

Chapter 2: Definitions of Terms

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Introduction: Happiness - What is meant by the term?

The primary objective of this report is to detail multiple policy recommendations for the promotion of happiness in light of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) index, with the aims of this chapter being to define this term, to analyze its various facets, and to discuss some ways in which it has been measured in studies and potentially bears on political decision-making.

This chapter begins by defining what is meant by 'happiness' for the sake of the report (sec. 1), which is more or less what people mean by 'well-being'. Next, it takes up the standard distinction between subjective and objective conceptions of well-being, noting that the dominant view among the Bhutanese and contributors to this report is that both sorts are relevant (sec. 2). Then, it notes an additional distinction among types of well-being, between well-being as a 'time-slice' of a life, to which the subjective/objective distinction most readily applies, on the one hand, and as a narrative pattern in life or how it develops over time, on the other (sec. 3). The following topic concerns whose well-being it is that is under consideration, where this could be either the well-being of an individual, an animal or even a group such as a family or community (sec. 4), after which the issue of how to measure well-being is addressed (sec. 5). The chapter concludes by briefly indicating how these various dimensions of happiness figure into policy discussions encountered in the rest of this report about GNH (sec. 6).

End in itself v. means.

Happiness was famously analyzed by Aristotle as being the sole ultimate goal of human existence, meaning that he viewed it the only thing important in its own right, not merely as a means to an end. Regardless of whether Aristotle is correct that happiness is the only end in itself, it is at least one important end for human beings and other life forms. Whereas money and technology, for example, are mere tools, i.e., useful solely as a means to some, further thing (as is economic growth, discussed in the chapter 'The power of GDP and its limitations'), happiness in contrast is by definition something good for its own sake. Of course, happiness can *also* be useful, and, indeed, below the report points to respects in which happiness brings additional goods in its wake. The key point, though, is that whatever happiness is, it is something that is desirable in itself, and not *merely* as an instrument to acquire something else.

'Happiness', 'well-being', 'the quality of life'

To many, particularly Western, ears, talk of 'happiness' connotes something individualistic and 'mental', for instance, a hedonic state in which a single person feels pleasure or contentment. However, that is not what contributors to this report and friends of GNH generally mean by the word. Drawing on more Eastern senses of 'happiness', as well as Aristotle's own understanding of the term and the 'eudaimonic' perspectives of contemporary psychology, in this report talk of 'happiness' is meant to be broad, signifying *everything that makes a person's life that goes well*. Furthermore, as is discussed below, many contributors believe that the happiness of animals also matters for its own sake, beyond whatever influence it might have on people's happiness.

Equivalent terms for the happiness of organisms generally, then, are 'well-being', a 'high quality of life' and perhaps a 'flourishing existence'. And the opposite of the happiness of life-forms is well captured by terms such as 'harm', a 'poor quality of life', and a 'stunted existence'. As is discussed below (sec. 2), from the perspective of GNH, happiness includes not only 'mental' facets such as pleasure, but also includes more 'objective' dimensions such as meeting needs and, in the case of persons, being compassionate, realizing oneself, exhibiting virtue and obtaining meaning in life.

Subjective and objective conceptions: To what extent is a good life a function of mental states or of certain states of being and functioning?

In the philosophical, psychological and related literature on personal happiness (well-being), it is common to differentiate theories of it in light of the degree to which it is thought to be a function of positive mental states. According to subjective theories, well-being is solely a positive state of mind, typically a matter of feeling pleasure and judging one's life to be satisfactory. In contrast, objective theories maintain that well-being is not merely mental and is constituted, for instance, by conditions such as exhibiting good character, having a family, or making important achievements.

Subjective well-being.

The notion of subjective well-being (SWB) is currently the dominant conception of happiness in psychological literature. SWB is currently considered to be a multidimensional construct, referring to distinct but related aspects that are often treated as a single property called 'happiness'. Specifically, SWB these days tends to encompass how people evaluate their own lives in terms of both affective (how we feel and emot) and cognitive (what we think) components of well-being (Veenhoven, 1994; Diener et al., 1999). Overall, high SWB is seen to combine: frequent and intense positive affective states, the relative absence of negative emotions, and satisfaction with one's life as a whole.

