

Happiness Revisited: Ontological Well-Being as a Theory-Based Construct of Subjective Well-Being

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Published online: 17 June 2008
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Abstract The current model of subjective well-being (SWB) has been operationalized as the unity of affective and cognitive dimensions concerning the evaluation of one's life, called emotional well-being and life satisfaction, respectively. There has been no theoretical framework, however, by which the unity is explained. The present paper offers a new construct of subjective well-being in an attempt to show that the cognitive and affective dimensions of SWB can be unified using the concept of goal. The concept of goal refers to the life as a project when the concern is the evaluation of life as a whole. The evaluation of the whole life, moreover, should take a whole-time perspective into account if it is supposed to be 'whole'. Ontological well-being (OWB) construct is structured in a theoretical framework by which the cognitive and affective components of the current conceptualization of SWB are reframed and interpreted in a whole time perspective. By taking as base the historical and philosophical resources of the affective and cognitive dimensions of subjective well-being, this new construct defines subjective well-being as one's evaluation of life in both past and future time perspectives in addition to the present.

Keywords Happiness · Subjective well-being · Time perspective · Eudaimonia · Life-satisfaction · Affect · Emotional well-being

1 Positive Psychology and Well-Being

The recent theoretical developments in the field of psychology declare the need for focusing not only on the challenges individuals face but also the strengths and positive processes that can lead to enhanced well-being. In focusing on the search for the psychological strengths of human beings, rather than weaknesses, positive psychology has emerged as a reaction to a psychopathology-oriented view of human functioning (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). One of the most important goals of psychology, according to this paradigm, should be to show what actions lead to well-being.

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In this paradigm, two competitive approaches to well-being have emerged as competing opponents in the research area: subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB: Ryff 1989; Ryff and Singer 1998). The former focuses on hedonic elements of life such as positive affect, lack of negative affect, and life satisfaction, whereas the latter on the eudaimonic dimensions of growth, meaning and direction. Life satisfaction constitutes the cognitive dimension of SWB and refers to individuals' judgments concerning their own lives. The affective dimension, originating from Bradburn's (1969) seminal work on happiness, refers to the negative and positive mood in one's immediate experience. This dimension is now defined as emotional well-being (Diener and Lucas 2000). SWB, by definition, focuses on private and phenomenal characteristics of the human experiential world without dependence on grand Western theories. PWB, on the other hand, is the result of a need for a theory-driven conceptualization of well-being and the indifference of the current conceptualization of SWB toward existential dimensions such as meaning, growth, and direction. This model of well-being, however, has been criticized because of its contamination with the a priori Western theoretical framework (Christopher 1999; Diener et al. 1998; Lu 2001). As Tiberius (2004) states, unless we formulate an account of the nature of well-being as the referent of a concept shared with other cultures, we cannot be sure whether the differences among cultures are differences regarding well-being.

This paper, after presenting current challenges, argues that there are conceptual avenues for a theoretical construct of SWB not derived from all-embracing Western theories and presents an operational definition for such a construct. It shall be asserted that the basic problems arise from the lack of theory and that this lack could be overcome by finding a clear referent for both affective and cognitive evaluations. As far as theoretical and philosophical sources are concerned, emotional well-being, in addition to the life satisfaction concept, refers to life as containing personal goals and projects. Taking the concept of the personal goal as a unifying base, "life as a personal goal/project" is introduced as a new referent for the definition of SWB. A new theory-based construct of SWB, called ontological well-being—OWB, is developed by adding a whole time perspective into this framework.

2 Shortcomings of Current Conceptualizations

It is clear that the problems arise from the absence of a theory explaining the basis of the SWB construct (Sink 2000). There is no clear theoretical base on which we can explain how these two components, life satisfaction and emotional well-being, are integrated within the concept of SWB. First of all, the absence of a theoretical framework is clearly reflected in the conceptual structures and operational definitions of the cognitive and affective dimensions of SWB. This creates conceptual and empirical difficulties, for both the cognitive and affective components of the construct, although the difficulties regarding the affective dimension are more obvious, and more severe. These problems are evident from the nature of the scales commonly used as operational definitions of these components. As noted by Diener and Lucas (2000), "Subjective well-being researchers assign importance to this subjective element and assess individuals' thoughts and feelings *about* their lives." (p. 325, *Italics added*). What Diener and Lucas refer to here is the intentionality inherent in subjective evaluations of life: that is, SWB is presumed to refer to life itself. Consequently, life satisfaction scales take individuals' cognitive evaluations *about* their lives as a base, although the referent here, e.g., 'the whole life', is ambiguous and hard to evaluate (Lent 2004; Schwarz and Strack 1991).

