

# The Pleasant Life, the Engaged Life, and the Meaningful Life: What about the Balanced Life?

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**Abstract** Martin Seligman, in his very popular book *Authentic Happiness* (Seligman 2002), argued that authentic happiness is derived from three major sets of experiences in life, namely experiencing pleasantness regularly (the pleasant life), experiencing a high level of engagement in satisfying activities (the engaged life), and experiencing a sense of connectedness to a greater whole (the meaningful life). In this paper, we maintain that balance in life contributes significantly to subjective well-being. Balance contributes to subjective well-being because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from a single life domain. People have to be involved in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human development needs. Different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs. More specifically, balance contributes to subjective well-being because subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce subjective well-being.

**Keywords** Balanced life · Life satisfaction · Subjective well-being · Happiness · Balance · Need satisfaction · Survival versus growth needs

Recently, Seligman and Royzman (2003) have argued that authentic happiness is grounded in three traditional theories, namely hedonism theory (the pleasant life), desire theory (the engaged life), and objective list theory (the meaningful life). Happiness, based on Seligman's interpretation of *hedonism*, is a matter of maximizing feelings of pleasure and minimizing feelings of pain. Hedonism has its modern conceptual roots in Bentham's

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utilitarianism (Bentham 1978) and its manifestation in American consumerism. More recently, according to Seligman and Royzman, the research by Danny Kahneman—the Nobel Prize winner in economics—conceptualized happiness through momentary experiences of pleasures. Kahneman uses the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) to measure happiness (Kahneman 1999). This method involves having researchers beep their subjects at random during the day and asking how much pleasure or pain they are experiencing at the moment. Based on these momentary perceptions of positive and negative affect, Kahneman extrapolates approximate total happiness points over the week. Thus, happiness as “objective happiness” for a given time period is computed by adding up subjects’ on-line hedonic assessments of all the individual moments that comprise that period. Seligman’s theory of authentic happiness (Seligman 2002) takes into account hedonism in that part of what makes a happy life a pleasant life. Happiness in the present involves paying attention to bodily pleasures and enhancing these pleasures. Seligman provides good advice on how people can enhance their pleasures through habituation (i.e., spreading out the events that produce pleasure far enough to generate a craving), savoring (i.e., indulging the senses), and mindfulness (i.e., becoming acutely aware of the surrounding).

*Desire theory* (the engaged life) focuses on gratification, not pleasure. It goes beyond hedonism. Desire theory holds that happiness is a matter of getting what you want (Griffin 1986), with the content of the want left up to the person who does the wanting. Desire theory subsumes hedonism when what we want is lots of pleasure and little pain. However, desire theory holds that fulfillment of a desire contributes to one’s happiness regardless of the amount of pleasure (or displeasure). Desire may be in the form of wanting truth, illumination, and purity. These desires are very different from bodily pleasures. The desire theory criterion for happiness moves from hedonism’s amount of pleasure felt to the somewhat less subjective state of how well one is engaged/absorbed and how well one’s desires are satisfied. Seligman (2002) provides plenty of advice to his readers on how to enhance gratification by engaging in activities that generate flow experience (cf. Csikszentmihalyi 1999). Thus, in addition to experiencing pleasure (the pleasant life), people can experience desire fulfillment through engagement (the engaged life).

*Objective List theory* (Nussbaum 1992; Sen 1985) maintains that happiness consists of a human life that achieves certain things from a list of worthwhile pursuits such as career accomplishments, friendship, freedom from disease and pain, material comforts, civic spirit, beauty, education, love, knowledge, and good conscience. Thus, leading a meaningful life is key to happiness. The meaningful life is not necessarily subjective as is the pleasant life (and the engaged life). Leading a meaningful life is at least objective. The person who lives a meaningful life is one that serves what is larger and more worthwhile than just the self’s pleasures and desires.

