Attaining Urban Bliss? Amenity use and Emotional Wellbeing among City Dwellers

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Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between the utilization of urban amenities and the degree to which residents of a mid-sized city experience happiness and overall subjective wellbeing. Based on a weekly survey of 170 working residents in St. Petersburg, Florida, results indicate that happiness and overall emotional wellbeing are positively correlated with exercise and spending time with friends, as well as spending time at restaurants, clubs, or bars.

Keywords: Happiness, Wellbeing, Amenities, Urban Studies, Exercise, Infrastructure.

This paper explores the relationship of several dimensions of urban living with the degree to which residents of a mid-sized city experience subjective wellbeing. In particular, we seek to evaluate claims that the existence of a broad base of amenities or "third places" tend to produce a happier population with greater overall wellbeing. Based on a weekly survey of 170 working residents in St. Petersburg, Florida, results indicate that happiness and overall emotional wellbeing are positively correlated with exercise and spending time with friends. The results also indicate that spending time at restaurants, clubs, or bars appears to make respondents happier.

The paper commences with a review of past literature on the connections between living in urban communities and people's wellbeing. That literature has moved from bleak pessimism to findings that many aspects of urban life, and some amenities in particular, have positive effects on people's emotional states. After a description of the study and sample, we present two sets of analyses—both hierarchical linear models and ordinary least squares regressions—that show that utilizing certain amenities is associated with higher levels of happiness and overall emotional wellbeing. The paper then discusses these findings and their implications for the design of urban communities before concluding with a brief discussion of the studies limitations and directions for future research.

BACKGROUND: THE EFFECTS OF URBAN LIVING ON WELLBEING

Social thought from the Enlightenment through early sociology of the 19th and early 20th Centuries tended to be largely pessimistic about the effects living in cities had on human beings. For example, Hume (1985 [1754]) wrote that cities were "destructive to society, [and] beget vice and disorder of all kinds." In 1844, Engels, observing the burgeoning industrial metropolis of Manchester, England, emphasized its miserable conditions, "so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement" (Marx 1978: 580). Wirth (1938) argued that, compared to rural areas, city dwellers were more greatly afflicted by "personal disorganization, mental breakdown, suicide, delinquency, crime, corruption, and disorder" (23).

While similar screeds about the miseries of city living were not uncommon through much of the 20th Century (Karp, *et al*. 2015, Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2018), by the 1960s some writers were taking a different look at cities, and seeing them in a more positive light. Writers like Jane Jacobs (1961), Gerald Suttles (1968), and others (e.g., Duneier 1999; Wilson and Taub 2007; Jerolmack 2009) have found vibrant communities within urban neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are replete with ample networks of close-knit neighbors and friends who support each other and frequently share positive interactions. They thus form the kind of primary groups that earlier sociologists believed disappeared with the move to urban living and which had been posited as producing happy, well-adjusted people.

Since the turn of the 21st Century, writers have focused on how different cities may provide different opportunities for residents to live happy and fulfilling lives. Such writers note that different cities offer numerous different packages of amenities. Those may include commercial establishments like restaurants, cafes, theaters, and taverns; City services like public transportation, park districts, and libraries; And natural amenities, such as access to bodies of water or parks with hiking trails. Cities with larger and more diverse collections of such amenities tend to be more attractive

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to people (Bayoh *et al*. 2006; Florida 2002, 2005; Grodach and Ehrenfeucht 2016; Nichols Clark 2003), and to produce greater sensations of happiness and wellbeing among their residents (Florida, *et al*. 2013; Gajdoš and Hudec 2020; Klinenberg 2018; Pfeiffer and Cloutier 2016). An exception seems to be the temporary provision of amenities that occurs during cultural festivals, which Steiner *et al*. (2015) find to depress life satisfaction; this harkens back to Durkheim's (1951[1897]) finding that cities hosting exhibitions tended to see higher suicide rates. Cities experiencing declines in population and income, presumably with declining packages of amenities, are concomitantly less happy than growing cities (Glaeser, *et al*. 2016). Knies, *et al*. (2021) finds that within cities, those who live in deprived neighborhoods tend to experience lower life satisfaction than those living in less deprived neighborhoods. Public health research has found significant evidence that various dimensions of the lived environment significantly affect both physical and mental health (Diez Roux and Mair 2010; Krefis, *et al*. 2018).

