



WELL-BEING AND WELL-BECOMING IN SCHOOLS

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FRAMING HUMAN WELL-BEING AND WELL-BECOMING: AN INTEGRATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

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Abstract: This paper introduces an approach to conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming: the WB2-Framework. In the first part of the paper, five core characteristics of the WB2-Framework are discussed. Drawing on these characteristics, the second part of the paper introduces in detail the features of the WB2-Framework approach to well-being and well-becoming. In the conclusion, potential contributions of the approach to the discourse on human, child, and student well-being and well-becoming are suggested.

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#2



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Introduction

Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin (an Anishinaabe way of living) and *mino-bimaadiziwin* (living a good life) are ways-of-being given to Anishinaabe people as part of their original instructions, which are reflected in the Creation story. It tells us how we were created from the earth and lowered to the earth; how the Creator had such incredible love for us, and therefore gave us gifts from Creation (such as wind/air, fire, and water) to house within our bodies. This incredible love is re-enacted in our children, as they are not to take life for granted; they are to appreciate life and be affirmed through cultural traditions and practices that they are the life of the people. (Bell, 2016, p. 8)

The centrality of a vision of the good life as a guide for and support of Indigenous living that I read into Bell's words can also be found in Indigenous scholars' writing on holistic lifelong learning (e.g., Bouvier, Battiste, & Laughlin, 2016), on the helping professions (e.g., Hart, 2002), on sustainable living (e.g., Cajete, 1999), and on the decolonizing process (e.g., Gehl, 2017).

In the Western tradition, *the question* of what the good life is runs through its cultural history

with quite varying responses.¹ In 1973, the economist Ernst Friedrich Schumacher published his still selling book *Small Is Beautiful* with the subtitle *Economics as if People Mattered*. With this subtitle he wanted to suggest that Western politics has it backwards; our concern for a flourishing economy in Western democracies blinds us for what really matters: the quality of life of the people – all people. Economics should be a means to the goal of improving the quality of life of all people. Our answers to the question what makes for the good life has to drive our responses to the question what makes for a good economy – not the other way around. Economists, psychologist, health researchers, and others have pointed to the devastating impact of a materialistic and consumer-oriented economic system on the quality of people’s lives and living conditions: the negative impact of an economy built upon the depletion of natural resources on the sustainability of natural life support systems for future generations (e.g., Jackson, 2009; Schor, 2010); the negative impact of economic inequality on people’s health (e.g., Wilkinson, 2005); the negative impact of a consumer culture of choice on our mental well-being (e.g., Schwartz, 2004); and the undermining of human psychological needs through a materialistic life orientation (e.g., Kasser, 2002). The concern raised through this research is not that citizens’ quality of life is not given consideration, but rather that the understanding of *quality of life* is (a) narrowed to the possession of material goods to the detriment of other quality-of-life goods, (b) narrowed to an average quality of life of all citizens to the detriment of those at the lower end of the material goods distribution, and (c) narrowed to a focus on the currently living population to the detriment of future generations.

Over the last two decades, this narrowing of the quality-of-life perspective has been challenged at the highest political level in so-called developed countries, partially in response to the negative consequences reported in the research referenced earlier. In 2008, the then French president Nicolas Sarkozy created the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress in response to

increasing concerns about the adequacy of current measures of economic performance, in particular those based on GDP figures, and to broader concerns about the relevance of these figures as measures of societal well-being, as well as measures of economic, environmental and social sustainability. (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010, p. xvii)

In 2010, the Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom launched its Measuring National Well-being Program “to provide a fuller understanding of ‘how society is doing’ than economic measures alone can provide” (Beaumont, 2011, p. 1). In 2011, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) created its *Better Life Initiative* that uses “a large set of comparable well-being indicators for OECD countries” (OECD, 2011, p. 14). Every two years starting in 2013, the OECD has been reporting on findings on the well-being of the population in OECD countries based on these indicators.

A similar shift can be observed in the concern for child well-being, where the call by academics in the 1990s for a move from using indicators of child survival to indicators of child well-being was followed up with publications of regular reports on child well-being in different countries (Ben-

¹ For a historical overview of different responses to the question in the Western tradition from Ancient Greece to modern times, see McMahon (2006). For a historical overview of different views on human well-being around the world, see the first five chapters in Estes and Sirgy (2017).

Arieh, 2008, p. 10) – so for instance in the UK (Bradshaw, 2011), Ireland (Brooks, Hanafin, & Langford, 2010), and the USA (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2018) – and by some international organizations (e.g., OECD, 2009; UNICEF Office of Research, 2013).

Parallel to these developments, a greater concern for *student* well-being in school-educational contexts can be observed. As part of the 2015 PISA testing, data were collected on student well-being (Borgonovi & Pál, 2016; OECD, 2017). A number of Canadian provincial governments have made student well-being an explicit concern for the school education system, so for instance the governments in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2014), in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2009), and in Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training, n.d.).

All these concerns and initiatives for human well-being have as their starting point an assumed or explicated concept of human well-being. The Western tradition on the question of the good life referenced above provides a range of such concepts, and indeed a range of conceptualizations of human well-being have been used in different initiatives on human, child, and student well-being. The main purpose of this paper is to introduce another conceptualization of human well-being (and well-becoming). What is different in the approach presented here compared to many others is that the conceptualization takes its starting point in some meta-criteria for conceptualizing human well-being, followed by a conceptualization that meets these meta-criteria. Whether someone agrees with these meta-criteria as criteria for the conceptualization of human well-being is, of course, another question. But what the meta-criteria approach provides is a framework for talking *about* conceptualizations of human well-being, which seems very much needed in light of the range of the conceptualizations offered in the research literature and used in professional contexts.

The paper is divided into two main parts. The first part outlines said meta-criteria as meta-characteristics of the approach to human well-being (and well-becoming) to be introduced in the second part. The second part develops a framework for the conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming – *the WB2-Framework*.² This framework has been developed with a particular concern for the well-being and well-becoming of those involved in school education (students, school staff, parents, and so on), therefore a number of illustrative examples in this paper is drawn from a school educational context. In the conclusion section I outline what the WB2-Framework can contribute to the ongoing discourse on and different initiatives for human, child, and student well-being.

Meta-Characteristics of the WB2-Framework Approach

The approach to framing a conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming outlined in this paper (the WB2-Framework) has the following five meta-characteristics:

- *It is a systems approach to well-being and well-becoming.* A systems perspective is used to understand the functioning and flourishing of humans as bio-psychic systems and as social actors of social and ecological systems.

² *WB2* is the acronym that the former Executive Director of the Manitoba Association of Superintendents, Ken Klassen, has introduced as a short form for “well-being and well-becoming”. I use the acronym to identify the framework in recognition of Ken’s invaluable contributions to making student well-being and well-becoming an important focus in the discourse on school education in Manitoba.

- *It is a framework approach to well-being and well-becoming:* The approach provides a *framework for conceptualizing well-being and well-becoming* rather than a conceptualization of well-being and well-becoming itself, which – in this framework approach – requires the consideration of the social-cultural context in which an understanding of well-being and well-becoming is needed.
- *It is an integrated approach to well-being and well-becoming:* The insights from a range of different approaches to well-being within and across different disciplines are integrated to arrive at a more holistic understanding of what it means for humans to flourish and thrive.
- *It is a needs-based approach to well-being and well-becoming:* At the core of what it means for humans to flourish is the satisfaction of their human needs.
- *It is a dynamic approach to well-being and well-becoming:* The approach gives consideration to a dynamic aspect (well-becoming) of well-being and human flourishing. This dynamic aspect is conceptualized as integral to understanding the quality of a person's present state (well-being).

This section explicates each of these meta-characteristics in more detail.

