The Shifting Meaning of Happiness

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Abstract

An examination of emotions reported on 12 million personal blogs along with a series of surveys and laboratory experiments shows that the meaning of happiness is not fixed; instead, it systematically shifts over the course of one's lifetime. Whereas younger people are more likely to associate happiness with excitement, as they get older, they become more likely to associate happiness with peacefulness. This change appears to be driven by a redirection of attention from the future to the present as people age. The dynamic of what happiness means has broad implications, from purchasing behavior to ways to increase one's happiness.

Keywords

happiness, hedonics, age, time, emotion

From ancient Greeks and Buddhists to modern philosophers and politicians, thinkers have queried the nature of happiness (McMahon, 2006). Psychologists have contributed to this discussion by empirically investigating measures, behavioral correlates, determinants, and consequences of happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004, 2006; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2008; Mogilner, 2010; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Wilson, Wheatley, Meyers, Gilbert, & Axsom, 2000). These investigations have largely focused on people's levels of happiness, leaving open the empirical question of the meaning of happiness: What is being experienced when an individual proclaims, "I feel happy"?

Some research has suggested that the meaning of happiness is similar across individuals (Meyers & Diener, 1995; Layard, 2005); others have argued that its meaning is highly subjective and idiosyncratic (Gilbert, 2006). In the present work, we examine the possibility that the answer lies between the two. We suggest that there is a dynamic and predictable shift in the meaning of happiness and how it is experienced over one's life course. Building on research that delineates two types of positive emotion, excitement and peacefulness (Barrett, 1998; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006), we suggest that in their youth, people are more likely to associate happiness with excitement, and as they get older, they become more likely to associate happiness with peacefulness.

The theoretical underpinning of this hypothesis comes from research on the psychology of aging, which shows that age-related differences in the amount of time one has left in life has significant consequences, affecting individuals' goals and decisions (Carstensen, 2006; Drolet & Williams, 2005). When people have an expansive time horizon, they tend to seek novelty and information that will serve them well in the future (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999). In contrast, when people's time horizon is limited, they are more likely to foster current relationships that are satisfying and comforting in the present (Carstensen et al., 1999). The emotions that resonate likely reflect these temporal orientations. Indeed, recent research shows excitement to be linked with future events, whereas calm, blessed, and peacefulness tend to be linked to an appreciation of the present (Kamvar & Harris, 2009). We therefore propose that because older adults (compared with younger adults) have a more limited future, their experience of happiness may be more focused on the present and thus more closely associated with feeling peaceful than excited.

To test the prediction that a shift in focus from the future to the present as people age drives the shifting experience of happiness, we manipulated individuals' attention to the present to examine whether young people would associate happiness with peacefulness, similar to older people. Not only does such an empirical step provide insight into one mechanism underlying the happiness shift, but the results serve to further highlight the dynamic meaning of happiness by underscoring the subtle power of the situation to alter the qualitative experience of happiness.

In this research, we relied on both computational and traditional empirical methods to investigate the meaning of happiness across the life course. First, a computational analysis

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of over 12 million feelings extracted from 4 years of personal blogs uncovered the gradual age-related shift in how happiness is experienced. We then complemented this online empirical tool with the more traditional methodologies of laboratory experiments and surveys to establish the initial findings' robustness, generalizability, underlying mechanism, and implications for behavior.

Study 1: Understanding Happiness Through Blogs

We began our investigation by examining 12 million personal blogs containing the phrase "I feel." Our objective was to capture the meaning of happiness by examining emotions that co-occurred with feeling "happy." Unlike traditional methods of studying human emotion, which rely on asking a convenience sample of individuals to think about (often retrospectively) and then report their feelings, this method gauges the broader population's unsolicited emotional experience, serving as a "hedonometer" (Edgeworth, 1881). The unobtrusive nature of this method provides a window into people's naturally generated thoughts and feelings, even those associated with sensitive or personal topics (Cohn, Mehl, & Pennebaker, 2004; Dodds & Danforth, 2009; Pang & Lee, 2008).

