

What is Well-Being?

PRESENTATION TO

WALES SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL
PRESCRIBING RESEARCH FORUM
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THE SOUTH WALES SOCIAL WELL-BEING
SCALE (SWSWBS)

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The aims of the presentation


- To identify a **general or overall shared** definition or concept of well-being to begin our understanding of well-being, but which leads to different and conflicting **conceptions of well-being**
- To identify two broad *conceptions* of well-being '**objective**' and '**subjective**' conceptions of well-being
- To identify what is the main starting point and/or focus for any conception of well-being – e.g. is it the **individual 'world'** or is it the **social 'world'**?

Identifying a general or overall shared **concept** of well-being, but leading to different and competing **conceptions** of well-being

- What can operate as a very general or overall shared **concept** of well-being is as follows: **“what, in and of itself, helps a life go better”** (Fletcher, 2016a, p 1)
- **BUT** this general or overall **concept** of well-being which most/all people can agree to, leads to different **conceptions** of well-being, which is where disagreements and debates about well-being are mostly located
- **SO: The history of the well-being debate** can be traced back to *at least* the Ancient Greeks
- **For example:** see Aristotle and his notion of **eudaimonia**, which, very roughly translated, means achieving well-being (so what in, and of itself, helps a life go better) by leading a **worthwhile** or **‘good life’** where an individual, as part of a political or social community, fulfils his or her potential.
- **HOWEVER:** This leads to *further* debates and questions about what *is* a ‘worthwhile’ or ‘good life’, and what *is* someone’s ‘potential’ and how it should be ‘fulfilled’.

Identifying two broad
conceptions of well-
being '**objective**' and
'**subjective**'
conceptions of well-
being

- **Objective conceptions:** we can conceptualise well-being 'objectively' referring to a list of external resources (so external to a person's 'subjective' internal experiences), access to which, is said to enhance a person and/or community's well-being.
- This **objective list** could include access to health, education, employment, income, housing, community assets, and inclusive social networks, and can be measured in numerous ways.
- **Subjective conceptions:** Or we can conceptualise well-being 'subjectively' referring to a person's internal world, which would also lead to a list of relevant internal 'states of being'.
- This **subjective list** could include desires, life-plans, commitments, beliefs, emotional states, psycho-social identity, feelings, and/or thoughts, and can be measured in numerous ways.

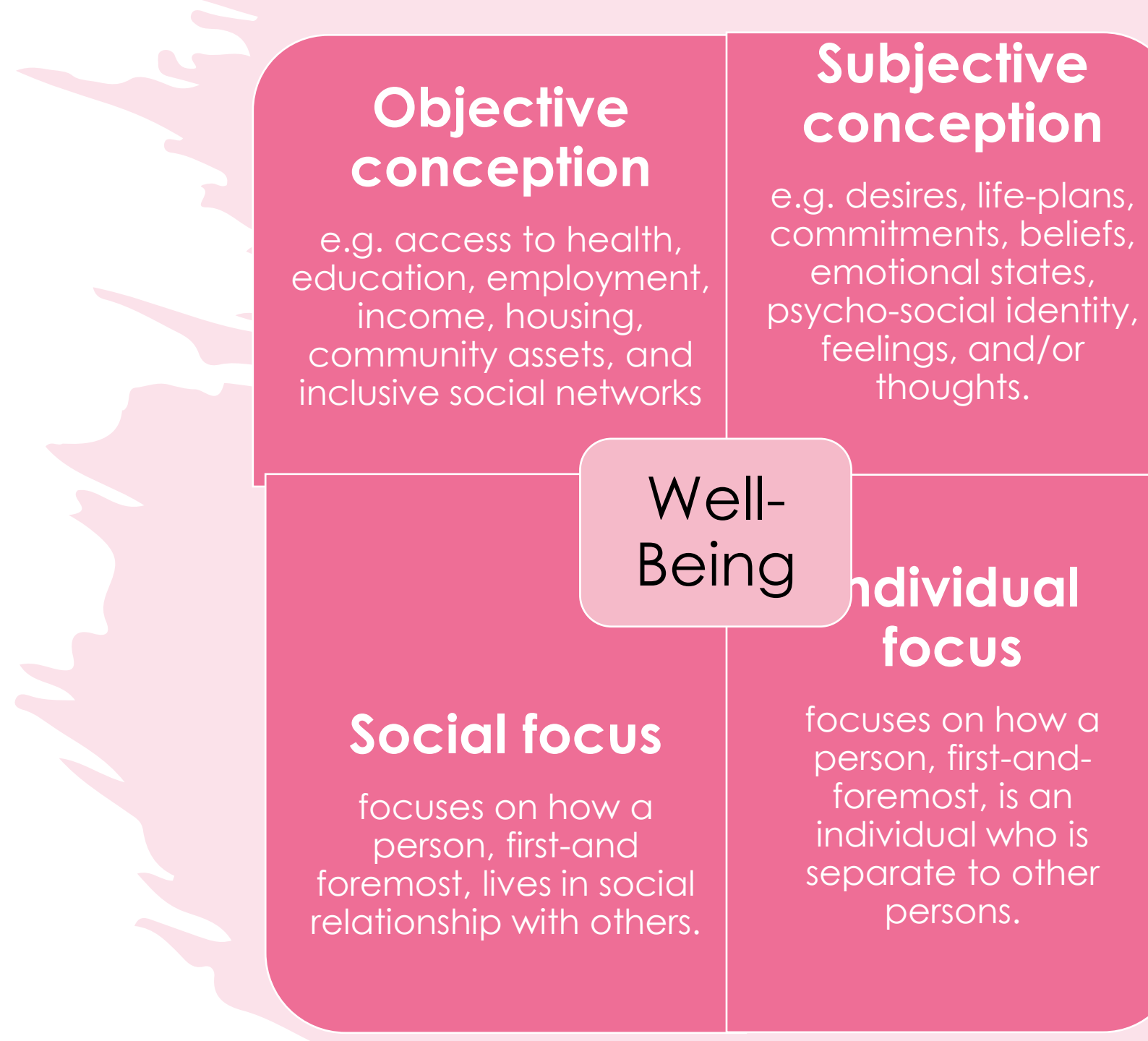


To identify what is the main **starting point and/or focus** for any conception of well-being – e.g. is it the **individual ‘world’** or is it the **social ‘world’**?

- **Individual ‘world’ as main starting point or focus** focuses on how a person, first-and-foremost, is an individual who is separate to other persons. And so, as an individual separate person, he/she will possess and have access to and entitlements to certain things and perceive, and/or experience their individual world, in a unique way that is peculiar *to* that person.
- **Social ‘world’ as main starting point or focus** focuses on how a person, first-and-foremost, lives in social relationship with others. And so, as a social person, they engage with others, and including within their outside environments, for example, with their friends and/or family, their workplace, their wider community.

Summary and conclusion

Where does all this fit in relation to the development and application of the South Wales Social Well-Being Scale (SWSWBS)?



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- Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), a 14-item tool, is one of the most common tools used by professionals to measure 'subjective' wellbeing.