2 Three Theories of Well-Being and Their Implications for School Education

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In Western industrialized societies, school education has traditionally focused on preparing students for adult life by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to become active citizens and productive economic contributors. On this approach toward school education – call it the *standard preparatory model* – student success has typically been defined in terms of the successful acquisition of curricular content knowledge across a variety of academic disciplines as well as in the development of transferable cognitive skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and effective communication. Recently, however, some educational researchers have begun to challenge this approach by emphasizing the role of schools in cultivating student well-being (Gilman, Huebner & Furlong, 2009; Noddings, 2003; OECD, 2017; White, 2011). On this alternative approach toward school education – call it the *well-being model* – student success not only (or even primarily) consists in the successful acquisition of curricular content knowledge or transferable cognitive skills, but also in the development of a broader set of skills and dispositions that will enable students to live flourishing lives, both as the children they are and as the adults they will eventually become.

The well-being model represents a more holistic approach toward school education, one that has the potential to radically transform contemporary thinking about the purpose and function of schools. However, developing this model to a point where it can be implemented presents a number of theoretical challenges, not the least of which is articulating the theory of well-being on which it is based. Well-being is a deeply contested concept, and different theories of well-being offer different and sometimes competing accounts of what it means to live a flourishing life. Thus, in order to determine what the well-being model is committed to – as well as how, and to what extent, it diverges from

the standard preparatory model – proponents must first settle the question of what, exactly, they mean when they talk about "well-being."

In this chapter, we draw on recent philosophical work on well-being in order to shed light on this question. Our main goal is not to defend a particular theory of well-being to serve as the basis for the well-being model, but rather to offer a framework through which a defensible theory can be arrived at. In a nutshell, we believe that proponents of the well-being model must be guided by two sets of considerations when thinking about the theory of well-being it is based on: (1) the attractiveness and internal coherence of the theory itself (that is, how well it accords with, explains, and systematizes our pre-theoretical intuitions about well-being); and (2) the implications of that theory in the context of school education. In a perfect world, both of these considerations would align, and an independently attractive theory of well-being would lead to palatable practical implications when applied in the context of school education. As we hope to demonstrate, however, this is not always the case: some theories of well-being have attractive implications in the context of school education while facing serious objections at the level of theory, while other theories of well-being are sounder at the level of theory while leading to unattractive implications in the context of school education. This leaves proponents of the well-being model with difficult choices to make as they seek to combine conceptual rigour with practical applicability when developing their model.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, we introduce the general concept of well-being and outline three leading substantive theories of well-being: *hedonism, desire fulfilment,* and *objective list theories.* In the second part, we explain what each theory of well-being implies in the context of school education and how it may support or diverge from the standard preparatory model.

Three Theories of Well-Being

If we are to propose a model of schooling that takes the cultivation of well-being as a central goal and measure, then we need to define what we mean by well-being. On the one hand, this might seem like a daunting task – after all, philosophers have been debating the concept of well-being for over 2500 years, and much of this debate has been characterized by deep and pervasive disagreement about its nature and constituents. On the other hand, the long-standing debate about well-being has also resulted in a set of sophisticated theories about what well-being is, how it is achieved, and what role it ought to play in our practical reasoning, providing a rich framework in which to gain clarity about

how this central concept should be understood. It is not necessary to provide a definitive theory of well-being in order to further the project of developing a model of well-being in schools, though proponents of this model should at least be aware of what type of theory they endorse and how it fits within the broader philosophical landscape, including the types of claims it is committed to and the objections it faces from rival theories.

A useful place to begin in getting a handle on these issues is to distinguish the general concept of well-being from the various theories of well-being that have gained currency among philosophers. In the philosophical literature, the general concept of well-being is normally understood as indicating what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person (Crisp, 2016). On this understanding, well-being is a measure of how well a person's life is going for that person, or from the perspective of their own interests. Things that have a positive effect on a person's well-being are things that are good for that person, or which benefit them or contribute to their interest or advantage, while things that have a negative effect on a person's well-being are things that are bad for that person, or which harm them or detract from their interest or advantage (Campbell, 2015, p. 403).

