Application to Attend the NBER Meeting on the Measurement and Tracking of Subjective Well-Being for Aging Research 2018

I am a third year Ph.D student in economics nearing candidacy at the Vancouver School of Economics. Although I am still a couple of years shy of completing my Ph.D. I am already an active researcher on the subject of subjective well-being and have been working under the guidance of Dr. John F. Helliwell since the early days of my first year.

I currently have several ongoing research projects, all part of an overall research program focusing on subjective well-being. In the first, with coauthors John Helliwell and Aneta Bonikowska, we provide a test of strong forms of the set-point hypothesis, documenting a clear pattern of convergence to local levels of life satisfaction among immigrants to Canada and the United Kingdom by linking large surveys of subjective well-being in these countries to the Gallup World Poll using detailed country-of-origin data. In the second I identify an SWB-based valuation of health insurance coverage through the U.S. Affordable Care Act's dependent coverage mandate using a regression discontinuity design, finding a strikingly high valuation of access to coverage through parental plans for those with pre-existing health conditions. In my most recent project, with John Helliwell and Christopher Barrington-Leigh, we have generated a set of fine-grained geographic regions for use with the large samples of life satisfaction and related social indicators in the Canadian Community Health Survey and General Social Survey, culminating in the release of a novel data set detailing life satisfaction across over 1200 local communities. The release of this data set, along with our preliminary descriptive results, has been covered in The Washington Post and The Globe and Mail. I have also co-authored chapters in the 2018 World Happiness Report, and the Handbook of Well-Being.

In the future, I intend to continue my research in the area of subjective well-being, focusing on two avenues of inquiry. First, by building on my previous regionalization work to examine the role of local spillovers and contextual effects in a multi-level modelling framework, and second by exploiting recent linkages between Canada's large cross-sectional subjective well-being datasets and longitudinal administrative datasets. I believe that the latter line of research will enable me to make contributions to the literature on ageing and subjective well-being, allowing me to assess potential biases arising from the cross-sectional nature of the majority of the large datasets which are currently in use.

As an aspiring empirical researcher with a passion for happiness research, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to attend the NBER's conference on measuring and tracking subjective well-being for ageing research. I hope to see you in July.

Sincerely,

Hugh A. Shiplett
Ph.D. Student
Vancouver School of Economics

Hugh A. Shiplett

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Education:

Ph.D. Student, Vancouver School of Economics, UBC *2015 – Present*

Master of Arts, Department of Economics, Queen's University *2015*

Bachelor of Arts, Double Major: Economics & Philosophy, University of Minnesota, Duluth *2010*

Awards, and Distinctions:

- J.A. Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Doctoral *2016*
- UBC Faculty of Arts Graduate Award *2015*
- J.A. Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Master's) *2014*
- Contestant at the 2014 Econometrics Game, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands *2014*
- Magna Cum Laude (UMD) *2010*
- Honour Society of Omicron Delta Epsilon *2009*
- Honour Society of Phi Kappa Phi *2009*

Publications:

International Migration and World Happiness
with John F. Helliwell, Haifang Huang and Shun Wang
Chapter 2 in World Happiness Report 2018
Edited by: John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeff Sachs
New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Social Capital and Prosocial Behaviour as Sources of Well-Being
with John F. Helliwell, Lara Aknin, Haifang Huang and Shun Wang
In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of Well-Being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers.

Working Papers:

How Happy are Your Neighbours? Variation in Life Satisfaction among 1200 Canadian Neighbourhoods and Communities
with John F. Helliwell and Christopher P. Barrington-Leigh
National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper no. 24592

Migration as a Test of the Happiness Set Point Hypothesis: Evidence from Immigration to Canada
with John F. Helliwell and Aneta Bonikowska
National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper no. 22601

Work in Progress:

- *The Affordable Care Act's Dependent Coverage Mandate and Subjective Well-Being: A Regression Discontinuity Approach*

Conference Presentations:

- *How can communities be spatially defined to better reveal community-level happiness?* (57th Congress of the European Regional Science Association, August 30, 2017)

Media Mentions:

- *Money really isn't everything: The surprising new ranking of Canada's happiest – and most miserable – places to live* (The Globe and Mail, May 20, 2018)
- *People who live in small towns and rural areas are happier than everyone else – researchers say* (The Washington Post, May 17, 2018)

Teaching:

Teaching Assistant, Vancouver School of Economics, UBC *2016 - Present*
Teaching Assistant, Queen's University Department of Economics *2014 - 2015*

Other Research Experience:

Graduate Research Assistant, Vancouver School of Economics *2015 - Present*
Research Assistant, McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy, McGill University *2014*
Intern, McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy, McGill University *2014*

a place of mind
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May 21, 2018

Joan Stillwell
stillwel@nber.org

Dear Joan,

Re: NBER Conference on the Measurement and Tracking
of Subjective Well-Being for Aging Research
July 2018
Reference letter for Hugh Shiplett, Vancouver School of Economics

Hugh Shiplett is, with my strong encouragement and support, applying to attend this conference. He is one of our best PhD students, with now several subjective well-being papers to his credit, and he is very interested in extending his and our analysis of well-being in the latter half of the life cycle. Canadian data from Statistics Canada are now offering the possibility of linking social surveys with subjective well-being data directly with longitudinal administrative files of tax records, including several measures of health status. Hugh has all the skills and experience to make the best possible use of these linked data.

He is a very able researcher who would benefit greatly from exposure to this high-level NBER working group. And these rather special Canadian data deserve the best of analysis.

I would love to be there myself, but other commitments preclude that option. I would be delighted to provide any further specific information that would help your decision process. He is a natural choice, and this is a perfect time for him to attend such a conference. I hope very much that you can invite him to attend.

With all best wishes,



John F. Helliwell
Research Associate, NBER
Distinguished Fellow, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
Professor Emeritus, Vancouver School of Economics