

SO302 SOCIOLOGICAL PROJECT

A Sociologist's Pursuit of 'Happiness'

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of previous research demonstrates a clear correspondence between the variables that provide individuals meaning and happiness; however, this has surprisingly not been addressed in the current literature. Moreover, there appears to be the relative absence of a sociologically informed investigation. Therefore, this paper takes a sociological approach in its endeavor to develop the relationship between happiness and meaning through the variables of religion, social relationships, and work. In doing so, it also elaborates the manner in which these variables provide meaning and happiness to individuals. Qualitative methodology is used, with semi-structured interviews being conducted in the city of Baroda, India. The results show that belief in God provides the interviewees with a clear value system, meeting one of the most important needs for meaning, whereas social relationships meet all four of Baumeister's needs of meaning: a sense of purpose, self-worth, efficacy, and value system. Work provides a source of meaning by giving the interviewees a means to provide for their families and community. Engaging in each of these ensures the experience of positive emotions, meeting the second component of happiness. Thus, the study attempts to demonstrate in what manner the variables, meaning, and happiness are intricately linked.

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INTRODUCTION

“The great end of all humanity is the attainment of happiness. For this were arts invented, sciences cultivated, laws ordained, and societies modelled.” - David Hume

The pursuit of happiness has been considered a primary motive of the human species and, thereby, happiness has been a topic of deliberation for centuries. From the oldest recorded scriptures – the Veda texts in 1,500 B.C. to Plato and Aristotle who institutionalized, scrutinized and developed the study of happiness, it has been at the forefront of philosophy and discussion. Moreover, “Numerous studies show that happy individuals are successful across multiple life domains, including marriage, friendship, income, work performance, and health” (Lyubomirsky et al.¹, cited in Ben-Shahar, 2007: 32) making happiness a topic of even greater importance for human investigation and consideration.

In the modern era, the means towards happiness began to be equated with economic growth and development, which was then staunchly pursued, especially in the 20th century. However, sizeable amount of credible research data demonstrates that, beyond a certain level, an increase in income does not lead to any significant increase in happiness (Layard, 2006). Studies show that, although income has more than doubled in advanced western countries such as the US and Britain, average people are no happier than they were 50 years ago (Layard, 2006). Thus, raising strong questions, not only on the previous means adopted towards happiness, but to the path to be followed henceforth.

Based on survey data collected in the last two decades, there is significant work today outlining the factors that promote happiness, namely social relationships, work, financial situation, health, friends and community, personal values, and freedom (Layard, 2006). Attempts have been made to develop the manner in which they provide happiness. Seligman (2002) establishes three routes towards happiness: the pleasurable life, the good life, and the meaningful life. However, while research on the first two is relatively well advanced, there is significant ambiguity and uncertainty on the 'meaningful life'.

Additionally, scholars like Baumeister establish a strong link between happiness and meaning, claiming "Meaning is a pre-requisite for happiness" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002: 622). Also, with a surprising consensus the main domains in which people strive for meaning have been established as being social relationships, work, religion, and self-transcendence (Emmons, 2003). However, in stark contrast to it lies the inadequate elaboration on how these variables provide meaning to people.

Moreover, though studies clearly demonstrate some variables contributing to happiness and meaning coinciding - relationships, work, and religion (including personal values) - little work appears to have been done to comprehend how the concepts are linked by these variables. Likewise, despite many of them being collective constructs, such as religion and social relationships, a sociologically informed approach to understanding happiness is still lacking. Therefore, taking a sociological approach, this paper attempts to further develop the relationship between happiness and meaning through the variables of social relationships, work, and religion. It also endeavors to understand how, and in what manner, do these variables provide happiness and meaning to individuals.

Unlike the majority of empirical work on happiness, the backdrop of this research is India. Two studies conducted by Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001; 2006) demonstrate that the poor of Calcutta appear to lead meaningful lives as a result of high satisfaction from the self and social domains. Therefore, with the intention of aiding the development of the relationship between happiness and meaning, Indian society was chosen as the empirical setting for the research. However, by no means does this paper aim to demonstrate that people living there lead more meaningful or happier lives.

The paper begins with reviewing previous literature and establishing the theoretical framework for the qualitative research study. Thereafter, the choice of methodology and other research and methodological considerations are looked into. Subsequently, the key findings are presented categorized broadly under religion, social relationship and work respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW²

CONCEPTUALIZING HAPPINESS

Contextualizing the debate

Although a number of scholars such as Plato and Epicurus have contemplated happiness, Aristotle has been credited with a formal and thorough examination of it. In *Nicomachean ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between hedonism, a life oriented towards seeking pleasure, and eudaimonism, a life based on exercising inner virtue and realizing one's inner potential. Drawing on this, contemporary social scientists have broadly categorized their approach and research, thereby creating a broad classification between eudaimonic happiness and hedonic happiness in the literature (Kashdan et al, 2008). The former, largely represents research focused on issues such as meaning and purpose, practice of virtue, actualization of skills and talents, whereas hedonism addresses how a person feels and evaluates his or her life. However, this is problematic for various reasons; the foremost being it lacks alignment with Aristotle's work itself (Kashdan et al, 2008). For Aristotle, eudaimonism – the greatest life possible for one – certainly included the experience of pleasure, an element of hedonism. Moreover, Kashdan et al. (2008) take the argument further by claiming a conceptual overlap between hedonism and eudaimonism, based on their analysis of previous empirical evidence. Thus, considering the criticisms to be particularly valid, hedonism and eudaimonism are not mutually exclusive conceptualizations of happiness here. They are both considered to be essential components of happiness which shall be reflected in the chosen definition of happiness here.

Meaning

Previous research clearly demonstrates meaning in life (eudaimonism) to be an essential component of happiness. Baumeister et al.(2002: 612) claim, “ People who cannot find meaning in life, and whose lives therefore are experienced as severely lacking in meaning, are probably unable to achieve happiness ... Meaning is a pre-requisite for happiness, but there are other necessary ingredients.” Thereby, such research clearly and accurately establishes the importance of meaning and its significant relationship to happiness. Moreover, it also vividly mentions other dimensions to happiness.

Pleasure and positive emotions

Contemporary positive psychologist, Tal Ben Shahar, provides a plausible answer to this additional dimension. He accurately observes that it isn't generally possible to pursue extremely difficult tasks for an extended period of time, regardless of the meaning attached to it, if one does not derive any pleasure from it. Therefore, the experience of pleasure is necessary for happiness. However, by this, it does not mean that a person experiences pleasure all the time or that a happy person cannot experience negative emotions; it essentially means that, although a person experiences negative emotions, “his overall state of being is positive” (Ben-Shahar, 2007: 36). Thus, he suitably determines pleasure as the second component of happiness.

Establishing the significance of pleasure, for Ben-Shahar (2007) pleasure simply means the experience of positive emotions. However, Seligman (2002) – the founder of positive psychology – distinguishes between positive emotions in the past, present, and future; the

positive emotions of the past being satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment, pride, and serenity; and that of the future being optimism, hope, faith, and trust. The discussion surrounding positive emotions of the present becomes more complex with the distinction between pleasure and gratification. According to Seligman, pleasure has clear sensory and strong emotional components, whereas gratification is about exercising one's key strengths and virtues. He essentially means the experience of flow – being so absorbed and immersed in the activity one is doing that time appears to stop – while referring to gratification. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) – who developed the concept of flow – describes the same experience as 'enjoyed absorption' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Thereby, to encompass the various terms that are all applicable to this research definition, Ben-Shahar's word 'pleasure' is substituted by 'positive emotions' in the definition used.

