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Abstract

Through three studies in their initial paper, Dunn, Aknin, and Norton (2008) demonstrated a correlational and causal link between prosocial spending (i.e., spending money on someone else) and reported level of happiness. Study 3 of this paper demonstrates a causal link between spending money on friend and reported level of happiness. Since then a wide range of follow-up literature used this *forced compliance method* as a manipulation to create the feeling of having behaved morally and measure subsequent moral behaviour (either to prove or disprove the existence of moral balancing). Additionally, the well-being literature has been referring to the assumed relationship between prosocial spending and happiness to justify introducing measures that promote prosocial spending. Here I argue that the observed effect between prosocial spending and happiness might be because the prosocially spent money was *free*. In other words, the prosocial spending never imposed any cost on the spender that may offset or at least decrease the experienced happiness of behaving prosocially. Along these lines, I present results of an ecologically more valid experiment ($N = 128$) in which first, subjects worked for their money, then, in the two experimental conditions, were prompted to donate half of their earnings. I find no causal link between donation and happiness, even after controlling for participants' income and previous donation activity. I conclude with discussing implications and limitations of my results.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, prosocial spending, pain of paying, loss aversion, forgone gain, out of pocket spending

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Introduction

Large body of research examines the causes for and the effects of happiness. The conditions and states of people experiencing different levels of subjective well-being are mainly due to genetic predispositions, personal living conditions and individual preferences. The motivation for this study has come from cross-sectional investigations that were undertaken internationally during the past decade. The studies contributed to answering the question why money cannot buy happiness, at least not in a direct way, such as in purchasing material goods. The investigations also found that certain ways of spending money, namely *spending it on others*, did have stronger effects on people's happiness. The findings that prosocial spending leads to higher levels of happiness was first demonstrated by Dunn et al. (2008), and this insight was used as part of the theoretical basis through abundant studies (e.g., Chancellor & Lyubomirsky, 2011; DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2009). There are subsequent investigations and refinements of the initial research demonstrated in studies (e.g., Aknin, Barrington-Leigh, Dunn, Helliwell, Burns, Biswas-Diener, ... Norton, 2013; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2014; Dunn, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2011; Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Quoidbach, Dunn, Petrides, & Mikolajczak, 2010; Weidman & Dunn, 2016). The international body of research describes the paths towards happiness and their influential factors that slow down or accelerate the processes on this path, but the studies rarely ever focus on the *mechanisms behind these processes* that cause prosocial spending to experience higher levels of happiness and subjective well-being.

The Concept of Happiness

The following chapter introduces relevant indicators of and conditions favouring happiness and moves on to various aspects of happiness in its social context.

Indicators of Happiness

The *American Declaration of Independence* explicitly mentions the *pursuit of happiness* as being one of the three major human rights, immediately after *life* and *liberty*, making it one of the most fundamental social and political goals towards the end of the 18th century (National Archives, America's founding documents, Web, 13.10.2017). During the past more than two centuries the tendencies of putting the *pursuit of happiness* on the same level as the *pursuit of wealth* seem to have been on the rise, especially in the industrialized countries (Power, 2016). The concept of happiness therefore is not just the mere difference of *not* feeling miserable, anxious or depressed, but a multitude and mixture of influencing factors that constitute happiness as a result. One of the main factors that have been confirmed in numerous empirical studies shows the seemingly common observation that one cannot feel happy and unhappy at the same time. Despite that the intensities of happiness and unhappiness can evolve in a consecutive manner and reach very high levels. The dimension of general well-being can therefore also be circumscribed by the *dimension of satisfaction* (Argyle, 1993).

Among the numerous definitions of happiness, the most general approach is the one that describes happiness in terms of *subjective well-being*; it results in high levels of life satisfaction due to the experience of more frequent positive affects than negative ones. The relative frequency of positive affects, as compared to the frequency of negative ones, weighs more than the intensity of the positive or negative experience as such. The intensity of affects is only weakly related to the feeling of long term subjective well-being; it is neither necessary nor sufficient, whereas the frequency of positive experiences is (Diener, Sandvik, & Slovic, 1991). An additional interpersonal, thus external aspect which is beyond the mere feeling of subjective well-being, originates from positive actions. Positive actions combine arguments, such as

purpose in life, with key aspects of interpersonal relationships (Peterson et al., 2005, as cited in Caunt, Franklin, Brodaty, & Brodaty, 2013, p. 476).

The definitions of subjective well-being range from the description of its characteristics to the explanation of the states of mind that are connected to the occurrences of happiness. Other approaches distinguish continuous states of mind and the frequency of positive experiences as opposed to extreme experiences in terms of peak intensities. Another approach differentiates between the *cognitive constructs* and the *actual affects* of happiness (Veenhoven, 2000). The condition and state of an individual that experiences subjective well-being can be defined as “the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favorably” (Veenhoven, 2000, p. 22).

Conditions favouring Happiness

Combining intrapersonal and interpersonal factors and considering the above-mentioned definition, happiness can be approached by combining the *genetic predisposition* with the *personal living conditions* and the *individual activities* (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, as cited in Caunt et al., 2013, p. 477). The genetic predisposition contributes to the subjective well-being by estimated 50%, thereby fluctuating in a relatively stable range throughout the whole life. Even major incidents such as very positive and also extremely negative events do not influence the genetic predisposition. They cause the feelings of subjective well-being to change massively, but after a certain period of time the respective personality returns to its genetically predisposed bandwidth of happiness and subjective well-being. *Personal living conditions*, individual circumstances and important life-status factors only contribute some estimated 10% to one’s subjective well-being. These factors range from stable social relationships with family members, partners and friends, to individual employment statuses, also facts such as long-term feelings of sufficient health and even the region of residence. They are considered to have

relatively little longer term effects on one's subjective well-being due to the individual capability of adaptation (Caunt et al., 2013). It appears, that the individual level of happiness can be influenced by activating the construct of time. People are more motivated to do things, which are associated with greater happiness, for example social activities (Mogilner, 2010).

