Positive

Guest editors P. ALEX LINLEY, STEPHEN JOSEPH *and* ILONA BONIWELL

welcome you to the special issue on positive psychology.

POSITIVE psychology was launched with Martin Seligman's APA Presidential Address in 1998. The first *American Psychologist* of the new millennium (January 2000, Vol. 55) was dedicated to positive psychology. The momentum of that auspicious start has grown ever since. In this special issue of *The Psychologist*, we have sought to give a truly international flavour of what positive psychology is about and, more importantly, why we believe it can make a real difference to our practice as psychologists.

As Martin Seligman notes, positive psychology is about 'happiness'. Ruut Veenhoven comprehensively answers some critiques that have been made of this concept, and its desirability as a social good. Ilona Boniwell and Philip Zimbardo explore how a balanced time perspective may be one of the keys to achieving a good life, while Paul Baltes and Ute Kunzmann consider another peak of human excellence in wisdom. Antonella Delle Fave and Fausto Massimini look at optimal experience in people with disabilities, a theme of triumph over adversity that is expanded by Alex Linley and Stephen Joseph in their article about post-traumatic growth. Maintaining this practitioner focus, Roger Bretherton and Roderick Ørner consider existential psychotherapy as a 'positive psychotherapy in disguise', with its emphasis on strengths and meaning, framed within a context of irreversible human limitations. From an occupational psychology perspective Jonathan Hill examines how the resources of work psychologists may be deployed more positively, while Jane Henry looks at what makes positive organisations different. Moving to a social level of analysis, Andrew Oswald gives an economist's perspective on how the effects of external factors on psychological well-being can be measured. Ed Cairns and Christopher Alan Lewis link their work in peace psychology with the focus of positive psychology, suggesting that a combination of the two provides a powerful force for constructive change following war and conflict.

Far be it from us to claim that this collection of short articles represents the whole of positive psychology. However, we hope that by the time you reach our concluding statement, we will have done enough to whet your appetite and to encourage you, as fellow psychologists, to think carefully about the advantages of applying positive psychology in your practice.

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FOR the last half century psychology has been largely consumed with a single topic only – mental illness – and it has done fairly well with it. Psychologists can now measure with some precision such formerly fuzzy concepts as depression and alcoholism. We now know a fair amount about how these troubles develop across the lifespan, and about their genetics, their biochemistry and their psychological causes. Best of all, we have learned how to relieve some of these disorders. But this progress has come at a high cost. Relieving the states that make life miserable has relegated building the states that make life worth living to a distant back seat.

There has been a profound obstacle to a science and practice of positive traits and positive states: the belief that virtue and happiness are inauthentic, epiphenomenal, parasitic upon or reducible to the negative traits and states. This 'rotten-to-the-core' view pervades Western thought, and if there is any doctrine positive psychology seeks to overthrow it is this one. Its original manifestation is the doctrine of original sin. In secular form, Freud dragged this doctrine into 20th-century psychology where it remains fashionably entrenched in academia today. For Freud, all of civilisation is just an elaborate defence against basic conflicts over infantile sexuality and aggression. So Bill Gates's competitiveness is really a desire to outdo his father, and Princess Diana's opposition to land mines was but the outcome of sublimating a murderous hate for Prince Charles and the other royals. Positive motives, like exercising fairness or pursuing duty, are ruled out as fundamental; there must be some covert, negative motivation that underpins goodness if the analysis is to be academically respectable.

In spite of its widespread acceptance in the religious and secular world, there is not a shred of evidence, not an iota of data, that compels us to believe that virtue is derived from negative motivation. On the contrary, I believe that evolution has favoured both

psychology
Fundamental assumptions

sorts of traits, and any number of adaptive roles in the world have selected for morality, cooperation, altruism, and goodness, just as any number have also selected for murder, theft, self-seeking, and terrorism. The rotten-to-the-core view is only a theory, and not a very comprehensive one at that. More plausible is the dual aspect theory that the strengths and the virtues are just as basic to human nature as the negative traits.

Positive psychology is about 'happiness', and I could fill the rest of these pages with just a fraction of the attempts to take this promiscuously overused word and make sense of it. But that is not my intention. Rather I want to lay out a terminology upon which a scientifically viable positive psychology might rest. In doing so, I distinguish three desirable lives: the *pleasant* life, the *good* life, and the *meaningful* life.

The pleasant life
I use 'happiness' and 'well-being' interchangeably as soft, overarching terms to describe the goals of the whole positive psychology enterprise. It is important to recognise that 'happiness' and 'well-being' sometimes refer to feelings, such as ecstasy and comfort, but they also sometimes refer to positive activities that have no feeling component at all, such as absorption and engagement.

Happiness and well-being are the desired outcomes of positive psychology. Because the ways of enhancing them differ, I divide the positive emotions into three kinds: those directed toward the *past* (e.g. satisfaction, contentment, pride, serenity), the *future* (e.g. optimism, hope, confidence, trust, faith) or the *present*.

The positive emotions about the present divide into two crucially different categories that I call the *pleasures* and the *gratifications*. The pleasures themselves comprise bodily pleasures and higher pleasures. The bodily pleasures are momentary positive emotions that come through the senses: delicious tastes and smells, sexual feelings, moving your body

Martin E.P. Seligman *believes that the things that make life worth living have been neglected for too long.*

well, delightful sights and sounds. We use words such as scrumptiousness, warmth, and orgasm to describe such pleasures. The higher pleasures are also momentary, but they are set off by events more complicated

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'it becomes our life task to employ our strengths and virtues in the major realms of living: work, love, parenting'

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and more learned than sensory ones, and they are defined by the feelings they bring about: ecstasy, rapture, thrill, bliss, gladness, mirth, glee, fun, ebullience, comfort, amusement, relaxation and the like. The pleasures of the present, like the positive emotions about the past and the future, are at rock bottom subjective; and there exist measures of positive emotion that are repeatable, stable across time and consistent across situations.

Add all this together and you get what I refer to as the pleasant life: *a life that successfully pursues the positive emotions about the present, past and future.*

The good life
The gratifications are the other class of positive emotions about the present, but unlike the pleasures, they are not feelings, but activities we like doing – reading, rock-climbing, dancing, good conversation, volleyball, or playing bridge, for example. The gratifications absorb and engage us fully, they block self-consciousness, they block felt emotion (except in retrospect – 'Wow, that was fun!'), they create *flow*, a state in which time stops and one feels completely at home.

The gratifications cannot be obtained

or permanently increased without developing the *strengths* and *virtues*. Happiness is therefore not just about obtaining pleasant, momentary subjective states. Our strengths and virtues are the natural routes to gratification, and the gratifications are the routes to what I conceive the good life to be: *using your strengths and virtues to obtain abundant gratification in the main realms of life*.

The meaningful life
The great lesson of the endless debates about 'what is happiness' is that happiness comes by many routes. Looked at in this way it becomes our life task to deploy our strengths and virtues in the major realms of living: work, love, parenting. Importantly, a 'happy' individual need not experience all or even most of the positive emotions and gratifications.

A meaningful life adds one more component to the good life – *it is the use of your strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are.*

Well, that was a mouthful. It is the gist of Seligman (2002), and of Peterson and Seligman (in press). Those eager to read more should turn there as well as to the articles that follow in this special issue.

