



4th Applied Positive Psychology Symposium

Saturday 2nd June 2018,
High Wycombe

Proceedings of Presented Papers

Edited by

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
1	Self-compassion as a much-needed response to chronic dieting syndrome: Positive psychology in action Helen Golstein.....3
2	Resilient relocation: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of single Anglo females as recent immigrants to Israel Monique Zahavi35
3	What is positive energy and how is it exhibited in the workplace? A qualitative exploration of this elusive concept Deborah Martin 70
4	Amazing Me: From MAPP to market (Abstract only) Tracy Richardson 78
5	Positive education: A whole school approach Frederika Roberts 79
6	Strickers: Exploratory research on the development of a strengths-based collectible sticker album Tom Gillson97
7	Does participation in delivering Forest School increase resilience in adults? Jane Jennison..... 124
8	A positive psychology perspective: Navigating life experiences racial discrimination amongst Black and Ethnic Minorities (BME) Ntsoaki Mary Mosoeunyane 153
9	Permission to break free Milica Sekulic 178
10	Positive psychology as a leadership intervention (Abstract only) Una McGarvie 191
11	Positive psychology in the clinical parapsychology setting Rachel E. Evenden & Callum E. Cooper 192

12	Personal qualities of professional football club youth academy players (<i>Abstract only</i>) Angus Meichan	204
13	An answer may not be the greatest gift Lee Newitt.....	205

Introduction

MSc Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) programmes can currently be found in the UK at Anglia Ruskin University, Buckinghamshire New University, and the University of East London. Other universities, such as the University of Northampton, also offer some undergraduate positive psychology courses. This *Proceedings* represents the contributions of students and graduates (and staff) of these programmes to the 4th Applied Positive Psychology Symposium held on Saturday 2nd June 2018 at the Buckinghamshire New University High Wycombe campus.

The annual Applied Positive Psychology Symposium dates back to the inaugural symposium held in May 2015, designed as an opportunity for the first cohort of graduates of the MSc Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) at Bucks to present their completed dissertation work to a wider audience, and prepare papers for the symposium's *Proceedings* that were based on their dissertation projects.

This symposium has proved a success and we were delighted to be able to return for a fourth year which, again, provided this opportunity for our students and students from other programmes to share their work with a wider audience. The symposia have only grown in popularity, scope, and engagement each year, with ever more contributions from other UK-wide MAPP and university positive psychology programmes. This year saw involvement from students at Anglia Ruskin University in the form of talks and the offering of a parallel workshop session on character strength development in schools, as well as a paper and poster from staff and students at the University of Northampton, alongside many Bucks MAPP graduates.

Positive psychology is a growing field across the globe, offering exciting new opportunities for research and positive change across our society. The applied nature of the MAPP courses emphasises using evidence-based practices to actively improve lives and institutions, and MAPP students are at the forefront of this relatively new discipline, contributing innovative and important research, solutions, and products.

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1

Self-compassion as a much-needed response to chronic dieting syndrome: Positive psychology in action

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Abstract

Obesity has a far-reaching impact across modern society and is on the increase, with a persistently upward trend (Hilton, Patterson, & Teyhan, 2012). McPherson, Marsh and Brown (2007) argue that there is no evidence that the national strategy for public health is reducing the incidence of obesity in the population notwithstanding an annual cost to the Health Service which is presently in excess of five billion pounds. This in itself, is compelling evidence that interventions which presently focus primarily on dieting and lifestyle are not proving to be effective. Stroebe, Van Koningsbruggen, Papiés and Henk (2013) suggest that “dieters often failing to control their weight” is almost a truism. This paper shares the results of a comprehensive literature review exploring previous obesity research, considering how interventions such as repeated or chronic dieting may have impacted on the obese person. Where findings suggest that the negative effects on an obese persons’ well-being are as much to do with the emotional impact of failed interventions, such as repeated failed dieting, as to do with the effects of the physical condition. Findings also point to a high prevalence of weight-related discrimination within society, bringing external and internal stigmatisation and causing high levels of shame and stress in those affected. By contrast, practices of self-compassion, shame resilience, and hope are shown to have improved well-being and result in turn, in healthier relationships with self and others. Drawing from the evidence and conclusions of the comprehensive literature review undertaken, an innovative positive psychological intervention for responding to obesity with self-compassion, shame resilience and hope theory has been developed. It is also rooted in the philosophy, theories, practises and value-base of positive psychology. It is expected that given the evidence of effectiveness of currently widely used positive psychological interventions in increasing levels of well-being, that the intervention developed in this study will evidence the same results Bolier et al., (2013).

Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2016) share that obesity has doubled since 1980 and that in 2014, more than 1.9 billion adults were considered overweight or obese. The incidence of obesity in the population is continuing to increase in most high and low-income countries (Swinburn & Egger, 2002), with 61.9% of adults and 28% of children under the age of 15 deemed to be obese or overweight in England (Ellison & Department of Health 2013).

For many, dieting has become the only way they know how to eat (McCargar & Mcburney, 1999). Clifford (2016) suggests that 48% of the United Kingdom population had tried to lose weight in the previous year and that 62% are trying to do so most of the time. Stroebe et al.,

(2013) suggest “*dieters often fail to control their weight is nearly a truism*”; and although more people are chronically dieting, obesity rates are rising. McCargar and Mcburney (1999) reported findings of self-esteem and self-worth being negatively affected by weight fluctuations and diet failure and suggested that dieticians need to be more concerned with health and well-being and stop handing out diet sheets.

Whilst it is relatively simple to define obesity from a physical perspective, and to even suggest that it is the result of “*an energy imbalance between energy in and energy out*”, the real challenge for all, is understanding the aetiology of the causes that lead to the imbalance, acknowledging that for many, the experience of being obese has serious psychological consequences (WHO, 2016).

Roberto et al., (2015) argue that no country to date has reversed its obesity epidemic and suggest that there is an urgent need for all stakeholders to take action. They note, whilst reviewing papers and studies, that the issue and solutions are nothing more than arguments from different views of the problem, all competing to be right. Common sense would suggest that what is needed is a more holistic approach, one that is less patronising and punitive. Roberto et al., (2015) suggest that any understanding of obesity needs to emphasise the reciprocal nature of the interaction between the environment and the individual, taking into account that the abundance of food in the Western world, which “exploits” people’s biological, psychological, social and economic vulnerabilities. This can lead to the overconsumption of food, since this environment has been defined as being obesogenic (Egger & Swinburn, 1997). Regardless of the reasons that lead to a person becoming overweight or obese, the evidence suggests that both their subjective and psychological well-being is negatively affected (Berger, 2004, Evans, 2003, Böckerman et al., 2014, Ryff, 2014).

Positive Psychology and Well-being

PP explores happiness from hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives; hedonic well-being is referred to as subjective well-being (SWB) and eudaimonic as psychological well-being (PWB) (Diener & Tay, 2015, Heffron, 2013). People who report higher levels of SWB have been found to have amongst, other characteristics higher levels of creativity, optimism, sociability, helpfulness, be less self-centred and tend to achieve more goals (Heffron & Boniwell, 2011).

The literature evidenced the negative effect of obesity and chronic dieting on well-being. The PPI pays specific attention to PWB, since evidence suggests that self-compassion positive affects PWB (Hollis-Walker, & Colosimo, 2011).

Literature Review

Approach to the Literature Review

The rationale for the approach taken was to determine if there was a need for the proposed intervention, by reviewing relevant literature and indicating any gaps in the current research (Aveyard, 2014). The specific areas for review were identified as:

1. How effective are diets?
2. What role does shame and stress play in chronic dieting?
3. How does self-compassion and shame resilience positively mediate the negative effects of shame?
4. How does Hope Theory make a valuable contribution to the PPI?

The papers included were searched for using the Buckinghamshire New University Library electronic search engine through the learning portal and when necessary use was made of the inter-library loans facility. Papers were also sourced using Google scholar and reference lists of other research papers. All except books, were sourced electronically.

The following key words were used, either on their own or in combination: fat, obese, overweight, chronic dieting, chronic diet, sad, diet, diets work, diets do not work, sad and dieting, diets and shame, diets and stressed, self-compassion, self-compassion and dieting, mindfulness, compassion based therapy, diets and NHS, WHO and obesity, stigma, bias, Slimming World, Weight Watchers, diet groups, hope, false hope, shame, shame resilience.

Papers not included for review:

- Papers using animals as a basis of research were not included because it is the belief of this author, that until the research its replicated on human beings, it is not evidentially relevant.

- Unpublished papers; this exclusion was due to insufficient time and does not suggest that there may not be important findings in currently unreviewed studies.
- Papers that were older than 20 years, unless they were heavily cited in recent papers and deemed seminal.
- Studies on children and adolescents as they are developmentally different from adult chronic dieters.

How effective are diets?

