Life Satisfaction in the City

Lina Martínez, John Rennie Short

Abstract: Colombia is known as one of the happiest countries in the world despite poverty, crime and government corruption. This paper reports on a survey of life satisfaction conducted in Cali, the third largest city in the country, in order to analyze how life satisfaction is affected by the socioeconomic conditions of where people live and their satisfaction with government performance. We find that, on the surface, Cali's habitants are generally happy, but when we look at the deep socioeconomic differences in the city, another picture emerges. We report two main findings: first, levels of happiness with home and city are relatively high, with neighborhood satisfaction much more dependent on socio-economic status; second, compared to personal subjective well-being, satisfaction with city government performance is much lower. There is a dichotomy in satisfaction levels at different spatial scales and between the private and public spheres.

Keywords: life satisfaction, Colombia, government and city satisfaction.

JEL classification: H40, Z18.

1. Introduction

There is a bourgeoning body of research that considers happiness and cities. For example, improving attributes of cities such as walkability, transportation and the provision of public goods such as parks can improve people's quality of life (Leyden *et al.*, 2011; Florida *et al.*, 2013; Goldberg *et al.*, 2012; Cloutier, Pfeiffer, 2015; Pfeiffer, Cloutier, 2016). These studies intersect with several academic areas, including urban affairs as well as urban planning and policy making. We intend to contribute to this discussion by providing evidence from Cali, Colombia, a city that despite high rates of crime, poverty, social inequality and political corruption, reports high rates of happiness. The analysis is novel insofar as there is limited research on happiness in cities in the global South. With this analysis, we seek to widen and deepen the discussion on life satisfaction.

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This paper has two objectives. One is to move beyond the generalized happiness that is reported in the city and Colombia. We show that there are several layers within the declared happiness. In particular, we find differences between those who live in impoverished districts and those who live in the more affluent areas. Our analysis contributes to discussion of life satisfaction in large cities and to differences between neighborhoods in the same city. The aim of the paper is also to evaluate government performance. Promotion of the population's well-being should be at the center of government functioning (Frey, 2008; Bok, 2010). Governments can provide «enabling conditions» for individuals to thrive and increase their personal satisfaction (Murray, 2013). Our results point to a major difference between satisfaction with personal life and satisfaction with the public realm. We refer to this as the public/private dichotomy.

For this analysis we use information from a unique population survey (Martínez, 2017) that enables us to analyze how the city and the provision of public services are related with individual happiness.

2. Research on life satisfaction and its relations with government performance

There is an increase in studies about happiness. Since the 1970s, psychologists, economists and sociologists have developed multiple theoretical and empirical frameworks to explain the factors associated with happiness (Easterlin, 1974; 2001; Veenhoven *et al.*, 2004; Veenhoven, Hagerty, 2006; Blanchflower, 2009; Diener *et al.*, 2003; Frey, 2008).

Research draws on a psychological approach concentrating on well-being, subjective experiences and life satisfaction (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Sheldon, King, 2001; Ryan, Deci, 2001). The work is grounded in personal experiences that reflect the degree to which people feel satisfied with their lives. Even though happiness, life satisfaction and well-being have different meanings (Diener *et al.*, 2009), they are often used as interchangeable concepts in the literature and in this paper.

Several personal factors are constantly validated in the literature as predictors of happiness. Since the seminal work by Wilson (1967), higher education, good health conditions, optimism, employment and marriage have been positively associated with happiness. Gender and IQ show no relationship (Wilson, 1967). Generally speaking, recent comparative research with larger data sets shows that those factors – and their direction – still hold (Blanchflower, 2009). Current investigation is now focused on going beyond observable characteristics that influence happiness. Researchers are more interested in understanding the process that underlies happiness (Diener *et al.*, 2003; Diener, 1994). Happy people appear more likely to be in good health

(mental and physical), have greater self-control and self-regulatory abilities (Aspinwall, 1998; Fredrickson, Joiner, 2002; Keltner, Bonanno, 1997) and better work outcomes (Staw *et al.*, 1994).

The relationship between income and happiness has been closely studied. One of the most interesting findings is that money and the things that money can buy help achieve happiness, but only to a certain extent (Easterlin, 1973; 1974: 2001; 2003). Studies show that an increase in income does not make people happier. Levels of happiness in the population have remained the same in the past 50 years, despite the average increase in wealth and income. This finding shows that the societal aim of material prosperity and wealth accumulation does not necessarily lead to happier societies (Diener, Oishi, 2000) and has fueled a discussion about how a government defines and evaluates factors that promote well-being within its population, which in turn, affect policy interventions and policy priorities (Bok, 2010).