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Happiness

UTILITARIAN philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1789/1996) wrote that the moral worth of all action should be judged by the degree to which it contributes to the 'greater happiness of a greater number'. This has proved to be a controversial view (see Smart & Williams, 1973), with several objections raised:

- Happiness is undefined; hence the philosophy is meaningless.
- Happiness is unmeasurable; hence the philosophy lacks consequence.
- Happiness is fleeting; enduring happiness is hence impossible.
- Happiness is for a happy few; happiness for the 'greater number' is hence illusionary.
- Happiness is relative; 'greater' happiness is hence impracticable.
- Happiness spoils; great happiness for a great number is hence undesirable.
- Given this, we would be better to aim at goals of more tangible worth, like social justice and psychological autonomy.

Happiness became the subject of empirical research in the 1960s. To date, 3300 studies have considered the matter, listed in the World Database of Happiness (see 'Weblinks' box) and recently reviewed by Diener (1999) and Argyle (2002). From the perspective of this research I would argue that the objections raised are misguided.

RUUT VEENHOVEN *argues that contemporary research shows that public policy could – and should – be aimed at advancing happiness.*

Happiness *can* be defined Bentham defined happiness as 'the sum of pleasures and pains'. Similarly happiness is currently conceived as 'the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole'. In this conceptualisation, happiness is an outcome of life and is distinct from preconditions for a good life, such as a liveable environment and good life-abilities. This conception differs from current notions of 'quality of life', which combine anything good (Veenhoven, 2000).

Happiness *can* be measured Happiness is a conscious state of mind; hence it can be measured by simply asking people about it. It is an overall judgement; so it can be measured by single questions. Thus happiness can be assessed in large-scale surveys. Several standard questions have shown to be quite valid and reasonably reliable (Diener, 1995). Degree and duration of happiness are combined in assessment of 'happy life-years' (Veenhoven, 1996).

Enduring happiness *is* possible Though some things called happiness are fleeting (e.g. luck and ecstasy), happiness in this sense is not. Follow-ups after one year show stability rates in the range of .65.

Happiness of a great number *is* possible Unhappiness prevails in some parts of the present-day world, but the majority are happy in most nations. In 2000 only 4 per cent of the British ticked 'not at all satisfied' on a Eurobarometer survey question about global satisfaction with the life that one leads (European Commission, 2000). Time-sampling studies on daily affect also show a preponderance of good mood. These results cannot be disposed of as being the result of measurement bias or cognitive accommodation.

Greater happiness *is* possible At the *macro* level, happiness depends heavily on societal qualities such as wealth, justice and freedom. Social policy can improve these conditions. At the *meso* level, happiness depends on institutional

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Happiness can be measured by simply asking people about it

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qualities, like autonomy at work or in care institutions. Organisational reform can improve such situations. At the *micro* level, happiness depends on personal capabilities like efficacy, independence and social skills. Education and therapy can improve these proficiencies.

Improvement is not always nullified by habituation or by a shift in standards of reference. Happiness is not relative. Contrary to common beliefs, happiness is not the result of cognitive evaluation but of spontaneous affective state (Veenhoven, 1991).

Nor are improvements neutralised by a fixed view on life. Happiness is not a trait (Veenhoven, 1994).

Happiness *does not* deprave Follow-up studies on consequences of happiness have shown positive effects on moral behaviour: happiness fosters altruism and sociability. There is also evidence that happiness promotes activity and initiative, but no indication for negative effects on creativity. Last but not least, happiness is positive for health: happy people live longer (Veenhoven, 1988).

Happiness is a good outcome criterion Quality of life (QoL) is typically measured by the presence of conditions deemed good for people; happiness indicates how well people actually flourish. Current QoL-indexes are scores of very different things that cannot be meaningfully added, while happiness provides an obvious overall appraisal of life. Current indexes treat external conditions and inner capabilities separately; happiness reflects the apparent 'fit' of conditions and capabilities. Given this, happiness is the best outcome criterion available (Veenhoven, 2000, 2002).

All in all, the criterion of happiness has value and should be used more in assessing outcomes of social policies and psychological therapies.

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Time to find the right balance

ILONA BONIWELL *and* PHILIP ZIMBARDO *argue that a balanced time perspective is an ideal foundation for leading a 'good life'.*

CENTRAL to the discipline of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) is the answer to the question 'What makes life worth living?' or simply 'What is "a good life"?' One key to learning how to live a fulfilling life is discovering how to achieve a balanced time perspective: the ability to switch one's temporal focus according to the demands of the current behavioural setting (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

The importance of time in our lives is evident from time themes in poetry, song, proverbs, homilies, as well as time discourses and metaphors, even in childhood fairy tales. An image of Cinderella, having to win over a prince's heart within very tight temporal constraints and mindful that present pleasures are transient, is likely to be embedded in the consciousness of many Western children. In idiomatic use, time is a commodity that can be spent, used, saved, maximised or wasted.

The subjective conception of focusing on various temporal categories or time frames when making decisions and taking action is one's time perspective (TP). It is one of the most powerful influences on virtually all aspects of human behaviour, in particular affecting our quality of life. TP is a dimension composed of categories along each of which individuals vary. A single integrated scale for measuring TP has been developed – the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) – which is reliable, valid and easy to use. Five main factors underlie the ZTPI – past-negative, past-positive, present-hedonistic, present-fatalistic and future factors. These were derived from a series of exploratory studies and have been continuously empirically refined (Gonzalez & Zimbardo, 1985; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Zimbardo & Gonzalez, 1984).

Let us give a flavour of what different time perspectives relate to. Past TP is associated with focus on family, tradition and history. This can be either negative or positive. A past-negative TP is associated with focusing on personal experiences that were aversive or noxious, while the past-positive TP reflects a warm, pleasurable, often sentimental and nostalgic view of one's past with an emphasis on maintaining relationships with family and friends.

The present-hedonistic TP is associated with the enjoyment of present momentary activities and with little concern over consequences of behaviour. This kind of person is essentially a biological creature, determined by stimuli, situational emotions and spontaneity, being oriented towards sensation and pleasure seeking. The present-fatalistic TP, on the other hand, is associated with hopelessness and immutable beliefs that outside forces control one's life.

A person with a future TP is concerned with working for future goals and rewards, often at the expense of present enjoyment. A future-oriented individual lives in abstraction, suppressing the reality of the present for the imagined reality of an ideal future world. The third little pig who built his house from bricks, estimating the possible dangers and uncertainties of the future, was almost certainly future-oriented.

The TP construct has been found to be related to many behaviours, attitudes, values and status variables, such as delinquency, educational achievement, health, sleep and dreaming patterns, and choices of romantic partner. Time perspective is predictive of a wide range of behaviours. For example, a present TP has been found to relate to risky driving and other forms of risk taking (Zimbardo *et al*., 1997), and also to predilections to sexual behaviours and substance abuse of alcohol and drugs (Keough *et al*., 1999). Unemployed people living in shelters who have a future TP are more likely to use their time constructively to seek jobs, and

those with present TP tend to engage in non-instrumental activities or to waste time watching TV (Epel *et al*., 1999).