Thus, Seligman (2002) holds that there are three distinct kinds of happiness: the Pleasant Life (pleasure), the Engaged Life (engagement), and the Meaningful Life (virtue). Seligman’s theory of authentic happiness attempts to synthesize all three theories of happiness. The Pleasant Life is about happiness in a hedonic sense. The Engaged Life is about happiness through engagement, and the Meaningful Life is about happiness by achieving virtue. Seligman and his colleagues (Peterson et al. 2005) conducted two studies to test the notion that people who score highly on the three dimensions of authentic happiness (life of pleasure, life of engagement, and life of meaning) score high on traditional measures of life satisfaction, and vice versa. The first study involved 180 adult volunteers who participated in a on-line survey. The goal of that study was to develop the measures capturing the three dimensions of authentic happiness. The second study involved 845 respondents who completed an on-line survey. The results of this study show

that respondents scoring simultaneously high on all three dimensions reported significantly higher life satisfaction than those who scored low on the same dimensions. Thus, these results provided some support for Seligman's theory of authentic happiness.

The attempt in this paper is to argue that Seligman's theory of authentic happiness misses another important criterion of happiness, namely achieving balance in life. That is, to achieve "authentic happiness," people have to experience a pleasant life, a good life, a meaningful life, *plus* a balanced life. Thus, the attempt described in this paper can be described as *developing a foundation for a theory of the balanced life*.

## 1 Balance and Imbalance

Imbalance is defined as *a state reflecting satisfaction or fulfillment in a focused domain (e.g., work, family) that ultimately leads to negative affect in other domains*. Consider the following scenario involving a career woman only a few years out of college. She received a degree in accounting and joined a major consulting firm. To prove herself to her employer, she worked more than 60 h a week. She did not have much of a social life. Then she dated her college friend, and a year-and-a-half later they got married and started a family. Currently, she has a 6 months baby girl, and she remains devoted to her job. She puts the same number of hours in her job as she did before giving birth. Lately, she realizes that she is failing as a mother and wife too. Her job is consuming more time at the expense of her family. Although she feels good about her job, she feels a great deal of stress related to her role as mother and wife. This is a classic situation of imbalance between work and family life. Of course, balance is restored between work and family life if our subject decides to take action and engage in activities allowing her to experience a reasonable amount of satisfaction from both work and family domains.

We define *balance* as *a state reflecting satisfaction or fulfillment in several important domains with little or no negative affect in other domains*. Research on imbalance between work and family roles has shown that work-family role conflict is associated with life dissatisfaction (e.g., Bedeian et al. 1988; Collins and Killough 1989; Edwards and Rothbard 2000; French and Caplan 1973; Fu and Shaffer 2001; Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Lewis and Cooper 1987; Parasuraman et al. 1992; Sekaran 1986; Sturges and Guest 2004; Wiley 1987) as well as low marital and family satisfaction and symptoms of low mental and physical well-being (e.g., Bedeian et al. 1988; Buell and Breslow 1960; Caplan et al. 1975; French and Caplan 1973; Parasuraman et al. 1992; Sekaran 1986; Steffy and Ashbaugh 1986; Wiley 1987; Zohman 1973). The family-work conflict occurs when one domain consumes resources needed for another domain.

With respect to balance, there is some evidence suggesting that people are more satisfied with life when the source of the satisfaction derives from *multiple* life domains than a single domain. For example, Marks and McDermid (1996) described a theory of role balance that suggests that people who have well-balanced role systems, which they conceptualize as full engagement in and enjoyment of all roles, have higher levels of well-being. Using a sample of employed mothers, they showed that those who were more "role balanced" and enjoyed "every part of their life equally well" reported less role overload, had higher self-esteem, and lower depression levels. Bhargava (1995) conducted a study in which subjects were asked to discuss life satisfaction of others. Most subjects inferred life satisfaction of others as a direct function of their satisfaction in *multiple* domains. They calculated happiness by summing satisfaction across several important domains—the more positive affect in multiple domains, the higher the subjective well-being. Additional

evidence comes from a study conducted by Chen (1996) who found that those who believe they will achieve some of their goals (and receive satisfaction from *multiple* domains) report higher levels of life satisfaction than those who do not believe that they will achieve these goals.