Life satisfaction studies are not limited to personal characteristics. Societal factors that contribute to individual well-being include a high degree of trust in the community and high social capital. Lower levels of life satisfaction are associated with poverty, discrimination, inequality, low community trust and poor governance (Helliwell *et al.*, 2014).

Recent developments in the literature show that where people live, the services that they receive from the government, the safety of their streets and the quality of their children's education are important factors in making people happier with their lives (Leyden *et al.*, 2011; Florida *et al.*, 2013; Goldberg *et al.*, 2012). And this leads to the conclusion that governments, and relevant public policies, have a large role to play in maintaining and improving people's happiness. Some have argued that the best outcome of the welfare system is to make citizens happier (Pacek, Radcliff, 2008), and others consider that societies should be measured by the happiness of their people (Layard, 2005; Leaming, 2004; Andelman, 2010). Increasing people's happiness as a government goal goes beyond individual concerns alone. The shared space of the public sphere is important. Citizens who are satisfied with public services not only report higher levels of happiness in their private lives (Leyden *et al.*, 2011), but also have greater trust in public institutions (Christensen, Lægreid, 2005). Individuals who are satisfied with government performance and the provision of public goods are, generally speaking, happier.

Research on the relationship between well-being and urbanization is growing. One line of inquiry in the global North finds that people tend to be happiest in small places (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2015; Okulicz-Kozaryn *et al.*, 2018) and in more rural areas (Sorensen, 2014; Winters, Li, 2017). However, if we move beyond the simple urban/rural categorization more complex findings emerge.

City size is important. Chen *et al.* (2015) find that, after controlling for individual socio-demographic characteristics, health status, and household

wealth, rural-to-urban migrants who settle in cities with urban populations between 200,000 and 500,000 are more satisfied with their lives than those who settle in either larger or smaller cities. One study in Romania (Lenzi, Perucca, 2016) found that life satisfaction was greater in larger cities. The authors theorize that, in this case, the benefits of agglomeration such as increased economic opportunity outweigh the costs of agglomeration. This insight explains the fact that in wealthier countries, rural living standards are high enough to create a higher level of subjective well-being; while in less developed countries the rural environment provides fewer opportunities for creating subjective well-being (Requena, 2016).

Even the individual city may play a role in subjective well-being. Morrison (2007) found that in New Zealand even after controlling for individual characteristics there remain marked place effects, with specific cities having an independent influence on wellbeing.

Differences in happiness are also reported within cities. Wang and Wang (2016) found, from a survey conducted in Beijing in 2012-13, significant differences among neighborhoods. Outer suburb residents are the least happy, central area residents are the second happiest, and inner suburb residents are the happiest. Inter-district differences account for around 10% of the variations in life satisfaction.

Another strand of research on life satisfaction in the city shows that the quality of the built environment and the amenities and services provided in the city have a great influence on declared levels of happiness. Cities that provide convenient transportation services, access to cultural venues, affordable housing and safety are better places to live, and their residents have a higher quality of life, which translates into higher levels of happiness (Leyden et al., 2011; Florida et al., 2013; Goldberg et al., 2012). A city's socio-spatial organization can also have an impact on health outcomes such as obesity, distress and physical activity (Martínez et al., 2018; Renalds et al., 2010).

The study of the many implications of life satisfaction in Latin America is an emerging field (Graham, Lora, 2010; Graham, Felton, 2005; Rojas, 2016). However, most of the information available is at the national level and the role of cities in promoting happiness is not yet widely studied in that region. In this paper we contribute to the emerging literature on measuring happiness in the global South by reporting the results of a survey conducted on a major Colombian city and explore the effect of government performance on life satisfaction.

3. Very happy places: Colombia and Cali

Colombia is a country in the global South with 48 million habitants. During the past two decades, the country has moved from being a low-income to a middle-income country. The reduction in poverty rates, income increase

and the expansion of a middle class are all factors improving the quality of life (Stampini *et al.*, 2015). Colombia used to have a reputation around the world for all the wrong reasons: the largest civil conflict in Latin America and the violence provoked by drug-trafficking during the 1980s and 1990s. As with many countries in the global South, the new economic affluence has been unevenly distributed, generating deep social inequalities and promoting urban crime (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2003).

Nonetheless, Colombians are happy. They are happier than most: at least according to the various studies that measure life satisfaction in countries around the world. Colombians declare themselves to be very satisfied with their lives (Standish, Witters, 2014). In a 2013 survey, 39% of Colombians stated that they liked what they did and felt motivated; 46% considered themselves to have supportive relationships and love in their lives; and 38% considered themselves to have good health and enough energy to get things done daily (Standish, Witters, 2014). The most recent national measurement (2016) revealed that on average, the life satisfaction score for a Colombian (on a scale of 0-10) is 8.5 without significant variations across regions or urban-rural areas (DNP, 2016).

