) frequent positive affect, (2) infrequent negative affect, and (3) a positive evaluation of life satisfaction that persists across time, place, and culture (e.g. Achor, 2011; E. Diener, 1984; E. Diener & Fujita, 1995; E. Diener et al., 1999; Larsen & Eid, 2008; Sul et al., 2012). As a result, the term "subjective well-being" is a broad category that includes positive emotional responses such as joy, elation, happiness, and contentment, as well as long-term moods and cognitive dimensions. It also reflects a balance of positive emotions (e.g. joy, gratitude, hope, and awe) relative to negative affect (e.g. guilt and shame, sadness, anger, and anxiety), and a cognitive evaluation of one's overall life and particular domains of life, (e.g. the self, work, family, and health) (E. Diener et al., 1999).

The cognitive component is distinct from the hedonic component, as it takes into account individual priorities and values against which one would measure one's life satisfaction. It is a conscious evaluation that assesses one's present circumstances against the standards set by the individual based on their priorities. Rojas's (2005) model of Conceptual Referent Theory of Happiness posits that a person's basis for the judgements of their life and perceived happiness is highly dependent on their individual "conceptual

referent points". These referent points could be based on comparison benchmarks anchored in the past, against other people, or against the individual's ideal standards. The subjectivity of such life satisfaction evaluations is important, as a "life that is deemed perfect in one idea of the good life may be seen as a failure from another point of view," (Veenhoven, 2008, p. 48); life satisfaction is therefore an individual's subjective appraisal where the basis of happiness is not identical for everyone. Moreover, because different people react differently to the same circumstances or stimuli, based on Rojas's model, they can create subjectively meaningful evaluations of the situations based on their own unique set of values, expectancies, and past experiences (E. Diener et al., 1999). On a related note, the eudaimonistic account of happiness argues for subjective well-being on the basis of virtue and nature fulfilment; whereby subjective well-being is dependent on and evaluated based on the person's ability to fully exercise their strengths and capacities in accordance to their virtues, nature, priorities, and talents, and to use such talents to contribute beyond the individual self (Haybron, 2008). The foundation of this account of happiness is that moral virtue is essential to well-being, and that people can only flourish if they fully exercise such virtues in accordance to their nature.

However, today, especially in Western individualistic cultures, people tend to define happiness with a strong emphasis on the hedonic component, and little regard for the moral virtues or whether they are flourishing. Using an international sample from the World Value Survey of over 7,000 college students and over 60,000 adult respondents in 41 nations, E. Diener, Sandvik, and Pavot (1991) found that individuals who reported high levels of life satisfaction expressed feelings of joy over half of the time and a high proportion of positive affect over negative affect. These findings subsequently led E. Diener et al. (1991) to

conclude that happiness is defined as a state in which people feel a predominance of positive affect over negative emotions; thus, demonstrating a heavy emphasis on the hedonic component in today's modern individualistic world, as opposed to the eudaimonistic account. This hedonic approach to happiness is restrictive, as it does not sufficiently capture the complexities and "richness" of our subjective well-being profile. Grimm et al. (2015) cautioned against a single orientation to happiness that focused solely on either the hedonic component or the eudaimonic account; and encouraged a more diverse orientation that comprises two or more constituents of happiness (i.e. orientations towards pleasure, meaning, and engagement). The authors also suggested that cultivating all three orientations would help maximise one's happiness, as those with more than one orientation to happiness were associated with higher overall well-being and also experienced more pleasure, meaning, and engagement in his or her everyday activities (Grimm et al., 2015).

3.1.2. History of Happiness Studies

Historically, Aristotle and 19th-century utilitarian philosophers viewed happiness as the ultimate goal, the *summum bonum*, where it is something that is pursued for its own sake and for no other purposes (as cited in Myers & Diener, 1995). This definition of happiness led scholars and researchers in the topic of happiness into a paradigm where happiness is viewed as a consequence; an end point that bears no further significance thereafter, and thus stifled the progress toward a better understanding of the topic in the past. As a consequence, more than 60 years of psychological studies were mostly devoted to the "disease model": the study of psychopathology. Moreover, there was considerable scientific pessimism over whether it is even possible to attain sustainable increases in

happiness; some believed that the pursuit of happiness goes against the conditions of our living, and that reality is designed to cause unhappiness and psychological distress (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al., 2005). Augustine (1972) even went as far as to say that "true happiness" is an unattainable goal in life; because of the consequences of "Original Sin", humankind is condemned to forever suffer on earth and to yearn for a satisfaction that can never be attained as mere mortals. Similarly, Freud argued that the pursuit of happiness is doomed to failure and can never be met in reality; therefore the aim of psychology should not be to increase happiness, but to pursue "ordinary misery" (as cited in Etcoff, 2004; Shmotkin, 2005, p. 294).

Trapped in this paradigm, the topic of happiness fell in the blind spot in psychology's field of study. Although the discipline of psychology was originally formed with three main objectives: (1) to cure mental illness, (2) to make relatively untroubled people happier, and (3) to study genius and high talent (Seligman et al., 2004), psychologists in the past became embroiled in the "disease model" and had therefore set a precedent that focused solely on the first objective. Even though the disease model played a major role in the creation of classifications for mental illnesses (e.g. depression, addictions, chronic stress) and in making them treatable, and even curable, it only paints part the picture of human psychology – this approach to psychology ultimately comes with its own set of costs. As a result, the potential benefits of positive affect or subjective well-being, have previously remained largely untested.

"we know very well how to be unwell and miserable and so little about how to thrive"

- Achor (2011, p. 11)

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Indeed, this disease focused mindset was so pervasive that, when trainee psychologists were sent to practice assessment skills with "normal" children, they were bewildered to discover that the children had no problems that they could report (Huebner & Diener, 2008). With a heavy emphasis on mental illnesses, the traditional conceptualisation of mental health in association with typical psychological assessment tools provided little information to convey beyond something akin to "the child shows normal functioning". Hence, although useful in treating mental illnesses and psychoses (e.g. relieving depression, alcohol abuse, chronic stress, anxiety, or other psychopathology), traditional conceptualisation of the human psychology failed to address the positive facets of a person, and lacked the means to describe the individual beyond his or her disability (Huebner & Diener, 2008). This led Seligman et al. (2004) to argue that there are three costs to this disease mindset: (1) psychologists become "victimologists" and "pathologisers"; (2) psychologists have forgotten about improving normal lives and high talents; and (3) in the rush to repair damages, psychologists have neglected positive interventions that help make untroubled people happier or more fulfilled. Hence, many have argued that the discipline of psychology needed to move from the disease model to the study of "what works, not just what is broken" (Achor, 2011, p. 12; Haybron, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

"You can study gravity forever without learning how to fly."

- Achor (2011, p. 11)

3.1.3. A Move Away from the Disease Model

The last 40 years have seen a gradual move away from the field's preoccupation with the disease model, and a movement towards the objectives of increasing happiness and

cultivating individual strengths. Specifically, there has been an increase in the studies addressing the potential causal role of positive emotions in determining positive life outcomes, and high levels of subjective well-being have been found to have adaptive implications rather than being merely a consequence of circumstances (e.g. Achor, 2011; E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Isen & Levin, 1972; Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005). This marked a paradigm shift in the emphasis in psychological studies concerning the topic of happiness. One of the first studies concerning this was Isen and Levin's (1972) telephone booth study which found that people who were induced with positive emotions (e.g. subjects found a coin in the telephone booth) demonstrated real changes in their behaviour: they were more likely to show prosocial and altruistic behaviours towards others (e.g. helping a confederate pick up dropped papers or volunteering for an extra study). Extensions of the study found that people induced to feel happy were not only perceived more favourably by others, but also formed favourable opinions of others (Isen & Levin, 1972; Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005).

A meta-study by Lyubomirsky, King, et al. (2005) found subjective well-being to be predictive of successes in many areas in people's lives. Amongst the other considerable implications of subjective well-being, happy people were more successful at work, had better health behaviours, formed better social relationships, were more likely to marry and stay married, and were also more likely to be satisfied with their relationships. Huebner and Diener (2008) found that happy adolescents generally demonstrated more positive functioning across intrapersonal, interpersonal, and school-related domains (e.g. sports or academia). Hence, as Etcoff (2004) argued, emotions are not just feelings, rather, they are systems that govern our thoughts and behaviours, how we perceive things, how we

remember them, and ultimately the decisions that we make. In concurrence, Robbins (2006) argued that the quality of our lives depends on the quality of our emotions. Emotions, therefore, have significant real world consequences, and here I make the assertion that positive emotions, in particular, could be the key to ameliorating some of the negative effects of modern conditions. As I discuss in the coming sections, subjective well-being is a psychological resource that influences us in several ways.

PART IV

The Happiness Solution

Contrary to the common conception that happiness tends to lead to idleness, researchers of subjective well-being have found the opposite to be true. Specifically, positive affect is linked to the "urge to do anything" and people are more active during the days when they feel happy (Fredrickson, 2008, 2009; Veenhoven, 1988). This is where happiness can play the pivotal role of attenuating the negative effects of the modern social disconnect; and potentially addressing the issue itself. As previously delineated, modern industrialised societies are characterised by: (1) a strong need for personal accomplishments, (2) expectations of immediate gratification, and (3) the pursuit of the "pleasant life." Especially relevant to the two latter characteristics, I contend that dispositional happiness or even momentary positive emotions act to separate action from mere intent by creating favourable psychological conditions that promote behaviours with real world consequences. These behaviours serve to reconnect us with others, and draw emphasis to an outward (i.e. other people) focus beyond our self-interests; thereby diminishing the obsession of self-gratification and subsequently promoting sociability.

4.0.1. Distinguishing between Actions and Fantasies

Intentions alone do not have real-world consequences. Hence, fantasising about what we would do *if* we were to take action only serves to satisfy our own ego needs; it is a form of self-focused immediate gratification that lacks real meaning or consequences. Indeed, the failure to initiate or maintain an activity, regardless of intentions, would result in a markedly decreased chance of benefitting from the activity (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al.,

2005). For example, if a lady sees an elderly man in need of help with his groceries, merely fantasising about helping the man will only provide short-term self-gratification. This lack of action not only has no consequence (i.e. the elderly man did not receive any help), but could also undermine the lady's perception of herself in the longer term (e.g. the awareness that she could have helped, but failed to do so).

Congruously, Oettingen and Mayer (2002) found that positive fantasies could undermine individual motivation to take action. The authors differentiated between positive expectations and positive fantasies; the former referred to beliefs that a desired event is likely to occur based on past experiences, whilst the latter referred to positively experienced *images* of future desired events that emerge in the stream of thought ungrounded in reality. In four studies, they found that positive expectations motivated actions, on the basis that past effortful investments or actions have resulted in successes in the past. Favourable expectations also help us interpret facts, situations, or our environments in a favourable way that motivates us to take action and realise the envisioned success (Gilbert, 2006). Hence, positive expectations predicted high effort and performance in pursuit of goal fulfilment (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002).