Although each of the TP factors has some value, an excessive orientation towards any one perspective can become dysfunctional. For example, Western ways of life have become predominantly goal- and future-oriented. Time-saving technological devices serve the function of increasing productivity and efficiency, but fail to free up actual time to enjoy oneself (Zimbardo, 2002). The concept of 'time famine' is often used to account for the lack of time and people's difficulty in finding an optimal balance of time use. For example, rather than becoming symbolic of freedom from situational constraints, the dilution of boundaries between work and home has resulted in the future-oriented time perspective associated with work becoming applied to our leisure time as well. Also, having largely replaced the traditional culture of written letters, we can question whether e-mail technology has led to speedier communication processes or to an increase of necessary and unnecessary contacts.

There are costs and sacrifices associated with valuing achievement-oriented 'workaholic' traits over and above life enjoyment and social engagement. It emerges that friends, church, family, recreation, hobbies, even household chores, come high on the list of the activities we can omit (Myers, 2000). The danger here is the risk of undermining the rituals and narratives essential to a sense of family, community and nation.

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Passive television viewing has been found to be associated with boredom

However, an abundance of time does not automatically lead to a more fulfilling life. Retired and unemployed people often suffer from depression, and many people do not find their leisure time rewarding (Argyle cited in Mulgan & Wilkinson, 1995). Csikszentmihalyi (1992) suggests that the dominant proportion of leisure is wasted in passive entertainment, such as television viewing, and is not enjoyed by the participants. Passive television viewing accounts for nearly a third of leisure time (Tyrrell, 1995) and has been found to be associated with boredom, low levels of concentration, low levels of potency, lack of clarity of thought and lack of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Russell (cited in Lane, 1995) writes: 'To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilisation, and at present

very few people have reached that level.' (p.14.)

Can such unsatisfying use of leisure time be viewed as characteristic of a lack of balance in our temporal perspective and the inability to be flexible in shifting from one temporal orientation to another? For example, immersion in future- and achievement-oriented perspectives of work may make it difficult to return to a present-oriented 'here and now' perspective for relaxation. So the only way to 'switch off' becomes to enter the atemporal, mindless experience of passive television viewing.

Here is where the ideal of a 'balanced time perspective' comes into play. It is proposed as a more positive alternative to living life as a slave to a particular temporal bias. In an optimally balanced time perspective, the past, present and future components blend and flexibly engage, depending on a situation's demands and our needs and values (Zimbardo, 2002). It does seem that people are capable of achieving a more balanced time perspective. In a recent study in South Africa (Zimbardo, 2001) a substantial proportion of participants obtained high scores on three (past-positive, present-hedonistic and future) of five factors of the ZTPI, thus showing balance across the temporal perspectives. This is in contrast with most studies, where participants tend to show an imbalance through high scores on only one or two factors.

People with a balanced time perspective are capable of operating within a temporal mode appropriate to the situation in which they find themselves. So when they spend time with their families and friends they are fully with them. When they take a day off work, they get involved in recreation rather than feel guilty about the work they

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haven't done. However, when working and studying they may well put their more appropriate future TP hat on and work more productively.

Why is such flexibility so important? Are people with a balanced TP likely to be happier than the rest of us? Functioning within past-positive and present-hedonistic modes enhances your chances of developing happy personal relationships, which is a key factor in enhancing one's well-being, according to the findings of research with exceptionally happy people (Diener & Seligman, in press). On the other hand, a future TP is correlated with higher socio-economic status, which is moderately associated with well-being (Diener, 2000).

Despite being mainly conceived at a theoretical level, a balanced TP offers considerable potential for practical interventions in clinical and occupational psychology. The focus of time management techniques can shift from advocating generalised time-management strategies, to developing interventions based on an understanding of workers' TP profiles and TP cognitive biases that unconsciously dominate their lives. Such techniques can be useful in the prevention of occupational stress or for solving the dilemmas of work–leisure balance.

Research is currently in progress to establish a relationship between TP and the way people actually use their time, looking at whether a balanced TP is associated with a more optimal time use, higher well-being and with a higher level of satisfaction with one's own time use (Boniwell, 2002). Laughing when it's time to laugh, working when it's time to work, playing when it's time to play, listening to grandma's old stories, connecting with your friends, valuing desire and passion, and taking fuller control of your life; these should be some of the benefits of learning to achieve a balanced time perspective. They are possible keys to unlocking personal happiness and finding more meaning in life despite the relentless, indifferent movement of life's time clock. The value of a balanced time perspective is that it suggests new approaches to psychological interventions while offering yet another answer to the question 'What is a good life?'

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Wisdom

Paul B. Baltes *and* Ute Kunzmann *believe that wisdom is the peak of human excellence.*

THE search for human excellence has been a long journey. One of the main guideposts has been the concept of wisdom (e.g. Assmann, 1994; Kekes, 1995; Lehrer *et al.*, 1996). At the core of this concept is the notion of the perfect, quasi-utopian integration of knowledge and character, of mind and virtue.

At the Berlin Max Planck Institute for Human Development, the first author and colleagues have studied ways of defining

'Wisdom-related knowledge deals with matters of utmost personal and social significance'

wisdom as a psychological construct (e.g. Baltes *et al.*, 1984; Baltes *et al.*, 2002; Baltes & Smith, 1990; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). In this article we will discuss this conceptualisation of wisdom and summarise major findings from our research on the development, antecedents, correlates and consequences of wisdom.

Because wisdom is considered an ideal endpoint of human development, the original impetus for psychological work on this concept evolved in the context of lifespan psychology and the study of ageing (e.g. Clayton & Birren, 1980; Sternberg, 1990). The search for positive human functioning has been a hallmark in the field of developmental psychology since its inception (see Lerner, 2002). Two examples: Piaget, with his characterisation of intelligence, attempted to capture optimal cognitive development; in his theory on personality development Erikson believed that concepts such as generativity and wisdom define progress in psychological maturity during adulthood.

In our psychological conceptualisation of wisdom we have proceeded from philosophical and cultural-anthropological

conceptions of wisdom and placed these into the context of psychological theory and methods. On the most general level we have defined wisdom as expert knowledge and judgement about important, difficult and uncertain questions associated with the meaning and conduct of life. Wisdom-related knowledge deals with matters of utmost personal and social significance.

To test for wisdom we present people with difficult hypothetical situations. For example, imagine that someone gets a call from a good friend who says that he or she cannot go on anymore and wants to commit suicide. Or a 15-year-old girl wants to get married right away. What could one consider and do? These situations differ from tasks that have been developed in intelligence research in that they are poorly defined and characterised by multiple solutions. High-quality responses to these situations therefore require exceptional intellectual and social-emotional abilities.

We use a standardised procedure to collect think-aloud responses. A response to the problem of the 15-year-old girl might be: 'Well, on the surface, this seems like an easy problem. On average, marriage for 15-year-old girls is not a good thing. On the other hand, thinking about getting married is not the same as actually doing it. I guess many girls think about it without getting married in the end… There are situations where the average case doesn't fit. Perhaps special life circumstances are involved. The girl may have a terminal illness. She may not be from this country or perhaps she lives in another culture…'

Trained raters evaluate responses such as these by using five criteria that we specify as defining wisdom-related knowledge: (a) *factual* knowledge about life and lifespan development, (b) *procedural* knowledge about strategies of life development, (c) knowledge about the *context* of lives and their dynamics, (d) knowledge about *value relativism* and

tolerance, and (e) knowledge indicative of the awareness and management of *uncertainty*. The assessment of wisdom-related knowledge on the basis of these criteria exhibits satisfactory reliability and validity.

