



Towards a greater global understanding of wellbeing: A proposal for a more inclusive measure

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Abstract: The science of wellbeing has come a long way from the early days of measuring wellbeing via a nation's GDP, and wellbeing measures and concepts continue to proliferate to capture its various elements. Yet, much of this activity has reflected concepts from Western cultures, despite the emphasis placed on wellbeing in all corners of the globe. To meet the challenges and opportunities arising from cross-disciplinary research worldwide, the Well-Being for Planet Earth Foundation and the Gallup World Poll have joined forces to add more culturally relevant constructs and questions to existing Gallup modules. In this white paper, we review the discussion from the international well-being summit in Kyoto, Japan (August 2019), where nine such additions were proposed and highlight why a more global view of wellbeing is needed. Overall, the new items reflect a richer view of wellbeing than life satisfaction alone and include hedonic and eudaimonic facets of wellbeing, social wellbeing, the role of culture, community, nature, and governance. These additions allow for the measurement of a broader conceptualization of wellbeing, more refined and nuanced cross-cultural comparisons, and facilitate a better examination of the causes of variation in global wellbeing. The new Gallup World Poll additions will be trialled in 2020, with additional inclusions from this summit to be made in 2021.

Keywords: positive psychology, wellbeing, hedonia, eudaimonia, life satisfaction, culture

1. Introduction

The science of wellbeing has come a long way. Initially anchored in the field of psychology, it has since moved into fields like organizational development, health, education, economics, and policy expansion. Indeed, global policy makers are progressively adopting wellbeing as an overarching framework by which to assess, track, and respond to human development challenges and opportunities. Indices by which wellbeing is measured are thus critical, and need to be carefully reviewed and updated. For example, the World Happiness Report (WHR), which has garnered international attention for its national happiness rankings, and the Happy Planet Index, ranking environmentally sustainable wellbeing, assess wellbeing via the Gallup World Poll (GWP). Both reports rely on a single question: the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965), also called Cantril's Ladder, which asks respondents to rate themselves on their current and future perceived quality or satisfaction with life, with the bottom of the 'ladder' representing low satisfaction/quality of life and the top, representing high satisfaction/quality of life.



Although the Cantril's Ladder is a valid assessment of present perceived quality of life across global cultures, it is an incomplete measure of well-being. At the country-level, Cantril's Ladder is highly correlated with a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Diener, Kahneman, Tov, & Arora, 2010; Helliwell, Huang, & Wang, 2017; Joshanloo, 2018; Joshanloo, Jovanovic, & Taylor, 2019; Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). This single score is also linked to several factors (e.g., personal freedom as well as healthcare, educational, and political functioning, Joshanloo et al., 2019). It is further considered a Western-centric metric of wellbeing reflecting Western populations used in most psychology research (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) and is limited in its ability to reflect ways in which wellbeing is experienced and understood worldwide (Lomas, 2015). Scholars have found that subjective wellbeing can be ordered along a single dimension from evaluative judgements of life (Cantril's ladder) on one end to experienced affect on the other (Diener, Kahneman, Arora, Harter, & Tov, 2009; Diener, Ng, Harter, & Arora, 2010). This ordering reveals that evaluative judgements are more highly related to income, standards of living, and luxury conveniences although meeting basic and psychosocial needs mediated the effects of income on life evaluation to a degree, while affect is more highly related to psychological needs, autonomy, social relationships, and fulfilment in daily tasks.

Wellbeing has also been thought of as a multidimensional set of constructs that are not reducible to a single facet (such as quality of life) (de Chavez, Backett-Milburn, Parry, & Platt, 2005; Lomas, Hefferon, & Ivtzan, 2015); it includes not only satisfaction with life, a cognitive appraisal of one's life, but positive emotions and psychological resources (such as meaning in life), together with considerations of social inequality, environmental degradation, and political freedom. For example, Morrison, Tay, and Diener (2011) found, using Gallup World Poll data that people tend to use proximate factors, such as one's job, health, or standard of living to judge their wellbeing when overall living conditions are satisfactory or when individualism is salient. In contrast, individuals are more likely to use perceived societal success to judge life satisfaction when life conditions are difficult or when collectivist norms form part of their culture. This suggests additional dimensions need emphasis in wellbeing appraisals, preferably through consensus and founded on empirical evidence proffered by the global academic community. This approach also means capturing the diverse influences that have hitherto been overlooked in existing measures and which matter to individuals and societies.