More broadly, findings suggest that city dwellers experience greater happiness and subjective wellbeing compared to their counterparts in more rural areas, with those effects attributed to cities' more robust collections of amenities as well as economic opportunities (De Neve and Krekel 2020; Qian *et al*. 2023). That noted, others have continued to find that certain specifically urban characteristics of a living space, like population density, contribute to lower levels of happiness among residents (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2018), echoing the concerns of those earlier critics of cities.

The aforementioned works have investigated the different levels of subjective wellbeing experienced by people in a number of different cities at given points in time (e.g., De Neve and Krekel 2020; Florida, *et al*. 2013; Gajdoš and Hudec 2020; Glaeser, *et al*. 2016; Qian *et al*. 2023; Steiner, *et al*. 2015). However, to date we are aware of no work that has tracked the emotional wellbeing of a panel of residents of a particular city over time. Doing so may allow us to better understand how different experiences of urban life affect individuals' sense of wellbeing, for example by allowing us to see if utilizing certain urban amenities does or does not produce a sense of greater wellbeing.

The Sunshine City Happiness Survey

Toward that end, we partnered with the Chamber of Commerce of St. Petersburg, Florida to survey a group of working people who either work in the city, reside there, or both. 170 qualifying people responded to calls for participants. Over the course the year in 2024, panelists responded each week to survey questionnaires that include a battery of questions regarding their current subjective wellbeing (largely based on a questionnaire developed by Kahneman, *et al*. (2004)) as well as questions about their activities over the last seven days. The questions regarding affect asked respondents to rate how accurately a series of terms about emotions described them over prior 24 hours. They comprised 5-point Likert-style questions ranging from "Not Accurately at All" to "Extremely Accurately." The emotions included "Happy," "Frustrated/Annoyed," "Depressed/Sad," "Competent/Capable," "Warm/ Friendly," "Angry/Hostile," "Worried/Anxious," "Tired," and "Enjoying Myself." While some have expressed doubt about the utility of measuring subjective wellbeing and self-reported happiness (e.g., Wilkinson 2007), a number of studies have made good use of such measures and have shown important associations between such measures and covariates such as trust, income, education, and civic engagement (e.g., Helliwell 2003; Knies, *et al*. 2021; Krefis *et al*. 2018). Oswald and Wu (2010) go so far as to argue that subjective reports of wellbeing correlate strongly with objective measures of health and wellbeing.

Respondents were also asked whether they engaged in any of the following activities over the prior seven days: "Exercised/Worked Out Indoors," "Exercised/Worked Out Outdoors," "Visited a Museum," "Eaten at a Restaurant," "Gone to a theatrical or musical performance," "Gone to a nightclub, tavern or bar," "Spent time with friends," "Gone to the beach," "Used public transit for commuting to/from work," "Used public transit not for commuting to/from work," "Gone to a professional sporting event," and "Gone shopping (beside grocery shopping)."

For the purposes of the following analyses, we utilized the weekly data from the first three months of 2024. From the 170 individuals participating in the study, that comprises 678 weekly reports. We note that the number of active participants fell quickly after the beginning of the study. On average, roughly 70 participants answer the questionnaire in any given week during the first three months, trailing off to about 25 respondents by the end of the year.

Profile of the Sample

Before examining the analyses of determinants of happiness and wellbeing, we first present a few

relevant characteristics of the survey respondents, as presented in Table **1**.

Table 1: Select Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	104	61.2
Male	63	37.1
Other	2	1.2
Highest Education Attained		
High school or GED	3	1.8
Some college	12	7.1
Associate's degree	10	5.9
Bachelor's	83	48.8
Master's degree	43	25.3
Doctorate or professional degree	19	11.2
Race		
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.6
Black or African American	15	8.8
Other	3	1.8
White	145	85.3
White and Asian	1	0.6
White and Black or African American	3	1.8
White and Black or African American and Asian	1	0.6
Income		
Less than $25,000	3	1.8
$25,000 to $34,999	5	2.9
$35,000 to $49,999	9	5.3
$50,000 to $64,999	24	14.1
$65,000 to $74,999	15	8.8
$75,000 or more	108	63.5