The individual *intentional activities* contribute to the feelings of subjective well-being up to some estimated 40% and range from intentional *behavioural* and *cognitive* to *volitional* activities (Caunt et al., 2013). Behavioural activities include physical actions of almost all kinds and intensities, also meditation exercises and social activities that are benefiting others. The Dimension of cognitive activities includes the sense of gratitude and appreciation, the capability of reducing negative responses, which means the capacity of forgiveness and the individual coping capabilities, which are essential when for example having to face significant adversity in life. The volitional activities constitute a dimension that includes categories such as achieving goals, thereby developing hope, self-motivation and also finding meaning in life as a general description of defining one's existence as valuable and worthwhile (Caunt et al., 2013).

There are three main groups of contributing aspects in this multidimensional field of well-being are a *physically* and *mentally healthy lifestyle*, good *adaptability* and *flexibility* with reference to the individual coping capacity regarding big changes in life. The third being *sociability* as general form of conducting one's life by maintaining a certain number of close long-term relationships (Power, 2016).

The dimensions and categories that are being used in order to describe happiness comprise the individual personality, the circumstances of one's life and the behavioural activities. The actual frequency and the intensity of affects can cause minor and major satisfaction or higher levels of happiness and joy, depending on the personality traits, the circumstances of a person's

life and the intentional activities (Argyle & Martin, 1991). With respect to the above-mentioned facts happiness “appears as an attitude towards one’s own life” (Veenhoven, 2000, p. 24).

Happiness in its Social Context

Since decades psychological and sociological studies have been able to show that social relations have a significant influence on the overall feeling of subjective well-being (Caunt et al., 2013). During the past decades, certain values and activities have changed and were transformed within the digital world, values such as marriage have shifted to more general perceptions of partnership, other activities such as watching TV have shifted technically since the development of the internet and social media. But many of the domains show high levels of stability over time, such as family relations and friendship. Good social relationships have a strong influence on the satisfaction levels with life as a whole. They represent reliable and stable interpersonal connections (Argyle & Martin, 1991; Caunt et al., 2013).

The positive effects of good and supportive analog social networks enable people to reduce stress more constructively, to cope with adversity far better and to prevent illnesses more efficiently. Job satisfaction also is one of the major factors of overall satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction, for example the satisfaction with regards to the contents of the work, but also the social surroundings determined by the co-workers have substantial influence on the feelings of one’s subjective well-being (Argyle & Martin, 1991).

Social systems as a whole also play an important role and have substantial influence on the feelings of subjective well-being. Freedom, democracy and economic growth all have strong correlations with happiness. They influence the mental state of social groups and networks living in these circumstances. It is quite obvious that wars and a substantial lack of political freedom are detrimental to any kind of subjective well-being. The foundations of these

arguments have already been laid down in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but the characteristics of contemporary societies confirm that there is a connection between for example a long term economic growth, high public health expenditures and the subjective feeling of economic and social security and safety (Veenhoven, 2000).

In addition to the direct interpersonal ties and relationships there is another group of factors that influence happiness on the fundamental level of appreciating one's life within a given social environment: the place in society one attains and arrives at is also influenced by age, gender and/or minority status. Potentially negative effects can be at least partly compensated by achieving personal goals, educational success and occupational prestige (Veenhoven, 2000). Even Grant and Sonnentag (2010) could show, that prosocial behaviour or the perceived impact of it can serve as a buffer of negative influences. Furthermore, the connection between income and happiness seems to be weaker than the prevalent expectation of its correlation. Especially the levels of happiness and life satisfaction at the bottom of the income levels are very often underestimated (Cone & Gilovich, 2010).

The Dynamics of Well-Being

The theoretical basis of the differentiations between spending money for oneself and spending it prosocially will be outlined and discussed from several perspectives and according to the results of the international findings, thereby considering the roles money, income and especially their forms of spending play for the individual levels of happiness.

The Causes of subjective Well-Being

The assumption that external circumstances can cause subjective well-being is among the most frequent answers to the general question asking what it is that makes people happy. It is also both common knowledge and empirically proved that material objects mostly provide

additional states of joy for a relatively short period of time. Despite this, *externalist approaches* often argue that unmet material needs are one of the main threats to happiness. As pointed out, external conditions cannot be entirely neglected and individuals are not fully independent from economic, ecological and social influences, but pure externalism can answer only one small part of the interactions between material provisioning and feelings of joy (Ahuvia et al., 2015).

One of the main causes of long lasting, sustainable subjective well-being comes true by maintaining long term *social relationships* and experiencing *feelings of success* (Argyle & Martin, 1991). In addition to that an *internalist* point of view states that the subjective interpretation of facts is capable of effecting substantial perception changes, thus influencing the regulation of emotional experiences. Investigations proved that medical ratings of health were less strongly correlated to happiness than self-perceived levels of health (Veenhoven, 2000). The *interactionist* approach claims that happiness cannot arise solely from material objects and consumption, nor solely from internal processes of perception and cognitive adjustments, but from both internal and external factors and their mutual effects of synergy (Ahuvia et al., 2015).

