1 CHAPTER 36

2 THE GEOGRAPHY 3 OF HAPPINESS

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6 Introduction

7 Does geography matter when it comes to happiness? To what extent does *where* we live
8 affect *how* we feel and *why*? These questions have not yet received the attention they deserve
9 in the growing body of interdisciplinary research on the determinants of subjective happi-
10 ness and well-being. While a considerable number of happiness studies are now approach-
11 ing the issue from various perspectives, there is a paucity of work by geographers on this
12 topic. This is surprising, given the importance of geographical context in understanding and
13 measuring subjective happiness and well-being.
14 From a measurement point of view, it has long been argued that there are cultural
15 (Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Tiberius, 2004; Uchida, Norasakkunkit & Kitayama, 2004) as well as
16 possible linguistic (Veenhoven, 1993) issues affecting the responses to happiness questions
17 in surveys. People living in societies where personal modesty is valued over individualism
18 may understate their levels of happiness, whereas happiness may be overstated by those
19 living in societies that encourage individuals to "stand out from the crowd." It is often
20 suggested, for example, that Americans have a tendency to say that they are "very happy"
21 because salient happiness is so positively valued in the USA, whereas in countries like France
22 the exact opposite may be the case (Frey & Stutzer, 2002).
23 In addition to cultural characteristics, there are a number of additional geographical
24 factors that influence the extent to which people appear to feel happy or satisfied with their
25 lives. These include climate and the physical environment (Brereton, Clinch, & Ferreira,
26 2008; Ferrer-i-Carbonelli & Gowdy, 2007; Mitchell & Popham, 2008), as well as social and
27 spatial inequalities (Alesina, Di Tella, & MacCulloch, 2004; Ballas, Dorling, & Shaw, 2007;
28 Dorling & Barford, 2009; Frank, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005; Williamson & Pickett, 2009).
29 A comprehensive geographical approach to subjective happiness and well-being is needed
30 to address the extent to which subjective happiness may be attributed to "individual" (e.g.,
31 employment status, age group), "household" (e.g., household income, accommodation type

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and size), and/or wider "contextual" (e.g., climate, socioeconomic environment) circumstances and characteristics across the world, and to establish the relative importance of such characteristics in different countries and within regions and cities in a country. This chapter considers some of the key geographical contextual issues that may be particularly important when measuring and explaining variation in subjective happiness across cities, regions, and nations.

First, we provide a brief review of the ways in which happiness has been conceptualized in different geographical regions. The subsequent section critically reviews work on the geography of happiness across different countries in the world and discusses the problems of comparing self-rated happiness and, in particular, issues pertaining to the impact of inequality. This is followed by a consideration of place and space at smaller area level. The final section of the chapter offers concluding comments and outlines a possible research agenda for the geography of happiness.

Perceptions and Theories of Happiness Through Time and Space

> When we look at the world's great thinkers . . . [we] find them different in time, different in place, different in language and culture. Yet inevitable though these differences are, they cannot obscure the deep similarities in how we search for happiness. (Schoch, 2007, p. 13)

The meaning of happiness varies through space and time. The first known attempts to understand and define happiness began in the Far East around 600 BC, with the Chinese schools of Confucianism, Mo Ti, Buddhism, and Taoism (Fung, 1985; Tam 2010). Confucianism placed emphasis on societal quality of life and social relationships, arguing that a positive attitude towards knowledge, learning and responsibility are of central importance for happiness (Legge, 1971; Zhang & Veenhoven, 2007). The followers of Mo Ti, a Chinese philosopher who, unlike Confucius, was from the laboring class, argued for reciprocity and equality (Tam, 2010, pp. 12–13, 74). On the other hand, Taoism emphasized the individual and suggested that social conditions do not affect the ability of individuals to be happy. A Taoist might have argued against the development of knowledge and wisdom and suggested that the good life is a "simple life," implying that children are the happiest human beings (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2007). Buddhism also placed emphasis on the individual and introduced the concept of Nirvana: "a state of saintliness, that is characterized by perfect inner peace, enlightenment and the abolition of all wants" (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2007, p. 8).

A few decades after the Eastern philosophies of happiness took form, and 4000 miles to the West, the "Golden Age" of Greek philosophy began. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, argued that happiness was the highest good achievable by human action and suggested that the attainment of happiness involves the satisfaction of the human desires through living a full and rich life (Annas, 1993; Lear, 1988; Ryff & Singer, 2006; Tam, 2010). However, Aristotle believed that the question of what is a full and rich life could not be answered in abstraction from the society in which people lived (Lear, 1988). Moreover, he argued that the achievement of human happiness relies upon the realization of an individual's true potential, which is consistent with earlier views, widely attributed to Socrates, that the "unexamined life is

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not worth-living." In other words, happiness involves "doing well" rather than the attainment of actual pleasure, implying that social and geographical context matters when asking the question of happiness.