Meaning and positive emotions

Thus, it is seen that meaning and positive emotion are both indispensable components of happiness; one needs both present benefit (pleasure) as well as future benefit (meaning) to lead a happy life - it is about enjoying the journey while dedicating oneself to a purpose that one believes in (Ben-Shahar, 2007). Thus, replacing pleasure with positive emotions in Ben-Shahar's definition, for the purpose of this paper, happiness is considered the overall experience of positive emotions and meaning; of hedonism as well as eudaimonism.

By product of external engagement

Further, though it is agreed that happiness is certainly dependent on the internal - one's state of mind, the manner in which one experiences and perceives - it is believed to be also

dependent on the activities one engages in. Empirical research provides evidence for the same; 'meaning scientist' Emmons (2003: 106) accurately summarizes it: "for many people, of course, the primary goal in life is to be happy. Yet research indicates that happiness is most often a by-product of participating in worthwhile projects and activities that do not have as their primary focus the attainment of happiness". Therefore, happiness is also a product of engaging in pleasurable and meaningful activities.

FACTORS AND ROUTES TOWARDS HAPPINESS

The 'Big Seven'

With scholars of diverse academic backgrounds turning to contemplate happiness in the last few decades, there is plausible and reliable evidence on the factors contributing to happiness. Eminent economist Lord Layard (2006) puts forward the 'Big Seven' factors affecting happiness – namely (in order of importance) social relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom, and personal values. Basing his work on the findings of John Helliwell (2003), he uses the US General Social Survey not only to establish the factors affecting happiness, but also ranks them in order of importance. Moreover, his use of a large sample size as well as survey data collected over a period of time for his analysis ensures relatively credible evidence.

Furthermore, data collected in the World Value Survey in four different years, demonstrates how six of these Big Seven factors – divorce rate, unemployment rate, level of trust, membership in non-religious organizations, quality of government and the percentage believing in God - can explain up to 80% of variations in happiness in fifty different countries (Layard,

2006); proving further the reliability of the findings. Thus, drawing on different survey data, scholars have been able to plausibly identify and establish the factors affecting happiness. However, possibly, due to the survey-based quantitative nature of the study, the manner in which these variables actually affect happiness has not been adequately developed yet. For instance, Layard (2006) claims social relationships are unanimously the most important factor affecting happiness; however, how and why it affects happiness is not adequately elaborated.

Amongst his most significant and controversial claims is that there exists a causal relationship between belief in God and happiness. Although most scholars in the field widely accept a correlation between the two variables, they are hesitant to claim and accept a causal relationship. But Layard makes the point visibly, "...people who believe in God are happier. At the individual level one cannot be sure whether belief causes happiness or happiness causes belief. But since the relation also exists at the national level, we can be sure that to some extent belief causes happiness" (Layard, 2006: 72). Thus, he makes a momentous claim that shall be explored later, in the course of exploring the relationship of religion to meaning and happiness.

The routes to happiness

On the other hand, Seligman (2002) suggests three different routes towards happiness, namely the pleasurable life, the good life, and the meaningful life. It is important to clarify here the definition of happiness used by Seligman does not match the one used in this paper. For Seligman, the pleasurable life, the good life, and the meaningful life are all different routes towards happiness, but in this paper meaning and positive emotions are both considered

essential elements of happiness. However, Seligman's concept of a 'full life' – a life that integrates all three routes – equates to the definition of happiness used in this paper.

The distinction between pleasure and gratification – both positive emotions of the present, as seen earlier – form the basis of the pleasurable life and the good life. While the pleasurable life essentially involves the experience and maximization of pleasure, the good life is about the experience of gratification (Seligman, 2002). These two routes towards happiness are rather well developed, with researchers like Seligman going so far as to provide ways to maximize happiness derived through these routes. However, the third route, the meaningful life, is certainly not adequately developed, a limitation that Seligman acknowledges himself. Though he establishes the relationship between happiness and meaning, he fails to take it further. Nevertheless, he provides the reader with a broad framework to meaningful life, defining it as “using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are” (Seligman, 2002: 263). Attempting to develop this route towards a 'full life', this definition, is used to explore the relationship between happiness and meaning. In doing so, one does not distinguish between source of meaning for religious and non-religious people as Seligman hints at.

MEANING

Sources of meaning

Being a small research field there is interestingly a consensus as to the domains in which people generally seek meaning. Emmons (2003), basing his work on the findings of three empirical studies having diverse methodologies from rating scales and surveys to interviews in

heterogeneous populations, presents the 'taxonomy of meaning'. The four categories in which people generally strive for meaning are: (1) achievement/work, which encompasses commitment to one's work, believing in its worth, and enjoying challenges; (2) relationship/intimacy, which includes relating well to others, trusting others, and being altruistic and helpful; (3) Religion/ spirituality, which includes having a personal relationship with God, believing in an afterlife, and contributing to a faith community; and lastly, (4) Self-transcendence/ generativity, which includes contributing to society, leaving a legacy, and transcending self-interests. Therefore, grounding his work on a wide range of methodologies in diverse populations, Emmons provides a credible categorization of the domains in which people strive for meaning, thereby providing a strong foundation for the way ahead. However, he, too, does not adequately explain and elaborate on how these factors provide meaning to people.

Needs for meaning

On the other hand, Bausmeister provides an extremely insightful conceptualization of meaning - framing the pursuit of meaning in terms of four needs of meaning, namely need for purpose, values, efficacy, and self-worth. People who report satisfaction in all these needs are expected to report living very meaningful lives. Coming to the first need, the need for purpose, the present event derives meaning by its connection to a future outcome; the future gives meaning to the present activity. However, engaging in the present activity also provides direction to the eventual purpose. Broadly, purposes are classified into two categories: goals, which are an objective state of outcome that is desired but not yet achieved; and fulfillments, which are

subjective rather than objective outcomes such as wanting to be happy, in love, etc (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002).

The need for values relates to one being able to decide whether a certain action is right or wrong. They provide a sense of goodness and justify the chosen path of action. Scholars such as Frankl consider the values to be the main source of meaning that people need. It is essentially about being able to decide whether a certain action is right or not by being able to contextualize it in a broader level of abstraction and set of principles. Eventually, there must be certain things that are good and correct by themselves, referred to as a 'value base' by Baumeister. Next, the need for a sense of efficacy refers to the belief that one can make a difference. Lastly, the need for a basis of self-worth refers to looking for a reason to believe that one is a good and worthy person. This can be sought individually, by considering oneself superior to others, as well as collectively, by belonging to a group that one regards as worthy (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Thus, Baumeister presents an unambiguous and detailed conceptualization of the different needs for meaning, thereby providing a clear framework to assess the meaningfulness in an individual's life.

Baumeister takes this discussion further, arguing that one can also assess meaningfulness throughout an entire society by using the four needs of meaning. Utilizing the same, he provides extremely insightful results as to why people fail to find meaning in modern life. He accurately observes that modern western society is sufficiently able to meet three of the four needs of meaning, namely (1) the need for purpose, in the form of numerous goals and fulfillments; (2) the need for efficacy, through the various ways and levels at which a person can

exert control; and (3) the need for self-worth, through a diverse range of individual and collective pursuits that enables everyone to consider themselves superior to others at least in some domain. However, modern society is unable provide a distinct set of reliable values; it is unable to meet the need for values (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). As seen earlier, this is considered to be the most important need for meaning by scholars such as Frankl – the main domain in which people strive for meaning. Referring to this difficulty that people in modern society encounter, Baumeister terms it the 'value gap' (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Thus, Baumeister's work provides a clear manual for the needs that should be met in order to live meaningful lives, thereby also presenting an unambiguous criterion to assess the meaningfulness derived from the varying sources.