The Income - Happiness Correlation

There is a large body of investigations that has evaluated the question if income was a very important or just one of many sources of happiness. A problem of these studies could be the developments over time which were influenced by external factors like economies around the world, by political developments in various parts around the world. The indicators of happiness were different in various cultural environments and so were the distinctions between contentment, joyful well-being and delight.

Could subjective well-being and happiness have such behavioural effects that higher income might be one of its consequences? Although the causal chain between happiness and positive social feedback may lead to better interpersonal relationships and thus to higher salaries, the direct effect of happiness on income can neither be seen as a significant or solid correlation nor as a law for individuals in general (Veenhoven, 2000). Even the so-called “frustrated achievers” have been examined; these are cases in which increasing income is associated with negative changes in subjective well-being. An analysis of a sample over a 19-year long period showed that *negative life events*, in the case of social life events like divorce, health deterioration etc. weighted much more than increases in income. A minority of the respondents expressed the feelings that their increasing income was eroded by their negative life events and could not be compensated. (Becchetti & Rossetti, 2009; Becchetti, Corrado, & Rossetti, 2011).

The more obvious question focuses on the mechanisms and effects money can have on happiness. In many cases, there are correlations between income and happiness, even if the respective relationships often are not linear, especially when examining changes of income over time and the corresponding changes in subjective well-being (Becchetti et al., 2011). The effects of money and income on subjective well-being are mostly overestimated. Respondents in various studies even expected the direct effects of income on happiness to be larger at the lower end of the income scale (Cone & Gilovich, 2010). There are also many contradictory results and inconsistencies, such as the huge income-gaps between the industrialized world and the developing countries that do not correspond to an equivalent gap regarding life-satisfaction (Nettle, 2005, as cited in Becchetti et al., 2011). It also could be shown, that the meaning of money can be determined by the biography (Wernimont & Fitzpatrick, 1972). In developing countries, the income levels are closer to the subsistence levels, which on the other hand have

a positive effect on social relationships and family ties, giving each other support, thereby adding to the levels of life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 2000).

The vast numbers of variables influencing the relationship of money and subjective well-being, of income fluctuations and happiness, show that there is a multitude of views regarding the role of income and money with respect to happiness. Personality traits, political, social, economical, cultural, religious and even semantic differences play significant roles in differentiating and influencing the actual perception of happiness at a given point in time and within a specific situation.

Prosocial Spending and Happiness

People usually act prosocially intentionally or unconsciously (Carlson, Aknin, & Liotti, 2016). Prosocial behaviour in the case of donating has shown, that mood is predictive for the decision to donate and empathical feelings are predictive for the donated amount (Dickert, Sagara, & Slovic, 2011). Grant and Dutton (2012) show, that the reflection about prosocial behaviour can increase the probability to donate. Additionally, positive priming has to be shown as a factor, which influence people to act in a prosocial way (Young, Chakroff, & Tom, 2012).

As outlined above the determinants of happiness are complex and pose substantial difficulties in differentiating their components and factors of influence. There are effects caused by living conditions but also by personality traits, socio-economical and individual aspects that need to be taken into account when considering the role that money and income play in individuals' happiness.

The effect income has on happiness can be described as consistent but relatively weak, thus by far not as strong as the common judgment would expect. This effect also has a tendency to decrease, once the basic material needs are fulfilled. Despite rising Gross domestic product

(GDP) in the industrialized countries and increasing economic welfare since decades the levels of happiness have stayed relatively stable, during the whole period of this historically quite unique development. And despite many activities which are associated with happiness and subjective well-being, such as spending time with close friends, in most cases the increased wealth is being invested in consumer goods of all categories (Dunn et al., 2008).

Based upon these and other results of international investigations, Dunn et al. (2008) decided not to examine the income effects on happiness but to focus on the effect of *how money is spent* on happiness. In study 1 reported in this paper the authors examine quantifiable prosocial activities, such as donations to charity, purchases of gifts for others as opposed to spending money for oneself, such as for the typical monthly bills and expenses. The results of a representative survey indicated that increase in *prosocial spending* is associated to increase in reported level of happiness. In a second study they conformed this positive relationship between among employees who reported higher levels of happiness after they spend their windfall gains (i.e., bonus) and spent some of it prosocially. Study 3 is an experiment in which participants were either endowed with USD 5 or USD 10 and were either instructed to spend this by 5 pm on themselves or on someone else. They find that regardless of the size of the money those who prosaically spent it reported greater level of post-spending happiness than those who spent the money on themselves.

In one of the follow-up studies Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson (2011) further investigated the different ways of spending money. Given the simple inference that money can enable people to do what makes them happy, more money should therefore allow for many more things that eventually render more happiness. Wealth provides people with higher standards of life, better medical care, security, food etc., which all of them constituting clear indicators for a solid basis of happiness. All of these logical inferences empirical results have shown that more wealth only

increases the individual happiness only marginally. According to Dunn et al. (2011), one reason for not achieving higher levels of happiness for significantly longer periods of time is that people generally do not spend their wealth in a right way; this is mainly due to the fact that they commit mistakes in “*affective forecasting and mental simulations of future events*” (p. 115). One of the possible solutions to the question of spending money in a right way, is to invest into experiences rather than material goods, because the experience, for example in “seeing a baby cheetah at dawn on an African safari” (Dunn et al., 2011, p. 117) may provide more positive memories and long-lasting levels of happiness than the investment of the equivalent amount into some arbitrary consumer goods (Dunn & Weidman, 2015).