A new wave of happiness philosophy was formulated during the Hellenistic period, running from 323 BC, the year of the death of Alexander the Great, until the establishment of the Roman Empire in 31 BC (Bergsma, Poot, & Liefbroer, 2007; Tarn, 1952). This was a time of great change: city-states were losing their prominence, more people were traveling around a vast empire characterized by authoritarianism but also cosmopolitanism, commitment to civic and political activities was on the decline (Bergsma et al., 2007; Russell, 1990), and individualism was on the rise. These changes were accompanied by increases in feelings of insignificance and insecurity and the emergence of the new philosophies of Stoicism, Scepticism, and Epicureanism. While Stoicism "addressed the more highly educated and aristocratic citizens with its focus on public life" (Bergsma et al., 2007, p. 8) the ideas of the philosopher Epicurus appealed mostly to the fearful and oppressed citizens, the ones that felt very uncomfortable in the new world order (Bergsma et al., 2007; Tarn, 1952). Epicurus advised that the best way to lead a good life, characterized by the absence of pain and fear, is by living a modest and contemplative life in friendly communities (Annas, 1993; Bergsma et al., 2007; Tam, 2010). Epicurus advocated a quiet life as a way of achieving happiness, emphasizing individual self-sufficiency in the context of small groups of like-minded friends who are indifferent about the feelings of other people in society (Schoch, 2007). Thus, "Epicureans in the west and Taoists in the east encouraged people to withdraw from public life to seek enjoyments in their own spheres of life" (Tam, 2010, 18).

It can be argued that, despite the years and distance between them, the Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, briefly reviewed here, share the idea that happiness is something that is achieved through human effort. As a philosopher based in the British Empire 2000 years after the Hellenistic period, Bertrand Russell also argued that happiness is something for which we must strive and work hard, and that it does "not just happen to us like ripened fruit falling effortlessly into the mouth" (Russell, 1930; cited in Ryff & Singer, 2006, p. 19). While there is little argument as to the role of effort in the achievement of happiness, there is a divergence in the way these schools of thought address social and geographical context; namely, how they address issues such as whether the feelings, actions and circumstances of *other* people affect *our* own happiness.

In the fourth and fifth century AD, discussion of the "good life" was heavily influenced by theological concerns and the belief that true happiness could only be attained after death. The focus shifted from how to achieve happiness in the present to how life should be led in order to accomplish ultimate happiness in the afterlife (for a detailed review of how both religious and philosophical perspectives influenced thinking on the definition of happiness, see McMahon (Chapter 19, this volume) and Schoch (2007)). Amongst the most comprehensive systematic attempts to examine the meaning of happiness in this context are the works of Thomas Aquinas, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, and Al-Farabi (Schoch, 2007).

In Britain, it was not until decades after the seventeenth-century European Enlightenment that the focus for understanding of happiness shifted to how people actually felt as they went about their earthly lives. This, in turn, gave rise in the eighteenth century to the idea that happiness was something that could be measured, cultivated, and consequently, linked to public policy. Jeremy Bentham (1789/1983) argued that all human actions should aim at

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producing the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Layard, 2005; Frey and Stutzer, 2002).

As this brief review shows, the concept of happiness has been historically understood, valued, and explained by different schools of thought that emerged in different times, places, and cultures. This is not merely of historical interest, for these differences are reflected, at least to some extent, in how happiness is understood and valued today by people with different cultural and geographical upbringings. This can be further demonstrated by using an example of qualitative research of happiness by Lu and Gilmour (2004), highlighting how cultural background may be affecting the alternative ways in which happiness is defined. They present and discuss the following extracts of essays on the meaning of happiness by university students of the same age but with different backgrounds (the first two extracts were from essays of Chinese students and the last two from essays of American students):

> a. Happiness is a mental state. Only when the spirit is rich, the mind is peaceful and steady, is happiness possible.
>
> b. For me, happiness can be defined in four aspects: (1) free of physical sufferings, illnesses or disabilities; (2) being socially acceptable, getting along well with other people, being respected and cared for, not being isolated; (3) free of worries and hardships, being able to live a carefree and joyful life; and (4) possessing a healthy, normal mind, being accepted by the society.
>
> c. Happiness is absolutely great and one of the most important states of being a person or living thing could ever pursue. The pursuit of happiness is one of my supreme goals in life.
>
> d. To me happiness is doing and being who I want to be without being held back by the restrictions of society. Happiness is a reward for all the hard work you employ.
>
> (Lu & Gilmour, 2004, pp. 269–270)

It is evident that the meanings of "happiness," as well as perceptions of its determinants, have varied through time and space, influencing patterns of divergence that are observable today. However, recent advances in relevant socioeconomic and geographical data allow these issues to be investigated empirically, and thus provide a geographically-oriented perspective on subjective happiness and well-being. The remainder of this chapter reviews some of the empirical evidence on the extent to which *space* and *place* matter to subjective happiness and well-being.