The problem of intentionality, however, is a more serious threat for affective evaluations within the current SWB framework. It seems that affective dimension does not refer to life as a whole in the same way as the cognitive dimension. In fact, the affective ratings refer to no specific object. As far as the construction of the Positive and Negative Affect Scales (Watson et al. 1988) is concerned, the score obtained indicates the frequency of experiencing these feelings, not the feelings *about* one's own life. This is a serious problem for the affective dimension because by definition emotions have objects (Frijda 1994). This means that the affective states evaluated in this way do not refer to an object, and therefore have no intentionality. This highlights a crucial problem in the current conceptualization of SWB, which is that life cannot be evaluated merely by assessing the frequency of positive and negative affective states. In taking this approach, SWB theorists and researchers have neglected their own conviction that SWB properly refers to affect and cognition regarding one's life. In sum, the cognitive component of SWB (as currently conceptualized and operationalized) does at least refer to one's life, but does so in a general and ambiguous way, while the affective component is conceptualized as entirely lacking a clear referent.

This context-free evaluation of life creates conceptual fuzziness because it is unclear exactly what the construct refers to, and it may cause empirical difficulties such as low reliability in individuals' judgments of happiness (Lent 2004). Although Diener and Lucas (2000) assert that SWB is a stable construct, research (Bostic and Ptacek 2001; Carter 2004) indicates that there is considerable variability in SWB scores over time. This instability is not surprising given the context-free nature of happiness assessments. Specifically, when happiness is assessed in this manner, individuals and the situations in which they find themselves determine the effective context. Empirical findings illustrate the powerful effect situation-induced context can have on happiness self-reports. For example, Schwarz and Strack (1991) conducted an experiment in which students were asked how frequently they go out on a date and how happy they are. The results of this experiment showed that once the context of the evaluation of general happiness was 'dating', subjects rated their happiness according to the dating frequency. Similarly, another study (Strack et al. 1985) clearly showed that both affective and cognitive evaluations were affected from the hedonic quality of the events recalled by the subjects: if induced to recall positive events, evaluations were also positive. It seems that the lack of 'intentionality' results in the evaluation of the 'whole' life according to the context provided by the researcher and this results in situation-induced instability in SWB reports.

Another problem cited in the literature concerning emotional well-being is its conceptual overlapping with personality measures (Schumutte and Ryff 1997). Since measures of SWB use affect terms without actual reference to life itself, they become very similar to measures of personality. Measures of personality traits and well-being, according to Schumutte and Ryff, often share multiple common items, a methodological artifact which results in suspicion concerning the relations between the constructs. Similarly, Davern et al. (2007) showed that when shared variance between personality and SWB was eliminated, the correlation between the constructs decreased substantially. Moreover, according to the results, when suitable affective and cognitive variables were used to define SWB, personality factors did not contribute to the unique variance in explanation of SWB.

Finally, it is stated that a theoretical lack results in a neglect of important dimensions of positive conceptualizations concerning mental health (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Singer 1998). Affective evaluations without a reference to life, when combined with the satisfaction judgments as a reflection of the pleasure vs. pain framework (Lent 2004), makes the SWB concept in reference to mental states strictly related only to the hedonic inclinations of individuals. Such a conceptualization, consequently, totally ignores eudaimonic elements

(Lent 2004; Ryan and Deci 2001; Waterman 1993). Indeed, research has shown that the current conceptualization of SWB is insensitive to important aspects of life. For example, research by Vitterso (2004) indicated that SWB is not related to self-actualization (operationalized in the study as openness to experience), a finding replicated by Steel and Ones (2002). Similarly, McGregor and Little (1998) reported that subjective well-being is not associated with the existential dimensions of mental health such as growth and purpose in life.

It seems clear that a lack of theory results in the absence of a clear referent for affective and cognitive evaluations of life, which, in turn, causes problems. The next section will provide a theoretical background for the unity of these dimensions by tracing their roots back to historical and philosophical literature. After identifying the reasons for the conceptual unity of affective and cognitive dimensions under the concept of personal goal, a whole-time perspective will be included to find a clear referent and to reach a more comprehensive definition of SWB.

3 The Theoretical Relationship Between Emotional Well-Being and Life Satisfaction: Goal as a Unifying Concept

The concept of goal has been defined as desired states or ‘internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly construed as outcomes, events, or processes’ (Austin and Vancouver 1996, p. 338). This paper argues that the concepts of goal and SWB are strictly related to each other, and that this relation becomes apparent when the conceptual and historical roots of affective and cognitive components of subjective well-being are clarified. Although there is an extant literature concerning the relationship between goals and SWB, all the research has not been treated this relationship to reach a more comprehensive theoretical construct of SWB. As Diener (1984) states, much of the research on subjective well-being has been based on an implicit model related to goals but with no specific theoretical formulation. It is proposed, in this paper, that the concept of goal can be considered as a base on which a new conceptual framework for SWB can be reached.

The source of the life satisfaction component of SWB is studies concerning successful ageing (Kafka and Kozma 2001; Ryff 1989). Successful ageing refers to goals and projects that are meaningful for individuals, the fulfillment of which makes life worthy (Collings 2001). As stated by Kafka and Kozma (2001), the logic behind life satisfaction is that the degree of one’s favorable evaluation of one’s own life results in a sense of well-being and contentment. Life satisfaction implies individuals’ perceived distance from their aspirations (Steverink et al. 1998). The evaluation of one’s whole life as a judgment, thus, is based on a standard which is set for oneself (Diener 1984). The research has suggested that, according to Makinen and Pychyl (2001), people have a tendency to be more satisfied with life when their projects are meaningful to them, socially supported, and processed according to a plan. Consequently, the concern is a life which is meaningful when there are goals and projects and when they are fulfilled. The recent theoretical and empirical viewpoints suggest that the importance of attainment of goals, namely life satisfaction becomes a significant psychological variable starting from adolescence (Bradley and Corwyn 2004).