In summary of this question, the literature strongly suggested that diets are proving an ineffective solution for many. The review has also shown that overweight and obese people face discrimination and stigmatisation because of their weight, with some evidence that the negative bias is worse than that experienced by other minority groups in society (Latner, O'Brien, Durso, Brinkman & MacDonald, 2008). There is also strong inference from health policies, health practitioners and commercial weight companies that the failure of the diet, lies firmly in the hands of the dieter (Puhl & Heuer, 2009). This is leading to high levels of shame and stress for the chronic dieter, which then leads to more "comfort eating", a term commonly used by dieters to describe eating to manage negative affect and which has been shown to reduce the impact of stress on well-being (Finch & Tomiyama 2015).

What role does shame and stress play in chronic dieting?

In summary, this section demonstrated that chronic stress, which shame has been shown to trigger, is in-part responsible for dysregulated eating as well as the difficulty of losing and sustaining long term weight-loss (Tan & Chow 2014). When shame, triggered by high levels of self-criticism is experienced the stress response is activated which results in the prefrontal cortex being overridden by the limbic system (Brown, 2012) with the consequence of not being able to think clearly. Fight and flight is designed for survival not for social connections and some of the experiences of shame were described by Brown's (2006) participants cited in Brown (2012) as "when I feel shame, I'm like a crazy person..." "I get desperate when I feel ashamed, I check out mentally and emotionally...." and "shame makes you feel estranged from the world. I hide".

Chronic dieters experience high levels of self-criticism and shame and are locked in a cycle of failure and self-blame with Whelton and Greenberg (2005) showing that high levels of self-criticism result in self-directed anger. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that what is

needed are theories, perceptions and practices, such as self-compassion, self-kindness and shame resilience with the aim of ‘standing down’ the stress response (Johnson & O’Brien, 2013). Each of these would fall within the discipline of positive psychology and become part of its potential contribution to lived experience in society.

How does self-compassion and shame resilience positively mediate the negative effect of shame?

In summary this section would suggest that the practice of the three components of self-compassion as posited by Neff (2003a) in enabling much kinder responses to shame, complements the four practices described in Brown’s (2006) Shame Resilience Theory, leading to feelings of contentment, safety and connection (Gilbert, 2009,2015). Together they enable feelings of contentment, safety and connection as Gilbert (2009,2015) argues are more possible to achieve (Figure 1.1).

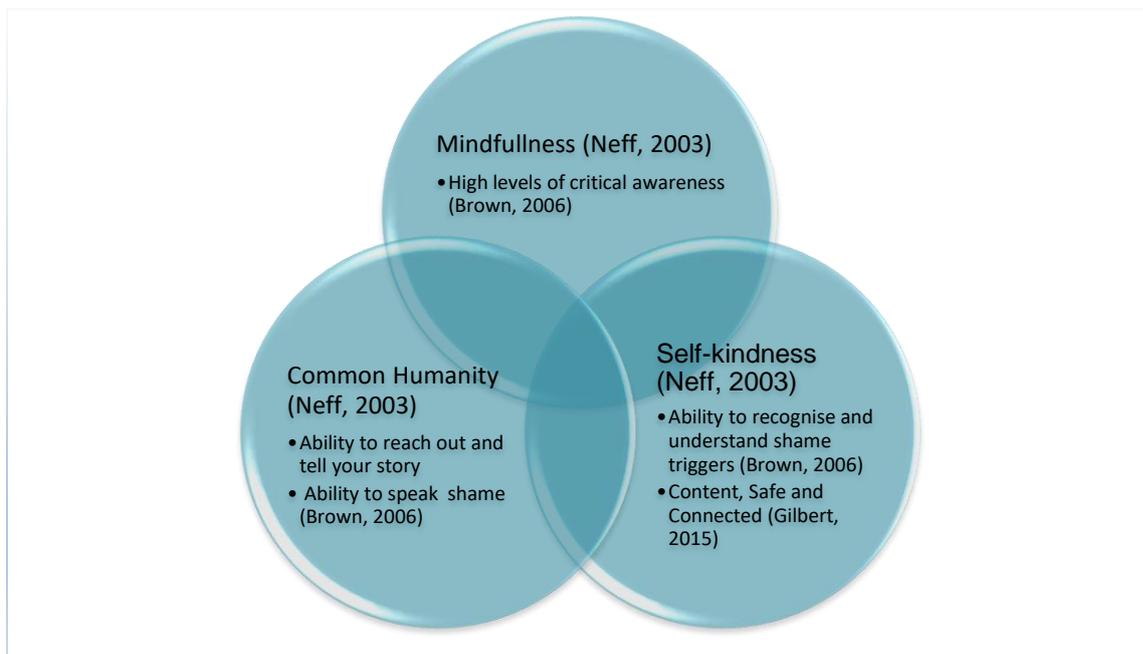


Figure 1.1. Illustrates the connection between Self-Compassion.

Adams and Leary (2007) in a study that was interested in exploring further the research that evidenced restrained eaters eating more, following the ingestion of high calorie foods, not allowed on their diets. They found that for some, self-compassion helped monitor their eating and when they did “break their diets” they were able to recognise that “*everyone eats unhealthily once in a while*” and as a consequence the cycle was interrupted.

Ivtzan (2015) posits that practicing self-compassion in response to the parts of ourselves that are avoided, could lead to positive transformation and increase well-being. He argues that by engaging in behaviours which are driven by avoidance of our failings, there is a lost opportunity for personal growth. However, when those failings are responded to instead with compassion, it offers “*an internal safe place*” from which to observe and move on from (Ivtzan, 2015). It is also shown that self-compassion is positively linked with social ties, life satisfaction and negatively associated with “*ruminatation, anxiety, neurotic perfectionism, depression and self-criticism*” as well as playing a role in stress reduction (Ivtzan, 2015, Shapiro, Astin Bishop and Cordova, 2005).

The literature reviewed points to shame resilience and self-compassion as being inextricably linked, with self-compassion being shown to interrupt self-critical responses and enhance positive well-being (Johnson & O’Brien, 2013). The evidence strongly suggests that the characteristics of the proposed intervention in this study would prove to be helpful for chronic dieters.

How does Hope Theory make a valuable contribution to the PPI?

Underpinning the PPI with Hope (Snyder, 2002) is an imperative bought about not only due to the experience of repeated cycles of dieting failure, but also because for the most part, chronic dieters have not only lost hope but have developed ‘false hope’ (Polivy & Herman, 2002). ‘False Hope Syndrome’ is described by Polivy and Herman (2002) as a “*cycle of failure and renewed effort*” created by goals that are unrealistic and often unachievable for self-change to happen.

Heatherton, Mahamedi, Striepe, Field, Keel and Strauss (1997) reported that “*dieting is an ... ineffective means of ... weight loss*”, observing that only 5% of successful dieters will keep their weight off, the rest will go on to regain their weight and more. Herman and Polivy (2002) argue that there is a game of blame played, with the diet industry inferring that the dieter is responsible for their failure and the dieter blaming that diet; critically important is the dieter is giving agency externally.

Hope Theory, in operationalising hope, offers chronic dieters a model in which to understand what needs to change in their thinking to increase their well-being. The literature strongly suggests that developing high levels of self-compassion, will not only affect the frequency

and effect of shame but also pave the way for higher levels of hope to be experienced.

Summary and Critique of the Literature

Within the scope of the review, no interventions were found that were designed to respond specifically to chronic dieters (McCargar & Mcburney, 1999) or that were under-pinned with self-compassion or shame resilience, despite the evidence that suggesting beneficial effects (Albertson, Neff & Dill-Shackleford, 2015). Nor was there any evidence of the research being applied in response to the stigmatization and discrimination experienced by the obese and overweight. The researcher would suggest it is so ingrained in modern society, that it is almost hidden in plain sight and socially acceptable (Crandall, 1994, Latner, O'Brien, Durson, Brinkman & Macdonald, 2008).

The researcher observed that whilst almost all papers identified the size of the obesity problem and acknowledged that lives are being adversely affected, there was little evidence of strategic alliances between most of the researchers. Cleland, McNeilly, Crawford and Ball (2013) suggests that there is a need for those involved in the field to be working together to translate the evidence into interventions. The evidence clearly demonstrates that regardless of the initial and continuing reasons for overeating; the consequential weight gain, external and internal stigmatization, along with becoming trapped in the tyranny of unsuccessful dieting is exacerbating the problem.

The literature reviewed by this paper strongly suggests that chronic dieters are locked in an inescapable cycle of wanting to become slimmer and healthier, being coerced by health policy, commercial diet companies, peers and society in general that, all they need to do is try harder, be more active, less lazy, more in control and this one will work, only for the attempt to end in the same shameful way. The literature also highlights the amount of stigma and discrimination across society aimed at the overweight and obese, mostly unchecked, with health care professionals being some of the worst offenders. Whilst there is a wealth of repetitive research and debate around the causes of obesity it does not seem to be matched with a variety of interventions to add to or replace diets as the 'go to' solution.