Different theories of well-being provide different accounts of what is ultimately good for a person and why. For the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to distinguish between two types of theory. *Substantive* or *enumerative* theories seek to provide a list of items that are ultimately good for a person. The question these theories seek to answer is: what kinds of things make a person's life go better for them? *Formal* or *explanatory* theories, by contrast, seek to provide an explanation of *why* these items are good for a person, or offer an account of their good-making features. The question these theories seek to answer is: what makes a particular thing good for a person? (Rodogno, 2016). In this chapter, we limit our focus to providing an overview of substantive theories of well-being that seek to provide a concrete account of the things that make a person's life go well. This, after all, is the most important type of theory for developing a model of well-being in schools: while we can develop such a model without a sophisticated understanding of *why* a particular set of goods makes a person's life go well, we cannot develop such a model without a clear understanding of *what* those goods actually are.

Hedonism

Following a taxonomy originally introduced by Derek Parfit (1984, Appendix I), it is now common for philosophers to distinguish between

three main substantive theories of well-being: *hedonistic*, *desire fulfilment*, and *objective list* theories. Hedonistic theories conceive of well-being as the balance of pleasure over pain, where "pleasure" can be understood broadly to include a range of positive feelings and mental states, and "pain" can be understood broadly to include a range of negative feelings and mental states. On the simplest version of this view, often called *simple* or *quantitative* hedonism, a person fares better or worse in their lives according to how much of their total experience is characterized by pleasurable states as opposed to painful states, combined with the intensity of those experiences.

For many philosophers since antiquity, hedonism has seemed quite plausible as a theoretical model of well-being – after all, well-being is a measure of what is non-instrumentally good for a person, and pleasure is a good that is an end in itself, to which many other goods are often just means. Nevertheless, hedonism prompts a number of important objections. First, many critics have questioned the idea that all forms of pleasure are equally valuable. Imagine, for example, there are two people who derive an equal amount of pleasure from two different activities: (1) composing music on the piano, and (2) counting blades of grass on their front lawn. It is plausible that a creative activity like composing music contributes more to a person's well-being than a pointless activity like counting blades of grass, though simple hedonism cannot distinguish between them so long as the pleasure they yield is of equal intensity and duration.

Some philosophers have simply bitten the bullet on this issue and conceded that all forms of pleasure are equally valuable. Jeremy Bentham (1830), for example, famously proclaimed that "Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin[1] is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music or poetry" (p. 206) so long as it yields equal pleasure for those who engage in it. Others, however, have attempted to accommodate this objection by adopting a *qualitative* version of hedonism that distinguishes between pleasures of different kinds. For instance, John Stuart Mill (1859, 1863) argued that we can distinguish between "higher" and "lower" pleasures based on the preferences of people who have experienced both kinds. This type of view is compatible with attributing greater prudential value to the pleasure gained from composing a sonata to the pleasure gained from counting blades of grass, and so is thought by proponents to avoid the counterintuitive implications of treating all pleasures equally.

Whether or not qualitative versions of hedonism can truly avoid these implications is a matter of controversy – some critics have questioned whether they even count as forms of hedonism given

that non-hedonic values must be invoked to determine what are considered "higher" and "lower" forms of pleasure (Feldman, 1997). In either case, however, qualitative versions of hedonism still face a second major objection to hedonism generally, which challenges the notion that pleasure is the *only* thing that matters for a person's well-being. While the experience of pleasure must figure prominently in any plausible theory of well-being, we also seem to value a wide range of goods and experiences that have little or no hedonic value. For example, we tend to value having the freedom to choose our own careers or places of residence, even if it can sometimes result in anxiety or indecisiveness. Similarly, we tend to value honesty in our interactions with friends, family, and colleagues, even if their revelations can sometimes hurt us deeply. If we think that a life devoid of these goods is worse than a life that includes them – despite potentially scoring higher on the hedonic index – then we might think that hedonism is incomplete as a theory of well-being.