HAPPINESS, SPACE, AND LACE

There are now a number of national surveys across the world containing a range of subjective happiness and well-being measures (Tov & Au, Chapter 35, this volume). These survey data have been used extensively by social scientists to conduct individual level studies of happiness and its determinants in each nation, as well as to compare aggregate happiness levels between nations (see Veenhoven (1993, 2000) for a review of more studies, and for survey data see Veenhoven (2009)). Very few examinations of these data have been explicitly concerned with the difference place makes; instead they have focused on how factors ~~rested in how factors~~ that are place-related influence how happy people appear to be.

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It is important to more fully understand why *where* someone lives may affect *how* they respond to happiness questions in surveys, in other words, how place and space affect the measurement of people's feelings. In this chapter, "place" is determined by the physical and cultural environment, whereas "space" is determined by the possible links between sociospatial processes (e.g., migration), states (e.g., socioeconomic spatial polarization; social and spatial inequalities) and subjective happiness.

As many philosophers and economists have noted, the position that a person has in society, as well as the overall level of status inequalities, strongly influences her subjective experience, including happiness and unhappiness. Adam Smith famously wrote: "By necessities, I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the customs of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lower order, to be without. A creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt" (Smith, 1759, p. 383). Karl Marx (1847) identified the importance of relative social position via the impact of inequality and social comparisons upon human well-being in a social justice context. Veblen (1899) and Duesenberry (1949) highlighted the importance of social comparison of how people live and what (and how much) they consume. Runciman (1966) argued that people compare themselves most with their "near equals" and, more recently, Layard (2005) has suggested that people tend to compare themselves to their colleagues, friends and neighbors, with consequences for both happiness and health.

Most of the empirical studies that have examined comparison effects in relation to happiness have focused on relative income (a person's income in relation to the income of others) and income-rank. The logic here is that income is a means of communicating relative status in a social hierarchy (Alesina et al., 2004; Frank, 1985, 1999, 2007; Layard, 2005), and thus an individual's position in the income distribution is also an indicator of how much they are "valued." In practice, it is difficult to know a person's income without explicitly asking them, and so it is estimated by evaluating personal factors like consumption patterns, job titles and even residential addresses.

It has long been known that there is a moderate positive correlation of subjective well-being with real income per capita within a country. However, it has been shown that, for the wealthiest countries, further increases in overall income per capita do not markedly affect aggregate happiness (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). As Clark, Frijters, and Shields (2008) note, there is broad agreement that this finding reflects "the importance of relative considerations in the utility function, where higher income brings both consumption and status benefits to an individual" (p.137). In other words, once most people's material needs have been met, across the board growth in income fails to increase average happiness since status is zero-sum.

However, a good deal of recent and compelling evidence suggests that there is a relationship between the degree of *inequality* within a society and various health and social issues that are known to influence happiness, including physical and mental health, trust and community life (see, for instance, Fig. 36.1; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Even within wealthy Western nations, outcomes in these and other areas appear to be substantially worse in societies that are more unequal (in terms of income and wealth inequalities and social cohesion). These findings highlight the role of social and geographical context with regard to a wide range of factors that are associated with happiness.

These findings have been the subject of lively debate, which is of particular relevance to the geography of happiness. For instance, Jen, Jones, and Johnston (2009) have offered

FIG. 36.1 “Community Life” and income inequality.

criticism on the basis of empirical analyses of the relationship between measures of self-rated health and income inequality. They found that self-rated health is better in more unequal countries, which seems surprising given that numerous studies have shown life expectancy to be lower in more unequal countries. However, Dorling and Barford (2009) argue in response that measurements of “self-rated health” are themselves subject to cultural bias. There have long been studies showing that people’s ratings of their health are affected by social position, choice of reference group and gender (e.g., see Idler & Benyamini, 1997).

More recently, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have presented their “Spirit Level” hypothesis, according to which the relationship between income distribution and well-being is mediated through psychosocial pathways by the impacts of economic structure upon social relationships. In this model, lower income inequality is seen to result in societies with more cohesion, greater trust, and cooperation and lower social stress. Therefore, it can be argued that the level of inequality within a society has a direct impact on the way in which people perceive and report their health. If relative social position is an important influence on self-rated health, then, in more equal societies, fewer people occupy extreme positions in the social hierarchy and each person’s frame of reference for comparing themselves to other people is likely to be wider and hence include more people. Importantly, people may be less inclined to make comparisons with peers who are “above” when, in a more equal society, such differences are so much less important.

It also seems plausible that in more unequal societies, which are characterized by more status competition (Frank, 2007), people may more frequently and obviously need to reassure themselves of their health and well-being and their potential to succeed. Asserting

that one has "excellent" or "very good" health might be part of maintaining one's self-image. Relatedly, it could be that people in more equal societies may be less inclined to rate themselves at the top of a scale. Perhaps growing up in a more egalitarian society means that people are less likely to label themselves as "the best" or "excellent." Also, as noted in the introduction, social context and cultural norms (e.g., societies that value personal modesty and collectivism over individualism, or a desire to "stand out from the crowd"), may influence responses to survey questions (Abdallah, Thompson, & Marks, 2007).