Linking happiness and meaning

Thus, having reviewed the concepts of happiness and meaning, this paper now attempts to confine the key variables to comprehensively be able to understand how certain variables contribute to meaning and thereby happiness. Layard's work shows how social relationships, work, and religion are some of the key factors affecting happiness (Layard, 2006). On the other hand, Emmons's research demonstrates that social relationships, work, religion, and self-transcendence are the main dimensions in which people generally strive for meaning (Emmons, 2003). Therefore, a clear correspondence is seen between the variables that provide people happiness and sources of meaning. Hence, to develop the relationship between happiness and meaning at this preliminary level, this paper shall utilize variables that previous research has

shown to be linked with the two. Thus, the variables of social relationships, work, and religion are built upon to understand how they provide meaning and happiness to people.

HAPPINESS AND INDIA

Having established the theoretical framework, happiness and Indian society, the backdrop of empirical study, is looked at. The choice of Indian society may be surprising to a few, especially because it does not appear to lead most cross-country comparisons of happiness and life satisfaction. However, the two studies carried out by Biswas-Diener and Diener provide us with a new and valuable perspective to the same. The first³ project, a comparative study between homeless people in Calcutta (India) with those in California and Portland, Oregon (USA), clearly demonstrates higher levels of affection, social satisfaction and self satisfaction among the homeless of Calcutta. While the American samples reported satisfaction with social domains near or below the neutral point, the homeless of Calcutta, reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with both their families and their overall social lives, well above the neutral point. Therefore, their mean rating of life satisfaction is positive, in contrast to both the American samples, for which the same was negative (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2006). The second study, focusing exclusively on the poor of Calcutta, demonstrates that, while they have substandard living conditions, they are satisfied in many domains of their life, especially social relationships (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001) (See appendix 1 & 2 for statistics). Thus the two studies visibly demonstrate the high levels of contentment with relationships among the homeless and poor of Calcutta, and as seen previously, scholars like Layard claim social relationships to be the most important factor affecting happiness.

Many may rightfully argue that it is a study based on homeless people and therefore, generalizing the findings to an entire society may not be completely appropriate. Because of this concern, other sources of data such as the World Value Survey were examined. However, though it did provide information regarding life satisfaction of Indian people, it combined together financial satisfaction with self and social satisfaction. Therefore, with a high possibility of the poor financial satisfaction negating the high self and social satisfaction, such sources of data could be utilized to extend to understand the subject area. Thus, due the lack of availability of more information, the stance taken here is that the findings are too valuable to be overlooked. As Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001: 349) put it, "It should be apparent that while the poor of Calcutta do not lead enviable lives, they do lead meaningful lives. They capitalize on the non-material resources available to them and find satisfaction in many areas of their lives." Thus, researchers conducting previous studies do believe that people residing in that society live meaningful lives; this might aid the development of the relationship between meaning and happiness, thereby reinforcing our choice.

Moreover, Biswas-Diener and Diener also provide a strong base to utilize in the Indian context theories formulated in the West. For the second study, in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural values of Indian society, they conducted interviews in two different Indian states, Orissa and West Bengal. As they stated, "These interviews provide anecdotal evidence that despite differences people in these locations are concerned with many of the same ideals as non-Indians (e.g. positive family relationships and job security)" (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001 : 332). Thus, the study provides a firm base to utilize theories formulated on research in the West.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In addressing the choice of methodology and research methods, the key considerations, as has been widely established, are the aim of the research and the nature of the topic being studied. In accordance with the aim of the research - to explore and develop the relationship between happiness and meaning through the variables of social relationships, work, and religion - one needs to appropriately understand the participants' attitudes and values. Qualitative interviewing through open ended and flexible questions enable us better access to these opinions and values of the participants. Furthermore, they facilitate accessing a level of depth and complexity which other methods, especially survey-based approaches, do not capture (Byrne, 2004; Hoyle, 2002). Therefore, as this research focuses on exploring how and why established variables provide meaning and happiness to people, the choice of qualitative methodology and interviewing as a method seems appropriate.

Additionally, considering the nature of the topic being studied, this choice of method seems apt. 'Meaning scientists' such as Emmons (2003: 107) argue the "construct of 'meaning' *has no meaning* outside of a person's goals and purposes- what a person is trying to do" and it thereby becomes even more significant to be able to appropriately capture the subjective interpretations of the respondents. Furthermore, Baumeister and Vohs (2002) point out that meaning is considered idiosyncratic and researchers thereby prefer interviews as they allow more depth and breadth of information.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Despite having established earlier that the poor in Calcutta live meaningful lives, it was not possible to conduct the research there due to financial constraints. Therefore, to situate the study in Indian society, the interviews were conducted in Baroda, Gujarat, as this was more cost effective due to family connections. Furthermore, rather unfortunately, the upper middle class had to eventually be interviewed due to linguistic concerns. However, as Indian society was chosen simply in hope of it being able to aid the development of the relationship between happiness and meaning, this does not constrain the research in any significant manner.

In an attempt to neutralize the impact of other variables, every effort was made to ensure as homogenous a population as possible, making the task of deciding the criteria for sample selection extremely difficult. Abundant research on happiness and marriage demonstrates that married people are happier. For instance, the German Socio-Economic Panel, which followed people for more than twenty years, found that people generally become happier after getting married and that this is applicable to both men and women. (Layard, 2006: 65). On the other hand, it is believed by some that although having children increases meaningfulness in life, it decreases happiness (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Therefore, in an attempt to maintain consistency, it was decided that all participants should be married and have children, which is still the prevailing norm in Indian society. Age, on the other hand, is not considered to be a factor affecting happiness, according to prior research (Layard, 2006: 62). However, a decision was still taken regarding the same, the main reason being to try and eliminate the

influence of technology, media, globalization, etc., at different stages during the maturation years. Thus, the age band was narrowed to 35 - 55 years.

Thus, it was concluded that 12 semi-structured interviews would be conducted, having an equal proportion of men and women. At this stage it was realised that a significant proportion of women in Indian society are housewives, many helping their husbands in their business. In an attempt to avoid a gendered study, and to adequately understand the separate perspectives of housewives and working women, it was decided to over-represent women. Thus, the final sample consisted of 4 working men, 4 working women, and 4 housewives. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the chosen sample; the selected sample is certainly not representative of the entire population. Although the interviews shall provide valuable insights, generalizing the findings to an entire society might be erroneous and should be done with great care.

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

To ensure interviewees were freely able to express themselves, an effort was made to try and ensure that interviewees were not known on a personal level. Therefore, two middle-aged family friends were requested to suggest participants that matched the above criteria, thus using the gate-keeper's snowball method for sampling.

In order to promote reliability, interviewees were told at the beginning of the interview that the study was about Indian people's attitude to work, social relationships, and religion, as well as happiness. The intention was not to pre-empt them, or to obtain socially desirable answers of

an existing relationship between these variables, happiness and meaning. In accordance with ethical concerns, their consent was requested at the beginning if it would be acceptable to them if the exact purpose of the research was explained in greater detail after the interview.