This balance phenomenon has several implications. First, the strategy implies that “putting all your eggs in one basket” may not be effective in enhancing subjective well-being. That is, one should not allow one life domain to overwhelm one’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life. It is best to be invested emotionally in several domains. Doing so allows one to compensate for the dissatisfaction of some domains with satisfaction of other domains.

Frisch (2006, chapters 3 and 4) has addressed the issue of “putting all your eggs in one basket” by recounting the story of a patient named Carol. Carol put all her energy into caring for her children. She did not do anything significant in terms of leisure and recreation. She hardly saw any adult friends, although her friends were very important at one point in her life. Frisch assessed Carol’s situation as putting all her emotional eggs in the one basket of family life. This is a dangerous strategy because if things go wrong in Carol’s family life, she is likely to feel depressed. And this is exactly what happened. She over-invested herself in the family domain.

To overcome this problem, Frisch’s recommends the use of the “happiness pie” and “vision quest” techniques (Frisch 2006, chapters 3 and 4). These techniques are methods to allow psychotherapy clients to establish some meaningful goals and priorities in their lives. The therapist asks the client to draw a picture of his or her life in terms of a pie chart. Overall happiness is the pie composed of particular slices that make up overall happiness. Some slices are larger than others because they are more important. The therapist instructs the client to think about 16 areas of life, namely physical health, self-esteem, philosophy of life, standard of living, work, recreation, learning, creativity, helping activities, love relationship, friendships, relationships with children, relationships with relatives, home, neighborhood, and community. The therapist then asks the client to “draw a picture of what areas seem to dominate your life most now. In other words, where is most of your time and mental energy going?” If the picture drawn turns out to be a pie with one or two life domains (e.g., work), then the therapist guides the client to do some soul searching and develop a new pie that reflects new priorities concerning what the client really wants out of life. The therapist is guided by the balance principle—the more balanced the pie is, the more likely that the client can experience life satisfaction and happiness.

The *vision quest technique* is used as a follow-up to the *happiness pie exercise*. The goal here is to clarify the client’s goals and priorities in life. The client is instructed to go over each of the 16 life domains and identify goals the person would like to achieve during one’s “limited time on earth.” After doing so, the client is urged to select about five goals that are considered to be the most important lifetime goals. For example, Frisch cites how one client identified specific lifetime goals in the area of health, play and friendship, love, work, self-esteem, and spiritual life. The client started out by admitting that the only life domain that really mattered was work, work, and more work.

A social psychologist and happiness researcher recommends: “don’t let your entire life hinge on one element” (Niven 2000, p. 71). He asserts: “Your life is made up of many different facets. Don’t focus on one aspect of your life so much that you can’t experience pleasure if that one area is unsettled. It can become all you think about, and it can deaden your enjoyment of everything else—things you would otherwise love (p. 71).”

Based on the preceding discussion, we develop our first theoretical postulate. It can be stated as follows:

**Postulate 1** People who have balance in their lives (life satisfaction stemming from multiple life domains) are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than those who have imbalance (life satisfaction stemming from a single life domain).

## 2 How Do People Achieve Balance in Their Lives?

We identified a major pathway that people experience to achieve balance. This pathway involves need satisfaction limits and satisfaction of survival plus growth needs (see Fig. 1). We will describe these concepts of balance in some detail next.