Cali is the third largest city in the country with more than 2.4 million inhabitants (DANE, 2015). Cali is a traumatized city. During the 1980s and 1990s it was the scene of violence between drug trafficking cartels. It is home to people displaced by violence in the countryside who settled in city slums. Violence, poverty, and marked social and racial segregation are important features of the city. Cali is the most violent city in the country with 51 homicides per 100,000 habitants in 2017. But despite all these negative factors, people's life satisfaction scores mirror the high national average.

4. Data and methods

For our analysis, we used a data set from a population survey called CaliBRANDO. This is a yearly survey conducted by the Observatory of Public Policies (POLIS) of Universidad Icesi since 2014 (Martínez, 2017). This survey measures life satisfaction, and it is the only study in Colombia created with the main objective of measuring subjective well-being at a city level. The CaliBRANDO dataset is representative of the city in regard to major social components of gender, socioeconomic strata and race/ethnicity. The survey inquires into life satisfaction, employment, health, education, family composition, living standards and satisfaction with government performance. Likewise, information was collected about the neighborhood where respondents lived.

Data were collected with face-to-face interviews administered by trained pollsters to adults (18 and older). The interview took about 30 minutes to complete. Informants were randomly selected. Respondents were told the

objective of the study. They were assured confidentiality, and it was emphasized that the data would be used for academic purposes. Also, it was made clear to respondents that they could stop the interview at any time and that participation was voluntary. This analysis uses data from 2015 and 2016 for a total of 2,410 observations. Annex 1 presents the questionnaire used to collect the data.

4.1. Independent variable

To assess life satisfaction, the research reported in this study used an *evaluative happiness approach* (Helliwell *et al.*, 2014). The survey employed a standard and widely used scale to measure life satisfaction (1-10), with 1 the lowest and 10 the highest (Van Praag, Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2008).
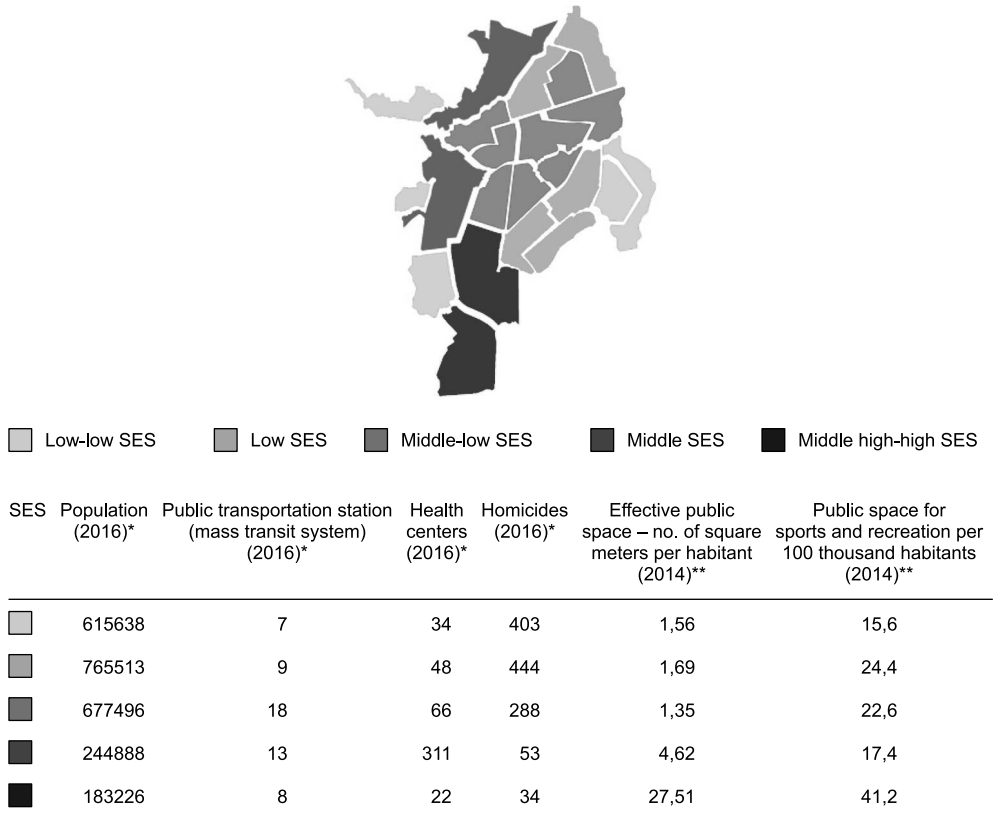
4.2. Key explanatory variables