As with semi-structured interviews, an interview schedule was created. Apart from the other considerations kept in mind while designing the schedule (Bryman, 2008; Foddy, 1993; Presser & Schaeffer, 2003), extra care was taken to neither use leading questions in the schedule nor while probing. The schedule was divided into five sections, the first section pertaining to demographic data followed by three sections referring to work, religion, and social relationships, respectively. These three sections consisted of indirect questions regarding their opinions and thoughts such as what motivated them, what did they derive from it etc., in order to understand the relation of these factors to happiness and meaning without asking leading questions. The last section contained direct questions about happiness, meaning, the sources of both, if they thought there was a relationship between the two, etc. The interview schedule was piloted on family members, thereby identifying and eliminating potential sources of miscommunication. Further, in accordance with the ethical practice of informed consent (Kelly & Ali, 2004), permission to record the interview was clearly requested from interviewees. Issues such as anonymously quoting from interviews were also discussed.

[The Location of the Interviews (3), a copy of The Letter to Participants (4), The Interview Schedule (5) and Interviewee's demographic data (6) are included in the appendix]

CODING AND DATA ANALYSIS

For the data analysis, systematic coding is believed to improve the validity of qualitative findings (Seale, 2004). Therefore, to facilitate validity, all interviews - which generally ranged between half an hour to an hour - were transcribed. Further, in the endeavour to adequately capture the perspective of the respondent, each paragraph of every interview was initially given a code. This process was repeated with larger and larger chunks of data until common trends were identified; the most significant and relevant of which are discussed in the following section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

GOD, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Their relationship with the supreme power

Interestingly, all the respondents affirmed belief in the existence of a higher power or God. As expected, they all admitted to have been socialized to believe in God. However, surprisingly, over the years they claim to have come to develop a very personal and intimate relationship with the Supreme Power. Contrary to popular belief, they do not fear God but see Him as a controller, a guiding force, someone they can count on; that power is on their side, helps them in difficult times, and provides them with courage and strength in tough situations. Therefore, as the extracts demonstrate, an intricate balance is being maintained in their relationships with God – being socialized to believe in God yet developing individual relationships with Him.

Socialized into believing in God

Usha: I have grown up seeing my parents believe in God. That, I would agree with. But that has made me believe in God because whenever I see I am in some trouble or I am sad... see that just talking to God, it releases some stress, so there is some inner strength that He gives you.

Gauri: I have always believed in God as a part of my upbringing also. But, this kind of your belief in God changes and evolves with time....

Aastha: I've been taught to believe in God. And funnily, I totally believe in God and in destiny, and that whatever we do is meant to happen with the help of God's guidance.

Personal relationships

Malini: I have so much faith in Him that I always fall back on Him. His support is always there. I can feel it somehow. I don't know how to express it, but I can feel that He is there, He has answered my prayers

The supreme controller

Aastha: we make our choices, we decide. You have a plate in front of you. You have to pick up what you want to pick up and be ready to take. So, I think whatever choice you are given is because of God.

Pranav: there is a presence of some force in everybody's life or in this universe that... who is ruling or is making things happen the way they are happening

Are not God-fearing people

Smriti: That if I am doing anything wrong, there is something ... woh paap milega [I feel that I have sinned] ... I never feared that. Because I am not God-fearing. Like, if I am standing in front of a temple and I don't go, I don't feel bad that I am not visiting.

Gauri: It gives me a lot of comfort. It gives me a lot of peace of mind and it gives me strength...He gives me a lot of strength and courage to face up to my difficulties or responsibilities.

Trying to appropriate the nature of such a relationship with God to Hinduism seems valid to a certain extent. Their own beliefs and concept of God, as well the beliefs of some of their primary socializing agents, i.e. their family members, can be seen as parallel to some of the teaching in the ancient Vedic scriptures where individual relationships with God do exist. However, completely locating this argument to Hinduism, labeling the interviewees as Hindus, and claiming them to have beliefs in alignment with that would be imposing a label on them which most respondents would be hesitant about (Appendix 7 for extracts). Apart from one interviewee who claimed she believed completely in Indian mythology, the beliefs and practices of most of the respondents were based on certain principles of religion that can be traced to almost all other religions, such as being compassionate, a good human being, assisting others, etc.

Value system

This intricate relationship with God seems to provide them with a vivid picture of what is right and wrong. It appears to give them the broad level of abstraction and set of principles that Baumeister calls the 'value base', meeting one of the four needs that human beings pursue in their quest for meaning (Baumesiter, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). As discussed earlier, some scholars like Frankl consider this to be the most important need for meaning. Moreover, Baumesiter argues that this need is one that modern western society is not able to adequately satisfy. Therefore, this value base that the respondents appear to have, might be able to provide some insight into the high levels of self and social satisfaction that the homeless of Calcutta had in Biswas-Diener and Diener's (2006) study. Moreover, it appears that their belief in God has penetrated their thoughts and practices in a manner such that it can almost be seen as an attitude towards life. Their values and principles provide them with their clear definitions of right and wrong, making them pursue a different path in life, especially during difficult times.

Malini: It does provide you a value system – it at least gives you a foundation. It shows you the kind of path you need to take or whether you are doing the right thing.

Gauri: If you believe that everything is going to happen for the best, you will never divert from it and do wrong things. I have been brought up in that fashion and my thinking is that, that anything which is right will always triumph and God will always be with me if I am in the right and He will always support me. It might be difficult for me to do. But, then I would not divert from that truth.

Pranav: It helps me in remaining proper and truthful to myself to the ethos which I have put for myself...like, the other person is also a human being, or there is other life, so do not hurt other life, which is there.

Hanisha: religion means be a good human being. ...trying to see that I do not make any mistakes myself by hurting anybody or by saying something that hurt anybody

Aastha:...because I am and I should be grateful that God has given me so much. I should pass on a bit of it around. So that's why I say that I am trying to teach my kids a bit of

value system with happiness, that everything is not money. That is what concerns me. Everything is not the latest computer game; it is not X-Box. There are smaller things. It boils down to – because of God, you want to try to appreciate the smaller things and let the kids also see, ok, because this happened, maybe God wanted this to happen – that's a very standard line that I do use. That maybe it was bound to happen and was destiny in the sense that God wanted this to happen. That's what destiny basically is.

Positive emotions

Additionally, their belief in God appears to provide them with qualities and characteristics that further promote happiness. Many of the suggestions and recommendations of happiness scientists, such as being optimistic, hopeful, and grateful, are practiced by them in their everyday lives as a result of their beliefs. For instance, based on the work of Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough, Ben- Shahr(2007) suggests that one should recollect (and write down) things that one is grateful for each night before going to bed to help appreciate the positive in one's life and thereby enjoy higher levels of wellbeing. He further suggests that expressing gratitude with near and dear ones can contribute in a meaningful way to relationships. On various occasions, such as those mentioned by Pranav, these practices form part of the daily lives of the interviewees. Thus, their belief in God makes them experience positive emotions, satisfying the second component of happiness.

Gratitude

Pranav :In the morning by offering prayers simply that it was a good night and things went right...And at night also, we [entire family] offer prayers simply because...the day was good enough and please continue to bless us.

Optimism and hope

Aastha: I think my belief and my faith in God has made me a very positive person...when you believe that there is a reason for this happening, you don't sit and fret about why it has happened...when you look for the reason and you believe in God and you look at life this way, there has to be something positive at the end of it.

Contentment

Aastha: I'd love to be thinner (laughs) but apart from that, I don't see any major thing that I am craving for. Not for diamonds, not for money...I think it makes you content and happy, and my biggest, biggest challenge is to at least let my children get into that mode. If they do that, they won't ever be unhappy.