About two-thirds of sample are female. The group is overwhelmingly relatively well-educated, with over 85% of the sample having earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 36.5% having earned a post graduate degree. The sample is predominately white (85.3%); for comparison, about 66.2% of St. Petersburg's population is white, 19.4% black according to the US Census Bureau (2025). Finally, a majority of the sample (63.5%) earn above $75,000 annually (average incomes in the city are about $50,000 annually (US Census Bureau 2025)). While this wealthier, whiter, and better-educated than average sample should lead us to take some caution in extending our interpretations to all city dwellers, it is worth noting that the sample was specifically targeted at the working population of the city. Further, as recruitment was done through the local chamber of commerce, which tends to better represent the professional sector, the sample profile appears to represent the chamber's constituency somewhat accurately.

That noted, we should acknowledge that this wealthier, whiter, more educated sample limits the generalizability of our results. In particular, we would expect that the baseline happiness of this sample is higher than average, as studies have shown that, up to a point of satiation, higher incomes yield higher levels of happiness in people (Bartolini, *et al*. 2013; Jebb, *et al*. 2018). And we may expect that those levels of income partly have their effect through the access that they buy to certain amenities. A significant proportion of our sample can afford, for example, to eat out at restaurants, go to the gym, or attend sporting events. That is not true of many lower income individuals. The relative lack of ethnic and racial diversity in our sample also could mean that if different racial and ethnic groups experience the city differently or derive wellbeing and happiness from different kinds of activities, we may not be able to detect such differences from our sample.

RESULTS

Two methods of analysis were applied to the data. First, we analyzed the data analyzed using a hierarchical linear model in SPSS. This allows us to discern whether activities conducted by individuals during a given week have an effect on their happiness or subjective wellbeing. Second, we analyzed data aggregated for all weeks using ordinary least squares regression. This analysis allows us to discern whether people who engage in certain activities more often have higher or lower overall levels of happiness or subjective wellbeing. In other words, this analysis allows us to answer the question of whether the effects of, for example, more frequently using a particular urban amenity like attending the theater carry over to affect people's sense of happiness and wellbeing even in weeks when they have not used that amenity.

Hierarchical Linear Model

First, we consider the analysis of the data conducted using the hierarchical linear modeling techniques described by Crowson (nd), Heck, *et al*.

(2022), and Raudenbush and Bryk (2001). This technique allows us to control for the variance between the effects that different individuals' backgrounds have on their overall happiness and wellbeing, as well as potential variations different individuals may have in gauging their happiness. For example, one individual may respond that they feel "happy" describes them "moderately accurately", while a different individual experiencing the same degree of happiness may respond that "happy" describes them "extremely accurately." We account for such variations by simultaneously modeling the impact of individuals' heterogeneities and modeling the impact of the activities respondents report partaking of in a given week. For these analyses, we consider two outcomes: Self-reports of happiness, and an overall measure of wellbeing that comprises a scale constructed from responses to the questions about happiness, sadness, frustration, competence, friendliness, hostility, anxiousness, fatigue, and enjoyment. Wellbeing is a straightforward addition of responses about those different emotions, with negative emotions (sadness, frustration, hostility, anxiousness, and fatigue) being reverse-coded.

Random-Intercepts Model

To confirm that there are in fact individual-level effects on how people respond to questions about their happiness or wellbeing, we first conducted a random-intercepts model, which may be represented at the individual level as

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

Where y represents the outcome variable of interest, either happiness or wellbeing, for a given individual. β_{0j} represents effects identified for the i individual in given weekly surveys, and e_{ij} is random error.

Simultaneously we model the effects of weekly variations in responses within individual respondents, which we may represent as

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$$

Here, β_{0j} is the same as above, delineating the variation affected to wellbeing within individuals from week to week, γ_{00} represents the effect of weekly variations, and μ_{0j} represents random error at the level of weekly responses. The combination of weekly effects on individuals yields this mixed model:

$$y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

These models demonstrate that there is in fact significant variation in individual-level responses about affect. For happiness, the model indicates that the average of individuals' average responses is 3.60, and that the difference between individual averages is significant below the P = .001-level. Similarly, the average of individuals' average responses on the wellbeing scale is 3.98, and the difference between individual averages is significant below the P = .001-level.

