Chapter 2

How To Open Doors To Happiness

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In preparing this chapter, I have been invaluably helped by an editorial committee comprising Lara Aknin, Claire Bulger, Jon Hall, Haifang Huang, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Max Norton, Hugh Shiplett, and Shun Wang, with the administrative support of Rebecca Clapperton Law. These efforts have in turn benefited from the advice of a high-level policy advisory committee comprising Laura Chinchilla, Enrico Giovannini, David Halpern, Jessica McDonald, Lord Gus O'Donnell, Meik Wiking and Dasho Karma Ura. I am also grateful to authors of the theme chapters, to Carrie Exton, and to Tarek Abu Fakhr and Jean Fares, for their helpful advice. My thanks to all.

Abstract

"How to" lessons are drawn from the six theme chapters, and then divided among key stages for successful happiness polices: establishing a happiness strategy, getting it into action, enabling collaboration within and across ministries, creating the necessary space for experimentation, facilitating consistency among policy choices, assuring continuity, and learning from experiences near and far. Providing all of these components, along with adequate well-being data and analysis, can be an ambitious challenge at a whole-of-government or even ministerial level. Meanwhile, smaller-scale projects within firms, neighbourhoods or individual schools are readily available entry points for delivering results. Successes at that scale should inspire further progress at the whole-of-government level.

Creating spaces for experimental design and delivery of happiness policies happens most easily in "Partnerships for Happiness" that provide cross-silo collaboration at a small enough scale to make the attendant risks easier for all the partners to accept. Such partnerships permit government ministries to obtain important results about the benefits of alternative policies without requiring large changes of direction for central government policies. In the meantime, below the radar if need be, there is ample scope for smaller scale partnerships to design, deliver, and evaluate happiness policies attuned to local and organizational needs. In addition to their direct happiness benefits, these partnerships help to increase the evidence base and foster citizen support for broader adoption of happiness policies.

Background

The *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Reports* are intended to help redirect the aims and content of government policies so as to increase equitable and sustainable human well-being. This change in policy perspective has been decades in the making, built on a growing dissatisfaction[1] with using GDP per capita as a sufficient measure of human progress, inspired by the Bhutanese choice more than 40 years ago to make happiness a national objective, and fuelled by decades of research aimed at creating a transdisciplinary science of happiness.[2] These converging threads came together on July 19, 2011, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Bhutan- sponsored resolution that "called on United Nations Member States to undertake steps
that give more importance to happiness and well-being in determining how to achieve and measure social and economic development."[3]

That resolution led to a High-Level Meeting on Well-Being and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm,[4] convened by the Prime Minister of Bhutan, at the United Nations on April 2, 2012. The meeting marked the release of the landmark first *World Happiness Report*, which brought together the available global data on national happiness and reviewed related evidence from the emerging science of happiness. That report, which in turn built on many other reviews of the science of well-being, provided strong support for the view that the quality of people's lives can be coherently, reliably, and validly assessed by a variety of subjective well-being measures, collectively referred to in this report as "happiness." It also built upon, as did the UN meeting itself, the UK launch of a well-being initiative in November 2010, still unique in combining engagement at the highest level from the political, administrative, and data-gathering pillars of government.[5]

Life evaluations are granted a central role in the *World Happiness Reports*, because they provide an umbrella measure by which the relative importance of the supporting pillars for good lives can be compared. The *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-Being*,[6] which were previewed as a case study in the first report, also emphasized the need to measure life evaluations as a primary indicator, ideally in concert with monitoring affect (i.e., the frequency of feelings, states and emotions, both positive and negative) and "eudaimonia" (i.e. measures of life purpose). These guidelines also discuss the need to consider other factors that have been found to support better lives (e.g. income, health, good jobs, family and friends, welcoming communities, good government, trust, generosity, and a healthy environment). Having an umbrella measure of subjective well-being permits the relative importance of these factors supporting well-being to be assessed, making it possible to move beyond a general wish to improve well-being towards some specific policies with established credentials for supporting better lives.

Both before and after the April 2012 UN meeting, attempts were made to sketch the possible implications of happiness research for public policies. A number of national and international efforts also aimed to develop a well-being policy framework, as summarized in the OECD chapter in this volume. The Bhutanese government has been unusual in carrying out systematic multidimensional happiness surveys (even including a life satisfaction question in the latest national census) and using the results to investigate the relationship between various policies and happiness.[7] Although there are now many countries that collect some official happiness statistics, there are still very few with enough data to support adequate research about what policies might best serve to support a happiness agenda. The Global Council for Happiness and Wellbeing[8] was formed in early 2017 to facilitate happiness policy development in interested countries. The first order of business was to assemble an inventory of happiness policy strategies and interventions that have been proposed or tested in communities and countries around the world.

The *Global Happiness Policy Report 2018* presented the first attempts by the Global Council for Happiness and Wellbeing to assess the range and quality of evidence on possible best practices for happiness policy, as well as how happiness data are collected and used in policy. The first step was to form six policy theme groups, each with a particular focus: health, education, work, personal happiness, cities, and metrics. The initial work plan for each group envisaged the *Global Happiness Policy Report 2018* and the *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019* as together providing an inventory of happiness policy ideas (mainly in *GHPR 2018*) as well as a roadmap towards the eventual goal of policy frameworks designed to improve happiness, with specific policy initiatives being chosen (mainly in *GHWPR 2019*) in accordance with their capacity to provide the largest improvements in the levels and distribution of happiness.

The theme chapters in both reports generally accept as a starting point that self-assessed well-being—especially, but not exclusively, obtained by asking how people evaluate the quality of their own lives—provides a good measure of the quality of life in society as a whole, and is a useful tool for public policy. The scientific basis for that starting point has been laid out over several years in the *World Happiness Reports*, and a host of studies reviewed there and elsewhere. It remains the case, however, that most of the national initiatives discussed by the OECD for the *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019* do not yet grant life satisfaction the umbrella role that a happiness focus would entail. Instead, almost all adopt a broad dashboard of indicators. This probably makes it easier in both political and administrative terms to adopt a well-being approach, and can enhance the quality of policy advice by making explicit the trade-offs and synergies - as well as winners and losers - across different outcomes. But it also makes it harder to provide an overall comparison of policies that have different effects on the various indicators, as well as to communicate overall progress in raising a nation's well-being.