A Systems Approach to Well-Being and Well-Becoming

The approach developed in this paper is a systems approach to well-being and well-becoming in the sense that a systems perspective is used to understanding humans as living beings within their social and ecological contexts. More specifically, three systems perspectives developed in different scholarly disciplines are used to understand human beings as systems or components of systems.

One perspective is the *bio-physical perspective* on human beings. Under this perspective, human beings are bio-physical systems that are living (bio) systems materially made up of certain physical elements, like water molecules and cell membranes. Under this perspective, the environment within which a human being as a bio-physical system is embedded in is a bio-physical eco-system that consists of other living beings (including other humans) and physical entities, like rocks. In the Western tradition of division of academic labour, this perspective is taken in the study of human beings in biology and bio-chemistry, and in bio-ecology, where human beings are seen as components of ecological systems, like the natural environment on planet Earth. From this perspective, human beings as bio-physical systems interact with their environment through behaviour within the bio-physical ecosystem, material exchanges with the bio-physical ecosystem (e.g., through breathing and eating) and sensations through the sensory system. The bio-physical perspective is foundational in the sense that what is seen from every other perspective is enabled and constrained by humans being bio-physical systems within a bio-physical environment. In this sense it is the functioning of humans as bio-physical systems within the relevant bio-physical environment that gives rise to *emergent* phenomena that are seen through the other two perspectives.

One type of emergent phenomena that the living of human beings as specific bio-physical beings gives rise to consists of phenomena like thoughts, memories, intentions, and feelings. While there is a bio-physical basis for these phenomena in humans as bio-physical systems – for instance through the material functioning of the human nervous system – these phenomena are not bio-

physical in nature. These phenomena are seen from the *psychic perspective*.³ Systemically, phenomena like thoughts, memories, intentions, and feelings are contingent in their respective manifestations rather than relatively stable across time. It is the latter that a systems perspective is primarily concerned with. The more stable phenomena that build on these contingent phenomena are what make up a human being as a psychic system: components like drives, motives, motivation, and temperament. Psychology of personality is the field of study that inquires into psychic systems in this sense (e.g., Allport, 1965; Kuhl, 2001; Maslow, 1970).

Another type of emergent phenomena that the living of human beings as specific bio-physical beings gives rise to consists of phenomena like languages, norms, cultures, and institutions. These phenomena are social phenomena. From a *social perspective*, human beings are social actors within social systems, a perspective developed in the field of sociology (e.g., Archer, 1995; Giddens, 1984; Sawyer, 2005).

The systems approach proposed in this paper postulates human well-being and well-becoming as an *emergent quality of the psychic system* (more on this below). While human flourishing is an emergent quality of the psychic system, there is a bio-physical perspective and a social perspective on human well-being that is grounded in the way in which the three types of systems just mentioned interact. The functioning of human beings as bio-physical systems gives rise to psychic phenomena that in turn give rise to the emergent quality of human flourishing. That means that the quality of a person's flourishing is impacted by the way in which that person's bio-physical system functions. In this derived sense there is a bio-physical aspect of human flourishing. As social actors within a social system, humans' psychic systems that underlie their functioning as social actors are in turn constrained by social phenomena like the particular languages, norms, cultures, and institutions that make up the social system in which the human is a social actor. That means that the quality of a person's flourishing is impacted by the way in which the social system functions within which the person is a social actor. In this derived sense there is a social aspect of human flourishing.

The systems approach proposed in this paper has another implication on the conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming. As bio-physical and psychic systems, and social actors within social systems, human beings are in constant interaction with their respective bio-physical, psychic, and social environments. That means that human well-being and well-becoming – from the systems approach taken here – is less a state of being and more a process of constant becoming understood as a *process* of constant interacting with one's environments. (More on this below.)

A Framework Approach to Well-Being and Well-Becoming

The second meta-characteristic of the approach to conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming proposed in this paper is that the approach suggests *a framework* for such conceptualization rather than a conceptualization itself. In what follows, I explicate what the difference is and the rationale for choosing the former over the latter.

Some approaches to well-being in positive psychology are explicitly trans-cultural, which means that they “ultimately aim to understand the positive states, traits, and institutions *that all cultures value*” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001, p. 90; emphasis added). In their critique of such trans-

³ The meaning of *psychic* as used here is *not* concerned with “para-normal”, but rather concerned with the mind or “soul”, with which psychology as a discipline is concerned with. The use of the phrase *psychic* to refer to qualities psychology is concerned with is akin to the use of the phrase *social* as it relates to qualities sociology is concerned with.

cultural perspectives on conceptualizing well-being, Christopher and his collaborators (Christopher, 1999; Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Christopher, Richardson, & Slife, 2008) argue that all theories, and particularly those heavily value-laden theories of well-being, are culturally embedded and thus cannot be culturally neutral or universal. Historical studies, like McMahon's (2006) study of the different understandings of the term *happiness* throughout Western history, and cross-cultural studies (see, for instance, the referenced work in Christopher, 1999) strongly suggest the appropriateness of Christopher et al.'s critique. As Christopher (1999) warns:

Understandings of psychological well-being necessarily rely upon moral visions that are culturally embedded and frequently culture specific. If we forget this point and believe that we are discovering universal and ahistorical psychological truths rather than reinterpreting and extending our society's or community's moral visions, then we run the high risk of casting non-Western people, ethnic minorities, and women as inherently less psychologically healthy. (p. 149)

The approach to well-being and well-becoming proposed in this paper heeds Christopher's (1999) warning in the following way. What is proposed is a *framework* for conceptualizing well-being and well-becoming rather than the conceptualization itself. That means that in order to actually develop a concept useful for, for instance, assessing human well-being and well-becoming within this framework, the meaning of what will be introduced below as the five components of human well-being and well-becoming will need to be more specified before any operationalization for assessment purposes can happen. For instance, if a school division would like to use the proposed framework of well-being and well-becoming to assess student well-being and well-becoming for policy and educational program purposes, the five components of well-being and well-becoming (see below) will have to be first specified relative to the social-cultural values within the school-divisional community. When the needs-based meta-characteristic of the approach presented here is elaborated upon below, the distinction between the provision of a framework and a culture-specific conceptualization is illustrated through a differentiation of trans-cultural human needs and culture-specific needs-satisfiers.

Depending on the purpose of conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming, a culture-relative conceptualization might not be sufficient. For instance, while the latter might suffice for assessing the status of well-being and well-becoming within a given community, it might not be conceptually sufficient as an assessment tool for concerns for the well-being and well-becoming at the individual rather than communal level. Classroom teaching, for instance, is concerned with impact at the individual level, while school divisional policy is generally concerned with division-wide assessment. Also, culture-wide understandings of well-being shift over time. At any given time, there are always subgroups or individuals within a given community whose understandings of well-being deviate from that of the community-at-large. In other words, the framework approach allows, for instance, for an individual person as an observer of their life to use the framework to conceptualize a more individualized approach to (their) well-being and well-becoming.

In his line of argumentation referenced above, Christopher (1999, p. 142) points to the "disguised ideology of individualism" that generally frames Western approaches to well-being and well-becoming. Such disguised ideology, Christopher and colleagues suggest, can make one blind toward understandings of well-being and well-becoming that are different in more collective-oriented societies but not less adequate:

This is not to say that people from other times and other places have not enjoyed and pursued emotional satisfaction. Such a claim is absurd. Rather, it is to point out that throughout history and across cultures, individual satisfaction has generally taken a backseat to the goals, purposes, and priorities of larger collectives and that when emotional satisfaction has been experienced it is often of a different kind, derived not from internal positive emotions, but from living in accordance with a social order typically situated within a broader cosmological framework. (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008, p. 571)

This difference in understanding what it means to be well, “means that cross-cultural studies of happiness, in Western terms of individual satisfaction . . . , can seriously distort the experience of non-Western people” (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008, p. 571).

