HOW TO BE HAPPY DURING THE PHD

(YET ANOTHER OPINION)

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HOW TO OPTIMIZE THE CHANCES OF ENDING UP BEING HAPPY DURING THE PHD AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF ABOUT WHAT COMES NEXT

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SHOULD I DO (OR CONTINUE TO DO) A PHD?

- To do a PhD you primarily need only **one** thing…
  - The same thing you need to do **anything** in life really…
  - If you don't have that thing you should **not start** your PhD
    - If you don't have that thing you should probably **stop** your PhD



SHOULD I DO (OR CONTINUE TO DO) A PHD?

- **Motivation**
  - To do good research
    - By working on hot topics
    - By working on important topics
    - By working on your own topics
  - To become a professor
    - **Teaching** (master) students and supporting (PhD) students
    - Recognition from peers
  - To get a good job in industry
    - Join a big tech company
    - Join or create your own startup

SHOULD I DO (OR CONTINUE TO DO) A PHD?



WHERE SHOULD I DO MY PHD?

- Common choices
  - Pick the highest ranked university that accepts you
    - Reminder: your advisor will always be less famous than Selena Gomez
    - Higher peer pressure due to (self) need for recognition
  - Pick the area you have done the most **prior** work on
    - Typically **biased**: you liked your undergrad professor X the most
    - Actually very biased: PhD applications optimized by **prior** work in area
  - Pick the area you **like** the most
    - **Delay**: you may want to do some work on the area **before** applying
    - You are **lucky** if it matches the area of undergrad professor X you liked

THANK YOU



WHERE SHOULD I DO MY PHD?

- Consider these too though
  - Pick your advisor because you (hope you can) **trust** him
    - Every day interactions are built around **trust** and **respect**
    - Ask her/his **students** to find out what kind of person he is
  - Your **style** of work and your advisor's style of work must **match**
    - Are you more independent? Go for a **hands-off** advisor
    - Are you deadline driven? Go for a **hands-on** advisor
    - Reminder: advisors may use a different approach **per student**
  - Pick a place you want to live in
    - These are 5-6 years of your **life** in your 20s!
    - **Work** hard and **party** hard during your PhD

WHERE SHOULD I DO MY PHD?



WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING MY PHD?

- Pick the right PhD topic
  - **You** should pick your PhD topic **not** your advisor
    - Higher **motivation** to work on it
    - Better results and higher novelty by **owning** the work
  - Work on the ideas that you **believe** in
    - **Throw away** ideas you do not believe in
    - Convince your advisor to **support** (and fund) your ideas
- **Own** your field
  - Become the **best** in the world in the field you are working on
  - What you work on must be important to **you** to make you happy
  - What you work on must be important to others to offer you a job

WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING MY PHD?



ACADEMIA OR INDUSTRY?

- Answer those questions:
  - Do you value **teaching** or **do-it-yourself** ?
    - Bias for action people are probably better fit in industry
  - Do you want to become an **engineer** or a **manager** ?
    - Industry managers and professors have a lot in common
- Do you care about money ?
  - $$$: engineer > scientist/researcher > university professor
- Do you value practicality?
  - Industry = your ideas need to **make money** but potentially boring
  - Academia = your ideas need to be **interesting** but potentially useless

LOOKING FOR AN INDUSTRY JOB?

- Get the **best** industry job for you
  - Learn about industry
    - Learn the real products out there
    - Do many **internships** on multiple different companies
  - Apply to a lot of jobs
    - Minimize the chances of failure
    - Maximize the chances of a good match
    - **Negotiate**
- Pick the best job for **you**
  - First pick the job and then maximize salary
  - See picking your PhD advisor section …

THANK YOU

