



# **Participant Observation of Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness**

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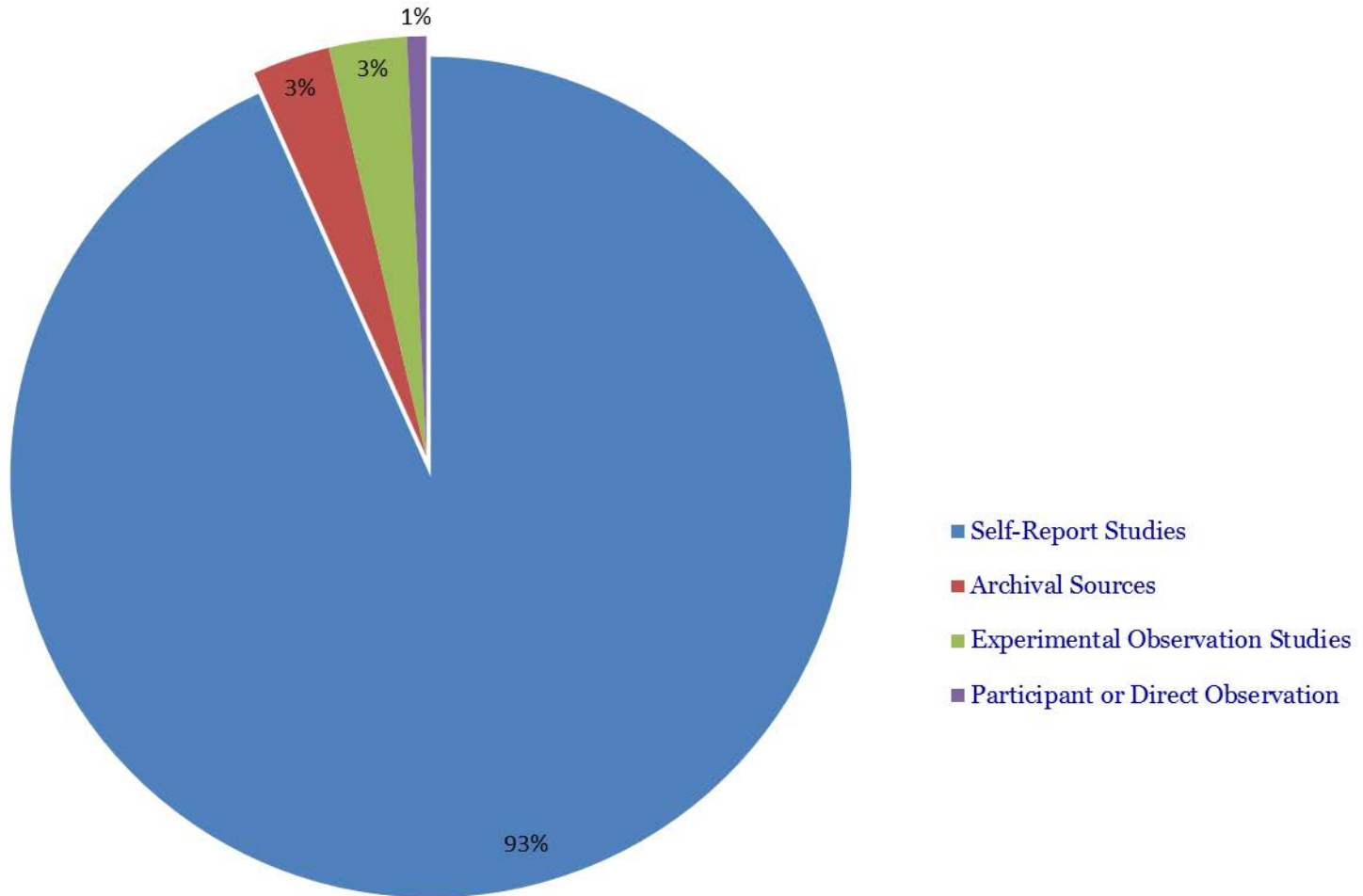
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**Does positive psychology need alternatives  
to self-report to more thoroughly  
study happiness?**

# Methodologies Used in 134 Studies on Positive Psychology

Found in the Journal of Happiness Studies & Journal of Positive Psychology  
January 2012-March 2013



# Who observes whom and how?

- Can anyone be an observer?
- Who might they observe?
- What kind of happiness should they observe?
- Do observers need to be trained?
- How might observers submit reports?