After reviewing the literature, this study disentangled the evidence so that the core themes were identified:

- Most chronic dieters are over-eating as a response to stress, which causes weight gain.

- They continue to believe they are at fault for their diet failing, which causes stress and therefore they over-eat.
- They are then negatively affected by the external and internal stigma which generates more stress and over-eating.
- They experience high levels of shame due to all of the above, which generates more stress and further over-eating.
- Low hope results in a lack of creativity in exploring new goals and pathways forward.

If all paths would appear to be leading, as the literature suggests, to the conclusion that the stress response is leading to over-eating, then what is needed is an intervention, which responds specifically to the stressors that are triggering a chronic dieter's eating patterns, the evidence strongly suggests beginning with self.

The literature reviewed shows chronic dieters are being viewed through a medical model of being broken and needing to be fixed. The evidence would suggest that this has not been helpful and the researcher suggests that a more resourceful frame would be, "*they have been doing the best they can with the resources they have*" (O'Connor, 2012). The intervention intends to build on those resources, allowing them to flourish, thrive and feel nurtured (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004).

The Positive Psychological Intervention

In the spirit of "make things simple...but not simpler" (Einstein quoted in Calaprice (2000, p475) this paper suggests that a key to living an optimal life is to become a much better friend to oneself; accepting your imperfect self along with all of humanity (Neff, 2003) knowing you are worthy of love and belonging (Brown, 2006) regardless of weight or body size. At its heart is the desire to honour its commitment in enabling chronic dieters to treat themselves as they would a dear friend.

Positive Psychology (PP) can best be described as being the study and science of positive emotions, positive character traits and enabling positive institutions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). PP rests on a foundation and legacy that can be seen to go back as far as the 1900's, William James in 1906 argued that if optimal human functioning was to be fully understood then "*one had to consider the subjective experience of an individual*" (Froh,

2004) with the term “*positive psychology*“ being used by Maslow in 1954, when asserting that psychology lacked an accurate understanding of human potential due to its preoccupation with what was wrong and suggesting a need to also study healthy, creative people in an attempt to investigate empirically the lives and patterns of self-actualized persons (Froh, 2004).

Applied PP is the application of the research with the intention of enabling optimal functioning (Seligman, 2012). Carr (2001) describes PP as wishing to facilitate: happiness and well-being, positive traits and engagement in absorbing activities; and the development of meaningful positive relationship, social systems and institutions. Peterson (2013) suggests that the scientific foundation of PP is impressive, citing the following as being evidenced with robust research suggesting that “*Happiness is a cause of good things in life... People who are satisfied with life eventually have even more reason to be satisfied, because happiness leads to more desirable outcomes at ... work, to fulfilling social relationships and ...good health and long life*” and importantly “*the good life can be taught*”.

PP has never said that the pursuit of happiness is to strive to live life free of pain or suffering. It acknowledges that all feelings are valid, are barometers and motivators of context and behavior. Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon and Worth (2015) argue that PP has at its heart: resilience, meaning, mortality, change, suffering and spirituality and understands that the path to optimal living is to fully embrace all of life, to be able to experience fully both pain and joy. Furthermore, PP understands that transformation, personal development and growth are most likely to happen as a result of being able to fully experience often painful challenges (Ivtzan, et al., 2015). Peterson (2013) stresses that the value of PP was to complement the field of psychology and to understand that a good life will contain within it, both what is good and bad; they are not mutually exclusive.

Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) argue that a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI) needs to focus on building strengths, and improving well-being as opposed to focusing on fixing what could be seen as a deficit. The intention of this paper is to design a PPI that instead of telling a chronic dieter that “something about them is wrong”, and handing them a diet and exercise program to fix them, offers them the opportunity to develop a self-compassionate relationship, in which their shame is responded to with empathy, resulting in increased well-being and health promoting behaviours (Neff, 2003).

The intervention will be delivered as a ten-week group coaching program, based on the evidence that at least eight weeks produces optimum results for PPI's (Bolier et al., 2013) and will be facilitated by a qualified coach with a background in PP and a commitment to its values. The coach, as a compassionate and skilled practitioner, acts as a supportive guide enabling those they are coaching to feel safe enough to practice new skills and ideas about themselves (David, 2016).

The PPI will be delivered by a coach, enabling: elicitation of authentic goals, agency, creativity in devising pathways for success, creating solutions for any obstacles along the way, as well as being there to help maintain commitment (Odou & Vella-Brodrick, 2013, David, 2016, Snyder, 2000). The PPI needs to be flexible in responding to the needs of the participants, ensuring there is perceived value and relevance to them; evidence demonstrates this results in higher levels of motivation and participation with participants experiencing sustained increases in well-being (Sheldon and Houser-Marko, 2001).

Biswas-Diener (2010) explains that whilst PP coaching shares many of the same characteristics of non-PP coaching, it differs with its intention, to be underpinned and influenced by the science of PP. He argues against creating a formal PP coaching model, which would need to be updated with every new learning, instead citing the following presuppositions (Figure 1.2):

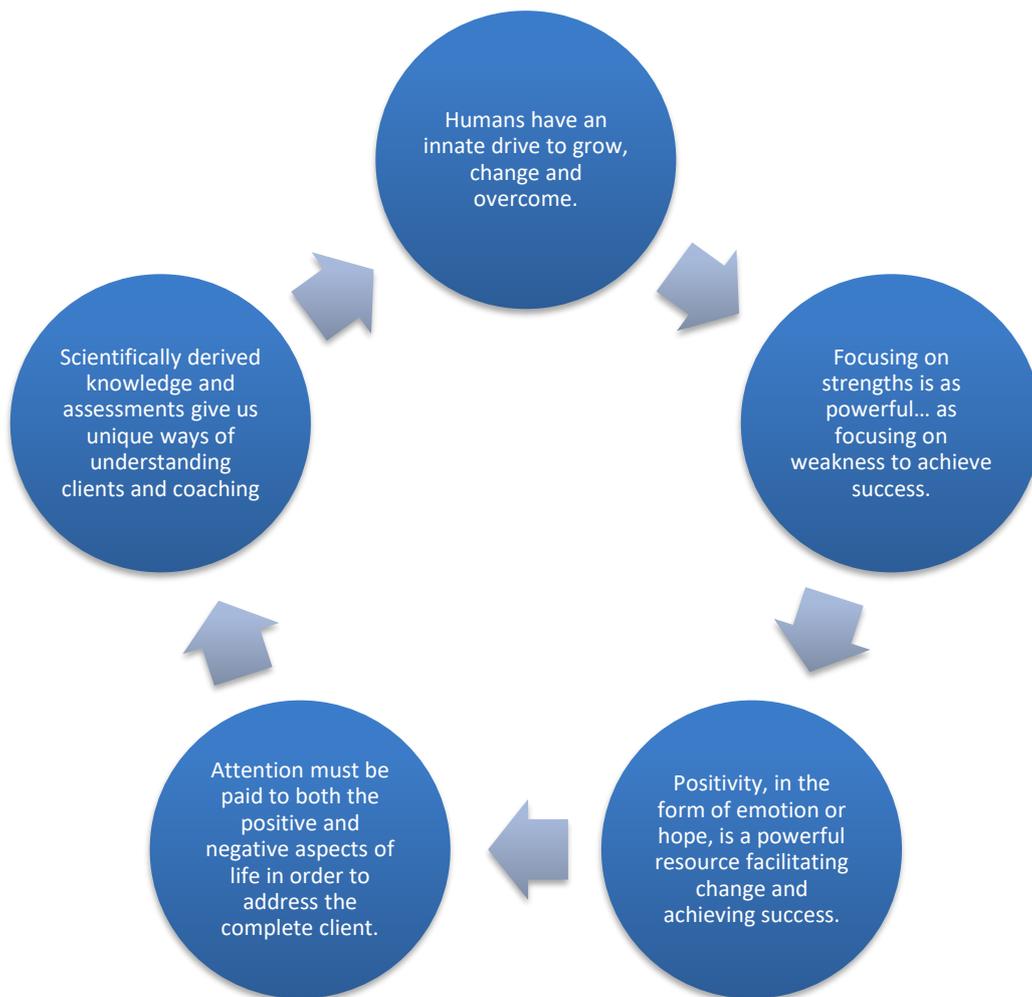


Figure 1.2. Core themes of PP Coaching (Biswas-Diener, 2010)

The intention of the PPI is for the goals to be authentic and in alignment with the participants' values (O'Connor & Lages, 2004). Authenticity is defined as *"the experience of being faithful to one's true self"* cited in (Ivtzan et al., 2015) and living life in accordance with what you think, feel and believe. This is challenging to do with high levels of self-criticism and shame. It is the intention of the PPI to create a safe space for the participants to reconnect with the parts of themselves that they have believed prevented them of being worthy of love and belonging and to *"own their story... and know they are worthy of love and belong"* (Brown, 2010).



