



Flourishing: Findings in Southern Africa

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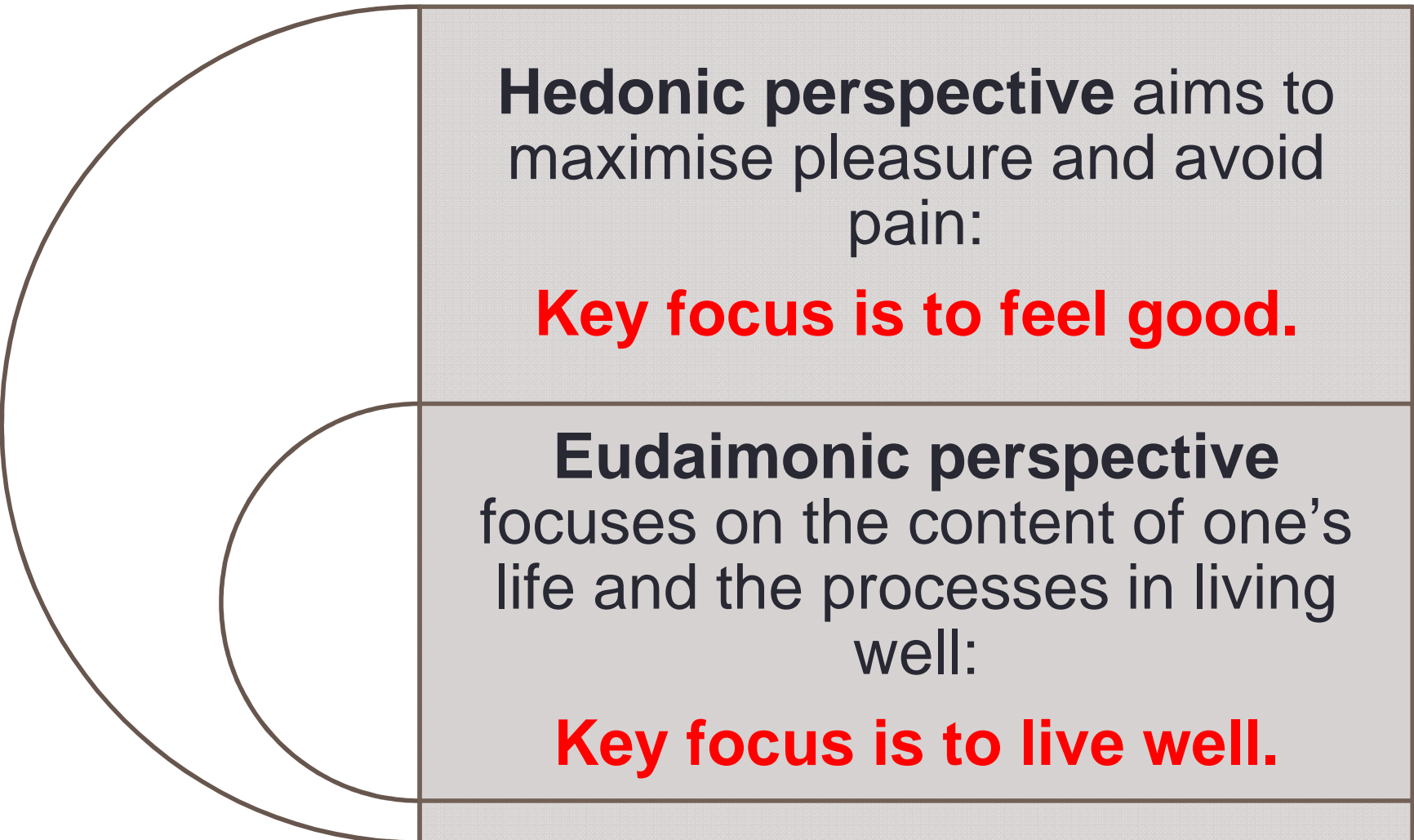
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Structure of Presentation

1. Definition of flourishing
2. Happiness versus negative affect
3. Outcomes of flourishing
4. Approaches to happiness and well-being
5. Promoting flourishing

Perspectives on Happiness and Well-being



Hedonic perspective aims to maximise pleasure and avoid pain:

Key focus is to feel good.

Eudaimonic perspective focuses on the content of one's life and the processes in living well:

Key focus is to live well.

You Are Flourishing When You ...

- feel satisfied with your life as well as different life domains
- experience positive emotions
- are psychologically well
- are socially well



Are We Eradicating Negative Affect?



