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Happiness in Relation to Altruistic Intentionality and Equity Theory

Burcu Altintas

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Happiness in Relation to Altruistic Intentionality and Equity Theory

An Honors College Thesis

by

Burcu Altintas

Spring 2018

Psychology Department

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Reader, Dr. Alex Najman

May 3rd, 2018

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	INTRO
WHAT IS HAPPINESS	1
LITERARY REVIEW	8
IRB AND APPLICATION.....	9
○ PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH.....	21
○ INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	36
○ LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS	38
○ HAPPINESS MEASURE.....	40
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS	42
METHODS	45
DISCUSSION	50
CONCLUSION.....	52
REFERENCES.....	53

Abstract

When it comes to the pursuit of happiness, there are many different speculations and theories on how it may be obtained. Pop-culture places a high belief in the idea that happiness lies within the focus of oneself and of people's individualized needs. Another commonly held idea states that happiness lies within spending hard earned money on material items. However, within psychology, countless studies have disproven this pop-culture belief and now there is evidence that demonstrates the negative relationship that materialism has on life satisfaction (Roberts, Tsang, & Manolis, 2015). On the other hand, research on prosocial *spending* is on the rise and an considerable amount proof of the positive affects related to prosocial behavior and its connection to happiness can be read about in the *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

This thesis describes previous research and discusses a design for a study that can be executed in the future to explore conductors of happiness. The purpose of this study is to better the understand the mechanisms behind people's motivations within prosocial behavior and the relationship between prosocial behavior and happiness. Current studies in happiness indicate that there is a strong association between happiness and prosocial behavior. However, current research lacks in explaining the differing mechanisms behind our motivations for such behavior. This thesis focuses on two distinct mechanisms for prosocial behavior, (1) altruistic intentionality, and (2) equity theory. Altruistic intentionality refers to one's openness to be prosocial without expectation of reciprocation or recognition for the act. Prosocial behavior can be characterized as any act with the goal of benefitting another person, and may include everyday kindnesses (e.g., cooking dinner for a loved one), as well as larger efforts to improve the world (e.g., picking up litter). On the other hand, equity theory states that people are driven

by fairness, and their outputs in life are determined by their inputs received. Based on previous research, my hypothesis is that altruistic intentionality will lead to happiness.

What is Happiness?

Happiness is something that most people do not think about consciously on a daily basis, and yet people's individualized levels of happiness has the greatest impact on the way they view their lives. The unceasing question that everyone wants to know, and what drove me to begin researching this topic is, does money really buy us happiness? More so now than ever, advertisers have been working to make people believe that happiness may be found in the leather pocketbook in the window of that store, or in that German sports car that people might be working overtime for. While material items may give people a sense of temporary fulfillment due to the dopamine rush they experience when they get something of material value, this hedonic feeling will dissipate quickly (O'Connor, 2008) and people will be right back where they started, looking for another "quick fix." The modern-day way of living has done an excellent job at convincing people what *it means to be happy*; however, people are just not wired the way the modern economist culture operates, and therefore they silently suffer while chasing after material things and capital. In America, over the past twenty-five years, the average citizen increased their working hours from forty to fifty; this is more than any other country *in the world*, including Japan (O'Connor, 2008), a country that actually has a word in their language that refers to death from overworking. Consumer spending increased by 3.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2017, bringing the total to \$12 trillion dollars in the United States alone (Amadeo, 2018). While at the same time, mental health is worsening and the suicide rate is increasing (Macmillan, 2017). People are made to believe that money has the power to grant them happiness, and, although it may provide them with a sense of security, it is more guaranteed to grant people with a life of constant "wanting", extreme fatigue, worry, and social isolation.

Although people's way of living has changed, people's response to stress 180,000 years ago is exactly the same as how people respond today. However, people's stressors do not consist of the fear of being eaten alive by a pride of lions; today people's stressors consist of the fear that they will not be good enough, fearing that their boss may replace them at any moment, and fearing that they will not meet their own expectations (O'Connor, 2008). These fears engage people's flight or fight responses and overtime slowly corroding their organs with toxic cortisol (O'Connor, 2008). Modern day threats are all around, but people may not even be conscious of them. Instead of living in a cooperative society where life's value is defined by how well people contribute to their community, people live in a competitive society that has a hard time defining just how a life is valued. Instead of security of the community, people have the anxiety of homelessness and unemployment. Today, eight out of the ten most frequently used medications treat conditions related to stress such as barbiturates, sleeping aids, and antidepressants. Further, according to a report that was released in 2011 by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), antidepressant consumption in the United States increased by almost 400% between 2005-2008 (Pratt, Brody, & Gu). In 2006, Americans spent over \$76 billion dollar a year on antidepressants (O'Connor, 2008); But these medications are only addressing symptoms, and not causes. This is why the science of positive psychology and preventative measures are so important.

It is time to ask ourselves in the United States, what are we not doing right? In 2017 I took a trip Iceland, the third happiest country in the world (World Happiness Report , 2017) to ask them about happiness and to learn more about the people and their way of life. I went around and asked haphazardly selected citizens off the streets of Reykjavik about the high taxes they are

required to pay in their country. Something that struck me as interesting is that the citizens are happy to pay more taxes to help others. I came to the understanding that people of Iceland universally felt a sense of responsibility for others. When an individual is feeling stressed it is not regarded as an individualistic issue, but rather a societal issue.

Iceland is a socially democratic welfare nation, which means that the ideologies imbedded in their government advocated for a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016). Iceland, similarly to Norway and Denmark (which ranked first and second according to the World Happiness Report), have governments that support economic and social intercessions that promote social justice. This humanitarian mentality within the structural framework of the government influences the mindset of their citizens and the importance of social support is truly recognized and shared throughout the entire country. For example, Icelanders pay extremely high taxes to fund and maintain their social welfare programs as a source for all- and they do it happily- In fact, many Icelanders wish they paid more taxes. Examples of such Icelanders who wish they paid more taxes include my instructors at the University of Reykjavik, Sigrun Olafsdottir and Unnur Valdimarsdottir. Maybe money, in some non-direct way *can* buy happiness through acts of generosity and charity.