A proponent of hedonism might respond to this objection by claiming that a life containing goods like freedom and honesty tends to be more pleasurable on balance than a life that is devoid of them, such that these goods can also be justified indirectly on hedonistic grounds. It is of course debatable whether this response provides the best interpretation of why we value goods like freedom or honesty; even if it succeeds, however, hedonism still faces a third major objection, which challenges the assumption that well-being can be wholly determined by a person's mental states. In a famous version of this objection, Robert Nozick (1974) presents the following thought experiment:

> Suppose there was an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Super-duper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life experiences? (pp. 44–5)

If well-being were wholly determined by our mental states, then we should all plug into the experience machine and guarantee ourselves pleasurable mental states for the rest of our lives. However, most people would not regard this as any kind of flourishing life, which suggests that factors other than pleasurable mental states are important determinants of well-being.

Desire Fulfilment

Desire fulfilment theories are one family of theories that take a more expansive view of well-being. According to these theories, well-being consists in the fulfilment of a person's desires, such that what is ultimately good for a person is getting the things they want, whatever they happen to be. Desire theories may overlap with hedonistic theories insofar as we desire to experience a range of pleasurable mental states, though they can also register prudential value in other types of goods to the extent that those goods form the object of a person's desires. This allows them to sidestep some of the major objections that apply to hedonistic theories. For example, they are able to account for the prudential value of goods and experiences with potentially low hedonic value, like freedom or honesty in one's social interactions, and they would not recommend plugging into the experience machine, where most of our desires would in fact go unfulfilled.

One of the major appeals of desire theories lies in their strongly subjectivist nature. It is plausible that what is ultimately good for a person will have a strong connection to what that person finds to be compelling or attractive; as Peter Railton (1986) claims, "It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him" (p. 9). This presents a possible advantage over more objectivist theories of well-being, including objective list theories, which attribute prudential value to certain items regardless of a person's attitude toward them.

Despite this appeal, however, desire fulfilment theories also entail a number of challenges. The first challenge is to specify the *type* of desire whose fulfilment contributes to a person's well-being. On the simplest interpretation of the desire theory, the satisfaction of our *actual* desires contributes to our well-being, but this interpretation involves some serious problems. First, due either to weakness of will or ignorance about the facts, we often desire things that are actually bad for us, including foods that are unhealthy, relationships that are toxic, or careers that leave us feeling burnt-out or empty. It seems implausible to suggest that the satisfaction of *these* desires contributes to our well-being. Similarly, some people have desires that are malicious or ignoble, such as desires to harm other people, or for a variety of other injustices to come to fruition. Counting the satisfaction of *these* desires as determinants of well-being might also seem misguided.

On a different interpretation of the desire theory, the satisfaction of *idealized* desires contributes to our well-being. On this interpretation, what is ultimately good for a person is to get what they *would* desire if

they were fully informed and acting rationally in pursuit of their good (Rawls, 1971, p. 417). This interpretation may avoid the problem of misinformed and/or malicious desires – we may not want what is bad for ourselves or others if we are fully informed and rational – though it also brings a few problems of its own. First, in associating a person's well-being with the satisfaction of idealized as opposed to actual desires, the idealized interpretation largely abandons the desire theory's subjectivist appeal. Indeed, by focusing on what we *would* want in a hypothetical scenario characterized by full information and rationality, the idealized interpretation looks less like a version of the desire theory and more like a thought experiment for arriving at a defensible list of objective goods. Moreover, unless this interpretation can provide a fairly clear account of the content of idealized desires, it also runs the risk of circularity, suggesting that well-being consists in the satisfaction of the desires that we *would* have if we were fully informed and acting rationally in pursuit of our well-being (Heathwood, 2015, p. 140). But this simply begs the question – it does not give us a clear picture of the kinds of things that contribute to a person's well-being, and therefore fails as a substantive theory.