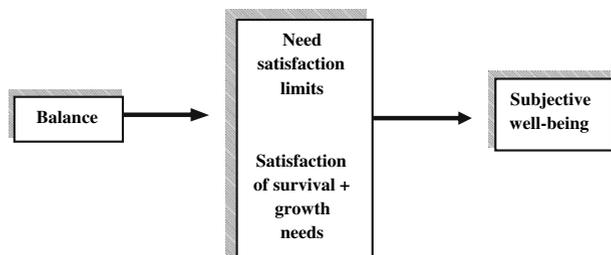
The two concepts of balance to subjective well-being (need satisfaction limits and satisfaction of survival plus growth needs) are all grounded in the need satisfaction approach to subjective well-being (e.g., Kosenko et al. 1990; Sirgy 2002, pp. 34–36; Sirgy et al. 1995). This approach is developed using concepts propagated by Maslow (1954, 1970), McClelland (1961), Herzberg (1966), and Alderfer (1972). For an excellent review of the research using the need satisfaction approach in organizational psychology and management, see O'Brien (1986), Roberts and Glick (1981), and Salanick and Pfeffer (1977).

## 3 Need Satisfaction Limits

We believe that the psychological explanation of how balance contributes to subjective well-being is directly related to the principle of *need satisfaction limits*. We maintain that satisfaction from one life domain can contribute only a limited amount (a quota) of positive affect to subjective well-being. The basic tenet of the need satisfaction approach (e.g., Alderfer 1972; Herzberg 1966; Maslow 1954, 1970; McClelland 1961) is that people have a variety of developmental needs they seek to fulfill (developmental needs such as biological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and beauty-related needs), and the more they satisfy these needs the more they feel good about their lives. That is, those who are more successful in satisfying their developmental needs are likely to experience greater happiness and life satisfaction than those who are less successful. Those who are more successful do so because they are effective in organizing their lives in manageable domains (e.g., work life, family life, leisure life, love life) and participate actively in these domains.

How do people organize their lives to fulfill their developmental needs? To satisfy their biological needs, people engage in a variety of activities such as eating right, exercising regularly, having regular check-ups, having regular sex, and so on. The events related to those activities and their outcomes generate a certain amount of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These affective reactions are organized and stored in memory in certain life

**Fig. 1** How balance contributes to subjective well-being



domains such as health, love, residential, and family (see Table 1). When a person is asked how he feels about his health life, it is likely that he will reflect on his affective experiences in relation to health-related activities such as eating right, exercising regularly, having regular check-ups, and so on. When the same person is asked about his love life, he reflects about his affective experiences related to love, romantic relationships, and sex. When asked about his residential life, he reflects on those experiences related to the use of his residence, his neighborhood, and community.

Social psychologists such as Lewin (1951) and organizational psychologists (e.g., Dana and Griffin 1999; Rice et al. 1985; Seeman 1967) have long recognized that affective experiences are segmented in “life spheres,” or what QOL researchers refer to as *life domains*. Thus, a person may have affective experiences segmented in relation to education, family, health, job, friends, and romantic relationships, among others. Memory (conscious, subconscious, and unconscious) is likely to be divided into life domains, and within each domain the person has deep-seated cognitions reflecting affective experiences in that domain.

Note that although most life domains are organized and structured around one focal set of needs (biological, safety, social, etc.), they reflect affective experiences related to satisfaction of other needs. For example, many think leisure life involves a set of activities dealing with one’s social needs. Those activities serve not only to satisfy one’s social needs but also a variety of other needs such as the need for aesthetics and creativity (see Table 1). Developmental needs (biological, safety, social, etc.) are satisfied through activities engaged in certain life domains. The life domains shown in the table are for illustrative purposes only. They are not meant to capture all life domains. It should be noted that different people segment their affective experiences differently. For example, a person actively engaged in political activities may have a “political life,” which may be absent for many others.

This is an important point that brings us back to the notion that subjective well-being is not simply cumulative positive minus negative affect—irrespective of the source. It is the satisfaction of human developmental needs, the full range of needs—not a handful of selected needs. One cannot substitute positive affect related to one need with another need. To illustrate the satisfaction limit with an arithmetic example, suppose that a woman’s level of subjective well-being is 50 (on a scale varying from –100 to +100). This means