Figure 1.3. An overview of the PPI with the themes and exercises

The 10 core themes (Figure 1.3) were created to shine a light on the necessary behaviors and attitudes that the research suggests would result in high levels of PWB, self-compassion, shame resilience and hope. The next stage was to adapt or use existing practices within PP, to include self-compassion and shame resilience; Table 1.1 provides an overview:

Table 1.1. *Overview of aims, themes, exercises week by week of the PPI, with sources.*

Brief overview of week	Theme and underlying influences	Exercises with their sources and influences
<p>WEEK 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce self-compassion and what it means in practice. • What it means to be a friend in general. • Begin to notice where giving energy away. • A soft goal of becoming kinder to themselves this week. 	<p>Begin to get to know you.</p> <p>Ryff (2014) Snyder (2002)</p>	<p>The ‘Humph’ Audit</p> <p>Created by the researcher influenced by: Self-Compassion (Neff,2003) Gilbert (2009, 2015) Brown (2006) Snyder (2002)</p>
<p>WEEK 2</p> <p>Reflecting on the results of the Humph Audit, exploring the reasons for choices, if people pleasing, linking to why?</p> <p>How practicing mindfulness can help increase awareness of self and what is happening in the present.</p>	<p>Engaging with who you really are.</p> <p>Ryff (2014) Snyder (2002) Brown (2006) Self-compassion (Neff, 2003) Galant et al., (2009) Germer (2009) Kabat-Zin (2009)</p>	<p>Practicing mindfulness: Be: Friending Meditation</p> <p>This is from Franticworld.com Mark William’s Chosen as it is less than 10mins and a good introduction to the practice. It is shared for use with the public.</p>
<p>WEEK 3</p> <p>Reflect on the use of the mindfulness practice, what was noticed, whether it was practiced or not.</p> <p>Introduce the idea of internal dialogue and its role in creating state.</p>	<p>Silencing the critic and letting go of shame.</p> <p>Neff (2003) Brown (2006) Gilbert (2009, 2015) Germer (2009)</p>	<p>It’s not what you say, it’s the way you are saying it.</p> <p>Created by the researcher, influenced by: Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP: O’Connor, 2012) Neff (2003) Brown (2006) Gilbert (2009, 2015)</p>
<p>WEEK 4</p> <p>Continuing the curiosity of how we communicate with ourselves and the effect it has on how we feel, and then behave.</p>	<p>Talking to yourself with love and respect.</p> <p>Neff (2003) Germer (2009)</p>	<p>And I am worthy of love and belonging</p> <p>Created by the researcher, influenced by: Brown (2006)</p>
<p>WEEK 5</p> <p>Introduce what it is to be vulnerable, courageous and authentic.</p> <p>Talk about what shame is, and an invitation to begin to explore their own shame triggers and become aware of how shame feels and how it affects behaviour.</p>	<p>Focus on your purpose and being courageous.</p> <p>Ryff (2014) Brown (2012)</p>	<p>It’s a Shame, isn’t it?</p> <p>Adapted from the stages of SRT, Brown (2006)</p>

Table 1.1 (continued)

Brief overview of week	Themes and underlying influences	Exercise and links to research
<p>WEEK 6</p> <p>Begin to be curious about what is important in life and what brings joy for them and where they have it in their lives. Becoming curious and creative about what they want to do, be and have in their life.</p>	<p>Re-engaging with your joys</p> <p>Snyder (2002) Ryff (2014)</p>	<p>The Wheel of Life</p> <p>Adapted from The Wheel of Life exercise (Whitworth et al., 1998)</p>
<p>WEEK 7</p> <p>Begin to talk about practicing gratitude, especially offering an invitation to show their body gratitude for all it does for them.</p>	<p>Inviting and living gratitude</p> <p>Neff (2003) Brown (2006) Gilbert (2009, 2015) Germer (2009)</p>	<p>The Gratitude Journal</p> <p>Adapted from: Emmons and McCullough (2003) Lyubomirsky (2008)</p>
<p>WEEK 8</p> <p>Explore what creating meaningful outcomes in ensuring goals are based on values, strengths and desired outcomes; and broader than wanting to lose weight.</p> <p>Will also gain insight into “losing weight” as a process goal and the importance of coaching goals in positive language.</p>	<p>Enjoying your own company and engaging in meaningful and flourishing relationship with self and others.</p> <p>Ryff (2014)</p>	<p>Creating Your Desired Outcomes</p> <p>Adapted from: Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) exercise of same name (O’Connor, 2012)</p> <p>Future pacing (NLP) and also Gilbert (2006) in explaining that can generate what is not yet there by thought, and imagine it so.</p>
<p>WEEK 9</p> <p>Discuss and demonstrate how to eat mindfully and learning to be present when moving towards food.</p>	<p>Nourishing yourself with worth</p> <p>Neff (2003) Brown (2006) Gilbert (2009, 2015) Germer (2009)</p>	<p>If I am not hungry, then what am I?</p> <p>Adapted and influenced by: Mindfulness-based eating awareness training (MB-EAT) Kristeller (2006)</p> <p>Goss, K., & Allan, S. (2014) application of compassion-focused therapy for eating disorders.</p>
<p>WEEK 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the final exercise. • Reflect on the practices offered over the ten weeks. • Plan the way forward. 	<p>Daily choices showing worth and value to yourself and others</p> <p>Ryff (2014) Snyder (2002) Neff (2003)</p>	<p>Because I am worth it</p> <p>This exercise is underpinned by Neff (2003) from writing a self-compassion letter.</p>

Reflections and Reflexivity on the Design of the Positive Psychological Intervention

The researcher has been exploring aspects of the PPI content within her professional coaching practice and she began her formal study of PP in 2014, which resulted in the underlying shape of an intervention becoming clearer. The researchers’ motivation for designing this PPI was driven by noticing weight loss clients becoming more successful with

their weight loss goals, when learning to motivate themselves with kindness as opposed to being self-critical.

The researcher strongly asserts that self-compassion and shame resilience need to be placed firmly in the heart of PP. They teach us how to be courageous and vulnerable and in doing so become authentic. From that place, all other interventions aimed at improving well-being will be enhanced. In a world that has become overly complicated, the researcher is driven to look for what is being missed in the chaos; kindness, self-soothing and love. The researcher believes that as Marks (2016) suggests, one half of the obesity puzzle is a stressed environment; that is not peculiar to the obese, that sadly is the present state for many. The Dalai Lama XIV (2016) in the Book of Joy shared “*Something is lacking. As one of the seven billion human beings, I believe everyone has the responsibility to develop a happier world ...In other words, kindness or compassion, which is lacking now. We must pay more attention to our inner values. We must look inside...*”. The PPI that has been developed has at its heart the intention, regardless of the size or shape of person, to enable them to do just that.

Conclusion and Proposed Next Steps

This paper is a creative and innovative attempt to illustrate that society’s current needs and effort to support weight loss are worryingly flawed and have ignored self-compassion and shame resilience. The situation is further confounded by the reluctance of policy makers to change direction (Bacon and Aphramor, 2011). The literature reviewed illustrated that existing interventions are failing alongside a systemic belief that the blame lies with the dieters, not the diet, a belief mirrored by the dieters. This results in high levels of blame, shame and stress.

This paper believes it has demonstrated through the literature that the current interventions for obesity persist in seeking to treat only that symptom, and not the cause, being the reasons driving the over-eating. This PPI has been developed to respond to the evidence that for many people, the cause is their coping strategy for dealing with shame and stress. The theories and practices of self-compassion, shame resilience and Hope Theory have been used to underpin the PPI as the research suggests that these three have proved to be effective in increasing levels of well-being, by positively mediating the negative effect of shame and stress.

The researcher recognizes that further development of the PPI is needed and to that end, intends to use the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) which coupled with evidence of

personal and weight-loss goals being achieved will offer research-based evidence of its value, and its capacity to be taught to and used by others. This paper offers, in the development of the PPI, an innovative contribution to positive psychology practice and its underpinning theories.

This PPI will be a pilot exercise to test the theories expounded in this paper in breaking the cycle of shame, stress and chronic dieting. If, as anticipated, the PPI proves to be effective in successive test groups, then this innovative and creative model will drive a change of attitude and practices within the field of weight management and enable many to finally be free to live their good life.