Is a “disguised ideology of individualism” at work in the WB2-Framework, considering that the proposed approach suggests human well-being and well-becoming is an emergent quality of *psychic systems*? I want to suggest that it is not, for two reasons. The WB2-Framework allows for the conceptualization of both, an understanding of well-being and well-becoming that is grounded in individual internal satisfaction *as well as* an understanding that is grounded in cultural structures and values provided within the socio-cultural context into which an individual being is embedded. For instance, the culture-based needs satisfiers that frame the agentic capabilities within the WB2-Framework (see below) provides the space for a collective-oriented understanding of well-being and well-becoming within the WB2-Framework. Understanding human well-being and well-becoming as an emergent quality of individual psychic systems is grounded in the overall starting point of the proposed approach, namely, in the perspective that humans are first and foremost living organisms, which are, as such, *individualized* beings, and thus distinguished from their respective environments, including other individual organisms. This starting point in the individual human organism *does not* pre-determine what aspects of an organism’s internally and externally triggered perturbations (experiences) are relevant and in what way they are relevant for the respective organism’s well-being and well-becoming and, thus, for the organism’s flourishing. The values that make perturbations of the psychic system into experiences of a certain type for an individual psychic system (e.g., positive or negative experiences) are shaped by the fact that humans are bio-physical systems of a certain type as well as social actors within a social system of a certain type. In other words, how flourishing my life is as an individual human being is framed by my belonging to a species of a certain type (human beings) and by my being enculturated into social communities that value certain types of experiences over others.

An Integrated Approach to Well-Being and Well-Becoming

The third meta-characteristic of the approach is that it is *integrative* in the sense that it integrates traditionally different approaches to human flourishing. The Western scholarly literature on human well-being is vast and draws on research in a range of disciplines, particularly philosophy (e.g., Griffin, 1986; Sumner, 1996), psychology (e.g., Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Seligman, 2011), economics (e.g., Layard, 2005; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010), sociology (e.g., Veenhoven, 2008), and anthropology (e.g., Mathews & Izquierdo, 2009).⁴ In the context of Western academic

⁴ For a discussion of different approaches to *well-being* in the Western scholarly literature, see Falkenberg (2014a). While I draw explicitly on the literature on *Western* approaches to well-being, my understanding of (North American)

disciplines, the concept of human well-being has been particularly extensively studied in philosophy, especially in an extension of the ancient Greek engagement with the idea of the good life, and in psychology, especially since the emergence of human psychology (Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1961; Schneider, Pierson, & Bugental, 2015) and, more recently, positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The scholars from across these disciplines but also from within each of the disciplines are using a number of different terms, like *happiness* (e.g., Almeder, 2000; Nettle, 2005), *flourishing* (e.g., Seligman, 2011), *welfare* (e.g., Sumner, 1996), and *the good life* (e.g., Feldman, 2004) – where I and others use *well-being* (e.g., Griffin, 1986; Haworth & Hart, 2007; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). While I am not claiming that all scholars use their terms with the same meaning, I do want to suggest that there is some family resemblance of the meanings with which these terms are used. The linchpin of this family resemblance is a specifically human capacity that the philosopher Harry Frankfurt (1971/1988) has identified as the capacity to have second-order desires, which are desires to have certain desires or motives.

It is my view that one essential difference between persons and other creatures is to be found in the structure of a person's will. . . . Besides wanting and choosing and being moved *to do* this or that, [humans] may also want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives. They are capable of wanting to be different, in their preferences and purposes, from what they are. (Frankfurt, 1971/1988, p. 12)

For instance, we might have the desire to be a person that is concerned for the needs of other people. This is an example of a second-order desire, since we desire to have the desire (to be motivated in life) to help other people. Human agency as a disposition very broadly construed can be understood as the capacity of having such second-order desires, and elsewhere I have used human agency thus understood as a way to capture the family resemblance of the meanings of terms for which I am using *well-being*:

In other words, *the concept of well-being is to capture what humans aim for when they exert their agency to live their lives one way rather than another*. This concept of well-being has the quality of “prospectivity” (Sumner, 1996, p. 133) or future directedness (Hostetler, 2011, p. 50). This identifies one central reason for the importance of the concept of well-being: What we conceptualize it to mean can and should direct our decisions and actions at the individual, socio-cultural, and socio-political level. (Falkenberg, 2014a, pp. 78-79)

The quotation suggests why we in the field of education should be greatly interested in the study of well-being and well-becoming: because well-being and well-becoming are concerned with purpose of life – our life and the life of those we educate. What greater concern can there be for any educational endeavour?

While I have just argued for a family resemblance across different approaches to well-being, the approach to well-being and well-becoming proposed in this paper has to deal with the fact that

Indigenous perspectives (e.g., Adelson 2009; Deer & Falkenberg 2016; Hart 2002), Eastern perspectives (e.g., Kosaka 2006; Vokey 2011), and my very limited understanding of African perspectives on well-being (e.g., Ryff & Singer 1998) suggest to me that the proposed approach to well-being should also have potential supporting some of the non-Western perspectives on well-being.

there are clear differences among these approaches across and within different disciplines. Some of the different main approaches are the following (see Falkenberg, 2014a):

- subjective well-being approaches, which focus on people’s reports on their own perceived well-being; examples can be found in hedonic psychology (e.g., Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz 1999) and life satisfaction research (e.g., Diener, 1984; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002);
- approaches using “objective” measures of well-being, which measure aspects of people’s living condition; examples can be found in health and social indicators research (e.g., Michalos 2005);
- capabilities approaches to well-being, which ground well-being in informed choice and the ability to act with agency; this approach was developed by Nussbaum (2000; 2011) and Sen (1993), and is now used in economics (e.g., Comim, Qizilbash, & Alkire, 2008), child well-being research (e.g., Biggeri, Ballet, & Comim, 2011), and education (e.g., Robeyns, 2006);
- eudaimonic approaches to well-being; these approaches build on Aristotle’s notion that human well-being consists in living in accordance with one’s “good spirit” (*eu daimōn*), which for Aristotle meant living in accordance with virtues that are grounded in the concept of what it means to be a good human rather than in the desires or choice preferences of an individual human; eudaimonic approaches are well represented in philosophy (e.g., Aristotle, trans. 1976; Hursthouse, 1999; MacIntyre, 1984; Pence, 1991) and to some degree in psychology (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 1998).⁵

The framework for the conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming developed in this paper draws on and integrates some of these different (Western) traditions. By taking such an integrative approach, I follow Gordon Allport’s (1964) argument for a systematic eclecticism, which he made for the psychological science. He argues that “the situation at present [1964] is that each theorist typically occupies himself with one parameter of human nature, and builds himself a limited model to fit his special data and personal style” (pp. 31-32). Allport then suggests that “an open system eclecticism” (p. 40) might provide the most promising approach toward an integration of those different theories and models toward “a viable image” of humans (p. 41). Rather than *systemic eclecticism*, I prefer to use the term *systematic integration*.

While Allport (1964) provides the way (systematic integration), Sen’s (2009) observation in his critique of the limits of happiness as focused on in welfare economics (e.g., Layard 2005) provides the main rationale for the integrated approach proposed here: “The central issue is not the significance of happiness, but the alleged insignificance of everything else, on which many advocates of the happiness perspective seem to insist” (Sen 2009, p. 273). I take this as a rationale for an integrated approach to human well-being and well-becoming which incorporates perspectives that have been well and sustainably argued for in the literature on well-being. According to Allport (1964), William James “saw that by their own theories of human nature psychologists have the power of elevating or degrading this same nature. Debasing assumptions debase human beings; generous

⁵ Indigenous approaches to the good life (e.g. Bell, 2016; Hart, 2002) seem to me to align with eudaimonic approaches to well-being.

assumptions exalt them” (p. 36). What a good argument for developing a more inclusive and holistic view of human well-being and well-becoming!

