Rethinking happiness (measures)
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Introduction
- Sociological research on happiness: happiness = life satisfaction
- Psychological perspective: happiness = many faceted construct with (at least) two distinct components: hedonic & eudaimonic well-being
- Aim of this research: discovering the potentials of this perspective for sociological studies

Theoretical concepts
- **Hedonic well-being**
  Maximisation (minimisation) of experiences of pleasure (displeasure) of mind and body → high levels of positive emotions, low levels of negative emotions
- **Eudaimonic well-being**
  Living an autonomous, self-determined life in accordance with one’s true self and perceived development of one’s best potentials → sense of purpose and meaning in life
- **Life satisfaction**
  More general, overarching concept which refers to an assessment of people’s feelings and attitudes towards their life as a whole (plus, in some cases, towards subdomains of their life)

Data & Measures
- **Data**: British Household Panel Survey, waves 6-10 (’96-’00) & 12-18 (’02-’08)
- **Operationalisation Hedonia / Eudaimonia**: Factor analysis of GHQ-12 scale

Empirical application: Effects of children on parental happiness

Results
- Effects of the birth of a first child show diverging tendencies for the three different dimensions over the course of time
  - Consistently positive (negative) effect on mothers’ (fathers’) hedonic well-being
  - Alternating positive and negative effects on mothers’ and fathers’ eudaimonic well-being
  - Initial positive effects followed by negative effects on mothers’ and fathers’ *life satisfaction*
- However: effects not significant in most time periods

Discussion & Conclusion
- Measures constructed here can only be considered rough approximations of the constructs hedonia and eudaimonia
- Particularly critical: operationalisation of hedonic well-being based on items assessing the absence of negative affective states, while the presence of positive affective states (not in the data) is an equally important component of hedonic well-being
- Summary: Results can be regarded as a first indication that the one-dimensional concept ‘life-satisfaction’ does not capture all aspects of happiness and that further pursuit of a multidimensional conceptualisation might indeed prove beneficial to future advances of sociological research

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