Method

We used the We Feel Fine Web crawler to collect 12 million sentences posted on blogs (between August 2005 and December 2009) that contained the words "I feel" or "I am feeling" (Kamvar & Harris, 2009). Of these statements, we were able to determine the ages of 4,462,053 of the authors through their public profiles. Of those, 3,049,866 expressed identifiable emotions (sentences of the form "I feel like going to the store" were excluded), 70,153 of which were "happy." A total of 6,302 of these sentences expressed feeling happy as well as other emotions. The top co-occurring emotions with happiness are listed in Table 1.

The words that co-occurred with *happy* reflected two primary experiences of happiness: excited happiness and peaceful happiness. We used the Affective Norms for English Words database to determine the co-occurring words that were associated with feeling peaceful (arousal score < 3) and those that were associated with feeling excited (arousal score > 7) (Bradley & Lang, 1999; Russell & Barrett, 1999; Tsai et al., 2006). The words counted as peaceful were *peaceful*, *relaxed*, *calm*, and *relieved*, and the words counted as excited were *excited*, *ecstatic*, *giddy*, and *elated*. Thus, an instance of peaceful happiness was identified as a feeling sentence that contained the word *happy* along with a peaceful word, and an instance of excited happiness was identified as a feeling sentence that contained the word *happy* along with an excited word (see Table 2 for examples). These sentences were collected into a data set called the "happiness set" ($n = 1,833$). A "reference set" ($n = 29,332$) was similarly created by collecting all sentences containing "I feel" along with an excited word or a peaceful word (independently of whether these sentences also contained the word *happy*).

Table 1. Top Feelings That Co-Occurred With Happiness

Feeling	Count
Content	753
Excited	719
Glad	337
Satisfied	319
Relaxed	277
Relieved	170
Contented	146
Peaceful	145
Fulfilled	143
Hopeful	140
Giddy	100
Carefree	72
Cheerful	71
Joyful	66
Ecstatic	41
Elated	35
Blissful	28

Note: In Study 1's blog analysis, these were the top feelings that occurred in the same sentence as happiness. There were a total of 70,153 expressions of happiness in the data set.

Table 2. Examples of Bloggers' Expressed Happiness

Excited Happiness	Peaceful Happiness
"I feel really happy and excited."	"I feel peaceful and happy in my new position."
"I am smiling since I feel happy and know that I am getting cared for so well and that I am so excited to find my forever home."	"I feel happy and relaxed today after a calm, no stress weekend."
"I feel happy and free and giddy and so stressed but so, so, so, so, so glad life is what it is."	"I feel very happy and peaceful when I feel in control."

The frequencies of peaceful happiness and excited happiness were measured for each age group: teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. There were few bloggers in the data set older than 60 years, so the analyses were restricted to bloggers aged 15 to 60. Specifically, for each age group, we computed the percentage of excited-happy sentences: excited-happy/(excited-happy + peaceful-happy); the percentage of peaceful-happy sentences: peaceful-happy/(excited-happy + peaceful-happy); as well as the ratios of excited-happy to peaceful-happy sentences. We computed the same values for the reference set: the percentage of excited sentences and peaceful sentences, and the ratio of excited to peaceful sentences for each age group.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 depicts the percentage of excited-happy and peaceful-happy sentences per 10-year age group, showing that the meaning of happiness steadily shifts over the life course. Specifically, the results revealed that expressions of excited