District Socioeconomic Conditions (SES). In order to proxy for the conditions in which people live to explain differences within the city, we created a SES indicator at district level. To build this indicator, we followed national standards for socioeconomic classifications. In Colombia, households are classified in a strata scale of their neighborhood from one to six – one the poorest, six the richest. The classification is used by the government to target social spending and the subsidizing of electricity, sanitation and running water services (DANE, 2015). For our analysis we grouped neighborhoods into districts (22 in total) and then districts into five categories of socioeconomic conditions using the neighborhood classification provided by the local government.
1) Low-low SES (1 in the local strata scale) are the most deprived and poor neighborhoods; most of them are slums and lack basic sanitation services.
2) Low SES (2 in the local strata scale) are poor neighborhoods with most of the basic needs covered (potable water, electricity, sewerage).
3) Middle-low SES (3 in the local strata scale) are districts with mostly working poor population.
4) Middle SES (4 in the local strata scale) are middle class districts.
5) Middle high – high SES (5 and 6 in the local strata scale) are the most affluent districts.
Low-low and low SES districts (as shown in Figure 1) present the highest rates of homicides, have the lowest number of health facilities in the city, have the lowest ratio of effective public space per habitant, and host about 56% of the population. Figure 3 presents general characteristics, safety and provision of public goods and services by district SES.
To control for life satisfaction based on the socioeconomic characteristics of where people live, we included variables of gender, marriage, and declared

Figure 1: Cali socioeconomic districts composition and general characteristics.

SES	Population (2016)*	Public transportation station (mass transit system) (2016)*	Health centers (2016)*	Homicides (2016)*	Effective public space – no. of square meters per habitant (2014)**	Public space for sports and recreation per 100 thousand habitants (2014)**
	615638	7	34	403	1,56	15,6
	765513	9	48	444	1,69	24,4
	677496	18	66	288	1,35	22,6
	244888	13	311	53	4,62	17,4
	183226	8	22	34	27,51	41,2

* Alcaldía de Cali
** Cali Cómo Vamos, 2014

monthly income. Given the importance of health for life satisfaction and the impact that neighborhood has on health outcomes in Cali (Martínez *et al.*, 2018) we used two measures as proxies for mental and physical health[1]. We also controlled for satisfaction with living standards (yes/no question).

This analysis also includes a set of subjective measures of satisfaction, all rated on a scale from 1 to 10. One set of variables are related with location (satisfaction with city, neighborhood and home). The other set of variables refer to satisfaction with the government's provision of public goods and

[1] Physical health was assessed by the question «now thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days has your physical health not been good?». Mental health was measured using the question «now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days has your mental health not been good?». 14 days were used a threshold because practitioners use a similar timeframe to diagnose mood disorders (Lamothe-Galette, 2005).

Table 1: CaliBRANDO descriptive statistics 2015-2016

	2015	2016
Average life satisfaction score -1-10 scale	8,7	8,5
District SES (%)		
Low-low SES	28,7	23,4
Low SES	23,6	31,1
Middle-low SES	24,2	22,6
Middle SES	15,4	11,9
Middle/high-high SES	7,9	10,3
Male (%)	49,7	49,4
Married (%)	18,8	15,1
Cohabitation (%)	24,7	27,1
Average monthly income (US dollars)*	US 343	US 364
Health		
Having 14 or more days of poor physical health during the last month** (%)	18,6	13,4
Having 14 or more days of poor mental health during the last month*** (%)	11,9	10,9
Satisfaction life standard (%)	70,8	75,3
Satisfaction with location -1 to 10 escale		
Average city satisfaction	6,8	7
Average neighborhood satisfaction	6,1	5,5
Average place of living satisfaction	7,9	7,6
Average government services satisfaction -1 to 10 scale		
Safety	4,2	4,1
Health services	4,9	3,9
Public transportation	4,1	3,5
Parks and green areas	5,9	5,7
Obs	1204	1206

Notes: * minimum monthly wage = US245. US1 dollar = 3,000 Colombian peso; ** physical health includes physical illness and injury; *** mental health includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions.

services (safety, health services, public transportation, and parks and green areas). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics by year of the survey.

We used an ordered logit model to estimate the association between happiness and the satisfaction with place and the government's provision of public goods and services. This model was selected given the nature of the dependent variable, which was an ordered scale of 0-10. We controlled for individuals' socio-demographic and economic characteristics using the variables described above. We also conducted analysis by district SES in terms of health conditions and satisfaction with the provision of public goods. This

analysis is descriptive, and we do not claim a causal relationship among the factors studied in this exploration.

