

Publication

A Life Span Developmental Approach to Determinants of Subjective Well-Being

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Numerous contributions to the field of research in subjective well-being (SWB) impressively testify and underscore the great importance attached to the understanding of what constitutes people's well-being. Although at this stage the notion that SWB is not single- but rather co-determined by different factors of different units of analyses has begun to emerge in empirical investigations. Thus, in order to complement existing research through an explicit focus on co-determination of SWB, the present work incorporates three determinants of SWB embeddes in an integrative framework of personality description, i.e., broad personality traits, more contextualized life goals, and a biographical component such as consequential life events. Moreover, against the background of a life span developmental perspective these associations are investigated as a function of age in young, middle, and late adulthood. In particular, this dissertation aims to address following research questions: How do personality traits, intrinsic and extrinsic goal importance, and life events relate to SWB in young, middle-aged and old adults? Are there differences in goal importance and control over goal attainment assigned to different goal contents across groups? Are there differneces in content of personal goals in young adulthood as a function of socio-historical conditions? Are there different paths to happiness in young adulthood as a functionof socio-historical condistions? These questions were analyzed with data from two large-scale cross-sectional studies. The first study contains an overall sample of 766 participants (i.e. 256 young, 244 middle-aged and 266 old adults), and the second study includes 926 family members of three generations (i.e. 320 young, 318 parents and 288 grandparents). Results from multivariate analyses and structural equation modeling provide preliminary cross-sectional evidence on how traits, life goals, and life events are related to a positive developmental trajectory across the life span in terms of successful aging and maintenance od SWB.

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