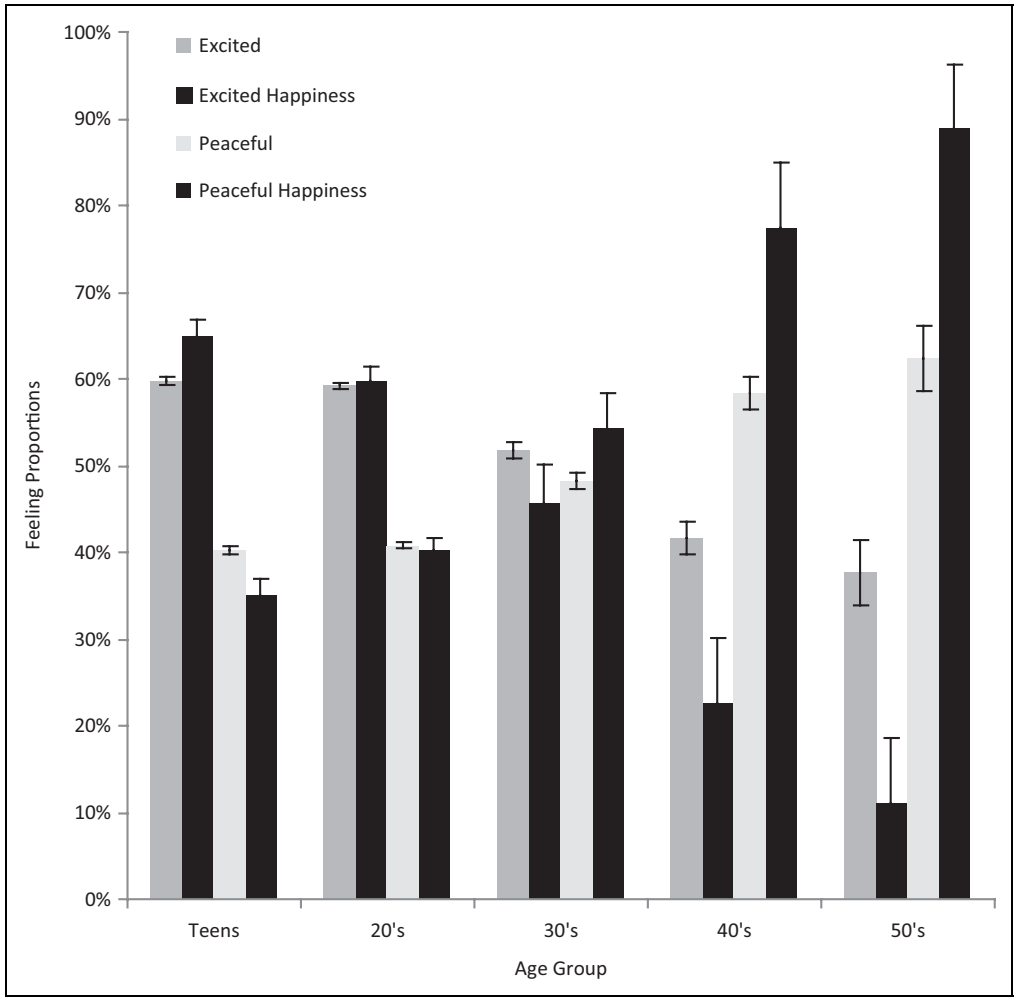

Figure 1. Percentage of blog "I feel" sentences containing the word *happy* in addition to either an exciting word or a peaceful word across 10-year age groups. The percentages of sentences containing just an exciting word or just a peaceful word are also shown

happiness decreased with age, whereas expressions of peaceful happiness increased with age. A regression analysis of age on the ratio of peaceful happiness to excited happiness confirmed the age-based relationship, $B = 0.18$, $t(3) = 3.34$, $p < .05$. Table 3 shows the ratio of peaceful happiness to excited happiness per 10-year age group. Focusing on the endpoints, these ratios highlight that bloggers younger than 20 years were more than 5 times as likely to express excited happiness as bloggers older than 50 years ($p < .001$), and bloggers older than 50 were almost 2 times as likely to express peaceful happiness as bloggers younger than 20 ($p < .001$).

Might this difference simply reflect a general shift from feeling excited to feeling peaceful as people age? To address this question, we compared the results from this data set (the happiness set) with bloggers' expressions of excitement and peacefulness overall, independent of happiness (the reference set). Figure 1 also depicts the percentage of excited sentences and peaceful sentences per 10-year age group, showing that as people get older, they do feel more peaceful and less excited. However, this increase in peacefulness and decrease in excitement (in the reference set) is less pronounced than the increase in peaceful happiness and decrease in excited happiness (in the happiness set). The more gradual shift for the reference set is also reflected in the ratios of excitement to peacefulness for each age group in Table 3. A regression of age on the ratio of peacefulness to excitement produced a smaller regression coefficient, $B = 0.03$, $t(3) = 5.70$, $p < .05$, than that found within the happiness set.

