A Multi-Method Exploration of How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Cathy Heaney, PhD, MPH
cheaney@stanford.edu
From Health to Well-Being

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

--World Health Organization, 1946

Health-related quality of life has generally focused on deficits in functioning and been linked to patient outcomes (morbidity and mortality).
Healthy Days Core Module (CDC HRQOL–4)

1. Would you say that in general your health is excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?

2. Now thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good?

3. Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?

4. During the past 30 days, for about how many days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities, such as self-care, work, or recreation?
EQ-5D-5L (UK English sample version)

MOBILITY
I have no problems in walking about
I have slight problems in walking about
I have moderate problems in walking about
I have severe problems in walking about
I am unable to walk about

PAIN / DISCOMFORT
I have no pain or discomfort
I have slight pain or discomfort
I have moderate pain or discomfort
I have severe pain or discomfort
I have extreme pain or discomfort
Positive Psychology

Cantrell: Life Satisfaction Ladder  
Diener: Life Satisfaction and Flourishing  
Seligman: PERMA Framework

- **Positive emotions** – feeling good  
- **Engagement** – being completely absorbed in activities  
- **Relationships** – being authentically connected to others  
- **Meaning** – purposeful existence  
- **Achievement** – a sense of accomplishment and success

Ryff: well-being composed of: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance
Our Starting Place

• Not assume that treating/managing/curing/preventing illness or injury is the same as fostering well-being
• Use a measurement technique that allows for:
  • The mind and body to be interconnected
  • The inclusion of positive assets as well as problems or infirmities
  • Focus on “whole lives” as experienced
• Pluralism--- more than one way to be well and live a good life
A Narrative Approach

• Fundamental to narrative inquiry is the notion that people understand and give meaning to their lives through stories.

• These stories are “especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002)

• Therefore narrative inquiry is very well-suited to creating an understanding of well-being that is valid across cultures and for people who have had very different life experiences.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

First I would like to ask you about **WELL-BEING**.

So to start, I’d like to ask you to consider your adult life--- from the age of 18 onward. Please think of a time in your adult life when you were experiencing a particularly high level of well-being/particularly low level of well-being.

Please tell me about the time that you are thinking about.

Prompts IF NEEDED:
1. What were you feeling during that time?
2. What was going on in your life?
3. Tell me more about when this was?
Well-Being: Constituent Domains
Three Measures of Well-Being

- **WELL for Life Scale**
  - 76 items
  - Faceted measure of all 10 domains
  - To be used by all WELL sites
  - Allows for strong inferences about relevance of different domains
  - Provides reliable domain subscales

- **Brief WELL for Life Scale**
  - 20 items
  - Faceted measure of all 10 domains
  - To be incorporated into existing cohorts/studies

- **Global Well-Being Item**
  - 1 item
  - Overall subjective assessment with some priming for comprehensive construct

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Well-Being Score (Composed of 10 Domains)

Potential Range: 0-100

Each domain is scored 0-10.

Mean = 66.36
Median = 67.08
For a 50 year old woman with a bachelor’s college degree
Work Contributes More than it Detracts?

- # of interviewees:
  - Contributes: 58
  - Detracts: 30

- # of data elements:
  - Contributes: 141
  - Detracts: 52
# Ways that Work Detracts from Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low pay</th>
<th>Time urgency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job insecurity</td>
<td>Difficult work relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflict</td>
<td>Heavy lifting/hard work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of fulfillment</td>
<td>Long commutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressful work</td>
<td>Emotional labor</td>
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</table>
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Money
“"I am starting to make money, that’s a positive thing for me”"
“"earning a decent wage”"
“"supporting my family”"

Lifestyle Opportunities
“"company outings”"
“"pelota courts”"
“"[worksite health promotion program] is an oasis for me”"
“"[worksite health promotion program] is a lifeline”"
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Social Interaction

Working together
• “Enjoyed working with the people”
• “highly collaborative”
• “…everyone’s on top of their game, so I really like that. Everyone’s open to new ideas. No one’s got an ego. Everyone just strives to be their best, and I really like that. I like working with people who think like that.”

Meet new/different people
• “allows me to be somewhere with people who are doing interesting things. That means a lot to me.”
• “met a lot of celebrities”

Serving others
“I would go into this classroom and everyday I would say to myself that when I left that classroom— I was teaching ESL to adults— I would feel better than when I came”

Source of Connection
“gives me a role to play and through that, people get to know me.”
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Social Interaction

Serving others

• **Sense of Purpose:** “I would go into this classroom and everyday I would say to myself that when I left that classroom— I was teaching ESL to adults— I would feel better than when I came”

• **Source of joy:** “my sense of joy is very tied to the experience of my students. And so when they are going through tough times, I’m going through tough times. When they are doing great, I’m doing great…it is a very special sort of relationship”
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Sense of agency/accomplishment/mastery

• “bringing my A game to business...trying to do a really good job”

• “I knew exactly what I needed to do, and that I could do it”

• “achieving something, achieving a goal. There can be a sense, like wow, I did it. And for a while you sort of bask in that for a little bit.”

• “my job built up my confidence again”

• “actually doing something in life...gaining a sense of control”

• [my job made me] so lively from the inside of me...I was just screaming!”
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Learning skills
• Gaining new skills
• Using new skills
• Building on strengths

Learning about yourself
“I was able to develop my view of life, partly based on my experience for a telephone company.”
“[work can] build your personality”
How Work Contributes to Well-Being

Recognition

• “being recognized on a professional basis”

• “the customer called me in the afternoon and gushed for half an hour about how much he liked what we did. That just made me feel good all weekend, and I saved that recording. I usually don’t save my telephone messages, but I saved that one so I can play it back for the guys that I work with. I played it a couple of times and it’s just nice.”
“Doing what I do best”: The association between skill utilization and employee health with healthy behavior as a mediator

Kaori Fujishiro a,*, 1, Catherine A. Heaney b

a Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations, and Field Studies, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Cincinnati, OH, USA
b Stanford Prevention Research Center, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA

Fig. 1. A conceptual framework for direct and indirect effects of skill utilization on health.