A second challenge for the desire theory is specifying the *scope* of the desires whose fulfilment contributes to a person's well-being. Many of our desires are desires about our own lives, including things we want to have or the type of people we want to be (e.g., "I want a wife and kids"; "I want to become a doctor"), yet other desires are desires about other people's lives or about general states of affairs (e.g., "I want my friend to be happy"; "I want the Bornean Orangutan to avoid extinction"). It is easy to understand how the satisfaction of the former desires would have prudential value for the desirer, though it is less clear how the satisfaction of the latter desires would. Consider, for example, the following case from Parfit (1984):

> Suppose I meet a stranger who has what is believed to be a fatal disease. My sympathy is aroused, and I strongly want this stranger to be cured. We never meet again. Later, unknown to me, the stranger is cured. (p. 494)

On Parfit's view, it is implausible to suggest that the stranger's being cured could have any effect on his well-being, suggesting that an unrestricted version of the desire theory – that is, one that places no restrictions on the scope of the desires whose fulfilment contributes to a person's well-being – is false.

Parfit's example suggests two possible restrictions on the scope of relevant desires: the first is the requirement that the desire be

self-regarding, or principally about our own lives, while the second is the requirement that we *experience* the fulfilment of the desire in some tangible way. Either or both of these restrictions could explain why the recovery of the stranger has no effect on Parfit's well-being. For example, the recovery of the stranger could lack prudential value because it is not a self-regarding desire, and/or because it is unknown to Parfit and thus cannot be experienced in any tangible way. However, not everyone agrees that these restrictions are warranted, and there are compelling counter-examples that seem to suggest otherwise. Consider, for example, Julio's desire that Argentina win the World Cup. This desire is not self-regarding – Julio does not himself play for the team – though it seems uncontroversial to claim that the satisfaction of this desire would have significant prudential value for him (indeed, it would be impossible to explain the phenomenon of sports fandom if we did not assume this to be the case). Or consider Brian's desire that his wife remain faithful to him. Even if Brian never experiences the non-fulfilment of this desire – suppose his wife has an affair that is forever concealed from him – it is plausible to claim that his life still goes worse in some way as a result of its non-fulfilment. Examples like these suggest that other-regarding and "unexperienced" desires can also count toward determining well-being, though taking this stance might mean accepting counter-intuitive implications in other types of cases, including the implication that our lives can go better or worse according to the unknown fate of a distant stranger. Proponents of the desire theory will have to resolve these tensions in one way or another.

Objective List Theories

The preceding responses to the problems of misinformed and unexperienced desires suggest that our well-being can be determined by factors other than our own subjective experiences. This is one of the assumptions behind *objective list* theories of well-being, which hold that what is ultimately good for a person is to be in possession of a particular list of objective goods, such as health, love, family, friendship, leisure, knowledge, freedom, fulfilment, and many others. For many people, objective list theories will bear the strongest resemblance to their pre-theoretical intuitions about well-being. For example, if you ask a person at the bus stop "What makes a person's life go well?" chances are they will rattle off a diverse list of items rather than identifying a singular determinant of well-being, such as pleasure or desire-fulfilment. In this sense, objective list theories have a strong intuitive appeal.