In the interests of advancing this aim, the authors recently participated in a three-day summit convened in August 2019 in Kyoto, Japan. Funded and facilitated by the Well-Being for Planet Earth Foundation (previously called the LiFull Foundation) and Gallup representatives, its principal goal was to add new items to the GWP to ensure its representativeness in global wellbeing perspectives. This means including additional concepts that have been omitted to date, such as the role of culture, community, governance, and nature. This white paper offers a summary of the proposed additions, including their rationale and future research potential. By offering these additions, we hope to complement the work of the World Happiness Report council and offer a truly comprehensive "World Wellbeing Report" in the years to come.

1.1 *What's wrong with the GDP as a measure of prosperity?*

While income (GDP) is an indicator of prosperity, it is not the only one, and the realization of its inadequacy in measuring social progress is growing (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Lambert, Mulay-Shah, Warren, & Younis, 2019; Nikolova, 2016; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009; Uchida & Oishi, 2016). Measuring the market value of goods and services tells us little about individual wellbeing and happiness, or who benefits when a nation's GDP increases. Costs to the environment or health are also not calculated; in fact, this is a constant criticism of positive

psychology, the newly minted science of wellbeing, which focuses more on the psychological makeup of individuals and less on societal, political, and natural contexts in which they live (Kern et al., 2019; Mead et al., 2019). Further, while more income generates higher life satisfaction, this relationship does not hold true everywhere or in all conditions (Easterlin, 2015). For instance, a decrease in positive emotion due to rising ambitions and lost hopes for one's economy, coupled with failed leadership in delivering jobs and rising social equality, underscores what is known as the "unhappy development paradox" (Arampatzi, Burger, Ianchovichina, Röhrich, & Veenhoven, 2015). Money is not all that matters; factors such as equality, access to opportunity, and feelings of respect can highlight what is happening in societies that a nation's GDP cannot.

1.2 *Why Does Wellbeing Matter?*

While this question has been answered by many researchers, a recap is helpful for those who remain unconvinced of its necessity as a matter of policy and global research. There are many reasons why wellbeing matters. First, individuals with greater wellbeing are known to generate greater social good and are easier on the public purse. For instance, they are more likely to save and control expenditures by consuming less (Güven, 2012). They are more likely to show compassion, empathy, and more prosocial behavior (Johnson & Fredrickson, 2005; Nelson, 2009; Rand, Kraft-Todd, & Gruber, 2015), be more socially engaged (Mehl, Vazire, Holleran, & Clark, 2010; Richards & Huppert, 2011) and volunteer to a greater degree (Priller & Shupp, 2011; Son & Wilson, 2012; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). More likely to make more ethical decisions (James & Chymis, 2004), they also engage in less risky behavior, smoke less, and exercise more (Goudie, Mukherjee, De Neve, Oswald, & Wu, 2012; Grant, Wardle, & Steptoe, 2009; Huang & Humphreys, 2012). Individuals with greater wellbeing also tend to be healthier and live longer (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Sin, 2016; Wiest, Schüz, Webster, & Wurm, 2011). At school, greater wellbeing translates into better grades (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Suldo, Thalji, & Ferron, 2011), while workplaces benefit with happier employees showing more productivity, engagement attitudes, and less sick time and absenteeism (Bockerman & Ilmakunnas, 2012; Edmans, 2012; Harter, Schmidt, Asplund, Agrawal, & Killham, 2010; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Krause, 2013; Oswald, Proto, & Sgroi, 2012; Walsh, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2018).

1.3 *The Gallup World Poll (GWP)*

The Gallup World Poll (2005-present) contains a core survey component that carries over from year to year covering the range of overall wellbeing measurements on a continuum from evaluative judgements of life (Cantril's Ladder) to measures of affect and daily experiences (reflections on the previous day). The core instrument also includes measures of law and order, food and shelter, work quality, health, standard of living, citizen engagement, migration intentions, views of governance, and demographic variables. Additional items and modules are added based on current events and the needs of sponsoring entities. This current initiative seeks to expand the core content to fill gaps in wellbeing research that align with Eastern scholar's findings and views.

