

PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to make an effort to bring together a body of research on the subjective aspects of quality of life ("subjective well being", "happiness", "life satisfaction", "perceived quality of life") by starting out with Wilson's (1968) theory of avowed happiness. I build on Wilson's theory by applying diverse but selected findings from the ever-burgeoning quality-of-life literature. Wilson's theory of happiness can be captured by two key postulates. These were summarised by Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999). They stated that fulfilment of needs causes happiness, whereas the persistence of unfulfilled needs causes unhappiness. The degree of need fulfillment required to produce satisfaction depends on the adaptation level of the needs, which is influenced by past experience, comparisons with others, personal values, among others.

Well, the literature on the subjective aspects of quality of life has grown by leaps and bounds since 1967. Diener (1984) and Diener et al. (1999) did a great job reviewing a small part of this voluminous and growing literature. But the literature remains quite fragmented. It needs synthesis and integration. Furthermore, the literature needs to answer the "so what" question. I make an attempt in this book to pull the literature together. I do so by providing a common theoretical language that serves to establish a nomological network. Most importantly, I make a strong attempt to answer the "so what" question by showing how people can use this massive literature to enhance their own subjective well being and the well being of others. Specifically, I show the reader that there are 11 strategies that people can use to optimise subjective well being. These are:

1. Bottom-up spillover,
2. Top-down spillover,
3. Horizontal spillover,
4. Compensation,
5. Re-evaluation based on personal history,
6. Re-evaluation based on the self-concept,
7. Re-evaluation based on social comparison,
8. Goal selection,
9. Goal implementation and attainment,
10. Re-appraisal, and
11. Balance.

These personal growth strategies can be categorised in terms of their focus on inter versus intra domain dynamics. There are strategies that focus on the interrelationships among life domains in a hierarchy of domains. These particular strategies are bottom-up spillover, top-down spillover, horizontal spillover, and compensation. We call these "inter-domain

strategies". In contrast, other personal growth strategies focus on manipulating aspects within a given life domain. These are re-evaluation based on personal history, re-evaluation based on the self-concept, re-evaluation based on social comparison, goal selection, goal implementation and attainment, and re-appraisal. These are "intra-domain strategies". There is also a strategy that involves the manipulation of psychological aspects within a given life domain and across various life domains. This particular strategy is balance.

Why is subjective well being an important concept to study? The answer to this question is twofold: *Subjective well being leads to prosocial behaviour, a prerequisite to civilised society.* Are there any empirical studies to substantiate the link between prosocial behaviour and subjective well being? Yes. Here is an example of a recent study providing evidence of that link. Magen (1996) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between adolescents' experience of happiness and altruism and prosocial behaviour. The findings of the study showed that those who experience happiness in greater depth and intensity tend to be more altruistic and prosocial in their behaviour than those who experience less are happiness. Examples of excerpts from youths who scored high on happiness include:

I would like to help people who need help, to make them happy, to make them feel good. I want to be a psychologist because I want to understand the heart of each person, to help him in life, so that nothing will weigh heavy on him or interfere with his living his life in peace (p. 261).

I volunteered at an old age home where we helped the elderly ... to eat, to get dressed, and sometimes we told them stories that warmed their hearts. It was a wonderful week. I went to an institution for the blind before the holidays, where we students sang and cheered them up When we left I felt that we had really made a contribution to them, and this deed and the happiness we sparked in those people gave me a feeling that life is really wonderful (p. 261).

How can we explain this finding? Subjective well being can be construed *a la* Maslow as need satiation. When needs are satisfied and satiated, the individual is released to focus on higher-order needs. The greater the need satiation the greater the propensity to move into the higher stages of cognitive moral development. Thus, increased happiness enhances people's disposition to become more moral and altruistic in their behaviour. The more people become happy with their lives the more they contribute positively and significantly to society. Hence, to promote social and societal development we need to enhance people's quality of life, i.e., to enhance their subjective well being (cf. Diener, 2000).

Ruut Veenhoven, a renowned quality-of-life researcher, has made this argument repeatedly (Veenhoven, 1991b). He argues that happy people have identity integrity, ego strength, mental maturity, inner control, social ability, activity, and perceptual openness. Happiness leads people to become actively involved in society; it frees them to be creative; and it fosters better personal relations with people in general. Happiness enhances health and promotes longevity. Ultimately, happiness has survival value for the human species. Enjoyment of life fosters activity, strengthens social bonds, and preserves health.

The second answer to the question (about why the study of subjective aspects of quality of life is important) involves *values*. Milton Rokeach (1972), a renowned social psychologist, once made the distinction between instrumental and terminal values. Terminal values are goals in life that are end states, not means to ends. Examples of terminal values include happiness, a comfortable life, a meaningful life, peace, equality, freedom, wisdom, true friendship, and salvation, among others. Instrumental values are highly valued goals because we believe that by pursuing these goals we will be able to experience those cherished terminal values. Examples of instrumental values include hard work, respect for others, co-operation, competition, loyalty, fidelity, commitment, gratitude, and respect for the environment, among others. This distinction between terminal and instrumental values is helpful because it informs us that there are certain values in life that give meaning to our existence. We live to experience those terminal values. One of those terminal values is the *quality of life*. Quality of life, as a terminal value, is captured by common-language terms such as *happiness*, *meaningful life*, and a *comfortable life*. Quality of life is an end goal for the human species, and society organises its many institutions to strive to attain a better quality of life for all.