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) suggest that one way to cope with living in an extremely unequal affluent society is to feign optimism: to convince yourself that you are strong, you will survive and prosper, even though you realize that most around you will not (Dorling & Barford, 2009). Linking this discussion to the impact of "place," consider the experience of living in Harlem in New York City, which has both a high murder rate and a low suicide rate. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) argue that individuals are unlikely to do well in an unequal environment like Harlem if they internalize their concerns. Better to attribute blame for one's own problems to external factors, let your anger out, and when asked how you are, say you are doing "'just great'". Conversely, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) hypothesize that it is harder to blame others—or "the system"—for your woes in places that are more socially equal. People in such areas may be less likely to internalize their concerns and not lash out, and to blame themselves more and be less inclined to "talk themselves up." If this is the case, it may be that people would be likely to admit their own health to be poor; poorer than it actually is in relation to others living in more unequal countries, but perhaps poor as far as they see it (Dorling & Barford, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

The previous discussion is relevant to cross-country comparisons of happiness: it illustrates the possibility of obtaining survey responses at the international level that contradict actual physical experience. Thus, international variation in reported levels of happiness can clearly be affected by cultural differences in expression, in the same way that cultural influences seem to affect how people express their perceptions of health. Such effects can even be found within a single country. For instance, in Britain, levels of reporting long-term illness, all else being equal, are higher in Wales than in England, and lower in Scotland than in England. In other words, people in Scotland do not report being ill as much as those elsewhere in Britain given the same levels actual health; the opposite is true of Wales. This may well be beneficial to the Welsh, who tend to be treated earlier as a result of actual illnesses being diagnosed more frequently (Mitchell, 2005).

Despite these results, cultural and geographical contextual influences with regards to the measurement of subjective happiness and well-being are much weaker when looking at differences in places within nations and regions (including within countries as unequal as Britain). For instance, Oswald and Wu (2010) tested the validity of reported well-being at the state level within the USA using a recent sample of one million American citizens. They found that the subjective responses traced out a similar pattern of quality of life as previously calculated using objective measures of well-being. Based on a sample of 100,000 individuals in Britain, Blanchflower and Oswald (2009) found a strong relationship between blood pressure by region and the level of reported mental strain. Therefore, it could be argued that comparing subjective measures of happiness and well-being within countries is much less problematic than performing international comparisons.

Nevertheless, the geographical level at which contextual factors matter with regards to determining the actual objective (rather than self-reported subjective) happiness is much

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less clear. As noted previously, inequality matters because people compare themselves with their "peer groups." But do they compare themselves to "peer groups" in their neighborhood, city, region, country, or possibly to diaspora groups in other countries or with peoples of whom they know little, but who appear on television? It is far from clear how reference groups are constituted. There are many other kinds of non-geographical groups to which we may compare ourselves and with whom we consider ourselves to be of a similar social standing. Given this confusion, some have elected to simply focus on inequality at more local areas (e.g., neighborhood or community areas), aiming to capture social comparisons within that level, without reference to the wider social structure (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2006). Wilkinson (1997) has argued that income inequality in small areas (such as streets, wards, or even towns) is affected by the degree of residential segregation of rich and poor. He proposes that the health of people in materially deprived neighborhoods is poorer not because of the inequality within their neighborhoods, but because they are deprived in relation to the wider society as measured at the national level (also see Ballas et al., 2007).

Most significantly, Wilkinson and Pickett (2006) compiled a list of 155 published peer-reviewed reports of research on the relation between income distribution and measures of population health. They classified these studies as "wholly supportive" or "unsupportive" according to whether they were international studies, using data for whole countries, whether their data were for large subnational areas such as states, regions, and metropolitan areas or whether they were for smaller units such as counties, census tracts, or parishes. The proportion of analyses classified as wholly supportive falls from 83% (of all wholly supportive or unsupportive) in the international studies to 73% in the large subnational areas, to 45% among the smallest spatial units. The implication is that the spatial scale at which people make their social comparisons is more likely to be the nation state (arguably reflecting socio-economic position) than it is to be locality (reflecting position within neighborhood). In Wilkinson and Pickett's (2006) words:

> … the broad impression is that social class stratification establishes itself primarily as a national social structure, though there are perhaps also some more local civic hierarchies – for instance within cities and US states. But it should go without saying that classes are defined in relation to each other: one is higher because the other is lower, and vice versa. *The lower class identity of people in a poor neighbourhood is inevitably defined in relation to a hierarchy which includes a knowledge of the existence of superior classes who may live in other areas some distance away* (p. 1774, our emphasis).

Despite the local evidence being weakest, there is a need for more empirical studies that explore the geographical and socioeconomic factors affecting individual happiness at different geographical scales. Studies of happiness at local levels are relatively limited due to the paucity of relevant data, although there are some exceptions. Propper et al. (2005) examined the association between neighborhood-level variables and mental health disorders in Britain. Their analysis included the estimation of multilevel models of "level-changes" (such as individual level, household level, and area level) and 5-year changes of common mental disorders, and suggested that individual and household-level characteristics, not place, appear to be most important in terms of predicting mental health disorders.