A Needs-Based Approach to Well-Being and Well-Becoming

The fourth meta-characteristic of the approach to human well-being and well-becoming proposed here is the understanding that at the core of what it means for humans to flourish is the satisfaction of their needs as human beings. This understanding is a reflection of the notion that human needs (as distinct from wants) are those very aspects of being human that need to be satisfactorily addressed for humans to flourish. Deci and Ryan’s (2000, 2011) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), for instance, is an example of an approach to human well-being that is based on the notion that the satisfaction of the three psychological needs identified in SDT is needed for human flourishing and well-being.

The approach to human well-being and well-becoming proposed here adopts the account of human needs proposed by the economist Manfred Max-Neef (1991). What characterizes his approach to human needs are the following features. First, the human needs that Max-Neef postulates are:

- the need for subsistence;
- the need for protection;
- the need for affection;
- the need for understanding;
- the need for participation;
- the need for idleness;
- the need for creation;
- the need for identity;
- the need for freedom.⁶

Second, with this set of human needs, Max-Neef provides a rich and diverse view on the needs humans have as living beings of a certain kind – a richer and more diverse view than is commonly taken. That this rich view on human needs is not arbitrary is demonstrated by the research undertaken by Biggeri and his collaborators. In a 2006 study, Biggeri, Libanora, Mariani, and Menchini surveyed about 200 children between the ages of 11 and 17 who attended the First Children’s World Congress on Child Labour in 2004 about their views on what the most important capabilities are for children to have during their life. In Table 1 I have matched the domain areas identified by the children in Biggeri et al.’s (2006) study (right-hand side) with Max-Neef’s (1991) human needs. Table 1 shows that every one of Max-Neef’s human needs matches at least one of the

⁶ Max-Neef’s (1991, pp. 32-33) actual definition of a human need is more differentiated than the list suggests. First, in his approach to human needs, a human need is characterized as belonging to an axiological category (which are the ones represented in the list) and an existential category. The existential categories Max-Neef identifies are: being, having, doing, and interacting. Thus, Max-Neef distinguishes not between nine human needs but rather between 27 human needs (3×9). Second, Max-Neef distinguishes between needs and needs satisfiers, whereby the former is a universal and trans-cultural concept of human needs, while the latter is the actualization of the former in a concrete cultural context as relevant to concrete human beings. I explore this distinction below.

capability domains that the children in the study have identified as a domain of capabilities that provide for most important opportunities that children should have during their lives.

In line with William James’s view referenced above, we can say that a more generous set of assumptions about human needs exalt human beings, which not just implies a more generous understanding of what humans are capable of but also a more generous understanding of what we as a community owe each and every human being.

Max-Neef (1991)	Biggeri et al. (2006)
Subsistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life and physical health • Shelter and environment
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily integrity and safety • Freedom from economic and non-economic exploitation
Affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love and care • Mental well-being • Social relations
Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Social relations
Idleness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time autonomy • Leisure activities
Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure activities
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and identity • Respect
Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility • Religion and identity

Table 1.

Third, Max-Neef interrelates human needs as a non-hierarchical system (with one exception):

Human needs must be understood as a system: that is, all human needs are interrelated and interactive. With the sole exception of the need of subsistence, that is, to remain alive, no hierarchies exist within the system. On the contrary, simultaneities, complementarities and trade-offs are characteristics of the process of needs satisfaction. (Max-Neef, 1991, p. 17)

Fourth, Max-Neef (1991) considers the human needs in the list as universal across time and societies. However, for each listed need, Max-Neef postulates culturally specific needs-satisfiers, which are the actualizations of those universal needs in the context of a specific society or culture at a particular time for people living at that time within that specific society or culture. For instance, within a Canadian cultural context, to live a flourishing life would generally involve agentic capabilities that allow one to make use of one’s freedom to more or less freely choose one’s life partner. That might include capabilities to initiate, engage in, and sustain an intimate relationship in the context of the ever-present possibility that one’s partner might leave the relationship. In a cultural context with norms of arranged marriages that are expected to last for life, the corresponding

capabilities would be different ones. While having relevant human capabilities is a component of the *framework* for conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming, what those well-being and well-becoming capabilities actually are is culture-specific and linked to the culture-specific needs satisfiers.

A Dynamic Approach to Well-Being and Well-Becoming

The fifth meta-characteristic of the WB2-Framework for conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming is that its approach is dynamic. This characteristic is grounded in the view that human beings – as living beings more generally – are constantly changing as they are viewed from the three systems perspectives described above. Through the bio-physical perspective we see that the lining in our lungs is completely replaced every two weeks, that our skin is totally replaced every month, that our liver is completely replaced every year, and that our skeleton is a new one every ten years (Johnson, 2018). Our brain's plasticity is the very basis for our day-to-day learning (e.g., Wolfe, 2001), and it is also the basis of examples of radical re-designing of our brain to re-gain lost mental capacities (e.g., Doidge, 2007). We are constantly becoming a different bio-physiological being – until we die.

From the psychic systems perspective, the foundation for human motivation and behaviour is our personality, for which Allport (1955) states:

personality is less a finished product than a transitive process. While it has some stable features, it is at the same time continually undergoing change. It is this course of change, of becoming, of individuation that is now our special concern. (p. 19)

Humans are continuously engaged in this process of becoming as a function of our engaged capacity of self-consciousness and self-reflection, assessing our past experiences and envisioning our future possibilities:

The drama of human life can be written largely in terms of the friction engendered between earlier stages and later stages of development. Becoming is the process of incorporating earlier stages into later; or when this is impossible, of handling the conflict between early and late stages as well as one can. (Allport, 1955, p. 28)

Through the social systems perspective, we see that society is an *open* system, which as such adapts to external perturbations by, for instance, a group of people using their agency to rebel against existing norms and practices that make up (part of) the existing social structure of the social system.

Thus, the systems perspective that characterizes the WB2-Framework approach suggests that with humans constantly changing, human well-being and well-becoming cannot be a static state but has to be understood as dynamic. What does this mean?

As humans we are always becoming. Such becoming is an integral aspect of our interaction with our systems environment and of the enacting of our agency. This dynamic systems view of human *beings* suggests that even as we assess our own or someone else's state of being at a given time, there is a dynamic element in that being, namely the potential of the system to develop in certain ways rather than in others and to be attentive to certain ways of system disturbances by the environment rather than to other ways. For instance, in the WB2-Framework, understanding enjoyment as a component of human well-being and well-becoming (see below) gives consideration

to the dynamic aspect of enjoyment. This dynamic aspect of enjoying something at a particular point in time (well-being) might manifest itself in my critical reflecting on my laughing about a joke that insults someone, laying the basis for a future readiness to cognitively overwrite an initial drive to laugh about this type of joke, and then leading to my later not feeling any initial drive to laugh about this type of joke anymore. In my enjoying something at a given time, there is always already the readiness of change of how and what I enjoy in the future – and thus my future well-being.

It is this potential for becoming in the being that the WB2-Framework gives consideration to what it means for humans to flourish. Thus, the phrase *well-becoming* in *well-being and well-becoming* should remind us of the dynamic aspect of this approach. However, the phrase *well-being and well-becoming* is *not* to suggest that in this approach there are two separate human qualities given consideration, well-being on one hand and well-becoming on the other. The phrase stands as a single indicator of the dynamic approach to human flourishing rather than separating a being aspect from a becoming aspect. In this integrative sense one can say that *well-becoming* expresses the dynamic aspect of well-being and *well-being* expresses the momentary state of well-becoming. The latter will become clearer when the capabilities component of human well-being and well-becoming is introduced below.

The WB2-Framework for Conceptualizing Well-Being and Well-Becoming

After describing the five meta-characteristics of the approach, I now turn to a description of the WB2-Framework for conceptualizing human well-being and well-becoming.