On the other hand, positive fantasies lead people to mentally enjoy the desired future in their present; it is an immediate mental gratification that does not require any effortful investment. And because people tend to envision success rather than failure (Gilbert, 2006), such fantasies become more satisfying as they are ungrounded in reality, and bear no risks of failure or the necessity of any real effort; the satisfaction of such fantasies thereby curbs efforts to *attempt* to achieve desired outcomes and predicts low performance (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002). Even if people were to make the attempt to

pursue their goals, the habit of indulging in unrealistic fantasies could have debilitating effects on people's self-esteem and motivation at the onset of failure (Gilbert, 2006). Although positive fantasies might provide us with temporary satisfaction by allowing us to enjoy the desired outcome and mentally explore possibilities without the investment of effort, they come with some potentially significant long-term costs. Indeed, the authors found that positive fantasies have detrimental effects on personal development; notably, subjects who demonstrated a propensity for positive fantasies were less likely to succeed in areas such as their professional life, romantic relationships, academia, and even experience poorer recovery from surgeries.

Oettingen and Mayer (2002) illustrated one of the long-term costs of positive fantasies with the example of "life tasks", such as entering the professional workforce. As mentioned above, individuals with the tendency to indulge in positive fantasies tend to be less successful in their professional lives. The authors found that this was due to the dampening effects of positive fantasies on motivation. These individuals made fewer job applications, were offered fewer jobs, and ultimately earned less money than their peers who did not indulge in such fantasies. Because one's first job often forms the basis of the career opportunities and successive job positions a person would hold during his life, lower success in entering professional life would place the individual at a disadvantaged starting point. This starting point would subsequently dictate the type of opportunities, or the lack of it, that the individual would be exposed to throughout his professional career. Not only would this pose a potential problem for the individual, but could also have adverse effects on his relationships with his parents and friends, financial and living conditions, and the

advent of starting a family. The combination of such factors could also ultimately put a toll on one's well-being, self-esteem, and their self-efficacy (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002).

Positive fantasies, therefore, could have significant deleterious effects on life outcomes and personal development. If Deci and Ryan (2000) were correct in positing that hedonism is primarily concerned with seeking pleasant feelings and avoiding unpleasant ones, positive fantasies could potentially become a damaging habit today. Especially with societies' tendencies for mental self-gratification and the emphasis on personal hedonic satisfaction, people may be more likely to engage in positive fantasies; given the availability of the Internet today, people may have even more "materials" to fuel such fantasies than before. Not only will this lead to inaction and potentially interfere with individual development, this habit could sustain our ever-persistent self-focus and perpetuate the modern day disconnect. Here, I argue that happiness or momentary positive emotions could be the overarching solution to the problem of self-focus and the social disconnect by changing our mindsets and creating the psychological conditions that are conducive for overcoming the psychological and physical barriers to action. Specifically, I posit four main mechanisms in the happiness solution: (1) building psychological resources; (2) altering our perceptions of time; and (3) changing our perceptions of our social others. And finally, (4) the activation of our rewards systems serves to tie the former three mechanisms together and acts as the "motive" that separates action from intent and fantasies.

4.1.1. Building psychological resources

Psychological resources make us more resilient to stressors and allow the maintenance of positive psychological equilibrium. According to Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, and Conway (2009), people move between the poles of immediate self-preservation and long-term investment; adjusting their attention, goals, and behaviour to the changes in their thoughts, feelings, and environment. While Cohn and colleagues' (2009) theory is concerned with the individual's internal self, I posit that the long-term investment the authors refer to could be adapted to imply an external focus on something beyond the individual self – a move away from the pole of immediate self-preservation. Whereas stress or negative affect narrows thought-action repertoires and forces attentional resources to attend to one's immediate need for self-preservation, positive emotions allow for the pursuit of other goals that may not be concurrently relevant (Fredrickson, 2009; Oishi & Koo, 2008).

Similarly, Apter (1982, as cited in Argyle, 2001) discussed the experience of the "telic" and the "paratelic" emotional states that influence people to seek different things. Specifically, in the "telic" state, people tend to seek goals – they are purposeful aspirations that will contribute to our meaning in life (e.g. activities such as studying, political participation, goal achievements, altruism, etc). Whilst the "paratelic" states influence people to seek excitement, comfort, or the arousal of certain hedonic needs at the specific point in time – which tend to be found in inherently purposeless and meaningless activities (e.g. playing games, watching movies, listening to music, eating, etc). Cacioppo et al. (2008) concur and argued that when time is perceived as limited, positive emotional experience becomes people's primary motivation; wherein people tune attentional, cognitive, and

social investments to enhance their personal feelings of emotional closeness and need for positive affect. When people become intently focused on their personal gratifications, they tend to disregard the costs that such gratification can have on others (Piff, 2013). Building on Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, psychological resilience provides the sense of security about the environment we are in, and allows us to move away from the focus on self-preservation or temporary hedonic relief (i.e. the "paratelic" state), and towards something external and beyond our individual selves.

4.1.2. A World of Negativity

Today, we are faced with an overwhelming amount of information of the world around us. With the advent of smart phones and the Internet, information is always available to us whenever and wherever we want. Although beneficial in many ways, it also means that we are now more connected to the negativities of the world, such as wars, famine, earthquakes, and terrorisms, than ever before. Despite the dramatic improvements in the human condition, we still live in a world where we are constantly reminded of atrocities such as violence, malnutrition, epidemics, and political unrest. Although such threats are removed from most of us, the ease of information access tends to make these atrocities feel much closer to home. Moreover, there will always be threats to our physical and psychological well-being that can never be completely eliminated regardless of who or where we are; threats such as failure, illnesses, accidents, interpersonal conflicts, crime, natural disasters, aging, and ultimately, death (Shmotkin, 2005). We are now experiencing a whole new level of adaptive complexity that we may not be equipped to handle. This is why, now more than ever, there is a need for strong psychological immune systems to guard against such negativities and perceived threats to our psychological well-being.

Following this, Shmotkin (2005) posited that humans have evolved psychological mechanisms that scan the world for any threats to their survival. Specifically, he proposed the "hostile world scenario (HWS)" theory; where the HWS constitutes a system of appraisal that scans the environment for actual or potential self-perceived threats to life, environment, and physical or mental well-being. This cognitive process functions to examine both present and future problems that could potentially worsen the individual's state of being. In its mild manifestation, HWS serves as a form of cognitive "vigilance and prudence regarding negative eventualities" that is vital to effective adaptive functioning (Shmotkin, 2005, p. 297). However, in its extreme manifestation, it generates constant stress and existential anxiety which could be severely damaging to one's physical and psychological well-being (Shmotkin, 2005). Given the existence of the HWS, the propagation of negativity in our media saturated world intensifies the threat to our subjective well-being. And although most people are able to keep atrocities out of their conscious minds, Baumeister (1997) argued that they are ever-present within our social and mental makeup. For example, Milgram's (1974) experiment on obedience, and the Stanford prison experiment on human behaviours in extreme social settings (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973) all goes to show that safeguards against human's capacity for evil are fallible even in modern democracies. Although negative emotions and HWS functioned to ensure the survival of our ancestors' genes, they contribute very little to our subjective well-being.

4.1.3. Negativity Bias

The pervasive effects of HWS in instilling a sense of negativity in our minds are further perpetuated by the asymmetric effects of negativity. Empirical evidence shows that "bad is stronger than good" (e.g. E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Etcoff, 2004; Fredrickson,

2009; Larsen & Prizmic, 2008; Shmotkin, 2005). It has been well-documented that negative events, such as disabilities, conflicts, trauma, or failure tend to capture more attentional resources and are more easily recalled than positive events. Additionally, negative events tend to have stronger, longer lasting, and self-perpetuating effects on people's well-being than comparable positive events (Shmotkin & Shrira, 2011). For example, Larsen and Prizmic (2008) reported an asymmetry in positive and negative affect systems; where the "negative affect systems" were more reactive to stimulus than the "positive affect systems." Similarly, Etcoff (2004) demonstrated that people can detect sweetness at the ratio of dilution at 1/200, while bitterness can be detected at the dilution ratio of 1/2 million. Hence, not only is this asymmetric reactivity present in our psyche, it is rooted in biology as well.

In addition to our reactivity to negative stimuli, Janoff-Bulman (1992) posited that negative events, such as losses and trauma, are notoriously persistent. Whilst people adapt to good events at a relatively fast rate, trauma leaves a conceptual void upon shattering its victim's previous, albeit rosier, conceptions of the world. Janoff-Bulman (1992) argued that such events tend to have lingering effects on one's psychological well-being that disrupt assumptions of the world and could easily be reactivated by the onset of stress, even after normalcy has been re-established. Studies on unemployment and divorce lend support to this finding, as those who had previously been made redundant or divorced suffer from long-term deficits in their self-esteem and subjective well-being, even after they have found new jobs or become romantically involved again (Lucas et al., 2003; see also, Fredrickson, 2009, on "negativity spiral"). Hence, negativity in the modern day has profound effects on one's psychological well-being. With a perceived sense of day-to-day survivorship, it is

difficult to move away from an emphasis on self-preservation and the pursuit of self-interest.

4.1.4. Maintaining Psychological Equilibrium and Resilience

In combating the modern day negativity and stressors, subjective well-being constitutes a favourable psychological environment that serves to regulate our appraisal of the world around us. It counterbalances the effects of the HWS and helps maintain a psychological equilibrium that mediates people's daily functioning (Shmotkin & Shrira, 2011). At medium or high levels, positive subjective well-being forms the basis of a positive state of mind, free from perceptions of threats, and allows the individual to engage and maintain ongoing behaviours. Subjective well-being does so by shielding the individual from unwarranted mental disruptions that the HWS and other external stressors may produce (Shmotkin, 2005). For example, rejections can be extremely painful experiences that leave psychological scars and trigger a rumination loss cycle that could severely damage one's psychological well-being. Winch (2014) argued that positive emotions help build stronger psychological immune systems that can break the cycle of rumination and make us more resilient to such psychological threats.

Indeed, studies on emotion regulation have found that happy people tend to be more adept at coping with stress, anxiety, and negative affect through various coping strategies. For example, individuals high in subjective well-being are able to induce positive affect by using memories with certain affective qualities to regulate the effects of a negative event. Strack, Schwarz, and Gschneidinger (1985) found that individual ratings of general life satisfaction depended not only on the affective quality of the life experiences that the person happened to recall, but also on how the individual thought about the recalled

memories. In particular, recalled memories that were temporally distant from the present can create a contrast effect on individual hedonic evaluations, whilst detailed memories of recent events that were more easily accessible were found to have a congruent effect on the participant's life satisfaction ratings, subsequently enhancing their happiness levels. In other words, an affectively negative event in the distant past was found to predict a positive present life satisfaction, whilst an affectively negative recent event was found to predict an increase in negative current life satisfaction. Using this, individuals could use their memory of past events to counter the effects of a negative event, or to enhance the hedonic qualities of a positive event. Other studies have reported similar findings, with evidence suggesting that happy people utilise memory recall to regulate their subjective well-being. Liberman, Boehm, Lyubomirsky, and Ross (2009) found that happy subjects were able to savour or "endow" past positive life events retrospectively, whilst Shmotkin and Shrira (2011) demonstrated that people can influence their evaluations of their life story using different "anchor periods" to dictate the hedonic quality of their current life satisfaction evaluations.