Because there is a wide range of items that can be designated as objective goods, objective list theories comprise a wide and varied class of theories; nevertheless, they tend to share two important features (Fletcher, 2015, p. 148).[2] The first feature is *pluralism* about prudential value, meaning that objective list theories tend to identify a range of different items that are ultimately good for a person, while the second feature is *attitude-independence*, meaning that objective list theories attribute prudential value to these items regardless of a person's attitude toward them. Taken together, these features provide a formidable bulwark against some of the major objections that apply to other theories of well-being. For example, because they can include a plurality of goods, objective list theories can account for the value of hedonic experience while avoiding the pitfalls of hedonism – pleasure can simply be listed as one good among many (thus avoiding the implications of claiming that pleasure is the *only* prudential good) and they would not recommend plugging into an experience machine, as this would preclude the enjoyment of other objective goods. Similarly, because they measure well-being according to certain objective criteria, objective list theories can also explain why a person's life goes poorly even when they are subjectively satisfied with their current state of affairs. This can make sense of some important cases. Consider, for example, a woman in a deeply patriarchal society who is happy to live a life of subservience to her husband because she has internalized her society's cultural norms. The desire fulfilment theory might have trouble explaining why this woman's life goes poorly given that she desires to a live a life of subservience to her husband, though objective list theories can provide a different diagnosis due to its absence of goods that are partially constitutive of well-being, including freedom, autonomy, or independence. For many proponents of objective list theories, this counts as a significant advantage (see Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999).

However, while pluralism and attitude-independence supply objective list theories with their greatest strengths, they are also the source of their most notable weaknesses. Consider first the feature of pluralism about prudential value. This feature allows objective list theories to account for a wide range of goods that we intuitively associate with living well, though it also brings with it the problem of *arbitrariness*: what reason do we have for endorsing list *a*, *b*, and *c* over list *x*, *y*, and *z*, other than our own intuitive judgments about well-being? For some critics, objective list theories represent nothing more than an unconnected heap of goods masquerading as a theory of well-being. Moreover, there are some circumstances in which we need to compare the well-being of different individuals, though objective list theories seem ill-equipped to

facilitate this given that they cannot provide a single metric of comparison. Suppose, for example, that we endorse an objective list comprising goods x, y, and z. How do we compare the life of person A, who possesses x and y but is deficient in z, with the life of person B, who possesses z and y but is deficient in x? This seems difficult if not impossible in the absence of a complex ranking or weighting of different goods, which is itself vulnerable to the charge of arbitrariness.

Consider next the feature of attitude-independence. This feature allows objective list theories to measure a person's well-being independently of their own subjective attitudes, though it also brings with it the problem of *alienation:* a person could possess many or most of the goods on a particular objective list while being subjectively dissatisfied with their own life (and vice versa). Recall the woman who is happy to live a life of subservience to her husband. Depending on the content of their respective lists, many objective list theorists will claim that this woman's life goes poorly in certain respects due to a lack of objective goods, including freedom, autonomy, or independence. But suppose this woman's endorsement of her role is the product of deep reflection on her religious or cultural commitments and a genuine desire to maintain the social norms that she holds dear. On what basis can objective list theorists claim that this woman would be better off living under a different type of arrangement? This might seem objectionably paternalistic, particularly when the list itself is subject to the worry about arbitrariness. Objective lists theorists might be able to avoid some of these problems by building desire fulfilment and other subjective criteria into their lists of objective goods, though it is doubtful that they can avoid the problem of alienation entirely, given the sheer diversity of opinion about what it means to live well.

Well-Being and School Education

We can see from this brief overview that while each theory of well-being has a number of attractive features, each is also vulnerable to a number of difficult objections. The ability to satisfactorily respond to these objections is one consideration that must factor into the choice of theory that will serve as the basis for the well-being model. However, beyond considering the attractiveness and internal coherence of each theory, we must also consider its implications in the context of school education, for students, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers. After all, a defensible theory will not only be one that is philosophically sound, but one that also has desirable implications when applied in the relevant context.