# Procedural Details of Studies 1, 2 & 3

- Study 1 involved 9 student observers (5 females) who each unobtrusively watched a man and a woman for 4 weeks.
- Study 1 observers submitted observations on eudaimonic and hedonic happiness twice a week (mid-week and weekend).
- Study 2 involved 11 Resident Assistant observers (6 men) who unobtrusively watched a man and a woman for 4 weeks.
- Study 2 observers reported twice a week on the eudaimonic and hedonic happiness they observed in three spheres of life: recreation, work, and relationships (48 data points per week).
- Study 3 involved a married heterosexual couple who reported on themselves and each other twice a week for one month on both forms of happiness in three spheres of life.

# Eudaimonic Scales

## Positive Eudaimonic



*Flourishing  
Prospering  
Thriving  
Growing  
Blossoming*

## Negative Eudaimonic



*Languishing  
Deteriorating  
Struggling  
Declining  
Withering*

# Hedonic Scales

## Positive Hedonic



*Joyful  
Contented  
Pleased  
Zestful  
Reassured*

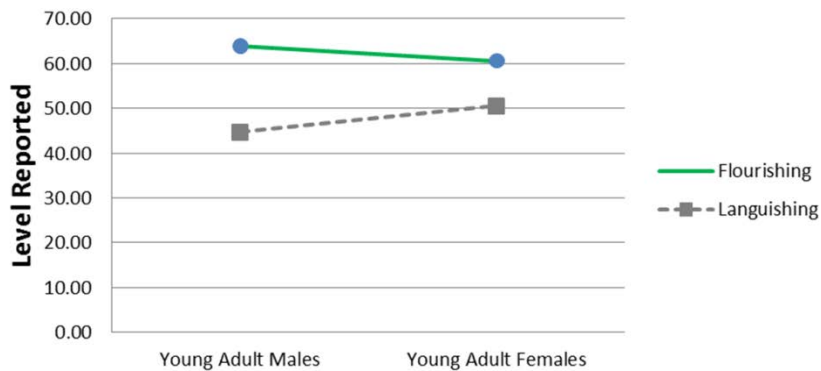
## Negative Hedonic



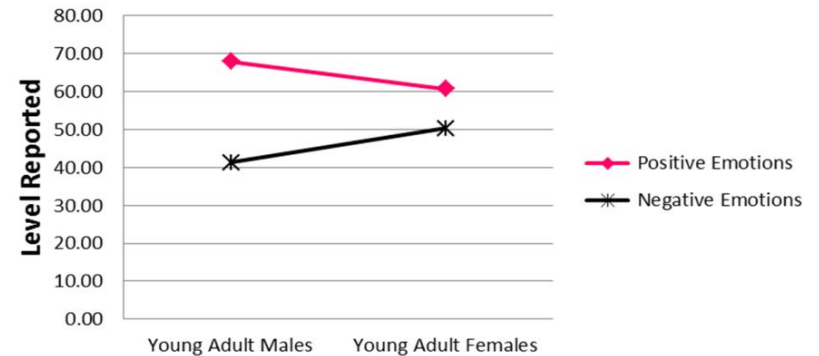
*Gloomy  
Dissatisfied  
Distressed  
Apathetic  
Anxious*