Research on human emotionality and coping strategies also found evidence that dispositionally happy people engage in markedly different types of coping strategies compared to their unhappy counterparts. People who rated highly in subjective well-being tend to have more effective coping abilities and were more resilient in the face of adversity (Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005). Cross-sectional studies on personality variables and coping effectiveness found that this resilience could be attributed to happy people's active coping efforts and their attribution style; wherein dispositionally happy individuals were able to maintain a positive outlook, thus, preserving a sense of hope and optimism, during negative

or stressful life events, by actively engaging in constructive coping strategies (Carver, Pozo, Harris, & Noriega, 1993; Fredrickson, 2009; McCrae & Costa, 1986; Seligman & Schulman, 1986).

This concept of hope and optimism is consistent with Oettingen and Mayer's (2002) notion of positive expectations; specifically, the general positive expectancy for life's outcomes has been found to promote the engagement of active coping strategies and encourages positive affectivity during times of difficulty. For example, in a study by Carver et al. (1993), the authors found that optimistic women in the early stages of breast cancer actively coped with the stresses of the cancer treatments and surgery using positive reframing, humour, or religion. Whereas their less optimistic counterparts employed strategies such as denial and behavioural disengagement from stressors, the optimistic patients' active coping helped them gain acceptance of their circumstances and ameliorated the distress associated with them. As a consequence, whilst dispositional happiness, acceptance, and the use of humour predicted lowered levels of distress, denial and disengagement predicted heightened levels of stress and maladjustment (Argyle, 2001; Carver et al., 1993). Furthermore, the happier patients were more likely to follow through with the treatment regimen and therefore had higher chances of survival. Other concepts related to positive expectations include one's locus of control, and self-esteem (F. F. Chen, Jing, Hayes, & Lee, 2012).

Apart from denial and emotional disengagement, ruminating is one of the most commonly adopted strategies by unhappy people during times of stress or adversity; not only has rumination been found to be an ineffective coping strategy, it is one that could cause further impediments to individual functioning. Rumination, as defined by Larsen and

Prizmic (2008) is the persistent tendency to have repetitive thoughts about a particular (usually negative) event in one's mind, to relive the feelings that had arisen from it, to imagine different outcomes, and to regret one's actions thereafter. The act of rumination is a dispositional trait that is characterised by a greater reactivity to stressful events, and signifies the breakdown in negative affect regulation, perpetuated by an overemphasis on one's negative feelings and an over-enhancement of one's negative cognitions, and predicts and prolongs depressive and anxiety disorders, stress, and other psychological disruptions (E. Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006; Larsen & Prizmic, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Boehm, Kasri, & Zehm, 2011; Winch, 2014). Lyubomirsky et al. (2011) found that the tendency to ruminate impairs individual functioning. For example, rumination disrupts task performance abilities – due to the intrusive nature of rumination, it depletes individual cognitive resources and impairs the ability to concentrate on task-relevant thoughts and behaviours, and this subsequently predicted lower task performance, even for trivial tasks.

Conversely, happy people were less likely to engage in such negative ruminative thought processes, and were able to disengage from past failures or underperformance, even when pushed to dwell on them. In the study by Lyubomirsky et al. (2011), although the happy participants received the same news about their subpar performance compared to a confederate, they did not demonstrate any drop in task abilities. Instead, these participants were able to quickly rationalise their lower performance, suppress any cognitive interference, and refocus their cognitive resources back to the task at hand; subsequently maintaining their superior task abilities. Some participants even demonstrated heightened task performance, implying that they became more motivated to perform better at the onset of a negative feedback. This capacity to maintain a positive psychological environment

has especially important implications in our modern age, as it helps us disengage from the effects of being constantly surrounded with negativity, and unrealistic, irrelevant standards of social comparisons.

Other implications of positive emotionality were found in bereavement studies, where positive emotions at moderately high levels form an effective buffer against negative emotions associated with grief and stress recovery. Similarly, Fredrickson and Levenson (1998) and Fredrickson (2009) posited that positive affect could "undo" or neutralise the effects of grief and stress on our physical and mental well-being. Positive emotions subsequently predicted positive adjustment and recovery regardless of the intensity of the negative emotions; hence, positive affect is a strong predictor of effective coping abilities and life satisfaction, with its effects persisting even in the midst of intense negative events (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). For example, Keltner and Bonanno (1997) found that the expression of genuine positive emotions during times of bereavement, especially genuine heartfelt laughter, was associated with heightened levels of adjustment and emotional recovery from grief. Similarly, in the post-September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003) found that individuals characterised as high in trait positive affect and resilience were less likely to experience depression and were more likely to derive positive meanings from the attacks, such as closer familial bonds, and sense of community. They also reported psychological growth in hardiness.

All these point to the conclusion that dispositionally happy people are more adept at maintaining favourable psychological environments, especially during times of adversity. With the maintenance of his or her psychological well-being, the individual can suspend an emphasis on threat survivorship and a narrow pursuit of temporary hedonic satisfaction,

and move to focus on something other than themselves. It is only by suspending the self-focus, that people can become aware of the needs of others (e.g. social others, society, environment, etc.), and subsequently set in motion the behaviours to create change and attend to such needs. The implications of a move away from survivorship include more prosocial behaviours, broadened thought-behaviour repertoires (Fredrickson, 2009), and engagement with "the meaningful life" (Seligman et al., 2004). Moreover, these behaviours have also been found to increase one's subjective well-being, thereby creating a positive self-perpetuating loop.

4.2.0. Altering the perception of time

Time is probably the most sought after and scarcest "commodity" for most people, especially in the modern day where everyone is rushed for time. Perlow (1999) posited that modern societies are characterised by a "time famine" where people feel that they have too much to do but not enough time to do it. Indeed, a poll of more than 1,000 Americans by Carroll (2008) found that nearly half (47%) of the respondents felt that this "time famine" characterised their everyday lives. Studies have found that this perceived shortage of time could have potential negative side effects on people's well-being; including troubles sleeping, stress, and difficulty in delaying gratification (Lehto, 1998, as cited in Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012; Vuckovic, 1999). It is also logical to assume that when pressed for time, people will be less likely to invest in the development and maintenance of other contributors to well-being – such as the aforementioned psychological resources or to invest in their social resources. Hence, perceived shortage of time could potentially add to the problem of our modern day social disconnect.

Research in the role of emotions on time perception is relatively scarce, but some evidence suggest that emotionality plays a role in influencing people's perception of time (Droit-Volet & Meck, 2007). Notably, Rudd et al. (2012) found one of the ten aforementioned forms of happiness, awe, to have an effect on people's perception of time. Here, Rudd et al. (2012) defined awe as a distinct and powerful emotion with two defining features: (1) it involves perceptual vastness, which is the sense that one has encountered something immense in size, number, scope, complexity, ability, or social bearing; and (2) awe stimulates a need for accommodation and alters one's understanding of the world. Together, these features serve to expand one's typical frame of reference and stimulate the creation of new mental models. People experiencing awe may feel a connection to the vastness of world beyond their usual perception of it, and they may suspend their thoughts of themselves to accommodate for this. Fredrickson (2009, p. 46) found that when in awe, "Boundaries melt away and [one] feels part of something larger than [oneself]." Rudd et al. (2012) found that this expansion of one's frame of reference had an effect on the way time is perceived; participants who were prompted to feel a sense of awe subsequently perceived time as more abundant, compared to those in the neutral control conditions. However, evidence behind the effect of emotions on time perception is limited, and interestingly Rudd et al. (2012) found that the general emotion of "happiness" constricted people's perception of time rather than expanded it. Other researchers, however, reported evidence to the contrary (e.g. Fredrickson, 2009), in which some forms of happiness (e.g. joy, serenity, gratitude) were found to promote behaviours that suggest increases in perceived time availability. In line with Fredrickson (2009), one possibility is that, because positive emotions give us a sense of security, they suppress our existential anxiety (see also, Terror Management Theory by Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon, 1986), thereby

promoting a sense of abundance of our time left on Earth (i.e. temporarily changing our perception of time), but, future research would be needed to address this.

4.2.1. Implications of Perceived Time Availability

In a classic study, Darley and Batson (1973) found that the perception of availability of time had significant implications for individual prosocial behaviours. Specifically, they cited past research on bystander intervention during emergency situations was unable to reliably identify any personality determinants in prosocial behaviours (e.g. Machiavellianism, authoritarianism, social desirability, alienation, and social responsibility). Even influencing people to think altruistically did not significantly predict prosocial behaviours in such situations. Darley and Batson's (1973) study demonstrated no significant differences between theological seminary subjects who were primed to think altruistically using the parable of the Good Samaritan, and subjects in a control condition. Rather, what they found as predictive of helping and the degree of help offered when exposed to a man slumped in a doorway groaning in distress was whether the subjects were manipulated by a research confederate to feel pressed for time when proceeding to their destination ("Oh, you're late. They were expecting you a few minutes ago. . ." versus "It'll be a few minutes before they're ready for you. . ."). Darley and Batson (1973) found that a person not in a hurry may stop and offer help to the person in distress, but subjects in a hurry were likely to keep going (and on several occasions, the hurried seminary student, including those in the Good Samaritan condition, literally stepped over the victim as he rushed to reach his destination).

Goleman (2007) attributed this result to an inward and present focus of attention; whereby people pressed for time would tend to focus on their own immediate thoughts and

needs. For example, people rushing to work would probably be thinking about the fastest way to their workplace, or be contemplating what work they need to do for the day. Tolman (1948) conceptualised this as the "narrowing of the cognitive map"; in a hurried state, people's field of focus and mental maps shrink, subsequently diminishing their ability to perceive an occasion such as the bystander intervention as requiring any ethical decision. Indeed, when asked about the victim in distress, the hurried seminary students reported being aware of the victim at the time of the interaction, but it was only in hindsight that they interpreted the situation as someone requiring assistance. In their narrowed cognitive map, interpretations of other people's situations were deferred, as their attention was directed elsewhere (i.e. intrapersonally). Other studies have found similar results, where insufficient time availability was found to be a common barrier to volunteering and engaging in community service in a sample of working women (Strober & Weinberg, 1980). Other negative effects of the perceived lack of time include unhealthy lifestyle choices – such as opting for fast foods (Darian & Cohen, 1995), having unhealthy diets, and less family meals at home (Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, Story, Croll, & Perry, 2003). Moreover, not having enough time is an oft-cited reason for not engaging in leisure experiences, such as going on vacations and engaging in sporting activities (Mannell & Zuzanek, 1991).

Corroborating these findings, Rudd et al. (2012) found that when subjects were primed to perceive time as abundant, they demonstrated markedly stronger preference for experiential purchases over material ones. This has significant implications for our subjective well-being. Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) found that purchases made to acquire life experiences (i.e. experiential purchases) made people happier than purchases made to acquire material possessions (i.e. material purchases) (see also, Van Boven, 2005). The

authors argued that, while material possessions were more likely to run the risk of unnecessary negative comparisons and adaptation, experiential purchases were less susceptible to social comparisons and tend to have a long-term positive effect on our subjective well-being. Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) and Van Boven (2005) attributed this to three qualities of experiences: (1) experiences are more open to positive reinterpretations from hindsight; (2) they are more resistant to disadvantageous comparisons; and (3) they foster successful social relationships as experiences tend to be inherently social.