How does policymaking change when happiness is the focus of attention? First, a happiness approach fundamentally changes the ways in which policies are evaluated. For example, a commonly used tool in government decision-making, benefit/cost analysis, compares the benefits and costs associated with policies and recommends them if they offer the highest economic return. One key problem with this procedure is that it is difficult to compare the social, environmental and economic consequences of policy options, with non-market consequences in particular often treated in footnotes or as complications. With happiness as the focus, it becomes possible to treat health, income, social trust and other features of life comparably as sources of well-being. Benefit/cost analysis can then be done using well-being as the objective, with policies preferred that promise to deliver the greatest net increases in the quality of life.[9] The availability of research showing how different aspects of life are related to overall happiness thereby permits a fundamental shift in the way policies are analyzed. As observed from the heart of the policymaking process, this shift provides a method of analysis applicable across a wide range of government agencies and departments.

Second, and perhaps more fundamentally, using happiness as an overarching policy objective has the potential for building cross-government cooperation. It may be easier to find and implement consistent policy choices if happiness becomes the common currency used to evaluate policy outcomes. This, in turn, may aid the achievement of a wider sense of common purpose.

Third, once happiness is established as the overall goal for policy, it becomes feasible and natural to improve the policymaking process in fundamental ways. The happiness focus extends attention beyond the direct benefits for the recipients of government services to include the impact of the services on the happiness of both those designing and delivering them, and those living in the surrounding communities. The various chapters in *Global Happiness Policy Report 2018* and *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019* provide many examples showing that the social context—how highly people think of each other and cooperate with one another—is vitally important to how highly they rate their lives.
This is true at work, on the streets, in families, in schools, and in the institutions of government and politics. Without a happiness focus these important aspects of life risk being lost in the footnotes or left entirely outside the policy-making process.

Fourth, an average score for life satisfaction can provide a simple and easily understood umbrella measure of the quality of life, and a more encompassing indicator of policy success. It has more breadth of coverage than GDP, and more simplicity than dashboards of indicators or other multidimensional measures. Life satisfaction measures, if they are widely enough collected, can also be more readily applied to individual regions, communities, and demographic groups than can GDP or dashboards of indicators. The distribution of life satisfaction scores can also provide measures of inequality that are more comprehensive than any of the usual statistics relating to the distribution of income and financial wealth.[10]

The rest of this chapter comprises three parts. The first identifies the main "how to" points in each of the six theme chapters. The second section highlights the main advice for accomplishing eight key elements in support of successful policy-making for happiness:

- Establishing happiness strategies
- Creating the magic sauce to turn talk into action, translating research into policy and practice
- Enabling collaboration within ministries or organizations
- Enabling collaboration across ministries, NGOs and others
- Creating the necessary space for experimentation, innovation, evaluation, and risk-taking
- Facilitating consistency among policy choices
- Assuring continuity
- Learning from experiences near and far

Finally, after reviewing this impressive list of necessary conditions for success, the chapter concludes on a positive note, emphasizing the possibility of making progress on happiness policies even when and where national governments are not yet using happiness as a central focus for policy design. It introduces the idea of "Partnerships for Happiness" whereby a mixture of outside and inside efforts may provide a viable way to design and deliver happiness policies without taking ministries and national governments too far outside their comfort zones. By delivering happiness effectively on the ground, these partnerships can be an effective tool for building even broader public support for a happiness agenda.

"How to" Lessons from the Thematic Chapters

Health

This year's health chapter, entitled *Priority Setting in Healthcare Through the Lens of Happiness* offers four main "how to" recommendations for improving healthcare appraisal methods so as to deliver greater happiness:

1. Formal healthcare appraisal should guide decision making.
2. Decisions should explicitly consider alternative uses of resources (their opportunity cost).
3. Benefits of healthcare should be measured in terms of happiness rather than health.
4. Benefits (and opportunity costs) to all parties should be considered, looking beyond the

patients to consider carers and family members.

What the chapter is essentially proposing is a widening of healthcare assessment procedures to use happiness rather than health as the primary goal, with expenditures allocated to where they deliver the biggest happiness improvements across the board. The chapter can best be seen as an important "how to" manual for better decision-making within a health ministry to allocate scarce resources across a given set of health care interventions. Since these expenditures amount to some 10% of GDP across the world, with potential new treatments appearing daily, a broadened healthcare evaluation procedure offers the possibility of substantially improving lives. The chapter notes in particular that using a happiness lens would increase resources devoted to mental health and to improved end-of-life care with an emphasis on palliative care and pain relief. All of these recommendations still reflect a ministerial approach to allocations among a competing list of established treatments. Health policy has an even broader conception when using a happiness lens to improve the health of populations. For example, there are likely to be interventions in many other ministries ranging from education to policing, social services, and community centres, that improve (or worsen) both health and happiness, with likely implications for future health-care expenditures. But the implications of these policies for the health of populations and for health care budgets and activities are not normally taken into account.[11] This issue is further discussed later in this synthesis.

Education

This year's education chapter, entitled *Positive Education 2019*, uses case studies to emphasize four different aspects of positive education: a whole-school approach (Geelong Grammar School), teacher training (Adelaide), a whole-university approach (Tecmilenio, Monterrey) and tests of the effects of specific positive education courses in national settings (principally Bhutan, with comparisons to courses in Mexico and Peru).

The Geelong Grammar School has the longest experience among the case studies, with more than 10 years of continuing development. Their "how to" lessons are therefore especially relevant, and include: extensive research, regularly engaging with experts in the field, involving the whole school community, empowering the initiative of classroom teachers, having an in-house training team, and accepting a long-term commitment.