Our research programme involved many variations including inquiry into the effects of age, gender and professional specialisation on wisdom-related knowledge. We also studied adults (public figures) who were nominated by an expert panel as being wise – independently of our own definition of wisdom. The nominees scored higher on our wisdom tasks than comparison groups of similarly aged and educated adults. This finding was important as it demonstrated that our conception of wisdom had ecological validity. Finally, in another line of research, we explored ways of optimising adults' wisdom-related performance by teaching them certain mnemonic techniques or by providing the opportunity for social discourse and the use of 'inner voices' (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996). What were our major findings?

Findings

First, and true to the spirit of wisdom as representing excellence of utopian quality, *high levels of wisdom-related knowledge are rare*. Many adults are on the way towards wisdom, but very few people approach a high level of wisdom-related knowledge as we measure it.

Second, the period of *late adolescence and early adulthood is the primary age window for wisdom-related knowledge to emerge*. In the older-than-young-adulthood samples we observed no further changes of the average level of wisdom beyond the level achieved in early adulthood. Furthermore, our findings suggest that the ages of life have their own wisdom-knowledge specialities. When the content of wisdom tasks is age-matched, people show higher levels of performance (for a review see Staudinger, 1999).

Third, for wisdom-related knowledge and judgement to develop further, either beyond the level achieved in early adulthood or in one's own course of lifespan development, *factors other than age become critical*. It takes a complex coalition of enhancing factors from a variety of domains: psychological, social, professional and historical. If such a coalition is present, some individuals continue a developmental trajectory towards higher levels of wisdom-related knowledge. As a consequence, older adults are, perhaps disproportionately, among the top performers in such knowledge. A high level of wisdom-related knowledge, then, appears to be more prevalent in older adults, although simply getting older is not a sufficient condition.

Fourth, during adulthood the most powerful predictors of wisdom-related knowledge are not cognitive factors such as intelligence. *Higher predictive value is offered by personality-related factors,* such as openness to experience, generativity, creativity, or a judicial cognitive style (i.e. a preference for comparing, evaluating and judging information). In addition, specific life experiences (e.g. being trained and practising in a field concerned with difficult life problems), having wisdom-enhancing mentors, or having been exposed to certain idiographic events or societal conditions, and a sense of mastery of these experiences, all contribute to higher levels of wisdom-related knowledge.

Fifth, our intervention work showed that people possess larger amounts of wisdom-related knowledge than is evident in our standard assessment procedure. For instance, people express a markedly higher level of wisdom-related knowledge if guided by memory cueing or internal dialogues with significant others.

In sum, the acquisition of high levels of wisdom, beyond an average level of wisdom-related knowledge available to many, seems to be dependent on a coalition of ontogenetic factors that, in combination, enhance the development of wisdom. Wisdom as studied by us is not a primarily cognitive phenomenon. Rather, our analyses suggest that wisdom involves cognitive, emotional and motivational characteristics, and is a variant neither of intelligence nor of personality dimensions that can be assessed with psychometric tests. None of the many constructs that we considered in our studies explains more than a small share of the reliable variance in wisdom-related knowledge.

Wisdom, emotion and values

The important role of emotions and values in the acquisition and expression of wisdom has been further substantiated by more recent work (Kunzmann & Baltes, in press). People higher in wisdom-related knowledge evince a more complex and

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modulated profile of emotions. For instance, they show a lesser preference for values whose primary focus is on one's own happiness. Rather, they show a preference for values that consider the welfare of others and report engaging themselves in the interest of others, including strategies of negotiation in conflict resolution.

More recently we have also begun to link wisdom-related knowledge to behavioural expressions of developmental regulation, such as the selection and pursuit of personal goals (Baltes & Freund, in press). Does wisdom-related knowledge play a role in lifespan development and its regulation? The model of successful development 'selective optimisation with compensation' (SOC) posits that the orchestration of three regulatory processes produces successful development: selection of goals, optimisation of goal-relevant means and compensation of lost means by substitute means (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Freund & Baltes, 2002).

In our conception, wisdom and SOC operate together in the following way. On the basis of wisdom, people can define and select those goals and means that are socially acceptable and desirable in human development. For instance, the spectrum of wisdom-related goals requires that these goals are oriented towards the personal and the common good and that the means used in goal attainment do not violate the resources and rights of others. The life management strategy of SOC, on the other hand, is value-neutral. Without evaluating the moral and ethical dimension of the behaviour involved, SOC specifies the conditions by which advances and success in any domain of human efficacy and performance are possible. In terms of the use of SOC, a mafia boss can be as effective as Mother Theresa. Therefore, wisdom and SOC need to be intertwined.

In our view, wisdom is a topic that holds much promise as psychologists turn their attention to positivity and excellence in human behaviour. Considering the intricate problems of our lives in a society often driven by individualistic and materialistic motives (e.g. Myers, 2000), wisdom points to another set of avenues for satisfaction and happiness. Its very foundation lies in the orchestration of mind and virtue towards the personal and public good.

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Making disability into a resource

ANTONELLA DELLE FAVE *and* **FAUSTO MASSIMINI** *suggest a way to promote autonomy and social integration.*

THE European Community declared 2003 the Year of Disabled Citizens, emphasising the need for policies focused on people's own perspective. Information on how disabled people experience their lives, social relations and daily activities and situations is essential to centre intervention programmes on individual resources rather than on social expectations. Quality of life depends not only on health conditions but also on personality and style

> **'Physical impairments…can help individuals discover new opportunities for optimal experience'**

of interaction with the environment. Sick people frequently report positive consequences of illness, such as improved relationships, positive personality changes, and even a better quality of life (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999; Sodergren & Hyland, 2000). In this article we investigate the positive experiences disabled people report in daily life and their potential in fostering personal growth and social integration.

The revised International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organization, 2001) conceptualises disablement as an interaction between individual and environmental features comprising three dimensions: impairment of biological or psychological structures or functions; activity limitations; and participation restrictions (consequences of impairment that limit or prevent the fulfilment of expected social roles).

Environmental factors, such as cultural norms and economic conditions, can hinder or help the social integration of disabled people. In turn, individuals actively engage with their environment. Day by day they invest their attention in a subset of activities, relationships and values that they select from the cultural context. This lifelong process, known as psychological selection (Csikszentmihalyi & Massimini, 1985), is based on the quality of experience reported in daily activities (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000). In particular, people prefer to carry out and cultivate activities associated with optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This state of consciousness is characterised by the perception of high environmental

challenges, high personal skills, concentration, enjoyment, control of the situation and intrinsic motivation. Optimal experience shows a dynamic structure that is crucial for personal growth and skill development. By constantly practising a given activity, the individual will master increasing difficulties, and consequently search for new and higher challenges.

We analysed the role of optimal experience in the lives of disabled people through the Flow Questionnaire (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). In a sample of 56 people with congenital disabilities (blindness and motor impairments) all but one reported optimal experience in their lives, mostly associating it with work, study and the use of media (Delle Fave, 2001; Delle Fave & Maletto, 1992). These results highlight the potential of optimal experience in fostering well-being and social integration: jobs and learning were occasions for enjoyment, intrinsic reward and skill development, as well as opportunities for participation in the productive life.