A number of studies have examined the role of income and employment in local well-being. Luttmer (2005) matched individual level happiness data to information about average earnings in geographical areas of 150,000 inhabitants on average (the so called US Public Use Microdata areas) to investigate whether individuals feel worse off when others

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around them earn more. He found that, on average, higher earnings of neighbors are associated with lower levels of self-reported well-being. Clark (2003) used data from the British Household Panel Survey (a national annual survey of the adult population of the UK, drawn from a representative sample of over 5000 households) to show that the well-being of unemployed people is strongly positively correlated with reference group unemployment at the regional and household level, suggesting that "unemployment hurts, but it hurts less when there are more unemployed people around." Similarly, Powdthavee (2007) used cross-sectional data from South Africa to examine the role of social norms in the relationship between happiness and unemployment and reported that unemployment appears to be less detrimental to happiness in regions where the rate of unemployment is high.

Morrison (2007) used survey data to compare subjective well-being in 12 different locations in New Zealand, and used single-level regression models to explore the extent to which "place" has an effect upon individual well-being. He found that, even after controlling for characteristics of individuals known to influence subjective well-being, there were considerable "place effects," suggesting that the characteristics of local areas may have an independent impact on well-being. Ballas and Tranmer (2012) employed multilevel modeling on a combination of census and survey microdata in Britain and found that happiness and well-being was not significantly different between metropolitan districts in the UK, once a full set of individual, household and area characteristics is controlled for. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that this analysis suggested that, on average, the longer an individual has lived at their address, the higher their well-being. This finding may be likely to be associated with the extent of individuals' social and support networks.

As noted earlier, there are very limited data on happiness and well-being for small areas. Nevertheless, it is possible to use small area data to build formal indices of "local well-being," for instance, the index of "anomie" (the sociological term to describe, according to some interpretations, the feeling of "not belonging"). Such measures can also be described as "loneliness indices." Recently Dorling, Vickers, Thomas, Pritchard, and Ballas (2008) calculated such an index to explore the geography of "loneliness" or "anomie" in Britain in a study commissioned by the BBC which aimed at comparing BBC radio and TV regions. The index used was based on a scale and weightings which have now been widely employed in many pieces of research (Congdon, 1996). Specifically, the index is calculated based on weighted sums of non-married adults, one person households, people who have moved to the area within the last year and people renting privately.

The data used to calculate the index are readily available in Britain for small areas from the census of population and it can be argued that they represent a number of variables that are associated with happiness and well-being. For instance, it has long been suggested that single people appear to be on average less happy than married couples (Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Helliwell, 2003; Inglehart, 1990) and in general there is evidence that stable and secure intimate relationships are beneficial for happiness. In contrast, the dissolution of such relationships is damaging (Dolan et al., 2007; Myers, 1999). In this context the census variables "number of 1-person households" and "numbers of non-married adults" could be considered suitable to measure at the local level. Also, as noted earlier, length of time at current address and social networks have an impact on well-being. The census variables "number of people who have moved to their current address within the last year" and "number of people renting privately" capture, to some extent, the degree to which people are integrated to the local community and may feel that they "belong." This variable also implicitly incorporates

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in the analysis the spatial process of migration (as it provides the number of in-migrants in the area within the year before the census date).

Dorling et al. (2008) collected these data from the British censuses for the years 1971, 1981, 1991, and 2001 to compare the "anomie" index levels between different regions (using the BBC radio regions as the geographical unit of analysis). They mapped this proxy of social fragmentation or "local well-being" across Britain using both conventional maps and human cartograms that show areas in proportion to their populations (see Fig. 36.2). Fig. 36.3 shows the spatial distribution of the "social fragmentation" index in 1971, and Fig. 36.4 depicts the same variable in 2001. The gap between the index extreme values has grown over time (other than during the 1970s). Fig. 36.5 shows the spatial distribution of anomie index change between 1971 and 2001. This follows similar patterns with regards to economic and social polarization and political disaffection (Dorling et al., 2008). Young adults, who have increasingly moved to more affluent cities for work, especially to London, are moving further away