A closer look at the literature reveals that the affective dimension of SWB is also closely related to personal goals and projects, which makes its conceptual relation to life satisfaction apparent. The historical source of emotional well-being is Bradburn’s concept

of happiness derived from Aristotle's concept of Eudaimonia. Ryff (1989) formed her psychological well-being construct by taking Waterman's (1984) interpretation of Eudaimonia as a basis. Waterman states that the interpretation of the Greek word 'Eudaimonia' as happiness is questionable because of its reference to the affective dimension consistent with and leading to one's true potential, which cannot be simply interpreted as a hedonistic experience of feelings. By ignoring the affective dimension in the concept of Eudaimonia and by focusing merely on the elements such as growth, meaning, and direction, Ryff incorporates the leading concepts of humanistic psychology into a new theory. Although Ryff's (1989) acknowledgement of Eudaimonia led to an important construct of positive mental health, it misses a point crucial for the conceptual structure of subjective well-being. It would appear that Waterman did not reject the emotional tone inherited in the concept of Eudaimonia. What he mentions is the consistency or congruency between the affective dimension and the experiences concerning growth and self-realization, which is a concern for the construct that shall be introduced in this paper.

This paper asserts that the affective dimension of subjective well-being, when the concept of Eudaimonia is acknowledged in that sense, is strictly related to personal goals and projects, the destination of which is growth, meaning, and self-realization in a purely personal / phenomenal sense. A sampling of the literature indicating the close connection between affect and self-fulfillment or goal pursuit behaviors is as follows. Veenhoven (2003), for example, stated that hedonism also manifests itself in life-goals. Confirming the existence of the relationship, Tiberius (2004) indicated that one's hedonistic inclinations are closely connected to desires that are inherently connected with goals or projects. Accordingly, affective states might be conceptualized as inclinations, in the sense of fulfilling one's goals and projects, and, thus, contributing to one's well-being. Vitterso (2004) additionally stated that "the principle behind happiness and other basic emotions is understood within a self-regulation framework, which indicates that human behavior is a continual process of moving towards various kinds of mental goal representations" (p. 304).

Empirical findings also confirm the connection between affect and personal goals or projects. As an integration of telic and autotelic perspectives, Omodei and Wearing (1990) present a model in which overall SWB is conceptualized as the outcome of the aggregate of all of one's projects. The results indicated that 62% of the variance in positive affect is accounted for by the personal project system. In the same vein, Lavalee and Campbell (1995) reported some findings indicating that the impact of negative daily life events is interpreted by individuals according to their relevance to the individuals' goals. Similarly, Emmons (1986), in the light of empirical literature, states that affect and motivation are closely connected in the sense that they play a key role in the attainment of personal goals or personal strivings as personal goal patterns.

The affective and cognitive dimensions of subjective well-being are, thus, interconnected in the way of an overall evaluation of life concerning goals or personal projects. Consequently, satisfaction with life can be considered as the cognitive evaluation regarding the fulfillment of personal goals and projects, and emotional well-being as the affective dimension of this evaluation. As a result of these insights, subjective well-being can be reconceptualized as the unity of cognitive and affective evaluations of life with regard to personal goals and projects.

However, goals or projects are commonly thought of as strictly concrete personal issues such as education or family (Elliot and Thrash 2002). It is difficult to attain a theoretical construct by considering individual instances of goals because they are relative to a high degree and sensitive to contextual factors. This difficulty concerning relativity can easily

be overcome by taking the ‘whole’ life as a natural referent or criterion for the operational definitions of SWB. The literature concerning personal goals and projects suggests that the evaluation of the whole of life is a continual assessment of their fulfillment. Indeed, Gallese and Metzinger (2003) claimed that the human brain constructs goals as basic constituents of the world as it is interpreted. That is, according to the authors, the brain works in such a way that the individual interprets life as the totality of goal representations that are purely phenomenal. Hence, the concept of goal, when the issue is subjective well-being (the evaluation of life as a whole), is assumed to refer to the whole of life as a goal or project. Every personal goal or project can be thought of as an instantiation of this higher-order purely individual enterprise.

Consequently, life itself comes into existence as the chief goal, that is, the base for the existence of all other personal goals or projects. This is highly consistent with Aristotle’s conceptualization. The movements and actions as well as the goals of the individuals, according to Aristotle (1991a, p. 13), should fit the maxim of ‘the chief good’:

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good.

Thus, the whole life as a project is considered here as the thing which we desire for its own sake; and everything else is desired for the sake of this chief good. Consequently, this personal project is considered as the referent in the evaluation of SWB.