In World Poll countries, Gallup surveys residents using probability-based sampling methods. The samples are representative of the civilian, non-institutionalized national population, aged 15 and older in the vast majority of countries. Exceptions to national coverage include unsafe areas, very remote locations and low human-density areas. Typically, the sample size is 1,000 adults in most countries, while in the most populous nations such as China, India, and Russia, Gallup uses sample sizes of at least 2,000. The sampling of respondents and countries

represents more than 95% of the global population on any given year. This broad coverage of the global population has led to improved interpretations of the relationships among many wellbeing variables, including life satisfaction, age, health, and income across societies for example (Deaton, 2008).

Gallup maintains a centralized level of research management and quality assurance coupled with country-specific knowledge provided by its Regional Research Directors. This centralisation offers a single point of contact and strong processes to ensure consistency, quality and transparency. The World Poll data collection is divided into seven regions. Each region (see box) is led by a Regional Research Director who is responsible for all phases of the research process in his or her portfolio of countries. The Regional Research Director also oversees data collection efforts, which are carried out by the local partners' field teams. Good logistics are key to collecting quality data in the most time-efficient manner. In face-to-face countries, Gallup's local data collection partners use a field plan to deploy their field teams most effectively across geographies. In telephone countries, local partners must also manage the phone sample carefully for maximum efficiency.

1.4 *Why Additions are Necessary*

Empirical research around wellbeing is rapidly growing. Indices must keep pace with these scientific developments by including broader constructs that contribute to wellbeing, such as the natural, social, and political settings in which humans live and thrive (Kern et al., 2019; Mead et al., 2019). Further, not only is the literature evolving, but non-Western research in particular is emerging, making salient a dearth of cross-cultural diversity in the science and measurement of wellbeing (Kim, Doiron, Warren, & Donaldson, 2018). The predominant Western view of wellbeing has implications for which of its aspects are researched, upon whom the research is based, and what resulting norms emerge for what constitutes a good life. For example, cross-cultural differences influence how societies define the self (Joshanloo, 2014), with individualism (a view of the self as independent and focused on the promotion of one's success and personal attributes) being predominant in the West, and collectivism (where self construals are interdependent, with value placed on maintaining relationships, fulfilling social roles, and sacrificing for a collective good) being predominant in the East.

With the exception of cross-cultural research, which tends to be relegated to the periphery of research findings, and the Gallup World Poll as well as a handful of other data collecting entities, much of the wellbeing research to date has largely been based on what have been called "WEIRD" samples, i.e., Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic populations (Henrich et al., 2010) reflected in nearly 90% of the published psychology research (Arnett, 2009; Christopher, Wendt, Marecek, & Goodman, 2014; Rad, Martingano, & Ginges, 2018). This Western-centricity of psychology needs to be challenged to make research and its findings more representative of all humans; moreover, representative research populations and a broader range of wellbeing constructs will align more accurately with how communities around the world view themselves (Kim et al., 2018) and reflect what truly comprises a good life.

2. The Process

A team of seven researchers was invited to the summit on August 5, 6, and 7, 2019. The summit took place at the Shunkoin Temple in Kyoto, Japan and was organized by the Well-Being for Planet Earth Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to making wellbeing science truly global and representative of all human views and perspectives. Invited participants were chosen for their range of cross-cultural research expertise, experience in developing measures and scales, in-

depth knowledge of non-traditional and/or non-Western views of wellbeing, and leadership in philosophical and theoretical developments in the field of wellbeing. Participants presented their findings and proposed research initiatives, focused on addressing current gaps in the literature through the provision of context and content from non-Western regions of the world. They also collectively proposed alternative and/or additional topics for the existing GWP and formulated these as questionnaire items. These topics and items were discussed, debated, and voted upon. The list below includes the final selection. Questions 1 through 6 are those with the highest votes, which were put forward to Gallup for consideration. The remaining items (7 to 9) are those we felt were worthy of consideration for future editions of the poll.