The Adelaide Wellbeing Framework was developed in 2018 for application in 2019. The planning partnership included heads of schools, program directors, course coordinators, teachers, course designers, current students and graduates now teaching in schools. This breadth of partnership is one of the central "how to" lessons, with echoes in the other case studies, all of which have longer histories. Making a well-being framework central to the training of future teachers also improves the prospects for subsequent applications in school settings.

Since 2012, Tecmilenio, a recently established but fast-growing private university based in Monterrey but with 29 campuses across Mexico, has committed to be a 'positive university' with the aim of delivering "a learning community that cultivates the best self in each person, allowing them to flourish, discover their purpose in life, and benefit society." Every student (5,000 per year) takes an incoming course in well-being and happiness, and a final year course in positive organizations. Although university administrators are heavily invested in the mission, with more than 85% having positive psychology certification, fewer than 20% of faculty are similarly accredited. There is, however, a special focus on training in the fields of positive education and positive leadership. The "how to" lessons of the Tecmilenio case include obtaining buy-in at the outset from the board, adopting the best of international experience, using in-house training to scale up capacity, enabling faculty and students to live positive lives, and finding appropriate ways to evaluate progress.

The fourth case study draws the "how to" lessons from an evaluation of Education for Gross National Happiness in Bhutan. The case is especially relevant because Bhutan is the country where the linkage between academic performance and increased well-being was first established by empirical comparisons between treatment and control groups. Although increased well-being and fitness for life may be the fundamental goal of positive education, the finding of matching increases in academic performance dramatically raises the appeal of positive education to school administrators, teachers, students and parents. To develop and test a positive education program on a large scale is a daunting task that has given rise to a correspondingly long and important "how to" checklist:

1. Cultural immersion (required to ensure an appropriate curriculum)
2. Multi-stakeholder engagement
3. Needs and goals assessment
4. Study design and baseline measurements (to ensure the validity of subsequent evaluations)
5. Curriculum development and adaptation (to ensure relevant life skills training)
6. Training of educators
7. Curriculum implementation (infusing well-being in subject courses)
8. Measurement of results and impact evaluation (showing large increases in both academic performance and well-being, N=6500)
9. Ongoing evaluation of implementation at different scales (revealing smaller but still substantial effects in larger scale applications in Mexico [N=69,000] and Peru [N=700,000]).

The chapter concludes, based especially on the experimental evidence from Bhutan, that building well-being skills and academic skills hand-in-hand is both feasible and desirable. Hence the importance of the "how to" lessons and the relevance of the appended report of current progress in positive education around the world.

Work

This year's work chapter, entitled *Employee Wellbeing, Productivity and Firm Performance: Evidence and Case Studies* has as its centrepiece a meta-analysis of workplace surveys, involving in the aggregate almost 2 million employees in more than 200 business units from 73 countries. The chapter highlights the impact of job satisfaction and employee engagement on several measures of firm performance: customer loyalty, employee productivity, profit and staff turnover. A range of specific cases studies, mainly from the private sector, but including one from the UK National Health Service, illustrate the variety of particular tools used to improve employee satisfaction and engagement, and thereby to influence the measures of work unit performance. Across a wide variety and very large number of workplace studies, the results for job satisfaction, employee engagement and firm performance together provide an impressive body of evidence.

There is little evidence offered about the life satisfaction of employees, managers, customers and shareholders, thereby illustrating that the happiness lens has perhaps not yet been used comprehensively enough in the workplace. One notable common feature of this large number of workplace studies is that they are primarily evaluated in terms of their ability to deliver better performance using conventional measures of firm success. The ultimate objective is taken to be the financial bottom line, with employee retention and customer satisfaction valued chiefly for their ultimate impact on financial returns. This approach in turn suggests an instrumental rather than fundamental role for happiness, with life satisfaction outcomes not directly measured for any of the parties involved, and implicitly being valued for their contribution to the financial bottom line. If there is a "how to" inference for improving happiness in the workplace, it is that adoption of well-being policies requires first of all that a case be made that such interventions improve firm performance, so that management can see that these measures will not hurt the bottom line. However, primary reliance on traditional outcome measures is likely to skew the choice of interventions, and thereby to miss valuable opportunities for improving workplace and population happiness. Perhaps the underlying reality is that a well-being strategy should initially be sold on its delivery of conventional outcomes, and then later, when more broadly accepted, redesigned to deliver even greater happiness.

For its "how to" lessons, the chapter uses a broad range of evidence to support its recommendation that firms should invest much more in employee well-being by targeting social relationships on the job, making jobs more interesting, and enabling employees to achieve a better work/life balance. This is coupled with advice to document the effects of such interventions as well as possible, so as to increase the stock of good practices for themselves and others to follow.

Personal Happiness

This year's personal happiness chapter, entitled *Well-being Interventions to Improve Societies* focuses on interventions aimed at improving the well-being of individuals. The chapter starts by listing a dozen different interventions classified into four types: 1) thinking happier, 2) social interactions, 3) diet and exercise, and 4) listing and labelling (e.g. counting your blessings).

Of course, these can be combined into packages, as illustrated by the first main case study, the 3-month ENHANCE program designed for either in-person or online delivery. The 10 modules of the ENHANCE program relate to the core self, the experiential self, and the social self. Example exercises for the social self include giving compliments, feeling and expressing gratitude, noticing and sharing good news, active listening, and making others the centre of attention. Experimental evaluations show sustained improvements in several different happiness measures, as well as in physical health over a 3-month follow-up period.

The second half of the chapter offers a "how to" guide for effective interventions. Interventions are, in the authors' experience, more effective when they contain multiple components, including education, skills development, and reflection. Key considerations in design include stakeholder buy-in and input, cultural fit, language, a clear strategy for measurement and evaluation, clear target populations, mode of delivery, and revision and improvement in response to results.