4 Time as the Basic Ontological Category: The Importance of a Whole-Time Perspective

However, the philosophical and psychological literature indicates that life is a ‘whole’ only when it is conceptualized in a whole-time perspective. The conceptualization of happiness on the ground of whole time perspective has not been taken into consideration yet. This might be the result of the inclination of taking the present evaluations as base for the evaluations concerning happiness. As Derrida (1973) has stated clearly, there is a dominance of ‘now’ in Western thought, which is the main result of a metaphysical inclination of capturing the self in its ‘presence’ as an absolute entity. This inclination seems to exist in current SWB conceptualizations. The ‘now’ of experience, in that respect, has been regarded as the main corollary of the actual existence of individual self-consciousness which, according to Derrida, is capable of governing every possible concept of truth and sense. This dominance of the present seems to result in the underestimation of both past and future. Although there is a life satisfaction measure based on a whole-time perspective (McIntosh 2001), it focuses only on the cognitive dimension of SWB, and thus, the relationship between emotional well-being and life satisfaction remains unspecified. Indeed, this measure seems to only take time into consideration in order to overcome the problem of personal variability in time with regard to life satisfaction scores.

According to Aristotle (1991a) without time, nothing is meaningful for human beings. Moreover, according to Aristotle (1991b), time is the base for rationality and awareness. Smith (2001), in this respect, stated that Eudaimonia is strictly related to rationality and self-awareness, by means of which we can locate the proper meaning for every action and goal. Irwin (1998), similarly, states that Aristotle’s concept of Eudaimonia refers to a

rational agent's wish that differs from appetite in so far as it is guided by deliberation resting on one's conception of one's good. Such a conception, according to the author, extends beyond one's present inclinations both at a particular time and over time. It is clear, then, that a time perspective is a prerequisite for Eudaimonia.

As an indicator of the life for which everyone hopes, as a consequence, Eudaimonia is the whole life that is, in fact, a movement from the past to the future and to be evaluated by the person in question. Time, when considered as a basic ontological category, transforms the concept of 'life as a personal project' into one more abstract: 'life as a project of becoming', which is the chief good as the indicator of a happy life. This formulation presupposes that everyone has a global sense of well-being (happiness) based upon the private and meaningful standards which are used to evaluate one's 'existence as becoming'. That is not "to be or not to be", but "to become or not to become". Indeed, Aristotle's concern with time is regarded by Heidegger (1996) as the fulfillment of the whole of life as a project. Taking the notion of 'flow of time', Heidegger considers time as the basic ontological category by which every individual construes the life as "being-towards possibilities", which is a private history of becoming.

In such becoming, 'development' is sometimes a rise, sometimes a fall. What 'has history' in this way can, at the same time, 'make' such history... It determines 'a future' in the present. Here, "history" signifies a context of 'events' and 'effects', which draws on through 'the past', the 'Present', and the 'future' (p. 430).

The main theme in *Being and Time*, the opus magnum of the existential approaches to psychology and psychotherapy, seems to be the individual's existence in the world as a project. The basic dimension of this project is the tension between the past and the future at every single instant of 'now', making life a story or narration. Research (Dapkus 1985) supported this conclusion by finding that 'becoming in time' as a major phenomenological and existential theme was one of the major categories about individuals' experience of time.

Moreover, these theoretical insights are consistent with the contemporary conceptualizations and research in psychology. It is indicated that there is a common inclination among individuals to assess their life in terms of three time dimensions (Johnson and Sherman 1990; Lewin 1948, 1951), which is important for happiness (Robinson and Ryff 1999), psychological well-being (Ryff and Heidrich 1997), development (Hultsch and Bortner 1974), as well as for ego identity (Erikson 1959). Studies concerning the relationship between time perspective and SWB have important implications for the construct presented here.

The research on time perspective by Zimbardo and his colleagues (Boniwell and Zimbardo 2004; Zimbardo and Boyd 1999) show that it is closely related to well-being. It was shown in this series of studies that future time perspective was related to motivation and success, past to self-esteem, depression and happiness, and present time to risk behaviors and depression. Boniwell and Zimbardo (2004), in their review of relevant literature, summarized the research indicating that time perspective is strongly related to positive psychology and happiness. The authors indicated, consistent with the framework in the present paper, that taking time in its continuity with the past, present, and future are related to self-actualization, purpose in life, and achievement. According to the authors, a whole-time perspective (balanced time perspective), namely a unity of past, present, and future, is the most useful organizing principle for happiness and positive adjustment. These components blend and flexibly engage depending on personal demands, needs, and values.

The literature, thus, suggests that the whole time perspective, taking all time frames into account, is a prerequisite for SWB. In such an evaluation people are considered as time

travelers who construct the past and future into the present by taking into consideration their own trajectories as growing individuals. The evaluation of life in such a perspective is basically organized by the perception of time and makes it relevant to many conceptualizations in the study of SWB and personality in general.