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2

Resilient relocation: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of single Anglo females as recent immigrants to Israel

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Abstract

Research suggests that whether as an asylum seeker, refugee or through choice, immigration poses psychological challenges which may continue long after physical relocation. Aliyah uniquely references the global phenomenon of Jewish immigration to Israel as an ancestral, spiritual homeland, both to escape anti-Semitism or for immigrants from safer communities, to fulfil a sense of coming home. Israel is culturally and politically complex and though theoretically gender equal, women are often expected to adopt traditional gender roles and may face marginalisation within the workforce. Furthermore, studies relating to older lone women immigrants to Israel are limited and rarely explore immigration from the positive psychological viewpoints of thriving and resilient coping. Employing the qualitative methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) the current study explored the lived experience of lone female immigrants to Israel, aged between fifty and sixty-five, having relocated in the last two years, from the UK or the USA. Three semi-structured interviews comprising open-ended questions were conducted, with pertinent points followed up. Analysis revealed five superordinate themes, common to all participants; Life journey, Acculturation, Transcendence, Intrinsic identity and Meaning and purpose, with subthemes also common to all participants, to various degrees. Despite sociocultural challenges, findings indicated that Aliyah may be considered a positive psychological intervention, facilitating reconnection with the self, resilient, positively focused coping, a sense of newfound freedom, belonging and meaning in life. Findings could inform mentoring or coaching programmes for older female immigrants, with future studies considering the effectiveness of positive psychological interventions, for this and other immigrant communities.

Keywords: Aliyah, resilience, female immigrants, positive psychology, older women

Introduction

This research explored the experience of single Anglo females aged between fifty and sixty-five, who have chosen within the two years prior to participating in this study, to permanently relocate to Israel alone, from either the USA or UK. Literature likely to be applicable to the understanding of the experiences of the research participants is summarised and context is offered for the uniqueness of the phenomenon of Aliyah, as well as the application of positive psychological theory as supportive of the relocation process. Whether to avoid, persecution,

political unrest, enhance socioeconomic status or to experience life from another cultural perspective, human migration has occurred throughout history. According to the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2017), two hundred and fifty-eight million people currently live in countries other than their birth nation. Whilst the phenomena of being a refugee or an asylum seeker may be viewed differently from actively choosing to leave one's birth nation, research suggests that emigration requires a reevaluation of identity, reassessment of future plans, ambitions and desires and acclimatisation to a new culture, with possible far reaching psychological effects long after the physical upheaval of relocation has ended (Berry, 1997;2006; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010; Strang & Ager, 2010; Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000).

The Phenomenon of Aliyah

Permanent relocation to Israel is a unique phenomenon, in that immigrants are largely, though not solely Jewish and often motivated by an ideological and spiritual connection to Israel as the Jewish ancestral homeland (Elias, 2008). Whether secular or religious, Jews from around the globe describe an affiliation with Israel as the land of the Old Testament, the settings of happenings which form the tenets of the Jewish faith (Ben-Porat, 2013; Johnson, 2013). Immigration to Israel is often referred to by both diaspora Jewry; those outside of Israel and native Israelis, as *Aliyah*, a Hebrew word translating as ascendance, to rise or elevate, stemming from the Jewish ideological and spiritual conviction that moving to Israel elevates one's soul (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Coleman & Eade, 2004; Ezrachi, 2004). However, given the more recent reported global increase in anti-Semitism, idealism is not the only motivator encouraging Aliyah (United States, Department of State, 2008; Cotler, 2010). Israel offers religious freedom in the Middle East for all faiths and is still a haven for Jews who face persecution, with a pro-immigration policy of offering citizenship to Jews and their families from anywhere, even where a spouse is not Jewish (Smootha, 2002; The Jewish Agency, 2014).

Since the pre and post World-War-Two influxes of displaced Middle Eastern Jews and European Holocaust survivors, more recent arrivals include large numbers of immigrants from Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia and France, with an ongoing steady influx of smaller numbers from the USA, UK and other global destinations (CBS, 2017). Israel is therefore a nation of immigrants, a multifaceted, complex society, comprising of a diverse mix of political, religious, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and though Israel identifies as a Jewish

state, a fifth of the population are Israeli Arabs and five percent other faiths (CBS, 2017; Hacoheh, 2001). Social divides exist not only between Arabs and Jews, but between Jewish secular, traditional, religious and ethnic groups and between genders. Israel has nonetheless become a largely secular, Westernised society, despite the lack of separation of religion and state and notwithstanding an eclectic mix of life views (Avineri, 2017; Ben-Porat, 2013). Nevertheless, whilst considered globally as a hub of technological, medical and business advancement and by the current definition, a first world nation, globally exported technological advancements often fail to enhance life for Israelis, due to a bureaucratic system encompassing a mix of historical Middle Eastern and Eastern European mentalities. The resulting combination of the modern and the traditional, East and West, has created a nation whose people demonstrate a unique sense of community and unity in times of trouble, yet for many new immigrants, life is vastly different from their host nations (Avineri, 2017; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2005; Zerubavel, 2000).

Research considering the psychological well-being of new immigrants to Israel argues that loss of status through a lack of securing employment or settling for a menial rather than professional role, may leave immigrants struggling with finding meaning and satisfaction with life (Ariely, Kamenica & Prelec, 2008; Benjamin, 2007; Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger & Rothmann, 2013). Conversely, adaptation may be facilitated by open-mindedness about cultural and social differences and an acceptance of changes in standard of living (Aknin, Norton & Dunn, 2009; Ben-Shahar, 2007; Kurman, Eshel & Zehavi, 2005). Notwithstanding significant cultural, demographic, geographical and political challenges, many who move to Israel report increased quality of life through becoming part of a society where one's religious and spiritual identity is not questioned and where they feel at home. This is reflected in the recent global World Happiness Report (World Happiness Report, 2017), ranking Israel as the eleventh happiest country globally.

Positive Psychological Considerations for Immigration

Rather than attempting to alleviate negative human behaviour and suffering, psychological research has moved more recently towards the exploration of factors which may enhance happiness levels and life satisfaction. The burgeoning field of Positive Psychology, whilst not negating the potential adverse effects of managing stressful daily life challenges or unexpected traumatic events, views difficulties as potential opportunities for growth and transformation (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, & Worth, 2015; Ong, Bergeman & Chow, 2010;

Seligman, 1998; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Studies considering the application of Positive Psychological Interventions (PPIs) such as such as mindfulness, acts of kindness and gratitude practices, in both personal or organisational contexts, found long lasting effects on well-being levels which are as effective for both the over and under fifties (Bolier et al., 2013; Proyer, Gander, Wellenzohn & Ruch, 2014). Furthermore, though personality, physical ability or socioeconomic status directly impact on well-being, actively seeking positive coping strategies may enhance well-being levels more than any of these factors (Ivtzan et al., 2015). Whilst acknowledging that the three stages of relocation; planning, transit and departure, often induce prolonged stress, much like during other difficult and ongoing circumstances, such as serious illness, bereavement or divorce, immigrants often demonstrate remarkable resilience, as Berger and Weiss's (2003) found in their study disputing immigration as psychologically detrimental. Later studies argued that an individual's pre-immigration problem solving abilities, character strengths, alongside developing language proficiency and contact with other immigrants who have positively managed their relocation experience, can often mediate the anxiety associated with relocation, to the extent that the experience becomes one of personal growth (Amit, 2010; Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Weiss & Berger, 2008).

Resilience

Resilience has emerged as a prominent research topic across multiple disciplines, including medicine, psychology and sociology. However, opinions differ on whether resilience is uncommon, as described by Pines' (1975) study of childhood resilience and a recent study by Infurna and Luthar's (2016), or whether as suggested by Masten (2001) and recent studies by Southwick and Charney (2018), resilience is *ordinary magic*. Despite evident risks to both physical and mental well-being of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), studies have shown that children who experience adversity may not only thrive, but often develop greater problem-solving skills as adults than those who have faced less challenges (Felitti et al., 1998; Mittal, Griskevicius, Simpson, Sung & Young 2015; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1992). There is no unanimous definition, though individual differences in personality, cultural, genetic, social systemic and environmental may all affect resilience levels (Waller, 2001; Seery, Holman & Silver, 2010). Researchers also agree that resilience is demonstrated through having faced significant risk and then *bounced-back*, or thrived, with benefits reaching beyond the restoration of equilibrium and extending to post-traumatic

growth and a deeper sense of self-mastery when faced with subsequently difficulties (Cicchetti, 2010; Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010).

As positive psychological research has evolved, studies have been motivated by the pursuit of happiness and meaning, considering how resilience mediates management of modern life's challenges; career navigation and satisfaction, global disasters, terrorism and population shifts (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014; Frankl, 2006; Winders, 2014). Furthermore, there is evidence that multiple positive traits and behaviours can be learned, which may offer protection from the effects of adversity (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Models of resilience have included compensating by indirectly mediating the effect of risk, for example, mindfulness meditation encourages relaxation, whilst also positively affecting anxiety levels (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zeidan, Martucci, Kraft, McHaffie & Coghill, 2014). The protective model proposed actively using interventions to lessen the effect of an apparent risk, for instance, practising gratitude affirmations may improve feelings of well-being, even when facing chronic illness (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). The challenge model relates to the process of becoming resilient, through *resilient reintegration*; exposure to lower levels of risk, over an extended period (Richardson, 2002). Furthermore, recent neuroscientific developments and greater understanding of brain plasticity suggest that interventions, therapies and the development of personal coping mechanisms may prevent, or even undo previous damage (Wu et al., 2013).