The second case study is quite different from the first, as it illustrates how individuals can work together to redesign their own communities to make them happier places. The Blue Zones project was designed to enable communities of any size to build some of the features of those places around the world where abnormally large fractions of the population live beyond 100 years. The interventions, which are organized and managed at the town and city level, involve the active participation of a range of local institutions, including schools, restaurants, stores and places of worship. The main thrust of the Blue Zones program is to alter the local environment in ways that promote healthier life styles. The collaborative methods used are intended to improve the social fabric of happiness, so it is no surprise that the outcomes include better health and more happiness. Documented outcomes in three California cities included increased rates of walking to school from 1% to 30%, less obesity, less smoking, better eating and greater life satisfaction. The Blue Zones team has identified a number of "how to" features for successful adoption and implementation. These include readiness for change (indicated by an invitation to the Blue Zones team), buy-in and 5-year commitments from a range of local leaders, creating a strategic plan and a five-year steering committee, and securing funding for the necessary core staff.

The chapter ends with three "how to" suggestions, applicable to policy-makers in general, for improving the pace and structure of interventions. These are to disseminate and promote well-being interventions, to tailor interventions to suit the target audience, and to commit to tracking and evaluation of each of these targeted policies.

Cities

This year's chapter, entitled *Happy Cities Agenda*, considers six aspects of city design – city planning, contact with nature, mobility, sustainability, culture, and quality of service – that contribute to happiness through their interaction with eight enabling factors: trust, safety and security, affordability, tolerance and inclusivity, health and life balance, meaning and belonging, economy and skills, and sociality. Example policies are then chosen to showcase these eight enabling factors while being in general focussed on one of the six aspects of design. The example projects exhibit a striking variety of sources and management structures, with a remarkably high proportion coming from local citizen initiatives, most effectively with support from local government.

Two examples in particular are worthy of special mention, given the extent to which they illustrate cross-cutting attention to several of the enabling factors. The first example is from Aarhus in Denmark, where the municipality partnered with an architecture firm to cover the cobbled town square with an undulating carpet of grass and hundreds of trees, thereby creating a pop-up urban forest littered with social spaces and opportunities. The forest promoted well-being by inviting play, relaxation, and even improving social norms, with local police reporting no incidents in a place that normally witnessed crime. The second example is Melbourne Knowledge Week, where annually for ten years the city has challenged its inhabitants to build a shared vision. The resulting broad participation – and transparency – in turn has helped to increase trust between city managers and residents, with councillors setting municipal priorities according to citizen preferences collected during knowledge weeks.

The chapter draws two main "how to" lessons. First is the importance of empowering people to take responsibility, using a mix of both top-down and ground-up approaches to build successful communities. Second, and drawing from the chapter's conclusion, "many examples illustrated the importance of sociality as a primary enabler. This theme was visible in many examples: the design parameters of Seaside Florida, the Hey Neighbour community initiative in Vancouver, the family focused counselling in Denmark, a park re-design in Manchester, UK that helped people interact more with each other, even the Ciclovia cycling days event in Bogota, which had a strong social element to augment the benefits from the physical activity. City managers should focus on getting people together, and catalysing their interaction. Some of these examples underscore the *Socially Smart City*, by using data and innovative methods to attend to the social needs of the city, and ultimately people's happiness."

Metrics

This year's chapter, entitled *Adopting a Well-Being Approach in Central Government: Policy Mechanisms and Practical Tools* surveys national whole-of-government approaches to well-being policy in two parts. The first surveys the mechanisms used by a number of different national governments to introduce well-being data and objectives into their national policy-making processes. The second part of the chapter examines the tools and methods available to help policy analysts working within the government service to design and compare policies in terms of their likely contributions to well-being.

The first part considers five mechanisms that have been used to introduce well-being metrics and analysis into central government policy-making: the budget process, legislation to establish well-being objectives or collect well-being data, national development strategies with a well-being focus, new ministries or agencies, and strengthening civil service capacity.

In essentially all of the examples considered, the national well-being focus is multidimensional, without any central measure assigned an overall umbrella role. This appears to be a natural first step in a 'beyond GDP' development strategy, and perhaps gains cross-government support by giving ministries their own favorite variables in the dashboard of indicators while also avoiding the need to argue over the weighting structure inherent in any composite indicator of well-being. The chapter leaves uncertain the current amount of policy momentum there is for subjective well-being to provide an umbrella measure of progress and a research base for evaluating competing projects and proposals, both of which are argued in this synthesis to be central features of a national happiness agenda. Perhaps this modest role in most current national well-being strategies is appropriate while the evidence base accumulates to facilitate these expanded roles for subjective well-being. But in the meantime, of course, there is the need to ensure much more universal collection and understanding of happiness data, supported by comparable data for a wide range of potentially important indicators that can help to explain the sources of happiness.

The chapter articulates this need persuasively, arguing that "…putting well-being at the centre of policy analysis requires supporting machinery: a well-developed and accessible evidence base, civil servants with the training, tools and capability to conduct the analyses and interpret the findings, and perhaps most crucially, leaders (both political and managerial) who demand greater use of well-being evidence in order to arrive at their decisions. They will only make these demands if they can see that the quality of the advice, subsequent decision-making, and ultimately people's lives improve as a result of adopting a well-being lens. This means honestly evaluating the methods being developed, and continuing to share knowledge and lessons among practitioners."

The most helpful advice in the chapter lies in the specific examples offered for how to develop the capacity within the civil service to use well-being research based on happiness data to compare policies. The key examples offered are from the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. In the United Kingdom, established procedures for evaluating projects have been appropriately broadened, and courses offered to civil servants on how to compare projects in terms of their impacts on subjective well-being. The United Arab Emirates *Happiness Policy Manual* sets out a vision to place happiness at the centre of public policy and to ensure policy alignment across departments by quantifying and comparing the results of policy using several different happiness measures.

Digging deeper into the work of policy analysts, the chapter notes several ways in which well-being data can help: by developing a logic for policy action, exposing the nature of policy trade-offs, changing the data and methods used for regulatory impact assessments, and, most importantly, using well-being research to inform a broader cost-benefit analysis for choosing policies based on their likely impacts on the quality of peoples' lives.

Useful "how to" examples from this section of the chapter include the provision of better data and more training for analysts, the use of a range of evaluation techniques to better understand and map the underlying complexities, raising awareness, and helping to shape the public dialogue. Progress will require patience, and patience will also permit the all-important evidence base to be built up and better understood.