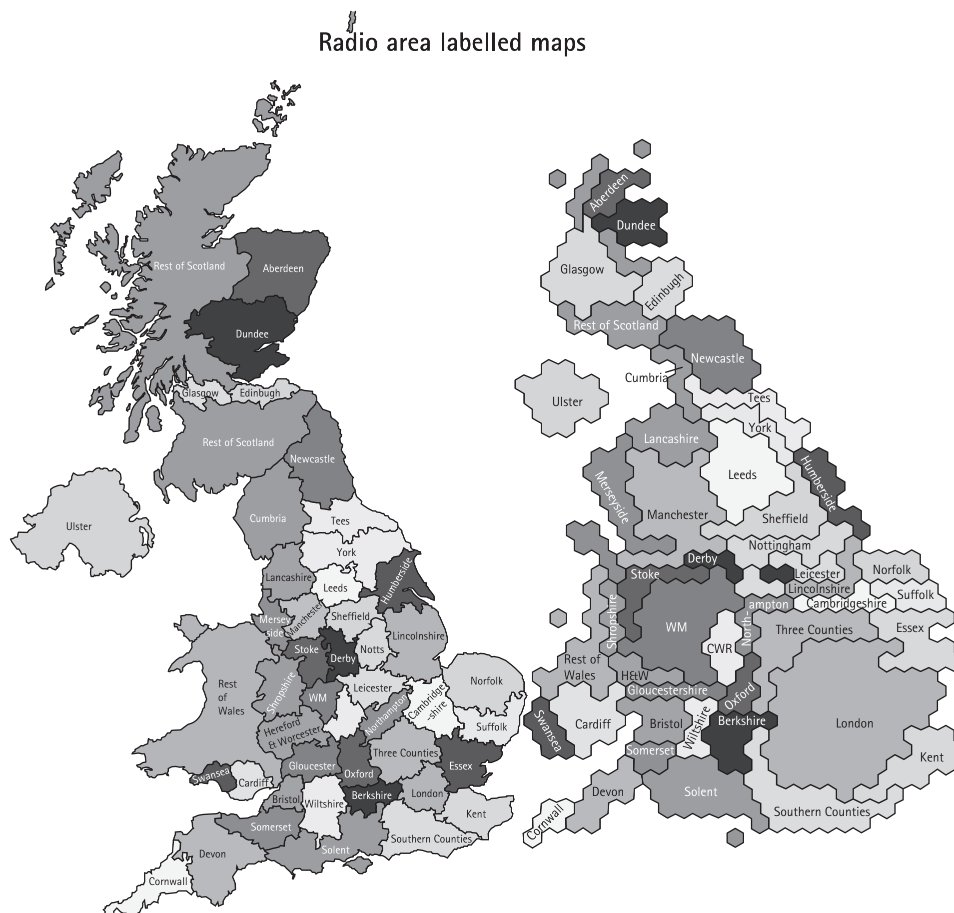

FIG. 36.2 (Also see Color plate 1.) The BBC radio regions map and human cartogram. Courtesy: the Social and Spatial Inequalities (SASI) Group, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, UK.

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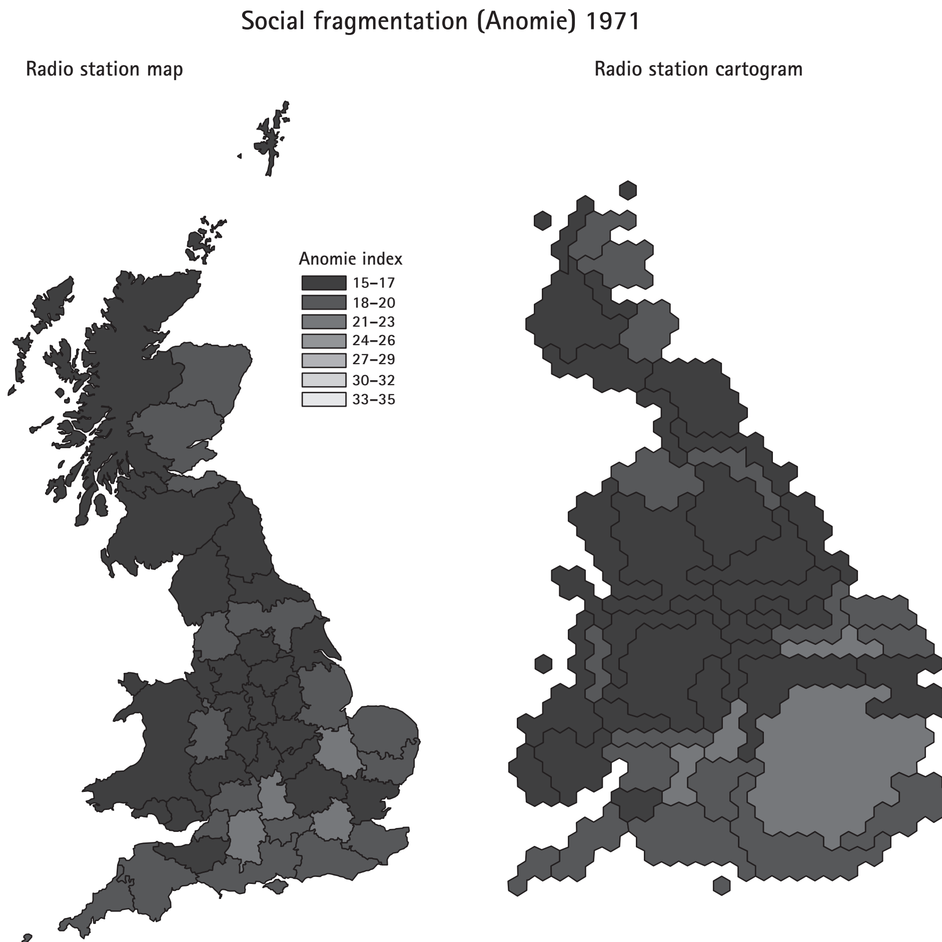

FIG. 36.3 (Also see Color plate 2.) Spatial distribution of anomie index in 1971. Courtesy: the Social and Spatial Inequalities (SASI) Group, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, UK.

from both younger and older generations. As they do so, however, they are also moving into increasingly socially fragmented cities. Areas they feel they belong to less and less.

