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# PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNEY ACROSS CULTURES: SEARCHING FOR A HAPPY NATION

dr Aleksandra Borkowska

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES (ED DIENER, EUNKOOK SUH, HARRY TRIANDIS)

- ◉ What is the „good life“?
  - virtue (Greek philosophers),
  - orderly society in which individuals correctly perform their roles and responsibilities (the Confucian school),
  - life repleted with happiness and pleasure; desirable society - one that maximizes pleasure for all people (the Utilitarians),

Although the search for the ingredients of quality of life is ancient, only in last decades the empirical study of well-being has become a systematic scientific work.

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ In confronting the question of the good life and the successful society, we approach the problem of cultural relativism.
- ◉ If societies have different sets of values, people in them consider different criteria when judging the success of their society.
- ◉ In one community equality may be most important, whereas, in another one more weight can be placed on economic prosperity. In another culture freedom might be considered most important.

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ The concept of cultural relativism points to the need for **internal standards** when judging societies
  - citizens try to accomplish their own values, goals, and therefore judge their own lives and community to be successful (or not successful) according to their own standards.
- ◉ Because people who cannot attain their values and goals are likely to be less satisfied and happy, it is likely that measures of SBW to some degree represent a judgment of the culture from an internal perspective, from the viewpoint of the members of that society.

## MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ If we assess various aspects of SWB such as whether people believe they are living correctly, whether they enjoy their lives, whether important others think they are living well, as well as whether they possess a sense of fulfillment, we may have one set of measures by which we can compare the success of societies.
- ◉ **SWB represent the degree to which people in each society are accomplishing their values.**

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ Should be SWB considered as a special value among many?
- ◉ Why? Try to explain.
  
- ◉ 1) Societies throughout the world are becoming increasingly democratized. SWB is a particularly democratic scalar. It is really important to know **how each person thinks and feels about his or her life.**
  
- ◉ It is not just the opinion of philosophers or psychologists (or other experts on „mental health”) - societies are evaluated through the standards and values chosen by the person herself.

## MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ 2) SWB can take people's values into account, and give a summary of whether their lives fulfill these standards.  
SWB can reflect success at achieving the numerous values that people seek.
- ◉ 3) SWB includes components that are dependent on pleasure and the fulfillment of basic human needs, but also includes people's ethical and evaluative judgments of their lives. SWB reflects to some degree how much people are living in accord with human needs, but also represents judgments based on the particular norms and values of each culture.



# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ Measures of SWB that are dependent on happiness and pleasure might be necessary in evaluating the quality of life of societies, but they are not sufficient - people have values in addition to hedonism and satisfaction.

(low infant mortality, education, human equality, caring for nature)

- ◉ The way we want to achieve SWB is also important:  
-relationships and attainment of goals and values (SWB should not come from drugs).
- ◉ Thus full set of measures of SWB will include judgments of whether people are living the „good life” from the frame of reference of that society, and include evaluative judgments that go beyond hedonism.

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ A problem with an unswerving cultural relativism is that every outcome is as good as every other; every type of life can be equally desirable depending on the framework for evaluation.
- ◉ We must have some criteria by which societies can be judged.

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ Psychologists agree that

- 1) human health,

- 2) happiness,

- 3) the long-term well-being of the planet

- 4) the happiness of people in other communities

are good standards with which to start in judging a society.

- ◉ We may discover that there are many types of good societies that can produce happy citizens. Just because diverse societies can be good, however, does not mean that all societies are good.

# MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CULTURES

- ◉ Cultural relativism points us to the idea that there are different paths that can accommodate human needs and desires, but it does not mean that all institutional arrangements are equally good.
- ◉ **Will we discover that some type of societies are inferior in producing health and happiness?**

# ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- ◉ Why SWB can be considered as a special value among many?
- ◉ Try to define „*cultural relativism*”.
- ◉ What will include full set of measures of SWB?
- ◉ Describe the criteria by which societies can be judged?
- ◉ Do you agree that some type of societies are inferior in producing health and happiness?



