

Asymmetric Relations Between Life-Satisfaction Judgments and (Current) Mood



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Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Definitions

SWB has a cognitive and an affective component.

The **cognitive component** is a *global judgement* of current satisfaction with one's life. It is heavily influenced by and slightly influences *domain satisfaction*, that is judgments of satisfaction with e.g. health, work, marriage, and leisure.

The **affective component** (sometimes referred to as affective SWB) is identified with (current or past) *mood* which vary from positive active or passive and to negative active or passive .

Subjective Well-Being (SWB) Measurement

SWB is either measured by a single-item scale:

”Taken all things together, how would you say your life is today? Would you say you are very happy, rather happy, or not happy at all?”

(World Values Survey, Eurobarometer)

Or by a multi-item scale

“In most ways my life is close to my ideal; The conditions of my life are excellent; I am satisfied with my life; So far I have achieved the important things I want in life; If I could live my life over again, I would change almost nothing.” (Satisfaction With Life Scale, SWLS, Diener et al.)

Current or Past Mood (intensity/frequency) is measured by self-report rating scales (peer ratings or physiological methods are also used):

”Rate how positive/negative you feel at the moment/have felt previous week.”

”Indicate how frequently you have felt positive/negative previous week.”

Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Determinants

➤ **Personality (50%)**

Higher for extravert than introvert people

Higher for emotional stable than emotional instable people

➤ **Socio-demographic variables (10%)**

Women more variable than men

U-shaped relation to age (minimum at 40)

Increases with education

Increases with employment

Negatively accelerated function of income

Increases after marriage, decreases after divorce or death of spouse

➤ **Intentional activities (40%)**

Increases with goal pursuit

Increases with positive affect associated with activities

Decreases with daily hassles (negative stress)

Recent publications

- Ettema, D., Gärling, T., Eriksson, L., Friman, M., Olsson, L. E., & Fujii, S. (2011). Satisfaction with travel and subjective wellbeing: Development and tests of a measurement tool. *Transportation Research Part F, 14*, 167-175.
- Ettema, D., Gärling, T., Olsson, L. E., & Friman, M. (2010). Out-of-home activities, daily travel, and subjective well-being. *Transportation Research Part A, 44*, 723-732.
- Jakobsson Bergstad, C., Gamble, A., Hagman, O., Polk, M., Gärling, T., Ettema, D., Friman, M., & Olsson, L. E. (2011). Influences on subjective well-being of affect associated with routine out-of-home activities. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.
- Jakobsson Bergstad, C., Gamble, A., Hagman, O., Polk, M., Gärling, T., Ettema, D., Friman, M., & Olsson, L. E. (2011). Subjective well-being related to satisfaction with daily travel. *Transportation, 38*, 1-15.
- Olsson, L. E., Gärling, T., Ettema, D., Fuji, S., & Friman, M. (2011). *Satisfaction with the work commute increases life satisfaction*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Gamble, A., & Gärling, T. (2011). The relationships between life satisfaction, happiness, and current mood. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.**
- ✓ **Gamble, A., & Gärling, T. (2011). Influences on current mood of eliciting life-satisfaction judgments. Manuscript submitted for publication.**

Does the correlation ($r \approx .50$) between life-satisfaction judgments and mood reflect a causal relation, and if so in which direction? And which is the causal mechanism?

What are the implications for measurement?

Schimmack, Diener, & Oishi (2002) propose that mood should be measured before life-satisfaction judgments (SWLS) since there are no carryover effects in this direction but there are in the other direction. Is this true and if so, why?

- Incidental mood effect (Schwartz): E.g. weather affects SWLS
- **Integral (reverse) mood effects (Gamble & Gärling):**
SWLS activates thoughts about positive or negative resources and in turn pleasant activities that the resources facilitate (e.g. consumption)
– or unpleasant activities that the resources require (e.g. medical care)
Both affect current mood although in different directions.

