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

Amelie Gamble
Tommy Gärling
University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden
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 unstable 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


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)

The affect grid (Russell, Diener et al., Västfjäll & Gärling)

Activation

Positive activation

Positive valence

Positive deactivation

Deactivation

Negative activation

Negative valence

Negative deactivation

Preference order (no context):
1. Positive activation
2. Positive deactivation
3. Negative deactivation
4. Negative activation
Measurement of current mood


- **Situation congruence**, e.g. funeral, party
- **Valence**, e.g. glad - sad
- **Activation**, e.g. alert - sleepy
- **Evaluation of current mood**, e.g. good - bad
- **Happiness**
## Results (correlations with SWLS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos-neg activation</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos-neg deactivation</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation current mood</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.57***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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)

- Listing thoughts about resources
- Current mood
- SWLS

Control group (n = 46)

- Passing or failing knowledge test
- Current mood
- SWLS

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.40**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos-neg activation</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos-neg deactivation</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation current mood</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.41**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.01
Past (recalled) mood versus current (experienced) mood:

\[
\text{current mood } t-(1+n) + \text{ current mood } t-1 = \text{ current mood } t0
\]

\[
\Downarrow \quad \Uparrow
\]

------ Assessments rate of goal progress ------

\[
\text{episode } t-(1+n) \quad \text{episode } t-1 \quad \text{episode } t0
\]

\[
\Downarrow \quad \Downarrow
\]

\[
\text{emotional reaction } t-(1+n) + \text{ emotional reaction } t-1 = \text{ emotional reaction } t0
\]
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”)