In other words, experiences can be improved in retrospect as people tend to forget minor annoyances that occurred during the experience. For example, for vacations, people are able to reconstruct their experience with a positive spin so that the vacation seems better in retrospect than it was in reality (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008). Experiences are also more resistant to disadvantageous comparisons that foster regret or disappointment; unlike material possessions where it is easy to objectively compare the quality of one with another, experiences tend to be less comparable as they are highly subjective and personal. Carter and Gilovich (2012) found that people tend to associate themselves more closely to their life experiences and experiential purchases than their material possessions, and also felt that purchases described in terms of their experiential qualities overlapped more with their sense of identity. Participants were also more likely to mention experiential purchases when telling their life story, and described experiential purchases as yielding greater insight into a person's true self, compared to material purchases. Finally, experiences are inherently more social than material possessions; allowing one to cultivate their relationship with others during the experience, and when sharing the experience in retrospect (Demir &

Davidson, 2012; Van Boven, 2005). Moreover, experiences are more socially valued and tend to have a positive stereotype associated with them (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

Hence, this preference of experientialism over materialism is not only beneficial to our subjective well-being by quelling our materialistic tendencies and promoting social relations, it also has implications for our consumption behaviour that could impact environmental sustainability (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). Indeed, Dambrun and Ricard (2011) argued for the importance of a future orientation and a consideration for others, where we take into account the implications of our behaviours on our sojourners, our future survival, and the future generations. A future orientation with more consideration for others, made possible by changes in our perception of time, was found to predict increases in savings behaviour and investments in resource building (e.g. building psychological, physiological, or social resources that are not immediately necessary) (Broaden-and-Build by Fredrickson, 2009), more environmentally responsible behaviours, and a decrease in overconsumption (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011).

On a related note, this perceived abundance of time and preference for experiences have important implications for allowing people to build up their psychological and social resources. When time is perceived as abundant, people's motivation and goals may change to non-concurrent goals, such as acquiring new information and expanding their horizons (Cacioppo et al., 2008). In Fredrickson's (2009) oft-cited Broaden-and-Build Theory, the author posited that, when people perceive the environment as non-threatening, they are more inclined to engage in activities and behaviours that are not immediately relevant but could have potential adaptive benefits. The perception of time availability could be one of the components that constitute a non-threatening environment that is conducive for the

aforementioned resource building. Fredrickson (2009) argued that, under such circumstances, people would engage in exploratory behaviours and play. For example, patas monkeys engaging in a game of chase are inherently learning skills that have adaptive implications (i.e. they are learning the skills to escape capture). Similarly, Brown (2008) found that individuals who engaged in play at a young age demonstrated superior problem solving abilities later on in life; an ability he attributes to the curiosity and exploration that those individuals displayed within their perceived safe environments. Brown (2008) also reported that whereas play behaviours neutralised hostility, even across different animal species, the suppression of developmentally normal play can breed hostility. Brown's (2008) study of the Virginia Tech and Texas Tower massacres revealed that the perpetrators of these atrocities shared a commonality – the perpetrators were found to be deprived of normal developmental play activities when young.

Another implication of an increase in perceived time availability is that it counteracts the "time famine" (Perlow, 1999) that characterises modern industrialised societies. Honoré (2004) believed that this can allow people to slow down and to savour the things that they do. Many researchers have found that the savouring and practicing gratitude help enhance the intensity and frequency of people's happiness levels, thereby increasing their level of subjective well-being (e.g. E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Fredrickson, 2009; Hurley & Kwon, 2012; Liberman et al., 2009; Sul et al., 2012). Not only does the ability to slow down and savour an experience increase our subjective well-being by continuing to elicit positive feelings from the present and the past experiences (e.g. Fredrickson, 2009; Liberman et al., 2009), the act of slowing down has real world implications. For example, Honoré (2004) reported that the "slow work movement", where people are encouraged to take frequent

breaks at work, demonstrates increases in individual task performances. Similarly, schools that implemented homework-free days demonstrated a 20% increase in their students' average mathematics and science scores. Hence, the act of slowing down and savouring can have objectively beneficial outcomes.

In summary, when time is perceived as limited, people are compelled to focus on self-preservation and the satisfaction of their immediate psychological, physiological, or hedonic needs (Cohn et al., 2009; Rudd et al., 2012). Whereas negative affect promotes behaviours that focus on the present, positive affect is found to suspend one's perception of time, making people perceive time as abundant (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2009). When time is perceived as abundant, it encourages investment in social others and the future, rather than a self and present focus. Not only does this have implications on our social behaviours, where we are more likely suspend our self-focus and engage in prosocial behaviours, it also changes our consumption behaviours, as a future orientation would encourage us to be more mindful with our resources (Ricard, 2014). As evidence suggests, all of these have important implications on our subjective well-being, and it may prove advantageous for future research to further explore the psychological and neurological mechanisms that control one's perception of time, and the specific conditions in which positive emotions may exert their influence on such mechanisms.

4.3.0. Changing the Perception of Others

According to the social-functional perspective, one of the core functions of emotions is to coordinate a person's social interactions and relationships. The theory posits that positive emotions serve to communicate affiliative intent and approachability to our social others, and also promote similar positive emotional states in others involved. This subsequently creates psychological and social environments conducive to the formation of mutually satisfying relationships and long-term cooperative bonds (Mauss et al., 2011). Corroborating this, Lucas, Diener, Suh, Shao, and Grob (2000) found that positive affectivity also functions as the "glue" that binds together various aspects of affiliative competency such as ascendance, sociability, and relatedness. More importantly, positive emotions foster greater sensitivity towards others and positively alter our perceptions of others; promoting social connectedness and allowing us to reap the benefits of social relationships.

4.3.1. Influence of Emotions on Social Perceptions

In one of the earliest studies on the role of positive emotions in social interactions, Isen (1970) found that, when subjects were "accidentally" left alone in the waiting room with a research confederate posing as a fellow participant, subjects induced into a positive mood were more sociable towards the research confederate, were more likely to initiate conversations with her, and showed more interest in the conversation compared to those who were induced to feel sad. Similarly, Cunningham (1988) and Kashdan and Roberts (2004) found that participants induced to feel happy were more likely to engage in social interactions with the confederate and disclosed more personal information, compared to their less happy peers. Not only that, those high in positive affect were also more likely to report such interactions as more enjoyable and of higher quality, liked their conversation

partner more, rated the conversation as less awkward or forced, as more pleasant, smooth and relaxed (Berry & Hansen, 1996), and demonstrated more sensitivity and concern for others (Oishi & Koo, 2008).

Researchers attributed some of these positive social outcomes to the influence of emotions on changing people's perception of others; whereby happy people were found to form higher opinions of others compared to those low in subjective well-being. In a cross-sectional study by Judge and Higgins (1998), faculty members high in trait positive affect wrote relatively more favourable letters of recommendation compared to their less happy counterparts. Staw and Barsade (1993) found similar results where participants high in dispositional positive affect were rated by objective observers as evidencing stronger leadership abilities while performing a management task. While in an experimental study, students who were previously induced into a positive mood rated their job applicants more favourably when conducting a simulated job interview (Baron, 1987). They subsequently rated applicants higher on a number of job-related and personal dimensions, and were more likely to "hire" the applicants compared to those induced to feel negative.

Hence, relative to unhappy people, happy people seem to form more favourable and positive perceptions of the people surrounding them. Indeed, in a study by Lyubomirsky and Tucker (1998) where participants interacted with a research confederate before watching a series of videotapes depicting an unfamiliar student in various situations, the authors found that participants who were induced to feel happy subsequently rated the confederate whom they just met as more self-assured, open, tolerant, and warm. Moreover, this positive first impression also motivated them to express more interest in becoming friends with the confederate and to have her as a partner in a class project (see also, Baron, 1987;

Cunningham, 1988; Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005). Additionally, the happy participants showed more liking towards the person they saw on the videotape compared to their unhappy counterparts.

This positive perception of others extends beyond the realm of first encounters with people, as many have found that happy people tend to describe their friends, spouses and families in more positive terms, reported more satisfaction with their relationships and social activities, and had less jealous tendencies toward other people in competing for their partner's affections (Baron, 1987; Cooper, Okamura, & Gurka, 1992; Luo Lu & Argyle, 1991; Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). Similarly, couples responding to a questionnaire after watching a happy movie were found to rate their relationship as more satisfying, reported greater admiration for each other and more self-disclosure within the relationship, compared to those who just watched a sad movie (Forgas, Levinger, & Moylan, 1994). In other words, not only do happy people form more favourable first impressions of others, they also remember more positive information about their existing relationships (see also, Ruvolo, 1998).

These findings indicate that happy individuals perceive their social relationships and interactions as more pleasurable and satisfying compared to less happy people. This is important, as Perel (2015) posited that there is the culture of "I deserve to be happy" today; wherein she argued that if people used to get divorced because they were *unhappy*, today, people divorce because they could be *happier*. A positive evaluation of our social relationships would not only give us the opportunity to enjoy our relationships more, it would allow us to experience the previously mentioned "critical incidents" that help forge stronger ties with our partners. As Achor (2011) argued, adversity can stimulate growth, and in this case, help build deeper and more meaningful bonds with our social others. Rather

than abandoning a relationship because they just want *more* from the relationship, because of the changes in perception, people would place higher value on their existing relationships, and continue to invest in those relationships and endure the "growing pains," even at the onset of failure or problems.

4.3.2. Perception of Happy People

Not only do happy people perceive others more favourably, they are also themselves perceived in more favourable terms. Research has found that happy people are rated highly in terms of likeability; and they are found to be judged as more physically attractive, more intelligent and competent, warmer and friendlier, less selfish, and even more likely to go to heaven (E. Diener & Fujita, 1995; E. Diener, Wolsic, & Fujita, 1995; King & Napa, 1998; Mathes & Kahn, 1975). Laboratory studies by Berry and Hansen (1996) and Kashdan and Roberts (2004) corroborated these findings: when participants interacted with partners of high positive affectivity, subjects found the social interaction to be more enjoyable and of higher quality; and reported feeling interpersonally closer and more attracted to their partners. Furthermore, this finding was not limited to those involved in the social interaction, as neutral observers also rated the interaction as more positive and enjoyable. These findings could be attributed to happier people's social competence and greater sensitivity towards others, as they would be more likely to listen and to engage with the other person, and find common grounds (e.g. shared interests, or hobbies) that make their interactions more enjoyable; subsequently encouraging social connections at deeper and more meaningful levels.

Similarly, women who exhibited genuine happiness in their photographs were liked more by neutral judges of their photos, compared to those who looked less happy or had

non-genuine smiles (i.e. the genuine Duchenne smile – described as a smile involving the contraction of both zygomatic major muscle, that raises the corners of the mouth; and the orbicularis oculi muscle, which raises the cheeks and contracts the muscles around the eyes or "smiling with the eyes"; whereas non-Duchenne smile only involves the zygomatic major muscle). The judges subsequently reported that they expected future hypothetical interactions with the women in the photos who had genuine smiles to be relatively more rewarding as well (Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005). E. Diener and Fujita (1995) found that friends and family members of happy people tended to rate the subjects as more socially skilled, more self-confident, assertive, and also as having stronger romantic relationships, more family support, and more close friends, compared to the less happy subjects. Happy moods not only help us perceive our social interactions as more rewarding, they also lead us to appear more appealing and inviting to potential interaction partners (Veenhoven, 1988).

