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New money, and old man/lady and ‘Two's company’: Subjective Welfare in the NORC General Social Surveys, 1972–1982

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Abstract

The nine surveys, dozens of variables, and more than ten thousand cases in the NORC General Social Surveys, 1972–1982, allow one to test a variety of cross-sectional and over-time hypotheses about Subjective Welfare (Happiness). I used discrete multivariate analyses to test five hypotheses: (1) the Economist's prediction that Happiness is a function of income; the Sociologist's hypotheses that Happiness is a function of (2) rank on various evaluated dimensions and (3) number of social ties; and the Psychologist's hypotheses that Happiness is affected by (4) social comparisons and (5) adaptation. None of the five is supported impressively, but three variables emerge as good cross-sectional predictors — Race (Blacks are less Happy, but not necessarily because of discrimination), Marital Status (all categories of nonmarried are less happy) and Financial Change

(those whose finances are improving are happier, those who finances have turned for the worse are less happy). When Marital Status and Recent Financial Change are used in a year-to-year social indicator model, fluctuations in the predictors produce significant but small changes in Happiness.



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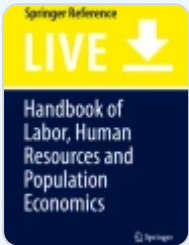
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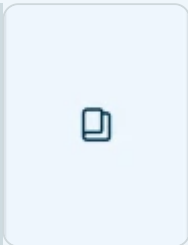
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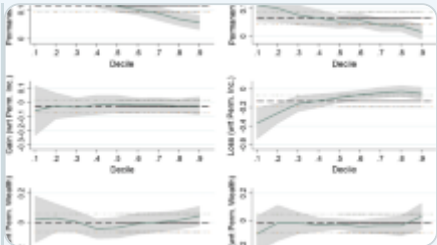
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