Well-Being and Well-Becoming as a Property of Psychic Systems

From the systems view adopted above, human well-being and well-becoming is characterized as an emergent system property. I distinguished between three system perspectives on human beings: human beings as bio-physical systems, as psychic systems, and as social actors within a social system. In the approach presented here human well-being and well-becoming is understood as *an emergent property of humans as psychic systems*.

In many approaches to human well-being, a domain separation is postulated and human well-being is defined as well-being in each of these domains. In the indicators approach taken by Bradshaw and his collaborators measuring the well-being of children in the UK, well-being is conceptualized into four domains: physical well-being, cognitive well-being, behavioural well-being, and emotional well-being (Bradshaw, 2011, p. 9; see also Bradshaw 2001). Brown (2008) structures the contributions to his edited book by the domains the indicators are fitting into: health indicators, education indicators, social and emotional indicators, social context of development indicators. Some domain (discipline) specialists divided well-being aspects along the lines of disciplines. So, for instance, Keyes, who distinguishes between psychological well-being (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and social well-being (Keyes, 1998). The domain approach seems particularly attractive to those concerned for student well-being from an organizational or administrative perspective. For instance, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in its recent assessment of student well-being (Borgonovi & Pál, 2016; OECD, 2017) distinguishes between material, cognitive, psychological, physical, and social dimensions of well-being; and the previous Ontario government in its student well-being initiative (Government of Ontario, 2014) distinguishes between

four domains of well-being: cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being (Government of Ontario, 2016, p. 3).

In the approach suggested in this paper, well-being and well-becoming is an emergent property of psychic systems. Therefore, the WB2-Framework suggests that if well-being and well-becoming (flourishing) is what we strive for when exerting our agency (see above), this quality is best seen from the psychic perspective on human beings: When we are concerned with human well-being and well-becoming (including our own well-being and well-becoming), we are concerned for humans from the psychic perspective.

The WB2-Framework does not separate the quality of human experiences and behaviour into domains. Rather, the approach suggests that there are different (systems) perspectives on humans, and we take those perspectives as observers of those systems depending on our interests to see certain qualities of what it means to live life as a human being. The distinction into the different perspectives reflects a discipline-based division of labour in the Western culture of academic research (roughly: biology – psychology – sociology). However, as far as human well-being and well-becoming is concerned, the WB2-Framework does not suggest a division of human well-being along the lines of academic disciplines – at least not when we work with the notion that human flourishing (well-being and well-becoming) is what we strive for when we exert our agency.

We are also concerned for human well-being and well-becoming from the bio-physical and the social perspective, however, more in a means-end sense. Because our functioning as bio-physical (bodily) systems gives rise to the psychic phenomena that make up the components of the human psychic system, our concern for human well-being and well-becoming as a property of the human psychic system requires a concern for the conditions that the functioning of the bio-physical system provide for the functioning of the psychic system and, thus, the well-being and well-becoming of a human being from the psychic systems perspective. Similarly, because social phenomena, like codified social regulations, causally impact humans as social actors, such impacts, in turn, impact humans as psychic systems. Thus, our concern for human well-being and well-becoming as a property of the human psychic system requires a concern for the social system as it provides conditions for the functioning of the psychic system and, thus, for the well-being and well-becoming of the human being from a psychic systems perspective. Human experience and behaviour at both the bio-physical and the social level is *mediated by* the psychic system. Linking human well-being and well-becoming to the psychic systems perspective goes also well with the intuitive starting point for this inquiry into human flourishing, namely the intuitive understanding that the phrase is to capture what humans strive for when exerting their agency in living their lives.

The framework presented here understands human well-being and well-becoming as a property of the human psychic system. This means that the components of well-being and well-becoming described in the next section have to be seen through the psychic systems perspective.

The Five Components of Well-Being and Well-Becoming

In this section I concretize two meta-characteristics of the approach, namely that the approach is integrated and needs-based. I do so by postulating five components of what it means (for a psychic system) to flourish (= to be and become well). The five components are:

- having agentic capabilities linked to human needs;
- experiencing situational opportunities to engage one’s agentic capabilities in relevant life domains;
- enjoying life;
- living a meaningful life;
- experiencing personal and communal connections that contribute to one’s well-being.

Based on the notion that the term *well-being and well-becoming* is to capture what humans are striving for when exerting their agency as they live their lives, these components capture clusters of motives and drives for a human being to live their life one way rather than another: motives and drives linked to wanting to have agency in addressing their needs and the required capabilities in relevant life domains; motives and drives linked to wanting to enjoy life; and so on.⁷ Seeing these qualities as qualities of humans from the psychic systems perspective means that they are psychic systems qualities.

Having agentic capabilities linked to human needs. This and the next component draw on the main ideas behind the Capabilities Approach (to well-being) developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 2000, 2011; Sen 1993, 2009).⁸ The Capabilities Approach is “an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorize about basic social justice” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 18). The Capabilities Approach has been quite influential at the level of international organizations and agencies as a theoretical framework for assessing quality of life around the world and is as such used, for instance, by the World Bank and the United Nations in its Development Programme (Nussbaum, 2011, p. x). Over the last two decades, the Capabilities Approach has also become more prominent in the conceptualizing and assessing of children’s well-being (e.g., Biggeri, Ballet, & Comim, 2011).

The Capabilities Approach conceptualizes human well-being as having freedom to choose to live a life one has reason to value. Such freedom-based choice requires appropriate opportunities to choose and requires capabilities in order to make use of such opportunities. Nussbaum (2011) identifies the following “essential elements of the approach” (p. 19):

[The approach] holds that the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice, is, ‘What is each person able to do and to be?’ In other words, the approach takes *each person as an end*, asking not just about the total or

⁷ While elaborating on the following point would go beyond the limits of this paper, I at least want to mention that the notion that we can start the inquiry with some understanding of *what humans are striving for when exerting their agency in living their lives* is somewhat problematic, because it assumes that, first, there is some communality across human beings in what they are striving for when exerting their agency and, second, that there is an understanding of *exerting one’s agency* that we can apply across cultures and individual human beings. I forgo the needed discussion of these issues in this paper.

⁸ Nussbaum and Sen understand their Capabilities Approach as an approach assessing how well the life is going for members of a society (e.g., Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1993) rather than as an approach to well-being per se. Sen considers *well-being* a term with a narrower focus on people’s quality of life than the term *capabilities* does (Sen 2009). For the purpose of this chapter and assuming a wider concept of well-being in this paper, I consider it appropriate to talk about the Capabilities Approach as an approach to well-being. It should also be noted that Nussbaum and Sen developed different versions of the Capabilities Approach, but the difference is of no concern to the focus of this paper. For a brief description of the different versions, see Nussbaum (2011, pp. 19-20).

average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person. It is *focused on choice or freedom*, holding that the crucial opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs. It thus commits itself to respect for people's powers of self-definition. (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 18)

As the quotation makes clear, central to the Capabilities Approach to well-being and well-becoming are the “life-chances” (Veenhoven, 2000) afforded to a person through the provision of freedom to choose and the development of capabilities to make use of possible choices. The Capabilities Approach is grounded in the “prospectivity” (Sumner, 1996, p. 133) of human living: on the potential inherent in the present for living one's life one way rather than another in the near and far future. As such, it is the integration of the Capabilities Approach into the WB2-Framework that – in particular although not exclusively – contributes to giving the WB2 Framework the dynamic characteristic explicated above.