# General Results of Study 1

## Eudaimonic Happiness Observed



## Hedonic Happiness Observed





## DEFINITIONS OF THREE SPHERES OF LIFE

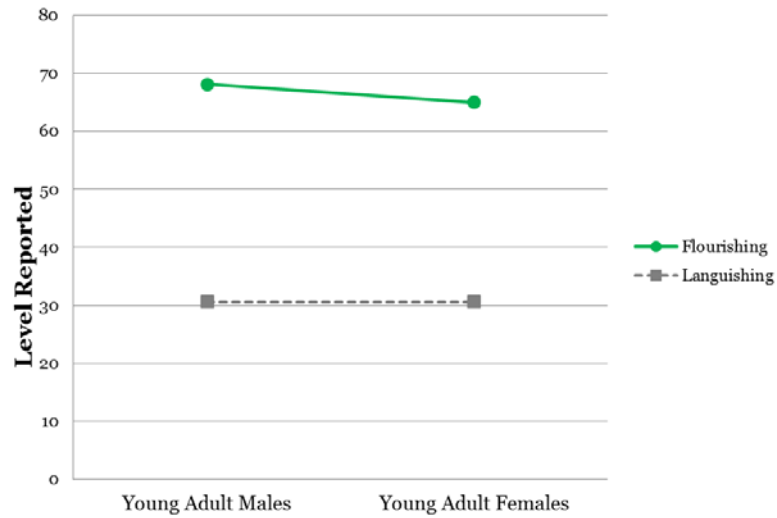
**Work:** *Hedonic or eudaimonic happiness expressed by people doing any activity relevant to earning a living or in the development of the capacity to earn a living (e.g., education or training). The happiness of people expressed in work environments or educational settings.*

**Vital Social Relations:** *Hedonic or eudaimonic happiness expressed by individuals when they are relating with the most important people in their lives, whether it be with family members, close colleagues, close friends or intimate partners.*

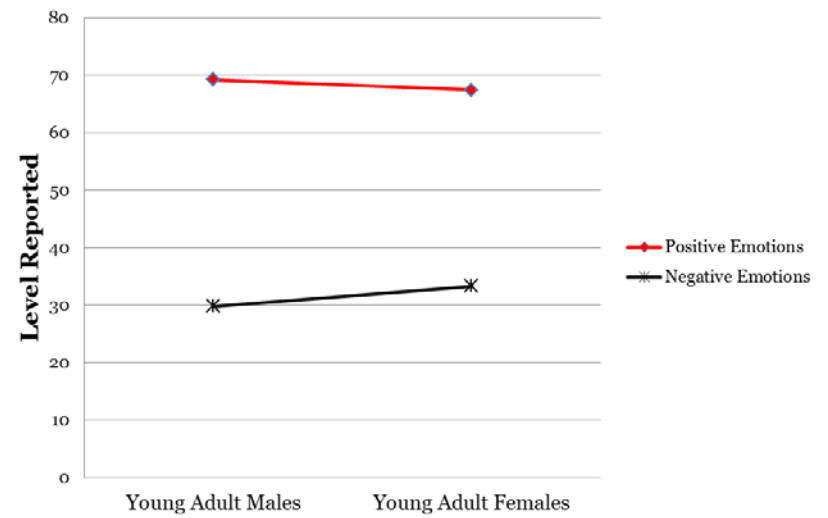
**Recreation:** *Hedonic or eudaimonic happiness expressed by people when they are not working and at play or pursuing a hobby or avocation, or relaxing and entertaining themselves or doing other things that are intrinsically enjoyable.*