I applied my new findings of the Icelandic culture and mentality to a broader scope of research. I wanted to understand a universal characteristic of happiness, and find out if one even exists. We already know that humans are social animals, and money can be nice and provides security when it is not regarded in a spendthrift way. I also know what I learned about Icelandic people and their mentality to help others and their openness to give. Ninety-six percent of Icelandic citizens believe they know someone they can rely on in a time of need; there is also

strong evidence that says that social capital and helpfulness contribute to higher levels of prosocial behavior and happiness (Han, 2015). But the most important factor of prosocial behavior's relation to happiness is that it is prevalent among many cultures around the world (Mochon & Morcillo, 2016). So maybe the fundamental basis to universal happiness is to hone in on the mechanisms and motivations behind prosocial behavior.

Much of the research on prosocial behavior discusses simple acts of kindness and how they are related to happiness; however, there is a lack of empirical studies that discuss the mental functioning and intentionality behind prosocial behavior. Are those who practice acts of kindness and expect them to be reciprocated happier? Or do their levels of happiness decline when the kindness they give out to the world do not come back around?

Due to the multidimensional nature of the subject (Diener, 2003), within the current realm of research there is a multitude of different postulations regarding predictors of happiness. One study from the United Kingdom has found that there is a strong correspondence with the neurotic personality trait and extroversion in respect to happiness (Gale, Booth, Mottus, Kuh, & Deary, 2013). Another study scales down to molecular genetics and addresses how low levels of the monoamine oxidase A, or the MAOA gene has the ability to predict happiness in women (Chen, et al., 2012). Interestingly, the MAOA gene, also known as the "warrior gene," (Powledge, 2016) has been notorious in the scientific world in its correlation with aggression and antisocial personality disorder (Powledge, 2016). In addition, there are other, more traditional, predictors of happiness, such as a positive self-esteem, a sense of perceived control, and optimism. The most common predictor of happiness in research focuses on social and environment influences, such as positive relationships and social capital. As mentioned

previously, social influences and relations is the only factor in happiness research that is prevalent among numerous cultures around the world (Mochon & Morcillo, 2016). This is why social influences and prosocial behavior are of interest to me.

Why should we care about what predicts happiness? “Being happy” and achieving happiness is the greatest mystery of all human history. The globe is made up all sorts of different people, all with different cultural backgrounds, norms, and external surroundings. But when these differences are removed and when one examines the roots of who people are, it can be seen that people are all the same neurologically. People, of course, all need the basics of shelter, food, and security; however, beyond that it does not matter if someone lives in the slums of India, Guam, or an economy-driven country such as America. What all human beings need is human connections such as social relationships, social support, and to feel loved. In fact, many scholars such as UCLA neuroscientist, Matthew Liberman believe that social connections are just as important as food and shelter (Wolpert, 2013). These social necessities are the foundation of what makes people human and what will allow people to thrive in an emotionally healthy sort of way.

Understanding Happiness

When reading about happiness and positive psychology, there are many terms that get thrown around and it can definitely be a little confusing. For example, are happiness and subjective wellbeing the same thing? Well, the answer to this is *yes and no*. Characteristics of happiness include positive affect, which, in part, leads to a more-long term, subjective well-being. Subjective well-being, or SWB for short, is defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 63). A person who has a high level of satisfaction with their life, and who experiences more positive affect and less negative affect, would be considered to have a high level of subjective well-being, or in simpler terms, that person is deemed as being happier (Albuquerque, 2010).

Two historical western concepts essential in understanding the different aspects of subjective-wellbeing and happiness are *hedonism* and *eudaimonia*. Hedonism can be defined as the simple pursuit of pleasure. This theory has a bad reputation in the work-ethic world; this is primarily because hedonists are usually considered selfish and short-sighted, living only for sensual pleasure of the moment. The concept of ethical hedonism was first coined by its biggest follower, Epicurius, who has stated "do no harm when seeking your own pleasure, and the world works out for the best." Furthermore, the notion of hedonism is also the basis for the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill (O'Connor, 2008). On the other, Eudaimonia, a concept that was developed by Aristotle, can be described as living up to one's true potential and their best possible conditions through discipline. There is research in the realm of positive psychology that suggests eudemonia beats hedonism when it comes to overall life satisfaction (O'Connor, 2008).

In addition to these two western theories, there is also another approach to happiness that was developed in the east, Buddhism. Buddha taught of Four Noble Truths. The first states that suffering is inevitable and it exists; the second is the notion that suffering is due to attachment; the third Noble Truth says that the end of suffering is within reach; and the fourth Noble Truth is the path towards the end of suffering, which is named the Eight-fold path. Within this path to the end of suffering, there is a strong emphasis on “appropriate” healthy, constructive, objective ways of thinking, behaving, and seeing which in part has the ability to reduce suffering here on earth- leading one closer to enlightenment, or pure contentment and happiness.

Why is happiness such a mystery and why do so many want to attain in? Firstly, what many people are not necessarily aware of is the tremendous health benefits that come with being happy. Positive affect is linked to better health and greater well-being, as compared to chronic negative affect such as anger, hostility, and worry. Those who experience more negative affect are more prone to developing high blood pressure and heart disease (Steptoe & Wardle 2005). In fact, happier people’s hearts beat at an average of six times slower per minute, which makes a huge difference in the long run. Happiness is also known to lengthen life expectancy and boost the immune system (Alper, Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, & Turner 2003).

Literary Review

Although prosocial behavior is thought to benefit only the recipient, there is now evidence that reveals the extensive emotional benefits to also the helpers doing the action. For instance, volunteering is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Wheeler, Gorey, & Greenblatt, 1998), and prosocial spending is more inclined to increase happiness than spending money on oneself. (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Zaki & Mitchell, 2011). It's not uncommon for one to think of altruism when they think of prosocial behavior, however the two who are separate, distinct things. Altruism is simply the unselfish concern for the welfare of others (Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2006). Much of this thesis discusses altruistic behavior as a motivation for prosocial behavior and yet, the true existence of altruism has been in debate for hundreds of years. Philosophers and psychologists alike want to know if it is actually conceivable that people do good without any expectation of positive consequences or benefit to themselves. Everyone has a different take on the validity on altruism. Many people like to over analyze the properties of altruistic behavior, believing that the *sense of reward* felt after doing an act of selfless prosocial behavior is enough to reject its existence. So, it makes sense to say that the ongoing debate of altruisms existence is relative to a person's own idea and definition for true selfless.