One way to understand SWB as a combination of affective and cognitive aspects is to construe it as an *experience*. Subjective well-being can be seen as a positive psychological experience of one's state of existence and development that is not a mere emotional flash, but is instead a stable, hedonic mood arising from conscious or unconscious judgment. The feeling or affective side of experience is a pleasant state of mind, perhaps one of enjoyment, whereas the judging or cognitive side is a matter of deeming one's life to have achieved a certain standard. From this perspective, SWB is a matter of positive experiences about various aspects of one's life, including the experiences of: abundance, mental and physical health, progress, autonomy, self-acceptance and relationships (Xing, 2013).

SWB is not only good in itself, but has also been linked to many positive outcomes for mental and physical health, as well as improved interpersonal relationships and better community integration. For example, individuals with higher levels of SWB have been shown to have stronger immune systems (Stone et al., 1994), to live longer (Ostir et al. 2000), to suffer from lower levels of sleep complaints (Brand et al., 2010), to exhibit greater self-control, self-regulatory and coping abilities (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002), and to be relatively more cooperative, pro-social, charitable, and other-centred (Williams and Shaw, 1999). (For more thorough discussion, see the chapter 'Psychological well-being'.)

Note that the above understanding of subjective well-being is a typically Western construal, one that is arguably too limited to capture everything that is subjective about well-being, at least from the Bhutanese perspective of GNH. For one, many in the Buddhist and more generally meditative traditions would suggest that part of subjective well-being is a detached state of mind in which one does not judge, and, especially, does not judge how well one's life is going. It is an interesting question how detachment, related attitudes such as acceptance, as well as other 'spiritual' orientations might square with the positive judgment (or 'life satisfaction') element that is taken for granted in Western analyses of SWB. Perhaps it is fair to say that *to the extent that* judgment is constitutive of well-being, it should be positive judgment, thereby leaving room for disagreement about how much judgment there should be.

The positive judgment facet of dominant understandings of SWB is not the only one that is questionable in light of GNH; so is the positive affect element. Consider that insofar as one is better off for being a loving person, where love involves sympathetic reactions toward others' pain, it appears that one can sometimes be better off, to some degree, precisely for feeling bad that one's beloved is not well. If one did not have negative mental reactions toward others' woe--as the psychopathic fail to do--then, although one might feel more

pleasure, one would be in a major respect subjectively worse off, so many Bhutanese would plausibly suggest. Self-regarding pleasure is one element of subjective well-being, but other-regarding attitudes are as well.

Failure to capture everything subjective about well-being is one concern about the dominant interpretations of SWB, but note a further point: it is unlikely that subjective considerations, however understood, capture everything about well-being. No matter how broadly construed, subjective well-being cannot account for the complexity of philosophical conceptions of a life that goes well, long-standing ideas of humanistic and existential schools of psychology, as well as many laypeople's ultimate goals.

For example, public policy aimed only at subjective well-being is vulnerable to the *Brave New World* caricature: 'just drug them into contentment (or even compassion) with *soma*'. It also stumbles on the fact that human beings persist in having children. Substantial evidence indicates that couples without children can expect to be subjectively happier than childless couples (Senior, 2010); professional, married couples without children are the most psychologically well off. For a final example, to judge the quality of relationships, we need to know not merely what you think about the quality of your marriage and how you experience it, but also what your spouses and children think about it, as well as the objective frequency of arguments, cooperative behaviour and sexual relations.

The upshot is that well-being does not exist just in one's own head, at least from the standpoint of adherents to GNH, which includes not merely psychological well-being as part of its index, but also categories such as community vitality, health and education, the value of which is not merely instrumental and cannot plausibly be reduced to pleasure or anything subjective. A teacher naturally wants his students to enjoy learning, but she also wants them to learn even if doing so must come at the cost of enjoyment.

Objective wellbeing

The most salient objective approach among psychologists is the 'eudaimonic', or self-realization, paradigm, where well-being is construed as an on-going, dynamic process of effortful living by means of engagement in *activities* perceived as meaningful (e.g., Ryan and Deci, 2001). Advocates of this approach maintain that living a life of virtue, understood as developing the valuable parts of one's human nature, or actualizing one's inherent potentials in the service of something greater, constitutes the good life for an individual (Bonniwell and Henry, 2007; Delle Fave, Massimini and Bassi, 2011). From this perspective, positive experiences are not in themselves important for a good life, and are

relevant only insofar as they involving appreciating objectively worthwhile ways of being or functioning.

