

# What Do You Think Would Make You Happier? What Do You Think You Would Choose?\*

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## Online Appendix: Scenarios Presented in Surveys

### **Scenario 1: Sleep vs. Income**

Say you have to decide between two new jobs. The jobs are exactly the same in almost every way, but have different work hours and pay different amounts.

**Option 1:** A job paying \$80,000 per year. The hours for this job are reasonable, and you would be able to get about 7.5 hours of sleep on the average work night.

**Option 2:** A job paying \$140,000 per year. However, this job requires you to go to work at unusual hours, and you would only be able to sleep around 6 hours on the average work night.

### **Scenario 2: Concert vs. Birthday**

Suppose you promised a close friend that you would attend his or her 50th ["21st" in student samples] birthday dinner. However, at the last minute you find out that you have won front row seats to see your favorite musician, and the concert is at the same time as the dinner. This is the musician's last night in town. You face two options:

**Option 1:** Skip your friend's birthday dinner to attend the concert.

**Option 2:** Attend your friend's birthday dinner and miss the concert.

### **Scenario 3: Absolute Income vs. Relative Income**

Suppose you are considering a new job, and have offers from two companies. Even though all aspects of the two jobs are identical, employees' salaries are different across the two companies due to arbitrary timing of when salary benchmarks happened to be set. Everyone in each company knows the other employees' salaries. You must choose one of the two companies, which means you must decide between the following two options:

**Option 1:** Your yearly income is \$105,000, while on average others at your level earn \$120,000.

**Option 2:** Your yearly income is \$100,000, while on average others at your level earn \$85,000.

### **Scenario 4: Legacy vs. Income**

*(Phrasing in Denver within-subject study):* Suppose you are a skilled artist, and you have to decide between two career paths for your life.

**Option 1:** You devote yourself to your own style of painting. This would require a number of sacrifices, such as having less time for friends and family, and making less money. For example, you expect that selling your paintings will give you an income of \$40,000 a year. If you choose this path, you don't expect that your work will be appreciated in your lifetime, but posthumously you will make an impact on the history of art, achieve fame, and be remembered in your work.

**Option 2:** You become a graphic designer at an advertising company. This would give you more money and more time with friends and family than Option 1. The company is offering you a salary of \$60,000 a year, which will afford you a much more comfortable lifestyle, but you will have no impact and leave no legacy to be remembered.

*(Version 2: Phrasing in Denver between-subjects study and Cornell studies):* Suppose you are a skilled artist, and you have to decide between two career paths for your life. There are two styles of painting that you consider to be your own style, and you enjoy both equally. Style 1 happens to be much less popular than Style 2 today, but you know it will be an important style in the future.

**Option 1:** You devote yourself to Style 1. You expect that selling your paintings will give you an income of \$40,000 a year. If you choose this path, you don't expect that your work will be appreciated in your lifetime, but posthumously you will make an impact on the history of art, achieve fame, and be remembered in your work.

**Option 2:** You devote yourself to Style 2. You expect that selling your paintings will give you an income of \$60,000 a year, but you will have no memorable impact.

[In the Denver between-subjects study, each subject saw this question three times, with different income levels in Option 2. Income levels could be \$42,000, \$60,000, \$80,000, or \$100,000.]

### **Scenario 5: Apple vs. Orange**

Suppose you are checking out a new supermarket that just opened near where you live. As you walk by the fresh fruit display, you are offered your choice of a free snack:

**Option 1:** A freshly sliced apple.

**Option 2:** A freshly sliced orange.

### **Scenario 6: Money vs. Time**

Suppose that due to budget cuts, the school implements a "student activities fee" of \$15 dollars a week to help pay for maintenance of facilities used for extracurricular student activities.

However, the school allows you to not pay the fee if instead you put in 2 hours of service a week shelving books at the library. You face two options:

**Option 1:** Spend 2 hours a week shelving books.

**Option 2:** Pay \$15 a week.

### **Scenario 7: Socialize vs. Sleep**

Say you are hanging out with a group of friends at your friend's room. You are having a really

good time, but it is getting to be late at night. You have to decide between two options.