5. Results

5.1. Indicators of happiness

In Cali, people declared themselves to be very happy. Over 75% of individuals surveyed said that they were very satisfied with their lives, scoring 8 or more on the 1-10 scale. To the question «how satisfied are you with your life», individuals rated 8.6 on average. These numbers are in sharp contrast with OECD countries, where life satisfaction is rated on average at 6.2 (OECD, 2013). However, Cali is not an outlier in the country. Our survey replicates the finding of national studies that people in Colombia are happier than people in developed nations (Clifton, 2015).

The literature on happiness shows that there are three strong predictors of individual happiness: income, marriage, and health.

The bulk of the literature on life satisfaction is devoted to understanding its relationship with money and socioeconomic status (Deaton, 2008; Easterlin *et al.*, 2010; Diener, Tay, 2015; Di Tella *et al.*, 2003). Similar to most of the findings from the global North, we find that the relationship between income and life satisfaction is positive, linear and very strong: the higher the income, the higher the life satisfaction.

In our sample, 21% of the individuals surveyed earned less than the minimum wage (about U$245 a month); the majority (53%) made between U$245 and U$491 monthly; and only 14% made more than U$500. Over 14% did not have an income, mostly women. This is in line with the findings of the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2013). On average, males had higher incomes than females despite similar educational attainment.

How did happiness change with income and the conditions of the districts where respondents lived? Figure 2 presents the results for life satisfaction and income by district SES. In summary: on average, the higher the income, the higher the score on life satisfaction. Those who lived in the most impoverished areas reported the lowest levels of life satisfaction. In contrast, those who lived in middle-income SES districts reported the highest levels of happiness, even higher than those in the upper income bracket. Despite the significant differences in income, over 70% of all respondents – regardless of district SES – were satisfied with their living standards (what they could do and buy with their current income).

In line with other research (Easterlin, 2003), we find that married people are happier, especially married men. Married men in Cali rate their life satisfaction at 9.3, whereas single males rate their overall happiness at 8.3. Married women are happier than single ones. In our study, married women
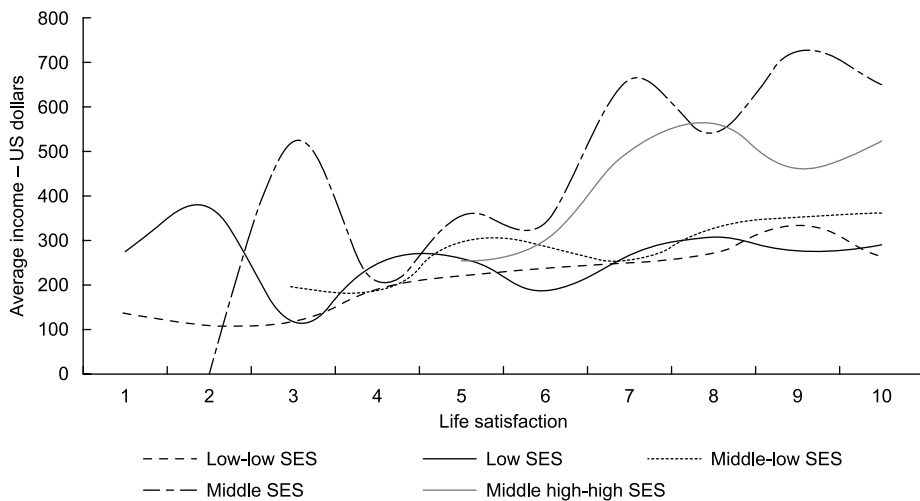
Figure 2: Life Satisfaction and income by district SES.

score 8.9 on life satisfaction, whereas singles rate at 8.3. We also find that marriage is more prevalent within the affluent population (25%), whereas in the poorest districts it is about 15%. These differences are statistically significant. One particular finding in our data that deserves some discussion is that cohabitation is not related with happiness. Amongst the poor, cohabitation is more prevalent than marriage (about 30%), but compared with married people, those who cohabit seems to be, on average, poorer and less happy.

Health is probably the most important factor when explaining individual happiness, even more important that income. This also holds in Cali. In a previous study in the city it was established that people living in districts with higher rates of crime (homicides) had a higher prevalence of mental distress, and those who lived in districts with low provision of parks and green areas had a higher probability of obesity (Martínez *et al.*, 2018). In our sample we found that 11% of respondents declared feeling depressed or anxious and 16% reported bad physical health during 14 days in the past month. Generally speaking, women reported a higher prevalence of days feeling depressed.

Table 2 shows how the prevalent disparities in the city affect the health conditions of the poorest. The poor in Cali are penalized in multiple ways. Lack of access to green areas, health facilities and high crime rates explain the significant differences between the rich and the poor.