5 OWB as a New Construct of Subjective Well-Being

As a result of the perspective provided above, one's every goal and project is assumed to refer to this *final* project (chief good) which is considered here as an interpretation of Eudaimonia in a subjective sense (Private Eudaimonia). Private Eudaimonia, in this sense, is the criterion through which every person evaluates his/her individual existence cognitively and affectively. This formulation seems to be supported by the recent research by Keyes et al. (2002). This research, which included confirmatory factor analysis, indicated that the current SWB construct (positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction) seems to be contingent upon committing oneself to a meaningful and purposeful life. As an indicator of positive mental health, OWB, thence, refers to the evaluation of whole life in its temporality with regard to the fulfillment of the private project of becoming. For Heidegger, according to Hale (1993, p. 90),

The individual is immersed in the flow of temporality, which provides unity to the multiplicity of human experience. Thus selfhood exists due to the medium of temporality that integrates past, present, and future in a meaningful way, providing depth of Being and continuity. Stated another way, the authenticity of our Being-in-the-world is largely defined by the quality of the time experiences in our life.

In the same direction as these philosophical insights, the research of Fleeson and Baltes (1998) indicated that present retrospections of past lifetime personality and anticipations of future lifetime personality predicted unique variance in a variety of current-day outcomes beyond that predicted by standard self-reports of present-day personality. The findings of research by Caplan et al. (1985) confirm this observation when the case is subjective well-being. According to the research findings, all time perspectives make unique contributions to well-being. As Ivey (1986, p. 2) clearly stated, "The state of being is our ontology, our total experience of the present, past, and future".

As a result of a whole time perspective, the 'whole' in the present paper refers to the life as a personal project. As can be seen from the following literature, such an evaluation is inevitable for most people from all age groups. It indicates that there is a strong inclination among individuals to develop more abstract, evaluative, organizing mental activity with regard to life experiences, whether related to the past, the present, or the future (Bluck and Habermas 2001; McAdams 2001; Staudinger 2001). Although different concepts such as life-reflection, autobiographical memory or reasoning, narrative memory or processing, are used for this mental activity, the common inclination is to refer to a life as a personal history or project. Staudinger (2001) states that reminiscence and life review, as the most mentioned life-reflection types, have been linked to aging and clinical research, and regarded mostly as a way of coping with critical life changes. The author, however, provides clear empirical evidence which strongly suggests that this ability cannot be confined to repair and a return to normal levels of functioning but can easily be considered as a human strength, serving for different developmental functions for different age groups. Such a reflection on one's life seems to result in a personal history or narration derived from autobiographical memory.

OWB, thus, by definition, is closely related to the narrative psychology. The construct treats the evaluation of one's life as if it were a fully private narration or story constructed by the person in question. The framework of this new concept of well-being is fully consistent with the narrative paradigm in psychology. Narration or story is a potentially useful organizing principle for psychology, suggests Lyddon (1999), according to which every person construes his or her reality within a narrative or story. Brown et al. (1996) indicate that acknowledging life as a story is closely related to the happiness of clients. In the same way, OWB views life as a story reflecting on both past and future extensions. In other words, the construct presented here suggests that every individual, as the author of the 'text' of his or her own life, has a personal narrative which can only be truly and appropriately evaluated personally.

Moreover, the construct presented here is assumed to be common to most cultures. Every individual, no matter whether living in the West or East, has personal goals or projects. Although these goals and projects could have variability across cultures, every individual is considered to have a personal evaluation of his or her "life project". For example, freedom (Oishi et al. 1999) and self-esteem (Diener and Diener 1995) might be more important in individualist cultures, and relationship harmony in the collective ones (Kwan et al. 1997). As a growing organism, however, everyone evaluates his or her existence into a purely personal measure. Kim et al. (2003), for example, showed that regardless of whether a person lives in an individualistic or a collectivist nation, benefits from well-being come from a focus on goals likely to satisfy one's needs. Gallese and Metzinger (2003), moreover, claimed that goals and goal systems are the base for constructing personal reality, which is common to all human beings. Indeed, the findings of Sheldon et al. (2004) supported this claim, which indicates that goal pursuit is important in all cultures.

Taking the concept of goal as a base, the model presented here reflects a telic conceptualization of subjective well-being. As Diener (1984) states, telic theories of subjective well-being suggests that achievement of goals or satisfying needs cause happiness. According to him, however, these theories have several shortcomings regarding theoretical formulations and lack of immunity to falsification. The present formulation clearly shows how the concept of goal underlies the affective and cognitive components of subjective well-being and integrates all personal goals into the concept of the "the whole life as a project". Diverging from the current conceptualizations of subjective well-being, this formulation presupposes that not only the present time subjective evaluations but also past and future evaluations are necessary for defining an exact teleological framework for subjective well-being. It is supposed, thus, that every person has a life project as an end point, although it may change along the life span. Accordingly, when the context is subjective well-being this basic teleological motivation underlying life-evaluation can be satisfied using all time perspectives in assessment; looking at past life to decide whether it has been contented, reflecting on the present to evaluate whether it is processing according to the aim(s) of the project, and predicting how positive the future will be. Moreover, such a conceptualization gives rise to acknowledging happiness as referring to growth, direction, and self-actualization in a purely phenomenal framework.