“We are possibly not far away from eradicating a major cultural force, a serious inspiration to invention, the muse behind much art and poetry and music. We are hankering to rid the world of numerous ideas and visions, multitudinous innovations and meditations. We are right at the moment annihilating melancholia.”

Wilson, E.G (2008). *Against happiness: In praise of melancholy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Publishers.

Happiness versus Complacency



Maybe happiness is meant to be the *exception* rather than the *rule*. *If you're happy too much* of the time, you might get too comfortable - too complacent - with the way things are and not want to change anything.

Pessimism about Flourishing

- People have a genetically determined set point which determines at least 50% of their happiness.
- Personality characteristics of individuals are remarkably stable over time.
- Gains in happiness are short term because people adapt quickly to change.



Optimism about Flourishing

- Greater happiness can be achieved over time.
- Motivational and attitudinal factors are amenable to some control (e.g. optimistic perspective).
- Unwanted effects of genes could be minimised by active efforts to steer oneself away from situations that detract from well-being.



Flourishing is associated with various positive outcomes



Findings about Flourishing (1)

- About 54% of people are moderately happy – yet not flourishing (lack enthusiasm and are not actively and productively engaged with the world)
- Happy people live longer
- Organisations and relationships where a positive versus negative emotion ratio of 3:1 is maintained flourish – a ratio of 1:1 is characterised by problems; 11:1 is unrealistic
- Brief raising of positive mood enhances creative thinking and makes positive physicians more accurate and faster to come up with proper liver diagnosis

Findings about Flourishing (2)

- Attention is superior under positive emotion
- Among 96 men who had their first heart attack, 15 of the 16 most pessimistic died of cardiovascular disease over the next decade, while only 5 of the 16 most optimistic died controlling for major risk factors
- Positive emotion could prevent the onset of common cold
- Flourishing people are more committed to their organisations, productive in their jobs, show more organisational citizenship, and are more resilient in the face of hardship

Seligman, M.E.P. (2008). Positive health. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 57, 3-18.

Approaches to Happiness and Well-being

- Subjective well-being as emotional well-being (Ruut Veenhoven, Ed Diener)
- Authentic happiness (Martin Seligman)
- The how of happiness (Sonja Lyubomirsky)
- Flourishing (Corey Keyes)

- ‘Utilitarianism’: Morality appears in consequences. Most moral is what produces ‘greatest happiness for greatest number.’
- Greater happiness is possible by addressing live-ability and lifeability.