Models with Predictors at the Level of Weekly Data

Having thus established the appropriateness of using a hierarchical linear model to analyze the data, we move on to conduct a series of models that include predictors at the level of weekly data.

We next present the grand means of the weekly reports on activities and emotions. These may be seen in Table **2**.

Table 2: Grand Means of Activity and Emotion Variables

	Mean	SD
Happiness	3.63	0.94
Overall Wellbeing	4.17	6.17
Indoor Exercise	0.67	0.47
Outdoor Exercise	0.74	0.44
Museum Attendance	0.12	0.32
Eating at Restaurant	0.81	0.39
Theater/Music	0.18	0.39
Bar or Nightclub	0.36	0.48
Time with Friends	0.88	0.33
Going to Beach	0.15	0.35
Public Transit for Work	0.02	0.12
Public Transit not for Work	0.04	0.19
Attending Sporting Event	0.09	0.29
Shopping	0.45	0.50

N = 608.

From this table, we can discern the most common activities—for example, 88% of responses report spending time with friends in a given week, while 81% report eating at a restaurant. Conversely, fewer than 5% of responses indicate the use of public transportation, and only 9% report attendance at a sporting event. Average responses to the question about happiness suggest that people generally felt that "Happy" described them between "moderately" and "very" accurately. Responses to the composite variable

for overall wellbeing could vary between values of -15 to 15; average responses were in the positive range, averaging 4.17.

We are now in a position to identify which weekly activities do or do not significantly impact individuals' reports of happiness or wellbeing. Thus, the models above are refined such that now the combined model may be represented as

$$y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j} + \gamma_{10}Activity + e_{ij}$$

Where the outcome, y_{ij} is the *j*th report by the *i*th individual and it is contingent upon weekly averages γ_{00}, and the effect of whether or not a given activity (*Activity*) was conducted in a given week. The slope of the effect of that activity is given by γ_{10}. The results of the models for Happiness and Wellbeing are given in Table **3**.

Table 3: Slopes of Effects of Different Activities on Happiness and Overall Wellbeing

Activity	Happiness	Wellbeing
Indoor Exercise	.184*	1.01*
Outdoor Exercise	.295**	1.09*
Museum Attendance	-.268	-.424
Eating at Restaurant	.186*	.737
Theater/Music	.066	-.220
Bar or Nightclub	.145	.434
Time with Friends	.256*	1.61**
Going to Beach	.112	.666
Public Transit for Work	-.111	-.604
Public Transit not for Work	-.092	-1.054
Attending Sporting Event	.072	.737
Shopping	.041	.543

These results give some support to the idea that recent experiences utilizing amenities within the city have positive effects on individuals' emotional states. With respect to specific amenities, we may only observe a significant relationship between visiting restaurants and happiness. That is, those respondents who have eaten in a restaurant in the past week are more likely to report being happier. The same is true of working out indoors. While this may be the effect of utilizing a gym, the survey is worded in such a way that at-home workouts are included. Otherwise, no specific amenities are found to have an effect on reports of happiness or wellbeing.

There are clear relationships between reports of happiness and wellbeing and certain kinds of activities. In particular, spending time with friends or exercising (indoors or outdoors) show significant positive effects on both happiness and wellbeing.

Ordinary Least Squares Regression

Having established that there are limited short-term effects of certain activities on respondents' happiness and overall wellbeing, we next turn to the question of whether there are more lasting effects, or whether the effects of engaging in certain activities or using certain urban amenities have cumulative effects on individuals' happiness and overall wellbeing. In other words, do people who engage in certain activities more frequently tend to be generally better off than those who do not? Given the sample size and its limited degrees of freedom, this also allows us to test whether demographic heterogeneities affect happiness and overall wellbeing that we could not observe using the hierarchical linear model.

First, we can look at the average person-means for affect, activities, and the demographic variables under consideration, as shown in Table **4**.