As a telic conceptualization, OWB comes closest to the construct of meaning or purpose of life, which has been seen as one of the basic strivings of individuals. Having been defined by Frankl (1959) as a fundamental drive, the will to meaning, as Ransit and Marcoen (1997) stated, acknowledged in different theoretical conceptualizations refers to different concepts such as existential vacuum, the order and coherence in one's life, and the need for purpose, efficacy, justification, and self-worth. The meaning of this concept has

been interpreted through different theoretical outlooks, which makes its 'sense' problematic (Reker and Fry 2003). Although both meaning in life and OWB have similar existential concerns, and are strictly related to attainment of goals and a sense of fulfillment (Zika and Chamberlain 1992), OWB is defined here within a purely phenomenal framework taking individual subjective judgments concerning life into account. Moreover, it incorporates cognitive and affective evaluations of life into a whole-time perspective derived from a whole-time perspective. Even though this new construct may be interpreted as related to concepts such as the order of coherence and the need for purpose or efficacy, these might be the consequences of this construct, not the construct itself.

It may be held that positive affect will automatically emerge if one's evaluation of one's whole life is satisfying. Although both are evaluative, however, cognitive and affective states are different dimensions of happiness or subjective well-being. As Ledoux (1994) suggested, even though emotional processing is dependent to some extent on cognitions it involves separate systems in the brain. Emmons (1986), for example, stated that affective system of individuals provide a motivational basis for behavioral outcomes with regard to personal goals. In the light of the literature, the author concludes that affect and motivation are closely connected in the sense that they play a key role in the attainment of personal goals or personal strivings as personal goal patterns. Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), similarly, in their review of the relevant empirical literature give strong evidence that experiencing positive affect is closely related to success.

Singer (1995) proposes that reflecting on one's life includes experiencing emotions that are independent of cognition and have a motivational function to focus and guide cognition and behavior. Affective and cognitive dimensions refer to different aspects of evaluating one's whole life. Staudinger (2001), in the same vein, argues that reflecting on one's life cannot be reduced to cognition and recommends that emotional and motivational components be integrated into this process as an evaluation. According to her, gaining insight into one's life is almost impossible without monitoring feelings such as shame, anxiety, or pride. As intentional states of consciousness, there seems to be a two-way interaction between emotional and cognitive evaluations. This is well-recognized from the earlier research showing that the affective and cognitive evaluations affect each other in the evaluation of life as a whole. Stated more clearly, one's judgment concerning life satisfaction is partly affected by the emotional well-being (Suh et al. 1998). This denotes that individuals take affective states into consideration when they evaluate their satisfaction with life. However, some research shows that the reverse is also true (Robinson and Kirkeby 2005). It is evident, thus, that the affective reactions cannot and should not be regarded as invariant evaluations as a result of cognitive judgments.

Even different age groups have different emotional reactions to their lives from a temporal perspective. Every person from every age group, in daily life, tries to achieve many personal goals, strivings, or goals. The past, present, and future signifies different things to individuals from different age groups when these 'trying to do things' are taken into consideration. Staudinger, Bluck and Herzberg (2003), for example, found that young adults perceived past SWB more negatively and future SWB more positively than present SWB, whereas in late adulthood the past was rated higher and the future lower than present evaluation. Moreover, the results showed that the present SWB was more predicted by both past and future SWB in later adulthood than in young adulthood. Other researchers (Jokisaari 2004; Wrosch et al. 2005) similarly found significant age differences concerning the effect of time perspective on SWB among different age categories. Socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al. 1999; Fung et al. 2005) argues, however, that it is the perception of time, rather than age, that is the most important thing in defining goals and

that leads to differences in the aging process. Individuals, according to this theory, are time travelers with the capacity to reflect on the past and plan for the future. Accordingly, time perspective has a crucial impact on the selection between two basic domains of goals: acquisition of knowledge and regulation of emotion. The former is more important for younger people but the latter for older people as a result of a proactive choice.

According to the framework presented here, however, the main target of all of these efforts is the desire for success concerning the chief good, or life as a project of becoming. As Staudinger et al. (2003) states, although different age groups have different developmental tasks, the main concern for all age groups are the same: self-enhancement and, consequently, self-assessment, the destination of which, this paper argues, is the whole life as a purely personal project. As stated above, even if every individual from any age group has different goal content, all of these goals refer to life as a fulfillment of life as a project.

The construct of OWB, thus, seems to be related to many concepts in the psychology literature such as narrative psychology, autobiographical memory, purpose in life, motivation, and aging. In the next section, the operational definition and sub-dimensions of this construct will be presented.

6 Operational Definition of OWB

All theoretical framework and empirical findings outlined above indicate a SWB construct implying that every person evaluates (cognitively and affectively) his or her life as a whole by taking both past and future evaluations into account, in addition to the “now” of the evaluation. As Diener et al. (1997) point out, for most people the past and future are more important than the current instant in time. It appears that the underlying assumption for these evaluations is that the person considers life as a project in its temporality, resulting in a sense of degree to which the project is fulfilled successfully. Thus, that life itself is the primary goal emerging as the main concern for both cognitive and affective dimensions of OWB when time is considered as the basic ontological category of the whole of human life.