What are the Secrets for Opening Doors to Happiness?

We return here to consider features of successful happiness policies, using the eight stages listed in the introduction:

Establishing a happiness strategy for a country, region, city, ministry or organization

A recurring feature of the case studies is the need for buy-in from all the key stakeholder groups. The need for buy-in goes across all the major interest groups and top-to-bottom within each of those groups. Buy-in from the top provides a licence to innovate for all those at the lower levels. Buy-in from the front-line service providers greatly increases the chances of finding a workable strategy, and is essential for its implementation. The necessity for buy-in is reported throughout the chapters of this report. But there is very little evidence on how to create this buy-in among policy-makers long used to doing things in comfortably established ways.

A second key requirement for a successful strategy is an accepted objective, coupled with data to chart progress, as well as analysis sufficient to support policy decisions. Happiness data, and especially life evaluations, are uniquely able, if collected on a sufficiently broad basis, to underpin a happiness strategy for any government or organization, because they:

1. provide a single powerful umbrella measure of welfare and of the equality of its distribution
2. provide individual-level data to enable the sources of well-being to be identified at all levels of aggregation and the results used to inform cost/benefit analysis
3. can be made available for all demographic subgroups
4. can be made available at all geographies

Several of the theme chapters emphasize the benefits of policy innovations in terms of their consequences for conventional policy success measures - namely academic scores in education, health outcomes following health care or personal interventions, and profits for workplace interventions. Furthermore, the metrics chapter notes that most of their case study countries still employ well-being strategies that do not afford a central role to subjective well-being, and some even exclude it entirely. If a central role for happiness is essential for happiness policy to succeed in the long term, then there needs to be more widespread acceptance of life evaluations as an appropriate indicator of national well-being. The *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Reports* are intended to share happiness policy advice among those already convinced of the relevance of happiness data and research. This is a constituency that needs enlarging in order to assure more selection of policies on the basis of their expected power to improve lives as assessed by peoples' own evaluations of the quality of their lives.

Creating the magic sauce to turn talk into action

If a strategy is based on the two criteria noted above - buy-in from top to bottom, and support from happiness data and analysis - then moving to action becomes much easier. Perhaps the best spur to action is the availability of good examples to copy, coupled with encouragement of innovation and experimentation at the operating level. Stepping outside normal practice involves a leap of faith and a dose of courage, both of which are likely to be aided by upper-level acceptance of any related risks. Getting started may also be easier with a phased introduction, with the first steps being explicitly designed to test concepts and to provide any redirection needed for the following stages. Being small scale and off the radar can sometimes help as well.

What are the key components of an effective action team? In several of the case studies, the key features were human assets: the presence of a committed leader or central figure, shared enthusiasm for action among all those in positions to help, and high levels of trust and shared purpose. (e.g. "This is important for us, will benefit others, and together we can do it"). It has been argued that the 2010 launch of the UK well-being agenda based on widespread collection of happiness data (and the related public consultations) required shared convictions and mutual trust among those at the very top of the government, the civil service, and the Office for National Statistics.[12] One of the key elements of the UK well-being strategy was to bring subjective well-being into the heart of policy-making, including revising the Treasury's 'Green Book' that sets out the procedures for developing and evaluating policy proposals. Despite the strong leadership support for the proposals, there was resistance within the Treasury to giving a central place to subjective well-being. Without strong and unified leadership, the required changes to the statistical framework, the establishment of well-being as the key policy objective, and the use of subjective well-being research to provide the all-important conversion factors linking trust, incomes, and health, might never have happened.[13]

Enabling collaboration within portfolios

Substantial evidence shows that people who work in flatter organizational structures are happier,[14] and that across schools and countries, more collaborative teaching structures are associated with higher levels of social capital.[15] The extent of trust and social connections between those at different levels of an organization has been labelled "linking social capital".[16] These are the kinds of environments most likely to provide the top-to-bottom trust linkages needed to support successful happiness interventions. Hence any policies or procedures that serve to increase trust among colleagues at different levels of an organization may be viewed not just as sources of happiness in their own right, but as being likely to increase the chances of success for other well-being interventions.

Well-being research has regularly shown that the social context within workplaces, communities, ministries, prisons, schools and hospitals is of first-order importance for the lives of all those involved, whether as residents, patients, inmates, students, teachers, parents, employees, managers, doctors, or any other combination of life roles.

This finding has not yet been recognized within ministries and organizations. For example, workplace trust tends to get into the policy agendas of firms or economics ministries only to the extent that it is seen to influence firm productivity. However, the happiness implications for the individuals involved are far larger than revealed by those productivity measures. Similarly, the success of prison life is measured more by its freedom from violence than by the current or future happiness of prisoners, staff, and the communities from which the prisoners come and into which they return.

One of the initially unforeseen benefits of the increasing availability of happiness data has been the possibility to evaluate the social context in ways that have exposed its primary role as a support for well-being. This in turn has exposed a whole new range of possibilities for previously unconsidered ways of making lives better. For now, however, these remain mostly just as possibilities, with few ever having been implemented, or even appearing among the examples in this report. There is thus a shortage of "how to" examples for policy changes that could improve the social context within ministries and the constituencies they serve. There is a broader range of examples in the cities and personal happiness chapters, as expected given that both are dealing with diverse populations whose well-being clearly depends on the quality of the social contexts in which they live.

Enabling collaboration across ministries, NGOs and interested others

The structure of government, and even the structure of this report, reflects a high degree of specialization, with each department using its own tools to achieve its own defined goals and objectives. Even where it is possible to insert a broader objective, as in the health chapter's recommendation for happiness-based cost-effectiveness analysis, or by using the SHAPE tool presented in the cities chapter, there are still natural incentives to seek these broader objectives using the department's established tools and resources. The theme chapters of this report concentrate on initiatives involving single firms or ministries. The changes are often adopted and justified for their expected contributions to health, grades, profits, or ease of congestion and pollution. What is largely missing from policy-making, and from this report, are examples of silo-joining activities and ideas for how to create and evaluate such innovations.