The other investment that provides the highest levels of happiness is to *spend money on others* rather than on *oneself*. Following up several international investigations showed similar results as the study of Dunn et al. (2008), with participants reporting higher levels of happiness when spending money on others than on themselves (Dunn et al., 2011). Certain aspects of prosocial spending even have tendencies of cross-cultural universals, shared completely or with little variation in all of the examined cultures. Spending money on others is similar to sharing financial resources and it also includes attitudes and behaviours comparable to prosocial activities such as volunteering in communities, caring for ill people and alike (Aknin et al., 2013). Given the fact that money usually is a limited resource, a large number of smaller expenses or presents for other people within a certain period of time has a stronger long-term effect on the individual happiness levels than very few large units (Dunn et al., 2011). This statement is in line with the observation that happiness is more strongly related to *frequency* than to *intensity* (Diener et al., 1991). Thaler (1985) and his investigations to consumer choice could show, that people apply a mental accounting. This knowledge could be gained from the

prospect theory and a conclusion that is drawn from this theory is that several small gains make happier than few large ones.

According to a recent study also single purchases can provide similar levels of happiness due to their different stages of remembered values, like *anticipated*, *momentary* and *afterglow values* with respect to the purchases (Dunn et al., 2015). Within these decision-making processes certain additional issues were investigated, for example the question whether valuing time over money could provide individuals with greater levels of happiness. Across a large number of studies ($N = 4,690$) the *prioritization of time over money* was a stable decision that lead to higher levels of happiness. The results did not only show that working less hours gave participants more opportunities to socialize or pursue with activities they enjoyed, but also that people were willing to spend money in order to gain more time. Higher investments into a home near the workplace in order to save commuting times were one of the decisions that those participants were willing to take, who felt that prioritizing time over money would increase their levels of subjective well-being (Whillans, Weidman, & Dunn, 2016).

Theoretical considerations behind the experimental design

In study 3, Dunn et al. (2008) demonstrate a causal relationship between prosocial spending and happiness. In this experiment we slightly modify the design from Dunn et al. (2008) when investigating whether it is truly prosocial spending per se or the initiative to spend prosocially predicts greater happiness.

The salience of a received gain or payment in an experimental setting plays an important role in the personal awareness and further behaviour. Thus, receiving an amount of money because of hard work is totally different from receiving the same amount just for free (Cherry, Frykblom, & Shogren, 2002). According to Thaler and Johnson (1990) it hurts more, when you

lose your own money than a windfall gain. Additionally, Prelec and Loewenstein (1998) propose that spending money hurts, which takes off pleasure from consumption. The various degrees of difficulty or easiness in earning money influence the personal attachment to it. The attempt of this study is to exclude the possibility of prosocial spending with money that was *just given* to the participants.

In this study participants earned the money which they spent prosocially. Geenen, Hohelüchter, Langholf, and Walther (2014) have already been attempted to investigate whether it makes a difference in which way the participants receive the money, in form of a wage or a windfall. With some modification they replicated study 3 from Dunn et al. (2008). Results show that the source of the money (wage vs. windfall) has no significant effect on the happiness level.

The current study is trying to find one of many possible causes of Dunn's findings. Theoretical considerations would make the experimental design more valid. Dunn's study did not provide participants with a choice to donate their money in case of forced compliance. For this reason two conditions were established, whether the extent of forced compliance can be manipulated. The two experimental conditions are “out of pocket” (OP) and “forgone gain” (FG). It would be assumed that participants of the FG condition show higher levels of happiness than members of the OP condition, this is due to the fact that the already deducted part of their earned amount should not be seen as their own possession. Members of the OP condition on the other hand will feel that they spent money prosocially too, but they will also partly conceive feelings of “having less” than before, an element of loss, due to working and giving away a part of their earnings.

The experiment deployed three conditions The Baseline condition (henceforth, B) without any manipulations. Participants received a wage for completing a task and no donation was carried out. The first experimental condition, OP, where participants donated a part of their

wage. In the second experimental condition FG, participants received their wage after their donation was deducted.

Predictions

Dunn et al.'s (2008) results translated to the actual experimental design, participants in either donation conditions OP and FG should report greater level of happiness after donation (post happiness), than those in condition B.

Thus resulting the Hypothesis for the actual experiment:

H1: Reported happiness would be greater in OP and FG than in B.

H2: Reported happiness is lower in OP than in FG.

Method

One hundred twenty-eight participants were enrolled in this experiment and were randomly assigned to either of the one condition. There are ($n = 43$) participants in B, ($n = 43$) in OP and ($n = 42$) in FG.

Procedure

Participants were mainly recruited directly in the “Neues Institutsgebäude” (NIG) and in the main building of the University of Vienna. The time period during which participants were recruited and the experiment was conducted was between October 31, 2016, and November 4, 2016.

During the recruiting procedure, the participants received a small flyer which provided basic information about the experiment, including the location, date and time, duration, and the expected earnings (i.e., 10€).

The paper and pencil experiment was conducted in the testing laboratory at the NIG and lasted for approximately 10 minutes (all materials in Appendix B). Participants were positioned in such a way that they could not influence or disturb each other.

Participants were first given an instructions sheet, which included all relevant information concerning the procedure, as well as the amount of compensation participants would receive. All further materials had been placed at the workstations beforehand. After reading the instructions, participants received their show-up fee of 5€. Next, they answered basic demographic questions. Then, on a 5-levels Likert scale they indicated how happy they generally feel with response scale anchored (1 = extremely unhappy... 5 = extremely happy). This question served as the measurement for a participant's level of *trait happiness*. Next, participants completed a real effort task in which they had to sort documents and put them into their appropriate folders.