**Ruut Veenhoven
(2011)**

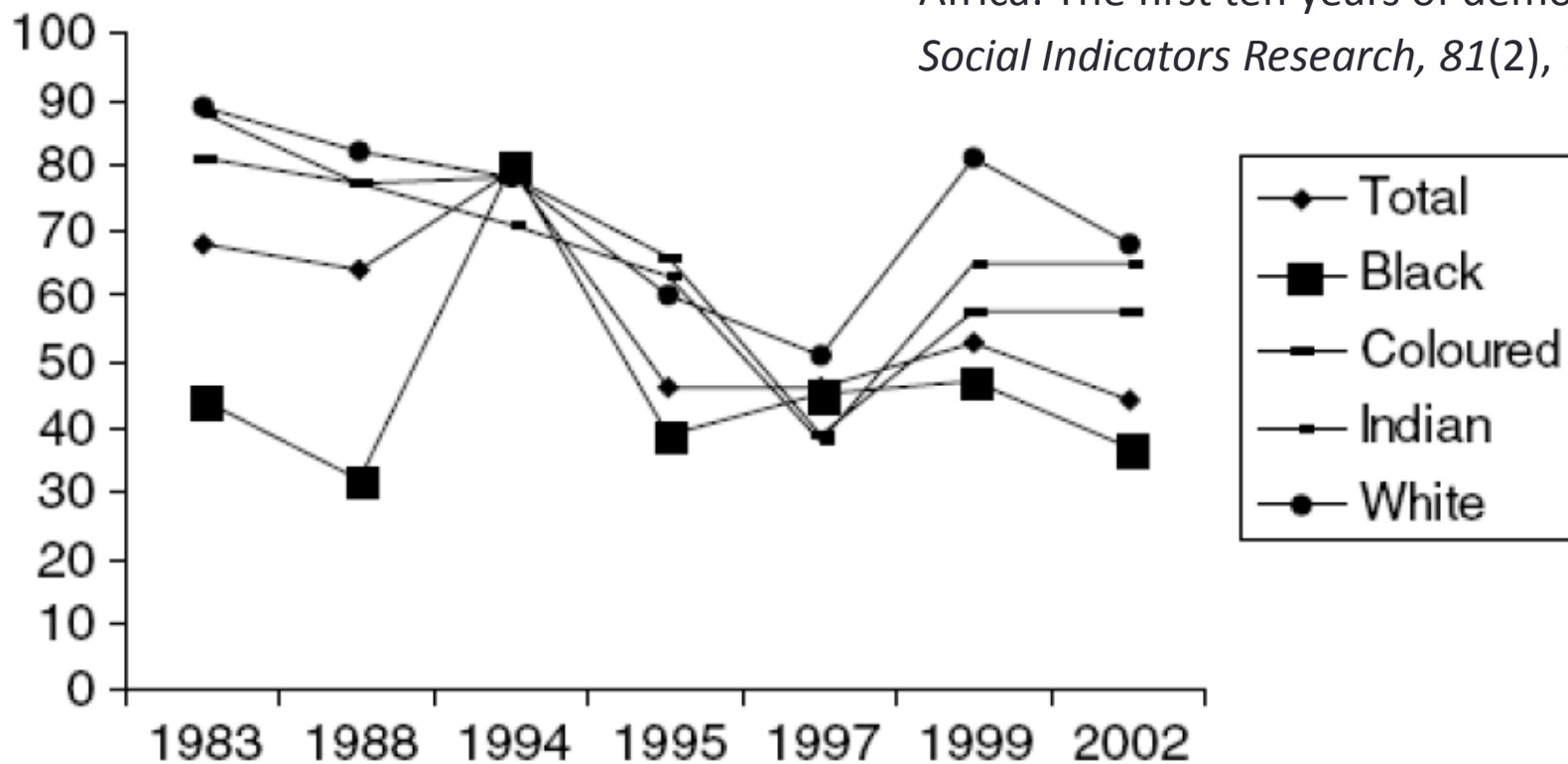


What Makes People Happy? (“liveability”)

Condition	Coefficient
Economic affluence	+0.61
Political freedom	+0.54
Rule of law	+0.58
State welfare	+0.22
Income inequality	+0.18
Tolerance	+0.68
Explained variance	75%

Life Satisfaction in South Africa

Møller, V. (2007) Quality of life in South Africa: The first ten years of democracy. *Social Indicators Research*, 81(2), 181-201.



South African Quality of Life Trends: Percentages satisfied with life-as-a-whole.

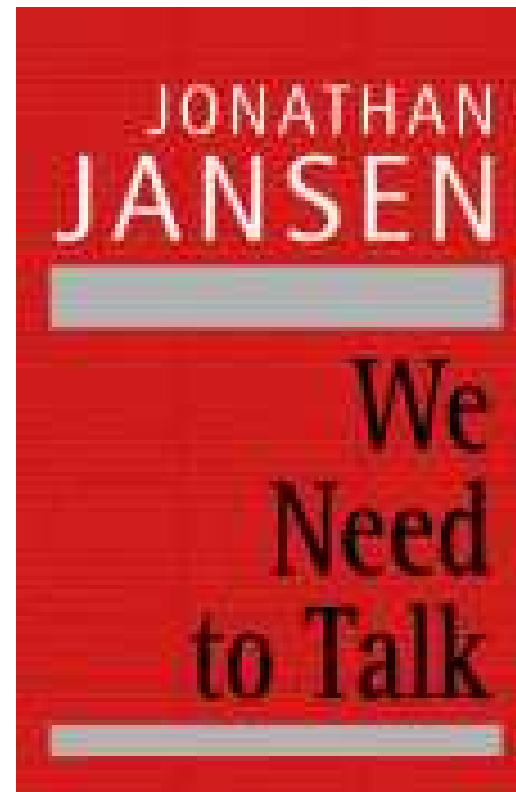
Happiness for Who?



How can I be happy if my fellow South Africans are not happy? (Question to Prof. Valerie Moller when researching life satisfaction in 1990)

Diagnostic Overview

<http://www.npconline.co.za>



How Happy Are We?

Condition	Coefficient
Denmark	8.3
USA	7.4
Germany	7.1
Japan	6.5
South Africa	5.8
Russia	5.5
Zimbabwe	3.0

Source: Veenhoven, R. (2011). World Database of Happiness.

What Makes People Happy? (“lifeability”)

Condition	% of Variance
Heredity	± 30%
Good luck/bad luck	± 10%
Social position	± 10%
Learned abilities	± 25%
Choice	± 25%

Authentic Happiness

- Pleasure
- Engagement
- Meaning
- Accomplishment
- Positive relations

Authentic
happiness
(Seligman, 2000)