Table 2: Health and district SES

|	Low-low SES	Low SES	Middle-low SES	Middle SES	Middle high-high SES
Having 14 or more days of poor physical health during the last month (%)	30,6	25,96	22,4	12,84	8,2
Having 14 or more days of poor mental health during the last month (%)	27,31	27,69	23,08	11,54	10,38

5.2. Happiness and place

Happiness can be assessed at different spatial scales, from the general urban realm to the inner sphere of privacy of the household. In our analysis, we sought to understand how the three levels of city, neighborhood, and home (household) related to individual happiness.

We used different levels to proxy for location, because each level related to individual happiness in different ways. The literature shows that the perceived benefits from the city as a whole are different from the benefits perceived from neighborhoods and even from a more inner and intimate sphere like the household. The reported satisfaction that individuals derive from cities is related with job opportunities, income, city facilities, access to cultural activities and infrastructure (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2013). Neighborhoods in turn, provide a sense of cohesion and community building. Also issues like traffic, lack of public services provision, and crime are usually segmented and clustered in the most impoverished areas. All these factors affect people's satisfaction with their neighborhoods (Hur, Morrow-Jones, 2008). Satisfaction with a household or «home» is more related with a community commitment to strengthening families and the inner circle at the same time that influences self-esteem and greater control (Rohe *et al.*, 2013; Rohe, Stegman, 2016).

When we consider happiness on these different spatial scales, we obtain some interesting results. Figure 3 presents the results for Cali of city, neighborhood and home satisfaction.

In terms of satisfaction with the city and home, the five different groups all share relatively high levels of satisfaction. Those living in the most affluent districts are, generally speaking, more satisfied with the city. Home satisfaction has a very similar pattern across all groups. Individuals report high satisfaction rates with their homes. This may capture the social relations and the sense of community on which people build in their inner and private sphere. As is shown in Table 4, city and home satisfaction increases happiness.
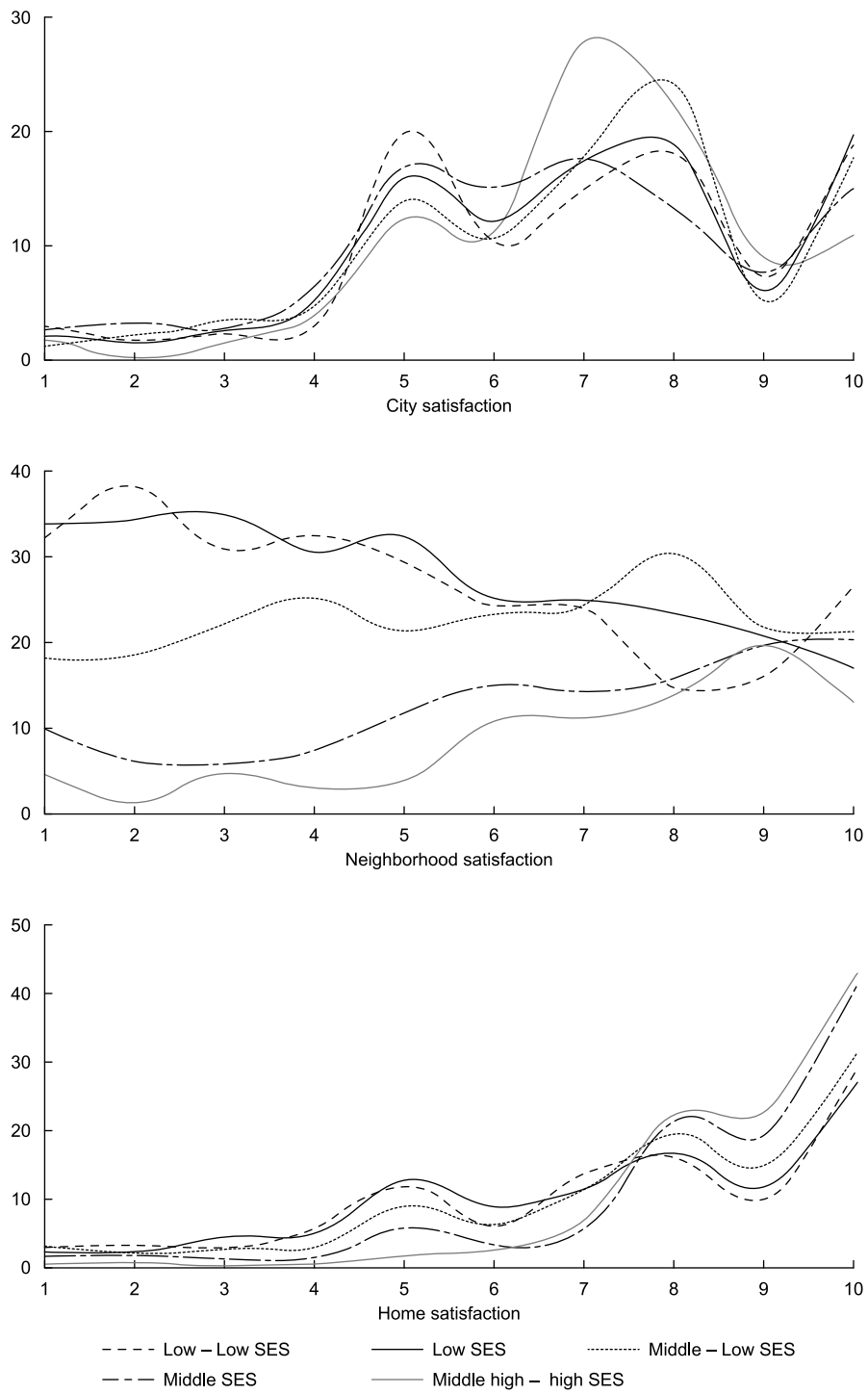
Figure 3: City, neighborhood and home satisfaction by district SES.