What capabilities are relevant for a conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming? Distinct from Nussbaum's version of the Capabilities Approach, the capabilities relevant to the WB2-Framework are derived from the underlying theory of human needs by Max-Neef's (1991). This means that in the approach proposed in this paper one component of human well-being and well-becoming as a property of the human psychic system is having capabilities linked to the need for subsistence, capabilities linked to the need for protection, and so on. These capabilities, though, have to be *agentic* capabilities. While exploring the notion of human agency would exceed the focus and space of this paper, I do want to outline some characteristics of the meaning of *agentic* capabilities as they are central to in the WB2-Framework and how they link to human well-being.

Agentic capabilities are grounded in second-order desires. A core characteristic is linked to the human ability of wanting and choosing certain desires and motives, which Frankfurt – as referenced earlier – has called “second-order desires” (Frankfurt, 1971/1988). Human agency as a disposition very broadly construed can be understood as the capacity of having such second-order desires, which are desires to be a certain kind of person with certain preferences, purposes, and motives, *and* to have what is needed to act upon that capacity if one so chooses. Thus, having agentic capabilities allows us to live a life we have reason to wanting to live (Nussbaum, 2011). To live a flourishing life, then, means that we require to have agentic capabilities linked to the needs we have as humans.

Agentic capabilities are contextual. Following, I use an example to illustrate another core characteristic of the concept of *agentic* capabilities. A capability linked to the general human need to create in the Canadian socio-cultural context might be the capability of being persistent. Understanding persistence as an *agentic* capability specifies this capability as follows. First, having the agentic capability of being persistent (in order to address one's general need to create) means that that capability is available to me in a way that is appropriate for the specific contexts in which I generally find myself in, and thus having that capability in those contexts gives me agency over my experiences and actions in those contexts. For instance, as a middle-years student, those contexts might be the specific classes that I take as part of my school education. So, my capability of being persistent would need to reflect the kind of persistence adequate for, for instance, being creative in finding solutions to problems posed in my mathematics class.

Agentic capabilities require different ways of knowing. To continue with the example just discussed, in order for the capability of being persistent to be agentic for a particular person in their typical life context, the capability will have to include the availability of different forms of knowing

to provide for the rich knowing base needed to *agentially* enact persistence to address one's need to create. To draw on Mingers (2006), we can differentiate between propositional knowing, experiential knowing, performative knowing, and epistemological knowing.⁹ I briefly look at each form of knowing.

To know in the sense of *propositional knowing* is “to know *that* – to be aware of or to be cognisant of states of affairs” (Mingers, 2006, p. 136). For instance, to be agentially capable of being persistent, we might need to know our own motivational state of affairs at given times. I might need to be aware of the fact that I can easily get motivated to stay engaged in the realm of fine arts, but less so in the realm of mathematical problem solving. *Knowing that* that is the case for my motivational functioning supports my agency in being persistent in different life domains. To propositionally *know that* generally I am in different motivational states when solving mathematical problems than when painting a picture might provide me with the understanding that I need to use different strategies to be persistent in completing mathematical problems than to be persistent in completing a painting I started.

To know in the sense of *experiential knowing* is “to be acquainted with or to be familiar with” (Mingers, 2006, p. 136). For instance, someone might know someone by being acquainted with “his wife Angela” or by being familiar with “what this feels like”. While I might know *that* there is the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg (propositional knowing), I might not know the museum through personal experience or acquaintance (experiential knowing), because I have never visited the museum. Experiential knowing that is relevant to the agentic capability of persistence to address our need to create might involve: to be familiar with the feeling of wanting to give up but then staying with it and the feeling of satisfaction of having stayed with it until completion. Experiential knowing can be a very intuitive and implicit process, as for instance in the case of being acquainted with someone's physical appearance to the degree that I recognize the person in a large crowd (experiential knowing), but that I am not able to describe explicitly the facial features of that person (propositional knowing).

To know in the sense of *performative knowing* is “to know *how*” (Mingers, 2006, p. 137). This form of knowing includes knowing linked to having and enacting skills, but it also includes forms of performative knowing like “knowing how to ride a bike; knowing how to play the piano; knowing how to speak a language; knowing how to ‘play the game’ as in office politics or a sport; knowing how to parent or knowing how to cook” (Mingers, 2006, p. 137). “What distinguishes this type of knowledge [knowing] is that it goes beyond simple experience of something to involve particular skills and abilities that have to be learnt over a period of time. It generally involves explicit training in order to develop the necessary skills” (Mingers, 2006, p. 137). For instance, the agentic capability of persistence to address our need to create would involve the skills of actually creating something – whatever the performance domain might be, like painting, mathematical problem solving, and so on. To expand on the example given for propositional knowing above, to have agentic capabilities to address my need to be creative in the domain of mathematical problem solving, I would require the know-how (strategies) of being persistent in this domain, like the skill of assessing my level of competence to address the experienced difficulties, so that I work on problems that push my competence levels but for which my knowing (know-how) is (still) sufficient. Engaging in such *still-*

⁹ Mingers (2006) speaks of propositional *knowledge*, experiential *knowledge*, and so on. My using of the verb form rather than the noun flags that what I am talking about here is engagement of a living organism rather than a “thing” external to living beings as, for instance, Popper's “objective knowledge” in his postulated “third world” (Popper, 1972).

right-for-me problems provide a good chance of *getting in flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) as I work on the problem. Being in flow means that my “sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by in minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49). Being in flow is characterized by “intense and focused concentration on the present moment” and by “loss of reflective self-consciousness” (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 195), both implying that I cannot tell myself that I cannot solve the problem and that I better give up. These momentary qualities of being when being in flow are probably the most desired way of being persistent when engaging with a task.

To know in the sense of *epistemological knowing* is “to know *why*, to be knowledgeable about, to know the truth of, to be certain of, or to understand” (Mingers, 2006, p. 138).

This type of knowledge [knowing] is in some way the obverse [i.e. opposite] of performative knowledge as it is almost entirely explicit and discursive and is judged in terms of its correctness rather than its success. It can be knowledge of an everyday kind—knowing how something works, but in the main it refers to scholarly knowledge that is generated according to well-defined procedures or methodologies. (Mingers, 2006, p. 138).

While propositional knowing is about understanding what is the case – the facts describing a state of affairs – epistemological knowing is about the underlying reasons for the case to be the way it is. In other words, epistemological knowing is knowing what causes the state of affairs to be this way rather than that way. The latter is generally the domain of more formal scholarship and research, which is why Mingers refers to knowing generated through scholarly and methodical work.

For instance, epistemological knowing in the context of the agentic capability of persistence to address our need to create might involve the understanding of why I get so easily distracted when sitting at my desk to write, undermining my attempt to be persistent in my writing: Research on unconscious automaticity of higher mental processes suggests that “the unconscious preparation of even the simplest action starts before we are conscious of the action we are about to perform” so that practically “the unconscious makes the decision to act” (Dijksterhuis, Chartrand, & Aarts, 2007, p. 53).¹⁰ While automaticity undermines agency, it can be my epistemological knowing of why I automatically respond in certain situations in certain ways that gives me back at least some of the conscious and willed control of my action, including my ability to persist in my creative practice.¹¹

Agentic capabilities enable moving ideas. Knowing in these four forms of knowing make up the knowing base of an agentic capability. What gives this knowing base the power of agency is what Dewey calls “moving ideas”:

The business of the educator – whether parent or teacher – is to see to it that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become *moving* ideas, motive-forces in the guidance of conduct. (Dewey, 1909/1975, p. 2)

¹⁰ For a more general introduction to the research on the role of the unconscious on what we do, see Bargh (2017).

¹¹ For a systematic practice of working on changing automatic behaviour in the context of professional practice, see Mason (2002); for a use of Mason’s approach in the context of teaching, see Falkenberg (2014b, 2016).