Table 3. Ratio of Excited Happiness to Peaceful Happiness by Age

	Teens	20s	30s	40s	50s	*B*	*SE*
Excited happiness/ peaceful happiness	1.85:1	1.48:1	1:1.19	1:3.42	1:8.00	.18	.05
n	636	998	149	31	18		
Excitement/ peacefulness	1.49:1	1.45:1	1.08:1	1:1.40	1:1.66	.03	.005
n	9,172	16,504	634	634	62		

Note: Younger bloggers expressed excited happiness more than peaceful happiness, and older bloggers expressed peaceful happiness more than excited happiness (row 1). There was a less pronounced shift from simple excitement to peacefulness (row 2).

These results suggest that the shift from excited happiness to peaceful happiness does not simply reflect a more general shift from feeling excited to feeling peaceful. Rather, our analysis of blogs suggests that the extent to which excitement and peaceful are experienced as happiness depends on the individual's age. As individuals get older they start to associate happiness less with excitement and more with peacefulness.

Study 2: A Survey

Although personal blogs provide a rich source of data that represent racial diversity and both genders, blogger demographics tend to skew toward the young (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Therefore, to test the robustness of the finding and to extend our investigation to a broader age range, we conducted a survey among 18- to 78-year-olds.

Method

Three hundred eighty-six adults (aged 18 to 78 years, 68% women) from across the United States participated in this online survey for the chance to win $100. The survey assessed participants' levels of happiness and the extent to which they typically felt peaceful versus excited. Specifically, participants used 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to report their happiness on three items ($\alpha = .95$): "In general, I consider myself happy"; "Taking all things together, I feel I am happy"; and "Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself happy" (Lyubomirsky, 2001). Participants' responses on these three items were averaged to create a happiness index. Participants were also asked to report the proportion of time they felt excited versus peaceful by allocating 100 points between the two.

Results

The results corroborated those found among bloggers. As shown in Figure 2, we conducted a correlation between happiness and the proportion of time participants felt excited (vs. peaceful) for each age group. The results showed a shift in the relationship across age groups. For participants in their teens and 20s, happiness was positively correlated with feeling excited (and negatively correlated with feeling peaceful). However, for participants in their 40s, 50s, and older, happiness was positively correlated with feeling peaceful (and negatively correlated with feeling excited).

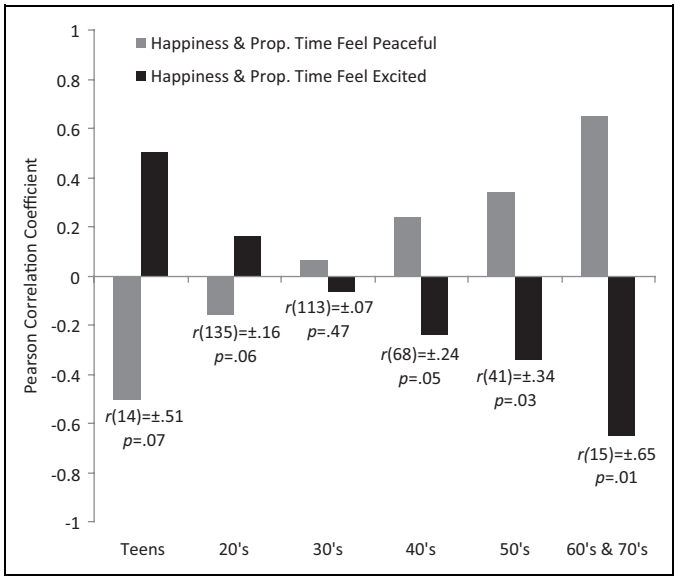

Figure 2. Correlation coefficients between happiness and the proportion of time one feels excited (vs. peaceful) for each 10-year age group

Study 3: A Laboratory Experiment

The results of the previous two studies suggest that the associations with happiness shift across the life course. As a further test of whether feeling excited and peaceful differentially translate into experiences of happiness depending on age, we next conducted a laboratory experiment in which the excitement and peacefulness felt by participants were manipulated and subsequent happiness was measured.