Table 4: Person-Level Averages of Activity, Emotions, and Demographic Variables

	Mean	SD
Happiness	3.61	0.78
Overall Wellbeing	4.03	5.70
Indoor Exercise	0.64	0.40
Outdoor Exercise	0.72	0.38
Museum Attendance	0.11	0.24
Eating at Restaurant	0.80	0.31
Theater/Music	0.17	0.27
Bar or Nightclub	0.35	0.39
Time with Friends	0.88	0.23
Going to Beach	0.13	0.22
Public Transit for Work	0.01	0.06
Public Transit not for Work	0.04	0.13
Attending Sporting Event	0.08	0.15
Shopping	0.43	0.37
Male	0.34	0.48
Postgrad	0.38	0.49
Non-Hispanic White	0.71	0.46
Income under $75k	0.54	0.50

N = 105.

We may note that the means for activities and affect are similar but slightly different to those given in the grand means for the hierarchical linear modeling. That owes to the fact that grand means for the hierarchical linear model are comprised of a variable number of reports from different individuals. For example, over the course of the twelve weeks we are considering here, some respondents may have responded all twelve times, but others responded to fewer surveys. Thus the averages reported in Table **4** are the average of individuals' average responses.

Similar to the technique applied with the hierarchical linear modeling, we regressed happiness and overall wellbeing on each activity individually. Here, we are regressing individuals' average reports of happiness and overall wellbeing on the proportion of their survey responses that indicated they engaged in a particular activity. For controls, we are also considering the impact of gender, a postgraduate degree, race and ethnicity, and income (considering annual incomes under $75,000 to be "lower" income). Results are given in Table **5**.

Table 5: Regressions of Happiness and Overall Wellbeing on Different Activities and Demographic Controls

	Happiness	Wellbeing
Indoor Exercise	0.034	-0.305
Male	0.125	0.445
Postgraduate	-0.357*	-1.843
White	-0.176	-1.325
Lower Income	-0.418**	-3.144*
Outdoor Exercise	0.196	0.19
Male	0.137	0.462
Postgraduate	-0.361*	-1.881
White	-0.18	-1.3
Lower Income	-0.393*	-3.142**
Museum	-0.042	-1.672
Male	0.126	0.52
Postgraduate	-0.355*	-1.942
White	-0.179	-1.303
Lower Income	-0.417**	-3.224**
Restaurant	0.533*	2.783
Male	0.102	0.346
Postgraduate	-0.356*	-1.897
White	-0.190	-1.349
Lower Income	-0.398*	-3.078**
Theater	-0.156	-1.066
Male	0.128	0.482
Postgraduate	-0.35*	-1.854
White	-0.19	-1.369
Lower Income	-0.424**	-3.224**
Club or Bar	0.481*	1.834
Male	0.014	0.048
Postgraduate	-0.331*	-1.806
White	-0.191	-1.335
Lower Income	-0.366*	-2.991*
Friends	0.778*	4.981*
Male	0.067	0.093
Postgraduate	-0.428**	-2.362^
White	-0.167	-1.214
Lower Income	-0.400*	-3.072**
Beach	-0.092	-2.254
Male	0.131	0.624
Postgraduate	-0.36*	-2.058^
White	-0.172	-1.111
Lower Income	-0.418**	-3.233**
Public Transit--Work	-1.24	8.593
Male	0.122	1.203
Postgraduate	-0.369*	1.211
White	-0.172	1.274
Lower Income	-0.403*	1.167**
Public Transit--Other	-1.435*	-13.837**
Male	0.176	0.957
Postgraduate	-0.28*	-1.17
White	-0.226	-1.75
Lower Income	-0.367*	-2.693*
Sporting Event	0.27	1.945
Male	0.107	0.319
Postgraduate	-0.337*	-1.743
White	-0.181	-1.315
Lower Income	-0.419**	-3.178**
Shopping	0.004	0.153
Male	0.124	0.447
Postgraduate	-0.353*	-1.855
White	-0.179	-1.276
Lower Income	-0.415*	-3.142**

These results show some interesting differences from the results of the hierarchical linear models. First, the inclusion of control variables allows us to see that,

generally speaking, people with lower incomes feel less happy and exhibit lower overall subjective wellbeing, while people with postgraduate degrees generally appear less happy than those without. There are no significant differences between males and others or between non-Hispanic whites and other racial and ethnic groups.