**Table 1** Developmental needs satisfied through activities organized in terms of life domains

	Health life	Love life	Residential life	Family life	Social life	Leisure life	Work life	Education life	Spiritual life
Biological needs	Most	Most	Most	Most	Some	Some	Most	Least	Least
Safety needs	Most	Most	Most	Some	Some	Some	Some	Least	Least
Social needs	Some	Most	Some	Some	Most	Most	Some	Some	Some
Esteem needs	Least	Some	Some	Least	Some	Some	Most	Some	Some
Actualization needs	Least	Some	Least	Least	Least	Some	Some	Most	Most
Knowledge needs	Least	Least	Least	Least	Least	Some	Some	Most	Most
Aesthetics needs	Least	Least	Least	Least	Some	Most	Some	Most	Most

*Notes:* “Most,” “some,” and “least” indicate the extent to which those activities in a specific life domain are successful in satisfying a specific developmental need. For example, the table shows that safety needs can be “most” satisfied through the health, love, and residential life domains and “least” satisfied in the educational life domain

that she is relatively happy with life. The source of this moderate degree of happiness comes from five key domains—work, leisure, family, community, and neighborhood. Now let us focus on work life. She has +15 points of satisfaction. The satisfaction limit in the work domain is +10. In other words, only 10 out of the 15 could contribute to subjective well-being. She is +5 over the limit in her work domain. Only so much of that satisfaction can contribute to her overall life satisfaction. Why? Because satisfaction from work life may reflect the satisfaction of only a subset of human developmental needs, not the full range of these needs.

There are a number of measures of subjective well-being that are based on the notion that life satisfaction is the sum of the satisfaction of various life domains and possibly moderated by the salience of these domains (e.g., Alfonso et al. 1996; Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976; Frisch 2006; Hall 1976). For example, Alfonso et al. produced an Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (ESWLS), using five items for each eight domains (social, sex, self, family, relationships, work, physical, and school). The sum composite of all the domain satisfaction correlated highly with general life satisfaction. The nomological validity of these measures provides evidence to the theoretical notion of need satisfaction limits.

Furthermore, evidence of the need satisfaction limits comes from a body of evidence showing that materialism is negatively correlated with life satisfaction (see Wright and Larsen 1993, for a meta-analysis of the research findings). Here, materialistic people can be viewed as imbalanced in that they regard wealth and material possessions to be most important in life. Materialistic people who are successful hoarding material wealth may feel successful and happy with their material life. But there is only so much happiness that can be extracted from the material domain. Placing undue emphasis on making money is likely to lead them to neglect their family, their place in the community, their social life, and so forth. This neglect is likely to create negative affect in family, neighborhood, social, leisure, and spiritual life. Negative affect from these other domains, in turn, adversely affects subjective well-being. The overall result is that materialistic people are less happy than their less materialistic counterparts.

Additional evidence for the need satisfaction limits comes from a longitudinal study involving several hundred Harvard graduates over a forty-year period. The study showed that happiness, external play, objective vocational success, mature inner defenses, good outward marriage, all correlate highly (Valliant 1977). In other words, those who are happy the most seem to be satisfied with multiple life domains in which each domain contributes to the satisfaction with different developmental needs. External play reflects satisfaction with social, esteem, intellectual, and aesthetics needs; objective vocational success reflects satisfaction with basic economic needs as well as family, safety, esteem, and self-actualization needs; mature inner defenses may relate to esteem and self-actualization needs; and good outward marriage relate to biological, family, safety, and social needs. Thus, happy people are likely to have their developmental needs more met than the less happy.

As a sign of acceptance of the notion of satisfaction with the full spectrum of human developmental (= QOL) are policies developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP develops policies based on the concept of human development that reflects basic and higher-order needs *a la* Maslow (United Nations Development Programme 1998). The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) is based on this concept. The HDI measures the overall achievements in a country along three dimensions of human development: longevity, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

Based on the preceding discussion, we develop our second theoretical postulate. It can be stated as follows:

**Postulate 2** Balance contributes to subjective well-being because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from a single life domain. People have to be involved in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human development needs. Different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs.

#### 4 Satisfaction of Survival Plus Growth Needs

One can argue that high levels of life satisfaction or subjective well-being cannot be achieved by satisfying only survival needs or growth needs. Balance is achieved when both sets of needs are sufficiently met.