**Option 1:** Stay up another hour. It is likely you will feel tired all day tomorrow, but this particular evening you are having an especially fun time.

**Option 2:** Excuse yourself from the group, and go to bed. You will be disappointed to miss the fun, but you know you will feel better the next day and be more productive at paying attention in class and doing your homework.

### **Scenario 8: Family vs. Money**

Imagine that for the first time in three years, your parents (or if your parents are gone, your closest relatives who are older than you) have arranged for a special family gathering that will happen the day after Thanksgiving, with everyone also invited to Thanksgiving dinner. You face two options. Would you choose to go to the family gathering the day after Thanksgiving (and maybe to Thanksgiving dinner) if getting there required a \$500 roundtrip plane ticket for plane flights that were 5 hours each way?

**Option 1:** Go to the thanksgiving gathering, which requires a \$500 round trip plane ticket.

**Option 2:** Miss the thanksgiving gathering, but save the money.

### **Scenario 9: Education vs. Social Life**

Suppose you have decided to leave Cornell, and are transferring to a new school. You have been accepted to two schools, and are deciding where to go. The first school is extremely selective and high quality, but is in a small town out in the country with a less active social scene. The second school is in a major city with a great social scene, but is slightly less renowned. Which would you choose?

**Option 1:** Highly selective school, isolated socially and geographically.

**Option 2:** Less selective school, socially active and in a major city.

### **Scenario 10: Interest vs. Career**

Suppose you are considering two summer internships. One is extremely interesting and involves work you are passionate about, but does not advance your career. The other will likely be boring, but will help you get a job in the future. Which would you choose?

**Option 1:** Interesting internship which does not advance career.

**Option 2:** Boring internship which will help you get a job.

### **Scenario 11: Concert vs. Duty**

Say you are driving by yourself to see your favorite musician in concert on their last day in town. You are five minutes away, and the concert starts in ten minutes. On the drive, you witness a truck hit a parked car, causing roughly \$500 in damages, and then drive away without leaving their information. You notice the truck's license plate, and you are the only witness. You face two options:

**Option 1:** Keep driving and get to the concert on time.

**Option 2:** Call the police, in which case you will have to wait around the parked car to give a testimony. This would take about half an hour. You would have trouble finding a seat and might miss the whole concert.

### **Scenario 12: Low Rent vs. Short Commute**

*(Phrasing in Denver within-subject study):* Say you are moving to a new town. You are trying to decide between two similar apartments which you could rent. The two apartments are identical in almost everything – including floor plan, amenities, neighborhood character, schools, safety, etc. However, they have different rents and are located at different distances from your work.

**Option 1:** An apartment which requires a 45-minute drive to work. The rent is about 20% of your monthly income.

**Option 2:** A similar apartment, with only a 10-minute drive. The rent is about 40% of your monthly income.

(Version 2: *Phrasing in Denver between-subject study*): Say you are moving to a new town. The new town is known for its terrible traffic jams, and driving there is widely considered to be unpleasant. You are trying to decide between two similar apartments which you could rent. The two apartments are identical in almost everything – including floor plan, amenities, neighborhood character, schools, safety, etc. However, they have different rents and are located at different distances from your work.

**Option 1:** An apartment which requires a 45-minute drive each way to work. The commute has heavy traffic almost the whole way. The rent is about 20% of your monthly income.

**Option 2:** A similar apartment which requires a 10-minute drive each way to work. The commute has heavy traffic almost the whole way. The rent is about 40% of your monthly income.

### **Scenario 13: Friends vs Income**

Say you have been reassigned at your job, and will be moved to a new location. There are two offices where you could request to work. One office is in a city where many of your friends happen to live, and pays 20% less than your current salary. The other office is in a city where you don't know anyone, and pays 10% more than your current salary. Your job will be exactly the same at either office. You must decide between the following two options:

**Option 1:** Make 20% less than your current salary and move to the city with your friends.

**Option 2:** Make 10% more than your current salary and move to a city where you do not know anyone.