When we consider different activities, two findings are consistent with the hierarchical linear models. First, people who spend more time with friends are generally happier and generally report higher levels of overall wellbeing. Second, dining out at restaurants continues to appear to contribute to people's sense of happiness, though not their overall wellbeing.

A couple of additional significant relationships emerge when we consider people's general senses of happiness and wellbeing averaged over time. First, going out to clubs or bars is associated with generally higher levels of happiness. Also, people who more frequently use of public transit, specifically for travel to places beside the workplace, report being both less happy and have lower overall levels of subjective wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

The findings above lend some support to the idea that the kind of "third places" (Oldenburg 1999) frequently described as attractive or even eudemonic produce happiness or wellbeing in people. Time spent with friends or in restaurants, bars, and clubs appear to notably enhance the happiness or wellbeing of respondents in our sample, and exercise appears to do so at least in the short run.

Arguably, the common denominator behind most of our significant findings is that time spent with people tends to positively affect happiness and wellbeing. Cities provide us with the kind of population density that is amenable to building networks of friends, the geographic proximity that allows us to maintain relatively frequent contact with them, and the institutions to facilitate the maintenance of social ties (e.g., Fischer 1982; Friedland 2015; Jerolmack 2009; Karp, *et al*. 2015; Wellman 1979). The positive effects of going to restaurants, clubs, and bars on happiness and on subjective wellbeing may also signal the importance of social time to improving people's subjective wellbeing. These are all activities that people frequently partake of in pairs and groups. Though certainly people do sometimes partake of these activities alone, they tend to be occasions for socializing with friends or even in the search for new friends (Grazian 2007). These findings add to a growing body of literature suggesting the importance of time spent with others to people's broader wellbeing (e.g., Bartolini 2013, Leyden 2003, Harter and Arora 2008).

These findings have important implications for urban communities. To the extent that we understand community as sustained social interaction (Karp, et. al 2015), these findings show that some of the institutions that facilitate this interaction are clear boons to people's wellbeing. In order to thus enhance community, we may argue that cities facilitate the development of restaurants, bars, and clubs. And indeed, it is likely that other meeting places, from parks to community centers and libraries, could have similar positive effects on the individuals who partake of them to spend time with their friends. While more research would be needed to specifically discern the effects of those other such institutions, again, the evidence strongly suggests that time with friends—time spent in community—is a key to happiness.

Concerning exercise, cities can provide residents not only with gyms, but also, with careful planning, an array of opportunities to exercise outdoors. The findings of the positive nature of such time spent outdoors presented here resonate with other findings that connectedness with nature and utilization of outdoor urban spaces enhance people's wellbeing (Anderson, *et al*. 2017; Zelenski and Nisbet 2014). St. Petersburg arguably has done quite well in regard to design that encourages people to make use of outdoor spaces. It not only provides a number of parks that include exercise facilities. As part of a relatively small peninsula jutting into the Gulf of Mexico from the larger Florida peninsula, it also provides access to a great many aquatic pursuits, from sailing to swimming and paddleboarding. With respect to facilitating the physical an emotional wellbeing of their residents, cities may do well to fully explore the different ways in which they can make opportunites for physical exercise available, through both built amenities such as gymnasiums as well as access to outdoor recreation.

One one hand, this study's findings might lead us to question if theaters, museums, sporting events, and music venues are as important to urban life as some have argued, at least from the standpoint of producing actual happiness or emotional wellbeing in people. On the other hand—to the extent that people believe such

amenities will be useful to a city's populace, it may be remiss for us to suggest that cities disinvest in such amenities. This is further problematized by the argument that utility more broadly is separable from subjective wellbeing. As Glaeser *et al*. (2016) and others (e.g., Sen 1997) have argued, a number of dimensions may compose utility. People derive different values beside emotional wellbeing from diverse activities. A simple example would be work: While a person's job may make them miserable, that job is necessary for providing the means to eat and remain housed. Indeed, as Gibb and Pryce (2014) have noted, people are willing to pay a premium to live close to employment. Similarly, people may find value in attending the theater or museums, such as providing them information about the world or ways of thinking about human relations, while those activities do not directly contribute to their subjective wellbeing and happiness.