We administered the same questionnaire to 45 people who became blind, paraplegic or tetraplegic during adolescence or adulthood (Delle Fave, 1996; Delle Fave & Maletto, 1992). They had to face dramatic changes, often being deprived of activities previously associated with optimal experiences. Nevertheless, 41 participants recognised optimal experience in their present life. Blind people mostly associated it with media (reading in Braille, listening to radio and TV) and work, paraplegic and tetraplegic people with sport, work and physiotherapy. Participants had preserved optimal experience after the onset of disability, discovering new activities or adapting previous ones to their changed

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physical conditions. Blind people learned to read in Braille. People with motor impairments acquired new skills in sports such as basketball and table tennis, and through rehabilitation practice, which is vital for reintegration into active life after

spinal injuries (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000).

Our findings suggest that physical impairments, rather than preventing development, can help individuals discover new opportunities for optimal experience and can foster personal growth. For this reason, rehabilitation programmes and integration projects should pursue two goals. At the environmental level they should provide meaningful opportunities for social integration. At the individual level they should focus on the activities subjectively associated with optimal experiences in order to exploit the behavioural flexibility and resource potential of disabled people, promoting their development and their active contribution to culture.

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Trauma and personal growth

P. ALEX LINLEY *and* **STEPHEN JOSEPH** *argue that positive psychology can even light the darkness of trauma.*

VARIOUS philosophies, literatures and religions throughout history have conveyed the idea that there is personal gain to be found in suffering (Linley, in press). Although much evidence has been accumulated for post-traumatic stress in survivors of various traumatic events (e.g. Joseph *et al*., 1997), there is also a growing body of empirical evidence that trauma can provide the impetus for personal and social transformation (see Tedeschi *et al*., 1998, for a review).

For example, in some early work with survivors of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster we found that 46 per cent of people said that their view of life had changed for the worse. But 43 per cent said it had changed for the better, saying things like 'I don't take life for granted anymore', 'I value my family and friends much more now' and 'I live every day to the full now' (Joseph *et al*., 1993). In the last few years we have begun to turn our attention to this new question (see Linley & Joseph, 2002): Why is it that some people are able to grow and thrive as a result of traumatic experience, achieving a higher level of functioning and self-actualisation than they enjoyed before the trauma?

Positive changes

It has been found that between 30 and 90 per cent of people who experience some form of traumatic event report at least some positive changes following trauma, with the figure varying dependent on the type of event and many other factors (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999). These positive changes can underpin a whole new way of living that embraces the central tenets of positive psychology (Linley, 2000). People may

- change their life philosophy, learning to appreciate each day to the full (i.e. positive subjective experience) and renegotiating what really matters to them in the full realisation that their life is finite (Tedeschi *et al*., 1998);
- believe themselves to be wiser or act more altruistically in the service of others (i.e. positive individual characteristics) and have a greater sense of personal resilience and strength, perhaps coupled with more acceptance of their vulnerabilities and limitations;
- dedicate their energies to social renewal or political activism (i.e. positive institutions and communities); or
- report that their relationships are enhanced in some way, for example valuing their friends and family more (i.e. positive social relationships).

However, trauma survivors embrace this positive approach to life within a context of tragic hopefulness. They know at first hand the ups and downs, and the limits of human life. This awareness guides them to live their lives in a way that is truly and positively authentic, interpreting their trauma as a valued learning opportunity and giving back to others through the benefit of their experience (Harvey, 2001).

Psychotherapy and counselling

Early indications are that people who report more growth in the aftermath of trauma go on to show better long-term adjustment. Therefore the facilitation of growth is a legitimate therapeutic goal (Linley & Joseph, 2002). Given that research remains in its infancy, it is too early to be certain of the specific therapeutic implications. But what we are clear about is that we cannot simply generalise from what we know about the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder to the facilitation of post-traumatic growth. The facilitation of post-traumatic growth is not easily amenable to the techniques of cognitive behaviour therapy, or to treatment approaches taken from a manual. Our view at this stage is that we will begin to find more client-centred, experiential, and existential psychotherapies of value in the facilitation of post-traumatic growth.

An awareness of the potential for positive change following trauma provides a potentially rich seam for therapists to consider in their work with traumatised persons. We believe that post-traumatic growth harnesses the core principles of positive psychology, and that these principles can be put to effective use in the therapeutic service of trauma survivors.

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Positive psychotherapy in disguise

KATE GREY

OF the numerous therapeutic approaches available to the practising psychologist, many appear to be good candidates for 'positive' practice. But therapeutic approaches derived from existential philosophy rarely figure highly in this quest. This is hardly surprising, given that existential psychotherapy takes its roots from European philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who derived profound insights out of their personal confrontations with misery, hardship and death. But the view we present here is that despite its morbid reputation, a therapeutic approach derived from an existential perspective can – and should – be considered as an approach that parallels many of the emphases of positive psychology.

Existentialism itself is notoriously difficult to define (Warnock, 1970) and even among practitioners of existential psychotherapy there is a diversity of opinion as to how (or even whether it is possible) to outline the approach. Spinelli (1997) offers a definition:

> …*existential-phenomenological theory has always insisted upon viewing human beings from a relational rather than an isolated perspective… In a therapeutic context, this stance reconsiders the problems and dilemmas that are presented in therapy as dialogical statements that express various anxieties and insecurities of relational existence.* (p.5)

ROGER BRETHERTON *and* **RODERICK ØRNER** *believe that a 'positive' psychotherapy needs to recognise potential and limitations.*

As a consequence, the therapist–patient relationship can be considered the principal concern in the application of existential

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'meaning can be found even in the face of the unchangeable givens of life, such as pain, guilt and death'

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thought to clinical practice (Spinelli, 1997; Yalom, 1999). This is not in the positive-empathic ethos of the person-centred tradition, or in the transference/countertransference mould of psychoanalytically oriented approaches. Rather, the existential approach aims to clarify and elaborate the patient's way of being-in-the-world, by using the therapeutic context as a microcosmic indication of the client's relationship to the world (van Deurzen-Smith, 1988). This is what makes the existential perspective a positive approach – it seeks to examine and illuminate what is there, rather than correct what is lacking.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which

the existential approach parallels positive psychology is in its preoccupation with what is presented by the client rather than with global models of deficit and disorder. Using the phenomenological method, therapists attempt to 'bracket' (put to one side) many of the assumptions and reactions they have with regard to clients (including the desire for therapeutic progress) so as to better engage with a client's way of being. By stepping back from their own prejudices and stereotypes, existential therapists can identify clients' possibilities as well as their limitations, their strengths as well as their weaknesses (van Deurzen-Smith, 1988), rather than being attuned principally to the signs and symptoms of psychological disorder. The existentialists suggest that by identifying the constellations of meaning by which we relate to the world, we give ourselves the opportunity of decision – to decide whether to alter our way of being in the world.