IRB

IRB stands for *institutional review board* and it is comprised of a committee of people who inspect and review proposals for the purpose of granting researchers' permission to execute their study's. The IRB committee is made up of an administrator, faculty members, and outside committee members. Within the IRB are three different types of review that a study may classify for; (1) *exempt*, (2) *expedited*, and (3) *full review*. There are certain criteria necessary within each and every study for it to qualify for either an exempt, expedited, or full review. For a study to be eligible for an *exempt* review, there must be little to no risk involved. Also, the study must include certain items such as anonymous surveys where participants cannot be identified, in addition if a study elaborates on previously conducted research, it may also be eligible for exemption. An exempt review is ideal in certain situations because it only reviewed by one person, the head of the *IRB*, rather than the entire comity- for this reason, receiving approval is a much more accelerated process in comparison to expedited review and full review. An *expedited review* is meant for those who plan on enacting an intervention with little risk involved- in an expedited review only two people from the *IRB* review the study, The head of the committee and one more person. A *full review* is a more comprehensive review involving the entire committee for a study that has moderate to high risk associated with it. For instance, a study involving the assessment of a new drug would have to undergo a complete a *full review* which entails the entire committee's judgement and approval. In addition, for a study to be deemed ethical in no matter what category of review it falls under, the researcher must showcase that there is a need to know more about the subject, and a good reason to do the study- otherwise the study may be deemed unethical on the terms that it's considered a waste of participants time.

Originally, I had hoped that my study would qualify for the exempt review process because of my plan to utilize a simple survey as my measure and a method of keeping participants anonymous by only requesting for their mothers first and last initial, with inclusion of the participant's last four digits of their phone number (e.g., NA2660). However, after finalizing and submitting my application to the IRB, I was disappointed to learn that my study did not meet eligibility for exempt review due to the inclusion of an intervention (asking participants to do various kinds of prosocial activities, and completing). On the pages that follow is my exempt application:

IRB ID# _____

**Long Island University
Institutional Review Board
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT CATEGORY REVIEW**

Project Title: Happiness in Relation to Altruistic intentionality and Equity theory

A. Investigators:

Faculty Investigator/Sponsor: Dr. Nancy Frye

Department: Psychology

Campus: Post

Phone: 516-299-2008 Fax: 516-299-3105 Email: Nancy.Frye@liu.edu

Student Investigator: Burcu Altintas

Department: Psychology

Campus: Post

Phone: [REDACTED] Fax: _____ Email: Burcu.Altintas@my.liu.edu

Address for Correspondence: _____

**PLEASE ATTACH A SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH:
INCLUDE:**

- Purpose of the study
- Statement indicating why study meets the guidelines for exempt review
- Subject population
- Brief description of procedures to be followed
- Brief description of risks and benefits to subjects involved in the study
- Recruitment Procedures
- Copies of consent forms, scripts, surveys, questionnaires, syllabi, and letters of cooperation should be appended.

As of September 1, 2004 all Long Island University personnel (including students and staff) involved in projects using human research subjects who have not completed the Long Island University workshop, "Education in the Protection of Human Research Subjects", are required to complete an online training program before beginning their research. To complete the training titled "Protecting Human Research Participants" go to <http://phrp.nihtraining.com>. Once the training module has been completed, you will be prompted to print out a certificate of completion. A copy of this certificate must be submitted with your IRB application or your application will be returned. Please keep a copy of your certificate for your records as it must be attached to all future IRB applications as proof of training compliance.

Please send one copy of the completed application to:
Inter-Departmental Mail: Patricia Harvey, Sponsored Research, University Center
Regular Mail: Patricia Harvey, IRB, LIU, Office of Sponsored Research,
700 Northern Blvd., Greenvale, NY 11548

After learning about my denial for exempt review, I followed the next steps necessary and submitted an application for expedited review. Following is my application for expedited review that was submitted to the IRB April 4th, 2018:

Long Island University

Institutional Review Board

APPLICATION FOR EXPEDITED CATEGORY REVIEW

Some categories of human subjects research that do not qualify for exemption qualify for **expedited review**. Research activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk* to human research participants **and** (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the following categories (see below) may be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Inclusion on this list merely means that the activity is eligible for review through the expedited review procedure when the specific circumstances of the proposed research involve no more than minimal risk to research participants.

**Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves from those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. [45 CFR 46.102(i)]*

The categories in this list apply regardless of the age of participants, except as noted.

The expedited review procedure may not be used where identification of the participants is possible directly, or through identifiers linked to them **and** their responses would reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participant's financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation.

The expedited review procedure may not be used for classified research involving human research participants.

The standard requirements for informed consent (or its waiver, alteration, or exception) apply.

RESEARCH CATEGORIES ELIGIBLE FOR EXPEDITED REVIEW

Identify the expedited review category (or categories) of the proposed research.

Additional details on these expedited review categories can be found at

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/expedited98.html>.

1) ☐ Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met:

(a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review.).

(b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

2) ☐ Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows:

(a) From healthy, nonpregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or

(b) From other adults and children¹ considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

NOTE: Intravenous (IV), Port, Central, or any other lines are NOT eligible under this category even if the research involves “minimal risk”.

3) ☐ Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means.

Examples: (a) Hair and nail clippings in a nondisfiguring manner; (b) deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction; (c) permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction; (d) excreta and external secretions (including sweat); (e) uncannulated saliva collected either in an unstimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue; (f) placenta removed at delivery; (g) amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor; (h) supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques; (i) mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings; (j) sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

- 4) ☐ Collection of data through noninvasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications.)

Examples: (a) Physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy; (b) weighing or testing sensory acuity; (c) magnetic

resonance imaging; (d) electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography; (e) moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

- 5) ☐ Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis). (Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)
- 6) ☐ Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- 7) ☒ Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

8) ☐ Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB as follows:

(a) Where (i) the research is permanently closed to the enrollment of new subjects; (ii) all subjects have completed all research-related interventions; and (iii) the research remains active only for long-term follow-up of subjects; or

(b) Where no subjects have been enrolled and no additional risks have been identified; or

(c) Where the remaining research activities are limited to data analysis.