2.1 Proposed additions: Constructs, questions, and rationales

Broadly, the constructs and items we recommend expand Gallup's current wellbeing measures of life satisfaction (i.e., Cantril's Ladder) and the ratio of high-arousal positive to negative emotions, measures which primarily assess hedonic wellbeing (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001). With its focus on feeling good, experiencing pleasure, enjoyment, and comfort, and reducing pain, hedonic wellbeing is vital to human flourishing (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Also crucial is eudaimonic wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008), using and developing the best in oneself (Huta & Ryan, 2010), a definition of wellbeing with roots in Aristotle's virtue ethics that is concerned with mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. While hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing overlap and are distinct, each contributes to wellbeing in complementary ways (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan & Huta, 2009) and are both necessary to living a full life (Joshanloo, 2016; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Our items reflect both orientations as well as the basic psychological needs posited by Self-Determination Theory (SDT, Ryan & Deci, 2000) that must be satisfied for individuals to flourish, namely: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

While Gallup will unveil its final additions to the GWP in time for its 2020 wave and may modify the wording of items further, we have put forward a short list of additions we felt were:

- (1) reflective of a comprehensive conceptualization of wellbeing, augmenting other wellbeing measures in the current literature;
- (2) most pressing to capture as global data does not yet exist for these items;
- (3) inclusive of a wider, richer, and more in-depth range of non-Western worldviews not currently captured by the poll;
- (4) of emergent and dynamic interest as their relationships with other proposed concepts have not yet been examined;
- (5) useful items from which policy makers and other decision makers could take action and,
- (6) demonstrative of the true complexity of wellbeing, highlighting cultural, religious, or regional differences allowing for an examination of the factors that contribute to wellbeing across and within global societies.

2.1.1 Proposal 1—Relationship to nature: "I feel connected to nature and all of life."

The human need for relatedness goes beyond connecting with fellow humans; it extends to connecting with the greater-than-human natural world. Nature connectedness refers to an emotional sensibility that one is part of the larger cycle of life and broader natural environment (Leary, Tipsord, & Tate, 2008; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011). Across samples spanning four continents, empirical evidence has demonstrated that individuals who feel emotionally connected with nature enjoy enhanced levels of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (see meta-analyses by Capaldi, Dopko, & Zelenski, 2014; Pritchard, Richardson,

Sheffield, & McEwan, 2019). Greater feelings of nature connectedness are associated with higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and positive emotions, in addition to higher levels of autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, meaning in life, and positive relations with others. Moreover, nature connectedness emerges as a significant, distinct predictor of many happiness indicators, over and above other types of human social relationships and connections (Zelenski & Nisbet, 2014). With regard to eudaimonic wellbeing, nature connectedness emerges as either similar to or greater in predictive magnitude than socio-demographic and economic benchmarks (Martin et al., forthcoming).

In sum, nature connectedness matters to wellbeing and researchers have made a case for nature relatedness as a basic human psychological need in its own right (Baxter & Pelletier, 2019; Hurly & Walker, 2019). Further, meta-analytic results of studies utilizing samples from North and South America, Europe, Australasia, and Asia provide evidence for a robust, causal link between nature connectedness and pro-environmental behaviours and activities that protect the planet's wellbeing (Mackay & Schmitt, 2019; Whitburn, Linklater, & Abrahamse, 2019). Given this evidence, and in line with the summit's sponsor, the Well-Being for Planet Earth Foundation, we propose to include the item "I feel connected to nature and all of life".

2.1.2 Proposal 2—Mastery: "I am capable of dealing with life's challenges."

A sense of mastery is one aspect in the definition of eudaimonic wellbeing. Individuals who score high on this factor "have a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment, control a complex array of external activities, make effective use of surrounding opportunities, and are able to choose/create contexts suitable to personal needs and values" (Ryff, 1995). Noted earlier, within Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), a sense of competence or mastery is one of three basic human psychological needs. While some research supports these needs as evident across cultures (e.g., Chen et al., 2015), it has been suggested that the dimension of mastery may reflect more Western, individualistic notions, with non-Western cultures placing more emphasis on harmony with—rather than mastery of—their environment (Christopher, 1999; Joshanloo, 2013). Due to a lack of global data, however, it has been difficult to investigate this claim and its consequences. Measuring mastery on a global scale would enable a better quantification of the relative importance of mastery across different cultures, as well as its dynamic interplay with other aspects of well-being. We therefore propose the inclusion of the following item to assess self-perceived mastery: "I am capable of dealing with life's challenges".