Thus, it is seen how their belief in God provides them with a clear value base and fulfills one of the most important need for meaning. Further, it provides them with a purpose (fulfillments) of continuing to follow these principles and values and, more importantly, teaching them to their children - a theme reoccurring at numerous instances.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Meaning

As seen above, the interviewees' families appear to be the primary source of learning and nurturing their belief in God and the corresponding values and principles. Therefore, social relationships become the means of fulfilling their need for values and thereby contribute to satisfying one of Baumeister's four needs of meaning. Moreover, values such as giving and assisting others, explicitly taught to them by their families, help to further promote satisfaction and happiness. As previous research demonstrates, "people who care about other people are on average happier than those who are more preoccupied with themselves" (Layard, 2006: 72). Moreover, this attitude helps to nurture and build relationships, which can be seen in the following interview extracts.

Hanisha: certain knowledge which my parents gave me of how to approach life, I have imbibed that and that I have given to my children. That always be open, rather than saying a lie always be upfront to that person...Give. In life, if you give everything, your

love, your materialistic things, when somebody asks and they are in need, you give. God will reciprocate in this way...These small values of life really count and make a person.

Smriti: Values ... like...grandparents are there at home, they always teach you how to respect elders, how to respect the servants....all those values, I think, add a lot and so you tend to respect people more...

Malini: ...like getting a glass of water for them, small things... which is not even thinkable ...But I would like to do small, small things for them (family members).

Smriti: I always felt that I want to do something other than my home also ...you want to do something for the society...like...it is for the betterment of a person, I would want to change a person's life, or...not always poor, I would do something for my country, which I live in or my state, which I live in.

Furthermore, these relationships provide a sense of purpose to their lives. Adhering to the values and principles taught to them by their parents, and teaching their children the same, provides them with a purpose beyond themselves, unlike many other sources of purpose. Additionally, in many ways, it connects them with something Higher, providing a significant insight into Seligman's definition of a meaningful life: "using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are" (Seligman, 2002: 263). Thus, the dialogue of the interviews, along with demonstrating some of the ways in which social relationships meet Baumeister's need for purpose, also help to visibly develop Seligman's concept of a 'meaningful life'.

Usha : I want my children to grow up having good values for life – what we learnt, at least I can pass half of that to them – so they should be able to respect those values, grow up with those values, then I am happy,

Smriti: I think I chose to be a housewife because of the kids. I wanted to raise them well

The interconnectedness of purpose amongst individuals, especially family members, links to, and provides them with, a sense of efficacy and self-worth. The desire of respondents to teach

their children certain values and principles is closely linked to their understanding of the impact that they have on their children's lives and the difference they can make. It also relates to their perception of the role of parents and the impression they can make. Moreover, they appear to try and give their best, for their children as well as for the generations beyond.

Gauri: Today, what is happening with them and me, the same thing can happen tomorrow with my children and me. When they have seen me doing it that way, tomorrow they will do it to me also. It is a matter of life. What you do is going to come back to you... today, if my children see me adjusting out to people around, being adjusting and looking and doing things, they will also learn to do that. If they see me being totally self-centered and selfish, they will also learn to do that.

Hanisha: We see and we do

Aastha: My mother gave up working when her second child was born. And, to have her home when I came home from school, I think, made a lot of difference in my life. So, I want to do the same thing for my children. When they are home from school, I want to be around.

Aastha: it is a value that my parents did this. I feel that whatever your parent does for you, you're going to do at least 50 percent of that for your child. Definitely. Children know what they see and what they experience...I have to try and be as good as I can. And otherwise, I know where they're heading.

Moreover, this knowledge of being able to make a difference in someone's life goes hand in hand with their strong sense of responsibility towards these lives.

Hanisha : that thing in Indian women, we have that imbibed, that our parents give you...that sense of responsibility is very high... at least I feel that if you get married then give full justice to it, if you have children then do full justice to it. So I would feel that those were the times that my children needed me the most.....so for me that was my target that till my children grow up and go, I would want to give them their full attention so I was not working at that time.

This sense of being able to make a difference, especially to their children's lives along with their sense of responsibility, has a strong impact on the manner in which respondents, especially

mothers, structure their lives during the maturation years of their children - most of them structure their day in a manner that enables them to spend quantity as well as quality time with their child(ren). Structuring everyday activities in such a manner seems to provide them meaning on an everyday basis, something that Shahar believes is extremely important to living a meaningful life. As he puts it, "We need to find meaning on the specific level of our daily existence as well" (Ben-Shahar, 2007: 40).

Hanisha: So if you cannot spend productive time with your child...then what values are you going to imbibe in them?

Usha: It is both quantity and quality time that has to be given to the children. It is not just quality time, all the time you don't have to just talk about good things, Sometimes you have to be friends with them, play with them, spend just leisure time with them so that they open with you. Then only you have a very smooth-sailing relationship with your family, be it children, be it husband, be it in-laws or your parents, sisters, anybody, you know....

Aastha: I haven't kept a driver. I can afford a driver. But I want to be there because that 10 minutes when you are alone with the child in the car, probably you get to talk. At home, there are nine of us. So, sometimes, 'okay, you do your TV, I'm in the kitchen or whatever'. It is by choice I don't have a driver, so that we have our 10 minutes alone. So probably there would be some more interaction..... this is the social value that I'm talking about that – it is very easy – I have two kids, the whole evening I'm driving around between classes – just give 3000 rupees and have a driver... After five years, they are not going to need me to drive them around. Whatever relationship I think that we can build up has to be built up before they are 15.

Hanisha; I would be active in their school, I would go to their school, I would help the teachers...Things like that - so I was still active in that way, be with them and still not be with them.

Simren: There is a fixed thing from Monday to Friday I come back from work take her to the garden, she plays and I am with her if she has any questions, any thing I'm there. Then she comes back but I am always there with her, either me or Nicky [her husband]. ..I still feel that somewhere she has that sense of security that if your parent is there, there is, I can feel it, that when a question is come up for her she'll come and ask I believe that that is important; at least she knows that after this time I'm there and she can keep all her questions for me then...I like it. It makes me feel very special.

Moreover, with the participants spending time and developing strong, trustworthy relationships with their children, it suggests that their children too shall develop secure attachment styles like those that the interviewees seem to have. Prior research demonstrates that people with *secure attachments* generally believe that having social relationships is worthwhile and that people can be counted on in times of distress. (Sabini, 1995; Myers, 1999; Hogg & Vaughan, 2007). Thus, by nurturing secure attachment styles, the interviewees seem to be sowing the seeds for their children to develop future relationships that are likely to contribute to their meaning and happiness.

Pranav: in sad times when you need moral and physical support they are there, always there and you can count upon them. Like, no matter what happens, they will always be there. That does matter.....that is the biggest difference... children can look up to their elders and parents in the hours of need.

This is also linked to the fact that marriage (though declining) and family are still considered functional institutions in Indian society. Most of the respondents have grown up not only with both their biological parents, but also in or around extended families, learning values such as sharing and adjusting, as well as with the concern and nurturing of many other relatives (Appendix 8 and 9).

Additionally, as seen earlier, the children of the respondents like their parents to be around, to discuss and share the events of the day with them etc, making the interviewees feel important and needed. The knowledge that one plays an important part in another's life, and their presence is valued and eagerly awaited, is thereby firmly connected to a sense of belonging and self-worth. Moreover, being part of a family that a person thinks is worthy, also contributes to

their sense of self-worthiness pursued collectively. Though a rather extreme example, the following extract demonstrates visibly how interviewees feel proud to belong to the families they are part of.