4.3.3. Causes of Positive Perceptions of Others

One of the proposed underlying mechanisms behind this change in perception towards others is the self-other overlap. Johnson and Fredrickson (2005) and Fredrickson (2009) argued that there is a causal link between our emotions and the way we perceive things (in this case, how we see our social others); wherein she found that positive emotions broaden people's views of themselves and blur the "boundaries that separate 'me' from 'you'." People move from classifying others as distinctly separate entities (i.e. "me" versus "you") to seeing more interconnections and overlaps (or similarities) between the self with others (i.e. to see others as a part of "us"). Indeed, people induced into a good mood have been found to make more inclusive group representations; defining others as part of their in-group and subsequently used broader definitions of group memberships (Lyubomirsky,

King, et al., 2005). Lyubomirsky, King, et al. (2005) reported that, although happy individuals were more likely to use mental shortcuts and stereotypes when evaluating the external qualities/attributes of other people, they were also more likely to include more diverse people as part of their groups. Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992) called this concept the "self-expansion", where temporary boosts in positive affectivity allow people to incorporate other people's skills, characteristics, resources, and identities as their own. Rather than focusing on individual differences, momentary positive emotions draw people's attention towards the similarities shared between them and their social others; hence cultivating a sense of connection (or relatedness) and oneness to the people in their lives.

Johnson and Fredrickson (2005) found that emotions such as joy, gratitude, and love were able to temporarily broaden the minds of their subjects and eliminate what researchers called the "own-race bias in face recognition". This bias refers to people's lack of ability to distinguish unique facial characteristics of individuals across different racial lines; people tend to be inept at recognising persons who are racially different from themselves. Johnson and Fredrickson (2005) argued that when in neutral or negative emotional states, the first thing we notice about another person is their race rather than their individual characteristics. However when in positive mood states, the self-other overlap eliminates this tendency altogether and helps us see others as part of the global human race; hence, setting aside divisive group identities and helping people become just as skilled at recognising individuals across races as they are at recognising persons of their own race. Ultimately, we extend our identities to think of all others as belonging to the human race; irrespective of divisive factors like race, gender, age, social group, or profession.

4.3.4. Implications of Self-Other Overlap

The self-other overlap has important implications for our social climate. A study of pre-schoolers by Ricard (2014) found that pre-schoolers who were trained in 8 weeks of mindfulness and loving kindness meditation (i.e. a well-established intervention for creating positive affectivity) displayed non-biased altruistic acts towards other pre-schoolers in a "sticker test". In particular, before the start of the intervention, the pre-schoolers showed a tendency to distribute more stickers to their friends than a non-friend, an unknown child, or a sick child. However, after the mindfulness intervention, the pre-schoolers gave roughly equal numbers of stickers to their friend, non-friend, the unknown child, and the sick child; showing a marked decrease in prejudice and biases in their acts of altruism.

The implications of the self-other overlap extend beyond the pre-school and influence our propensity for hostility and competition as well. For example, Cowan, Neighbors, DeLaMoreaux, and Behnke (1998) found that college women who rated themselves as happy were less likely to exhibit hostility towards other women compared to their unhappy counterparts. Consequently, these lowered levels of aggression for happier individuals altered individual tendencies in conflict resolution: individuals high on trait or momentary positive affect demonstrated a decreased preference for conflict resolution through avoidance and competition; an increased tendency for reducing conflict through collaboration (Baron, Fortin, Frei, Hauver, & Shack, 1990; Larsen & Eid, 2008); were more likely to offer help to others (Baron, 1990; Baron, Rea, & Daniels, 1992); and demonstrated a preference for collaborative learning (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011).

Similarly, those high on positive affect were also more likely to make concessions during face-to-face negotiations and to favour win-win outcomes (Baron, 1990). Carnevale

and Isen (1986) induced groups with a positive mood and found they were more likely to reach an optimal agreement amongst themselves, and less likely to resort to aggressive negotiation tactics and stonewalling. Congruous with these findings, in a conflict resolution study by Barsade, Ward, and Sonnenfeld (2000), chronically happy CEOs of 62 American companies and their top managers reported that work groups comprising members high in average trait positive affect were less likely to experience workplace conflict and demonstrated a preference for collaborative conflict resolution, as opposed to competition that can perpetuate negativity and discord (see also, Baron et al., 1990; Barsade, 2002; Forgas, 1989).

These changes in our perception towards others could have important implications on our social connectedness. Citing Oishi and Koo's (2008) findings of people's increases in sensitivity and concern towards others when in good moods, positive affect could be the "spark" that sets off the sequence of changes to people's perception of others. Not only do people move away from the preoccupation of the self, greater sensitivity means that people become more socially aware and in tuned with others as well. As Goleman (2007) argued, it is our ability to tune in to others that separates us from sociopaths. Along with the favourable changes in perception of others, people would be more likely to invest in their social relationships and connect with their social others. Hence, happiness enhances our social sensitivity and changes our perception of others in positive ways, subsequently promoting a social environment that is conducive for cultivating deep, meaningful bonds.

4.4.0. Activating our Psychological Reward Systems

According to Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al. (2005), the engagement in an activity requires two different kinds of effort: (1) the effort to initiate the activity, and (2) the effort to carry out and maintain the activity. Hence, any benefits that one could reap from an activity would be highly dependent on one's ability to initiate and maintain the said activity. Arguably, this is where positive emotions have the pivotal role in separating action from mere intent or fantasies; trait subjective well-being and even momentary positive emotions motivate people to take action, as opposed to merely indulging in fantasies or intentions. Contrary to the common conceptions that happiness leads to idleness, researchers in the field of subjective well-being have linked positive emotionality to the "urge to do anything"; wherein people were found to be more active during the days when they felt happy compared to when they were in neutral or sad moods (Fredrickson, 2008, 2009). Moreover, Schimmack (2008) found that happy people reported higher frequencies of activities, regardless of the types of activity or activity partners.

Indeed, Schimmack (2008) found that positive affect energised and motivated people to overcome the physical and psychological barriers to initiating activities, thereby enhancing one's ability to take action and reap the potential benefits of such activities. Subjective well-being or momentary positive affect achieves this effect by activating one's psychological reward systems to ensure the motivation to approach is stronger than the motivation to avoid – Cacioppo, Gardner, and Berntson (1999) referred to this differential motivational tendency as the "positivity offset". The absence of this offset would mean that individuals in low-arousal environment (i.e. nothing extraordinarily exciting) would not be motivated to approach any novel and seemingly neutral stimulus or situations; in other

words, they would not initiate any engagement with activities that do not seem immediately rewarding (such as, altruistic or prosocial behaviours that require some short-term sacrifices). The positivity offset motivates action and promotes approach behaviours that could have potential real world benefits and consequences by influencing people to perceive certain situations as rewarding.

4.4.1. Influences of the Tendency to Approach

Gilbert (2006) argued that most events and stimuli that we are exposed to on a regular basis tend to be ambivalent, and our minds exploit this ambiguity to interpret the stimuli in ways that confirm our beliefs and identity. Here, the activation of the psychological reward system serves to promote individual approach behaviour by encouraging the positive interpretation of our environment and allowing us to perceive something neutral or ambiguous as potentially rewarding (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). In stark contrast with positive fantasies, this positive perception or interpretation is a belief that certain behaviours, stimulus, or situations in the future would be positive or lead to positive outcomes (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002). Oettingen and Mayer (2002) linked this positive expectation to internal mechanisms such as self-efficacy (i.e. whether one can perform certain actions in its relevant contexts), outcome expectations (i.e. whether certain behaviours would lead to the desired outcomes), or their general expectations (i.e. encompassing both efficacy and outcome expectations to determine the likelihood of an outcome). In all cases, a positive expectation is the belief that approaching certain stimuli or situations could be potentially rewarding for the person.

Gray (1994) argued that these approach or avoidant behaviours can be explained through three fundamental systems of emotions: (1) the "Behavioural Activation System

(BAS)", (2) the "Behavioural Inhibition System (BIS)", and (3) the "Fight-Flight System (FFS)". These three systems were found to have measurable psychophysiological activation; wherein mental and physical states are intricately connected and influence each other (Lucas, 2008). Gray (1994) posited that trait and momentary characteristics such as neuroticism and negative affect (e.g. fear and disgust) are linked to the activation of the BIS (which regulates reactions to signals of conditioned punishments and non-rewards) and the FFS (i.e. a regulator of reactions to signals of unconditioned punishment and non-rewards). In other words, neuroticism and negative affect elicits fear responses such as avoidance or withdrawal behaviours. However, it could also be reasonable to assume that negative emotions require active emotional maintenance in order for the individual to preserve their psychological equilibrium, thereby inhibiting (or withdrawing from) behaviours that require any expenditure of mental or physical resources on stimulus that are not immediately relevant to their survival.

Conversely, personality traits such as extraversion are characterised by the frequent activation of the BAS, which regulates reactions to signals of conditioned rewards and non-punishment, subsequently promoting approach behaviours. Trait and momentary positive emotions such as happiness and excitement share a similar link to the activation of the BAS; where, in the absence of perceived threats, individuals experiencing positive affect are more sensitive to the rewards in their environment, even when the stimulus is seemingly neutral (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Gray, 1994; Lucas, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al., 2005; Shmotkin, 2005). Happy people tend to be more sensitive to the intrinsic rewards of their environments (i.e. possess more reactive BAS) and seem to have the ability to subjectively extract positive meaning from their experiences, even from neutral or negative

experiences (e.g. Achor, 2011; E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Fredrickson et al., 2003; Gray, 1994). E. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) attributed this ability to individual AIM (Attention, Interpretation, and Memory) tendencies; in which the model posits that memory recall and perception towards a stimulus is dependent on three sequential factors: Attention to the event/stimulus, Interpretation of said event/stimulus, and Memory retrieval of the specified event/stimulus. Robinson and Compton (2008) argued that the initial stage "attention" is essential for the process of information encoding, while the "interpretation" stage functions to disambiguate daily events in an identity-coherent/reinforcing manner (Achor, 2011; E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Fredrickson, 2009; Gilbert, 2006). Positive emotions serve to influence people's "AIM" by encouraging them to (1) attend to the positive aspects of the stimulus or event, (2) interpret the stimulus or event as positive, and subsequently (3) prime the recall of past positive stimulus or events.

As our mental resources are finite, it is difficult (if not, impossible) to fully attend to both the positive and negative aspects of an event. The allocation of attentional resources to positive stimuli would not only elicit positive affect, but as a consequence, also inhibit the activation of negative interpretation. By paying attention to the positive aspects of specific stimuli or events, and interpreting them in meaningful ways, individuals high in trait and momentary positive affect are more likely and easily able to recall positive aspects of certain events and stimuli; while inhibiting negative memory recall. Following this, Robbins (2006) and Etcoff (2004) posited that the way we perceive and interpret events can have profound effects on the mental models we form of the world, subsequently shaping our emotions, actions, and meaning we derive from life events; all of which have real world implications.

4.4.2. Implications of Rewards System Activation

Following rewards system activation and the AIM model, happy people would be more sensitive to the intrinsic rewards of social interactions, tend to view social interactions as rich and rewarding, and would be able to derive more satisfaction from them. Because of this, happy individuals are more likely to seek out such interactions that reinforce their positive beliefs and expectations of their social engagements (Schaller & Cialdini, 1990). Indeed, when induced with positive moods, people expressed more interests in participating in social, prosocial, strenuous leisure and other general activities (Argyle, 2001). For example, students induced to feel happy showed greater interests in engaging in social and leisure activities (e.g. attending a party, going on holiday, or participating in sporting events) compared to those in neutral or sad moods (Cunningham, 1988). This approach behaviour, elicited by the activation of the psychological reward systems, could account for why happy people tend to enjoy more success in, not only the social realm, but also other areas such as health, and job success.

