The International Wellbeing Study: New and stronger paths to wellbeing

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www.wellbeingstudy.com
## People involved: Core researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Aaron Jarden</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Ormond Simpson</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Kennedy Mclachlan</td>
<td>China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Alexander MacKenzie</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor Todd Kashdan</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor Paul Jose</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**People involved: Language facilitators**

- Portuguese - Dr. Carla Crespo
- Norwegian - Jens Leo Iversen
- Russian - Evgeny Osin
- Italian - Lara Bellardita
- Persian - Roya Rad
- Dutch - Hein Zegers
- Czech - Alena Slezackova
- Slovak - Alena Moravcikova / Miroslava Bruncková
- Spanish - Dr. Margarita Tarragona
- German - Christoph Huelsmann
- Finnish - Dr. Sanna Malinen
- Chinese - Jingping Xu
- French - Alain Robiolio
- Hungarian - Tamás martos
- Slovene - Andreja Avsec
People involved

Research assistants

Karena Ring  Anna Peacey  Katrina Mirams  Gemma Ellis  Simon Beuse  Carolina Alfonso

Research collaborators

Kristine Hodsdon (USA)  Cheng Qian (NZ)  Ruth Velsvik (Norway)
Trish Lui (NZ)  Merima Isakovic-Cocker (NZ)  Suzie Green (Australia)
Jon Simonnaes (Norway)  Kerstin Karin Bannert (Germany)  Gaga Barnes (USA)
Russell Warden (USA)  John Schinnerer (USA)  Andreja Avsec (Slovenia)
Alexandra Davidson (USA)  Rual Rojas (USA)  Alena Slezáčková (Czech Republic)
Janet McLeod (NZ)  Maria del Rocio Hernandez Pozo  Tamás Martos (Hungary)
Meredith Rayner (NZ)  (Mexico)  Johanna Lake (Canada)
Jens Leo Iversen (Norway)  Margarita Tarragona (Mexico)  Regina Fanjul de Marsicovetere
Thomas Switch (Sweden)  Paul Silvia (USA)  (Guatemala)
Coriander Dawn (USA)  Ana Martins (Portugal)  Nazar Soomro (Pakistan/UK)
Claire Dunston (USA)  Dan Turton (NZ)  NaJaM ul HaSaN AbBaSi
Bridget Grenville-Cleave (UK)  Christian Vernon Mogol (Philippines)  (Pakistan/China)
John Sanderson (Norway)  Cicilia Chettiar (India)  Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir (Malaysia)
Carla Crespo (Portugal)  Kevin Moore (NZ)  Kirsi Tirri (Finland)
Shanmukh Kamble (India)  John Schinnerer (USA)
Melissa Rowthorn (NZ)  Stuart Leske (Australia)
Jon Stoddart (NZ)  Jingping Xu (China)
People involved

Participants
Study details

- Looks in depth at peoples’ wellbeing from around the world, particularly psychological aspects that contribute to wellbeing, and how wellbeing changes over time.
  - 208 questions (18 main scales); average 29 min’s
  - Five consecutive online assessments; every third month for a year, then yearly...
  - 16 languages (English, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Persian, French, Norwegian, Finnish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Slovak, Hungarian, Czech and Slovene); more coming hopefully (Maori, Japanese)...
- Participants (16+years)
- Three participant benefits
  - Draws for vouchers, online wellbeing courses, wellbeing report

2nd World Congress on Positive Psychology, Philadelphia USA, 25th July 2011
Study details

- Three interconnected projects:
  - Assessment study (The International Wellbeing Study)
  - Online wellbeing intervention studies (savouring, general wellbeing interventions)
  - Further assessment study (values, CAPP strengths, height, weight, sleep, A & D, exercise, nutrition, health problems, children, pets, technology, commuting, religion, accommodation, trust, crime, travel, etc)
Researchers have devoted decades to understanding what leads some people to be healthier than others. However, most people have only studied disease and disorder and failed to also address strengths and wellbeing. In this study, we want to look at what is going right in different people from around the world. We want to capture the entire picture of what it means to be healthy and most importantly, track people to understand how they change over time. This is the first study of its kind to look in depth at people’s wellbeing from around the world. If you choose to participate, you’ll be helping us to answer some of the most tantalising questions that our society faces today.