# General Results of Study 2

### Eudaimonic Happiness Observed

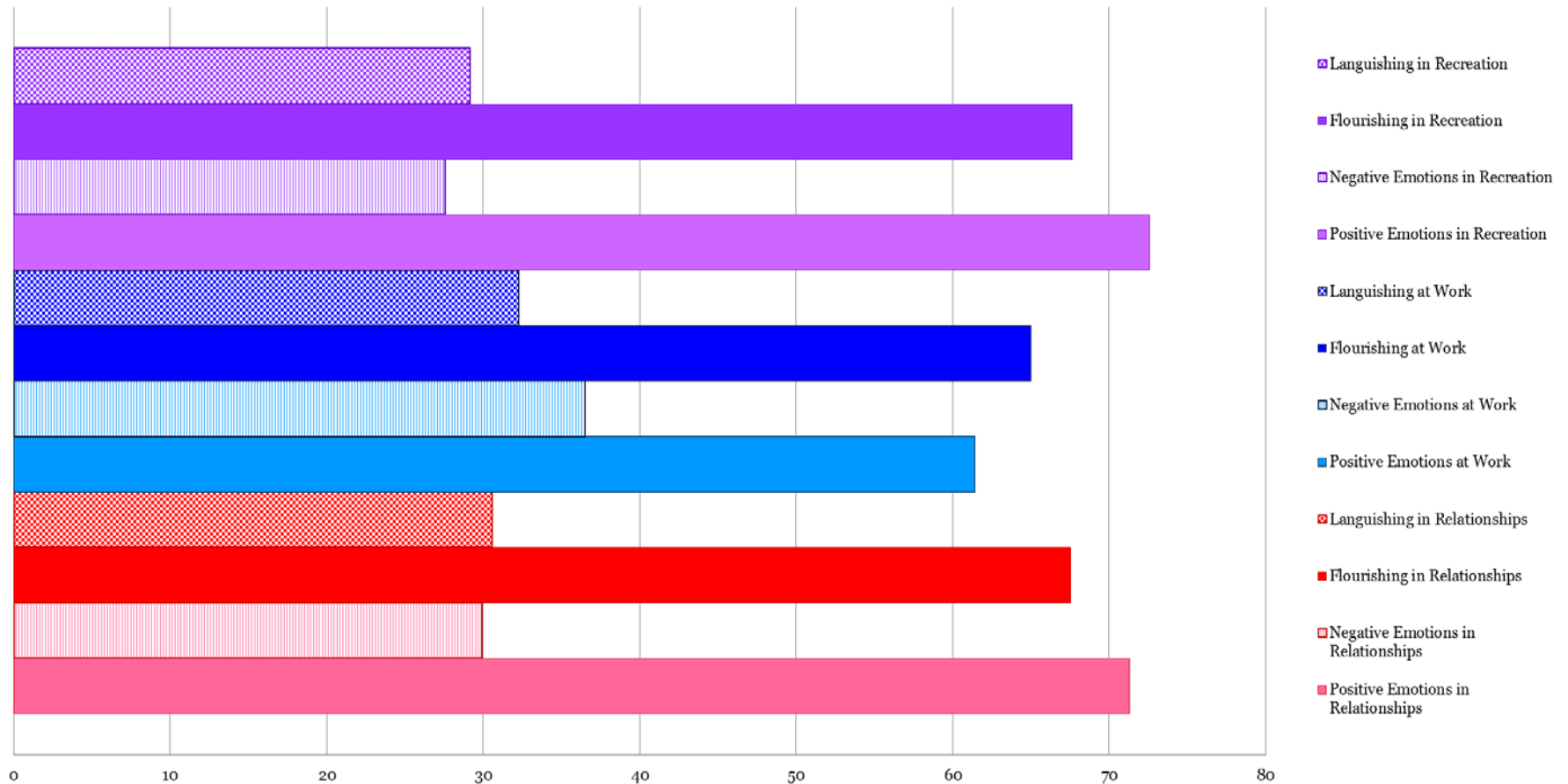


### Hedonic Happiness Observed

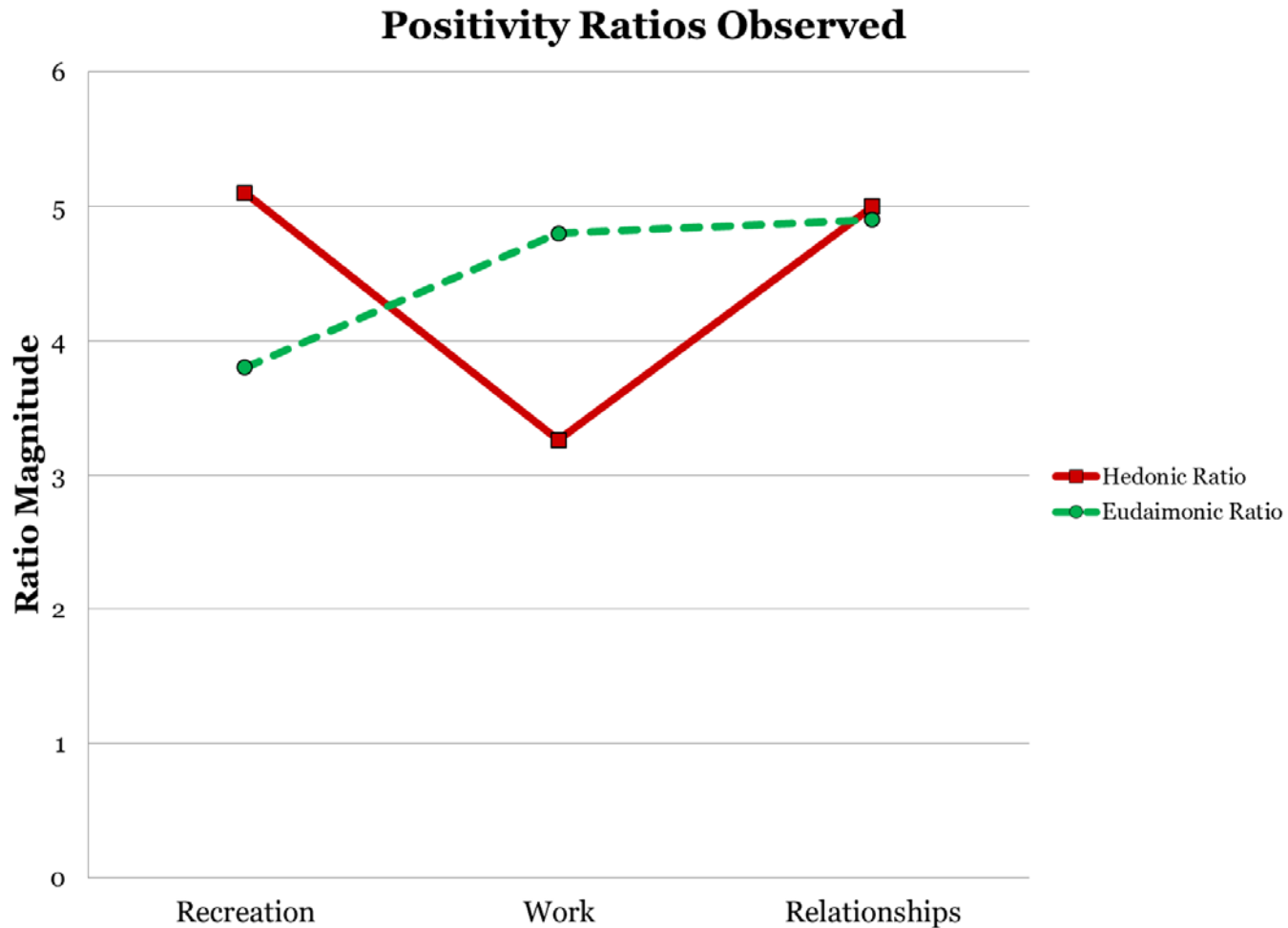


# Specific Results: Spheres of Life

## Forms of Happiness Observed in Recreation, Work and Relationships



# Hedonic and Eudaimonic Ratios

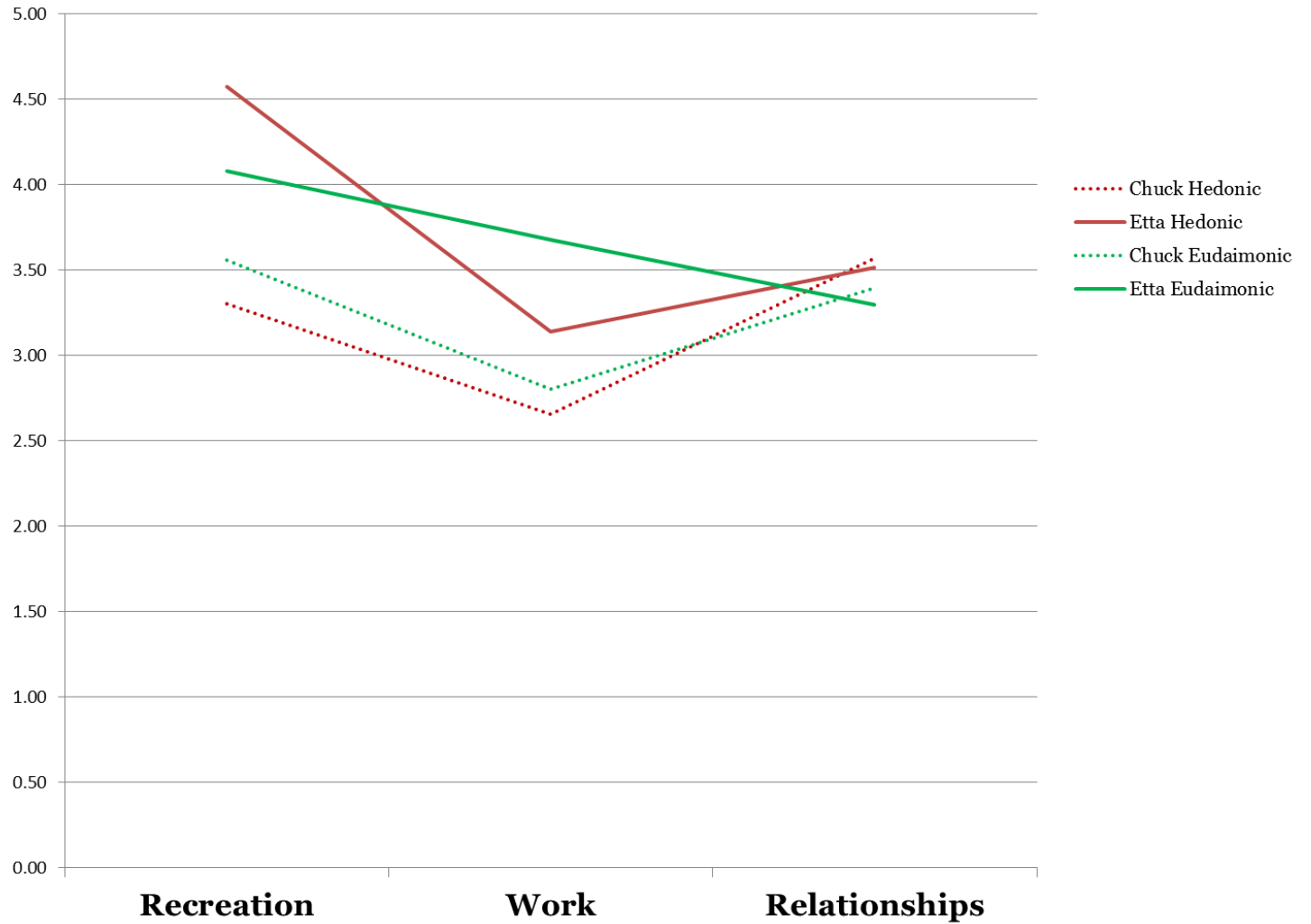


# General “Results” of Study 3

# Self & Partner Happiness Observations of a Married Couple



# Positivity Ratios



# Very Tentative Empirical Findings

- People express observable positive & negative forms of hedonic & eudaimonic happiness.
- Overall, people manifest more positive than negative forms of both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness.
- Hedonic happiness is high in recreation, while eudaimonic happiness is high in work. Both are high when a sphere of life is meaningful (e.g., *vital social relationships*).
- In order to achieve a desired “portfolio” of happiness, people may deliberately alter their positivity ratios (e.g., *languish in work in order to flourish in vital relationships*).



# Conclusions & Caveats

- With a little training, anyone can be an observer of happiness.
- Because observers must make inferences, they must be familiar with the people they watch.
- Observers need reminders and incentives to comply with procedures.
- Online technology works well, but must be revised & updated periodically.
- The potential of this methodology is as wide and deep as the horizon of positive psychology.

**Want a tour of the updated, revised online system we developed for participant observation of happiness?**

*[happyobservation.org](http://happyobservation.org)*