Philosophers and scholars advise us that sometimes we act confused. Our current values are out of synch with the notion of the good life. Many of us pursue material consumption as if it were an end goal, a terminal value. Social critics maintain that material consumption is an instrumental value, *not* a terminal one. We consume material goods to achieve happiness in life. We should not consume material goods for the sake of consumption. Many of our social ills (e.g., crime, environmental degradation, and immorality) are symptomatic of a society that has confused instrumental values with terminal ones. Materialism should be a means to a higher end, namely the quality of life. If excessive materialism denigrates the quality of life, then we should find ways to realign it with quality of life. We should be focusing on quality of life, not materialism. Materialism should serve this higher end, not work against it.

Over the last several centuries so much effort and good works have been focused on the "quantity of life," not necessarily the "quality of life". Efforts at eradicating poverty, hunger, and disease are directed to the *quantity of life*, not quality of life. These efforts prolong life. They may not enhance the quality of life. Programs designed to enhance economic development are attempts to enhance the quantity of life, not necessarily the quality of life. Quantity of life has its focus on meeting basic human needs, extending life expectancy, and sustaining the survival of an exploding population worldwide. Of course, efforts at enhancing the quantity of life are extremely important, and some may argue are more important than efforts directed to enhance the quality of life. But as human civilisation grows and as we make satisfactory progress to deal with issues of the quantity of life, our attention shifts to tackle issues of quality of life. The study of quality of life is becoming increasingly more important, and I suspect that it will play an increasingly important role in the years and centuries to come.

This book is about the *psychology* of quality of life. The focus here is on the subjective aspects of quality of life. Psychologists (particularly social, personality, and developmental psychologists) and quality-of-life researchers refer to the subjective aspects of quality of life as happiness, life satisfaction, subjective well being, and perceived quality of life. I will use the term *subjective well being* throughout this book to mean the subjective aspects of quality of life. Quality-of-life studies is a growing field of study that subsumes subjective well being. Quality-of-life researchers study both subjective and objective aspects of quality of life. Many quality-of-life economists, for example, focus on measuring the quality of life using objective indicators such as life expectancy, educational attainment, health status, food and nutrition, expenditures on consumer goods, energy consumption, etc. The focus of the quality-of-life economist is society at large. Quality-of-life psychologists focus on the subjective aspects of quality of life, and we work with the *individual in a social context*. They usually do not work with groups such as families and communities. Quality-of-life sociologists do that. Quality-of-life psychologists, sociologists, and economists are not all housed in the traditional disciplines of psychology, sociology, and economics. Many of us are spread across many disciplines. You will find us doing quality-of-life research in travel and tourism, leisure studies, family and child development, gerontology, architecture and design, urban planning, marketing, management, social work, clothing and textiles, environmental studies, pharmacology, health sciences, public administration, religious studies, food and nutrition, and many others. Most of us are *applied social/behavioural scientists*.

The problems and issues of quality of life are so varied. I do not pretend that this book comes anywhere close to dealing with the full spectrum of this growing field of study. This book has a very narrow focus. It deals only with subjective well being. The focus is to find out how people successfully use personal strategies to enhance their subjective well being and communicate this information to readers in a way that can be useful. These strategies are discussed in terms principles that capture the essence of the research in the field. Here is a list of the quality-of-life strategies and their unlinig principles.

The Bottom-Up Spillover Strategy

- o The Bottom-Up Spillover Principle
- o The Means-End Chain Principle of Bottom-up Spillover
- o The Multi-domain Satisfaction Principle of Bottom-up Spillover
- o The Abstractness of Life Domain Principle of Bottom-up Spillover
- o The Self-proximity Principle of Bottom-up Spillover

The Top-Down Spillover Strategy

- o The Principle of Top-Down Spillover
- o The Personality Principle of Top-down Spillover
- o The Very Happy and the Depressed Principle of Top-down Spillover

The Horizontal Spillover Strategy

- o The Horizontal-Spillover Principle
- o The Overlap Principle of Horizontal Spillover
- o The High Involvement Principle of Horizontal Spillover
- o The Skills Principle of Horizontal Spillover
- o The Cultural Pressures Principle of Horizontal Spillover

The Compensation Strategy

- o The Compensation Principle
- o The Repeated Failure Principle of Compensation
- o The Low-versus-High-Status Principle of Compensation
- o The Personal Crisis Principle of Compensation
- o The Public Condition Principle of Compensation
- o The Fixed-Sum-of-Resources Principle of Compensation
- o The Needs Principle of Compensation

The Re-Evaluation Based on Personal History Strategy

- o The Personal History Principle of Re-evaluation