9) ☐ Continuing review of research, not conducted under an investigational new drug application or investigational device exemption where categories two (2) through eight (8) do not apply but the IRB has determined and documented at a convened meeting that the research involves no greater than minimal risk and no additional risks have been identified.

All investigators are expected to be familiar with LIU policies and procedures governing the use of human subjects in research. Failure to follow application instructions may result in delay of the approval process. All LIU personnel (including students and staff) involved in projects using human research subjects are required to complete an online training program before beginning their research. To complete training go to <http://phrp.nihtraining.com> and submit a copy of the certificate of completion from that program as part of this application. (Protecting Human Research Participants).

Please email the completed application to irb-post@liu.edu (for the Post campus) or irb-brooklyn@liu.edu (for the Brooklyn campus). For any questions regarding this form, please contact the IRB administrator, Dr. Lacey Sischo, at 516-299-3591 or lacey.sischo@liu.edu.

Project Title:*

Happiness in relation to altruistic intentionality and equity theory

***If part of a larger program and/or if funded by an external agency, also provide the title of the larger program and/or grant title:**

A. INVESTIGATORS:

LIU Faculty Investigator / Sponsor: Nancy Frye

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Student Investigator: Burcu Altintas

Department: Psychology

Campus: Long Island University- Post

Phone: [REDACTED] Fax:

Email: Burcu.altintas@my.liu.edu

Address for Correspondence: [REDACTED]

On a separate sheet list any co-investigator(s) and affiliations(s); be sure to identify personnel who are not employees or students of LIU.

Type of project (check one):

☐ Faculty research ☐ Doctoral dissertation ☐ Pre-doctoral research

☐ Master's thesis ☐ Pilot study ☒ Other (specify): Senior Honors Thesis

B. SOURCE OF FUNDING:

1. ☐ Externally Funded:

Sponsor and Sponsor ID:

2. ☐ Seeking Funding:

Sponsor:

Deadline:

A full copy of the grant proposal must be on file with the University Office of

Sponsored Research or appended to this application. ☐ On File ☐ Appended

3. ☒ Not Seeking Funding

C. DATA COLLECTION:

1. Data collection, proposed dates: Upon IRB approval

(Note: the start date for collection must be no earlier than the date full approval is received.)

2. Site(s) of data collection: Long Island University- Post campus

3. If the proposed activities be conducted in whole or in part at another institution/organization, provide name(s) of participating institution(s) and indicate their role(s) in the study. If the subjects are to be drawn from an institution or organization [i.e., hospital, social service agency, employer, prison, school, etc.] which has responsibility for the subjects, then **documentation of permission from that institution and its IRB** or equivalent must be submitted before final LIU approval can be given.

Other organizations may require that you also receive HIPPA permission from an appropriate office or officer at their site. If required, a copy of the HIPPA approval should be attached.

(Note: Long Island University is not a “covered entity” under HIPPA consideration)

E. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH: Provide a brief description, in layman’s terms, of the proposed research. The description must include the purpose of the research and a

summary of the procedures to be used with the subjects. This section should also indicate the roles of each investigator, co-investigator and/or research study personnel. **Please limit your summary to one page:**

Proposal for research

My intended study is meant to look further at the effects of prosocial behavior and its relation to happiness. Countless previous research studies emphasize a strong relation to many different variations of prosocial behavior; however, no study has addressed prosocial behavior via altruistic intentionality or an equity theory approach. Altruistic intentionality refers to one's concern for the true welfare of others and involves self-less acts without the seeking of recognition for them. Equity theory is the idea that people are driven by fairness and their inputs in life are dictated by their outputs. Equity theory and altruism are important because they're major factors in prosocial behavior motivation that have been overlooked up until now, in addition, this study has the potential of deciphering a substantial component of individualized happiness. My proposed study will take what we currently know about prosocial behavior and happiness and take it a step farther. I intend to do this by building on a previous study, *The Effects of Prosocial and Self-Focused Behaviors on Psychological Flourishing*. I will be mirroring this study with minor modifications. Happiness will be measured at three points in time. First, initial levels of happiness will be measured. Participants will then be asked to engage in one of four kinds of activities: (a) engage in acts of kindness to others for which they can be identified (e.g. cooking dinner for friends or family, paying for someone's coffee, doing a chore for a family member, writing a thank you letter, etc.), (b) engage in acts of kindness to others that could not be identified with them (e.g. recycling, picking up litter, donating to charity, etc.), (c) engage in acts of kindness to themselves (e.g. Taking a five minute break when stressed, getting a massage, having a favorite meal, etc.), (d) engage in their typical daily behavior. Second,

participants' happiness will be measured again at the end of the day after this activity. Finally, participants' happiness will be measured a third time, one week later. The survey administered will be the same for all three inquiries, consisting of a combination of questions from the *Mental Health Continuum*, which was used in the original study, *The Subjective Happiness Scale* (SHS), and *The Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS). Participants will remain anonymous by providing the initial of their mothers first name, last name, and the last four digits of their phone numbers as their identifying factor.

Procedure

I will be recruiting volunteers by getting in touch with faculty and providing them with a sheet of paper that they can pass around to students at the end of a class period. If interested, students will provide me with their email addresses. I will collect all email addresses given to me and send out a mass invitation with a date and time for volunteers to meet and receive further information on the study they will also be receiving a folder. Before this day I will create folders for the volunteers. Each folder will include; (1) a letter to participants including a description of procedures, (1) random assignment of 1 of 4 conditions, (1) baseline survey for volunteer to fill out during meeting, (1) information so they can complete the second survey at the end of their activity, (1) consent forms.

F. SUBJECTS:

1. State the Category (1-7) of Expedited Research from **pages 1 and 2**: #
2. Number of subjects: #Males approx. 30;_#Females__approx 30_ #Total__approx 60_____
3. Subject Population (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Minors (under 18)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners* | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally Impaired* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physically Ill* | <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant Women* | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special racial or ethnic group (specify)* _____ | |

*Rationale for use of special groups or subjects whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question, must be fully explained and justified below.