Then, they were informed about their earnings from the real-effort task. The experimental manipulation was implemented at this point. In the B condition there was no manipulation, participants received a 5€ payment in an envelope labelled "my earnings" for completing the real effort task. In the OP condition, the envelope labelled "my earnings" contained 10€ (in two 5€ bills) and included a small note with the request to donate 5€ to the "Kinderkrebshilfe" (Child Cancer Foundation) by putting this amount into the accompanying envelope labelled "my donation". In the FG condition, the envelope labelled „my earnings“ contained 5€ and the envelope labelled "my donation" contained 5€ as well. A note in one of the envelopes informed participants that 5€ had already been deducted from their earnings of 10€ as a donation to the Kinderkrebshilfe. In all experimental conditions, participants were truthfully informed that their donations in fact go to Kinderkrebshilfe.

After receiving their payments everyone answered the question “how satisfied do you feel with your earnings from the sorting task?” with a 5-levels Likert scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied... 5 = extremely satisfied). Eliciting these responses was necessary to control for payment satisfaction.

Finally, participants answered “how happy do they feel now?”, again, responses anchored on a 5-levels Likert scale (1 = extremely unhappy... 5 = extremely happy). After answering the question, the experiment was over and the participants could leave the laboratory by signing a pay-out confirmation.

Results

Demographics

In the following paragraphs, the sociodemographic data of the participants will be presented. For the purpose of further statistical processing of the data, it is examined whether the distributions of demographic data differ significantly between the three conditions. Comparability between these three condition requires that there are no significant differences between the respective distributions. More detailed description of sample demographics is presented in Appendix A.

Gender: Concerning gender, results show a distribution of (57%) women and (43%) men. In order to determine whether the gender distribution is the same between the conditions, a chi-squared test is conducted. The result is not significant, $X^2(2, N = 128) = .89, p = .641$, indicating that there are no significant differences among the three conditions in terms of gender distribution.

Age: Participants' age ranges between 18 and 72 years ($M = 24.27$, $SD = 7.78$), with 112 participants (87.5%) falling into the age range between 18 and 29 years. Mean age in years do not differ between the three conditions, $F(2, 125) = .04$, $p = .961$.

Education: A descriptive analysis of the data shows that the majority of the participants (68.8%) report „Matura“ (higher education certificate) as their highest educational level, followed by participants with a bachelor's degree (18.8%). A chi-squared test is conducted in order to examine whether there are any significant differences between the three conditions in terms of their educational level. Results indicate that this is not the case, $X^2(10, N = 128) = 5.83$, $p = .829$.

Employment Status: The analysis of employment status shows that the majority of participants (82.8%) are full-time or part-time students. In order to confirm the equality of distributions assumption concerning employment status between the three conditions, a chi-squared test is conducted which shows that there are no significant differences regarding employment status between the conditions, $X^2(12, N = 128) = 16.03$, $p = .190$.

Income: Data analysis reveals that the majority of participants (85.9%) placed themselves financially in middle class. A chi-squared test reveals that there are no significant differences between the three conditions in terms of income, $X^2(6, N = 128) = 2.02$, $p = .918$.

Mother tongue: The majority of participants (83.6%) report to be native German speakers. A chi-squared test demonstrates that there are no significant differences regarding mother tongue between the three conditions, $X^2(34, N = 128) = 35.49$, $p = .398$.

Donation: Participants data concerning the frequency of donations have a range from 0 to 300 times. It has to be noted that the amount which was donated is not included in this statistical result. In a further step, participants were asked to indicate the total amount they donated so far.

They have to give their best estimate. Results indicate that participants donate on average 58€ ($M = 57.77$, $SD = 149.53$). Two participants don't provide any data. An F -test reveals no significant differences between the conditions, $F(2, 123) = 1.08$, $p = .34$. Further inspection of the individual mean donation values suggests that this result may be due to the high standard deviation.

Reported happiness and satisfaction levels

The two happiness questions (Trait Happiness, Happiness after receiving earnings) and the question about satisfaction with earnings are the key variables in this study. The statistical analysis provides the answer to the research question, or, more specifically, to the hypotheses, which were derived from Dunn et al. (2008).

Table 1 presented below shows the mean values and standard deviations of responses on these three items. It should be mentioned that one person in the baseline condition does not give an answer to the "happiness after receiving earnings" question. The "earning satisfaction" question serves as a control variable for the amount earned during the experiment. When they responded to this question, participants did not know yet that they will have to donate a part of their earnings. As one can see from the first three rows of this Table, there are no significant differences between the three conditions regarding the two "happiness questions" and the "satisfaction with earnings" question. Additionally, a difference score between the two "happiness questions" was calculated. Positive scores indicate an increase in happiness. In other words, we could find evidence of increased happiness after donation money.

Table 1.