Knowing that, how, and why, and being acquainted with as the knowing base of an *agentic* capability means that these forms of knowing are “motive-forces in the guidance of conduct”. That means, that if persistence functions as an *agentic* capability for me, then I know not only what is relevant in terms of knowing that, how, and why and being acquainted with, but all that knowing provides the motivational force for me to actually be persistent in order to address my need to create if and when I so choose. Knowing in a way that what I know (am acquainted with) functions as a “motive-force[s] in the guidance of [my] conduct” is the opposite of what Whitehead (1929) has called “inner ideas” (innert knowing), which are “ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combination” (pp. 1-2).

Implications for school education. This understanding of agentic capabilities to address our human needs has wide-reaching implications for school education if schooling is to develop such agentic capabilities so that students can address their needs as they live their lives inside and outside of school and as children, youth, and adults. Exploring these implications goes beyond the focus of this paper, therefore three points should suffice here.

First, if schooling is to develop agentic capabilities that would allow students to address their human needs, schooling has to greatly expand the curricular foci to encompass the wide range of capability domains included in the proposed rich understanding of human needs: capabilities linked to satisfying our need for creation, our need for affection, our need for idleness, our need for identity, and so on. The philosopher Nel Noddings has illustrated how curricularly distinct such schooling would look like from what we generally find in mainstream Western schooling (Noddings, 2003, 2006).

Second, judging by the curricula of the courses required for graduation, the school curricula in Canada focus overwhelmingly on the development of propositional and epistemological knowing. It is not accidental that these are the forms of knowing overwhelmingly valued in university-level education programs. If schooling is to develop agentic capabilities to address human needs needed for living a flourishing life, school curricula and teaching practices would need to give much more consideration to experiential and performative knowing in all curricula.

Third, schooling takes generally place physically and curricularly segregated from the place and curriculum of life in the community that surrounds the school and from the life that students live in that community. Schooling in the West is guided by the notion that there is context-transcendent knowledge and that this knowledge forms the knowing base needed for living a flourishing life in whatever community one does or will live in. But there is evidence – like the case study by Pope (2001) – that suggests that particularly high school students experience schooling as a system to navigate through in order to get the high marks needed for career or university entrance rather than as a place that enables them to expand their knowing as a motive force in the guidance of their conduct toward living flourishing lives. As Pope’s (2001) study suggests, the knowing that the high school students he studied developed as motive forces in the guidance of their conduct was the knowing how to navigate successfully through the school system in order to achieve the grades they are told are needed for career and university entrance. If schooling is to develop agentic capabilities to address human needs needed for living a flourishing life, schools need to assess their educational success in terms of the extent to which students’ knowing *actually* moves the way they live their lives. In the context of the human needs approach presented in this paper, this would mean that school would assess their success by the degree to which students develop *agentic* capabilities in the sense outlined here.

Experiencing situational opportunities to engage one's agentic capabilities. This component considers that “what really happens” (Sen, 2009, p. 235) is important to the quality of people's lives, not just what they have the capabilities for. To live a flourishing life, people need opportunities to actually engage their agentic capabilities. To acknowledge the importance of exerted agency to human well-being and well-becoming, these opportunities do not need to be taken up, but they need to be there for people to take up *if they so choose*. In order for this to be the case, the opportunities have to be *situational opportunities* and they have to be *experienced* as situational opportunities by those whose well-being is in focus. *Situational opportunities* is a phrase chosen to express that these opportunities manifest themselves in concrete and actual situations. That these situational opportunities have to be *experienced* (by the person in focus) emphasizes that what matters is that the person in focus is subjectively experiencing such situations as actual opportunities available to them. It is not enough that situations are perceived as opportunities to the person in focus from an outsider's perspective.

This component of the WB2-Framework is in line with what Nussbaum (2011) has called “the social/political/economic conditions in which functioning [i.e. the enactment of one's capabilities] can actually be chosen” (p. 21).

Enjoying life. This component of the WB2-Framework captures the importance of actual emotional experiences of certain qualities for well-being and well-becoming. Relevant to this component is the experience of enjoyment. However, *enjoying life* is not referring to single incidences of experiences of enjoyment, but rather it is referring to a global feeling of enjoying one's life as a whole. Of course, the memory of incidences of the former will greatly contribute to and might actually be to some degree necessary for the latter, but the concern of this component is for the latter.¹²

Living a meaningful life. This component captures what Frankl ([1949] 2006) has called human's “search for meaning” or “the will to meaning”, which he sees as “the primary motivation in [humans'] life” (p. 99). The importance of finding and having meaning in one's life is identified as a central component of well-being in a number of other psychological approaches, so for instance, in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) “psychology of optimal experience”, in Seligman's (2011) latest “visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being”, in Ryff and Singer's (1998) theory of positive human health, and in Yalom's (1980) existential psychotherapy.

What specifically makes life meaningful to a person is framed – though not determined – by the culture the person is embedded in.¹³ From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/1989), Taylor (1991) has convincingly argued that finding meaning in and for our life is only possible by drawing on meaning given to life practices and artifacts within the culture one is embedded in. For instance, if one finds meaning in living with voluntary simplicity (see Burch

¹² So-called hedonistic approaches to well-being have traditionally understood human well-being to consist in enjoyment or pleasure, so for instance in the ancient Greek tradition of Cyrenaic hedonism (e.g., Almeder 2000) and in the modern example of Hedonistic Psychology (e.g., Kahneman, Diener, and Schwartz 1999). For instance, Warr (1999) defines his hedonistic concept of well-being in terms of “two independent dimensions of feeling, here labeled ‘pleasure’ and ‘[mental] arousal’” (p. 393). The desired state of well-being (e.g., being enthusiastic, cheerful, happy) is one of high pleasure and high mental arousal (pp. 393-394).

¹³ For examples of different views of what makes life meaningful in different cultures, see the reviews in Csikszentmihalyi (1990, pp. 218-223) and McMahon (2006).

2011; Elgin 2010), then that meaning draws on its contrast to the consumer and materialistic-oriented lifestyle dominantly promoted in North America (e.g., Schor 2010). For this reason, the well-being component of living a meaningful life is not just an *inner* aspect of our well-being – what is meaningful to me in and for my life is clearly dependent on who I am as a person – but also an *outer* aspect of our well-being, since what it means to live a meaningful life is framed by a cultural context that gives rise to individual meaning making. (The distinction between inner and outer aspects of the concept of well-being is introduced and discussed below.)

Experiencing personal and communal connections that contribute to one’s well-being and well-becoming. This component is to capture the idea that humans are social (communal) beings with a need for social connections (human need). Human beings generally do not voluntarily choose social isolation. Quite to the contrary, social isolation is used as a means of torture and, less draconian, as a means of parental and school punishment for undesired child and student behaviour. For this component as well, the communal (social) connections have to be subjectively experienced by the person whose well-being is under consideration rather than just being seen by others to be in place.

The logical structure given to the formulation of this component of individual well-being is in mathematics called a recursive definition, which is a definition in which part of what defines a term is making reference to the term itself. In this case, this component of what would define well-being for a given person makes reference to the well-being of that person. This specific logical structure of this component gives consideration to both the possibility of flourishing in relative isolation in specific cases and the generally damaging impact of social isolation on humans’ well-being.

Structuring the Components

The five components of the WB2-Framework are not arbitrary. They respond to a structure of categories that Veenhoven (2000) has developed to “[order] concepts and measures of the good life” (p. 1) that have been suggested in the scholarly literature. To do so, he distinguishes between two categorical dimensions. The first one distinguishes between “inner quality” and “outer quality” of well-being (the good life), and the other dimension distinguishes between “life chances” and “life results”. This two-dimensional categorization results in a two-by-two matrix that Veenhoven is using to categorize the different approaches to conceptualizing and measuring the good life into four clusters.¹⁴ While I have adopted the general idea behind the proposed categorical dimensions, Veenhoven (2000) interprets those categories somewhat differently than I do. Using his structure, though, will allow me to (a) illustrate in what ways the five proposed components for conceptualizing well-being are pairwise distinct, and (b) that those five components might actually capture the range of aspects that we seem to generally consider when trying to make sense of the concept of well-being. Using Veenhoven’s two categorical dimensions, Figure 1 (below) structures the five components of the WB2-Framework along the two dimensions.