4. What are the criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion of subjects? The basis of exclusion from the study should be stated when subjects are asked to complete screening questionnaires.

Anyone over 18 will be eligible to participate.

5. Initial Contact and Subject Selection. Describe how subjects will be identified and recruited. Describe who will make initial contact, and how it will be made.

Subjects will be recruited in their classes after obtaining the instructors permission. I will make initial contact with participants and describe procedures.

- If subjects are chosen from records, indicate who gave approval for use of the records. Written documentation of the cooperation/permission from the holder or custodian of the records must be attached. (The official holder of the record, i.e. primary physician, therapist, or public school must make initial contact of subjects identified through records search official.)
- Be precise and attach a copy of any and all recruitment materials to be used (e.g., advertisements, flyers, letters, scripts).

5. Will subjects receive any inducements before participating or rewards or compensation after participating? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If **Yes**, please describe how much and in what form (cash, travel expenses, meals, lottery, etc.) and when participants will receive it (upon completion, after each session, if subjects withdraw from study ...etc.) This information must also be included in the consent form. If using lottery or raffle, describe who will be responsible for conducting, the location for the drawing, and under whose supervision.

G. RISKS:

1. Will the participants be placed **at risk of harm* as a consequence of participating in this research?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Definition of at risk of harm*—to be placed in a position with greater potential for physical, mental, social, legal or financial harm than would be expected for that individual in his or her normal occupation or daily activities. **If you are not sure of the answer to the above

question, please contact the IRB Administrator for guidance. If the answer is YES to the above question, then this research needs to be reviewed by the full IRB.

2. Do any of the procedures involve physiological treatments or intervention/invasion of the body by mechanical, electronic, biological or any other means? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If **Yes**, describe in detail the intervention, the means to administer the intervention, the behavior expected of subject(s) and the behavior of the investigator during the administration of the intervention; how data will be gathered and recorded; identify any anticipated and possible consequences of the procedure for the subject(s); what steps will be taken to assure proper operation and maintenance of the means used to administer the intervention; competence/qualifications of investigator; and name, title, affiliation, telephone number of individual who will supervise the procedure.

3. Does the study involve the administration of any prescribed or proscribed drugs?

____ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**:

a. Name the drug(s): _____

b. Is it: _____ prescribed or _____ proscribed

c. Describe the dosage: _____

d. Route of administration: _____

e. Is this an FDA-approved use? ____Yes ____No

f. Will the subject be at risk of harm in any way? ____Yes ____No

If **Yes**, identify type of harm; possibility that it will occur; action(s) to be taken to lessen possibility of occurrence; and action(s) to be taken in case of an adverse reaction.

4. Identify anticipated and possible physiological consequences of this procedure for the subject(s); identify the site where the procedure/administration is to be carried out; indicate the investigator's competence/qualification to conduct this procedure; and give name, title, affiliation, and phone number of individual who will supervise the procedure.

5. Do you deceive subjects in any way? ☐ Yes ☒ No

(A study is deceptive if false information is given to subjects, false impressions created, or information relating to the subjects' participation is withheld.)

If **Yes**, describe in detail the deception involved, including any instructions to subjects or false impressions created; why deception is necessary to accomplish the goals of the research; and plan for debriefing subjects. Attach a copy of any debriefing statement.

6. Does the research involve subjects who are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children (under 18), prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If **Yes**, what, if any, additional safeguards have been included to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects?

7. Does the research involve any of the following?

a. Major changes in diet or exercise? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

b. Administration of physical stimuli other than auditory and visual stimuli associated with normal classroom activities? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

c. Use of a new medical device? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

d. Possible invasions of privacy of subjects, or their families, including use of personal or medical information? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

e. Any probing for information that **might** be considered personal or sensitive, or **might** make a subject feel demeaned, embarrassed, appreciably anxious, or his or her privacy violated?

☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

f. Any procedure involving invasion of the body, i.e., touching, contact, attachment to instruments, withdrawal of specimens? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

g. Presentation to the subject of any materials that he/she **might** find offensive, threatening or degrading? ☐ Yes ☒ No If **Yes**, describe:

h. Describe any other possible risks not mentioned above.

No foreseeable risks.

If any of the above-referenced risks are more than minimal as defined above, then the study is not eligible for expedited review and full board review is required.

H. CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA:

Specify the steps to be taken to guard the anonymity of subjects and/or the confidentiality of their responses. Safeguards to protect confidentiality should be spelled out in the **consent form** and should include a description of the ultimate disposal of data.

1. Please explain how data confidentiality will be maintained. (e.g., coding, removal of identifiers, limitation of access to data, etc.)

Participant's identities will remain anonymous by them providing the first and last initial of their mothers name and the last four digits of their phone number- this will be their identifying factor- no names will be used.

2. How will your data be stored? Please note: Data must be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study before destroyed as per federal guidelines.

Pen and Paper questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in Dr. Frye's office. Online data will be stored on my personal hard-drive, nobody will have access to it.

3. Will you gather information from a subject while a recording (visual and/or aural) is taking place?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If **Yes**, explain what safeguards will be employed to protect confidentiality of data, i.e., coding, removal of identifiers, limitation of access to data, locked file cabinets, black out of faces, etc. Also complete question #4: (**You will need special permission for taping outlined in the consent form.**)

4. If Yes to answer 3, please clarify if the tapes will be used for only research purposes or for educational purposes

I. INFORMED CONSENT:

Informed consent is necessary for all research involving human subjects and must be documented. Use of subjects unable to give personal consent for reasons of age, mental state, legal or other such status, requires that consent be secured from parents or legal guardians.

1. What type of consent will be used? (Check one or more as appropriate for your project)

☒ Informed consent agreement, parent permission, assent (signatures obtained).

☐ Informed consent cover letter (no signature obtained). **One of the criteria below must be met and checked off:**

☐ The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm and involves no procedures for which a signature is normally required outside of research

☐ The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent and the principal risk would be potential harm from breach of confidentiality.