There have been different approaches to defining eudaimonia in the field of positive psychology, with researchers identifying a number of different aspects of self-realization such as: personal growth, meaning in life, purpose, autonomy, competence, mindfulness, self-acceptance, authenticity, values congruence, social connectedness and self-regulation (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002; Kashdan, Biswas-Diener and King, 2008; Huta and Ryan, 2010; Osin and Boniwell, 2012).

Other conceptions of well-being are objective but not strictly eudaimonist; they focus less on the central idea of self-realization and instead, often, on a plurality of ways of being and functioning. For example, according to some research about what people across the world seek out for its own sake, final ends include those of: engagement, which means being absorbed by an activity; interpersonal relationships; meaningful activity; and achievement at a career, hobby or some other project (Seligman and Adler, 2013). In addition, philosophers routinely offer what they call 'objective list theories' of, or 'capability approaches' to, the good life (Nussbaum, 2011). It has been argued that many elements of these views can be placed under the three classic headings of 'the good, the true and the beautiful' (Metz, 2013a). From these perspectives, a life goes well insofar as one directs one's intelligence toward: 'goodness', i.e., helping others in the form of, say, loving a family, working for a charity, being employed in a caring profession, participating in a group oriented toward a shared goal; 'truth', which means informedly reflecting about society, nature, the universe or oneself, perhaps by obtaining a formal education or maybe just by reading on one's own or conversing with others; and 'beauty', which is shorthand for creativity by, for instance, making art-objects, interpreting an artwork, decorating a room, taking care of a garden or expressing humor.

GNH appears compatible with a wide array of theoretical approaches to well-being (as is discussed in the chapter 'The desirability of sustainable happiness as a guide for public policy'). It does not suggest any one basic perspective by which to unify its eight objective domains of education, governance, cultural diversity, health, living standards, environment, community vitality and time use. However, it is worth noting that these facets emerged from a largely Buddhist worldview, and other societies might favour different dimensions. Furthermore, even if cultures were to share all the same dimensions, they might assign different weights to them. Individuals in independent, typically Western, cultural contexts are largely motivated to seek happiness through autonomous agency (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), whereas, in many East Asian cultural contexts, happiness tends to be construed in terms of interpersonal connectedness or balance between the self and others (Uchida, Norasakkunkit

and Kitayama, 2004). It is common to differentiate between a 'personal achievement orientation' and a 'relationship orientation', with many cross-cultural studies using this approach.

Recent work in psychology suggests that, at least among Westerners, believing that one's life has meaning and is a product of one's autonomous decisions is associated with: greater levels of a variety of positive feelings such as hope and satisfaction; better physical health; lower levels of stress; lower levels of drug addiction and dependence; and reduced incidence of depression (Baumeister, 1991). Among Asians, the following are highly predictive of positive experiences: factors such as the attainment of interpersonal goals (Oishi and Diener, 2001); positive relational emotional experiences (Kitayama, Mesquita and Karasawa, 2006); fulfilling relational norms (Suh et al., 1998); and harmony (Kwan, Bond and Singelis, 1997).

The contributors to this report believe, with the approach of GNH, that the best life, the one most worth pursuing, includes both subjective and objective elements. Well-being is plural, and not monistic: there is no one final-common-path. Useful understanding of well-being for public policy should be a 'dashboard' of subjective conditions of positive feelings and self-appraisal, and probably additional conditions such as spiritual dispositions and loving emotions, along with more objective conditions such as virtues, relationships and accomplishments. This report does not provide a single theory of well-being, but rather appeals to various elements discussed in this section that will be widely attractive as salient in a given context.

Aggregative and narrative conceptions: To what extent is a good life a sum of desirable segments or a pattern over time?

Another distinction with regard to well-being concerns what might be called its 'bearer', i.e., what it is about a person's life that is either going well or poorly. According to the dominant perspective, a life goes well insofar as its separate parts do. The more good parts, i.e., the greater their sum, the better the life. However, recently psychologists and philosophers have been arguing that although this might exhaust well-being for animals, it does not for persons, who are capable of viewing their lives as a whole. Human well-being is also a matter of how the parts of a life are ordered or related to one another; living a certain kind of life-story also tends to matter to people.