Gratitude

Research has found that practising gratitude may increase levels of positive affect, safeguarding against negative emotions and enhancing resilience levels, particularly whilst managing adverse life events (Frederickson, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Rosenberg's (1998) research into the grateful personality described gratitude as an "affective trait", suggesting that some individuals possess an innate ability to appreciate the smallest kindnesses and the simplest of pleasures, though Watkins (2001) argued that gratitude may also be a more transient state, rather than an enduring personality trait. Grateful individuals are often perceived as likeable, with a tendency to frequently engage in prosocial activities and to be thankful for everyday occurrences, often with no assumption of reciprocity (Dumas, Johnson & Lynch, 2002; Gallup, 1998; Grant & Gino, 2010). When faced with difficulty, grateful people report an ability to remain positively focused, reduced likelihood of exhibiting symptoms of physical illness and less inclination towards suicidal

tendencies (Emmons & Stern, 2013; Kleiman, Adams, Kashdan & Riskind, 2013). Furthermore, Frederickson (2001, 2002) proposed that as with other positive emotions, gratitude “broadens-and-builds”; feeling and expressing gratitude compounds a sense of well-being and happiness, leading to further expression of gratitude and the perpetuation of the gratitude-happiness cycle. Practicing the expression of gratitude may also enable individuals to “satisfice”, finding happiness in the smallest kindnesses and everyday events, even when life conditions are not ideal (Schwartz & Ward, 2004). However, Davis et al.’s (2016) recent meta-analysis of the effects of gratitude interventions argued for caution when considering the effect of gratitude interventions without assessing mediating factors such as physical and mental health, mood and spirituality.

Literature Summary

Whilst immigration may be a time of uncertainty, the developing field of positive psychology continues to evidence the human propensity for thriving, flourishing and personal growth, despite difficult life events. In reviewing the current literature, notwithstanding that positive psychological research into immigration is culturally narrow and whilst acknowledging individual differences in strengths and character traits, it is evident that PPIs such as gratitude practise may enhance resilience and sustain well-being which may be of benefit for recent immigrants.

Research Rationale: Acculturation and integration issues for lone women as immigrants to Israel

Israel offers structured life paths for families and for lone immigrant youth, who after completing compulsory military service will usually continue with education programmes which are highly subsidised for immigrants aged under thirty-five. However, no such programmes exist for older adults (The Jewish Agency, 2014). Furthermore, the duality of Israeli society, with its leaning towards modernity and roots in religiosity and tradition, may make acculturation and adaptation particularly challenging for older women from Western cultures (Rosenthal, 2008). Despite active contribution to every area of society as combat soldiers, scientists and politicians, the leaning towards a family-oriented rather than individualistic society means that women are generally still expected to marry and become mothers, often earn less than men, are less represented in government and expected to retire earlier than men. (Remennick, 2000; 2016). Older women are also less likely than men to find meaningful employment opportunities, leading to a process of reevaluation of career

direction and social status (Lavee & Katz, 2003; Stier & Levanon, 2003). Amit and Bar Lev (2015) reported that having spent a good deal of life elsewhere, for over fifties in general, acclimatising to a new life in Israel requires resilience and tenacity. For lone older women, having raised a family in their birth nation and left behind traditional gender roles of mothers, wives, homemakers or caretakers, adapting to life in Israel may be particularly challenging (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997; Remennick, 2013).

For the purposes of this study, the term Anglo refers to native English speakers and whilst there are many English-speaking Jewish communities, the primary researcher was familiar with the USA and UK communities and was interested in the lived experience of Aliyah of women from these communities. Since relocation agencies such as Nefesh b'Nefesh often group these communities together for the purposes of providing support, information and resources in English, it was assumed that the participants will all have had similar access to these resources (Kantor, 2017). Though there is a small but consistent yearly stream of lone female immigrants to Israel from both the USA and the UK (CBS, 2017), Western women choosing Aliyah may be considered better equipped than those who emigrate to escape persecution and are underrepresented in current literature, therefore the current study aimed to examine the experience of relocation for this demographic (Berger, 2013; Lerner et al., 2005; Ponisnovsky et al., 1998). Participants' views about personal attributes, strengths and resources which may have facilitated integration into Israeli society, allowed for exploration of the phenomenon of Aliyah from a positive psychological viewpoint. Though previous theories and models of acclimatisation and acculturation, social and cross-cultural psychological perspectives of immigration offer valuable definitions and explanations of the concept of immigration, a lack of ability to consider the experience of the individual, therefore losing *the voice* of the immigrant (Berry, 1997, 2003; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). For this reason, the qualitative research methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2015) was chosen methodology for the current study, as IPA allowed for consideration of the lived experience of the phenomenon of Aliyah, directly from the viewpoint of the participant.

Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is idiographic and non-assumptive, focusing on the distinct, precise experience of each participant as an *expert* on the phenomenon being explored, whilst also considering the deduction of the meaning of the experience for the

whole sample. For this reason, an effort is made to ensure a homogenous sample to whatever degree is possible (Smith, 2015). From an epistemological perspective, IPA assumes the stance of realism, or the existence of the self (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Based in phenomenology, IPA is considered a subcategory of philosophy, exploring what it is like to be or to experience a phenomenon (Husserl, 2012). Ontologically, IPA considers experience from a hermeneutic perspective, being concerned with the meaning of being or existing in the world, considering things as they appear, but also looking for interpretation and meaning (Heidegger, 1996). Lived experience involves active engagement with cognition through the body; we feel, sense and are present for it through our physical being in time and space, rather than outside of ourselves. However, the theoretically-informed methodology of IPA is such that both researcher and participant co-create the interpretation of the data. As such, whilst it is impossible to be completely removed from the IPA process, reflexivity on the part of the researcher allows the participant's experience to shape the finding of the study (Larkin, Eatough & Osborn, 2011; Shaw, 2010; Shinebourne, 2011; Wilson, 2017). The current study not only contributed to qualitative literature on Aliyah and immigration in general but *gave voice* to the participants, revealing the meaning of relocation and factors which supported acculturation and sustained well-being for these women (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Study Design

Recruiting Participants

A purposive homogenous self-selected sample was recruited of three women fitting the research criteria as follows; a) having emigrated to Israel, within the last two years, b) having originated from either the UK or the USA, c) being aged between fifty and sixty-five and d) having emigrated alone. Snowball sampling was implemented via posts in Anglo-Israeli social media groups for immigrants on Facebook and through email contact with Jewish immigration agencies (The Jewish Agency or Nefesh b'Nefesh). Three participants were chosen in order of response time via Facebook and were initially contacted via email.

Description of Participants

Participant One had previously attempted relocation as a younger woman, though feeling homesick, she returned to the UK where she spent her adult life until her recent Aliyah. She is the mother of two adult daughters, both not in Israel. Her parents were both immigrant; her

mother as a refugee and father a member of the Kindertransport. She describes her upbringing with awareness of familial emotional suppression; her mother is barely mentioned, her father, who she admires for his life of contribution, was reluctant to discuss life before the UK. Her narrative suggests her own difficulties with both self-esteem and emotional expression, though she expresses a strong sense of idealism and connection to her Jewish roots.

Participant Two is the mother of an adult son and daughter, both not in Israel. Born a Christian, she chose conversion to Judaism and describes her family as explorers and pioneers, having come from an ancestral background of both relocation and changing faiths. Having left a difficult marriage, she struggles with how she fits in and her financial ability to continue to sustain her life in Israel. She has a new partner in Israel and whilst she is hopeful of the relationship continuing, she is not reliant on this relationship, but enjoying it as part of her new life. Her status as a convert has led to a choice of a more religious community, suggesting her need for self-enforced boundaries as she develops her social identity.

Participant Three is the mother of one adult son, who relocated to Israel five years before her. She describes the difficulties of suppressing her Jewish identity as a serving member of the USA Navy for twenty-one years. Her father was a university professor, her mother an immigrant from a wealthy family. Describing her childhood as full freedom and exploration whilst simultaneously struggling with her mother’s drug and alcohol addictions, she walks away from her role as her father’s helper into a military career, enforcing boundaries not enforced during her childhood. She describes her current struggle with the transition to civilian life, learning to fill her days rather than having them scheduled and having to recreate a social circle.