Fredrickson and Losada (2005) have empirically demonstrated that people who flourish (have a high level of subjective well-being) tend to experience a ratio of 4.3 of positive to negative affect, whereas normal people average a 2.5 ratio. People who languish (low levels of subjective well-being) have a much lower ratio of positive to negative affect. The authors argue that positive emotions are evolved psychological adaptations that increased human ancestors' odds of survival and reproduction. In contrast, negative affect narrows behavioral urges toward specific actions that were life-preserving for human ancestors (e.g., fight and flight responses). Positive affect widens the array of thoughts and action such as play and exploratory behavior, which in turn contributes to generativity and behavioral flexibility. In other words, negative emotions serve the survival needs (e.g., biological, safety, and economic needs), whereas positive emotions serve higher-order (growth) needs such as social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and aesthetics needs. Survival needs are associated with more negative than positive affect. Conversely, growth needs are associated with more positive than negative affect. Human flourishing is associated with a high ratio of positive to negative affect. Both positive and negative affect are necessary because positive affect reflects the satisfaction of growth needs and negative affect reflects the satisfaction of survival needs.

Much research has been done to demonstrate this principle in the context of organizational psychology and management (e.g., Herzberg 1966; O'Brien 1986; Roberts and Glick 1981; Salanick and Pfeffer 1977). For example, the two-factor theory (Herzberg 1966) posits that job satisfaction is affected by two sets of factors, namely hygiene and motivation factors. Hygiene factors are related to survival needs (e.g., pay, working conditions, collegiality, and corporate policies). In contrast, motivation factors are related to growth needs (e.g., achievement programs, recognition awards, career advancement opportunities, corporate ownership and profit sharing). The two-factor theory argues that job satisfaction can be enhanced by developing conditions and programs at work that serve to satisfy *both* survival needs (e.g., biological, safety, and economic needs) and growth needs (e.g., social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and aesthetics needs). For excellent reviews of much of the research in this area, see O'Brien (1986), Roberts and Glick (1981) and Salanick and Pfeffer (1977).

Additional evidence of this principle comes from research in industrial/organizational psychology on work-life balance. For example, research in that area has found that organizational values supportive of work-family balance and organizational work-family balance programs can bring about balance between work and family life (e.g., Burke 2001, 2003; Ezra and Deckman 1996; Madsen 2003). Work-family balance programs include alternative work schedules, telecommuting, wellness classes, and caregiver services. Furthermore, factors in the family domain (e.g., spousal support) were found to play a significant role in reducing work-family conflict (Bedeian et al. 1986). The basic idea here

is that subjective well-being can be significantly enhanced through successful performance at work (satisfaction of higher-order needs). However, employees cannot be highly successful if they neglect their health and their family responsibilities. Health and family responsibilities are related to lower-order needs. Therefore, work-life balance programs are designed to enhance subjective well-being by helping employees become successful at work while helping them take care of their health and family responsibilities.

Additional suggestive evidence of the viability of the principle of satisfaction of survival plus growth needs come from cultural psychology. Consider the notion of the Ying and Yang, which is popular in East Asian cultures. The Ying and Yang concept posits that subjective well-being can be achieved by keeping a good balance between positive and negative emotions (Kitayama and Markus 2000). The adage is to remain calm, undisturbed, and not agitated. Thus, the Ying and Yang is balance between fulfillment of physical (lower-order needs) and spiritual needs (higher-order ones). Kitayama and Markus report findings from Japan about correlations between positive and negative affect. These correlations were mostly positive and significant (in contrast to negative correlations among U.S. subjects).

Further cross-cultural evidence of the combined effect of both lower- and higher-order needs on subjective well-being comes from studies that examined the relationship between income and happiness. For example, Veenhoven (1995) hypothesized that money enhances happiness when it contributes to the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and clothes). Study findings indicate that within societies there is a relationship between income and satisfaction at the lower end of the scale only, and that relationship is strong in poorer countries and weak in rich countries. Oishi et al. (1999) found that satisfaction with self-esteem and with freedom were stronger correlates of life satisfaction in richer nations.