Aggregative views

Both the subjective and objective conceptions of well-being (analyzed in sec. 2) suggest an aggregative view of what makes a life go well. According to subjective well-being, a life goes well, the more its parts exhibit positive experiences; roughly, the more pleasant feelings and approving judgments, the

better the life. Similar remarks go for a typical objective conception: a life goes well, the more its parts exhibit goods such as self-realization, relationships, knowledge, health and the like.

Few would deny that the quality of a life is substantially a matter of *how much* subjective and objective goodness is in it. However, it is probably not the whole story. For example, psychological studies show that, upon judging past events in their lives, people tend to appraise their value not so much in terms of the sum of the goodness of their parts, but largely in terms of their *pattern*, and, in particular, whether they 'ended on a high note' or not (Khaneman, 2011).

Narrative views

According to these perspectives, whether a life goes well depends in some respect on how its parts are ordered or on how the life develops over time. Here are four salient ideas from the literature, which are ordered developmentally (Metz, 2013b, ch.3).

First, few people want their lives to be repetitive. Even if the parts of a very repetitive life were quite desirable in themselves, full of subjective and objective elements, most people would sacrifice some goodness in the parts in order to avoid repetition in the pattern.

Second, there is the idea that it would be better for a life, which has different kinds of parts, to end on a high note than to have started out good and then declined. Holding constant the sum of part-life facets, it is better for one's life to get better over time than to get worse.

Third, some maintain that, supposing one's life has better and worse parts and the better parts come later, it would be ideal for the comparatively worse parts of a life to have brought about the better ones. That is, many people want to redeem the bad parts of their lives by making something good come of them.

Fourth, there is the view that, supposing the worse parts of one's life have caused better parts toward its end, it would be better for the latter parts to have been caused in a particular manner, say, either by a process of personal growth or in a way that would make for a readable biography.

It is not clear how these four facets of well-being might figure into socio-economic development policies, although one natural suggestion is to ensure that the elderly are not left to watch television in a nursing home. On the face of it, societies ought to work to ensure that older generations are afforded substantial opportunity to engage with and to enrich younger ones.

It might be, however, that these narrative judgments about the desirability of an upward slope in the progress of a life are culturally limited. In one study, Chinese and American participants were presented with graphs representing either a linear or nonlinear trend, and asked them to indicate which graph best represents the change in their happiness they predict over their lifespan (Ji, Nisbett and Su, 2001). Chinese respondents were more likely to choose a nonlinear graph, while Americans were more likely to choose a linear graph. Although this study enquired into what people expected would happen, and not what they wanted to happen, it could be that expectations are tracking hopes.

A complete conception of well-being would probably include both aggregative and some kinds of narrative elements, so that an individual should keep both in mind when considering how to live. However, a large majority of the contributions to this report focus on the former, as it admits of public policy applications more readily than the latter.

Individual and collective conceptions: Whose wellbeing matters, that of an individual or that of the group?

So far, the discussion has focused on the happiness of an *individual*. However, some thinkers, cultures and societies suggest that there are additional 'lives', namely, those of certain *groups*, that can go better or worse and that should be taken into consideration when developing public policy. The most common suggestions are families, communities and nations.

Individual well-being

A large majority of literature on well-being addresses that of an individual human being. Goods such as positive experiences, self-realization, meaningful activities, relationships and the like are naturally understood to be things that individuals can either have or lack. And although there is less literature among philosophers and psychologists about animal well-being, it tends to be construed either in hedonic terms, as a matter of feeling pleasure and avoiding pain, or as the meeting of biological needs.

Now, many would agree that it makes good sense to speak of a 'dysfunctional family' and a 'sick society', or of a 'happy family' and a 'flourishing society'. Is a group bad merely insofar as it bad for individuals or composed of badly off individuals? Conversely, is a group good merely to the extent that it enhances the quality of life of individuals or is constituted by well off individuals? According to some traditions, the correct answer to these questions is 'no'; groups can be better or worse off *as groups*, to some degree apart from how well off individuals are within them. From this holist perspective, we should also speak of 'collective well-being'.

Collective wellbeing

Consider some respects in which it seems possible for groups to be good in themselves or for groups to be doing better or worse. Think, first, about a nation or a people as something that is worth protecting for its own sake. A major architect of the United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide appears to have thought that genocide was a violation of the right of a nation to exist, where a nation 'signifies constructive cooperation and original contributions, based on genuine traditions, genuine culture, and a well-developed national psychology. The destruction of a nation, therefore, results in the loss of its future contributions to the world' (Lemkin, 1944). Similarly, there is the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which accords peoples moral and legal claims to self-defence and to natural resources, among other things.