Given the importance of the social context for happiness, it is natural to look in this area for actual and untapped policies to span ministries and disciplines. Not surprisingly, such ventures tend to start from outside the regular policy-making system. One obvious, and highly illustrative, silo-linking possibility is provided by linking the young and the old in ways that permit both groups to help, to learn from, and to enjoy each other. But this involves disrupting the flow of the increasingly professionalized and gated facilities used for schools and pre-schools, child care, hospitals, hospices and elder care.

To drop young children into an elder care environment is likely to upset all the prevailing norms and expectations about who is giving and who receiving the care, and for what purpose. Several types of elder-younger mixing have been tried, including having music students living in an elder-care facility[17] to share their music and experiences with the elder residents,[18] and opening up elder-care spaces in Helsinki for young residents, simultaneously providing needed housing and happiness at the same time. A number of age-mixed community-level housing options also exist, including several considered in the cities chapter. The Bridge Meadows project in Oregon aims especially to foster healing for vulnerable populations, thus linking the portfolios of family services, elder care and assisted living, with the intent of providing happiness for all.[19]

A variety of programmes mix pre-school and elder care. The pioneer was perhaps the Kotoen project in Tokyo, which was founded almost forty years ago, and by the end of the 20th century was among 16 examples in Japan of *yoro shisetsu*. These are "institutions where the very young and elderly interact and share experiences that let them both see that the beauty of life has neither a minimum age nor an expiration date…You can't reach old-age without acquiring a lot of life experience along the way, and if the reward for imparting that to future generations is being surrounded by their smiles during some of their most formative years, that sounds like a good deal for everyone involved, both young and old."[20] This idea took root in Seattle's Mount St. Vincent care facility in 1991, and flourishes still.[21] Other similar programs exist in North America and Europe[22], but apparently not in Latin America, where the extended multigenerational family is still a happiness-inducing norm.[23]

There are also non-residential options for mixing, including programs linking individuals, sometimes seen as filling the intergenerational space for those whose own families are far away, dead, or just too busy or disinclined to enjoy such activities. A program in Zimbabwe taps the wisdom of the nearby old volunteers to help avert depression among the young.[24] The happiness benefits of these intergenerational encounters have been documented for elderly participants by gerontology researchers.[25] The apparent lack of broader analysis covering the benefits (and sometimes costs) for the old and young, and the families and care-givers, may well reflect the disciplinary silos that define research as well as care design and delivery.[26]

Another option is to move school classes, for a whole term or year, into an elder care facility. The iGen project in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,[27] a partnership between Sherbrooke Community Centre and Saskatoon Public Schools, has been in operation for several years, with the resulting happiness gains for young and old evident in their faces and descriptions of what they have learned and enjoyed. The Saskatoon iGen program has attracted more grade six student applicants than the program can accommodate, with a lottery used to select the participants, opening the doors to more formal study of what the program has achieved for the students. A similar program in British Columbia, the Meadows Schools Project,[28] which operated from 2000 to 2008, has led to a successor organization[29] devoted to helping intergenerational "i2i"[30] projects to thrive elsewhere.

What are the possible "how to" lessons for establishing these cross-silo innovations? The pioneers of such experiments remembered initial worries that students would miss their school social context in a crucial year, that it would be impossible to monitor adequately the complex interactions within the shared environment, and that conventional learning outcomes would suffer. More comprehensive evaluations remain to be done, but experience has generally convinced participants that there is a magic to the mixing, an opening of important doors to the life experiences of others, and to the breadth of the human condition, that makes the prior worries seem misplaced. But nonetheless a leap of faith is required, and a willingness to accept the consequences, whatever they may turn out to be. Once again, the "how to" recipe seems to require at least one committed leader at the centre plus an effective cadre of collaborators from the connected schools, school boards, and elder care facilities. Without all these elements, the experiments do not happen, and when a key element is lost, the program dies.

The United Kingdom provides perhaps the best examples of interventions that are based on subjective well-being research, are applied across ministerial boundaries, and are tested and evaluated at significant scale. The 2010 launch of a happiness agenda in the United Kingdom involved not only large scale data collection and a reform of cost/benefit analysis to focus on improving subjective well-being, but also the establishment of a Behavioural Insights Team tasked with using experimental methods to test the benefits of alternative ways of delivering public policies. This combination of new data, new techniques for evaluation, and growing awareness of the importance of the social context has led to several cross-silo interventions of a sort that would have been unlikely without this combination of reforms, supported by the accumulation of evidence about what was needed, and what might work, to improve well-being. For example, focusing on well-being in services led the UK Social Action Team[31] to expand volunteering at a large teaching hospital, based on a survey asking staff "what are the things that you would like to do for patients, but just don't have the time to do?" A year later, with 2,000 volunteers giving patients someone to talk to, and to help them settle back into home, patient satisfaction soared, and hospitals across the country followed suit, with 78,000 volunteers by early 2015.[32]

Creating the necessary space for experimentation, evaluation, and risk-taking

Experimentation is more easily accepted with higher level buy-in, risk-pooling, phased introduction and small scale, all of which were seen earlier to also aid the transition from proposal to action.

Convincing evaluations require that the results from an experimental treatment be compared with a suitable control group. Yet the "how to" advice for successful innovation includes building an enthusiastic team of collaborators as a key element. Since the intervention is introduced and managed by those with enthusiastic commitment to the project, the gains obtained from a more general application may be smaller, by an unknown amount. Ideally, even fairly early in the experimentation phase, it should be possible to create a pool of willing volunteers for a program, and then draw the treatment group randomly from among the volunteers, or at least use a phased application. This procedure provides more appropriate control groups, but still does not assure that the results would generalize to the population at large. The underlying experimental strategy therefore seems to require a step-by-step approach, with initial experimentation and test-of-concept being conducted in the most favorable circumstances, and the most successful features carried forward to progressively wider applications. Beginning with an initial small scale may also help to obtain buy-in from sceptical partners, to minimize the costs and attendant risks, and to increase the scope for mid-course corrections.