Concluding comments

This chapter has highlighted a number of conceptual issues pertaining to geographical determinants of happiness and unhappiness, and reviewed some empirical work in this area. There is a strong need to build on extant work in order to explore the "between level" interactions and the role of social rank and its impact upon local community life and well-being (Clark et al., 2009; Dorling, 2010; Dorling & Thomas, 2004; Dorling et al., 2007; Wilkinson

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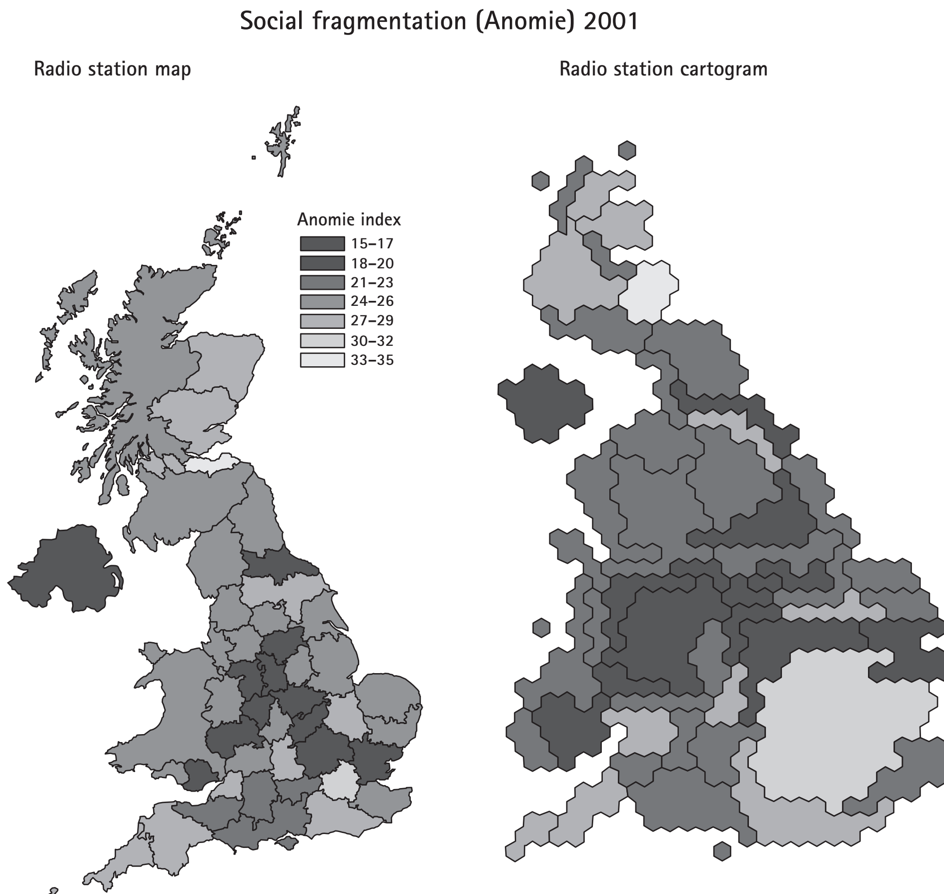

FIG. 36.4 (Also see Color plate 3.) Spatial distribution of anomie index in 2001. Courtesy: the Social and Spatial Inequalities (SASI) Group, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, UK.

& Pickett, 2009). In addition, there is a need to revisit the concept of "local social well-being" by building on new understandings resulting from how we measure concepts of "trust," "social cohesion," "social fragmentation," "belonging" and "social well-being" at the local level (Dorling et al., 2008). It is also important to explore the possible relationships between demographic segregation, socioeconomic polarization, social fragmentation and well-being. There is increasing availability of data at the local and regional levels that enable us to identify the individual and household-level behaviors that appear to result in different geographical population patterns (such as decisions to migrate and to move house in the city to secure access to better schools and other services). This kind of work can also be linked to relevant findings on the relationship between individual and happiness (e.g., see Lane, 2000; Ott, 2001; Schwartz, 2004; Veenhoven, 1999). In future, research could explore the relationship between subjective well-being, happiness, and choice with regards to different services