Dispositional positive affect or subjective well-being has similar effects on one's propensity for social engagement. Amongst the Big Five personality traits, extraversion and neuroticism are particularly strong correlates of subjective well-being ratings; where extraversion positively correlates with individual happiness, whilst neuroticism is negatively associated to happiness ratings. This link between extraversion and subjective well-being could be due to extraverts' ability to satisfy their "need to belong" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995); in which extraverts' tendency to have higher levels of social activities, engagement, enthusiasm, and self-confidence could be accounted for by the frequent activation of the BAS when it comes to social engagements. This is because extraverts tend to interpret social

engagements or activities as intrinsically rewarding and tend to derive greater pleasure from them, therefore, they are more likely to approach social situations and are more receptive to novel experiences (e.g. trying new things with friends, or meeting new people) (see also, Oettingen & Mayer, 2002, on positive expectations). Indeed, experimental studies have found that happy people derive more pleasure and report higher levels of enjoyment for even mundane tasks such as category-sorting (Hirt, Melton, McDonald, & Harackiewicz, 1996; Murray, Sujan, Hirt, & Sujan, 1990) and stressful tasks like group negotiations (Carnevale & Isen, 1986).

4.4.3. Social Implications

The propensity to approach and view even the most mundane tasks as rewarding encourages people to be more open to experiences and to engage in activities that are otherwise perceived as unrewarding. As previously discussed, studies have found that happy people reported engaging in a greater frequency of activities in general, had more social interactions, and were involved in more group leisure activities (Cunningham, 1988; Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005). They also attended club meetings more frequently, held more organisational affiliations, expressed greater desires to learn new skills, and were more informed about the political climate. In several diary studies, researchers found that on days when respondents reported high levels of positive affect they also reported spending relatively more time socialising with friends, family, or romantic partners (Lucas, 2000; D. Watson, Clark, McIntyre, & Hamaker, 1992) and a greater frequency of being engaged in some form of activity (e.g. attending parties, visiting a museum, shopping, or vacationing) (Cunningham, 1988; D. Watson et al., 1992). Similarly, experience sampling studies revealed that positive affect reported during any particular time of day were related

to feeling active and alert, to being with friends, and to engaging in leisure activities, such as socialising, playing sports, and hobbies (Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 1991; Kemp et al., 2008; Lucas, 2000).

This outgoing characteristic and tendency to approach is consistent with the personality trait of extraversion, which is a well-established correlate of happiness, chronic positive affect, and life satisfaction. Lucas (2000) characterised extraverts as "warm, gregarious, sociable, assertive, interested in new things, affiliative, lively, active and energetic". In particular, affiliation, or the inclination to relate to other people, is an important facet that extraverts and dispositionally happy share. In an experience sampling study by Csikszentmihalyi and Wong (1991), the researchers found that positive affect was reported particularly during times when the participating high school students were feeling sociable. Similarly, women who exhibited genuine happiness in their college photos were more likely to describe themselves as high in affiliation, and were more likely to be described as such by observers as well (Harker & Keltner, 2001). Given happy people's tendency to (1) perceive situations and people in more positive ways, (2) to be perceived more favourably by others, and (3) to engage in high levels of (social) activities, this high level of sociability could account for happy people's penchant for success in their social relationships; as the tendency to engage in activities could help develop their social competence and their ability to derive greater satisfaction from social interactions.

Moreover, not only were happy people found to be more satisfied with their relationships and social interactions, as previously mentioned, objective links between happiness and relationship status have been well established by researchers on relationships (e.g. M. L. Diener & McGavran, 2008; Lucas et al., 2003). Longitudinal studies

have found that dispositionally happy people were more likely to be married in their follow-up studies compared to their unhappy cohorts. For example, G. N. Marks and Fleming (1999) found that unmarried respondents who were one standard deviation above the mean happiness levels were one and a half times more likely to be married in their follow-up study compared to those with mean-level happiness. Those who were two standard deviations above the mean level happiness were twice as likely to be married at a later time period. A 6-year longitudinal study of Australians corroborated these findings (Headey & Veenhoven, 1989). Similarly, Spanier and Furstenberg (1982) discovered that happy people had a higher likelihood of remarrying after a divorce compared to those who were unhappy. These findings are unsurprising as people would be more likely to expose themselves to social situations if they deemed such situations to be intrinsically rewarding; thereby providing them with the opportunities to meet new people, and subsequently increasing their chances of meeting potentially suitable mates.

Hence, happy or extraverted people demonstrate greater aptitudes for acquiring friends (e.g. they are friendlier, more likeable, more likely to engage in active relationship management, and a propensity to approach social activities) compared to their less happy peers (e.g. Isen, 1970; Isen & Levin, 1972; Lyubomirsky, King, et al., 2005; Veenhoven, 2008). This propensity to approach is uncharacteristic of those high in trait neuroticism or depressive symptoms, as these individuals tend to ruminate on the negative aspects of stimulus or events, such as social interactions. Therefore, they would be less likely to initiate social activities (e.g. asking a friend out for a meal), as they would probably find it cumbersome, unrewarding, and deem the costs of such engagements (i.e. the previously mentioned physical and psychological barriers) to be higher than the benefits. Not only do

neurotic or depressed individuals experience lowered levels of social activities, they also engage in significantly less prosocial behaviours such as helping a colleague in the workplace. In contrast, happy individuals were found to be more inclined to engage in prosocial organisational behaviours, such as helping others, sharing information, and undertaking jobs beyond their job scope (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Williams & Shiaw, 1999).

These pro-social behaviours not only make happy workers better organisational citizens, their acts of generosity towards peers also inspire increased liking by others, tighter intimate ties, and prosocial reciprocity – all of which could be valuable in times of stress and need (Oishi & Koo, 2008). Indeed, employees high in positive affect were found to receive more emotional and tangible assistance from both their co-workers and their supervisors (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Outside of work settings, researchers have found that happy individuals are more likely to volunteer, spent more time doing charity/volunteer work, more likely to donate blood, and reported more interests in volunteering or getting involved in community service groups (Cunningham, Steinberg, & Grev, 1980; Isen, 1970; Magen & Aharoni, 1991; O'Malley & Andrews, 1983; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Although altruism and volunteering may be associated with some short-term costs (e.g. physical, emotional, loss of time, etc.), studies have found altruism to bring more enduring positive affect (e.g. King, 2008; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Moreover, altruism has implications on our self-focused materialistic tendencies. While materialism is about wanting and getting more, altruism is about giving – hence, "altruism breaks the grips of materialism" and focuses our priorities on the things that matter (Warren, 2006). Indeed, Norton (2011) found that people who were given money to spend on others, in the forms of charitable donations or gifts, reported enhanced feelings of

happiness, compared to those who spent the money on themselves (e.g. to pay bills, expenses, or gifts for self). Norton's (2011) study illustrated the link between prosocial behaviours and positive affect, even when the same form of purchases were made, for this case, coffee. Irrespective of the types of purchases made, it was only money spent on someone else (i.e. a prosocial behaviour) that predicted positive affect. Some posit that altruistic/pro-social behaviours also help enhance one's sense of personal advantageous resources and good fortune, and the rewardingness of such behaviours could promote beliefs that such good fortunes should be shared equitably with others (Aderman, 1972). This may, in turn, allow altruistic people to view themselves as more generous, and promote a positive sense of identity, such as greater self-confidence, efficacy, and optimism regarding their ability to help others in need (Cunningham, 1988).

4.4.4. Self-Perpetuating Cycle of Positivity

The tendency to engage in prosocial behaviours could stem from the positive expectations regarding the rewards associated with helping others, such as gratitude, appreciation, and positive self-view; wherein the link between prosocial behaviours and the associated rewards could create a feedforward loop of positivity (Argyle, 2001). Particularly, the AIM model posits that happy people may have different memory recall processes to their unhappy peers. As they are more likely to encode and store positive experiences in their memory, they have richer neural networks of positive experiences that makes recalling positive events easier; for this case intentions to help may evoke memories of gratitude, appreciation, and other positive emotions from their acts of helping in the past (E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Robinson & Compton, 2008). Happy people are more likely to recall the positive aspects of a past helping experience as opposed to its potential costs; hence, it

is the activation of their reward centres that create such altruistic tendencies, as people would have positive expectations regarding their altruistic behaviours (Cunningham, 1988).

Of interest, negative emotions such as guilt or sadness have also been shown to promote altruism, especially when the act of helping is accompanied with the prospects of helping one improve their mood, or when the individual feel that they have harmed someone (i.e. guilt)(Cunningham et al., 1980). This, along with the aforementioned findings, led researchers to believe that positive moods lead to helping under the majority of circumstances, whereas negative moods only lead to helping under specific conditions, notably when the rewards of helping are higher than the costs (e.g. Cunningham, Shaffer, Barbee, Wolff, & Kelley, 1990). Therefore, it may be beneficial to focus on promoting the former (i.e. positive moods) as a means to increasing social connectedness. As happy people tend to experience more frequent activation of their psychological reward systems, the frequent activation could increase people's tendency to approach activities and engage in social behaviours that have beneficial effects on our social connectedness and individual subjective well-being.

For example, when one considers meeting a friend for lunch, when in positive moods, would be more likely to consider the idea as potentially rewarding – making him more likely to initiate the invitation for lunch. During which, he may attend to the positive aspects of the interaction, gain better understanding of the friend, and find ways to maximise enjoyment with this friend (e.g. discover a common love for tennis). Consequently, the next time this individual thinks of this particular friend, he would expect the interaction to be pleasant and rewarding, rather than think of the potential costs. Hence, positive emotion encourages and motivates him to invite the friend for another