☐ Waiver from informed consent process. **All four criteria must be met. Describe this need in your project description.**

☐ The research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

☐ The waiver will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the participants.

☒ The research could not practically be carried out without the waiver.

☐ Whenever appropriate, participants will be given additional pertinent information after participation.

☒ Oral consent. (Attach a copy of the script for informed consent and the short written form that will be signed by the participant and a witness.)

2. Describe clearly (step-by-step) how informed consent/permission/assent will be obtained from or presented to participants, parents, and/or legal guardians.

Informed consent forms will be provided at the first meeting that participants choose attendant.

Attach a clean original of the written consent form to this application. At the end of the review process, the consent form will be stamped with IRB approval and returned. If consent will be presented orally, a written copy (verbal script) of the oral presentation must be submitted. The Principal Investigator must sign the consent along with the participant.

Requirements for Informed Consent

Be sure to provide the prospective subjects with sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate. Do not coerce or use undue influence that would affect a subject's decision to participate. No subject may be involved in research unless the subject's prior written consent has been obtained. The consent form should be in language that subjects can easily understand (8th grade level). Review the instructions below before preparing the consent form. Be sure to submit an original copy of the consent form as an attachment to the IRB application.

Sample consent forms can be found on the Office of Sponsored Research website (<http://www.liu.edu/About-LIU/Administrative-Departments/Academic-Affairs/Office-of-Sponsored-Research>).

A well-written consent form should include the following:

1. statement identifying the researcher as LIU faculty or LIU student fulfilling degree requirements;
2. statement that the study involves research;
3. statement of the purpose(s) of the research;
4. time required for the subject's participation;

5. description of the procedures to be followed and identification of any that are experimental;
6. description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subjects;
7. description of any benefits to the subject or to others that may reasonably be expected from the research;
8. disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, which might be advantageous to the subject;
9. statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
10. an explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and subjects' rights;
11. the name of the person to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; and
12. statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled; the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled; withdrawal will not effect subject's relationship with LIU or with any other organization or institution.

When appropriate, one or more of the following elements of information should also be provided to each subject:

13. statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant) that are currently unforeseeable;
14. anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent;
 15. any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research;
16. consequences of a subject's decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject;
17. statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject; and
 18. approximate number of subjects involved in the study.

Required Application Attachments:

- ☒ Questionnaire, survey, list of potential interview questions, etc. to be used with research participants
- ☒ Consent agreement, cover letter, telephone introductory script
- ☒ Permission to use existing data and/or permission from external institution (if applicable)
- ☒ Other: (please specify)

APPLICATION ENDORSEMENTS

Applications will not be reviewed without the appropriate endorsements.

Principal Investigator:

I certify that a) the information provided for this project is accurate; b) no other procedures will be used in this project; and c) any modifications in this project will be submitted for approval prior to use.



04/04/2018

 Signature of Investigator

Date

Faculty Supervisor:

I certify that this project is under my direct supervision and that I am responsible for insuring that the investigator complies with all provisions of approval.

04/04/2018

 Signature of Faculty Sponsor

Date

Department Chair:

My signature below certifies that I have reviewed this research protocol and that I attest to the scientific merit of this study and the competency of the investigator(s) to conduct the project.

Nancy Frye
 Printed Name of Department Chair



04/04/2018

 Signature of Department Chair

Date

NOTE: APPROVAL OF THIS PROJECT BY THE IRB ONLY SIGNIFIES THAT THE PROCEDURES ADEQUATELY PROTECT THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE SUBJECTS AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO INDICATE UNIVERSITY APPROVAL TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY (*Post Campus*)

Informed Consent Form for Human Research Subjects

You are being asked to volunteer in a research study *called Happiness in Relation to Altruistic Intentionality and Equity Theory*, conducted by *BURCU ALTINTAS, PSYCHOLOGY* under the supervision of *DR. NANCY FRYE, DEPARTMENT CHAIR, PSYCHOLOGY*. The purpose of the research is to investigate prosocial behavior in relation to happiness.

As a participant, you will be asked to attend a meeting at the Post campus of Long Island University and will be assigned to an activity to carry out during a period of one day, you will also be asked to complete a baseline survey while at the meeting. The meeting should last no longer than one hour. After this initial meeting, participants will be asked to complete two other surveys- one at the end of the activity and one week after the completion of the activity. The survey will be the same for all three inquiries and will consist of 9 questions- the completion of the survey should be no more than 5 minutes. There are no known risks/discomfort involved. While there is no direct benefit to you for participation in the study, it is reasonable to expect that the results may provide information of value for the field of Positive Psychology.

Your identity as a participant will remain confidential. Your name will not be included in any forms, questionnaires, etc. This consent form is the only document identifying you as a participant in this study; it will be stored securely in the Psychology office of Long Island University and available only to the investigator *Burcu Altintas and faculty advisor, Dr. Nancy Frye*. Data collected will be destroyed at the end of three years. Results will be reported only in the aggregate. If you are interested in seeing these results, you may contact the principal investigator.

If you have questions about the research you may contact the investigator, *Burcu Altintas* at *Burcu.Altintas@my.liu.edu* or the faculty sponsor, *Doctor Nancy Frye*, 516-299-2008. If you have questions concerning my rights as a subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Lacey Sischo at (516) 299-3591.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinue participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature indicates you have fully read the above text and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures of this study. Your signature also acknowledges receipt of a copy of the consent form as well as your willingness to participate.

Typed/Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Typed/Printed Name of Investigator

Dear Participant,

Firstly, I just wanted to take the time to thank you for volunteering to participate in student research- I wouldn't be able to do it without the generous contribution of time and energy from students like you.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to enhance our current apprehension of positive psychology and to hone in on the differing elements of happiness. Throughout my investigation I've come to the recognition that a major aspect of happiness is prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior can be defined as voluntary actions intended to help or benefit another individual or a group of individuals. These behaviors include a broad range of activities such as sharing, comforting, rescuing, and helping. The study that you are volunteering to be a part of is meant to explain the motivations behind prosocial behavior so that we can better decipher the mystery behind happiness.

Procedure

During our initial meeting, you will be provided with a folder that entails a consent form, a baseline survey and you will be given a randomly assigned activity to execute throughout the course of one day.