Method

Seventy-four adults (54% women) from across the United States who were either between the ages of 18 and 25 years or older than 50 years participated in this experiment for the chance to win $100. In this experiment, participants were made to feel excited or peaceful by listening to an exciting or peaceful version of a song. This manipulation was chosen because of extant work showing music to be an effective method of manipulating emotions (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Blood & Zatorre, 2001).

To inform our selection of music segments, we conducted a pretest with 21 participants (age range 21 to 78 years), presenting them with pairs of exciting and peaceful versions of five discrete songs and asking them to rate on 5-point Likert-type scales the extent to which they felt various emotions. The two versions of the song "Such Great Heights" were selected as the experiment's stimuli because they differed only in how excited ($M_{\text{peaceful song}} = 1.81$, $SD = 0.98$ vs. $M_{\text{exciting song}} = 2.67$, $SD = 1.24$), $t(20) = 3.41$, $p = .003$, and peaceful ($M_{\text{peaceful song}} = 3.00$, $SD = 1.10$ vs. $M_{\text{exciting song}} = 2.29$, $SD = 1.38$), $t(20) = 2.25$, $p = .04$, they made participants feel. They did not differ in familiarity, likability, or how happy they made participants feel (p values $> .10$).

In the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to first listen to the exciting version or peaceful version of the song. While listening to each version of the song, participants reported on a 5-point scale how happy they felt (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). As manipulation checks, we also assessed on 5-point scales how excited and peaceful each song made participants feel.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks confirmed that irrespective of age, participants felt more excited when listening to the exciting song ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.08$) than the peaceful song ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 72) = 22.21$, $p < .001$, and participants felt more peaceful when listening to the peaceful song ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.11$) than the exciting song ($M = 2.32$, $SD = .93$), $F(1, 72) = 20.28$, $p < .001$.

Of central interest, the results showed an interaction between age and song version on participants' reported happiness, $F(1, 72) = 20.48$, $p < .001$. Planned contrasts further showed that younger adults felt happier in the exciting condition ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.79$) than in the peaceful condition ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.24$), $F(1, 72) = 5.48$, $p = .02$, whereas older adults felt happier in the peaceful condition ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.16$) than in the exciting condition ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.89$), $F(1, 72) = 15.50$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 3). This suggests that happiness is indeed derived from distinct emotional experiences that depend on where one is in his or her life course. When younger, happiness stems more from excitement; however, as one gets older, happiness stems more from feeling peaceful.

The results thus far are consistent with a shift in the meaning of happiness across an individual's life course. Alternatively, they may reflect a cohort difference: Rather than the meaning of happiness changing for an individual as he or she ages, it may be that people who are young today are more excitement oriented than their parents were when they were young and that people who are now old are more peaceful oriented than today's youth will ever be. Although longitudinal data would address this possibility, we took another documented approach (Carstensen et al., 1999). We looked to identify a psychological state that is both related to age and responsible for the shift in how happiness is experienced. From this, we could test for the life course account by manipulating that underlying process and then assessing if the difference emerges within an age group. Thus, the goal of Study 4 was to investigate a potential mechanism for the shifting meaning of happiness.