meet up (or tennis). Hence, positive emotions create a self-perpetuating positive loop that starts with (1) perception of potential rewards that leads to the (2) activation of the reward system, leading to (3) engagement in the activity, which leads to (4) enjoyment and competence building, leading to (5) positive encoding of event into memory, (6) positive recall, and finally activation of rewards systems through positive perception for future events.
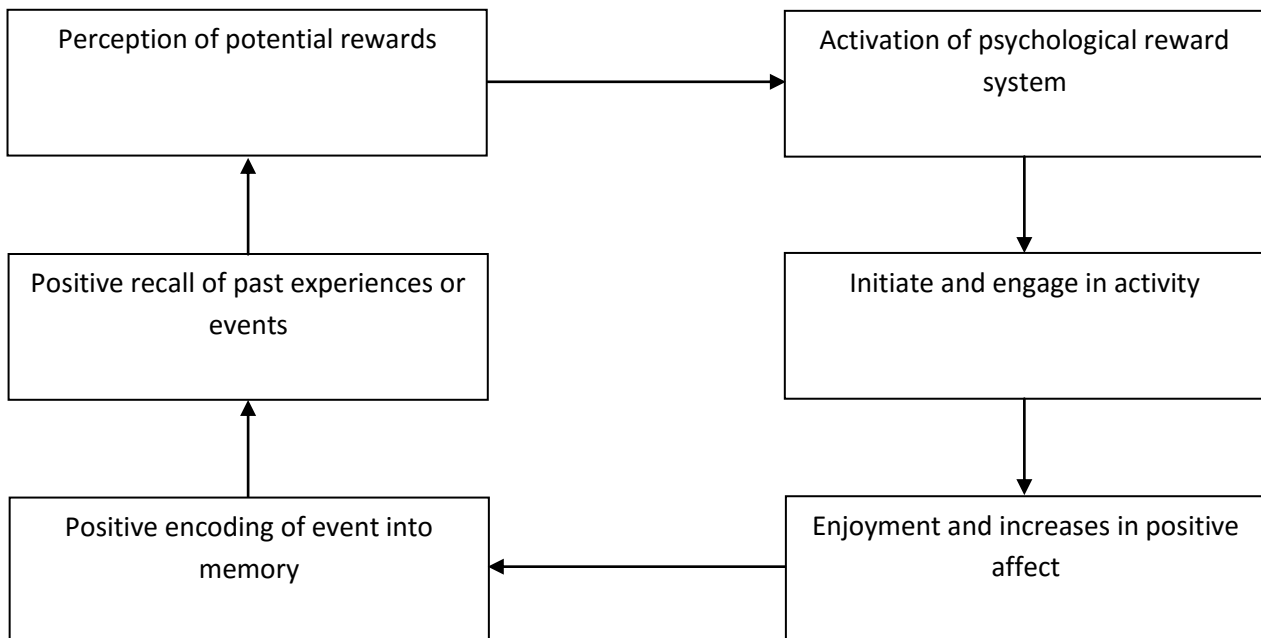
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┌─────────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Perception of potential │ ──────► │ Activation of psychological │
│        rewards          │         │     reward system       │
└─────────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
           ▲                                     │
           │                                     ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Positive recall of past │         │ Initiate and engage in  │
│  experiences or events  │         │        activity         │
└─────────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
           ▲                                     │
           │                                     ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Positive encoding of    │ ◄────── │ Enjoyment and increases │
│    event into memory    │         │   in positive affect    │
└─────────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
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Figure 3. Self-perpetuating positive loop.

4.4.5. Reward System Activation as the "Hub"

The findings in this section are of particular importance for alleviating the effects of our modern day disconnect. Specifically, the activation of our psychological rewards system promotes approach behaviours, and acts as the link that connects our psychological

resilience to the changes in our perception of time and of others, subsequently translating our intentions into actions. At the fundamental level, the move away from a self-preoccupation (or a sense of survivorship) broadens our thought repertoires and allows meaningful connections to be made between time availability and positive interpretations of situations and of our social others. However, merely having favourable psychological equilibrium, or perceiving time as abundant, or perceiving others favourably are not sufficient to influence us to act. These only constitute as conditions conducive to action, but do not necessarily motivate action. Rather, a motive (i.e. the reward) is needed as the key "active ingredient" in tying together these factors to create real world behavioural changes. As the "hedonic principle" posited, people are motivated to approach pleasure and to avoid displeasure (Higgins, 1997). Therefore, positive emotions translate intent into action by activating the "hub" (i.e. the motive) that motivates us to approach situations (and people, events, social activities, or stimuli), as we would evaluate them as potentially rewarding, rather than as potential costs. Through our preference and initiatives to approach (social) situations, we may begin to address the issue of our modern day social disconnect.

"Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do."

-   *Bruce Lee*

Part V

Implications

These findings demonstrate that subjective well-being has scientific and practical implications for real world changes. Although I focused on the importance of changes at individual levels for the majority of the thesis, changes at the macro level (e.g. society, government efforts and policies) would significantly help promote such positive changes. Specifically, while changes at individual levels might encourage people to act in the better interest of others in the short-run, there may be barriers (e.g. physical, social, government) that could deter them from continuing future efforts. For example, cars are undoubtedly a modern convenience that a large proportion of people have grown dependent on today. But this freedom and convenience has significant costs: vehicular traffic congestions are commonplace in many of today's industrialised societies. Although many governments have implemented changes (e.g. public transportation networks, highways, infrastructure changes), traffic congestions still persist; highlighting the limitations of such objective approaches. With approximately 1.2 billion units of vehicles worldwide today, the numbers are expected to double to 2.5 billion by 2050 (Voelcker, 2014). The United States, for instance, now has approximately 250 million on-road vehicles for its population of 300 million. It is unsurprising that infrastructures in some societies (especially China and the U.S.) are struggling to cope with the number of cars on their roads, resulting in traffic congestions which are a major source of frustration. Moreover, on-road vehicles are some of the largest consumers of fossil fuels, which are a primary source of carbon emissions today and contribute to negative environmental impacts (EPA, 2016). To date, despite the negative implications of widespread vehicle use, there has been limited societal

participation to remedy this issue. For example, according to the American Public Transit Association, for every 100 on-road vehicle trips made in the U.S., on average, only one trip is made on a bus or subway train (as cited in, Easterbrook, 2003). Solutions that involve societal participation, such as "carpooling", have not been largely popular.

Although many of us are aware of such facts, a large proportion of people still opt to drive their own cars for the sake of personal convenience and freedom. As a result, there are more cars on the road, causing traffic congestions, noise and air pollution, and threatening our physical and subjective well-being. In order for a small group of people to participate in carpooling for their commutes to work, they would be required to allocate extra time (e.g. an extra 30 minutes each) for their commute in order to carpool (e.g. to pick up others or be picked up for the commute) and reach their destinations on time. Although positive affect might encourage them to forego their short-term gains (e.g. more sleep) by influencing them to feel less pressed for time, and to perceive carpooling with friends or colleagues as affectively rewarding, there may be other barriers to this intention. For example, other road users who continue to prioritise their own convenience and contribute to the traffic congestion with little consideration for others could pose a barrier to this group of people, discouraging them from continuing with the carpooling efforts. At the other extreme, if everyone participated in carpooling, the number of cars on the roads during peak commuting hours could be more than halved: reducing traffic congestions, eliminating the need to allocate extra travel times, and also significantly reducing the negative impacts of motor cars on the environment. There would also be the added benefit of conversation partners during people's otherwise lonely commutes. By reducing the barriers to actions such as carpooling, (e.g. through government incentives for "carpoolers",

carpool lanes, etc.), the chances of people participating in carpooling and their willingness to forego their short-term needs (e.g. extra sleep, in this case) for the greater good could be enhanced. Although happiness may encourage people to try carpooling, it is the collective mindset and combined efforts from all parties that will sustain such changes.

As I have attempted to establish, the promotion of subjective well-being beyond the individual self has many merits in this modern age of instant gratification and self-centred pursuits, by translating our intentions into actions, and subsequently ameliorating the effects of the modern day social disconnect. However, the caveat here is that some measures need to be taken in order to sustain such changes and encourage a societal shift in values. One of the first steps is to acknowledge that traditional socioeconomic indicators are insufficient for this purpose and in measuring our quality of life. As Robert Kennedy once said, "The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile." This is a fitting quote, as Bergsma and Ardelt (2011) argued that GDP is merely a measure of the means rather than the ends. While the census seeks to answer tangible questions (i.e. economic and demographic), it fails to measure what makes life meaningful (Conley, 2010). Indeed, Conley (2010) found that of our total economy, 64% of businesses are in the service industry (i.e. intangible goods), while the remainder are in the agriculture and manufacturing industry (i.e. tangible goods); however, although this split shows what society truly values, our focus (e.g. on wealth, materialistic possessions, etc.) seems to diverge from these values.

Congruously, the education system that lauds and rewards intelligence or IQ risks running into the same problems, as IQ has zero correlation with emotional empathy – empathy which predicts one's social competence and relationship satisfaction (Goleman,

2007). As social relationships are one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction, this has important implications. Indeed, Huebner and Alderman (1993) demonstrated that life satisfaction reports of adolescents were unrelated to IQ test scores; intelligence is a poor predictor of individual subjective well-being. In illustrating the dangers of an overemphasis on IQ, Goleman (2007) showed that a notorious serial killer – the Santa Cruz strangler, who murdered eight people including his grandparents and mother by strangling – had an IQ of 160, a certifiable genius. This level of intelligence, unfortunately, did not predict any emotional empathy, but was instead used for evil.

Evidently,

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

- Albert Einstein

It is therefore an imperative that an alternate measure of societal success and well-being is established, rather than relying solely on socioeconomic conditions. E. Diener and Seligman (2004) believed that, along with socioeconomic measures, the implementation of national systems that account for people's subjective well-being, their meaning and quality of life, and the level of life engagement over time in various situations could be beneficial to our long-term subjective well-being. It is only by making these facets identifiable and measurable, that we will be able to improve the status quo. With such systems in place, policymakers would be more equipped to understand when and in what situations that people flourish (or languish), and subsequently implement the necessary infrastructure and instruments that reduce misery and enhance happiness; as opposed to solely focusing on

increasing measurable economic activity. Such changes could subsequently create an environment conducive to the happiness resource to translate people's intentions (e.g. for positive change) into consequential real-world actions.

"A city is successful not when it's rich but when its people are happy"

- Peñalosa, in Peñalosa and Ives (2004)

The kingdom of Bhutan is a society that strives to move away from these traditional measures of societal success; and emphasis is placed on the people's subjective well-being through the implementation of the Gross National Happiness index (Conley, 2010; O'Brien, 2008). Similarly, Bogotá, the capital of Colombia put in place an "infrastructure of well-being" with the single objective of increasing the city's happiness levels (Peñalosa & Ives, 2004). The "city of joy" aims to enhance the quality of life, and contribute to individual, communal, and global well-being through discouraging motor-vehicle usage, ridding the city of cluttering commercial signs, and the building of community parks and the world's most extensive network of dedicated bicycle and pedestrian-friendly paths. The implementation of this policy meant that the government took control over its citizens' environment in order to promote subjective well-being and positive self-image. By eliminating unnecessary billboards and decreasing on-road congestions, Bogotá minimised the risk of people making potentially negative social comparisons, and reduced the conditions that incite everyday frustrations.

Moreover, the construction of community parks subsequently raised the people's physical and subjective well-being by promoting physical activity and social integration. An indirect result of this initiative was a promotion of Bogotá citizens' sense of community

belongingness and a significant reduction in violent crime rates and perceived inequality (Peñalosa & Ives, 2004). Additionally, frequent exposures to the outdoors have been found to have other benefits for one's physical and psychological well-being. For example, "biophilia" is a term that is used to describe nature's restorative properties on one's psychophysiological well-being, whereby patients exposed to nature tend to heal faster compared to those who were not (Etcoff, 2004), Connolly (2012) also found that respondents to a survey were happier on the days when there was pleasant weather. Similarly, Homel and Burns (1989) found that children who lived in commercial areas of cities reported greater dissatisfaction than those who lived in residential areas; an effect that the authors attributed to the children's limited access to their friends and families, and play areas. These ideas lend support to Honoré's (2005; 2004) notion of the "Slow City movement" where changes are made to the urban landscape in order to help encourage people to slow down, savour their experiences, and reconnect with others.

