

Data and happiness [OPEN]

About me: My name is Alex, a graduate student who would like to be happy :))

Problem Definition - can the act of "measuring" and observing data about our mental state affect our perceptions and help us be "happier"? (this is very exploratory)

There's this saying that "you can't manage what you can't measure." Most people don't actively manage or measure their mental/emotional states because, how would you even do something like that? Our inner lives are incredibly fluid and subject to so many external factors, and for extreme cases, is subject to biological factors that we cannot control of in the first place.

However, there may be some things that we can manage. Cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness practice, religious practice, etc. can be applied during mild fluctuations of mood and emotion to help us get through rocky times. Even something as simple as scrolling through my camera roll and remembering good times can pull me out of a funk and prevent ruminating too long on the negatives. Is there a data-driven way we can measure and reflect on our mental states?

Data - We'll be collecting data ourselves with a very simple mechanical counter. Click it when you feel a moment of happiness, and record the total number of clicks each day together with a (very) short journal entry (we'll be doing some NLP on the written portions and pair it with the self-reported "happiness" clicks).

Deliverable - Not sure yet! I'm thinking some use cases could be checking our happiness graph to reflect on moments of high happiness or particular struggles, comparing a machine-reported assessment of our mood (sentiment analysis) with our self reported mood, etc.

Timeline - Not sure yet! Could easily be a very long term project.

Team - Anyone who's interested in mindfulness, mental health, psychology, being happy, or the way data affects the way we perceive the world and ourselves.

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