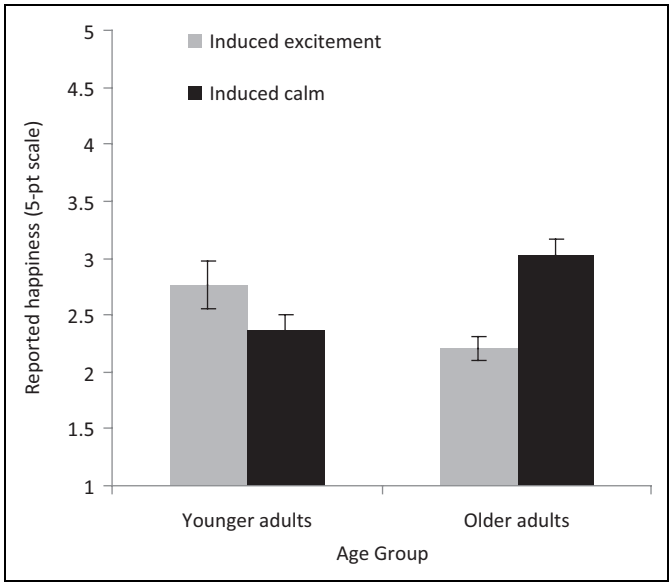

Figure 3. Participants' mean happiness reported on a 5-point Likert-type scale while induced to feel excited or peaceful by age group. Error bars show the SEM

Study 4: Why the Meaning of Happiness Shifts

Why do the differences in the meaning of happiness arise in Studies 1 to 3? Might a shift in temporal focus across one's life course underlie the effects? More broadly, to what degree can these associations with happiness be influenced? To address these questions, we conducted an experiment manipulating whether participants were focused on the present moment and then measured the extent to which they define happiness as feeling excited and the extent to which they define happiness as feeling peaceful.

First, we conducted a pretest to test the initial premise: If younger adults have a longer future extending out in front of them than older adults, whose future is more limited, people's attention should shift from being more focused on the future to being more focused on the present as they age (Carstensen, 2006; Carstensen et al., 1999). To assess the relationship between age and the extent to which individuals focus on the present moment, we conducted an online survey among 76 adults (aged 18 to 68 years, 56% women). The survey measured the extent to which participants were present focused on the basis of their agreement with five items ($\alpha = .90$) using 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*): "I often think about the present moment," "I typically focus on the present moment," "It's important to me that my thoughts are in the here and now," "My mind often focuses on what is happening now," and "I like to be present." The results revealed a positive relationship between age and people's focus on the present moment, $r(76) = .33$, $p = .04$: As people get older, they became more present focused. In the main study, we explored whether this change in present focus drives what happiness means.

Method

Eighty-six adults (71% women) from across the United States who were either younger than 25 years or older than 50 years participated in this online experiment for the chance to win $100. Participants were randomly assigned to either the control condition or the treatment condition, which consisted of a thought exercise designed to direct attention to the present moment. The manipulation was inspired by meditations based in the Buddhist tradition that increase one's present focus (Brown & Thurman, 2006; Eckhart, 1999). Specifically, participants in the treatment condition listened to a 5-minute recording that instructed them to close their eyes and bring their attention to the present moment. The instructions continued, "Let everything that has happened in the past, that is

happening later today, and that is supposed to happen tomorrow wash away. Just focus on the present moment.'' The recording then went on to instruct participants to silently repeat to themselves a series of phrases including, ''I am here in the present moment.'' Time stamps confirmed that those in treatment condition listened to the entire recording. Participants in the control condition were not exposed to this exercise before completing the study.

To check whether the manipulation was effective, we asked participants at the conclusion of the study to write a sentence. Research assistants, unaware of each participant's condition, coded for mentions of the present moment. Confirming that the manipulation was effective, among the younger participants, those in the treatment condition reported a greater proportion of present-focused thoughts ($M = 0.50$, $SD = 0.51$) than those in the control condition ($M = 0.19$, $SD = 0.40$), $F(1, 82) = 4.84$, $p = .03$. Among the older participants, there was no difference in prevalence of present-focused thoughts between those in the treatment condition ($M = 0.39$, $SD = 0.13$) and those in the control condition ($M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.09$), $F(1, 82) = 0.10$, $p > .10$. In line with the results of the pretest, this suggests that older people are chronically more present focused.

Following the experimental manipulation, participants were asked to rate on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) the extent to which they define happiness as ''feeling excited'' and the extent to which they define happiness as ''feeling peaceful.''