The measure of societal success in terms of happiness with the aim to increase it can not only improve individual and societal well-being, but also influence individual spending and consumption behaviours, and instil a sense of environmental responsibility. In today's society characterised by overconsumption of its resources, this has especially relevant implications (Ricard, 2014). For example, Guven (2012) found that happier people showed more conservative spending behaviour; where they saved more, spent less, were less likely to be in debt, and had a lower propensity to over-consume. Consequently, happy people took more time to consider their spending decisions and exercised more control over their expenditures. Guven (2012) attributed this tendency to their sense of optimism and future orientation, in which happier people expect to live longer and hence engage in more future

oriented behaviours, such as, saving. On a related note, because happy people tend to make more inclusive group judgements and have an expanded sense of identity, their consumption behaviours would be influenced by their consideration for others as well; thereby limiting their consumptions within the bounds of their needs, in consideration of others and future generations (Ricard, 2014). Ricard (2014) also went on to argue that more conservative consumption behaviours could potentially eliminate the socioeconomic inequalities that we observe today, as he argued that resources would then be shared, as opposed to competed for.

Following this, happy people's future orientation and expanded sense of identity could also contribute to their inclination toward engaging in environmentally responsible behaviours. Indeed, O'Brien (2008) posited that well-being does not need to rely on high levels of consumption; specifically, she found that happy people were less likely to exploit or degrade their environment in their pursuit of personal happiness, and were also more inclined to engage in environmentally friendly behaviours such as cycling, recycling, and not littering. The notion of "sustainable harmony" posits that people could do more with less, and Ricard (2014) argued for a need for people to grow qualitatively, rather than quantitatively. Costa Rica, rated as one of the happiest countries on earth, only uses a quarter of the resources that average modern societies use (N. Marks, 2010). Happiness does not necessarily need to cost the earth (or other people), and a sustainable pursuit of happiness is possible in the right/conducive "socioemotional" environments.

The policies for the city of Bogotá were not made with the goal of creating happiness, rather they were made with the intention to "create the conditions for happiness to occur" (Conley, 2010). This is only possible if a shift from traditional socioeconomic

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measures is to happen, and a "caring economics" that focuses on the intangible aspects of human well-being is created (Ricard, 2014). As Ricard (2014) argued, economics alone is insufficient to deal with poverty and inequality, but altruism and a caring economics can. Design, entertainment, and technology can also play a part in this by shaping our lives in meaningful and socially connected ways (Seligman, 2004). Hence, government intervention, a caring economics, good design, and more importantly, individual and collective social participation, can help us build environments that promote happier lifestyles and control the more destructive social conditions that we face today (Buss, 2000). This move away from the socioeconomic to the "socioemotional" account of well-being would be the first step to addressing our (arguably) deteriorating social climate.

Conclusion

I have attempted to establish that the modern conditions of living are accompanied by effects on our social climate. As previously delineated, although we now enjoy entirely new heights of luxury, economic prosperity, and technological advancements, our happiness levels have largely remained stagnant. Researchers (e.g. Nesse & Williams, 1994; Seligman, 1988; Uchida et al., 2004) in the field have suggested that this could be due to the conditions of modern individualistic societies that promote mass cultures of personal pursuits of happiness, often at the cost of others, which subsequently create and perpetuate the unprecedented level of social detachment that we experience today. Especially for those living in large developed urban cities, we are always surrounded by large numbers of people. However, the mere presence of others contributes very little to our subjective well-being, and the lack of meaningful intimate ties adds to our feelings of loneliness and perpetuates our sense of social disconnect. Loneliness is increasingly becoming the new norm.

5.1. The Issue

We subsequently explored how we have been socialised to pursue happiness that emphasises the hedonic component. In particular, I focused on demonstrating that our pursuits of personal happiness via (1) the strivings for personal accomplishments, (2) the pursuit of material affluence, and (3) the gratifying of our immediate (albeit momentary) needs, exert unnecessary negative impacts on our social relationships and interfere with the human's fundamental "need to belong" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

I argued that striving for personal accomplishments could cause unnecessary competition and negative social comparisons. Not only does this create negative self-images for people when they find themselves outcompeted by a rival, aggressive competitiveness operates on the premise of differential success (i.e. one's gain is often at another's loss) which inadvertently perpetuates social disconnect by creating a "me versus you" mentality. Secondly, the pursuit of material affluence has been often associated with symptoms of narcissism, self-entitlement, and lowered levels of compassion and empathy (e.g. Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Piff, 2013). In his studies on the effects of materialism, Piff (2013) found that materialism leads to multitudes of antisocial behaviours, lower levels of considerations for others, and evidence that having wealth makes people more self-centred and "mean". Above all, materialism is an endless pursuit, as people adapt to their circumstances; ultimately, luxury possessions begets the needs for more luxury.

Finally, in a world that promotes a sense of urgency and immediacy, we have been afforded with many conveniences that allow the (almost) instant and constant gratification of our needs (e.g. using the Internet for our information needs, or social media to connect with friends). These conveniences subsequently promote a culture in which people expect and sought after immediate gains as opposed to waiting for potentially larger future rewards. In the social realm, this mindset robs us of the necessary "critical incidents" that help us build deep meaningful relationships; as people no longer see the need to endure hardships and adversity with their social others, when they have access to other means of satisfying their immediate affective needs (e.g. via social media, or dating websites). However, the mediated world that we now live in is an insufficient substitute for traditional social interactions. Arguably, social media or mediated communication can be good

complements to traditional face-to-face interactions, but as it stands, it is inadequate to fully replace traditional social engagements. Whereas delay of gratification was necessitated by traditional communication methods (e.g. conventional mail), today's means of communication may make people less appreciative of conventional "get-togethers", as there is no "absence (to) make the heart go fonder".

Hence, in search of personal happiness, people have opted for what Seligman (2004) called "the pleasant life" and "the engaged life"; both of which identify mainly with personal pleasures or positive emotions, or individual engagement, with little regard for anything or anyone beyond the individual self. These findings, amongst others, point to a world where the social distance is widening, and loneliness is becoming the new norm. But loneliness is a psychological ill that needs to be addressed. Perceived loneliness is the social equivalent of pain, hunger, and thirst. It is the sense of incompleteness that is associated with many psychological ills like depression, personality disorders, psychoses, and impaired cognitive performances. The effects of loneliness are not limited to psychological distress, but also contain physiological health risks: such as poorer cardiovascular immunity, alcohol abuse, and difficulties in sleeping (Cacioppo et al., 2006). Furthermore, loneliness is a self-perpetuating loss cycle driven by negative social cognitions, where lonely people have negative beliefs about social engagements that deter them from approaching social activities – thereby perpetuating a loneliness cycle that is difficult to break.

5.2. The Happiness Solution

While loneliness is associated with deleterious effects, having meaningful social relationships is correlated with positive life outcomes – notably high levels of subjective well-being. As evidenced by many researchers in the topic of subjective well-being, the

influence of happiness and life outcomes (e.g. social relationships, job successes, etc.) are bidirectional; trait happiness and even momentary positive emotions are resources that have positive real world implications. I argued that trait positive emotionality can be channelled to translate intentions or fantasies into actions that can serve to reconnect us with our social nature. This happens in a number of ways, in which positive affect: (1) maintains a positive psychological environment, (2) changes our perception of time, (3) changes our perception of our social others, and finally, (4) activates the psychological reward system that serves to bind these mechanisms together. At the most fundamental level, positive psychological environment is maintained by ensuring that, at a personal level, we can maintain a psychological equilibrium that make us less susceptible to threat to our psychological well-being – thereby eliminating the necessity for a focus on self-preservation. With that we can turn our attention outwards, invest in building more psychological and physical resources, and more importantly, our social resources.

With our sense of personal security ensured, positive affect helps us expand our perception of time in making us feel that we have more time to do things that are important to us, and diminishes the "time famine" that characterises our modern lives. People who are hurried are often too preoccupied with their internal thoughts to consider others around them. As Darley and Batson (1973, p. 107) concluded, "ethics becomes a luxury as the speed of our daily lives increases." Darley and Batson (1973) showed that, when people feel pressed for time they are significantly less likely to engage in prosocial behaviour, even when primed to think altruistically. Therefore perception of time availability can have important implications in determining our social behaviours. Moreover, when time is perceived as abundant, people showed a preference for acquiring experiences over

materialism. As experiences tend to be social in nature, such as holidays, the preference for experiences can also help us reconnect with others, both when engaging in the experience together and when sharing the experience with others. This subsequently lent support to the notion that positive affect can increase sociality.

Additionally, I argued that increases in sociality can also be influenced by the role of positive emotions in changing people's perception of others in social settings. When in good moods, people show greater sensitivity toward others, tend to identify more similarities with others than differences, and are more likely to create more inclusive group representations – a tendency to see other people as part of the human race. Divisive group identities seemingly disappear under such conditions, and people become less competitive with others; opting for more collaborative efforts than competitive, and favouring "win-win" situations. Dispositional or momentary happiness also increases the likelihood of people creating more favourable views of others and their personal relationships, thereby promoting more social tendencies. Moreover, as happy people are more sociable, they tend to be viewed more favourably by others as well.

Finally, positive emotions activate our psychological rewards system, creating a positive feedforward loop for sociability. Positive emotions serve as the "hub" which binds psychological equilibrium with perception of time availability and positive perceptions of others, enhancing our tendencies to approach social situations. In other words, the combination of these "ingredients" helps us see otherwise mundane (social) situations as rewarding and subsequently promotes approach behaviours to such situations. Applying the logic behind Diener and Biswas-Diener's (2008) AIM model, the activation of our psychological rewards system creates a positive feedforward loop by: (1) creating positive

beliefs or *expectations* regarding certain social situations, (2) making us more likely to seek them out (i.e. *approach*), and (3) when said interactions are *interpreted* as rewarding and (4) we *remember* it as such, we (5) become more likely to *expect* similar future situations to be just as rewarding – thereby creating a self-perpetuating loop of sociality.

However, happiness is not a panacea, as a "happy only" disposition bears its own sets of hidden costs (see, E. Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Moreover, the extent to which happiness can translate intent into real world changes is severely constrained by our motives for change. But it is still a worthwhile pursuit to raise the happiness climate of our society as a whole. The caveat here is that not all types of happiness contribute equally to our enduring subjective well-being. Grimm et al. (2015) and Seligman (2004) argued that the pursuit of pleasure has almost no long-term contribution to life satisfaction, wherein pleasure only truly matters when both engagement and meaning are present. Therefore, it is important to utilise the "happiness resource" to create meaningful happiness, in this case, through creating more meaningful social interconnections. Although the social disconnect does not threaten the existence of the planet like climate change, it threatens the quality of our existence and the kind of people we become in the future (MacRae, 2010). As our lives today are far less constricted compared to the world of our previous generations, rather than evolving and raising the standards of our survival needs (Conley, 2010; Maslow, 1954) at the expense of our higher order needs by constantly redefining our definitions of "needs", we should strive to build on the needs that contribute to our psychological health and the meaningfulness of our lives – specifically, our needs for social belongingness, esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs.

As Ricard (2014) argued, economics can no longer be relied on solely to solve the problems of the world – but people and societies can. Especially those of us who are fortunate enough to reside in developed societies with the freedom to act and without constant threats to our well-being, we have the opportunity to create a world where meaning and purpose comes from the impact we make on the people around us. It is a global world today that is becoming increasingly interconnected in many ways except for social connectedness – which is crucial for human subjective and psychological well-being. Happiness should not be at the cost of others, or the things that make life truly meaningful. Therefore, instead of thinking about *my* happiness, we should use the happiness resource to strive for *our* happiness.

"Significance doesn't come from status, sex, or salary

– it comes from serving"

- Warren 2006

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