Mean (SD) responses

	B	OP	FG	Total	Test of statistical differences
Trait happiness	3.70 (.99)	3.79 (.80)	3.95 (.88)	3.81 (.89)	$F(2, 125) = .88, p = .417$
Satisfaction with earnings	3.88 (1.18)	3.98 (.96)	4.17 (1.03)	4.01 (1.06)	$F(2, 125) = .78, p = .460$
Happiness after receiving earnings	4.24 (.98)	4.19 (.88)	4.24 (1.03)	4.22 (.96)	$F(2, 124) = .04, p = .960$
DIHA	.57 (1.25)	.40 (0.93)	.29 (1.47)	.42 (1.23)	$F(2, 124) = .57, p = .566$

Note. The mean scores from “trait happiness and “happiness after receiving earnings” are from a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = extremely unhappy, 5 = extremely happy). The mean scores from “satisfaction with earnings” are from a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied). The last row shows the difference from two mean scores. DIHA = Difference between trait happiness and happiness after receiving earnings.

Since all requirements for using inferential statistical methods were met, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis is conducted. Results are shown in Table 2. Essentially, the results indicate that an increase in “satisfaction with earnings” is associated with an increase in “happiness”. Additionally, an increase in the donated amount in the past is associated with a decrease in “happiness”. Results show no positive association between prosocial spending and happiness, as neither OP nor FG is significantly associated to happiness.

Table 2.

Results of OLS with different model specifications. Dependent Variable: Happiness after receiving earnings from task.

	I.	II.	III.	IV.
Constant	4.24 (.15) ***	3.77 (.38)***	2.31 (.40)***	2.56 (.41)***
FG	.00 (.21)	-.04 (.21)	-.13 (.18)	-.14 (.18)
OP	-.05 (.21)	-.07 (.21)	-.90 (.18)	-.12 (.18)
Trait happiness		.13 (.10)	.05 (.08)	.40 (.08)
Satisfaction with earnings			.45 (.07)***	.41 (.07)***
Donated amount				-.001 (.00)**
LR Ch-sq	.09	1.84	36.62***	39.47***
df	2	3	4	5
AIC	356.63	356.88	324.10	318.05

Note. Baseline is the reference condition. Standard errors are in parenthesis. ***p≤.01, **p≤.05, *p≤.1.

Discussion

One conclusion of Dunn et al.'s (2008) studies is that prosocial spending increases happiness. This master thesis focuses on the experimental design used by Dunn et al. (2008), however, without attempting to replicate it. A critical analysis of the design raised the following question: which mechanisms might be responsible for the positive association between prosocial spending and happiness? It is assumed that there are multiple mechanisms influencing this association, however, one assumption regarding Dunn et al.'s experimental design was, that the participants received the money for free, which they donated. Additionally, the participants did not have a choice to donate, so the extent of forced compliance was manipulated.

It was attempted to address this potential weakness of the original design to modify it for the present master thesis's experiment, and having a closer look at the mechanisms behind it.

A paper-and-pencil experiment was used to measure the happiness level before and after the experimental manipulation, to see the impact of the donation. It was part of the experiment, that people got paid at two times for several reasons. The first payment was the show-up fee. Participants should get paid for their expenditure of time. It should be avoided, that the determined happiness baseline level is not influenced in a negative way for their appearance. The second payment, was after completing a real effort task, were they get paid for their performance. The intention was that the participants feel they worked for the money they received, and that it is their possession. In a further step we were able to manipulate the part of the donation, wherein in one condition a part of the earned money was already deducted and in the second condition participants received the whole earnings from which they had to donate a part.

The interpretation of the results from the present experiment leads to the conclusion that there is evidence that prosocial spending increases happiness, but inferential analyses with an OLS don't find a positive association. None of the hypotheses could be confirmed. Neither were the mean values for the two experimental conditions (OP and FG) significantly higher than in condition B, nor was there a significant difference between the mean values of the experimental conditions (OP and FG).

Talking about possible limitations, it should be noted that the presented results or their interpretation should not be generalized prematurely, since they were derived from a laboratory setting and a sample consisting mainly of students. Furthermore, some could argue, that the FG condition is not a real prosocial spending, because the participants did not have a choice of donating, but they did not have them with Dunn either, due to forced compliance. It could be possible, that the show-up fee has been sustainably affected the trait happiness question, and in the next step was responsible for the nonsignificant effect between prosocial spending and

happiness. It would have to be considered, whether a 5-point Likert-Scale is appropriate to measure happiness and to compare it with the result at another time. Maybe a scale with more grades would be more practicable. But for a better comparability, the used scale in this study is the same as in Dunn et al.'s (2008).

Future studies should aim to investigate the mechanisms which underlie the positive association between prosocial spending and happiness, since a lack of attention to these mechanisms could be responsible for a misinterpretation of the results.

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Online Sources

National Archives, America's founding documents. Web, 13.10.2017 from <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Appendices

Appendix A - Tables

Table A1.

Distribution of gender in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	20	46.5	19	45.2	16	37.2	55	43.0
Female	23	53.5	23	54.8	27	62.8	73	57.0
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A2.

Mean (SD) age in the three conditions

	OP	FG	B	Total
Age in years	24.23 (8.82)	24.52 (8.03)	24.05 (6.50)	24.27 (7.78)

Table A3.

Distribution of age categories in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18-29	38	88.4	35	83.3	39	90.7	112	87.5
30-39	3	7.0	5	11.9	2	4.7	10	7.8
40-49	1	2.3	1	2.4	1	2.3	3	2.3
50-59	.0	.0	.0	.0	1	2.3	1	.8
60-69	.0	.0	1	2.4	.0	.0	1	.8
70-	1	2.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	1	.8
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A4.

Distribution of highest level of education in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hauptschule	0	.0	1	2.4	1	2.3	2	1.6
Matura	33	76.7	26	61.9	29	67.4	88	68.8
BA	6	14.0	10	23.8	8	18.6	24	18.8
MA	2	4.7	3	7.1	1	2.3	6	4.7
Phd or advanced	0	.0	1	2.4	1	2.3	2	1.6
Other	2	4.7	1	2.4	3	7.0	6	4.7
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A5.