Based on the preceding discussion, we develop our third theoretical postulate. It can be stated as follows:

**Postulate 3** Balance contributes to subjective well-being because of subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce subjective well-being.

## 5 Toward a Program of Research of Balance

The three postulates about balance and how it affects subjective well-being can be viewed as a foundation for a possible theory of balance. Readers may ask why we do not report an empirical study to provide direct evidence of our theoretical model. Our response is that we have provided much “suggestive” evidence of three postulates to help researchers conduct a formal program of research in this area. Direct evidence cannot come from one study but from a program of research involving many studies conducted in a variety of contexts with a variety of populations in a variety of cultures and countries. To do so, we would like to offer suggestions that can help formalize this program of research.

## 6 Developing Hypotheses and Suggesting Methods and Measures for Testing

We theorized that people who have balance in their lives (life satisfaction stemming from multiple life domains) are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than

those who have imbalance (life satisfaction stemming from a single life domain) [*Postulate 1*]. That balance contributes to subjective well-being because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from a single life domain. People have to be involved in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human developmental needs. Different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs [*Postulate 2*]. Furthermore, balance contributes to subjective well-being because of subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce subjective well-being [*Postulate 3*]. These theoretical postulates can be stated in terms of testable hypotheses as follows: *People experiencing high levels of satisfaction from multiple life domains are likely to report higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing high levels of satisfaction stemming from a single domain.* However, this hypothesis does not account for the affect in the remaining life domains. Hence we need to qualify the hypothesis as follows: *People experiencing high levels of satisfaction from multiple life domains (with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect) are likely to report higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing high levels of satisfaction stemming from a single domain (with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect).* Note that the first theoretical postulate does not address the issue of compensatory mechanism among various life domains. The notion of compensation refers to the process by which people sum the positive and negative evaluations of the various life domains to arrive at an overall evaluation of life. Thus, any negative evaluations of certain domains can be neutralized (or compensated) by positive evaluations in other domains (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976). The reader should note that we do not assume a compensatory mechanism in achieving balance. In other words, the theory does not address what happens when the remaining life domains have significant amounts of negative affect. We only assume neutrality.

But then one can argue that the effect may be simply due to the accumulation of positive affect. Positive affect from multiple domains should produce greater subjective well-being than positive affect from a single domain. Again, this may occur as a direct function of compensation (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976). And again, the reader should note that our first postulate of balance does not address this notion of cumulative affect. To rule out the effect of cumulative affect, we rephrase the hypothesis as follows: *People experiencing moderate levels of satisfaction from multiple life domains (with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect) are likely to report higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing high levels of satisfaction stemming from a single domain (with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect).* Note that the way we phrased this hypothesis implies that the sum of the positive affect in multiple domains in question should be equivalent to the positive affect score from a single domain. Thus, we should phrase the hypothesis in a way to control for the possible confound of cumulative affect. Furthermore, our first theoretical postulate implies that people who experience high levels of satisfaction in a single domain versus multiple domains regard those domains as highly salient. Therefore, we need to further rephrase the hypothesis as follows:

**Hypothesis 1** People experiencing moderate levels of satisfaction from multiple life domains (regarded as highly salient, with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect) are likely to report higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing high levels of satisfaction stemming from a single domain (regarded as highly salient, with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect).

Suggestive evidence to the hypothesis comes from a study conducted by Diener et al. (1985) that demonstrated small doses of positive affect (low in intensity) contributed more to subjective well-being than infrequent but large doses of positive affect (high in intensity). However, Diener et al. did not use the balance concept to explain the study findings.