The existential dual concern with possibility and limitation provides a framework within which the practice of positive psychology can recognise human potential without succumbing to an

unrealistic optimism. Optimism represents the expectation of a favourable outcome. Hope, being more flexible, recognises situations where the possibility of a favourable outcome may be blocked. Hope is characterised by an openness to the difficulty of the experience, yet maintains a flexibility of response to the challenges of life (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998). The existential approach is therefore neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but can be profoundly hopeful – meaning can be found even in the face of the unchangeable givens of life, such as pain, guilt and death (Frankl, 1969). By facing up to the questions posed by suffering, existential psychotherapy lends itself to the understanding of people confronting the extreme challenges of life, such as HIV (Milton, 1997) or terminal cancer (Jacobsen *et al*., 2000).

Any perspective on life perpetuates a fantasy when it elevates the rich possibilities of our existence without taking account of the limiting factors of the human condition (e.g. death, loss, illness). A truly positive psychology does not deliver us from our troubles but speaks to us in them. We consider the existential approach to be positive psychotherapy in disguise, given its recognition of human potential coupled with an awareness of the irreversible difficulties of the human condition.

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Bleak future or new dawn?

Some visions for the future of psychology are highly optimistic, but a recent analysis suggests that work psychology is entering a dark age. JONATHAN HILL.

KATE GREY

A WIDELY-FRAMED – even visionary – perspective for our discipline is promoted by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) through their emphasis on positive psychology. Such sweeping and optimistic horizons for the future seem primarily to originate from leaders of psychology in the United States. But what sense might work psychologists elsewhere expect to make of such ambitious projects?

Much of work psychology has emphasised performance deficits and work-related stress, rather than 'positive' psychology. Employee weaknesses and limitations are diagnosed through underperformance in development centre exercises. The lower scores on 360-degree (multi-rater) questionnaire ratings of co-workers by co-workers are highlighted and represented as developmental opportunities; whereas development based on identified *strengths* may be more productive. Research on attracting staff to the workplace has been neglected, while definitions of competence and incompetence are endlessly reworked. Investigations of bullying benefit from close attention, but little effort is applied to the study of very considerate colleagues in their most considerate moments.

Sometimes the diagnostic torch is turned upon the internal fissures in the subdiscipline of work psychology and the fault lines picked out around the great scientist/practitioner divide. Anderson *et al*.

(2001) have identified three bad kinds of work psychology, and one good kind. Their model is framed by the two dimensions of relevance and rigour, and contains four cells: popularist science, pedantic science, puerile science, and pragmatic science. Several pressures lead to an increase in the volume of either pedantic or popularist science by work psychologists, and to diminishing opportunities for good pragmatic science that yet manages to combine relevance with rigour. The solution Anderson *et al*. propose is for work psychologists to develop key political skills, including leadership, in order to influence and attract the support of a wider range of stakeholders with whom research and consulting partnerships may be formed.

Building a wider constituency, however, may also require a quantum leap in the ambitions of work psychologists. At present their highest aspiration seems to be to become useful problem solvers delivering social maintenance (offering tactical repairs to the selection process) rather than social architecture (embracing organisational design and strategic transformation). Exceptions from near the popularist end of the market, however, include the accounts of talent (or high-performance) management by Woodruffe (1999) and by Williams (2000).

Partly as a result of such work, talent now features on the agenda of many key decision makers in public and private sector organisations. In a more measured way, Warr (1999) has contributed to the discovery of those factors at work and in life that enhance affective well-being. These include environmental factors such as opportunity for skill use, interpersonal contact, personal control, and social approval. Graduate entrants to the workforce, psychologists included, may hope that such opportunities are within reach. But a different twist to understanding socialisation into the workplace has been

Positive

provided by Arnold (1985). Arnold asked graduates to describe in their own words the surprises they experienced in handling the transition from university to full-time employment. The study of surprises in the workplace, including pleasant ones, is perhaps an antidote to pedantry.

A further increase in research into the work performance of humane leaders may be one of the many consequences flowing from the tragedy of September 11th. As new models of leadership emerge from the US, redesign work will be needed to acknowledge a different expression of leadership values in various countries. In this respect, the significant reworking of transformational leadership studies for UK organisations by Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2001) illustrates the advantages of positive creativity over purely sceptical critique.

Towards an alternative agenda
The faults and failings of humans at work naturally secure the attention of work psychologists. As long as costly errors of judgement are made in the workplace, such obligations will endure. But some work psychologists may choose instead to focus on talent, well-being and the visionary leadership of organisations, in pursuit of an alternative research agenda of equal merit and perhaps greater pragmatic relevance in the longer term.

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SO far the positive psychology movement has concentrated primarily on studying positive experiences and positive characteristics in individuals, and some features associated with positive communities. Several other levels of analysis, notably the group and organisation, are worth attending to.

Some of the characteristics that have been attributed to positive groups include the merits of recognising diversity (in cognitive style, perspective, and ways of working: Belbin, 1981), adopting a win-

in challenging tasks, suggest that many people report it at work at least as often as in leisure. Delle Fave (2001) reports finding flow experiences common in all the occupational groups she has studied to date (e.g. doctors, teachers) except office workers, where such experiences are rare.

It has been suggested that traditional management practices effectively treat workers like children who need to be told what to do (e.g. Semler, 1997). Argyris (1957) has long argued that organisations encourage defensive behaviour and that

Go with the flow – many workers find themselves happily absorbed in challenging tasks

win attitude to negotiation of all kinds and the application of the principles underlying conflict resolution where parties disagree.

The traditional command-and-control approach to managing organisations might seem rather antithetical to psychological well-being. Individuals lack control over their working lives, a state associated with higher stress and lower satisfaction levels. However, studies of 'flow', the state of mind characterised by a happy absorption

a more participatory form of organisation, where workers are given more control of their working lives and the decisions that affect them, would offer a more mature form of organisation.

In the last 20 years or so organisational rhetoric would suggest we have made considerable strides in this direction. Increased competition has led to downsized, leaner organisations with less middle management and greater reliance on

organisations

Organisational rhetoric may be set in a positive frame, but why has satisfaction at work declined? JANE HENRY *investigates.*

teamwork. This, coupled with the increasing pace of change requiring prompter responses, encouraged organisations to empower staff and push responsibility down. The need for high-wage economies to draw out the creativity in all their staff to aid continuous improvement has encouraged attempts to develop more open work cultures. In addition, organisational kitemarks like IIP (Investors in People) now require attention to individual development needs, and the manager's role has arguably become more a matter of facilitation. The buzzwords of the day are cooperation and partnership, not command and control, and it is commonplace for erstwhile competitors like Ford and Fiat to work together to develop new products.

In short, many staff now seem to be granted greater autonomy over when they work and how they achieve their work goals. Many academics, for example, now primarily work at home (White, 2001). Kanter (1997) and Handy (1995) argue that it is now commitment to common values that forms the glue that keeps the modern organisation together.

But at the same time increasing workloads plus an increase in measurement of the work being done has led to greater stress for many workers. It appears to be largely for this reason that job satisfaction measures have tended recently to go down rather than up (Taylor, 2002). Generally, more open working practices may have a positive outcome provided they are not associated with an excessive increase in work pressure.