Distribution of study fields in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Psychology + something else	5	11.6	9	21.4	17	39.5	31	24.2
Other, including no study	38	88.4	33	78.6	26	60.5	97	75.8
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A6.

Distribution of employment status in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full time student	20	46.5	25	59.5	29	67.4	74	57.8
Student and part time employed	17	39.5	8	19.0	7	16.3	32	25.0
Full time employed	1	2.3	1	2.4	0	.0	2	1.6
Part time employed	2	4.7	1	2.4	1	2.3	4	3.1
Self employed	3	7.0	1	2.4	1	2.3	5	3.9
Unemployed	0	.0	1	2.4	1	2.3	2	1.6
Other	0	.0	5	11.9	4	9.3	9	7.0
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A7.

Distribution of income levels in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In the lowest 25% of the Autsrrian population	4	9.3	6	14.3	6	14.0	16	12.5
Over 25% and below 50% of the Autsrrian population	15	34.9	16	38.1	17	39.5	48	37.5
Over 50% and below 75% of the Autsrrian population	23	53.5	19	45.2	20	46.5	62	48.4
Over 75% of the Autsrrian population	1	2.3	1	2.4	0	.0	2	1.6
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A8.

Distribution of mother tongue in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
German	41	95.3	36	85.7	36	83.7	107	83.6
Other	2	4.7	6	14.3	7	16.3	21	16.4
Total	43	100.0	42	100.0	43	100.0	128	100.0

Table A9.

Distribution of donation frequency in the three conditions

	OP		FG		B		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	9	20.9	10	23.8	9	20.9	28	21.9
1	7	16.3	5	11.9	2	4.7	14	10.9
2	6	14.0	5	11.9	9	20.9	20	15.6
3	1	2.3	2	4.8	8	18.6	11	8.6
4	4	9.3	6	14.3	3	7.0	13	10.2
5	2	4.7	3	7.1	2	4.7	7	5.5
6	2	4.7	1	2.4	1	2.3	4	3.1
7	1	2.3	2	4.8	0	.0	3	2.3
8	1	2.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	.8
10	3	7.0	0	.0	5	11.6	8	6.3
12	1	2.3	1	2.4	0	.0	2	1.6
15	0	.0	2	4.8	1	2.3	3	2.3
16	1	2.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	.8
17	0	.0	0	.0	1	2.3	1	.8
20	2	4.7	1	2.4	0	.0	3	2.3
24	2	4.7	1	2.4	0	.0	3	2.3
30	0	.0	1	2.4	0	.0	1	.8
60	1	2.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	.8
150	0	.0	0	.0	1	2.3	1	.8
300	0	.0	1	2.4	0	.0	1	.8
Total	43	100.0	41	97.6	42	97.7	126	98.4

Table A10.

Mean (SD) donated amounts in Euros in the three conditions

	OP	FG	B	Total
	31.39 (48.75)	62.05 (164.850)	78.74 (191.34)	57.77 (149.53)
N	41	42	43	126

Page B1.

Same page for all three conditions

Bitte ihre Personen ID auf jeder Seite vervollständigen. Die jeweilige zu ergänzende Nummer wird vom Leiter des Experiments vorgegeben.

Arbeitsheftchen

Willkommen zu unserem Experiment

Page B2.

Same page for all three conditions

Bitte beantworten sie folgende Fragen:

- **Ihr Alter:** _____
- **Ihr Geschlecht**
 - ☐ Mann
 - ☐ Frau
 - ☐ sonstiges
- **Wie oft und wie viel haben sie in den letzten zwei Jahren gespendet. Bitte geben sie ihre beste Schätzung über die Häufigkeit und die Höhe der Spende(n) an.**
 - ☐ Häufigkeit: _____
 - ☐ Höhe: _____ in Euro
- **Ihr höchster Schulabschluss**
 - ☐ Hauptschule
 - ☐ Matura
 - ☐ BA
 - ☐ MA
 - ☐ PhD oder Dr. oder höher
 - ☐ Sonstiges, bitte angeben: _____
- **Ihre Muttersprache:** _____

Bitte umblättern

Page B3.

Same page for all three conditions

- **Ihre Erwerbstätigkeit**
- **Sofern sie Student sind oder einer waren, welches Studium üben oder haben sie ausgeübt?**

- **Wie würden sie ihre finanzielle Situation einschätzen. Wenn sie von ihren Eltern unterstützt werden, bitte diese einzuschätzen.**
 - Vollzeit Student
 - Student und Teilzeit angestellt
 - Vollzeit angestellt
 - Teilzeit angestellt
 - Selbstständig
 - Pension
 - Arbeitslos
 - Sonstiges, bitte angeben:

 - Unter den niedrigsten 25% der österreichischen Population
 - Über den 25% und unter den 50% der österreichischen Population
 - Über den 50% und unter den 75% der österreichischen Population
 - Über den 75% der österreichischen Population

Bitte umblättern

Page B4.