Experiment 1

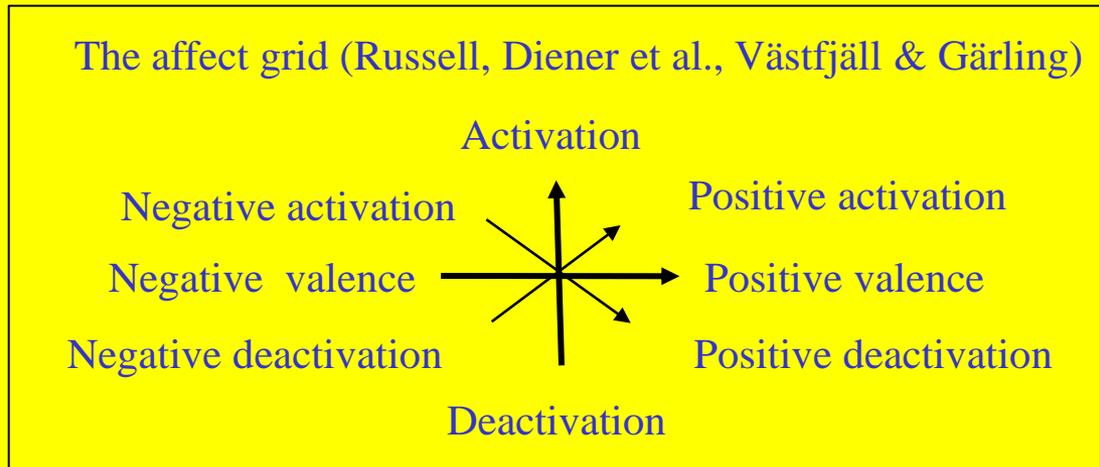
Experimental group (n = 51)



Control group (n = 48)



Measurement of current mood (Swedish Core Affect Scale, SCAS, Västfjäll & Gärling)

