

**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



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