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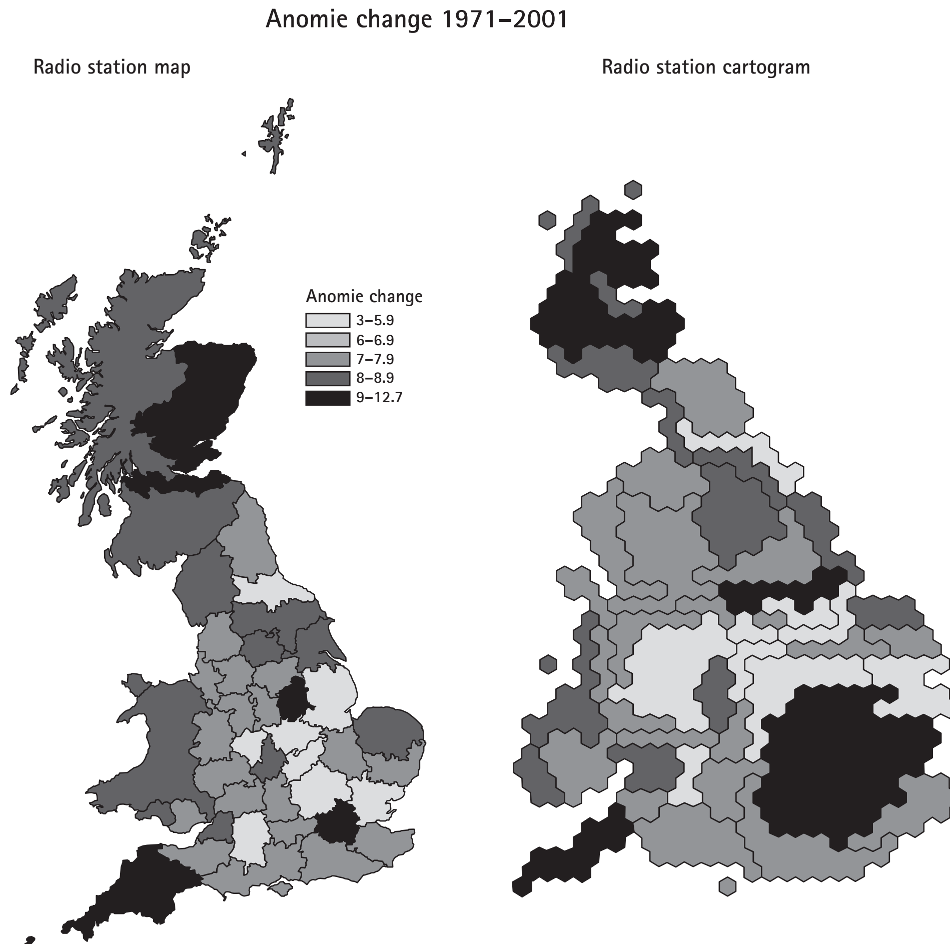

FIG. 36.5 (Also see Color plate 4.) Spatial distribution of anomie index difference between 1971 and 2001. Courtesy: the Social and Spatial Inequalities (SASI) Group, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, UK.

(such as education and health) and the degree to which "more choice" may be beneficial or detrimental to human well-being (Offner, 2006). From the geographical point of view, abundant choice could also result in a more socioeconomically polarized and segregated society in which everyone becomes more psychologically worse-off. In this context it will also be important to examine individual-group conflicts; that is, conflicts between individual and collective choice and the relationship between well-being and the so called "smart for one, dumb for all" behaviors (Frank, 1999, 2007).

It is also important to explore the impact of local, regional, and global environmental and socioeconomic factors simultaneously, building on the relatively limited work in this area (Ballas & Fritz, 2008; Brereton et al., 2008; Ferrer-i-Carbonelli & Gowdy, 2007). Possible future research could explore the ways in which global issues such as climate change and its

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impacts are related to concepts of well-being including people's health, happiness and community relations (Cato, 2009). It would, for example, be interesting to explore the relationship between choosing "environmental" individual behaviors and consumption practices (e.g., recycling, choosing to cycle or walk to work, or use a car), and their impact upon the well-being of the individual and the collective. Such research might identify conflicts between alternative behaviors, and could provide guidance for designing government economic policies (e.g., provide incentives to recycle and disincentives to commuting by car) and environmental policies (e.g., coastal retreat policies, energy policies) that could affect these behaviors (see Thompson, Marks & Jackso, Chapter 38, this volume).

Finally, there is growing potential for interdisciplinary research that could address issues pertaining to links between environmental change and well-being at different scales ranging from the individual to the household, neighborhood, regional, and larger areas. Of particular importance are the potential conflicts between individual interests and group interests that arise from alternative behavior choices.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the editors and two anonymous reviewers for their very useful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft. Dimitris Ballas and Danny Dorling were funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (research fellowship grant number RES-163–27–1013) and the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust (British Academy Research Leave Fellowship and Leverhulme Trust grant) respectively, while conducting the research and literature reviews upon which this chapter was based.

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