# CULTURAL SYNDROMES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

# MEANING OF CULTURAL SYNDROMES

(HARRY TRIANDIS, WOJCIECH BURSZA)

- ◉ **Culture** - is to society what memory is to individuals.
- ◉ Culture refers to tools and ideas that are shared and transmitted to succeeding generations because they were once practical at some point in time.

# MEANING OF CULTURAL SYNDROMES

(H. TRIANDIS, 2000)

- **Cultural syndrome** is a shared pattern of attitudes, beliefs, self definitions, norms, role definitions, values, and other subjective elements of culture that is organized around some theme; it can be found among those who speak a language dialect, in a certain historic period, and in definable geographic region.



# CULTURAL SYNDROMES:

1. Complexity - simplicity
2. Tightness - looseness
3. Individualism - collectivism

## CULTURAL SYNDROMES:

- **Complexity - simplicity:** the roles and choices in information societies are very large, but among gatherers they are relatively small. The theme is the complexity in the culture.

# CULTURAL SYNDROMES:

- ◉ **Tightness - looseness:** tightness is associated with dependable sanctions if people do not follow the norms of a society; looseness is associated with tolerance for deviations from the norms of a culture.

The theme is a culture's tolerance (looseness) or nontolerance (tightness) for deviations from norms.

Tight cultures have many rules and norms about social behavior; loose ones - fewer.

## CULTURAL SYNDROMES:

- ◉ **Individualism - collectivism:** individualism is found in societies in which the self is regarded as autonomous, personal goals have priority over in-group goals, attitudes are the most important determinants of behavior, and social exchanges characterize interpersonal relationships.  
The theme is the centrality of the individual in the culture.

## CULTURAL SYNDROMES:

- ◉ **Collectivism:** is found in societies where the self is regarded as an aspect of groups, interdependent with members of those groups, in-group norms have priority over personal needs, norms are as important as attitudes in determining behavior, and relationships are communal, including a lot of sharing, and little concern for the costs of the relationship to individuals.  
The theme is the centrality of the group.

# MEANING OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

- ◉ SWB - comprises people's evaluations, both affective and cognitive, of their lives.
  - ◉ SWB is related to common term „happiness” and it can range from depression to elation.
  - ◉ SWB has six aspects (Ryff and Keyes, 1995):
    - 1)self-acceptance,
    - 2)positive relations with others,
    - 3)autonomy,
    - 4)environmental mastery,
    - 5)purpose in life,
    - 6)personal growth.
- 
- Can these components be considered important by all cultures? Are they universal?
  - Is the relative weight of these components likely to vary with culture?

# MEANING OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

- SWB can have both „affective” aspects (*I feel good about my life*) and **cognitive** aspects (*I think that various aspects of my life: family, job, education are satisfactory*). The distinction between these aspects is desirable, sometimes they are not the same though.

(surveys of Campbell, Converse, Rodgers).

- ◉ **The factors that predict SWB may be different across cultures:**
  - Emotions predicted SWB of people in individualist cultures, while both emotions and behaving according to the norms of the society predicted SWB of individuals in collectivist cultures (Suh, Diener, 1997; 61 nations, N=62 446; Suh, Diener, Oishi, Triandis, 1998)

# MEANING OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

- High income, individualism, human rights, social equality leads to SWB (Diener, Diener and Diener, 1995).
- ◉ In general: developed countries enjoy high income, value human rights and social equality, so they have high levels of SWB.

Underdeveloped countries which do not emphasize these factors show lower levels of SWB.



## QUESTIONS:

- Individualism is not always so good for an individual. Try to explain why?
- Is it more desirable to say „I am happy” in some countries than in other countries?
- There is a fear that if one says „I am happy” such certainty will bring on unfortunate life events (Polish, Russian superstition). Can you think of examples of this kind of thinking in your culture?
- Is there a norm that requires people, in some cultures, to deny that they are happy?

# DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ECOLOGICAL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

- ◉ It is important to distinguish analyses at the cultural (ecological) level from analyses at the individual level.
- ◉ At the **cultural level**, we deal with attributes that refer to:
  - national income per capita,
  - average longevity,
  - expenditures on the environment as a percentage of national income.
- ◉ At the individual level, we refer, for ex. to the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and values of individuals.

# METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES...

- ◉ Do the SWB scales yield scores that are comparable across individuals and societies? (self-report - non-self-report measures), role of biological measures
- ◉ Does translation into different languages influence research results? (translation, semantic evaluations, well-being concepts across cultures)
- ◉ Global positivity response tendency (narrow domains of life, broader domains, bottom-up, top-down)
- ◉ Issue of causality - causal direction? (one-time cross-sectional research) experiments, longitudinal studies
- ◉ Defining and measuring cultural variables that predict well-being (freedom, equality)
- ◉ Sampling

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB. TIGHTNESS

- ❖ Collectivism is correlated with tightness (Trinadis).
- ❖ Tightness is related to lower levels of SWB (Arrindel, Rosenberg). Uncertainty avoidance, a dimension that is equated with tightness (Hofstede), is related to low SWB.
- ❖ In tight societies people experience high levels of anxiety. They fear that they may not be „correct”and „proper” in their behavior , that they may be criticized, rejected or even ostracized as a result.
- ❖ Japan - very tight culture, people are afraid of committing social error and being criticized. The second most frequent emotion for both men and women in Japan is anxiety about the consequences of one’s own actions on others (Kitayama, Markus, Kurokawa, in press).

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB. TIGHTNESS

- ◉ Since tightness results in people fearing that their behaviour is going to be inappropriate, there is a supposition that they may escape from this actuality by engaging in fantasies.
- ◉ High frequency of fantasies has consequences. Fantasies are generally pleasant, so the framework for evaluating events becomes quite positive. When a new event is perceived that is relatively lower in affect than the mean of the framework, the event is perceived as undesirable (Parducci, 1995)

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB. TIGHTNESS

- ◉ If one has many pleasant fantasies, reality is likely to appear rather unpleasant. If it is true that people in tight cultures have more fantasies, than their SWB will be lower than the SWB of people in loose cultures.
- ◉ Fantasies may have also a reciprocal causal relationship with SWB. Having fantasies decreases SWB, but also low SWB may lead to more fantasies.

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB. TIGHTNESS

- ◉ Tight cultures have rules not only about most social behavior but also about who the „appropriate” comparison others ought to be.
- ◉ If we compare ourselves to others who are less fortunate, we increase our SWB (only at the individual level).
- ◉ Cultural tightness is related to low SWB.

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

- ◉ SWB is high when one's children „turn out” the way we want them to turn out. Ryff (1995) found that about a quarter of the variance in SWB is due to this factor.
- ◉ Simpler the culture, the fewer the desirable ways for the children to turn out. In simple cultures the definition of what it is to „turn out well” is more limited, and thus there is likely to be more dissatisfaction with the way children turn out.



# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

- ◉ In a complex culture there are fewer clear expectations of how the child will „turn out”. On the other hand, it may be the case that in simpler cultures children do turn out frequently the way parents expect them to turn out. In that case simplicity should increase SWB.
- ◉ Cultural complexity may lead to anxiety. Also, if cultural complexity is related to individualism, which is often related to competitiveness, there may be pressures to achieve - that may reduce SWB. Anxiety and stress result in low SWB.

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

- ◉ Individualism is related to fast pace of life and that may also increase stress. On the other hand, in complex societies one has more comparison others to chose from. One can chose comparison targets that will increase one's self-esteem (higher SWB).
- ◉ There are interesting ways of linking cultural complexity to SWB.

*Can you think of any examples?*

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

- ◉ Individualism is closely linked with affluence. It leads to more control over the environment, more self-determination.
- ◉ The correlation between SWB and income is very low in the rich countries (US, Canada) and high only in the less affluent countries (India). (Explain, why?)
- ◉ There is a limit in the extent that the SWB of a country can be increased by raising the country's gross national product (Diener and Diener, Lachman and Weaver).