When we look at satisfaction with the neighborhood a very different picture emerges. Levels of neighborhood satisfaction in Cali increase with SES. The general dissatisfaction with neighborhood, particularly in the most impoverished districts, may reflect the high crime and poor provision of public goods to which the lower income population in the city is exposed.

5.3. Satisfaction with goods and services provided by the government

Happiness is not simply a product of individual lives but also a function of public life and civic culture. Some researchers argue that individual happiness is enhanced when people feel that their cities and policymakers are able to deliver services to improve the quality of life (Leyden *et al.*, 2011). A city with happy individuals may therefore translate into better social connections, higher public trust and a functioning civic culture. Individual happiness may have the potential to build better societies.

However, a major finding of this work is that individual happiness does not translate into greater civic culture or trust in the government's performance. The bulk of research shows that the individual happiness is strongly related with the services and goods that people receive from governments (OECD, 2017). Based on the data collected in Cali, we argue that, differently from developed countries, individual happiness is achieved despite perceived government performance.

In Table 3, we present the satisfaction with the provision of four public goods: safety, health services, public transportation and parks/green areas. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with those services on a scale from 1 to 10, one being the lowest score. As shown in Table 3, satisfaction with the provision of goods and services was generally low (below 4 in the scale). However, people living in districts with higher SES were, on average, somewhat more satisfied with the provision of safety, public transportation and parks/green areas compared with those living in the poorest districts. The average score on all dimensions remained steady – and low – during each year evaluated.

Citizen discontent is understandable. In 2014, almost half of Cali's population used public transportation in the city; however, the limited capacity of the mass transit system had created discontent amongst the population. Major and recurring criticisms of the system were that it is crowded, disorganized and unsafe (a lot of petty crime is committed in buses) (Cali Cómo Vamos, 2015). In 2004, 91 homicides were reported per 100,000 habitants, and by 2014 this figure had declined to 66 violent homicides. But petty crime is increasing in the city (Cali Cómo Vamos, 2014). Only 2% of respondents declared themselves to be completely satisfied with security in the city. There are, it seems, limits to the happiness syndrome. Happiness runs into the brute reality of perceived insecurity and poor government performance in the city.

Table 3: Average Government Satisfaction -1 to 10 scale

	Low-low SES	Low SES	Middle-low SES	Middle SES	Middle high-high SES
Safety	4,1	4,1	4,1	4,2	4,3
Health services	4,4	4,3	4,5	4,6	4,2
Public transportation	3,7	3,5	3,8	4,2	4,1
Parks and green areas	5,8	5,8	5,6	5,9	6,2

Table 4 presents the results of an ordered logit model predicting life satisfaction controlling for sociodemographic factors, satisfaction with location, satisfaction with the provision of government services and district SES.

In line with other findings, marriage is positively correlated with life satisfaction. Income is positively associated with life satisfaction, but its significance fades when health conditions are included in the model. Mental health presents a strong negative association with happiness (it most affects the poorest people and women). Satisfaction with living standards (what people can do and buy with their current income), is positively associated with happiness. As shown in Table 1, satisfaction with living standards is high (over 70%), and does not change to a significant extent across district SES, despite differences in income.

City and home satisfaction are strongly associated with life satisfaction. This shows the great importance of place and happiness. Dissatisfaction with government performance in different domains (safety, health services and public transportation,) is negatively associated with happiness although, the correlation is only statistically significant for safety.