To summarize, based on this 2×3 model of well-being, 6 dimensions are posited: cognitive and affective evaluations of the past, present and future. Thus, cognitive and affective dimensions of this new construct of SWB are defined in terms of their temporal context. As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state, “The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope, and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)” (p. 5).

6.1 Affective-Past Evaluation

This dimension involves affective reactions emerging as a result of one’s past as either full of failure and lack of success, or as achievements. People are assumed to react to their past as if it were an important period of time with regard to their life as a project. There are some (McAllister and Wolff 2002; O’Leary and Nieuwstraten 2001) who argue that unfinished business has important affective implications for the evaluation of life. It is highly probable that all individuals have unfinished business concerning their life as a project of becoming. Research (Emmons 1986; Jokisaari 2004) indicates that one’s emotional state is strongly related to the degree of fulfillment in the past. Private Eudaimonia, thus, reflects on one’s evaluation of the past as to whether it is regarded as

consisting of progress or lack of it, resulting in emotions such as anger with oneself, regret, sadness about the past, feeling of guilt, and “if only” experiences.

6.2 Affective-Present Evaluation

Individuals who are high on this dimension tend to evaluate their lives as satisfying, a life full of joy and excitement. Current conceptualizations of SWB regard the affective dimension as the frequency of affective states of individuals, which are context independent evaluations of emotions. The affective comprehension of SWB presented here takes into consideration the affective states of individuals with regard to the “now” of the experiences of their personal story. Thus, affective states of individuals are considered to be imbued with activities or fulfillments that are sources of emotions such as joy, satisfaction, and pride. As the present-time instance of becoming or existence of the individual, this dimension reflects one’s emotional reactions to what they are doing.

6.3 Affective-Future Evaluation

Research findings (Emmons 1986) indicate that negative affect is associated with low probability of future success concerning personal strivings. Similarly, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) state that positive affect is closely related to attainment of goals by serving to build their capacity or skills for future use. When affective states with regard to the future are understood under the concept of ‘life as becoming’, the affective reactions are anxiety and worry, or hope and optimism. Research suggest that happy persons see themselves as more able to perform health-promoting behaviors, and tend to form more optimistic estimates of the likelihood of future health events (Salovey et al. 2001). As Hultsch and Bortner (1974) assert, when comparative evaluations are made between the present and the future in terms of goals, protension (extension from the present into the future) becomes an index of hopefulness.

6.4 Cognitive-Past Evaluation

A cognitive evaluation of past life is very important in terms of adaptation and coping (Martin and Martin 2002). Thus, contentment with the life lived, according to the authors, is an important indicator of well-being. Reminiscence and life review, in this respect, appear to be the most important concepts concerning the evaluation of past life. These phenomena, as cognitive evaluations of life, are considered to be especially important to well-being and mental health (Puentes 2002). This dimension, thus, refers to the perception of whether one’s life project has actually been progressing. A positive evaluation on this dimension results in the understanding of the past as full of achievements and worthy and pleasing experiences. It is worth mentioning that one characteristic of happy people is that they are more able to recall good events (Seidlitz and Diener 1993, p. 281).

6.5 Cognitive-Present Evaluation

This dimension consists in conceptual apprehension regarding the “now” of the life that is lived by individuals. As a kind of judgment, the dimension takes the whole life itself into consideration, which is the most immediate way of comprehending life. The research on life satisfaction has already suggested that the present cognitive evaluation of life by the

individual has important implications for SWB. The dimension presented here focuses on the individual's evaluation of the life lived with respect to being a source of worth, meaningfulness, and growth.

6.6 Cognitive-Future Evaluation

Taylor and Brown (1988) propose that taking a positive stance towards the future, although it cannot be foreseen, is one of the most important mental health indicators. Indeed, Eronen and Nurmi (1999) point out that people construct their own futures and select their own environments, rather than being passive victims of extrinsic events. It has been proposed, by these authors, that setting personal goals, constructing strategies for their realization, and making related commitments may play an important role in this self-direction process. This dimension indicates, in this respect, one's perception of the future with an optimistic outlook, that is, openness to future. Lu (2001) emphasizes the importance of a positive outlook for the future. Such optimism toward the future is thought to be one of the most important components of mental health. Kimweli and Stilwell's (2002) research indicates that the perception of the future as bright is an important indicator of quality of life and subjective well-being. Cognitive-future evaluation, consequently, refers to an individual's evaluation of the future as to whether he will be able to realize his prospective part of the project. This dimension, in this regard, has to do with one's degree to which an individual holds positive beliefs regarding the future.

As a result, the inconsistency between the cognitive and affective dimensions is overcome in the outlook presented here. In addition to the cognitive evaluation of one's life, the affective evaluation makes sense in such a framework with regard to intentionality. Both affective and cognitive evaluations, thus, are considered with a reference to a life project as a higher-order construct, which extends from the past to the future.