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

- ◉ The upper income groups are more idiocentric and have higher SWB. The higher a person is positioned socially, the more self-determination that person has (the person can decide what to do, when, where, and how - physicians have more to say in how to do their jobs than do ditch diggers). This type of freedom leads to job satisfaction (Kohn and Slomczynski).
- ◉ Affluence is associated with busyness (a lot of ways of spending time, one has the financial resources to enjoy a great number of activities; less time for fantasies - positive life events are seen as more positive in individualist cultures).

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

- ◉ Individualism is associated with high self-esteem and optimism (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto). Research shows high levels of self-esteem and optimism in individualist cultures.
- ◉ Openness to experience is related to self-esteem (high among individualists); agreeableness is related to harmonious relationships (high among collectivists). Self-esteem and good relationships determine SWB (Kwan, Bond, Singelis).

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

- ◉ Personality relates to SWB: neuroticism is negatively related to SWB; openness, extroversion, sense of environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance are positively related to SWB (Staudinger, Fleeseon, Baltes).
- ◉ Individualist cultures are dominated by private enterprises, which increase their profits when they provide **conveniences** (increase SWB)

# CULTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SWB.

## CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

- ◉ People in collectivist cultures are supportive for their in-group members, but they have cold, and even hostile relationship with outgroup members (little trust).
- ◉ Interpersonal trust is high among people in the rich countries: material and physical security lose their importance as factors leading to SWB.

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*Coping styles and SWB  
in Polish emigrants in Canada and the Netherlands*

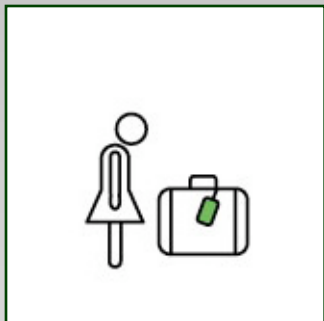


Warsaw 2007





# Problematyka badań/problem:



**Over 150 million people live outside of their native country (UN report, UNIS).**

Fakt, że 125 milionów ludzi żyje poza krajem swego urodzenia (CDMG 2000) dowodzi zasadności interesowania się socjologów, psychologów i ekonomistów losami uczestników współczesnych „globalnych” wędrówek.

Psychologia pozytywna jako nauka o mocnych stronach człowieka postuluje zasadność rozprawiania o sile osobistej człowieka, jego odpowiedzialności i cnotach (Czapiński, 1994; Skrzypińska, 2002; Mądrzycki, 1996; Seligman, 1996; Seligman, 2005).

