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HOW SOCIAL POLICIES
SHAPE LIFE SATISFACTION



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Redistributing Happiness

How Social Policies Shape Life Satisfaction

Hiroshi Ono and Kristen Schultz Lee

1 VOLUME

The conventional recipe for happiness has long included money, marriage, and parenthood as basic ingredients. What research is telling us, however, is that these elements don't relate to happiness in quite the way we might expect them to. *Redistributing Happiness: How Social Policies Shape Life Satisfaction* explores the factors that determine "life satisfaction" and demonstrate how an individual's happiness is largely shaped by social context—by where they live and local policies, norms and attitudes about religious beliefs, economic and political security, income redistribution, and more.

The book begins with a review of the contributions of other disciplines—such as economics, psychology, and political science—to common explanations of the sources of happiness. Next, the authors offer an international comparison based on their own research on what makes people happy, taking into consideration factors such as marriage, children, money, and job status. Most importantly, special attention is paid to how social policies and social context directly affect people's happiness. All readers high school age and up will enjoy the book's comprehensive—and fascinating—answer to the happiness question because of how the authors connect an individual's experience to the

broader environment of the social system and situation in which that person resides.

FEATURES

Coalesces survey data from 29 countries and highlights country-specific examples and cases to offer readers an insightful global perspective grounded in high-quality social science

Addresses the age-old question of "Does money buy happiness?" and offers an original and surprising answer

Delivers the takeaway message that social context is more powerful than any one determinant of individual happiness (such as economics or psychology)

Presents a hopeful prognosis for future generations: that key decisions societies make as a whole—about issues like inequality, public policy, and family—serve to shape happiness

Hiroshi Ono, PhD, is professor of human resources at Hitotsubashi University, Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy. He has extensive international experience, having held professional and academic positions in the United States, Japan, and Sweden. His research integrates sociology and microeconomics to study the causes and consequences of stratification and inequality, with applications in the areas of gender, family, education, and labor markets. His current work examines the determinants of happiness in an international context and career mobility in the Japanese labor market. His papers have appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *Social Forces*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Social Science Research*, among others. Ono received his doctorate in sociology from the University of Chicago.

Kristen Schultz Lee, PhD, is associate professor of sociology at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. She specializes in the areas of gender, family, the life course, and happiness. Her current research examines families and happiness in an international context, elder care in Japan, and children's educational trajectories in the United States. Her research has been supported by the Fulbright Foundation and the Japan Foundation and her papers have appeared in *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, and *Social Science Research*, among others. Lee received her doctorate in sociology from Cornell University.