At the end of the day after completing your activity, follow this link (www.dothissurvey.com) to complete your first follow-up survey.

One week later I will email you another follow up survey to the my.liu.edu account email that was provided to me. It is **IMPAIRATIVE** that you complete this survey in order for you results to be adequate and complete for research. If you do NOT complete this second follow-up survey, your participation will be deemed as void. This final survey will be the same as the baseline survey, and first follow-up survey and should take no more than five minutes to complete.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at

Burcu.Altintas@My.Liu.Edu

Once Again, thank you for your participation in my study.

-Burcu Altintas

Please indicate your mothers' first initial, last initial and the last four digits of your phone number. This is how we will keep track of your information anonymously. _____

1. In general, I consider myself:

not a very happy person 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a very happy person

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

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

3. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

less happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 more happy

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

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

5. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a great deal

6. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a great deal

7. The conditions of my life are excellent.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

8. I am satisfied with my life.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

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

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

On April 13th, 2018, I had received an answer from the *IRB* that there is other additional information that was required of me before I could gain approval. Unfortunately, however, due to my limited timeline, it was not feasible for me to resubmit my application with the additional data that was requested by the *IRB*. It was also not feasible for me to carry out my study on such short notice with the deadline of May 3rd quickly approaching. Therefore, on the pages that follow, I have a proposal for the study's statistical analysis that I would have done had I completed the study.

Statistical Analysis

Inferential statistics is a crucial component for any research study in determining the overall validity of the yielded results from a sample size within the study to a larger population. An element of inferential statistics involves the null hypothesis and the actual hypothesis. P Values ask the question “how likely is it that my results are due to chance if the null hypothesis is true.” A null hypothesis is one that negates the actual hypothesis and it is always *assumed* to be true, in my case, my hypothesis for *Happiness in Relation to Altruistic Intentionality and Equity Theory* was that those who participate in altruistic intentionality are more likely to be happier than those people who participate in equity style prosocial behavior. P values are meant to aid in determining if the hypotheses of any given study hold water. If the P value is less than .05% than the null hypothesis is rejected and the actual hypothesis assumes validity. There are various kinds of statistics that can be calculated to get a P value. Types of statistics used can be determined based on the variables used in any given study. The statistic the best fit my study is correlation. A correlation is used for a study that has two continuous *how much* variables. Usually, correlational studies are meant to distinguish *how much* of a relationship there is between two variables. In my study, I wanted to see if the amount of happiness would be different depending on which of the four groups people were in and for this reason, it is important to take note on whether a study is of a between subjects or within-subjects design.

My study design was a between-subjects design instead of a within-subjects design. A between subjects-design means that participants are each assigned to a single condition. Specifically, within my study there were four conditions; therefore, each participant would have

been assigned to one of four groups. However, in a within-subjects design, each participant would have been assigned to all four conditions to execute at different times and then be required to complete 3 surveys for each condition. That would have meant a total of 18 surveys to be completed by each participant. After contemplation, there are many problems that would arise when doing a within-subjects design. Firstly, there were strict time constraints in place that I had to abide by which would not have been optimal for a within-subjects design due to the high level of attention and time this type of design demands from both the researcher and the participants. In addition to time constraints, it is important to note that my participants were all to be college level students. Volunteering their already minimum amounts of free time for a study that would be of no direct benefit to them; for this reason, it was in my best interest to keep the activities required for this study as straightforward, concise, and as effortless as possible in an attempt to reduce the number of participants withdrawing halfway through the study. For these reasons, it was an ideal choice for me, and for my subjects to construct this study as a between-subjects design.

For this study in particular we are trying to investigate how much what group people are put in (i.e., altruistic intentionality, equity theory approach, or the control group) has the biggest of an impact on the dependent variable, happiness. To examine this, we created a survey as a method to obtain a conclusive measure of happiness levels in relation to one of four independent variables. This survey was on a 1-7 scale, comprised of 9 questions and would have been administered at three different times throughout the study; baseline, directly after the activity, and one week after the activity.

At the end of the study, after completing all the surveys and yielding all the results, a p value would have been determined through an ANOVA. ANOVA stands for analysis of variants

and it is used to determine if there is statistical significance between two or more independent variables. I would have used an ANOVA because I had a between-subjects design in which I was comparing the amount of happiness that participants in the different conditions of my study reported.

Method

Participants

Subjects were going to be recruited to participate on a volunteer basis. I, Burcu Altintas, intended to get in touch with faculty to get permission to recruit participants through their classes. After being granted permission, I intended to go into classes and speak to students about what the study would entail and at the end of my speech I would pass around a participation sign-up sheet where students would be able to write down their names and email addresses if they are interested in getting involved. People who are able to participate must all be of 18 years of age or older and must be students of Long Island University's Post Campus. Both males and female students are open participate but I predict to get a larger pool of female subjects because recruitment would be primarily taking place in psychology classrooms where the female population is greater than the male.

Materials

Materials to be used in the study includes an informational folder that would have been distributed to participants at the initial informational meeting. This folder would have included (1) a letter to participants including a description of procedures, (1) random assignment of 1 of 4 conditions, (1) baseline survey for the volunteer to fill out during meeting, (1) information so they can complete the second survey at the end of their activity, (1) consent forms. Other materials include a link to [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) for a follow up survey that would have been sent out via email to participants a week following the initial informational meeting.

Participants will randomly receive one of four conditions in their folders, shown exactly as follows:

Equity Theory Condition: Activity “A” allows participants the opportunity to engage in prosocial behaviors in a way that the receiver is able to identify the person doing the action, and for this reason it is our measure for equity-like prosocial behaviors. Participants randomly assigned to this condition will see the following:

ACTIVITY A

ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR OTHERS

In our daily lives, we all perform acts of kindness, generosity, and thoughtfulness— both large and small—for others. Examples include cooking dinner for friends or family, doing a chore for a family member, paying for someone’s coffee in line behind you, visiting an elderly relative, or writing a thank you letter.

Tomorrow, you are to perform *three* nice things for others, all three in one day. These acts of kindness do not need to be for the same person, the other person must be aware of the kind act, and the act may or may not be similar to the acts listed above. Next week, you will report what nice things you chose to perform. Please do not perform any kind acts that may place yourself or others in danger.