One reading of the low satisfaction with government performance is that Cali in particular, and Colombia in general, has been shifting from a low to a middle-income country. In 2005, 36% of the population in Cali considered themselves poor, by 2014 the proportion had fallen to 14% (Cali Como Vamos, 2014). With an increasing sense of affluence and prosperity, citizens are demanding more from public services, such as better transportation, better schools, more safety, more green spaces and parks. And the gap between rising expectations and government performance is widening, leading to a decline in satisfaction with the city government. In 2008, 71% of the population were satisfied living in Cali, but by 2014 this proportion had fallen to 62% (Cali Cómo Vamos, 2014). This finding is in line with a previous analysis conducted in the city. Martínez *et al.* (2015) found low scoring on satisfaction with civic norms and government performance, especially amongst the poor.

As shown in Table 4, income is not significantly correlated with happiness (once health and individual variables are included in the model).

Table 4: OLS predicting life satisfaction, 2015-2016

	Coefficient	Std. Err.
Male	.0089249	.0722255
Married	.29544689**	.0952044
Income	.06234393	.0393072
Physical health	-.11597683	.0985169
Mental health	-.3729827**	.11349
Satisfaction living standard	.86480424***	.0822176
Satisfaction with location		
City satisfaction	.14979212***	.0176552
Neighborhood satisfaction	-.01803219	.0152617
Home satisfaction	.14932665***	.0177408
Government satisfaction		
Safety	-.03969882*	.0195454
Health services	-.00266213	.0173812
Public transportation	-.00764024	.0181868
Parks and green areas	.01337226	.0175751
District SES		
Low SES	-.0780847	.0977258
Middle-low SES	-.22543996*	.1016197
Middle SES	-.23473326	.1249532
Middle/high-high SES	-.06529539	.1409871
Cons.	5.3501233***	.548345
Number of obs	1,874	
Adj R-squared	0.1756	

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001; excluded category in district SES: low-low SES.

Indeed, it seems that the poorest people are the happiest. As compared to those in low-low SES districts (excluded category in the model), all the respondents reported, generally speaking, lower scores of life satisfaction compared to those in the lower socioeconomic scale, although differences are only statistically significant in the middle-low and middle SES districts. This may seem counterintuitive. However, another analysis conducted in the city showed that the poor informal workers in the city – trash pickers and street vendors – report high levels of life satisfaction (Martínez, 2016).

The positive evaluation of life satisfaction and happiness amongst the poorest people is not new (Dowling, Yap, 2012) and by no means suggests that they are satisfied with what they are receiving from the government. On the contrary, it may suggest that other values are more important when assessing happiness and life satisfaction. Health, family and community may play a more relevant role than income.

6. Discussion

The people of Cali, like most people in Colombia, are happy. But this generalized happiness changes once the deep socioeconomic disparities in the city are analyzed. We found that, on the surface, people living in districts with better socioeconomic conditions were, generally speaking, happier. This reaffirms the generalized notion that income generates happiness. However, the complexity arises when other factors are taken into consideration. Satisfaction varies by spatial scale. People tended to be satisfied with the city and home and much less satisfied with the neighborhood. And there was significant difference with neighborhood satisfaction rising by SES. This difference reflects, we believe, the fact that residents were reacting to local public services rather than general city attitudes or perception of home. Respondents were less satisfied with their neighborhoods, especially in low SES districts, than with the city as whole or their home in particular.

Compared to personal subjective well-being, satisfaction with city government performance was much lower. There was a dichotomy in satisfaction levels between the private space of home and the public spheres of the neighborhood. We noted a major disparity between high scores for subjective wellbeing compared to satisfaction with government performance. Caleños score high on subjective well-being but lower on satisfaction with the public sphere. This is a countrywide problem. According to Gallup data, between 2009 and 2013 people declared low trust in the police, and high perceptions of insecurity and vulnerability to crime (Sonnenschein, 2014). Our study finds an important difference between individual feelings of wellbeing compared to civic satisfaction.

We also found that, overall, residents in the poorest districts were more satisfied with their lives (although the differences compared with residents in other districts are not statistically significant in all cases). This may reflect the high resilience of this population. The poorest people in the city are negatively affected by crime, poor health outcomes and insufficient provision of public goods, but they display great satisfaction with their private lives.

A growing body of literature suggests that happiness is not influenced by individual factors such as income or health alone. Life satisfaction increases when people feel positively about their neighborhoods and public services (Goldberg *et al.*, 2012). We find a clear distinction between individual and

collective happiness in Cali. Behind the happiness syndrome lies a disparity between the individual and collective spheres. While people are satisfied with their lives, they are less content with public life and government performance especially at the neighborhood level. Colombians are happy with their lives, but not with their society.

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