Results and Discussion

The results revealed an interaction between age, condition, and definition of happiness on ratings, $F(1, 82) = 5.45$, $p < .05$ (Figure 4). Corroborating the findings in the previous studies, in the control condition, adults younger than 25 years defined happiness more as feeling excited ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.02$) than feeling peaceful ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.84$), $F(1, 82) = 4.02$, $p = .048$, whereas adults older than 50 years defined happiness more as feeling peaceful ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 0.97$) than feeling excited ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.65$), $F(1, 82) = 21.09$, $p < .001$. Supporting our hypothesis that an increased focus on the present moment causes the shifting meaning of happiness, younger adults in the present-focused condition defined happiness more as feeling peaceful ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 0.72$) than feeling excited ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 82) = 6.27$, $p = .01$, much like the older adults ($M_{\text{peaceful}} = 6.23$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M_{\text{exciting}} = 4.62$, $SD = 1.61$), $F(1, 82) = 8.05$, $p = .006$. This set of results is inconsistent with a cohort account, as it demonstrates that younger adults can be influenced to define happiness in the same way as older adults by drawing their attention to the present moment.

Study 5: A Behavioral Implication of the Shifting Meaning of Happiness

What are the implications of these findings? Might the shifting meaning of happiness influence behavior, such as how individuals choose to spend their money? To address these questions, we conducted a survey assessing the purchases younger and older adults reported to make them happy.

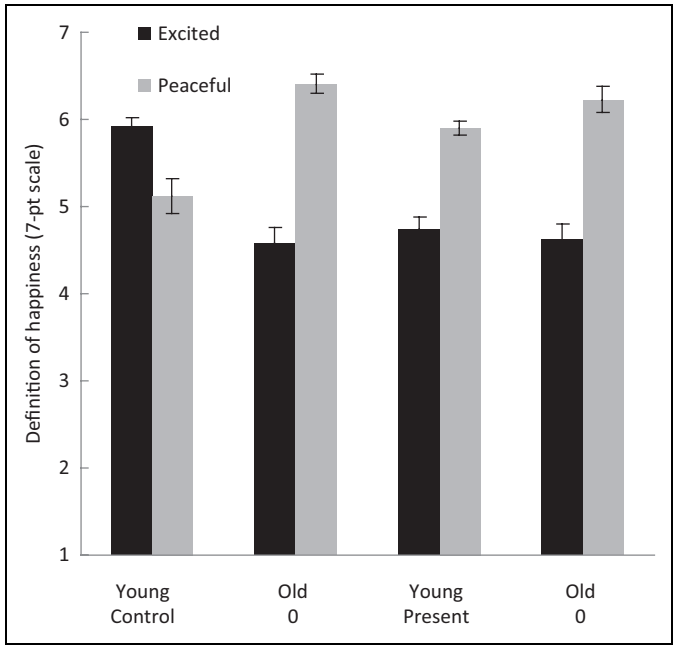

Figure 4. Mean extent to which participants define happiness as feeling excited or as feeling peaceful on 7-point Likert-type scales by condition. Error bars show the SEM

Method

Eighty-two adults (58% women) from across the United States who were either younger than 25 years or older than 50 years participated in this online experiment for the chance to win $100. Participants were asked two questions: ''What is the next purchase you plan to make?'' and ''What is a recent purchase that has made you extremely happy?'' Research assistants blind to the hypotheses coded for whether each purchase was exciting (e.g., soccer shoes, Mountain Dew, Nintendo Wii), calming (e.g., yoga pants, Teavana herbal tea, bubble bath), or neither. The coding for the two purchases was summed for each participant.

Results

The interaction revealed that age influenced participants' tendencies to report exciting or calming purchases, $F(1, 80) = 25.08$, $p < .001$. Planned contrasts showed that adults younger than 25 ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.80$) were more likely to state exciting purchases than adults older than 50 ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.46$), $F(1, 80) = 21.41$, $p < .001$, whereas the older adults ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.61$) were more likely to state calming purchases than the younger adults ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.39$), $F(1, 80) = 9.64$, $p = .003$. This suggests that changes in how individuals experience happiness influence which past purchases are deemed happy and what purchases individuals plan to make.