Altruistic Intentionality Condition: Activity “B” allows participants to engage in charitable behaviors where the participant may or may not be recognized for the action, and for that reason, it is our measure for altruistic intentionality. Participants randomly assigned to this condition will see the following:

ACTIVITY B

ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR THE WORLD

In our daily lives, we all perform acts of kindness—both large and small—to make the world a better

place. Examples include recycling, picking up roadside litter, donating to charity, or volunteering for a local organization. *Tomorrow*, you are to perform *three* nice things to improve the world, all three in one day. These acts of kindness should be towards others but not directly. In addition, the act may or may not be similar to the acts listed above. Next week, you will report what nice things you chose to perform. Please do not perform any kind acts that may place yourself or others in danger.

Neutral Control Condition: Activity C allows us the opportunity to compare our results to a neutral activity for added validity. Participants randomly assigned to this condition will see the following:

ACTIVITY C

ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR SELF

In our daily lives, we all perform acts of kindness for others, but we often neglect to do nice things for ourselves. *Tomorrow*, you are to perform *three* acts of kindness *for yourself*, all three in one day. These nice things that you do for yourself could be large (e.g., enjoying a day trip to your favorite hiking spot or a day at the spa) or they could be small (e.g., taking a 5-minute break when feeling stressed), but they should be something out of the ordinary that you do for yourself with a little extra effort. Examples include having your favorite meal, treating yourself to a massage, or spending time on your favorite hobby. These nice things for yourself do not need to be the same as the examples listed above, and although they may involve other people, they should be things that you do explicitly for yourself, not others.

Control Condition: Activity “D” asks the participant to go about their day normally and it is considered to be our control condition. Participants randomly assigned to this condition will see the following:

ACTIVITY D

Tomorrow, as you go about your day, please keep track of your activities. You do not need to remember who you are with or how you are feeling during that time. Instead, just try to remember factual

information about what you are doing. Do not alter your routine in any way; simply keep track of what you do.

When you log back in to the study, you will be asked to write an outline of what you did. For example:

Morning: ate breakfast, went to work, ate lunch with coworkers. Afternoon: started a new project, held a meeting, went to the gym. Evening: ate dinner, watched TV, went to bed. Only the facts are important.

In addition to seeing one of these four conditions, participants were to also be given a survey that was created consisting of a combination of questions from the *Mental Health Continuum* (Keyes, C.L.M. 2009), *The Subjective Happiness Scale* (SHS) (Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. 1999), and *The Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) (Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. 1985). This survey will be used as out measure for happiness and will be administered a total of three times throughout the study at three different points in time. Once at baseline, once at the end of the activity and once a week after as a follow up. You may view the survey on page 39.

Procedure

After receiving the participant sign-up sheet from all classes, the emails were to be collected and a mass invitation would have been sent to those interested in volunteering. An informational meeting would have been organized in one of the classrooms of Long Island University's- Post Campus during common hour (12:30 pm- 2:00 pm). At this meeting, I would have distributed a folder to each participant that contained, (1) a letter to participants including a description of procedures, (1) random assignment of 1 of 4 conditions, (1) baseline survey for volunteers to fill out during the meeting, (1) information so they can complete the second survey at the end of their activity, (1) consent forms. During the meeting, participants would have filled out their baseline measure, in addition, they would have been randomly assigned to one of four

conditions to execute throughout the period of one day (24 hours). At the end of the day after executing the activity, participants would have been given access to a surveymonkey.com link which would have been provided to them via their informational folder. This link is so that they could fill out the second survey. Exactly one week afterward, participants would have received another link sent to them via their email addresses where they could have filled out the follow up survey- after doing so, this would have concluded their responsibilities as a participant in the study.

Discussion

This study proposal was built off a dissertation titled: *The Effects of Prosocial and Self-Focused Behaviors on Psychological Flourishing* by Sarah Katherine Nelson of the Riverside University of California. My goal was to extend on previous research and to compare my findings to the findings of the above-mentioned study. Strengths within my study proposal include the decision to utilize a between-subjects design rather than a within-subjects design. This was an important decision because our results would have depended solely upon our participants' autonomous decision to participate and to complete the full study, including the intervention and the fulfillment of three surveys. Other strengths include the fact that we would have been able to utilize the convenience of the internet to send the survey electronically to participants so that they can easily and effortlessly answer the required questions at the end of the intervention/activity and during the follow up, one week after. This is all beneficial to keeping participants interested and less likely to opt out.

Other adjustments we can make about the study in the future may be to send a direct SMS text message to all participants involved, reminding them to complete the surveys- and even including a link to the study directly into the text message. The point of this would be to increase accessibility and ease. This would have resulted in participants being more inclined to complete the full study.

My original ambition when starting research on happiness was to uncover a universal predictor. Through numerous empirical studies and through my own experiences with traveling to Iceland, I was able to identify the strong connection that prosocial behavior has on happiness. In the future, I would propose taking this study into other countries to analyze the elements and

mechanisms of prosocial behavior in different areas with different people of different cultural backgrounds. I'm eager to learn more about the cross-cultural aspects of happiness and to see if prosocial behavior really has the potential to be deemed as happiness's universal predictor.

Conclusion

Throughout my experience with this thesis as a whole in my investigation of what predicts happiness, from my visiting of the third happiness country in the world, and comparing my obtained experiences there to current research today, I am delighted to say that I have advanced one step closer in identifying a universal commonality of what predicts happiness. And although I am disappointed that I was not able to execute my study this term due to my limited time-line, I am looking forward to performing my inquiry in the future. Before this investigation, I was completely unaware of how strongly the effects social relationships had on wellbeing. I've also learned about the many different elements that happiness comprises of; such as happiness as an emotion, a state of mind, and a way of life. In the future, I am looking forward to my career as a graduate psychology student, taking my passion for positive psychology and expending it on my ambition to be a clinical mental health counsellor. I will be taking with me this study proposal, so that it can implemented in the future, to finally confirm for once and for all, if altruistic intentionality is really more likely to increase happiness levels than equity-like behaviors.

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