For another example, think about the family. Obviously, what makes a family good in large part is that it benefits its members, is good for them. However, it is also plausible to think that the kinds of interaction inherent to a well-functioning family are also good for their own sake. *Relationships* in which people identify with each other, or share a way of life, and in which they exhibit solidarity with each other, or care about their quality of life, are arguably something to prize, apart from their consequences for the quality of individual lives.

Note that a concern for collective well-being, and specifically for harmonious relationships, would make good sense of a concern for the *distribution* of well-being in society (Uchida, 2013). Those sympathetic to equal distributions, or at least not grossly unequal ones, might think that a more egalitarian *society* is better than a more inegalitarian one.

An extreme version of the collective view would be that only groups are valuable, with individuals serving merely as a means to them. However, such a viewpoint is rare, and much more commonly one finds the view that if collective well-being is important, it is something to be balanced against individual well-being, which is most important. In any event, the contributors to this report focus in the first instance on individual well-being, but, to the extent that they are concerned with the pattern of distribution of goods across a society, they could be understood to be interested in social well-being, too.

Measuring well-being: How can we know whom is doing well?

It might seem impossible to measure many of the purported goods discussed above. How can one quantify, say, love? And if cultures differ with regard to the weights they assign to various goods, can one sensibly say that one culture

is on balance happier than another? There are difficulties, but social scientists have often overcome them when studying at least personal and national well-being.

Measuring personal wellbeing

One natural strategy to determine whether someone has been happy, at least subjectively, is to ask her. However, studies have shown that individuals frequently misrepresent their past subjective experiences. In some studies, participants were asked to provide a continuous indication of the hedonic quality of their experience in real time. At the end of the experiment, they were asked to evaluate their experience as a whole, and the retrospective evaluations tended not to reflect the real time judgments (Kahneman, 2011, pt.5). For one, participants tended to place disproportionately great emphasis on the last part of the experience, and, for another, post-experience reports tend to be influenced by respondents' current moods and immediate contexts.

To avoid this kind of problem, some psychologists use brain scans to determine whether people are actually feeling a certain way. More often, however, social scientists measure (subjective) well-being in real time. What is called the 'experience sampling method' systematically obtains self-report data about participants' everyday lives at many points in time, to obtain reports of real time experiences in natural settings, outside of a laboratory (Stone and Shiffman, 1994). This methodology might involve participants recording their feelings on a computer at several different points throughout the day, or receiving phone calls at various times from an enquiring researcher.

Whereas the above techniques focus in the first instance on people's feelings, others instead address their judgments, with 'life satisfaction' being a central indicator (Linley et al., 2009). Life satisfaction represents an individual's appraisal of his own life. People report high level of life satisfaction when there is little or no discrepancy between their current circumstances and what they think is an ideal or deserved situation. Although a person's happiness levels can fluctuate over time in response to changing circumstances, trauma or crises, there is a tendency for levels of overall life satisfaction to return to a fairly narrow range (Diener et al., 1999).

Individual judgments of happiness are largely influenced by cultural meanings and values within each nation or culture, and so what makes people subjectively happy will vary from society to society (and even individual to individual) (Uchida, 2013). In addition, it is well known that an individual's judgment of how well he is faring is often a function of comparing himself to a group with which he identifies, so that even if their group is doing very well in absolute terms, people will judge themselves not to be well off if they are not

the 'top dog' in their group. In addition, it should be noted that life satisfaction ratings may be influenced by social desirability factors, e.g., admitting one is unhappy with life could be akin to admitting failure.

Consider now another major technique, beyond retrospective reporting, the experience sampling method and life satisfaction. Often it is possible to use random assignment, placebo-controlled studies. First, people are randomly assigned to receive a certain treatment and others to a 'control group' that does not receive it. Next, a researcher ascertains whether those given the treatment do noticeably better than those who did not get it. If so, then there is some good evidence that the treatment is the cause of the improvement. The same basic, experimental logic holds for testing exercises that purport to increase well-being. So, for example, it has been found that those who set aside ten minutes before they sleep to recall what went well for them and why feel better and are less depressed than those who do not (Seligman et al., 2005). It has been suggested that this sort of technique can also be used to measure objective conditions such as relationships, meaningful activities and achievements (Seligman et al., 2009).

