

What does sociology bring to the study of happiness

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What does sociology bring to the study of happiness? The study of happiness is arguably one of the most interesting but equally challenging s. Different scholars have indeed approached the subject of happiness differently with sociologists taking a sociological perspective in defining, studying, and understanding happiness. Indeed, happiness can be understood from different scholarly perspectives such as philosophy, economical, religious, and sociological among others. Whereas each approach cannot provide a holistic understanding of happiness, sociologists provide a rich knowledge base to study of happiness.

Arguably, sociology provides the simplest form of understanding of happiness. Philosophical arguments have proved to be challenging even to the greatest of philosophers. For instance, philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates could not provide a universally acceptable line of thought regarding happiness. Indeed, their individual philosophical arguments regarding understanding of happiness are hard to understand especially for the common person. However, sociology provides a more realistic and easy to understand knowledge on the study of happiness. For instance, sociologists approach the study of happiness from a social perspective by incorporating social behavior, attitudes, and social perception in the study of happiness.

Sociology provides the widest encompassing knowledgebase to study of happiness than any other discipline seeking to inject knowledge to defining happiness (Wallis, 2005, P. 1). For instance, a study by Yang provided to the knowledge of happiness by using age, period, and cohort analysis. Such interesting and enriching findings by Yang were only made possible by the

sociological approach to subject of happiness. According to Yang the closing gap in regard to race, sex and education in happiness with age, significantly correlated to “ differential exposure to various social, conditions important to happiness, such as marital status and health” (Yang, 2008, p. 204). This study employed different tenets of social inequalities in understanding happiness.

Bentham made a significant contribution to understanding happiness. His attempt to provide a mathematical and scientific answer to the question of happiness could not find a safe haven in the minds of philosophical and social scholars. However, Stuart Mill, and other scholars incorporated Aristotle’s theories of happiness to come up with a better contribution to knowledge of happiness (Bok 39-44). According to Stuart, social, educational, and economic status determines definition of happiness (Goddard, and Wierzbicka, 2014). Different people from different social status would define happiness differently, thanks to the sociological approach to the subject. Early philosophers argued that happiness and morality worked in tandem and therefore making happiness an unachievable experience. Kant argued that happiness was indeed not achievable here but only possible in afterlife. However, a sociological approach by modern sociologists demystified such early philosophical thinking and set happiness and morality apart. For instance, Christine Korsgaard postulated that happiness can be achieved with either a moral or immoral thoughts (Bok 39-44). In sociological thought, robbers, for instance, can be happy with a good robbery despite their action being immoral. Therefore, it can be argued that sociology contributes a more acceptable knowledge in efforts to understanding happiness.

In conclusion, understanding the subject of happiness calls for more than a single sided approach. Whereas, other scholarly fields such as philosophy have contributed to understanding happiness, sociology has indeed provided the simplest, wide encompassing and widely acceptable definition and understanding of happiness.

Works Cited

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