Hanisha: I come from a very good family before marriage, and after marriage I did go into a middle-class family with my eyes open. But for me, honesty, an education was very important, and that is what my husband did. He came up in life on his own, which was also very, very nice for me - and honestly, without stepping on anybody's toes, he has come up in life. And today he can give me, provide for me as what my father could, without us asking from anybody anything. So that is....I feel proud of that.

Lastly, it can be implicitly seen in the above extracts how family provides a very strong foundation for *belonging*, and forms the means and basis to give as well as receive love - both considered to be fundamental human needs (Myers, 1999).

Positive emotions

The respondents also clearly state at numerous instances that they enjoy and appreciate spending time with their family. Therefore, along with meeting the need for meaning, social relationships also appear to satisfy the second component of happiness – the experience of positive emotions.

Smriti: We love doing that [spending time as a family]. And, for holidays we feel that is the most important time, but ... even in daily life also, we like to do things together mostly ... like ... at least watching TV makes you sit together, and for dinner and all. So that time, I think, is a good time to be together

...being with your children always makes you feel good. They come from school and they want to tell you everything what has happened. Both the girls have always done that ...every time they would want to tell everything. There were no secrets between us. So, there is always that time. You feel good ...

Usha: I have always enjoyed it and seeing them grow and seeing them evolve with new things, it gives you so much satisfaction

These findings stand in contrast to Baumeister's claim that, although having children increases meaningfulness in life, it decreases happiness (Baumesiter, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs 2002). Basing his argument on the findings of Tim Kasser that 'time affluence' - the feeling that person has sufficient time to pursue meaningful activities - is a consistent predictor of well-being, Ben-Shahar provides a plausible explanation for arguments such as Baumeister's. He firmly asserts, "There is little doubt that most people find child rearing meaningful.... and yet as a result of having too much to do, the pleasure component of happiness is significantly reduced.... When there are too many competing demands on our time and attention, our ability to be present is diminished – and with it, our ability to appreciate and enjoy the experience" (Ben-Shahar, 2007: 152). With the interviewees, especially the female respondents, they are able to structure their daily routine directly around their priorities, thereby enabling them to enjoy the time with their children.

The way forward

Although the above findings demonstrate explicitly that the attitudes and daily practices of the interviewees already incorporate numerous suggestions made by 'happiness scientists', trends and practices appear to be changing. The interviewees on numerous occasions referred to a decrease in sociability and interaction of their children, which they considered to be a consequence of gaining access to different forms of media and technology at a much younger age.

Pranav: As far as I am concerned, they are growing in a solitary world of their own. They are, maybe street-smart, but not really savvy in most of the interpersonal relationships.Whereas right now every child has a different set of things and there is no sharing.

Aastha: it's materialistic, it's exposure, and, you know, the simple things are not there anymore

Malini: Because you do land up spending some time in front of the box, right? We never used to have TV. So that time is cut off. I think that was a quality time...We used to spend so much time, because there was no TV..... There was a lot of family time. It is

still there but I am 100% sure it has gone down quite a bit....I think they are too secluded now. They don't actually want to leave their TV and come and sit and have a chat...They are not people's people now.

Thus, social interaction that forms a major source of meaning appears to be decreasing. Prior research shows similar results. Layard (2006: 86) puts it aptly, "It [Television] has transformed the way we spend our time.... this viewing time has to come from somewhere and it mainly comes from social life." In accordance with research on the impact of mass media, he takes the argument further, rightly claiming, "...For all its blessings, [it] has contributed in some degree to the decline of family and community life and the increase in crime" (Layard, 2006: 88). (Appendix 10 for more extracts).

Thus, summing up, social relationships appear to provide the interviewees with a strong sense of meaning, meeting all four of Baumeister's needs of meaning: the need for purpose, values, efficacy, and self-worth. Moreover, the commitment to values based on their belief in God and inculcated in them by their parents, in many ways connects them with something; taking one a step closer to developing Seligman's concept of a 'meaningful life'. It was also seen how relationships provide meaning to people in their everyday lives and routines, being especially applicable to the female respondents.

WORK

Meaning

Men, as implied earlier, structure their everyday life in a different manner from the female interviewees, primarily around their working hours. However, it certainly does not appear that

social relationships are less important or valued by them. Work, which supplies them the means to provide for their family, gives meaning to their everyday activities. Thus, social relationships provide meaning to a significant portion of their *everyday activities* in an indirect manner.

Pranav: The main principal thing for working would be to earn...a substantial sum so that your life and your dependents, people who are dependent on you, also enjoy a better quality of life...So, I have to provide security for myself and my dependents, who are depending on me. So, work is primarily earning. Secondary because of my particular profession, I am able to help people who really have some trouble...That gives you more satisfaction.

Many of them also derive meaning and satisfaction by using some of the financial resources earned to assist the needy and society at large. As Seligman (2002) demonstrates in an informal experiment with his students, satisfaction derived from a philanthropic act clearly outweighs that from a pleasurable one. Thereby, their attitude of giving or 'serving' - utilizing Seligman's term - seems to contribute to their happiness and meaning.

Dhruv (translated): If for the basic family necessity I need say Rs.50, 000 after I have achieved that amount I can't say I am not working for money. Again, I am working for money but at that time I don't stop to think whether that money is for only for me, my family or who is it for? It may be for society also. But I would rather like to think that if I get more money I would like to make money for others also.

Malini: So, for me, at the end of the day, whatever effort I have put in during the day, at the end of the year, it is going to charity, which is going to help other people. That is what gives me satisfaction.

Positive emotions

Moreover, most of the participants seem to really enjoy what they are doing. They are passionate about their work and would not like to stop working or do something else; in many ways their descriptions about their work appear to portray the experience of 'flow'.

Pranav: I would not like to stop working because this is the only thing I know, and even if my financial goals or other material goals are achieved, I would still work – may not be only for money – but yes, I would be working. Because I cannot see myself not working.

Aastha: Yes I love doing it. I love doing what I do.

Hanisha: Every day, because we plan out – okay, now we have to do printing; okay, new designs; new this, tomorrow we have to send this...so every day's work is different. So every day is a new way of thinking. So you enjoy these things. You enjoy it by itself and we look forward to it - all of us in my department...

Malini: It is my passion. I love styles, cuts, tailoring, colors, and those kinds of things...Vibrant...it is my passion – clothes.

Simren: I'm working there because I have a passion; it has come from within... I think that is taking me towards all of this reading I'm doing, towards this change I would like to see with children I'm working with...to create a few individuals who would grow up to do something different and that's because I am in education, to make that small shift in each child's mind. That is the meaning.

Thus, it appears that most of the respondents both enjoy their work, as well as derive meaning from it, as they are able to provide for their families and community. Thus, they experience both the components of happiness - positive emotions and meaning - through their work.

Limitations

However, this research has not been able to adequately explore the dimension of work. More research is needed to understand how people with different kinds of jobs derive meaning and happiness, along with grasping the complexities of deriving meaning and happiness from their everyday work activities. Additionally, although the respondents come from diverse fields - an architect, a doctor, an accountant, an educator, a bakery owner, businessmen, a boutique owner, an NGO worker –the service industry and high-profile jobs are admittedly over-represented, especially for a developing country like India. Furthermore, although this research demonstrates that men and women derive meaning on an everyday level from different types of activities, deeper examination is needed to understand the differences and similarities surrounding it, as well as to investigate if this is only applicable to Indian society. Thus, though the paper demonstrates that people derive meaning from their work, it is acknowledged that further investigation is needed on the same.