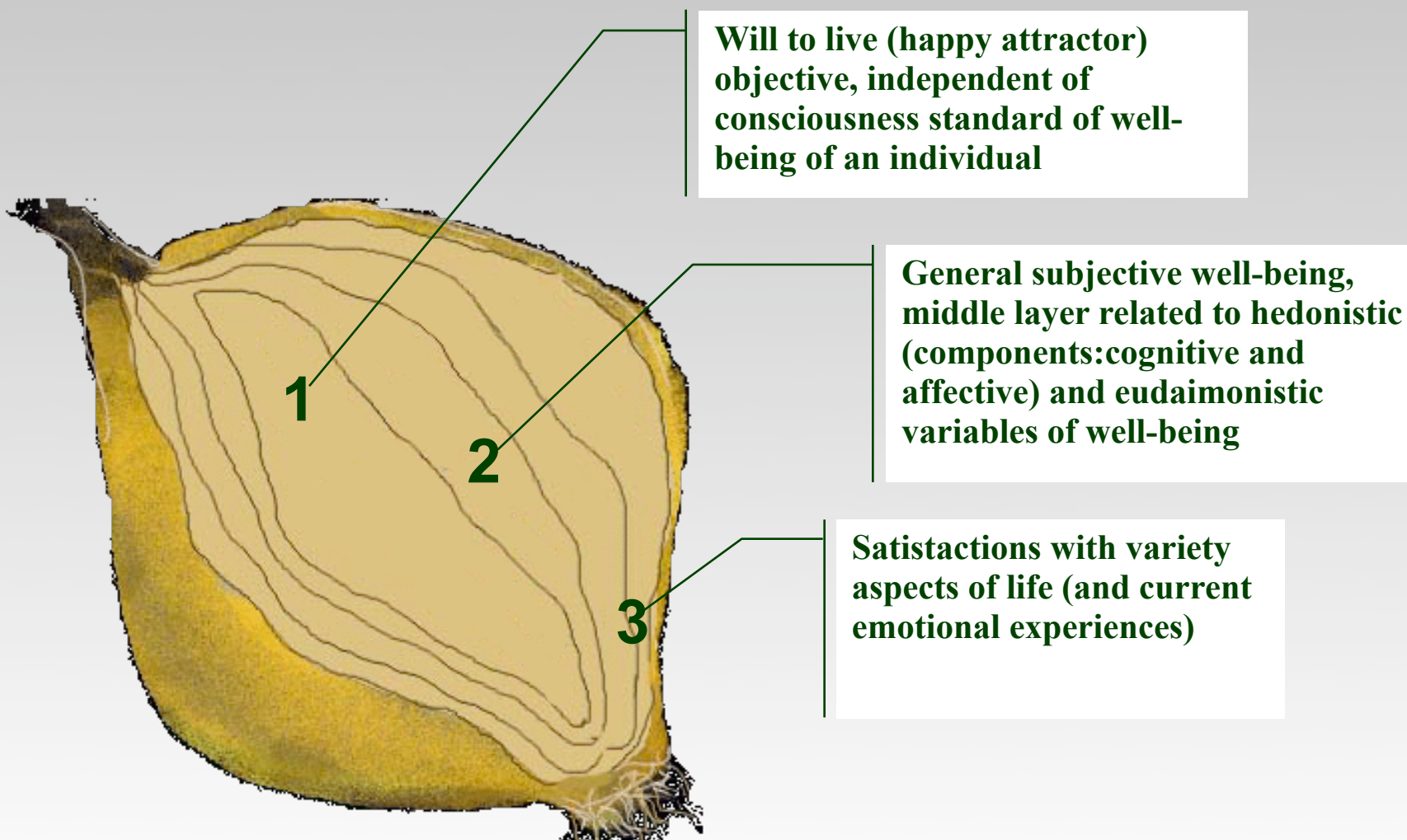


Szukanie związku między aktywnością zaradczą podejmowaną przez człowieka w obliczu trudności a dobrostanem psychicznym jest zasadne i potrzebne, zwłaszcza dzisiaj, w czasach ponowoczesności („rozpędzonej” globalizacji i powszechnego kosmopolityzmu) (Kempny, 2003; por. Helliwell, 2002; por. Wnuk-Lipiński, 2003; Gradziuk, 2002; Sulmicka, 2000; Anioł, 2002; Burszta, 1998).

## Research questions:

- Czy styl radzenia sobie ze stresem ma związek z dobrostanem psychicznym? Jeśli tak, to który styl radzenia sobie ze stresem sprzyja poczuciu psychicznego dobrostanu, a który je obniża?
- Czy jednostki żyjące w różnych kulturach różnią się między sobą pod względem poczucia psychicznego dobrostanu?
- **Do cultures vary in how they influence SWB of their members?**

# Czapinski's Onion Theory of Happiness (SWB)



## **Tools:**

### ■ Komponenty dobrostanu psychicznego/**SWB components:**

#### Poziom I/**Layer I** – Wola życia/**Will to live:**

- Pragnienie Życia Janusza Czapińskiego/**Attachment to life - Intensity of the desire to live (1994)**
- Skłonności Samobójcze Janusza Czapińskiego/**Absence of suicidal thoughts (1994)**

#### Poziom II/**Layer II** – Ogólny dobrostan subiektywny/**General SWB**

#### Wymiar hedonistyczny/**hedonistic aspects:**

- Drabina Hadleya Cantrila (**Cantril's Ladder**) (1965)
- Skala Zadowolenia z Życia (**Satisfaction With Life Scale**) Eda Dienera, Roberta Emmons, Randy'ego Larsena i Sharon Griffin (1985)
- Skala Radość z Życia (**Life Satisfaction Scale**) Janusza Czapińskiego (1994)
- Emocje - częstość i intensywność przeżywania – skala skonstruowana w oparciu o projekt Richarda Lucasa i Carol Gohm/**Emotions - Intensity and frequency of experienced emotions (2000)**