As each theory of well-being provides a different account of what is ultimately good for a person and why, each carries a different set of implications for programming in schools. Consider first the theory of hedonism. Applied in the context of school education, this theory implies that schools should aim to maximize students' experience of positive mental states and minimize their experience of negative mental states. Placing students' feelings of pleasure as an aim for school education might at first seem strange and in some ways inconsistent with its preparatory mission. As Kristján Kristjánsson (2012) argues, at least a certain amount of displeasure, disruption, and pain seems necessary to achieve important aims of schooling. At the same time, however, parents, classroom teachers, and other school practitioners who work closely with students demonstrate that they *are* concerned with students' sense of happiness and pleasure while they are at school. For example, Gibbons and Silva (2011) shows that parents and teachers are interested to know the extent to which students are experiencing gladness, enjoyment, excitement, and satisfaction at school. A focus on pleasure and experiences of happiness at school can also be found in the play-based, child-centred, and inquiry-based approaches found in curricula across Canada. For instance, the Reggio Emilia approach, popular in early years education programming, holds that "pleasure, aesthetics and play are essential in any act of learning and knowledge-building" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 64). Another prominent example in education policy and programming that demonstrates concern for pleasurable states of mind is the *positive education* movement, born out of the burgeoning field of positive psychology. When he first wrote about the field, Martin Seligman characterized positive psychology as being concerned with positive subjective experiences, which include "well-being and satisfaction; flow, joy, the sensual pleasures, and happiness, and constructive cognitions about the future – optimism, hope, and faith" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 4). Correspondingly, positive education is "a blend of evidence-based learning from the science of positive psychology and best practices in learning and teaching" (White, 2016, p. 2), which includes an emphasis on students' subjective experience of happiness and satisfaction.

So there is clearly an important place in school education for the experience of positive mental states. Challenges start to emerge, however, if we take the cultivation of positive mental states to be the guiding aim of school education. As we hinted at above, one of the obvious drawbacks of this approach is that negative mental states can sometimes accompany valuable educational experiences. For example, imagine

that a Grade 1 student, Zoya, experiences painful emotions during the process of learning how to read. A strictly hedonistic approach may recommend that Zoya avoid this discomfort in favour of more pleasurable experiences, though this would cause her to miss out on reading skills that will provide her with other opportunities for well-being in the future.

A proponent of hedonism might respond to this objection by noting that the discomfort Zoya experiences in the short term will be offset by the positive mental states she will experience in the long term from learning how to read, such that it too can be justified on hedonistic grounds. On this view, we are not to apply hedonism discretely to individual experiences, but rather broadly to educational programming so that children have the opportunity to achieve the greatest happiness over the course of their lives. This justificatory approach is perhaps a more plausible interpretation of hedonism as applied to school education, though it comes with some challenges of its own. One such challenge is that hedonism actually seems like a poor justification for many of the attitudes and dispositions that we seek to cultivate in children. For example, when we teach children to be non-prejudicial or tolerant of difference, we do so *not* because this will maximize happiness for children, but rather because it is a requirement of exhibiting respect for persons, and hence something that children ought to do irrespective of its impact on their happiness. Moreover, as hedonism is a subjectivist approach toward well-being, it must also contend with the fact that different children will ultimately take pleasure in different things, which may pose challenges for curriculum development and standardization in education. Proponents of hedonism must resolve these challenges in one way or another.

Consider next desire fulfilment theories of well-being. Like the experience of hedonic value, the satisfaction of desires as a guiding principle for school education might initially seem to conflict with many of its preparatory aims. After all, if the adults in schools simply left students to pursue their own goals and desires, schools may collapse into a state of chaos, particularly if you believe that children are not yet rational agents and lack the capacity to make sound judgments based on normative or moral principles (Schapiro, 1999). However, a focus on desire satisfaction and the experience of setting and achieving one's own unique goals at school (and in life) is actually pervasive in pedagogy and assessment approaches across Canada. Differentiated instruction (DI) and universal design learning (UDL) approaches take students' unique interests, skills, backgrounds, and learning goals as a fundamental starting point throughout the learning and

teaching process (Tomlinson, 1999). These "open-ended learning experiences are designed to offer students real choices and opportunities to develop their own voice" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 21). UDL and DI provide "opportunities for different kinds of activities and different means of demonstrating learning" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 22). Correspondingly, student involvement and choice in assessment have become the focus of increasing interest in assessment and evaluation research and policy (Tillema, 2014). For several decades, researchers have been advocating for students to assume much greater ownership over their unique assessment goals (Sadler, 1989) and for teachers to guide assessment processes that enable students to "compete against themselves" as they strive to "achieve stable goals" that are not necessarily shared among students (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013, p. 137).

