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Measuring individual welfare using data on reported subjective well-being has made great progress. It offers a new way of confronting public choice hypotheses with field data, e.g., with respect to partisan preferences or rents in the public bureaucracy. Insights from public choice also help to assess the role of happiness measures in public policy. We emphasize that maximizing aggregate happiness as a social welfare function neglects incentive problems and political institutions while citizens are reduced to metric stations. The goal of happiness research should be to improve the nature of the processes through which individuals can express their preferences.

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