CONCLUSION

This paper has therefore explored the relationship between happiness and meaning through the variables of belief in God, social relationships, and work. It has also attempted to understand how, and in what manner, these variables provide meaning and happiness to individuals. The research demonstrates that belief in God provides individuals with a clear value system, meeting one of the most important needs for meaning. This belief in God can almost be seen as a different attitude towards life, with the experience of positive emotions such as gratitude and contentment being a byproduct of it.

Social relationships seem to meet all the four needs of meaning; demonstrating that they provide individuals a sense of purpose, self-worth, and efficacy, as well as a value system. Moreover, interacting with family members and spending time with them is seen as an enjoyable experience by the interviewees, meeting the second component of happiness – the experience of positive emotions. In addition, their commitment to values inculcated in them by their parents, based on their belief in God, provides an illustration to Seligman's definition of a 'meaningful life'. Lastly, work appears to give individuals a means to provide for their family and community, providing them meaning. Further, most respondents seem to enjoy their work and experience positive emotions.

The findings of this paper, particularly with regards to belief in God and social relationships, reinforce the importance of collective goals and values. Academics such as Layard fiercely argue this, the importance of collective goals as the means towards a happier future. However, the responses of the interviewees reveal the discarding of practices and activities in this regard.

Therefore, further research is needed to verify the widespread impact of media and technology on Indian society. If the findings are in alignment with the respondents' worries, further investigation is needed to understand why this is the case. Additionally, deeper examination would also be required to see if interventions can be made to make people aware, and caution them against discarding practices that research demonstrates crafts a meaningful and happy life.

NOTES

1. Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King and Ed Diener; complete reference unavailable in book
2. Due to the lack of availability of literature in the field of sociology, relevant work from other disciplines is drawn on.
3. Not numbered chronologically

APPENDIX

I. TABLE I

Descriptive Statistics Variable	Slum Dwellers	Sex Workers	Pavement Dwellers	Total
Demographics:				
N	31	32	20	83
Mean Age	31.90A	30.80A	43.20B	35.40
Percent Women	61A	97B	20C	65
Mean Income	2.57A	2.28A	2.53A	2.47
Mean Housing Rating	3.25A	3.68B	1.57C	3.01
Satisfaction with Life:				
Satisfaction with Life	2.23A	1.81B	1.60B	1.93
Memory Balance	0.00A	0.15A	-0.88A	-0.14
Material Satisfaction	2.48A	2.07A	1.69B	2.16
Income Satisfaction	2.03A	2.04A	2.40A	2.12
Housing Satisfaction	2.14A	2.32A	1.88A	2.15
Food Satisfaction	2.60A	2.61A	2.37A	2.56
Social Satisfaction	2.41A	2.31A	2.46A	2.38
Family Satisfaction	2.73A	2.46B	2.17B	2.50
Romantic Satisfaction	2.44A	2.41A	2.69A	2.48
Friendship Satisfaction	2.37A	2.41A	2.23A	2.36
Satisfaction with Self	2.67A	2.31A	2.23A	2.43
Morality Satisfaction	2.80A	2.41A	2.50A	2.58
Intelligence Satisfaction	2.59A	2.48A	2.54A	2.54
Satisfaction with Physical Appearance	2.26A	2.31A	2.31A	2.29

Note: Different letters indicate means that differ by $p < 0.05$ or less.

Source: Biswas-Diener, R., & Diener, E. (2001). Making the Best of a Bad Situation: Satisfaction in the Slums of Calcutta. *Social Indicators Research*, 55, 329–352.

II. TABLE II : SATISFACTION OF THE HOMELESS

Group:	Calcutta	Dignity village	Fresno
Life Satisfaction (5–35; 20 is neutral)	22.20 (8.68)	A 17.27 (7.36)B	14.12 (7.61)B
Domain Satisfaction (score range 1–7)			
<i>Material Domains</i>			
1. Material Resources	3.46	3.84	3.42
2. Food	5.37	4.41	4.99
3. Income	3.75A	2.41B	2.68B
4. Housing	2.38	3.28	3.17
5. Health	3.33A	4.63B	4.62B
<i>Social Domains</i>			
6. Social	5.08A	4.34B	4.04B
7. Romantic Relations	4.97	4.19	4.04
8. Friends	4.22	5.00	4.07
9. Privacy	3.00	3.09	3.22
10. Family	5.93A	4.31B	4.36B
<i>Self-related Domains</i>			
11. Self	5.77A	4.66B	4.73B
12. Morality	4.97	5.41	4.57
13. Physical Appearance	4.40	4.34	4.36
14. Intelligence	5.85	5.00	5.38
Note: Scores in the same			

Source : Biswas-Diener, R., & Diener, E. (April, 2006). The Subjective Well-Being of the Homeless, and Lessons for Happiness. *Social Indicators Research*, 76(2), 185-205.

III. LOCATION OF INTERVIEWS

The interviewees were given the choice of location for the interviews. Most men preferred their respective offices where they each had an individual cabin; ensuring a quiet and confidential place for interviewing. With the female respondents, the majority of them were interviewed in a quiet room at my residence and the remaining at their respective residences.

IV. THE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Madam/ Sir,

I'm a final year B.Sc. Sociology student at the London School of Economics, United Kingdom. As part of the program, students are required to submit a research paper and that accounts for one-fourth of our grade in the final year. Being sociologists, we are encouraged to get into the field and collect our own data; attempting to interpret the world the way people actually perceive the world.

My topic of research is **happiness** and I desire to explore this concept through different dimensions. Surprisingly, there is extensive research done on the subject of happiness in different fields from philosophy to economics; as a matter of fact there is a new field called positive psychology that primarily aims at research in this field. However, most of the data gathered is based on studies done in the United States. Thereby, my research paper aims to explore previous work in a different context.

The research method I have chosen is interviews and thereby I would really appreciate if it would be possible for you to give an interview. The interview would be around an hour long consisting of questions regarding happiness, social environment, work etc.

As part of the process of learning to be ethical sociologists, we have been specifically trained to respect the privacy of our participants and ensure Complete Confidentiality of any information disclosed to us; **No information** at all will be discussed with any family member or friend. Even the final research paper shall not have your name or any other information that helps identify you unless prior permission is gained from you.

I hope it would be possible for you to spare some of your valuable time and participate in my research. I hope to do most of my interviews in the coming two weeks as I shall be returning to England on 4th Jan.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Shruti Sonathalia

V. THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name

Age

Gender

Number of years of marriage

Children

- Age
- Gender

Family

- ☐ nuclear
- ☐ joint

Work

Education

- I. Work – work is either a means to an end to support their family or is their calling
 - What are the motivating factors for you to work?
 - Are there any specific goals after the accomplishment of which you would like to stop working?
 - What needs does working satisfy? Do you attain satisfaction from working? In what way?
 - Do you work to satisfy certain needs? - material, non-material
 - Are there certain factors that make working necessary for you? If these constraints are met, would you like doing something else?
- II. Religion and spirituality
 - Your views on religion/ spirituality
 - Why do you believe in God

- Were you taught to believe in God?
- Have u always believed in God?
- Does you belief in God, influence your life in any way? (elaborate/ in what way?)
- Do you practice religion / Do you spend time worshipping God?
 - Individually
 - Collectively

III. Social relationships

- How different is life today from your childhood and teenage years? How would you compare your childhood and teenage years with that of children and teenagers today? (explore the main themes / values when they were socialized)
 - Impact of globalization (ideological dimension)
 - Media – Television and films (weakening social relations)
- How important do you think social relationships are?
- Do you think it is important to
 - spend this time with family?
 - To keep in touch with extended family
 - Meet and chat with friends
- How do you spend time with
 - family
 - friends
 - extended family

IV. Meaning and happiness – asking them directly about the hypothesis

- a. What gives meaning to your life?
- b. Have these sources of meaning changed over the years?
- c. What makes you happy, from the simplest to the most complex things? What gives you

(lasting/ enduring) happiness? (different from pleasure)

- d. Do you think there is a relationship between what gives you meaning and what makes you happy?

