Some procedural issues

- Reading responses completed
- Essays completed
- Experimental requirement up until May 7
- Exam on Monday
- Old final posted
- Special accommodations
- Review sessions
  - Thursday from 6-8 (SSS 114)
  - Friday from 4-6 (Dunham 220)

Does therapy work?

- People report feeling better after therapy
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General conclusions about therapy effectiveness

- People in treatment do better than those not
- Some types of therapy work better for specific problems
  - cognitive-behavioral for major depression
  - Medication for bipolar disorder
- Some therapists are better than others

Nonspecific factors in therapy effectiveness

- Nonspecific = unrelated to specific principles but critical to outcome
- Support
  - acceptance, empathy, encouragement, guidance
- Hope
  - sense of faith in therapy process
  - placebo effect = improvement from belief, rather than actual effect

Happiness

How happy are you?

- From a scale from 1 to 10.
- The most common answers are 7 and 8
- No big differences for age, place, or sex
- 42 countries:
  -- none under 5
  -- most happy: Swiss (8.39)
  -- most miserable: Bulgarians (5.03)
  -- Americans (7.71)
A bit of caution: Ratings can be unreliable

- Group A found a dime on a photocopy machine
- Group B did not.
- “How good is your whole life?”
- Group A reported greater happiness in their entire lives
- Effects of sunny days
- (Unless they asked “How’s the weather?”)

What is happiness?

- What is happiness for?
- Goal-state that animals have evolved to pursue; signal that needs have been satisfied
- E.g., Hunger vs. satiation
- Pinker:
  “We are happier when we are healthy, well-fed, comfortable, safe, prosperous, knowledgeable, respected, non-celibate, and loved.”

But it is not so simple

- Americans in the 21st century are healthier, better-fed, etc. than just about anyone in history
- But no happier
- People are not happier than in the 1950s, or in relatively poor countries
- Also, this are individual differences in happiness even among people whose basic needs are met
- How do we explain this?
- Some surprising facts about happiness …

1. Happiness doesn’t change as much as you think
How happy are you?

- Set-point
- Genetically-determined range (identical twins raised apart …)
- Happiness is highly heritable
- What about life events?

What is the worst thing that can happen to you?

- How much would it change your happiness?

What is the best thing that can happen to you?

- How much would it change your happiness?

Life events

- Paraplegics
- Lottery winners
- Getting or not getting tenure
- President Bush versus President Kerry
- Consumer purchases
Why don’t these events matter as much we think we will?

1. Failure to appreciate day-to-day irrelevance of certain events
2. The logic of the set-point  
   --- we adapt to bad things  
   (with some surprising exceptions)  
   --- we adapt to good things  
   (with some surprising exceptions)

“I hated life …”

“All is vanity and a chasing after wind, and there is nothing to be gained under the sun.”

Implications of the hedonic treadmill

- Possessions are not the key to happiness
- ALTERNATIVE 1: Endless novelty
- ALTERNATIVE 2: Step off the treadmill  
  Seek out more substantial goods  
  Friends and family; long-term projects
2. Happiness is relative

Money, power, and happiness

• There exists a set-point (or range)
• But there is some effect of your salary and your job on your happiness

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• If you are desperately poor, you will be unhappy
• Beyond that, your happiness is based on your relative circumstances

Happiness is relative

• A wealthy man is one who earns $100 more than his wife’s sister’s husband.

Happiness is relative

(a) $70,000, if everyone else in your office was making $65,000
(b) $75,000, if everyone else in your office was making $80,000

Research with British social servants

Negotiating tips from Maria Callas and Stanley Fish

Summary so far …
Advice for the king

- SSRIs and cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Move the castle to a quieter part of the kingdom
- Give up on concubines. Find a queen. Join a club. Get involved in charities

3. Our judgments about the pleasure and pain of past events are skewed in interesting ways

Which is worse?
(a) A dental procedure that is very painful for an hour.
(b) A dental procedure that is very painful for an hour, and then some additional mild pain.

Which is better?
(a) A party that is hugely fun at the beginning but ends badly (90% good, 10% bad)
(a) An awful party that ends well (90% bad, 10% good)
Summary of pleasure studies

• Endings matter
Two bigger lessons

• Humility

• Optimism