Facilitating consistent policy choices

What is most needed to achieve consistency is a standard for well-being evaluation that encompasses all the relevant factors, and is able to establish equivalent values for policies in different areas, and with consequences for a whole range of economic and social outcomes. Several chapters, and especially health, cities,[33] and metrics, made the case for project evaluations that use subjective well-being research to establish the relative values for a variety of key outcomes. This is perhaps the most important "how to" lesson for the long-term sustainability of any well-being strategy.

There are two related issues that might complicate policy consistency. The first is how to compare policies with different effects on the distribution of subjective well-being. One answer to this is to recognize that people generally are happier living in societies with less inequality in the distribution of well-being,[34] and to adjust the cost/benefit calculations accordingly. The second issue relates to the frequent policy emphasis within ministries and caring professions on diagnosing and treating misery rather than identifying and building the sources of happier lives. Targeting misery has the benefit of helping those who need it most. But such targeting risks stigmatizing the afflicted and losing the broad support attracted by more universal programs.[35] It also is more likely to involve diagnosis and treatments focused on removing the signs of illness rather than building positive circumstances, thereby ignoring policies that might be better for the entire population, whether initially in misery or not.[36] Some evidence also suggests that policies designed to improve the social context in general will in fact provide the greatest benefits for those in misery.[37]

Assuring Continuity

Even the best ideas often succeed only to be abandoned shortly after. Sometimes this may be because a government has changed and the new leadership wants to present a different vision, and has not yet appreciated the value of what has been achieved. For example, a highly successful school-based program held classes in an elder care facility, with widely recognized happiness and education gains for students, teachers, care givers, residents of the care facility, and the families of all. Then a new principal came to the school determined to return the school to its core function of delivering higher test scores, and to keep all students in their regular classrooms. What had been a beacon project cherished by all became history due to the insertion of just a single out-of-sync individual into what had been a collaborative chain of innovation supporting better lives. Traditional methods and goals reasserted themselves and the gains were gone. Disappointed students moved back to schools closer to home, and momentum was lost, perhaps permanently.

At the national level, happiness agendas can come to be associated with particular leaders or parties, thereby rendering them vulnerable to elimination with any change of government.

How can this situation be avoided? Some have recommended the use of explicit long-term commitments to the policy (as in the Blue Zones example in Chapter 6 on personal happiness). Continuity is also more likely where the benefits of the previous happiness policy have been widely disseminated, perhaps replicated elsewhere, and become the focal point for favorable attention (as in the Hey Neighbour example in the cities chapter). This spread of information can help to attract supportive new leaders and participants, and to develop a cadre of local supporters who are likely to act swiftly to protect a cherished program from needless extinction. However, it must be recognized that it takes great effort to keep innovations alive and responsive to changing needs and waning attention. Avoiding attrition due to fatigue within the original leadership team can perhaps best be avoided by ensuring the training of a new cadre of staff convinced of the value of the program and equipped with the skills required to enable it to survive and improve. Several chapters listed such training as a central "how to" suggestion, with continuity and growth among the chief benefits.

Learning from experiences near and far

Why do obviously good ideas not spread faster and farther? Why is it not easy and natural to benefit from policy innovations elsewhere? The central purpose of the *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report* is to help fill this knowledge gap by collecting and sharing happiness-based policy experiences from around the globe. The transmission of experiences offers two hoped-for benefits. The first, of course, is to shed light on ideas that have been tried elsewhere, so that they might be adapted to local circumstances and given a chance to show their benefits. A second benefit might flow through the creation of national and international networks of people deriving fresh energy and inspiration from their far-flung peers. If there is an inspiration gap to match the knowledge gap, then the connections that fill one gap might fill the other as well. This report is dedicated to all those willing and able to fill those twin gaps. If the resulting levels of trust and enthusiasm are high enough, then it will be as easy to learn about what did not work elsewhere as what did, thereby lowering the costs and raising the chances for successful happiness innovations.

What Next? Partnerships for Happiness?

The “how to” lessons reported in the chapters of this report all attach high importance to buy-in from top to bottom, and from one ministry or discipline to another, as well as to commitment, continuity, flat-structures, freedom to innovate, and fearless reporting of results, whether they are favorable or not. But existing bureaucratic structures, especially at the national level, are typically not able to deliver even a fraction of these characteristics. Still, there is growing interest among the public, and even within government policy circles, to redirect policies so as to enable happier lives.

Perhaps what is needed is to create safe spaces for happiness innovations that embody all the “how to” lessons, but do not require ministries or whole national governments to go too far outside their comfort zones. One common element of the most innovative and successful examples reported in this volume is their ability to get collaboration and cooperation across the board without excessive commitments – to achieve desirability while maintaining deniability. These examples might collectively be described as Partnerships for Happiness, each created for a specific purpose, usually on an initially small scale, and being quite explicitly experimental in nature. At the national level, the UK appears to have a bigger variety of such partnerships, including What Works Wellbeing,[38] Happy City Bristol,[39] Action for Happiness,[40] the Behavioural Insights Team,[41] and many others. All of these organizations have secured cooperation and sometimes direct participation from government departments, often in the form of robust collection of happiness data and support for the underlying research, but including the provision of issues and expertise, and the reform of project evaluation to grant primacy to better lives as measured by peoples’ own evaluations. Yet all of these activities and ventures are removed enough from the central engines of government that their progress and results do not require a central policy commitment, and are at a sufficient distance that deniability is at hand for experiments that do not pan out, or that fail in ways that might be embarrassing to the government.

Partnerships for Happiness can operate as easily across ministries as within them, and are not restricted in the range of interventions to be conducted or benefits to be considered, nor in how the costs and gains might be allocated across budget items. Of the examples in this report, the greatest number of Partnerships for Happiness do not have their origins in government, but in the minds and with the leadership of those who see opportunities and simply try to assemble the elements required to produce happiness. The ENHANCE and Blue Zone examples of the personal happiness chapter, the entire positive education movement, many of the examples in the cities chapter, and all of the cross-silo examples described in this chapter are all Partnerships for Happiness originating from the bottom up or the outside in. Their architects may have broader and more policy-driven applications in mind, but achieve their success by being small, nimble, and opportunistic in finding support where they can. In all cases, the leaders tend to have had experience and connections within a particular interest or organization, and start with a promising idea for improving happiness. There is also a need for organizations, such as the Happiness Research Institute[42] in Copenhagen, that can act as clearing houses for ideas and idea generators for future Partnerships for Happiness. Also important are a whole range of foundations, including in many of the world’s cities, that have the means and credibility to provide seed money and linkage opportunities for fledgling partnerships.