VI. INTERVIEWEE'S DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Name*	Gender	Age	Occupation	Number of years of marriage	Demographics of children	Current living in
Dhruv	M	49	Businessman	24	1. Girl 22 2. Boy 16	Nuclear family
Pranav	M	42	Doctor	14	1. Boy 12 2. Girl 9	Nuclear family
Varun	M	51	Chartered accountant	25	1. Girl 22 2. Girl 18	Nuclear family
Nihal	M	48	Bakery owner	26	1. Boy 23 2. Boy 22	Nuclear family
Malini	F	48	Designer and boutique owner	23	1. Boy 19 2. Girl 17	Nuclear family
Simren	F	36	Educationist	12	1. Girl 5	Joint family
Hanisha	F	51	NGO employee	29	1. Boy 26 2. Boy 21	Nuclear family now
Aastha	F	39	Writer and architect	14	1. Boy 9 2. Girl 6	Joint family
Gauri	F	45	Housewife	19	1. Girl 18 2. Girl 14	Nuclear family
Smriti	F	46	Housewife	21	1. Girl 20 2. Girl 13	Nuclear family
Usha	F	48	Housewife	25	1. Boy 22 2. Boy 20 3. Girl 15	Nuclear family
Aparna	F	36	Housewife	16	1. Boy 15 2. Girl 12	Nuclear family

* In order to ensure anonymity the names of the respondents have been changed.

VII. LABELLING THE INTERVIEWEE'S AS HINDUS

As the following extracts demonstrate, most of the interviewees are hesitant about calling themselves Hindus. However, it is important to mention that some external incidents may contribute to this attitude. It could be partially understood as their response to Islamic extremism, with the state experiencing several terrorist attacks in the last few years. It could also be that the brutal riots that the state experienced in 2002 still colors their memory.

Hanisha : I believe that there is something up there. There is nothing for me as religion as in like Hindu, Muslim. There is only one God.

Pranav: I acknowledge the fact that there is something...which governs us. Whether you name it God or Allah or Jesus Christ or whatever, it does not really matter.

VIII. GROWING UP WITH BOTH BIOLOGICAL PARENTS

Growing up with both biological parents has a significant impact on children.

Seligman summarizes it appropriately, "Children who live with both biological parents are treated for emotional disorders at one-fourth to one-third the rate of the other parenting arrangements. Among the most surprising outcomes (beyond better grades and lack of depression) are the findings that the children of stable marriages mature more slowly in sexual terms, they have more positive attitudes towards potential mates, and are more interested in long-term relationships rather than the children of divorce"(Seligman, 2002 : 188).

IX. ADVANTAGES OF EXTENDED FAMILIES

The interviewees refer to several advantages of living and growing up in extended families. Though most of them do not live with extended families now, many due to practical and geographical considerations, they evaluate such a lifestyle as favorable and positive.

Malini : ups and downs would always be there – but that's fine, because when you are in a joint family, you learn also so much. Like, you learn to be patient, tolerant, and other things like housework is also divided and you also tend to learn other things because there are so many people.

Simren : There is a lot learning that I am developing with living in a joint family. First, like I said patience, a lot of patience and also managing your house gives you that. I think there is a lot of sharing also, there is a lot of us then just me, that is what I wanted even Sanjana [her daughter] to pick up. Because somewhere we become so independent and such strong individuals that we stop thinking about others around us and that is what I think I'm learning. Because I came from the US, I was just all about myself and that's what I came back and re-enforced, that back living in India, it's also us, we are all together and that's what is the biggest learning happening.

Malini: Somebody is busy, somebody will get things. You help others, they help you. It never used be a tit for tat kind of thing. It was always from within, and anything would happen and if somebody would ask you to do something, without a thought you would just do it. You haven't done anything for me so I will not do anything for you – nothing of that kind.

Hanisha: You know... so... like you learn so much from all the other uncles or the aunties ...you learn from them so much more, and apni kya ruchi hai, woh usme se jyada khilti hai [whatever your interest is it can be nurtured more] because then the elders can see that yeh bachche ki yeh ruche ha [that this child is interested and good in this]. Encourage that child in that way.

Aastha: Probably, like, the amount of love my children have for their grandparents is because we're living together. The amount of affection and care I feel for my in-laws is because I'm living with them. That cannot come from living in another city. You know, small things, I had a fall and broke my arm, and my mother-in-law used to bring my milk up daily for me. And that is something that even if she is... if we were not staying together it would never happen. And that will make me obviously feel for her. Now, when she is sick, it's not just my duty to do that, I feel like doing it. That duty and feeling thing is there only in an Indian family.

X. INTERVIEW EXTRACTS OF CHANGES OCCURING

Aastha: It is what they see on television also. I can moderate it to a certain extent. But I cannot sit and watch all the programs. And, they're getting some of the cartoons...even Tom and Jerry is violence. If you really look at it, it is – Tom is hitting Jerry and Jerry is hitting Tom, you know. So, when you try to see, I don't think our parents even had to think. Like, Tom and Jerry, Charlie Chaplin was a big deal. But now when you look at it, there are so many violent TV shows. Even the cartoons are violent. You are scared that if they watch too much, they are going to imbibe something from it. So, to keep my children away from the TV, I make them do a lot of extracurricular activities. Which, when I was a child, I did some activities, but I used to play out also. So, one thing was less.

Pranav: I had not seen a television till I was in 8th grade. So, it was as late as that. So, by that time, you know, whatever rules or regulations or, you know, morals were fully imbibed in me. There was nothing really to ... distract me from those things. Because television was not there and the computer was unheard of, we used to indulge in to a lot of indoor and outdoor games and that used to take away most of our time, apart from studies.

Malini: Now, the life is pretty fast. So much technological advancement because of TVs and Play stations and whatever, PST and all those things. Our days, we never used to have this, so we used to have more people interactions, like we used to have games and things like playing outside and all. Now, it is more indoors and stuff, you know. They do go outside and play, but basically I think that has totally changed on a really fast track, I feel.

Because you do land up spending some time in front of the box, right? We never used to have TV. So that time is cut off. I think that was a quality time. We used to make an effort and go out and play in the street with other kids, you know. In our own society if we were living in a society. We used to have joint families, so all the cousins were together in the same house. We used to spend so much time, because there was no TV. We used to make up different games and then play those games, you know. There was a lot of family time. It is still there but I am 100% sure it has gone down quite a bit.

I think they are too secluded now, and in that case I think they become a little self centered also, in the sense that then people don't like it these when guests come. You know, they don't actually want to leave their TV and come and sit and have a chat. I think they have become more reserved and they are basically involved in the computer or TV. They are not people's people now. I feel in those days we were quite people's people.

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