Certain companies have gone out of their way to build more positive organisations. One approach advocates a shift to a position where staff effectively self-organise; for example, they set their own hours, hire their own staff, buy their own equipment, appraise bosses, have control of their own expenses and, in some cases, their share of the profits. The majority of the people in organisations that have tried this, like Dutton and Semco, report high levels of satisfaction. In such organisations, people may work hard but

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'The buzzwords of the day are cooperation and partnership, not command and control'

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they have much more control over when and how they work.

However, an open-ended work climate does not seem to suit all psychological types. Organisations undertaking a culture-change programme of this kind, in which middle management typically lose some authority, usually end up losing a percentage of staff who cannot adapt to the changed way of working. There is some evidence that those with an adaptive style, who favour working in more tried and tested ways, prefer a more ordered work environment than those with an innovator style who, tolerating ambiguity better and enjoying challenging the status quo, favour a more open-ended work environment (Ekvall, 1997).

So far, self-organisation has been tried primarily in small and medium-sized enterprises. The extent to which such practices are applicable to larger organisations is open to question. One can also question whether the individualistic and democratic values underlying many of these modern approaches to organisation are applicable to more communal and especially more hierarchical cultures (Hofstede, 1984).

At present the long-term relationship between values, performance and work satisfaction is not clear cut. Further research into organisation practices that lead to more positive experiences at work is required, especially given that many of us spend most of our working lives working in organisations we judge as less than 'positive'.

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Dutton: *www.dutton-eng.co.uk*

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How much do external factors affect well-being?

ANDREW J. OSWALD *describes how he has been using 'happiness economics' to decide.*

IMAGINE you are a prime minister or a president. You want – if only because you hope to be re-elected – to make your citizens happy and to run your country efficiently. You know that people care about personal factors (like their health, their income, and how well they get on with their spouse). You have an intuitive idea that they care also about external factors (like the inflation rate, or how much aircraft noise there is over their house). But how do you work out the relative importance of all these things? This is an extraordinarily difficult and subtle question. It requires us to weigh up different influences on well-being, and put values on one thing compared with another.

Economists like me have recently developed a way to do just this. This new method shows, among other things, that 'external' forces, like the inflation rate, really matter a lot to our well-being. The method is fairly statistical, so can look daunting to non-mathematicians. But the ideas are terribly simple. It just boils down to averaging the answers that people give in happiness surveys (of the sort discussed in Diener *et al*., 1999, for instance).

Say I am assessing, on a scale of 1 to 10, how happy I feel. Perhaps I give the answer 7. Then, let us imagine, I get a pay rise of £10,000, and in my next happiness survey I give the answer 8. That gives the statistical investigator a little bit of information about me. Now imagine that my marriage breaks up, and I am observed to drop my happiness score to a 5. That is a little more information. Or consider what happens if there is some external bad event, like a sharp rise in inflation and that worries me. Then, perhaps, I reduce my happiness score again a by a small amount.

All these movements in happiness 'scores' contain valuable information. One individual alone does not provide much that is useful, partly because he or she may be going through lots of other events in life, or simply changing mood, in ways the investigator cannot easily observe. However, if we average across individuals who experience the same life event, it is possible to learn a great deal about the forces that bear on human happiness. Oswald (1997) gives some more detail.

First, to set the scene, say we start with the background to modern research on subjective well-being. In the last few years, economists have developed a way to measure, and to put a financial value upon, the happiness induced by different kinds of personal or 'internal' influences and life events. They record the mental well-being levels of people in large samples at different points in time. Economists (and other investigators) go on to study the incomes of, and events that occurred to, the individuals, and then use statistical methods (regression equations) to work out the implied consequences upon well-being of different occurrences in life. Clark and Oswald (in press) is an example. This method is now also starting to be used to study how 'external' factors – inflation, the generosity of unemployment benefits, noise, or even outside social factors like the quality of democracy as in Frey and Stutzer (2000, 2001) – affect people's well-being.

Intuitively, what this method does is to start by facing up to the obvious fact that many things shape human happiness. Relationships matter, health matters, money matters. Within a statistical equation, these and other factors can be allowed for at the same time. Their respective weights in well-being can then be calculated. This can be generalised. In particular, it is possible to allow for external forces on human well-being. The environment, broadly interpreted, affects people's happiness, and we can allow for it statistically.

How does all this work? Consider a person who experiences good and bad events. Imagine that the person enjoys money. In principle, then, it is possible to calculate how much extra income would have to be given to the person to compensate exactly (neither too much nor too little) for any bad occurrence in life. This is done by seeing how much higher on a happiness score sheet a person marks when he or she gets more cash. That amount of cash can be thought of as a measure of the unpleasantness of the event. Equivalently, good events – falling in love and getting married, say – can be studied. Then, to work out how valuable in a deep happiness sense such an event is to a person, we determine statistically how much money would have to be taken out of a person's salary cheque to result in the same happiness level as before the good event. People are not asked to put a price on the event themselves: it is assessed by comparing the change in numerical scores on happiness surveys.

Imagine, perhaps, that an individual changes from employment to unemployment. It is known that this is a bad life event. The compensating differential (in the jargon) for this transition would be the amount of extra money, or increment to income, which would be required exactly to compensate the worker for being unemployed, i.e. to keep the worker at the same level of subjective well-being. Because of the large psychic costs of job loss, recent estimates put the resulting happiness loss at almost £100,000 a year. In other words, it is far more than the sheer loss of a pay packet. Similarly, the loss of happiness caused by marriage breakup is estimated at £60,000.

This general technique has been used by economists to calculate all sorts of things – for instance the happiness loss from being black rather than white in the United States of America and the value of a lasting marriage (Blanchflower & Oswald, in press), and the valuation of aircraft noise around Schiphol airport (van Praag & Baarsma, 2000). As with most regression analyses, the underlying assumption here is that a linear equation is a useful approximation to reality.

External economic factors have only recently been studied. Di Tella *et al.* (2001), for example, take data from 12 countries on hundreds of thousands of randomly sampled Europeans. They measure their subjective life satisfaction on a four-point scale. They show that, statistically, these life satisfaction reports depend on the person's age, gender, income, education, and other personal factors. Then they control for all those things – they hold them constant in a statistical sense.

The authors go on to look at the remaining correlations in life satisfaction with four outside variables: inflation, unemployment, gross domestic product (in other words how rich the country is) and the generosity of unemployment benefits. Using this method they find, consistent with common sense, that when the inflation rates goes up, people in a country en masse mark lower on their well-being score sheets. Of course, those people are not aware they are doing so as a group; each person thinks only of their own life when they fill up the happiness survey sheets, but they do exhibit a group pattern. Similarly, when unemployment rises, people mark lower on life-satisfaction score sheets. Rises in GDP and the generosity of unemployment benefits, however, do the opposite, sensibly enough. Individuals in the countries then mark higher on their life-satisfaction survey forms.

Di Tella *et al.* (2001) also show that pure 'fear' of unemployment creates large losses. When joblessness goes up in a country, happiness levels decline even among those who themselves neither lose their job nor take a pay reduction. Unsurprisingly, standards of comparison matter. People look over their shoulders. For example, Clark (in press) has the intriguing finding that in places with more unemployment, it is psychologically easier to be unemployed oneself. The unhappiness from individual joblessness is easier to bear if you are surrounded in your area by jobless people. In principle, exactly the same techniques can be applied to data on job satisfaction. The kinds of best-fitting statistical equations in, for example, Clark *et al.* (1996) could be generalised to include external influences as well as personal 'internal' ones.