We must note, however, that the desire fulfilment theory also runs into a number of challenges when taken as a guiding aim of school education. One obvious challenge for this theory is that, at least on the terms of the standard preparatory model, one of the central purposes of school education is to *shape* children's preferences, goals, and ambitions. Thus, taking the fulfilment of children's *existing* preferences as a guiding aim of school education might be putting the cart before the horse. For instance, when we send our children to school, we not only (or even primarily) hope they will get what they desire, but also hope that they will come to desire certain things, such as the ability to learn, to work hard, to treat others with respect, and to contribute positively to their communities. Successfully cultivating these desires in children may conflict in certain ways with measures aimed at satisfying their existing desires.

A second and related challenge for the desire theory is that a child's existing desires can sometimes be misinformed, or otherwise in tension with what is considered best for them from the perspective of their educators, families, or communities. Imagine that new Canadian Solomon starts out his Grade 9 school year with the goal of learning to read, write, and speak in forms that he views as the dominant "Canadian" way in order to fit into certain peer groups and prepare for what he views as a job market that might discriminate against his thick accent. Solomon's teachers, parents, and members of his community might reasonably question whether this goal is a good one, as it could further perpetuate unwarranted feelings of shame, redirect his efforts away from other important academic and personal goals, and later cause a disconnect between him and his family, community, and cultural background. A proponent of the desire theory might suggest that this problem can

be avoided by adopting an idealized interpretation of the desire theory that focuses on the fulfilment of desires that children *would* have if they were fully informed and rational. This interpretation may avoid the problem of misinformed desires – Solomon may not desire to assimilate if he was fully informed and rational – though it also seems to leave far less room for students' existing desires to inform choices about their education.

A third challenge facing the desire fulfilment theory is that maximizing or optimizing children's current goals and aims can sometimes conflict with their future goals and aims. Recall the case of Zoya, who experiences discomfort during the process of learning how to read. If Zoya's well-being is promoted by fulfilling her existing desires, then this may entail respecting her desire *not* to learn how to read, though this will inevitably frustrate future desires whose fulfilment is dependent on literacy. A proponent of the desire theory might respond to this problem in a similar way to the proponent of hedonism above and suggest that the desire theory can accommodate it by focusing on the fulfilment of a child's global desires. On this view, schools should not focus on satisfying children's present desires, but rather on providing them with the intellectual resources required to satisfy the global desires they will eventually develop about the shape and content of their entire lives. This is an intelligible response to the problem of temporal desire conflicts, though we should note that an approach focused on global desires may depart significantly from existing approaches like UDL or DI, which seem to focus more on children's present desires.

The last of the three theories of well-being is perhaps the most intuitive and most common, particularly at the policy and systems level within education. Objective list approaches are well-suited to ministries and boards of education whose resource allocation is grounded in metrics of reporting and large-scale data collection. Items related to school buildings, staffing, programs, and initiatives can be categorized into well-being domains which can then be followed up through accountability measures and quantitative data sets. Similarly, an objective list approach to well-being in schools can be itemized under selected domains of well-being for schools to carry out and perhaps even report on. We can see the features and advantages of both pluralism and attitude independence when we look at specific examples of provincial-wide frameworks for well-being in schools across Canada. For example, Ontario's well-being strategy defines well-being as made up of the following components: cognitive, emotional, social, and physical (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

The Ontario strategy aims to foster children's development in these four domains, with the implication that, if realized, it will promote children's well-being. Several school divisions across Canada take a similar approach to conceptualizing well-being as a list of items, and frameworks for well-being in schools exist at federal, provincial, divisional, and local levels (e.g., JCSH, 2016).