General Discussion

An examination of emotions expressed on millions of blogs and a series of surveys and laboratory experiments identify and confirm a striking shift in the meaning of happiness over the life course. When individuals are young, they primarily experience happiness as feeling excited; however, as they get older, they come to experience happiness more as feeling peaceful. Furthermore, an age-related increase in focus on the present moment appears to drive this shift. Therefore, the way happiness is defined among young people is susceptible to influence by small manipulations that encourage them to focus attention on the present, as older people tend to do.

These findings have implications for extant research examining the relationship between age and happiness levels that has produced ambiguous results (Carstensen, Pasupathi, Mayr & Nesselroade, 2000; Stone, Schwartz, Broderick & Deaton, 2010). For instance, recent research found that although overall well-being seemed to increase after the age of 50, ''happiness'' showed a modest relationship with age (Stone et al., 2010). Relatedly, even though a positive relationship has been documented among specific populations, interviews conducted among highly representative samples of individuals reveal that no time of life is notably happier or unhappier than others (Meyers & Diener, 1995; Inglehart, 1990; Latten, 1989; Mroczek & Kolarz 1998). The current work does not determine a relationship between age and levels of happiness. However, it does identify a relationship between age and the meaning of happiness, and it raises the possibility that the inconsistent findings in the extant literature reflects the discrepancy in what individuals are describing when reporting their happiness. When a 20-year-old and a 60-year-old express feeling ''happy,'' they are likely feeling different things.

Even though the current research investigates qualitative differences in how happiness is experienced across individuals, it also has important implications for the growing stream of research looking to identify methods to boost individuals' levels of happiness. Even after accounting for an individual's happiness set point determined by genetics and personality, approximately 40% of an individual's chronic happiness level can be influenced by intentional activity, such as practicing acts of kindness, being grateful, or using signature strengths (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Dunn, et al., 2008; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Seligman & Steen, 2005). Because the meaning of happiness moves along a path from excitement to peacefulness as one gets older, different strategies for increasing happiness may be differentially effective on the basis of age group. For example, practicing gratitude might be more effective at increasing happiness for older individuals, as it is likely associated with a feeling of peacefulness. On the other hand, using signature strengths in a new way may be more effective at increasing happiness for younger individuals, as it is likely associated with a feeling of excitement (Seligman & Steen, 2005).

The distinct meanings of happiness likely play out to influence the choices peoplemake in their daily lives, such as the types of activities they choose to engage in (Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2011). For instance, whereas a wild night of dancing might make for the happiest 22nd birthday celebration imaginable, a happy 63rd birthday might be more likely to involve a spa treatment or an intimate dinner with friends. This has implications for the (dis)satisfaction within relationships between people of different ages: grandparents and grandchildren, or even couples of very different ages. What makes for a happy afternoon together is likely quite different depending on whether asking the younger or older partner. Hopefully, relationship satisfaction could be improved with insight into what happiness means to one's substantially older or younger partner, along with the knowledge that temporary shifts in one's own perceptions of happiness are possible (e.g., Study 4). More generally, future research is needed to explore the link between temporal orientation and emotions. To what degree are specific emotions, such as excitement and peacefulness, characterized by a focus on the present versus the future, and what impact does the temporal orientation of one's emotions have on decision making and choice (Mogilner et al., 2011)?

Although much extant research implies that happiness is a fixed endpoint, and popular science saturates the market with advice for how to reach it, other work argues happiness is purely subjective and individually determined. Indeed, Immanuel Kant observed, ''The concept of happiness is such an indeterminate one that even though everyone wishes to attain happiness, he can never say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills.'' The current research suggests that the meaning of happiness is neither idiosyncratic nor singular and stable. Rather, happiness exhibits a predictable regularity, its meaning is dynamic over the life course, and the different meanings of happiness are malleable and drive behavior. With this perspective, we hope to contribute to the science of happiness: how to get it, how to keep it, who is happy, and why?

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