Given our statement of Hypothesis 1 as the most concrete and operational form of Postulate 1, how do we go about empirically testing this hypothesis? This hypothesis can be tested using measures sensitive enough to capture the level of intensity of positive affect in a variety of life domains with additional measures capturing the perception of salience of these domains. Of course, the dependent measure should capture subjective well-being, life satisfaction, or overall happiness. The data have to be based on several large-scale samples to ensure wide variability of scores in positive affect and domain salience. The samples have to involve different populations from different cultures and countries. The demographic profile of these samples have to be representative of their respective populations, and the samples' demographics have to equivalent across cultures and countries. The survey items have to be constructed in such a way to avoid the response bias commonly found in life satisfaction surveys in which respondents report higher levels of positive affect than normal (e.g., Schwarz and Strack 1999).

With respect to Postulate 2, we theorized that people who have balance in their lives (life satisfaction stemming from multiple life domains) are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than those who have imbalance (life satisfaction stemming from a single life domain). *That balance contributes to subjective well-being because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from a single life domain. People have to be involved in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human developmental needs.* Different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs. How do we operationalize this theoretical postulate in terms of a concrete hypothesis? The emphasis of this postulate is the notion that satisfaction in multiple domains ensures the satisfaction of a variety of human developmental needs than satisfaction in a single domain. Hence, we can put forth a mediating hypothesis as follows:

**Hypothesis 2a** People experiencing moderate levels of satisfaction from multiple life domains (regarded as highly salient, with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect) are likely to experience satisfaction of a wide range of human developmental needs (e.g., biological, economic, family, safety, social, esteem, actualization, aesthetic, and intellectual needs). In contrast, people experiencing high levels of satisfaction from a single domain (regarded as highly salient, with the remaining domains reflecting neutral affect) are likely to experience satisfaction of a small range of needs.

**Hypothesis 2b** People experiencing satisfaction of a wide range of human developmental needs (e.g., biological, economic, family, safety, social, esteem, actualization, aesthetic, and intellectual needs) are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing satisfaction of a small range of needs.

Testing Hypotheses 2a and 2b require the use of additional measures related to satisfaction of human developmental needs *al la* Maslow. One particular measure we can recommend is the Sirgy et al. (1995) measure of life satisfaction that is conceptualized in terms of Maslow's need hierarchy theory.

With respect to Postulate 3, we theorized that balance contributes to subjective well-being *because subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met.* High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of

basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce subjective well-being. We can operationalize Postulate 3 by fine tuning Hypothesis 2b as follows:

**Hypothesis 3** People experiencing satisfaction of both lower- (e.g., biological, economic, family, and safety needs) and higher (e.g., social, esteem, actualization, aesthetic, and intellectual needs) -order human developmental needs are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than people experiencing satisfaction of with either lower-order or higher-order needs solely. This hypothesis can easily be tested by grouping satisfaction of the human developmental needs in terms of lower-order versus higher-order need satisfaction.

## 7 Conclusion

To reiterate, Seligman (2002), argued that authentic happiness is derived from three major sets of experiences in life, namely experiencing pleasantness regularly (the pleasant life), experiencing a high level of engagement is satisfying activities (the engaged life), and experiencing a sense of connectedness to a greater whole (the meaningful life). We posed the question: what about the balanced life? We maintain that balance in life contributes significantly to authentic happiness, subjective well-being, or life satisfaction.

We introduced in this paper the concept of balance and its role in subjective well-being. We argued that people who have balance in their lives (life satisfaction stemming from multiple life domains) are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than those who have imbalance (life satisfaction stemming from a single life domain). That balance contributes to subjective well-being because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from a single life domain. People have to be involved in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human development needs. Different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs. Furthermore, balance contributes to subjective well-being because of subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce subjective well-being.

Although research evidence was cited to support many of the theoretical notions involving the balanced life, we encourage happiness researchers to subject all of the theoretical propositions to rigorous, empirical tests. We suggested specific hypotheses translated from the theoretical postulates that can aid researchers conduct empirical testing. We also offered some methodological suggestions. Only through good science and empirical research can we come closer to understanding the true dimensions of authentic happiness.

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