HOW TO BE HAPPY DURING THE PHD
(YET ANOTHER OPINION)

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

Orestis Polychroniou
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

ONE DECISION CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE
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