National governments have important roles to play in fostering Partnerships for Happiness. Existing dashboards of national well-being indicators provide valuable guides to the policy salience of different aspects of well-being, and show where interventions are most likely to be politically attractive. The broader collection of happiness data, and their use in policy assessments, can allow policy makers and citizens to better understand the linkages between the different areas of well-being, and to help ensure that the chosen policies are those most likely to deliver greater happiness in effective ways. Government support could and should also extend to collaboration and partial funding of agencies that are either themselves Partnerships for Happiness or can help to incubate new ones. The *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019* aims to encourage such Partnerships for Happiness by sharing policy ideas across the world.

Endnotes

1 See Stiglitz et al (2009).

2 See www.grossnationalhappiness.com, Ura et al (2015), and www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/.

3 Resolution 65/309. See https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/65/309

4 For the report of the meeting, see: https://sustainable development.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=617&menu=35

5 See Halpern (2015), especially Chapter 9.

6 See OECD (2013).

7 See NSB (2017). *Questionnaire of the 2017 Population and Housing Census*. The Population and Housing Census carried out in 2017 asked life satisfaction questions to all the heads of 163,000 households in Bhutan. A report on this and other happiness related responses will be released in 2019.

8 The Council was formed with the support of the United Arab Emirates, is chaired by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, and publishes the *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report* through the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

9 See Chapter 4 of *World Happiness Report 2015*, and the metrics and health chapters of this *Report*.

10 See Goff et al (2018).

11 In particular, health practitioners do not usually even monitor the positive states of mind of their patients, even though tested suites of questions are available (e.g. Su et al 2014). The relevance of such positive measures is shown by Keyes et al (2010). Examples of non-medical interventions that improve both health and happiness are surveyed by Holt-Lunstad et al (2010).

12 At the launch of the UK Government's well-being strategy, focused on measuring subjective well-being and rebuilding cost benefit analysis to make subjective well-being the objective, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, was flanked by the Cabinet Secretary, Gus O'Donnell, and the Head of the Office of National Statistics, Jil Matheson, both of whom were instrumental in enabling these plans to come to fruition. David Halpern (2015, especially Chapter 9) provides an insightful insider's account.

13 See Halpern (2015), especially pp. 258-265.

14 For example, in large samples of US workers, those who regard their immediate superior as a partner have significantly higher subjective well-being than do those who regard the supervisor as a boss (Helliwell et al 2018b).

15 See Algan et al (2013).

16 See Szreter and Woolcock (2004).

17 For the Cleveland example, see https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/business/retirementspecial/in-cleveland-young-and-old-keep-tempo-of-life.html

18 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xiofjk9rYAM

19 For a link to the Bridge Meadows project, see https://www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2016/10/10/at-bridge-meadows-derenda-schubert-leads-an-innovative-portland-housing-community

20 This quote about the Kotoen project is from https://soranews24.com/2015/02/01/yoro-shisetsu-japans-progressive-joint-care-centers-where-kids-and-seniors-interact/

21 See https://washington.providence.org/services-directory/services/i/intergenerational-learning-center

22 For the first UK example, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSG_FCQ10fA

23 See the results in Rojas (2018) showing intergenerational family living and socializing to be much more frequent, and much more appreciated, in Latin America, helping to explain why happiness is higher there than would be otherwise predicted.

24 See http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20181015-how-one-bench-and-a-team-of-grandmothers-can-beat-depression

25 See, for example, Morita and Kobayashi (2013).

26 But news reports of intergenerational mixing are more symmetric in showing the benefits for both young and old. See, for example https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/kindergarten-in-a-retirement-home-proves-a-hit-with-young-and-old/article4103165/

27 For a description and further links to the Saskatoon iGen program, see https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/the-sunday-edition-september-23-2018-1.4831872/sixth-graders-in-a-nursing-home-an-unlikely-but-life-changing-school-year-1.4832327. The iGen program was proposed by its founder Keri Albert in 2013, inspired both by earlier shared-site art programs involving children and elders (https://susanwhiteland.weebly.com) and also the Eden alternative model for elder care (http://www.edenalt.org) with the Sherbrooke Community Centre being one of its sites.

28 For a description, see http://intergenerational.ca/i2i/meadows-school-project/history/. For a radio documentary: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1A2Kvns0oKE03YbXbJ-hY046jigFPDUpl/view

29 See http://intergenerational.ca/i2i/

30 See, for example http://intergenerational.ca/i2i/meadows-school-project/bc-williams-lake-project/

31 The Social Action Team, founded in 2012 with substantial Cabinet Office funding, is itself an important example of support for silo-bridging social innovations. See Halpern (2015, 251-2.)

32 From Halpern (2015, 261-2).

33 See especially the Smart Cities Evaluation Tool (SHAPE) presented in the Appendix to the Cities chapter.

34 See Goff et al. (2018).

35 See Kumlin and Rothstein (2005).

36 See Keyes et al. (2010).

37 For example, Helliwell et al (2018a, Fig 18.3) show that living in an environment of high social trust is of greatest value for those most likely to be in misery, whether through illness, unemployment, or being a member of a group subject to discrimination.

38 See https://whatworkswellbeing.org The organization is funded by eight different government departments, and has strategic partnerships with organizations and universities in several countries. Topics of special importance have included job quality, social connections in the community, dashboards of social indicators, mental health, and fuller use of the four ONS measures of subjective wellbeing.

39 See http://www.happycity.org.uk

40 See http://www.actionforhappiness.org

41 See https://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk

42 See https://www.happinessresearchinstitute.com

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