2.1.3 Proposal 3—Meaning in Life: "My daily activities seem worthwhile to me."

The desire for meaning is widely characterized as a fundamental motivation (Frankl, 1963; Maslow, 1968; Williams, 2007) and cornerstone of eudaimonic wellbeing (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Steger, 2012). High levels of meaning in life predict various wellbeing benefits including life satisfaction, positive emotions, high morale, vitality, resiliency after trauma, self-worth, personal growth, and environmental mastery, to name a few (see review, Steger, 2009). A consensus has emerged detailing meaning in life as a multidimensional construct comprising three distinct facets: purpose—feeling directed and motivated by goals, coherence—feeling as though one's life makes sense, and significance—feeling that one's life and activities matter (George & Park, 2016; Heintzelman & King, 2014; Martela & Steger, 2016; Steger 2012). Although research has examined the purpose and coherence aspects of meaning, the significance aspect of meaning in life has been less studied. Still, research is emerging which suggests that a sense of significance, feeling that one's life matters and is worthwhile, is a central aspect of meaning (George & Park, 2016). Having a life worth living is

intimately connected with eudaimonia and aligned with the Japanese notion of *ikigai*, translated as a sense of “life worth living” (Sone et al., 2008, p. 709). It is important to note that “significance is not merely about any kind of positive and negative feelings in life, but about the sense of value that arises when we evaluate our lives” (Martela & Steger, 2016, p. 538). In order to measure significance, this central aspect of meaning in life, we propose to include the item “My daily activities seem worthwhile to me”.

2.1.4 Proposal 4—Low-arousal emotions: “Did you feel calm and at peace yesterday?”

As noted above, hedonic forms of wellbeing—often referred to as ‘subjective wellbeing’ (Diener, 1994)—are frequently operationalized as having two elements: a cognitive component, usually framed as ‘life satisfaction’ (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and an affective component, involving the ratio of positive to negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Research into the affective component tends to emphasize and prioritize high arousal forms of positive affect. However, such trends reflect the influence of researchers and participants from Western nations, since other cultures, particularly Eastern ones, may place greater value on low arousal positive emotions (Leu, Wang, & Koo, 2011), such as calmness and contentment. Possible explanations include a certain ‘fear’ or wariness of high arousal emotions in such cultures (Joshanloo, 2013). That said, low arousal positive emotions may be more universally valued than widely realized. For instance, analyzing lay perceptions of happiness across five continents, Delle Fave et al. (2016) found that the most prominent psychological definition was a sense of ‘inner harmony’, featuring three subcomponents: inner peace; contentment; and balance. We align with such findings, although we prefer to separate these subcomponents into two items: peace and contentment (this item), and balance (the next). In order to measure low arousal emotions, we propose to include the item, “Did you feel calm and at peace yesterday?”.

2.1.5 Proposal 5—Balance and harmony: “The various aspects of my life are in balance.”

A key insight from the summit was the recognition of the importance of balance and harmony (see Lomas (forthcoming) for a conceptual review). These concepts are central to Eastern conceptualizations of wellbeing (Wong, 2011), reflecting the influence of traditions such as Taoism (Fang, 2012). At the same time, Delle Fave et al.’s (2016) research suggests their importance might be more universally recognized. While Della Fave et al. grouped balance together with peace and contentment into an overall construct of inner harmony, we separate low arousal positive emotions (the previous item) from our conceptualization of balance and harmony. Our discussions of the latter centered on these qualities not as forms of low arousal affect, but rather as forms of dynamic equilibrium between dialectically related-contrasts across many aspects of life. These include (but are not limited to) subjective emotional states, character, activities, and self-other relations.

First, a full life involves a range of emotions, including negatively-valenced ones, as illustrated by the paradigm of ‘second wave’ positive psychology (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). Thus, there is a time for joy and a time for sadness, for acceptance and for anger, and so on, and flourishing involves an optimal subjective balance of these oppositional qualities. Second, in terms of character, following Aristotle’s notion of the ‘golden mean’, virtue and excellence are found in the optimal balance between extremes (courage, for instance, treading a middle line between timidity and rashness) (Kristjánsson, 2006). Third, with activities, wellbeing involves an appropriate balance between various life elements, as per the concept of ‘work-life balance’ (Guest, 2002). Finally, good self-other relations include striking a balance between prioritizing one’s individual needs with those of others (and also of the natural world). A flourishing life

involves many such balancing acts, with the overall configuration of these ideally being in a pattern of harmony. In order to measure this perceived balance and harmony in life, we propose the item “The various aspects of my life are in balance” (adapted from Kjell, Daukantaitė, Hefferon, and Sikström’s (2016) Harmony in Life Scale).