Most of the above measurements are of subjective well-being, with ways of sizing up objective well-being being less salient in the literature. However, take the case of how to measure love. If one believes that love is largely an emotion, i.e., fairly subjective, then there are readily available techniques for capturing its intensity, e.g., with the affect intensity measure, a 40-item questionnaire that assesses the characteristic strength or intensity with which an individual typically experiences her emotions, distinguishing between frequency of emotional experiences and their intensity (Larsen, Diener and Emmons, 1986). However, if one plausibly thinks of love more objectively, as a certain kind of relationship or interaction, one could also determine how strong or weak an instance of it is, at least in comparison to others. How often does a couple fight? How often do they choose to make love? How often do they go out of their way for each other? How often do they reveal their innermost thoughts? How often do they engage in shared activities? How often do they use the word 'we' as opposed to the word 'I'? In principle, one could measure these and related factors, sum them up, and arrive at a kind of score.

It is commonly pointed out that the quality of an individual's life is strongly correlated to the quality of his relationships. Hence, if one has measured the strength of a family's bonds or a person's interpersonal interaction generally, then one can probably predict how well-off he is.

Measuring collective (family and community) wellbeing

In order to measure family and community well-being, conceived as the sum of the well-being of their members, it would of course be useful to ask individuals about how they view their lives and then aggregate the results. And even for more strictly collective understandings of well-being, as groups that can be better or worse off apart from their members, it would be useful to ask individuals about how they assess their relatedness with family and community.

However, if it is indeed true that relationships themselves can go better or worse, apart from how the individuals in them are faring (as per 4.2), then one should try to measure the quality of relationships directly, requiring one to set a unit of analysis for family and community as such. For example, suppose that a desirable relationship is a loving or at least sympathetic one, where one person's happiness is dependent on others' happiness. In that case, a researcher could measure the extent to which the flourishing of others is mirrored psychologically in a given person and, similarly, the extent to which this person feels bad consequent to others' floundering. For another example, if a quality relationship is one in which people substantially engage in communicative action with one another, orienting their behaviour consequent to mutual understanding (Habermas, 1987), then a researcher could measure that degree of interaction compared with isolating times standing in a queue, driving in a car, engaging with an electronic gadget or following orders.

Measuring national wellbeing

Over the past several years there has been a shift away from defining a country's standing in purely financial terms, i.e., GDP or GNP, to measures of a nation's well-being that focus less on general purpose means such as money and, instead, more on desirable final ends. The GNH approach of course places these ends in themselves under the heading of 'happiness' (or 'well-being'). Note that the word 'nation' in the context of national well-being does not usually mean a group as something distinct from its members (as in the previous section, 5.2), but is instead normally the sum (or some other distribution) of the quality of individual lives.

A number of measures have been proposed that aim to measure national or societal happiness by focusing on quality of life rather than wealth (for an overview, see Veenhoven, 2007). Some policy makers advocate for aggregated measures of subjective well-being to be the *only* way of evaluating policy and progress, whereas others stipulate that human well-being depends on a range of objective functions and abilities each of which needs to be measured and which cannot, in general, be aggregated into a single measure. Since most contributors to this report believe, with GNH, that well-being has both subjective and

objective well-being, both kinds of measurement at the national level are appropriate.

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the level of income is both relatively unimportant and relatively transitory for at least subjective well-being, compared with family circumstances and unemployment. For example, longitudinal data has shown little long-term relationship between a nation's income and its average level of life satisfaction (Easterlin, 1995). Some maintain that more income improves happiness only until basic needs are met, e.g., adequate food and healthcare (Veenhoven, 1991). Factors that have been shown to substantially contribute to the long-term subjective happiness of nations include health (Easterlin, 2003) and employment and marital status (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004).

The life satisfaction approach is also a promising method, and has been used to value a number of large-scale, public bads such as air pollution (Luechinger, 2009), droughts (Carroll, Frijters and Shields, 2009) and flood hazards (Luechinger and Raschky, 2009). (For more examples, see the chapter 'Subjective well-being measures to inform public policies'.) A related tack is that of the World Health Organisation (WHO), which conceives of quality of life in terms of an individual's perception of her position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which she lives and in relation to her goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It includes the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment. WHO has developed two instruments for measuring the quality of life, the WHOQOL-100 and the WHOQOL-BREF, which can be used in a variety of cultural settings whilst allowing the results from different populations and countries to be compared.