The matrix reflects that among the five components there are some that reference qualities that are located in the human being itself (inner aspect”), while others reference qualities that are linked to the experienced environment/context into which the human being is embedded (outer

¹⁴ Sen (2009, pp. 286-290) introduces a similar two-dimensional distinction as Veenhoven (2000), although Sen uses a different nomenclature than is used in this paper.

aspect). On the other hand, the matrix also reflects that some components of the WB2-Framework are about possibilities (life-chances/freedom), while others are about realizations (life-results/achievement). Figure 1 shows the special status already discussed for the component of living

	inner aspect		outer aspect
life-chances/ freedom	having agentic capabilities linked to human needs		experiencing situational opportunities to engage one’s agentic capabilities
life-results/ achievement	enjoying life	living a meaningful life	experiencing personal and communal connections that contribute to one’s well-being and well-becoming

Figure 1: The WB2-Framework Components for Conceptualizing Well-Being and Well-Becoming

a meaningful life with respect to the dimension of inner-outer aspect. This component captures an inner as well as an outer quality of human well-being and well-becoming. On one hand, it is in me what gives my life meaning, which makes it an inner quality. On the other hand, compared to the enjoyment component for instance, the meaning that I can and might find in my life is also shaped by my engagement with the culture I am embedded in as discussed above, which makes it an outer quality.

The Dynamic Aspect Revisited

Earlier in this paper I explicated what makes this approach to human flourishing a dynamic approach and that *well-becoming* in the phrase *well-being and well-becoming* expresses the dynamic aspect of well-being and that *well-being* expresses the momentary state of well-becoming. After having introduced the components of the framework, I am now in a better position to explicate the latter part of this phrase: that *well-being* expresses the momentary state of well-becoming. The approach to well-being and well-becoming developed in this paper integrates the Capabilities Approach to human flourishing (Nussbaum 2000, 2011; Sen 1993, 2009) to create the two life-chance/freedom components (see Figure 1). The integration of human capabilities into the Capabilities Approach and into the WB2-Framework is based on the notion that living a flourishing life as a human being has to give consideration to human agency as the core human capacity, i.e. the capacity to direct our lives in ways that addresses our second-order desires. In order to be relevant to human flourishing, however, human agency cannot just be an abstract human capacity. It will need to manifest itself as an actualize-able capacity in a person’s life. That can only be the case if that capacity can *become* actualized as a way to address concrete second-order desires. This requires agentic capabilities that the Capabilities Approach and the WB2-Framework introduce to the understanding of human flourishing. In other words, the consideration of human agentic capabilities in the (framing of the) conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming makes what we can become – in terms of what we are able to do and be – an integral part to the understanding of human flourishing. The state of having relevant agentic capabilities, i.e. the state of the potential to become, is an integral

part to the understanding of human flourishing. It is in this sense that the phrase *well-being is the momentary state of well-becoming* is to be understood.

Conclusion

How can the WB2-Framework presented in this paper contribute to the discourses on human, child, and student well-being and well-becoming (human flourishing) referenced in the introduction? What the WB2-Framework contributes first and foremost to all these discourses is an understanding of what we can mean by human flourishing. But it does so in a specific way. The approach taken in the WB2-Framework is one that understands human flourishing as a property of individual human beings in terms of their actual experiences and their potential to live their lives in a way that they have reason to want to. As such, this approach to human flourishing is principally distinct from the wide-spread indicators-based approaches to human well-being, where indicators are variables that point to (indicate) what they are indicators of, but they are distinct from what it is that they point to. For instance, the social indicators approach to child well-being (e.g., Ben-Arieh & George, 2006) identifies indicators that “quantitatively measure key attributes that reflect how society, either people in general or specific subpopulations of interest, is doing” (Corbet, 2006, p. 4). Measuring the physical well-being of children in the UK, Bradshaw and Bloor (2006) used the following indicators for how the social group of UK children is doing: the infant and child mortality rates; children’s birth weights; breastfeeding rates; immunization rates; children’s self-assessed health reports; parental reports on their children’s health; rates of longstanding illnesses; rates of chronic illnesses; rates of injuries and accidents; rates of types of health behaviours in children.

This example illustrates two principal characteristics of indicators approaches to human flourishing. First, they measure variables that are suggested to tell us the state of a certain aspect of our well-being; the claim is not that they define that aspect. Children’s birthweight is measured because *it is assumed* that a child’s birthweight indicates (points to) the level of physical well-being of children as a social group in a particular society: birthweight operationalizes the concept of physical well-being but is not part of what *physical well-being* actually means. Second, the indicators are *social* indicators, meaning that they indicate the well-being of a social group, *not* the well-being of an individual child. The difference can be illustrated with reference to obesity. Obesity is an indicator of ill-being for children as the social group, because “children who are overweight and obese have an increased risk of becoming overweight and obese adults, with the associated implications for health risks” (Bradshaw & Bloor, 2006, p. 74). However, that does not mean that a particular child that is overweight or even obese is not physically flourishing. *Increased risk* is a statistical quality that as such also applies to those who are physically flourishing and will never develop illnesses statistically associated with being overweight or obese.

There is a reciprocal relationship between indicators-based approaches to human well-being and well-becoming. The choice of indicators will always have to be justified by going back to a conceptual understanding of human well-being. What in the past might have been accepted as an indicator for child well-being might now not be accepted as such anymore, because the conceptualization of what child well-being means has changed or because the empirical evidence that originally supported this variable as an indicator for child well-being has been undermined through other research. On the other hand, for any assessment purposes, any conceptualization of human well-being will have to be operationalized in some form in order to be able to assess (not

necessarily measure) a person's or group of persons' well-being and well-becoming. Such operationalization, however, might look different if the concern is with the well-being of individual people – like it is the concern for a classroom teacher – than if the concern is with the flourishing of students as a social group more generally – like it is the concern for a ministry of education. The WB2-Framework, thus, contributes to the discourses not just a particular approach to the conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming as characterized by the meta-characteristics explicated in the first part of this paper, but it provides also a possible foundation for indicators-based approaches to human flourishing.

Because this paper is written in the Well-Being in Schools Paper Series, I want to end by pointing to some of the ways in which the WB2-Framework can contribute to the increasing concern for student well-being in Canadian school education. First, the Framework takes its starting point in the fundamental assumption that “the concept of well-being is to capture what humans aim for when they exert their agency to live their lives one way rather than another” (Falkenberg, 2014a, p. 78). This gives human well-being and well-becoming a central role in the quality of human living. Any school education system that is concerned with students' quality of life – be it at present as students within the system or be it in the future as adults – needs to ground its work in an understanding of human well-being and the WB2-Framework could provide such needed understanding. Second, the WB2-Framework is built upon a rich image of human flourishing, based on an expansive set of assumed human needs. As such the WB2-Framework provides for possible directions in which the focus on student mental health that is currently so prominent in the understanding of and concern for student well-being can be broadened to include other aspects of what it means for students to flourish. Furthermore, the rich image of human flourishing provided in the WB2-Framework can also be used to expand the understanding of *student success*, if an education system is concerned with students' quality of life as part of its educational mandate. Third, because the WB2-Framework provides a *framework for* rather than an actual conceptualization of human well-being and well-becoming, the WB2-Framework can be used to frame a community-based engagement about what it means for students to flourish as students and future adults.

At the beginning of any engagement with the concern for student well-being and well-becoming and well-being and well-becoming in schools more broadly is the conceptual question of what we mean by *well-being and well-becoming*. This paper has provided and argued for a particular approach to such conceptualization.

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