Although hardly anyone has yet got to the study of social factors on happiness, it is bound to be a growth area over the decade. Frey and Stutzer (2000, 2001) have recently looked at the effects of democracy upon personal happiness. They showed that in Switzerland there is a greater degree of happiness in those cantons whose democracies work more efficiently, after all other influences had been factored out.

To sum up, economists are studying happiness. They have a lot to learn about the use of subjective well-being data, but their way of doing things, using regression equations, has some advantages. In particular, we are developing ways to work out how much human happiness is influenced by external factors.

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Empowering peace

ACCORDING to Pettigrew (1998), 'the public policy arena is scalding hot and controversial' (p.663). Perhaps such heat in the social policy kitchen is why psychologists have been avoiding the challenge of applying psychology in a way that makes it relevant to policymakers concerned with issues such as ethnic conflict. This is despite the fact that such conflicts clearly entail psychological issues, such as security, fear, destructive ideologies, enemy images, and a host of other concerns that bear on human well-being and survival (Anderson & Christie, 2001).

Despite this it is clear that psychology is now in a position to make a unique contribution in this multidisciplinary area (Cairns, 2001). This is being done through the application of research that has explored the dynamics underlying ethnic conflict (demonstrating that it is not a psychopathological phenomenon) and by contributing to the 'invention' of peace. Many examples of psychology's role in this area are beginning to accumulate.

Close to home, for example, psychologists in Northern Ireland have played, and are playing, a modest role in the peace process (Cairns & Darby, 1998).

They have been involved in testing and refining 'the contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969), which argues that contact between people will ultimately lead to reduced conflict. The contact hypothesis

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'Peace psychology and positive psychology together represent a powerful force for building better societies'

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has formed an important part of the strategy adopted by policy makers in Northern Ireland in their attempts to improve community relations.

Here we will confine ourselves to describing the work of three exemplars whose endeavours illustrate the contribution

People 'invented' war. Now Ed Cairns *and* Christopher Alan Lewis *describe pioneering work under way to 'invent' peace.*

that psychology can make to three areas that are key to the challenge of ending war and promoting peace – conflict resolution, ending cycles of revenge post-conflict, and promoting world peace.

Conflict resolution An example of more direct involvement in conflict resolution is the work of Herbert Kelman. Kelman is a social and political psychologist who works on international conflict and conflict resolution. For many years, he has focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict (see e.g. Kelman, 1997). Through a series of interactive problem-solving conflict resolution workshops he is credited with developing a cadre of Israelis and Palestinians many of whom were involved in the negations leading to the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993 (Pettigrew, 1998).

WEBLINKS

APA Division 48 – Peace Psychology Division:
www.apa.org/about/division/div48.html and
http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/~mstimac/Peace-Psychology.htm

Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology:
www.erlbaum.com/Journals/journals/PAC/pac.htm

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Ending cycles of revenge South African psychologists have a long history of attempting to apply psychological knowledge to the problems facing their society (Foster & Louw-Potgeiter, 1991). Following the ending of apartheid, psychologists are now engaged in various attempts to heal the wounds inflicted by years of conflict. One notable application of psychology to social policy in South Africa is the contribution by Foster to the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1998). Volume 5, chapter 7 of the report patently uses social identity theory to explain that during the conflict in South Africa people acted as they did because they were acting in terms of their social identities and in an intergroup, rather than an interpersonal, context. They did not act in this way because they were inherently evil or clinically disturbed.

Promoting world peace The Seville Statement on Violence (Adams, 1991) asserts that it is scientifically incorrect to say that human beings have an inherited tendency to make war or to behave violently. Fired by an interest in such things, Adams (originally specialising in brain mechanism of aggressive behaviour) joined UNESCO and became a prime mover in the establishment of UNESCO's Cultures of Peace movement. This ambitious project aims to promote tolerance and to build 'seeing peace', seen not simply as an abstract concept (the absence of war) but as an active state that the United Nations should use it best efforts to promote.

Linking the aim of the UN – to build 'peace in the minds of men' – with the aims of positive psychology could prove to be a formidable combination. As the positive psychology movement has pointed out, for too long psychologists have concentrated on cataloguing and repairing the negative aspects of human experience. The Cultures of Peace movement has similarly recognised that too much emphasis has been placed on ending war and not enough on learning about and promoting peace. Peace psychology and positive psychology together represent a powerful force for building better societies.

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Putting it into practice

P. ALEX LINLEY *and* STEPHEN JOSEPH *offer a way forward.*

Positive psychology is simply psychology. (Sheldon & King, 2001, p.216)

WE do not see positive psychology as a 'new' undertaking. Its early roots lie in the philosophy of Aristotle (e.g. Kekes, 1995), and more recently in humanistic psychology (e.g. Taylor, 2001). But as this collection of articles has shown, it can serve as a collective identity for disparate efforts within psychology and the broader social sciences.

Positive psychology should be recognised as being explicitly integrative, focusing on both the successes and the breakdowns of human functioning. It does not deny the advances psychology has made through its study of human pathology. Rather, it seeks to redress the balance, to ensure that health and fulfilment are not neglected. An exclusive dominance of the positive within psychology would be just as limiting as a purely negative focus (cf. Held, 2002).

We are encouraged that this collective identity has brought together psychologists and others from domains spanning both applied (clinical, educational, forensic, health, occupational) and academic psychology (e.g. biological, cognitive, developmental, social). We hope that this breadth of interest will infuse new energy into our discipline. In drawing this special issue to a close, we hope to offer some points of guidance as we seek to apply positive psychology in our work as psychologist-practitioners.

Signposts

First, we must stop to consider 'What is a good life?' Relatedly, what might psychologist-practitioners aspire to achieve in facilitating their clients' pursuit of this good life? We must be ever mindful that a 'one size fits all' approach is insufficient: there are many potential pathways. We must also recognise that these questions may not be reducible to scientific building blocks, but are instead philosophical issues of value and morality (see Kekes, 1995).

Second, we should consider how a psychology may fit within our existing models of practice when it is focused on human strength and virtue rather than deficit and disorder, on prevention and facilitation rather than treatment and intervention. For some, positive psychology may simply be a fashionable name for what they have always believed and practised. For others, adopting a positive psychological way of working may be more revolutionary than evolutionary. We can draw comfort from a recent volume, *How Therapists Change* (Goldfried, 2001); no single psychological approach has all of the answers, all of the time. We do not expect positive psychology to be any different. But we do hope that it encourages psychologist-practitioners to consider how their clients may wish to live in ways that fulfill their abilities and potential.

Third, positive psychology should not become sidelined as a subdiscipline for an interested few. It should be the vanguard of a new, integrative psychology (cf. Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2001) that seeks to consider human functioning across the range from disorder to fulfilment. By studying the full picture of what it means to be human, we will achieve new understandings of human nature that would be invisible when viewed from a focus that was exclusively negative – or positive.

As positive psychology advances, we expect to be able to delineate improvements in psychotherapy, in health care, in education, in the rehabilitation of offenders, in working practices, and in social policy, to name a few. There is much work already being conducted in all of these areas (see this issue, and Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Positive psychology serves as a beacon under which people working to assist others in their pursuit of a good life may gather.

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