2.1.6 Proposal 6—Relationship to group: “My happiness depends on the happiness of people close to me.”

Although individualism is often seen as a characteristic of Western cultures, rates of individualism are growing worldwide as a function of increasing globalization (Hamamura, 2012; Santos, Varnum, & Grossmann, 2017). Interestingly, parallel rates of collectivism are not in decline (e.g., Mesoudi, Magid, & Hussain, 2016) and much of the world remains collectively organized. Given that much of the psychology research stems from individualistic nations (Henrich et al., 2010), the orientation to ‘other’ is often treated as more of an anomaly than a norm. Collectivism reflects the view that the self is interdependent, related, and less differentiated from others than is the case in more individualistic contexts. In collectivistic settings, there tends to be a priority on relationships, social duties and roles, and ensuring that group prosperity and harmony take precedence (Grossman & Na, 2014). These narratives are expressed in norms, behaviors, socialization practices, and even how information is processed (Mesoudi et al., 2016). To capture what is still the collectivistic norm in many cultures, the proposed item reflects the interdependency individuals have with one another, and that individual wellbeing is tightly bound to collective wellbeing. To measure this relationship to the group, we propose to include the item “My happiness depends on the happiness of people close to me”.

2.1.7 Proposal 7—Relationship with government: “To what extent do you feel that your government and/or society respects people for who they are (for example, their culture, religion, sexual, or political orientation)?”

As noted, SDT proposes that autonomy is a basic human need (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In line with this, wellbeing tends to increase with greater political, economic, and personal freedoms (Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel, 2008; Ngamaba & Soni, 2018; Verme, 2009; Welzel & Inglehart, 2010). As such, it matters greatly the extent to which governments and societies are open, inclusive, and demonstrative of respect towards individuals with alternative lifestyles, cultures, religions, political orientations, and socioeconomic status. For instance, studies show that minorities (e.g., sexual minorities) are more satisfied in welcoming societies that are tolerant and inclusive (versus discriminatory, indifferent, or hostile). Further, it seems that this relationship between life satisfaction and tolerant, inclusive societies is true for everyone, not only for individuals of minority groups (Berggren, Bjørnskov, & Nilsson, 2017; Kogan, Shen, & Siegert, 2018). Studies support that social exclusion decreases subjective wellbeing (Verkuyten, 2008) and discrimination based on sexual minority status, for example, is costly to individuals in terms of life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing as they suffer from disparities in employment, friendships, physical health, income, and social supports (Conlin, Douglass, & Ouch, 2019; Powdthavee & Wooden, 2015). These same relationships between subjective wellbeing and discrimination against racial minorities is also evident (Cormack, Stanley, & Harris, 2018; Paradies et al., 2015; Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). In order to measure the relationship between individuals and their government and society (i.e., as either upholding or infringing upon their personal freedoms and dignities), we propose to include the item “To what extent do you feel that your government and/or society respects people for who they are (for example, their culture, religion, sexual, or political orientation)?”

2.1.8 Proposal 8—Leisure: “To what extent are you satisfied with how you spend your free time?”

Aristotle believed that leisure, “time away from unpleasant obligations” (Stebbins, 2001, pg. 4), was central to a satisfying life, in part because its activities were freely chosen. Modern theories not only refer to the freedom of choice inherent in leisure activity (Gunter & Gunter, 1980; Iso-Ahola, 1988; Kelly, 1972), linking it to the satisfaction of our basic human need for autonomy, but theories and research also refer to the satisfaction of needs related to meaning in life, mastery, and relatedness that leisure offers (Newman, Tay, & Deiner, 2014). While frequency of engaging in leisure activities is associated with happiness and life satisfaction (e.g., Newman et al., 2014; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004), it is leisure satisfaction, how pleased one is with those experiences, that is paramount to wellbeing (see review, Kuykendall, Boemerman, & Zhu, 2018).