Poziom II/**Layer II** – Ogólny dobrostan subiektywny/**General SWB**  
Wymiar eudajmonistyczny/**eudaimonistic aspects:**

- Ja i Moje Cele - **Krzysztofa Hirszla/ My goals (Szostak, 2000),**
- Kwestionariusz Wyboru Wartości **Krzysztofa Hirszla/ Questionnaire of Values (Szostak, 2000).**

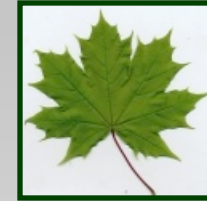
Poziom III/**Layer III**– Satysfakcje cząstkowe/**Satisfactions with variety aspects of life:**

- **Skala Satysfakcji Cząstkowych Janusza Czapińskiego (1994),**
- Szacowanie dochodu „w porównaniu do”/**Comparing one’s income with the income of the average citizen**

Do pomiaru potrzeby aprobaty społecznej zastosowano Kwestionariusz Aprobaty Społecznej (KAS) w opracowaniu Radosława Drwala i Jolanty Wilczyńskiej (Drwal, 1995; Wilczyńska i Drwal, 1983; Drwal i Wilczyńska, 1980)/ **the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale**

Five groups of participants were compared (N = 177):

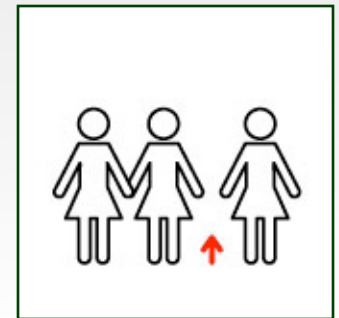
- Polish emigrants in Canada – 33



- Polish emigrants in the Netherlands - 33



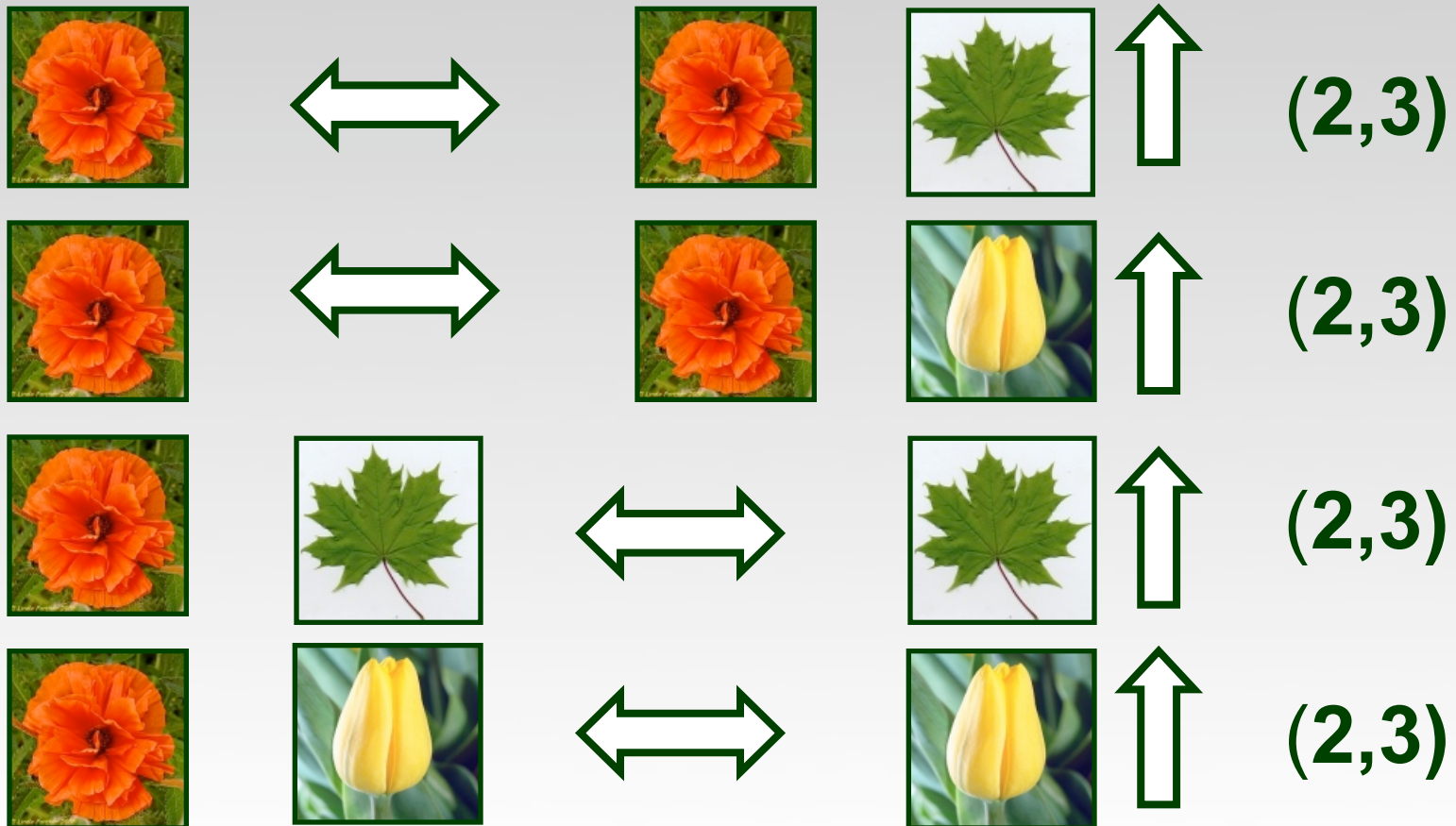
- Poles – 43



## Hypothesis 5.

**Poles, Polish emigrants in Canada and Polish emigrants in the Netherlands will differ in levels of SWB.**

**Differences will occur only in relation to the second and the third layer of the Onion Model of Happiness:**



# Verification of the hypothesis: compared groups

- Mann-Whitney's U test and the results:



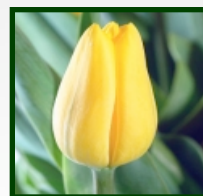
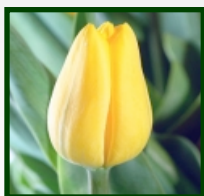
(2 HED: EM, COG; EUD, 3)



(2 HED: EM; EUD, 3)



(2 HED: EM; EUD, 3)



(2 HED: EM, COG; EUD, 3)



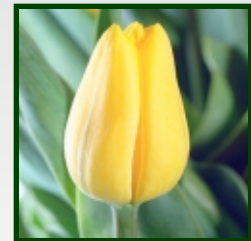
## Hypothesis 6.

**Poles, Canadians and the Dutch will differ in levels of SWB.**

**Differences will occur only in relation to the second and the third layer of the Onion Model of Happiness:**



**(2,3)**



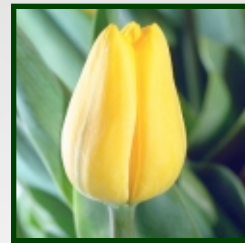
**(2,3)**

## Verification of the hypothesis: compared groups

- Mann-Whitney's U test and the results:



(1, 2 HED: EM, COG; EUD,3 )



(2 HED: EM, COG; EUD,3)

## **Conclusions:**

**Polish emigrants in Canada and Polish emigrants in the Netherlands show lower levels of SWB when compared to Canadians and the Dutch.**

**Poles show lower levels of SWB when compared to:**

- **Polish emigrants in Canada,**
- **Polish emigrants in the Netherlands,**
- **Canadians,**
- **the Dutch.**

**Role of:**

- **Cultural syndrome,**
- **Mode of acculturation,**
- **Stage of culture shock,**
- **Coping style, SOC, attribution style**
- **Resources.**