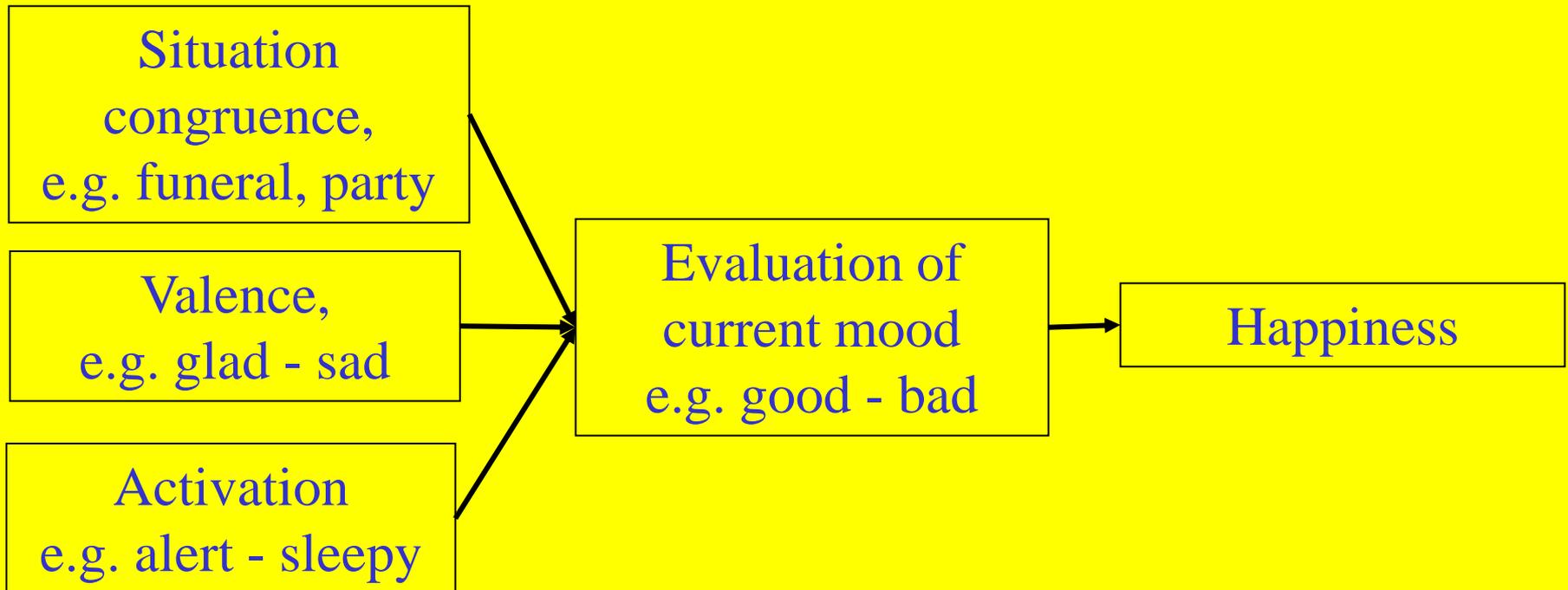


Preference order (no context):

1. Positive activation
2. Positive deactivation
3. Negative deactivation
4. Negative activation

Measurement of current mood

- Västfjäll, D., Gärling, T., & Kleiner, M. (2001). Does it make you happy feeling this way? A core affect account of preference for current mood. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2, 337-354.
- Västfjäll, D., & Gärling, T. (2006). Preferences for negative emotions. *Emotion*, 6, 326-329
- Gamble, A., & Gärling, T. (2011). The relationships between life satisfaction, happiness, and current mood. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.



Results (correlations with SWLS)

	All	Control	Experimental
Valence	.37**	.13	.59***
Activation	.19	.14	.23
Pos-neg activation	.35**	.19	.41**
Pos-neg deactivation	.25*	.13	.36**
Evaluation current mood	.43**	.27	.57***

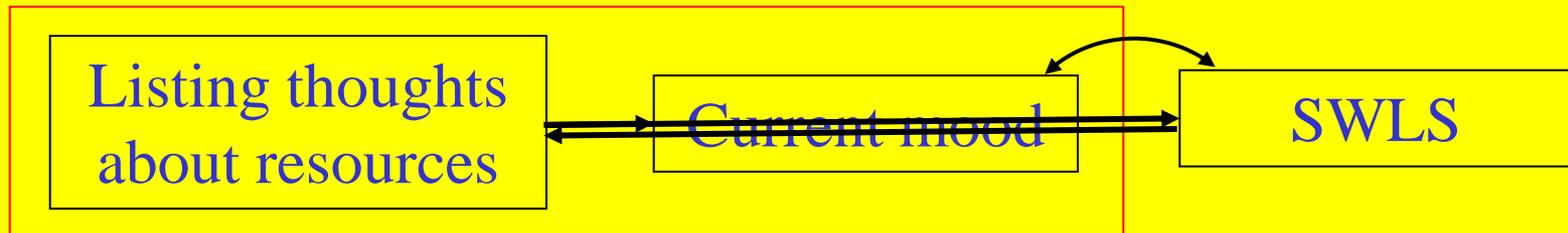
p<.01 *p<.001

Resources listed

- (1) Positive material resources
- (2) Positive social relationships
- (3) Lack of positive material resources
- (4) Lack of positive social relationships

Experiment 2

Experimental group (n = 47)



Control group (n = 46)



Manipulation check:

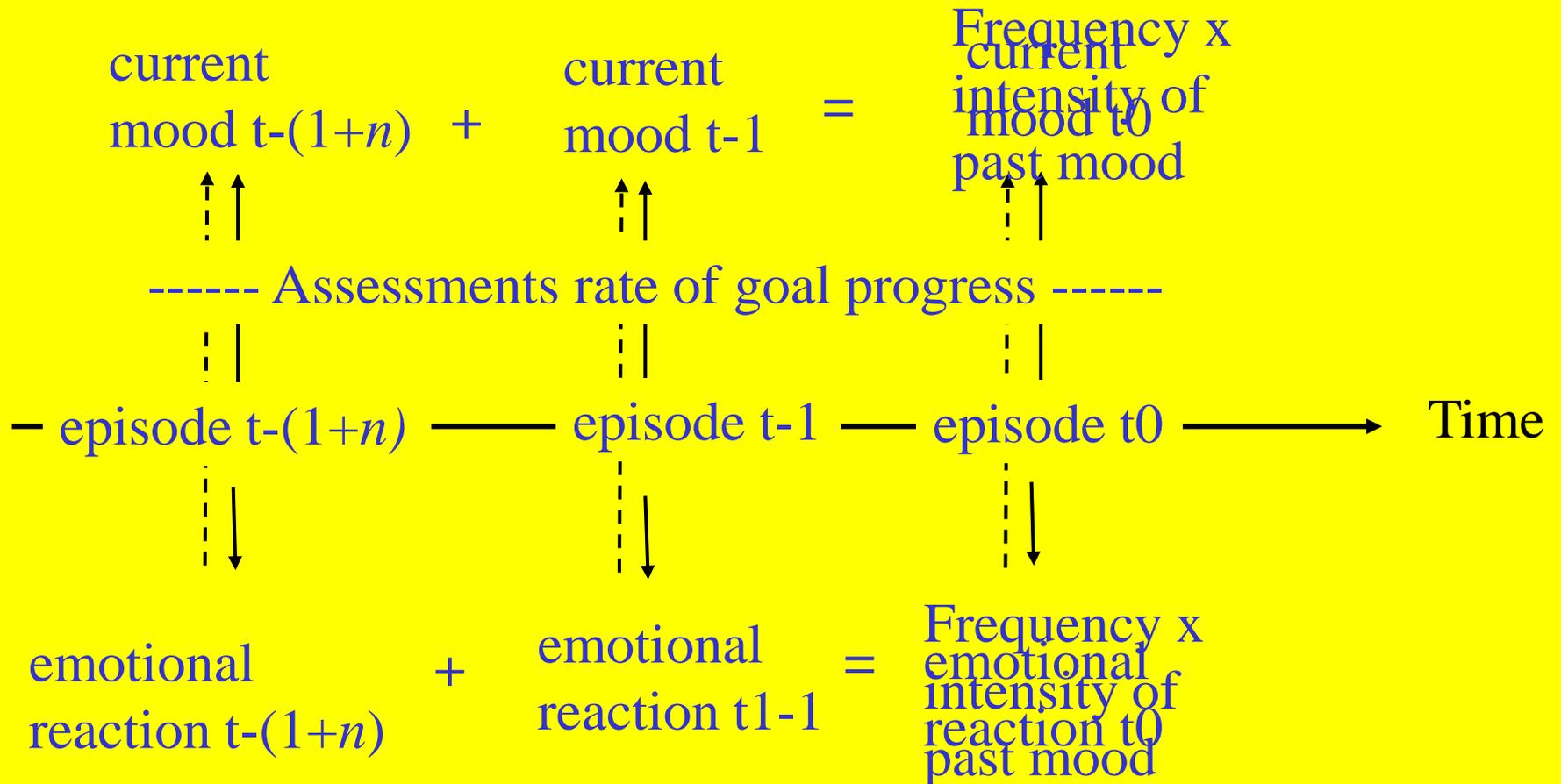
Those who were rewarded for passing knowledge test were in a more positive mood than those who failed and were not rewarded

Results (correlations with SWLS)

	All	Control	Experimental
Valence	.22*	.12	.40**
Activation	.19	.16	.23
Pos-neg activation	.24*	.18	.33**
Pos-neg deactivation	.06	.00	.18
Evaluation current mood	.21*	.08	.41**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Past (recalled) mood versus current (experienced) mood:



Memory-based versus on-line measures of the affective component of SWB

Indicate how frequently you have been (very) glad, sad, etc last X

Alternative 1. I report my current mood

Alternative 2. I try to recall how I have felt (past emotional reactions or past current moods?) – possibly serious memory distortion

Day Reconstruction Method (DRM)

Recall all episodes last day and recall how you felt

Alternative 2 but less memory distortion

Event Reconstruction Method (ERM)

Recall episode(s) X and report how you felt

Alternative 2 but less memory distortion

**Aggregate measures of recurrent current mood
("objective happiness")**