For instance, meta-analytic results of longitudinal and experimental studies suggest a causal effect of leisure satisfaction on hedonic wellbeing (Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015). While such studies involved samples from many countries (i.e., Australia, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Taiwan, and the United States), global data is needed. Moreover, linkages between leisure satisfaction and markers of eudaimonic well-being have yet to be examined. It is possible that cultural views regarding the value of work and leisure could attenuate or enhance the relationship between leisure satisfaction and wellbeing. Yet, no significant difference in the strength of this relationship was evident in Kuykendall and colleagues’ (2015) meta-analysis across samples from countries that highly value leisure (e.g., European countries) compared to nations which value it to a lesser extent (e.g., United States). Additional data is needed to examine if these results hold around the globe. In order to measure leisure satisfaction, we propose to include the item “To what extent are you satisfied with how you spend your free time?”.

2.1.9 Proposal 9—Resilience: “When life is difficult, I recover quickly.”

Resilient individuals are those who bounce back from difficulties, adapt to changing demands of stressful experiences, and move forward with few apparent disruptions to their daily functioning (Carver, 1998; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Many studies demonstrate that resiliency is associated with greater happiness and satisfaction with life in the short-term and over one’s lifetime (e.g., Doyle et al., 2015; Haddadi & Besharat, 2010; Seery, Holman, & Silver, 2010; Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2015). Resilient individuals still experience a range of negative emotions during stressful times, just as their less resilient counterparts do; indeed, highly resilient older adults show greater emotional complexity (i.e., the co-occurrence of positive and negative emotions) compared to the less resilient (Ong, Bergeman, & Boker, 2009).

Yet, as noted earlier in relation to balance and harmony, a full life necessarily includes a range of emotion (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). The strength that resilient individuals exhibit during stressful times comes not from ignoring negative emotions evoked by trauma and stress, rather their strength seems to lie in their ability to draw on positive emotions to regulate their overall affect (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). In turn, resiliency itself produces positive emotions, leading to an upward cycle of wellbeing (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Zautra, Johnson, & Davis, 2005). Others have suggested that meaning in life may be a critical link to resilience (Weathers, Aiena, Blackwell, & Schulenberg, 2016). While Southwick and Charney (2018) identified meaning in life as one of many factors correlated with resiliency, there is a paucity of studies examining the links between them. When added to Gallup’s existing measures of positive affect and life satisfaction, inclusion of our suggested item on meaning in life and resilience could help elucidate relationships among these factors across nations. To measure resiliency, we propose to include the item “When life is difficult, I recover quickly.”

2.2 Research Potential of Our Proposed Additions

The research potential stemming from an expanded global measure of wellbeing is immense. While the concept of wellbeing is much richer than life satisfaction alone, the lack of global data on hedonic and eudaimonic facets of wellbeing has hampered progress in the field. The inclusion of these newly proposed items not only allows for the measurement of a broader wellbeing definition across the world, but also allows for refined and nuanced cross-cultural comparisons of wellbeing. For example, having multiple items that measure different aspects of wellbeing creates novel opportunities for examining the factor-structure or network-structure of wellbeing across different countries and cultures. Additionally, given the abundance of other related measures present in the GWP, the inclusion of these new wellbeing items will allow for a better examination of the causes of variation in wellbeing across the globe. It is our hope that these new additions will serve to push the wellbeing agenda to the forefront of government policy, and, once data has been gathered, offer evidence to address current gaps in our knowledge.

3. Conclusion

The utility of the GWP's assessment of wellbeing across the globe, and national reports which stem from it such the WHR and Happy Planet Index, cannot be overlooked. The GWP has helped to garner greater interest in wellbeing as a topic of serious academic concern, as well as capture the attention of governments in its use as an overarching policy framework. As one of the first global wellbeing assessments, it has raised the profile of wellbeing everywhere. However, it is now time for a new, comprehensive measure of global wellbeing to be used to successfully reflect the preoccupations and opportunities of societies and individuals across the world and truly advance a representative human science of wellbeing. We hope to have captured these missing nuances in our proposed items and stimulate the growing and ever evolving body of research to capture such new developments in both conceptualizations and measurements.

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