Same page for all three conditions

Bitte beantworten sie folgende Frage:

- **Wie glücklich fühlen sie sich im Allgemeinen?**
 - Sehr unglücklich
 - unglücklich
 - Weder unglücklich noch glücklich
 - glücklich
 - Sehr glücklich

Bitte umblättern

Durchführung einer praktischen Aufgabe

Titel: Sortieren von Dokumenten

Anweisung für die Arbeitsaufgabe:

Sie erhalten eine bestimmte Anzahl an Karteimappen sowie ein breites Kuvert. Auf jeder Karteimappe steht der Name einer bestimmten Person und in dem breiten Kuvert befindet sich für jede Karteimappe ein fiktives Dokument, auf dem ebenfalls der Name einer bestimmten Person steht. Ziel der Aufgabe ist es diese fiktiven Dokumente in die passende Karteimappe abzulegen. Im Nachhinein werden diese Karteimappen alphabetisch (absteigend von A bis Z) geordnet. Wenn sie fertig sind, legen sie die sortierten Karteimappen in Form eines Stapels vor sich auf den Tisch.

Bitte blättern sie während der Durchführung ihrer Arbeitsaufgabe nicht um. Legen sie das Heftchen in der Zwischenzeit bei Seite.

Wenn sie Fragen zur Durchführung haben, bitte die Hand heben.

Nach Absolvierung der Arbeitsaufgabe dürfen sie auf die nächste

Seite umblättern.

Ihre Vergütung für die Absolvierung der Aufgabe beträgt 5 Euro.

- **Wie zufrieden fühlen sie sich nach Erhalt der Vergütung vom Sortieren der Dokumente? Bitte denken sie dabei nicht an ihre zuvor erhaltene Aufwandsentschädigung.**

- ☐ Sehr unzufrieden
- ☐ unzufrieden
- ☐ Weder unzufrieden noch zufrieden
- ☐ Zufrieden
- ☐ Sehr zufrieden

Nach Beantwortung der Frage heben sie ihre Hand, sie erhalten nun vom Leiter des Experiments ihre Vergütung.

Page B7.

Page only in „Out of pocket“, and „Forgone gain“ condition

Ihre Vergütung für die Absolvierung der Aufgabe beträgt 10 Euro.

- **Wie *zufrieden* fühlen sie sich nach Erhalt der Vergütung vom Sortieren der Dokumente? Bitte denken sie dabei nicht an ihre zuvor erhaltene Aufwandsentschädigung.**
 - Sehr unzufrieden
 - unzufrieden
 - Weder unzufrieden noch zufrieden
 - Zufrieden
 - Sehr zufrieden

Nach Beantwortung der Frage heben sie ihre Hand, sie erhalten nun vom Leiter des Experiments ihre Vergütung.

Page B8.

Same page for all three conditions

- **Wie *glücklich* fühlen sie sich jetzt?**
 - Sehr unglücklich
 - unglücklich
 - Weder unglücklich noch glücklich
 - glücklich
 - Sehr glücklich

Bitte umblättern

Vielen Dank für ihre Teilnahme

Lassen sie ihr Arbeitsheftchen auf dem Tisch liegen. Der Leiter des Experiments wird es einsammeln. Wenn die Arbeitsheftchen eingesammelt sind, warten sie bitte bei der Tür um die Bestätigung über den Erhalt ihrer Vergütung zu unterschreiben.

NIEMAND DARF DEN RAUM VERLASSEN OHNE DIE BESTÄTIGUNG ÜBER DEN ERHALT DER VERGÜTUNG UNTERSCHRIEBEN ZU HABEN.

Bitte erzählen sie niemandem von dem Ablauf des Experiments innerhalb der nächsten 4 Monate, da wir noch einige Durchgänge vor uns haben und wir gerne verfälschte Ergebnisse vermeiden wollen.

Nochmal, Vielen Dank

Zusammenfassung

Dunn, Aknin und Norton (2008) zeigten durch drei Studien in ihrer ersten Veröffentlichung einen korrelativen und kausalen Zusammenhang zwischen prosozialen Ausgaben und dem berichteten Level an happiness. In deren Studie 3 konnte gezeigt werden, dass es einen kausalen Zusammenhang gibt zwischen dem spenden von Geld an einen Freund und dem berichteten Level an happiness. Seither ist die Methode der *forced compliance* als Manipulation umfangreich in der Folgeliteratur eingesetzt worden, um das Gefühl zu schaffen, sich moralisch verhalten zu haben und anschließend moralisches Verhalten zu messen. Darüber hinaus bezieht sich die Literatur von well-being auf die angenommene Beziehung zwischen prosozialem Spenden und happiness, um die Einführung von Maßnahmen zu rechtfertigen, die prosoziales spenden fördern. In dieser Arbeit argumentiere ich, dass der beobachtete Effekt zwischen prosozialem Spenden und happiness möglicherweise darauf zurückzuführen ist, dass das erhaltene Geld, welches prosozial ausgegeben werden musste, gratis zur Verfügung gestellt wurde. Mit anderen Worten, die prosozialen Ausgaben haben dem Spender niemals irgendwelche Kosten verursacht. In diesem Sinne präsentiere ich die Ergebnisse eines ökologisch validen Experiments ($N = 128$), in dem zunächst die Probanden für ihr Geld arbeiteten und dann in den beiden Versuchsbedingungen aufgefordert wurden, die Hälfte ihres Verdienstes zu spenden. Ich finde keinen kausalen Zusammenhang zwischen prosozialem Spenden und happiness, selbst nach Kontrolle des Einkommens der Teilnehmer und früherer Spendenaktivitäten. Ich schließe mit der Diskussion der Auswirkungen und Grenzen meiner Ergebnisse.

Stichwörter: happiness, well-being, prosocial spending, pain of paying, loss aversion, forgone gain, out of pocket spending