Additionally, we may ask if the results shared here are generalizable beyond our wealthy, largely white, working age sample. In fact, the frequency of museum attendance (12% of weekly responses), attendance at theatrical or musical performances (18%), and sporting events (9%) are surprisingly high. We could thus speculate whether for people of more modest incomes, the effect of attendance at such events is more pronounced, and whether perhaps individuals in the current sample perhaps have so much access to different urban amenities that they have reached a point of satiation, whereby the incremental effects of taking advantage of more amenities are not detected by our survey. Further research with samples more representative of the population at large might detect positive effects of such amenities for people who have not used them to a point of possible satiation.

Further questions about community and urban happiness remain to be discerned. Particularly, we would do well to include analysis of neighborhoods and amenities in future research. Are people more likely to take advantage of happiness-enhancing amenities when they are close in proximity? We suspect that the answer is "yes," but the data here do not allow us to answer this question. Notably, this is also a question about equity. Again, our well-heeled sample does not allow us to draw many conclusions about how lower-income people feel about their amenity use beyond our finding that people below the rather high income threshold of earning $75,000 per year on average experience less happiness or overall senses of wellbeing. We would do well to learn more about the ability of people in lower income neighborhoods to access amenities that contribute to their wellbeing. That is to question whether access is a matter of simply the cost of accessing amenities or some combined factors of cost and proximity.

Our findings thus lead us to questions of inclusive urban planning strategies. In line with others' recommendations (e.g., Biswas 2019; Klinenberg 2018; Lemaire and Kerr 2017; Omholt 2019), we would argue that in order for the emotional benefits of amenities to accrue to the greatest number of city residents, planning should be done in such a way that would allow poor people and members of minority groups to take advantage of these amenities. While this may mean schemes to explicitly include beneficial amenities like parks and exercise facilities or restaurants within diverse neighborhoods (Schreiber and Carius 2016), it also means providing low- or no-cost transit options to residents (Lemaire and Kerr 2017). Such transit could allow relatively equitable access to those amenities that spread happiness and wellbeing among the population.

CONCLUSION

Overall, these findings may point civic leaders to consider carefully how they invest in built spaces in their communities. The findings add to a quite broad literature advocating for physical exercise. Not only are there ample physical benefits to exercise, the findings here seem to clearly demonstrate that exercise has a salutary effect on people's emotional states. This adds further credence to the notion that cities do well to make investments in their parks infrastructure, and could suggest that civic leaders should encourage the development of private gyms and nonprofit institutions like YMCAs. And the findings further a growing literature suggesting that connectedness with other people is a key to happiness and wellbeing. Both in the abstract, as time spent with others, and in places that people tend to congregate with friends, being among others produces positive impacts in the lives of city dwellers.

The lack of support for the notion that certain kinds of urban amenities produce positive emotional affect is somewhat surprising given the broad literature in support of amenities. Of course, things like arts institutions, taverns, and shops serve a number of broad purposes beyond making people happy. But the proprietors and boards of such institutions might consider if there are ways to make their places more conducive to the production of positive emotion. Given

our other findings that spending time with friends is significantly associated with more positive affect, establishments might consider schemes such as group discounts, both to attract additional patrons and to encourage patrons to bring their friends and leave them feeling happier after spending time at these places.

Of course, the current study leaves ample space for additional future research. It would be particularly helpful to sample populations who are more ethnically, financially, and age diverse than the current sample. Studies of other cities should be conducted to see if the effects of different amenities packages within different communities affect respondents' wellbeing differently. Additional questions could also be added to the weekly questionnaire to ascertain if other kinds of third places, particularly digital third places (Soukup 2006) play a role in people's wellbeing. Finally, extended longitudinal studies may seek to discern if the effects described here hold throughout the year, or if there are seasonal or other variations that influence people's happiness or wellbeing. For example, while it appears that outdoor exercise induces happiness in people in St. Petersburg in the spring, it may not be such a pleasant experience in Minneapolis in winter.

In any case, we believe that the findings described above point toward important conclusions for building communities focused on individuals' wellbeing. Spaces built around community, which is to say spaces that give people ample opportunity to interact with friends and neighbors, appear to be spaces that induce sensations of happiness and wellbeing in urban dwellers. It is in all our interest to see such spaces built and maintained and well-utilized.

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