7 Conclusion and Future Directions

Presented as a new theory-driven construct, OWB has three characteristics (Diener 1984) which every 'subjective well-being' construct/measure is considered to have. First, it is thought of as dependent on subjective evaluations. OWB takes individuals' subjective evaluations of life into account. Whether one is happy or not in the three dimensional time perspective is dependent upon one's self-evaluation of life experienced. Second, it includes positive measures; the construct includes positive evaluations of life with respect to cognitive and affective dimensions. Last but not least, it includes a global assessment of a person's life. OWB differs from the current definitions of SWB, however, in that it considers life as a whole by including the future time perspective, an important positive mental health variable (Taylor and Brown 1988).

Diener (1984) states that the SWB measures can be used in order to allow evaluation of specific domains of life such as employment, education, and social relationships. OWB can also be organized for this kind of evaluation, too. These dimensions refer to the life as a whole, and are neutral-topic or context-free, indicating no specific context of occupation. These specific areas can also be included in such an outlook, based on a whole-time perspective. That is, OWB is the 'form' of every evaluation concerning life in general or in particular.

In addition to these normative standards, the construct proposes a theory-based approach to SWB that appears to present no threat to the criteria: Stated in a theoretical

framework, it is a subjective, positive, and global evaluation of one's life. The construct, in taking a whole time perspective as a base, provides individuals with an opportunity to evaluate their lives. Given that the whole-time perspective and goal-related behaviors and cognitions are common to all cultures, the construct presupposes a trait-like psychological variable.

Additionally, the construct has some merits beyond the current conceptualizations of SWB. First of all, since there is no intentionality and context in the evaluations made by the current measures, the judgment regarding the whole of life becomes too problematic and sensitive to the context provided by the researcher. The result is that crucial variability in SWB judgments in time, as indicated previously. Life itself as a personal project is the context and referent for evaluations in the framework presented here, which makes affective and cognitive evaluations less sensitive to context and more sensitive to an individual's own criteria. The measurement framework presented here would to some extent alleviate the problem of this variability in time.

Second, the problem of the overlap with personality measures would be less of a threat for affective evaluations in this framework. The evaluation of life in such a framework is very different from own which takes individuals' general inclination to experience certain emotions. The idiosyncratic nature of affective evaluations concerning the project of life, thus, would become more evident. There is a definite expectation that such an evaluation would be different from personality dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism.

Moreover, taking emotions and cognitions into account as intentional states concerning life as a goal in its temporality make them much more than simply hedonic inclinations of individuals. Although the literature concerning these goals has been related to the daily or domain specific goals in life, the attainment of them is consistently related to well-being, according to Ryan and Deci (2001), who moreover, point out that the concept of goal is related to both hedonistic and eudaimonic perspectives. Lent (2004), similarly, suggests that personal goals give life meaning and a sense of growth. Considering life as a goal in itself, in fact, as the chief goal, makes the concept more relevant to the eudaimonic perspective. As Ryff and Keyes (1995, p. 720) state, personal growth is "a sense of continued growth and development as a person". Thus, OWB attempts to provide information about the eudaimonic elements that is not captured by the current conceptualizations.

Future research, after presenting an empirical confirmation of this construct, could test a set of hypotheses: First, age differences concerning the sub-dimensions of the construct presented here and their differential relations with mental health indicators would contribute to the successful aging research. Moreover, the construct presented here could be operationalized as domain specific evaluations such as employment, family, and friendships. It has been recognized that the age groups differ in evaluation of these sources (Carstensen and Mikels 2005). Thus, it would be worth searching for the differential contributions of these domains to mental health in different age groups. Taking the relevant literature into account, it could be argued for example that the affective dimension could be more important for older people whereas cognitive evaluation of life more important for younger people. For the time dimensions, the past could be more important for the older given that they are concerned with the meaning and purpose in life whereas the future could be more important for the younger. It is possible that the present would be much more open to daily influences than the other segments of time given that it is the organizing aspect of a life project. Second, since there is a total absence of conceptualization of grouping emotions in different time perspectives, the life project construct could give important implications in this respect given that different time dimensions could contribute differentially to motivation (Karniol and Ross 1996). The future-affective dimensions

would probably explain greater variance in motivation in the evaluation of life in general or in specific areas of life.

It is worth mentioning that the construct presented here is not considered as a psychological well-being model which takes experts' opinions into account when defining well-being. Additionally, the construct is not based on a negative conceptualization of mental health and, thus, is only weakly related to psychopathology indicators such as obsessive compulsive behavior or paranoia. Finally, it should be noted that the construct presented here should not be confused with the conceptualizations which take into account different periods of lifetime. A number of instruments or measurement strategies have been used to measure some of the personality dimensions including SWB by requiring the subjects to fill out measures by considering memories of past or forecasting future possibilities. Thus, the referent in these evaluations remains unclear and difficult to evaluate. The construct here, however, is quite different from such a conceptualization because it regards past and future taking life project as a referent in these evaluations.

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