As for resolutely objective national measures, the Human Development Index (HDI) is currently a prominent rival of GDP. It is based on the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and integrates health, education, and economic affluence into a human development framework. Another index, the Inequality-Adjusted HDI (I-HDI) was introduced following criticisms that HDI scores do not take into account the way in which health, income, education and the like are distributed across the population of a country.

An additional objective measurement is of course Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, which has been in use for decades and is defined by the government of Bhutan this way: 'Gross National Happiness measures the quality of a country in more holistic way [than GNP] and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each

other' (quoted in Ura et al., 2012, p.7). As analyzed in this chapter, there are nine dimensions of GNH: psychological well-being, health, education, culture, time use, good governance, community, living standards and ecology. A single index is developed from 33 indicators categorized under these nine domains. However, policy makers have much more information at their disposal than simply one numerical score, and can use data available for each of the nine domains in 'dashboard' fashion.

For a final example, consider the Better Life Initiative, which includes number of well-being indicators along with a composite index. It distinguishes between material living conditions (income and wealth; jobs and earning; housing) and quality of life (health status; work and life balance; education and skills; civic engagement and governance; social connections; environmental quality; personal security; and subjective well-being). These eleven life domains are then weighted to produce a single score, if such is desired.

Above it was noted that different societies assign different degrees of importance to various objective goods. Some prize autonomous achievements more than interdependent relationships, and vice versa. How can international comparisons be made in light of such reasonable disagreements about priorities? One option is to evaluate national happiness along two different dimensions, one that is invariant across societies and one that is sensitive to local values. Examples of the former, standardized approach include the I-HDI and the OECD's Better Life Index, whereas Bhutan's GNH, grounded in this country's Buddhist traditions, might be a good instance of an indigenous index.

Another factor to keep in mind when comparing the well-being of various nations is the influence of cultural factors on the ways people respond to surveys. For a first issue, there are response biases, e.g., Asians prefer to use a middle point while Americans prefer to use an extreme point on a Likert scale (Chen, Lee and Stevenson, 1995). A second concern is the reference group effect, by which people judge themselves based on others nearby, meaning that people's judgments in each nation will tend to vary with their local reference point (Heine et al., 2002). Third, consider that what counts as 'optimal happiness' varies substantially across cultures. For example, in Japan, the ideal level of happiness is not a '100% happy situation'; instead, people judge that around 75% is ideal. These considerations suggest being wary of a single global model by which to measure happiness in different societies (Uchida, 2013); investigating the meaning of happiness within each cultural context might be most productive.

Lastly, when measuring national well-being, it is important for policy-makers to keep in mind not merely how well off individuals within the nation are as a

sum, but also several distributive factors, of which here are three. First, should the nation be seeking to maximize the well-being of its residents, or should it be aiming for a satisfactory amount? Second, how should well-being be allocated across society, e.g., should those with the least amount of well-being receive the most resources, or should resources be put wherever they are expected to do the most good? Third, and finally, policy-makers need to balance a concern for the well-being of the present generation with that of future generations, where tempering the former might well be required to provide enough for the latter.

Conclusion: How do these definitions underlie the rest of the report?

This chapter has sought to analyze the way the term ‘happiness’ is understood in the context of GNH and of public policy more generally. It first noted that ‘happiness’ refers to something that is desirable for its own sake, and not, like money, good merely as a means to something else, and that the word is typically used to connote the conditions of a life that goes well. Then it drew a standard distinction between subjective and objective conceptions of well-being. GNH includes both elements, and so the reader will recurrently encounter explicit and implicit reference to both facets in the rest of this report. Next, this chapter noted that well-being can be plausibly understood not only as a sum of desirable elements, but also as a life that exhibits a certain pattern over time, a ‘life-story’, after which it pointed out that many theorists consider groups, and not merely individuals, also to be capable of being better and worse off. Finally, the chapter discussed ways to measure well-being, taking into account previous distinctions of subjective and objective, aggregative and distributive, individual and group. With these basic elements, the reader may confidently proceed to think about what it would mean to orient public policy toward the promotion of happiness.

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