Despite their intuitive appeal and practical advantages, however, objective list frameworks also face a number of challenges when applied in educational settings. The first and most obvious challenge is the problem of arbitrariness: what rationale can be provided for the particular list of objective goods that a school division or educational authority takes to be constitutive of well-being? This challenge applies to objective list theories generally, but it seems particularly salient in the context of multicultural societies like Canada, where there is often deep and pervasive disagreement about what kinds of things make our lives go well. Even if this problem can be sidestepped in some way by identifying a general list of all-purpose goods that tend to cross cultural boundaries, further challenges arise when attempting to operationalize this list in a practical setting. By way of illustration, imagine that a rural school division in Ontario follows the provincial well-being strategy and conceptualizes well-being in terms of four domains: cognitive, emotional, social, and physical. The school division now faces several definitional, methodological, and empirical questions such as: How will the division practically define each domain? How will they monitor and assess each domain? How will they ensure that each domain fairly addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of their student population? How will they weigh the importance of each component within and across domains? How will this particular approach compare approaches employed in other (including urban) school divisions to ensure that students are getting equal access to well-being? These are just a few of the difficult questions that must be addressed before employing an objective list framework in an educational setting.

A second set of challenges stems from the more general problem of alienation, which occurs when an agent's subjective assessment of their own well-being does not track a particular list of objective goods. Students may experience alienation if they are told that, according to a particular objective list measure, their lives are going well when in fact they are subjectively dissatisfied with how their school life is going (or vice versa). Suppose that sixth grader Rosa, who lives in a rural school division in Ontario, is told in her tri-conference interview that she is faring poorly in the social domain of well-being due to her consistent desire to read books during recess rather than engage with her peers. As

a natural introvert, however, Rosa is perfectly content with her current level of engagement and would feel uncomfortable having to spend more time socializing rather than reading. An objective list theory must now explain why Rosa is mistaken about her own well-being, though this type of explanation might seem implausible in light of strong subjectivist intuitions about well-being. After all, how could Rosa's well-being exist in a certain level of socialization with her peers if this level of socialization fails in any way to engage her?

A final problem for objective list theories relates to the issue of interpersonal comparisons. Like the standard preparatory model, which evaluates and ranks students based on their acquisition of curricular content knowledge and development of transferable cognitive skills, the well-being model will have application as a means of assessment and a guide to resource allocation. However, because they are pluralistic about value, objective list theories cannot provide a single metric of comparison, which can make comparisons *between* students (to inform decision-making and resources allocation) somewhat complicated. For example, how should the rural Ontario school division compare the well-being of Rosa, who scores very low on the social domain of well-being while scoring very high on all the others, with that of Horatio, who scores very high on the social and physical domains of well-being and moderately on the cognitive and emotional domains? This type of comparison seems difficult in the absence of a complex weighting and ranking of different components of well-being, which is of course also vulnerable to the charge of arbitrariness. To be sure, hedonist and desire fulfilment theories also face challenges in terms of measure and comparison – for instance, there may be epistemic challenges associated with measuring mental states or the fulfilment of desires – though they at least provide a single metric by which well-being can be measured (i.e., positive mental states and fulfilled desires).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented three leading substantive theories of well-being and outlined some of the implications they might have if taken as a guiding aim of school education. While each theory of well-being has a number of attractive features, each also presents a number of important theoretical and practical challenges that must ultimately be addressed if taken as the basis for the well-being model. Proponents of the well-being model must take these challenges seriously as they continue to develop and operationalize this model in Canada and beyond.

NOTES

1 Push-pin was a popular children's game in nineteenth-century England, and so in the context of Bentham's quotation is meant to reflect an unsophisticated form of entertainment.
2 Note, however, that these may not be necessary features of objective list theories. Guy Fletcher (2015), for example, argues that only attitude-independence is a necessary feature, and that pluralism is a common but unnecessary feature.

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