The study began in March 2005, is open to the general population, has sixteen assessment points in total each three months apart, and ends in March 2013 (March 2012 is the last date of entry into the study). Participants are required to complete five consecutive assessments (i.e., over one year).
### Wellbeing Study - June 2009 English

3.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>A little disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>A little agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like most parts of my personality.</td>
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<td>When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far.</td>
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<td>Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.</td>
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<td>The demands of everyday life often get me down.</td>
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<td>In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.</td>
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<td>Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.</td>
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<td>I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.</td>
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<td>In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.</td>
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<td>I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life.</td>
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<td>I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.</td>
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<td>For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.</td>
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<td>I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world.</td>
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<td>People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.</td>
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<td>I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.</td>
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<td>I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.</td>
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<td>I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.</td>
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<td>I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from the way most other people think.</td>
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<td>I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is</td>
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Study details

- Measures: $n = 208$
  - Scales of Psychological Wellbeing 18
  - Temporal Satisfaction with Life Scale 15
  - Strengths Use and Current Knowledge Scale 10
  - Subjective Happiness Scale 4
  - Orientations to Happiness 18
  - Adult Hope Scale 12
  - Happiness Measures 4
  - Gratitude Survey 6
  - Curiosity and Exploration Inventory – II 10
  - Grit scale 17
  - Meaning in Life Questionnaire 10
  - Positive Life Events 5
  - Ways of Savouring Scale 20
  - Savouring Beliefs Scale 5
  - Control Beliefs Scale 4
  - Negative Life Events 5
  - Rumination 6
  - CESD - Depression Scale 20
  - Other Questions (flow, mindfulness, values, time use, etc) 12
  - Demographic Questions 7

2nd World Congress on Positive Psychology, Philadelphia USA, 25th July 2011
Some (relatively) unique aspects:

- Collaborative nature (specific cohorts: e.g., yoga, philosophers, migrants, dentists, gym members, mental health support workers)
- Cheap cost
- Use of technology - scalability
- Longitudinal design
- Controls for + & - events
- Open source data
- Evolving/expanding research (further assessment study)
- Norm new scales (SUCK, CAPP Implicit, etc)
- For others to test new intervention programs
Development

- Core researchers (6), and a team of strengths:
  - Positive psychology wiz kid, longitudinal analysis guru, funding genius, experienced old research head, comedian & sceptic, and me...

- A little helps from your friends...
  - Dianne Vella-Brodrick
  - Denise Quinlan
  - Many others provided valuable input during development...
Challenges

- Languages
  - Developing a good method via trail and error
    - Back translations, expectations across cultures
    - Google translate

- Collaborating
  - Win-win’s via democratic decisions, compromise, & frequent communication
  - Be clear on ownership of intellectual property, data access, sharing, and authorship
Challenges

- **Design**
  - Participant engagement (long questionnaire), and reducing drop out
  - To control for major confounders or modifiers of psychological wellbeing – such as physical health

- **Moving forward**
  - Gain representative samples (i.e., non self-selecting)
  - More males
  - More representative languages
  - More of various country samples
  - Automation
  - Funding
Feedback

- Negative Feedback
  - “I just now started the questionnaire but have given up deciding there are too many better things to do in life, like filling in my tax return, than completing this marathon task”
  - “Never in the history of social science have so many questions been asked in such a long and such a boring questionnaire; and then to have to it again! (psychology professor)”
  - “The sample of people who complete this questionnaire twice must surely be drawn from a population of people whose mental lives are so impoverished they can find no more stimulating way of occupying their time”
Feedback

Positive Feedback

“This is an impressive study: it is a) international, b) longitudinal, c) uses 20 scales of known reliability & validity, and d) invites interesting sub-samples. Giving those who recruit sub-samples the opportunity to analyze their data opens up avenues of discovery no single team of researchers could anticipate. Anyone who would criticize this study simply because it relies a lot on self-report does not appreciate the sophistication of what you are undertaking”

“One of the most ambitious endeavours to understand the trajectories of wellbeing in meaningful contexts around the globe”
Initial findings

- Mountainous data-set
  - Intake One (March 2009) had 980 English participants, * 208 questions = 203,840 data points.
  - About 8,000 participants * 208 questions = 1,644,000 data points for their Time One assessment.
Example findings: General

- Example findings:
  - What is the best predictor of wellbeing? (Strengths, meaning in life, hope, gratitude, curiosity, grit, values, time use, savouring, positive events, friendships, purpose, growth mindset, being in flow, etc?)
  - The questions themselves may be an intervention?
  - Depressed - dissatisfied with time use (-.500**), and not living in alignment with their values (-.549**) – (stronger than hope)
Example findings: Specific

- Example strengths findings:
  - Strengths Use, not Strengths Knowledge, correlates positively with wellbeing, and negatively with depressed mood (-.346**)
  - % time using strengths associated with self-acceptance (.459**), happiness (.456**), % time happy (.425**), grit (.477**), meaning in life (.420**), being in flow (.465**), satisfaction with time use (.455**), and living alignment with values (.450**).
  - Strengths use associated with self-acceptance (.502**), control of the environment (.437**), present life satisfaction (.417**), future life satisfaction (.411**), happiness (.492**), engagement (.425**), hope agency (.653**), hope pathways (.568**), % time happy (.404**), being curious – stretching (.469**), grit (.514**), meaning in life (.474**), flow (.470**), satisfaction with time use (.441**), and living alignment with values (.438**).
  - Strengths knowledge associated with autonomy (.409**)
The International Journal of Wellbeing was launched on 31st January 2011 in order to promote interdisciplinary research on wellbeing. The editorial team are dedicated to open access for academic research, and to making the journal's content permanently free for all readers and authors.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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