Table 2.1. *Description of Participants*

Participant Number	Participant Age	Marital Status	Country of Origin	Relocation Date
One	64	Divorced	UK	April 2016
Two	58	Divorced	USA	August 2015
Three	63	Divorced	USA	July 2015

Development of the Interview Schedule and Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed, with care to use language which enabled free disclosure. The questions created a possible structure, with prompts allowing for deeper questioning. Data was obtained through the primary researcher conducting three semi-structured interviews about an hour in length via Skype, since participants lived in Israel. Interviews were digitally recorded using MP3 Skype Recorder software. The purpose of the interview was described to the participants as a way of finding out about their experience of emigrating to Israel as a single Anglo female. Through summarising and reflecting answers, further disclosure was encouraged where the researcher felt that participant's responses warranted deeper exploration

Sequence of Data Analysis

Data was analysed following the process of IPA as described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). Interviews were listened to several times to familiarise the researcher with the data and all interviews were then transcribed verbatim. Analysis was then carried out initially on a case by case basis. The interview transcripts were read several times. The researcher annotated the transcripts in Excel, using the right-hand margin for exploratory comments. Descriptive comments summarised what the researcher thought was meant by the participant in standard text, linguistic comments were used where the language used by the participant was perceived by the researcher as being of relevance or importance in italics and conceptual comments were made in underlined text, where the researcher interpreted possible underlying meaning for the participant. Once exploratory coding was completed, the left-hand margin was used to note potential initial emergent themes and interpretative remarks on the data.

Comments were read, and emergent themes were developed with supporting excerpts for each theme collated from the original transcript. The researcher then further analysed the themes, considering how they might be connected, employing a hermeneutic circular process of interpretation, revisiting and reconsidering themes throughout this process. Factors such as relationships between conflicting or opposing concepts, number of occurrences and narrative context to the data were all examined. Superordinate and subordinate themes were developed for each case and finally, with analysis then conducted across all cases, producing a master table of superordinate and subordinate themes (Table 2). Themes which were not considered intrinsic to this study were not reported.

Research Rigour

The primary researcher conducted analysis without the intention of developing theoretical conclusions, considering and interpreting each participant's unique experience. The secondary researcher supervised the analysis process, ensuring that themes seemed relevant to the data. No comment was made by the supervisor on interpretation of the data since the double hermeneutic process of IPA is such that the primary researcher's interpretation was pivotal; any external comment may have changed the meaning of the interpretation as from a phenomenological perspective, the participants' words formed the essence of this study. Trustworthiness of the analysis was ensured through maintenance of an audit trail of decisions and steps taken during the analytical process, enabling themes to be traced back to the verbatim transcription of each participant's words (Yardley, 2000; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith, et al., 2009). Awareness of personal and cultural similarities to the participants facilitated the primary researcher's reflexivity during analysis and a reflexive account comprising notes and observations compiled throughout the duration of the study allowed for expansion on these considerations. Though a literature review was conducted before the analysis, the idiographic nature of findings warranted the consideration of further literature, based on the exploration of each participant's experiences.

Ethical Considerations

This study was undertaken by the primary researcher as part fulfillment of the Masters in Applied Positive Psychology therefore, ethical approval to conduct this study was granted by Buckinghamshire New University's Ethics Committee. Participants were provided with an information sheet before their interviews, a debrief sheet after the interview and requested to provide written informed consent via digital signature. Participants were advised of the voluntary nature of their participation and of their right to withdraw. The primary researcher stored recordings in password protected cloud-based files, for possible future research. Anonymity was ensured when transcribing data through omission or changing of names. Had participants become upset or anxious during questioning due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, the researcher would have offered to pause or stop the interview. Participants were referred to the relevant support agencies with details made available on the debrief statement provided after the interviews.

Findings

Analysis of the participants' verbatim transcripts led to the emergence of five superordinate and subordinate themes as noted in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2.

Superordinate and subordinate themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
<i>Life journey</i>	Maternal bond Life stages Future self
<i>Acculturation</i>	Social acceptance and relationships Community and belonging Social and cultural diversity Cultural duality Language barrier
<i>Transcendence</i>	Managing bureaucracy Self-reliance and independence Positive coping Freedom and fun
<i>Intrinsic identity</i>	Familial influence Self-perception and self-worth Religion and spirituality
<i>Purpose and meaning</i>	Dream fulfilment Contribution, helping, organising Refuge and security

Superordinate Theme 1 - Life Journey

Participants express the meaning of the timing of Aliyah in terms of significant factors relating to their transition through the life journey, describing relocation to Israel with a sense of continuity, a next step, rather than as a new start. They acknowledge both the difficulties and joys of change:

Maternal Bond

As mothers of adult children, participants' relocation has meant reevaluation of the maternal relationship. Participant Three is happily, now in the same country as her son, whereas Participants One and Two have left their children in their birth nation and describe taking the lead from their children and needing their blessings to relocate:

Now my children are all grown up and er... self-sufficient and I've always, always wanted to be back in Israel. So my children said to me... well now's your time Mum...(P1)

And so they were very excited, and once I got their approval, then I started the process to make Aliyah... so... [laughs] (P2)

And of course, I'm closer with my son too. Physically close, it's easier to... so I can actually see him er...(P3)

Life Stages

Participants demonstrate awareness of transitioning through stages of life, each describing a specific time or event as preceding the decision to relocate. For Participant Two, the finalisation of her divorce facilitated her relocation:

So when I got the divorce settlement, I had four years of spousal support, so I knew every month I was getting a certain amount of money that was going to be plenty for me to live (P2)

Participant One sees herself as better prepared, more emotionally mature and resilient as an older woman, expressing her desire to relocate more recently with the underlying sense of urgency, a sense of time and life passing:

I ... I felt that if I didn't make the change now, I might, I probably would, always regret not coming and not... and not trying and seeing how it worked. (P1)

Retirement from her military career coincides with Participant Three's growing sense of unease at living as a Jewess in the USA:

The last seventeen years, when I was working with the City of [P. place of work USA] it began to gnaw on me quite a bit, it really did.

Future Self

Participants discuss visions and hopes for their future selves, expressing a current sense of a lack of certainty of commitment to life in Israel, for both social and practical reasons:

I have always had a plan B and the plan B would only come into effect after a minimum of three years here, when I gave it a good, you know, a good testing. Erm.... but I'm pretty sure, ninety-nine point nine percent that I will not be returning to the UK to live. Erm but I will... I will be here (P1)

I just... I definitely ... I definitely see myself still here. Erm, because there's a lot of times, like now, when I can't see how I'm gonna make it. 'Cause my support, that spousal support aforementioned ends in December, and so [laughs] and I'm not really sure that I'm gonna have what I need (P2)

Erm... I'm really wanting to stay here. I really, really, really, really want to but at the same time too I think you're figuring out that I am a planner, OK? So I know if I don't get my license, erm I will give it two years erm. (P3)

Superordinate Theme 2 – Acculturation

Participants describe the implications of sociocultural changes, strategies for adaptation and the impact on their well-being, expressing meaning behind the choice of their communities:

Social Acceptance and Relationships

Building social relationships appears essential for safeguarding participants against a sense of loneliness and isolation, whilst meeting the need to feel accepted. Participant Two describes the challenge of balancing her sense of needing to be engaged socially and her fear of being left out, expressing a simultaneous sense of being *less than* because she chose rather than being born to Judaism, whilst also describing acceptance and societal openness:

I'm like an extroverted introvert thing, where when I go to somebody's home and I don't know anybody there, there's a lot of social anxiety (P2)

So sometimes they'll ask you questions deliberately to figure out if you're a convert or not, especially since I'm. I don't particularly look Jewish (P2)

... When you come to a community and you put yourself out there and you start connecting with people, just on any level, you know, just start connecting, it's amazing in this country, not just in my community (P2)

For Participant Three, building friendships was integral to successful relocation, particularly since she was also learning to live outside of the routine of military life:

If I don't get something to where I have a core group of good, good friends and stuff like that, which I would say within two to three years I may go back er... (P3)

Because there were military friends that I got accustomed to being with and everything...so... er as I said, it's not that easy (P3)

Participant One describes fitting in to her community easily and having family members there, as somehow protective and having helped her relocation process:

Erm I think if I hadn't have met ... so... met and made so many friends, if I wouldn't have had family here, erm... I might not have settled as well (P1)

Community and Belonging

Participants' choices of community reflect a meeting of their physical needs whilst also fitting with their new bicultural identity. Participant Two's choice of an Orthodox observant, community in politically disputed territory, suggests both a religious and cultural statement, and self-enforcement of boundaries, such as modest dressing to fit in with more religious women, which she feels may help with building her new identity:

Some days I'm like whatever, I'm just gonna wear this and other days I'm like, yeah OK, I'll choose for this you know... cover this and wear a sweater and whatever. So, I guess it's got me more mindful, you know, just because the ... the... in the community people are more mindful of that (P2)

Participant Three's kibbutz community, though located further away from an easily reachable social life, reflects her need to feel different, her interest in the unusual, culture and artistic freedom and a connection with her younger, *hippy* self:

So, at night time I can walk by the dance studios and hear you know, them dancing ... it's whether it's ballet music or neo classical or... or getting ready for something. With nine-inch nails, erm you know it's, it's very eclectic up here (P2)

Participant One's describes her choice of a very convenient, Anglo community, with a sense of relief at not having to manage any overarching sense of disruption:

Erm... it's a lovely area, it's got everything within a three or four-minute walk, erm and that's, you know they're all things that... that er that combine to make... to make moving country a success (P1)

Social and Cultural Diversity

Participants describe a sense of awareness of acceptance and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, both in their chosen communities and in wider society:

So the ... it's it's like the culture understands that a huge amount of people, if not most, are immigrants (P2)

When you're here, of course you're with other religions, other way of life, but here just seems a little bit more normal for me. So I mean it's a lot of fun (P3)

I... I live in an area that is full of...of young people, erm... of the whole spectrum of observance. (P1)

Cultural Duality

Participants express their comparison of having originated from one culture and relocating to another. They describe an ongoing process of integrating two cultural identities:

Yeah... so I have... I do have two homes and it is still...it is my previous home but this is my current home. And this home is nicer than the other. (P1)

They still have this there, they put some of their stuff in storage and they've moved to, you know. So they made it like a temporary kind of a move... (P2)

Participant Three struggles less with her Israeli-American status, feeling relief at integrating her Jewishness with her secular identity, despite her understanding of Israel's geopolitical fragilities:

I just feel normal, I don't feel on... on guard. Erm... of course things ... on guard here a little bit different than other areas but it just feels normal. (P3)

Language Barrier

Limited fluency in spoken and written Hebrew impacts participant's career choices, navigation of everyday life and the process of internalising a new cultural identity:

I wanted a job in English because although I speak Ivrit [modern Hebrew] erm, my Ivrit is not good enough if ...it's fine for everyday conversation, but not in a work environment (P1)

Even getting the job as a .. and an assistant I didn't go get a job in a gan [kindergarten] here erm, because I don't have the Hebrew enough (P2)

But I really wanted to er understand the culture, and in order to do that really, you kinda have to know something of the language (P2)

So, for me, and you know nothing was in English, nothing's erm you know that easy (P3)

Superordinate Theme 3 – Transcendence

Participants describe determination, managing everyday life in a new country as lone immigrants, wanting to remain fiercely independent, overcoming practical and emotional challenges and finding ways of coping.

Managing Bureaucracy

Participants all describe navigating the bureaucratic process of Aliyah. Participants One and Two, express a sense of their success as attributed to spirituality or luck, whereas Participant three feels she is coping better than other immigrants due to her frequent past relocations:

From that point of actually making the decision to go through the Jewish Agency and Nefesh b'Nefesh [Jewish relocation agency] to start the process, erm, one things after another inexplicably started falling into place, so things that could have been just so difficult, weren't. (P2)

I was exceptionally lucky because all the erm... all the expected bureaucracy, erm that I thought I would encounter, actually went particularly smoothly, so I didn't have a rough ride with all the different offices. I wasn't sent from pillar to post like I was the first time I came...(P1)

There's a lot of other olim that are having a lot of issues but... but for me I think there was really no big surprises. (P3)

Self-reliance and Independence

As lone females living in a new country, participants all express the need for independence, not wanting to burden others or rely on them. Attaining a driving license and finding suitable employment feature strongly as facilitators of both practical and financial independence:

So I pulled off from the side of the road and it wasn't a problem. Yep, so that was unexpected (P1)

I think soon as I can get my driver's license then I can... get out of here, get a little bit more independence, that will really jelly some things up. (P3)

I was going to give it eighteen months to find work. Erm...and then I might have had to reconsider the whole, the whole, the whole erm Aliyah programme (P1)

I.. I began trying to supplement my income because I knew OK I only have a few more years of this and then it's, I'm on my own you know (P2).

Positive Coping

Feelings of joy, gratitude, appreciation of new and beautiful surroundings, practicing self-compassion and acknowledging distress all enable a sense of positive coping. Despite the evident existence of fear and doubt, participants attempt to build on positive emotion and make the best of things:

I've learned how to be able to kick myself in the rear end, to be able to contemplate, to work on... and I'd have a good cry if I need to have a good cry (P3)

I'm not ... I don't want it to be like Pollyanna, and [laughs] you know like everything is wonderful, erm, because it is hard, you know (P2)

I would talk to my friend, the friend that lives here from [USA home town] and she was good at er... she was good at kinda talking me off the ledge... I was never on the ledge, but you know she was good at like bringing back to reality and helping me to you know unfog my glasses, to see you know, what's ...what's really here you know (P2)

I'm willing to give it a go and erm I, I see... I try and see the best in everything. Er...not everything is wonderful, but if you, if you look for the best bits, erm that helps (P1)

So for me it's just... gosh... it's everything. Like right now I can hear the jackals in the mountains and they just sound beautiful to me. So it's just the little things you know that really make me happy, so ... so yeah (P3)

Erm, getting up in the morning and looking out my window and seeing the Judean hills, you know [laughs] just like, like, yeah, just like, it's just simple things just blow me away... I'm going grocery shopping ... and I'm in Israel ... I'm going into the mall to buy some shoes, and I'm in Israel, wow... I'm just driving along and I'm stuck in traffic, and I'm in Israel (P2)

Freedom and Fun

The Aliyah experience appears to reawaken participants' sense of freedom and the desire to experience fun, though financial survival and working long hours is costing Participant Two the freedom she craves:

So we're riding a camel to Woodstock, you know, of the of the crazy hippy generation which I love which is a lot like this kibbutz is to, you know the twenty-second century (P3)

And I am like a fifteen-minute drive to the beach er... and I can go any time I want and I never take it for granted (P1)

But er, you know so the hobbies, the hobbies have kind of suffered for the time being (P2)

Superordinate Theme 4 - Intrinsic Identity

The ability to make sense of relocation and adapt to a new sociocultural identity is expressed as deeply rooted in participants' stories and past experiences:

Familial Influence

Internal narratives around the participants' family backgrounds continue to deeply influence current decision-making processes. Participant One expresses a sense of her upbringing as overshadowed by her parents' past, her sense of her father's emotional suppression and a feeling that Aliyah was expected and inevitable:

And my, my and my parents were wonderful, erm ...erm they were both erm... immigrants. They were..... my mother was a refugee, my father erm... came to the UK on the Kindertransport [UK rescue effort of Jewish children at risk from the Nazis, in the months before World War Two] (P1)

Certainly my father, his whole life because he was on the Kindertransport and didn't talk about anything before he was in the UK, his whole life was dedicated to sport, youth and Israel (P1)

My whole childhood and my whole education, my whole social environment has always been with a connection with Israel and the Jews and my community both there, not so much here because it works differently here. Erm.... so really it would have been very surprising had I not have wanted to er, to make Aliyah for the second time. (P1)

Participant Two describes her family history as an example to follow while taking her own steps towards a new life:

And I have other relatives that went west on the stage... on the stage coach, covered wagons you know and went West and tried... so I have like pioneer in my family from way back (P2)

And so that sense that erm, you can relocate and you can, you can thrive, is kind of almost in my genes, you know (P2)

Participant Three discusses her childhood as clouded by her mother's addictions and father's inability to cope, yet acknowledges her parents' sense of adventure and love of travel as influential of her life choices:

I think the big thing is my parents also travelled. So In the beginning being a young child and doing what the Kennedy's did and all the travel and when we travelled we stayed for months (P3)

So as a young child, and there were difficulties 'cause my mother did unfortunately, she was what you call a Valley of the Dolls mom...She was very much into her two o'clock, three o'clock martinis with her friends and then doing some reds and black beauties (P3)

Self-perception and Self-worth

Participants recognise unique abilities, positive character traits and strengths as enabling mastery over their current circumstances, yet concurrently express a sense of self-doubt and a lack of self-worth:

I have some times when I'm down, when I get like, when I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, erm, but I'd say for most of the time, I'm a pretty glass half full kind of person... yeah (P2)

Did I answer your question because sometimes I ramble so ...? [laughs] (P2)

Participant One discusses her desire to avoid conflict as a way of fitting in, displaying emotions only where she feels they are appropriate:

I don't know I just don't take, I don't like to have arguments, I don't like confrontation, erm....so quite often I will just go along with whatever, just so not to upset anybody or not to offend anybody. Erm...(P1)

So I'm quite an emotional person, where emotion is ... is a natural ... or could be a natural reaction. Erm...(P1)

Participant Three discusses protecting herself from risking vulnerability by remaining detached, observing the behaviour of others before engaging deeply and risking vulnerability:

Erm so yeah, I'm an oxymoron as you might say, I really, really am. It keeps people on their toes [being an oxymoron] I think so it's kinda fun watching people...(P3)

Religion and Spirituality

Religion and spirituality are key factors affecting the decision to make Aliyah, whether based in Judaism, Zionism, idealism, or reconnection to a sense of a spiritual self. Participant Two's conversion to Judaism and subsequent relocation to Israel, are part of her process of self-discovery of what she sees as the true the essence of herself:

My background was in Christianity. It was in erm... it was kind of a long journey.... and erm continually was just seeking kind of... the way I feel like I was looking for truth. Erm and yeah, looking for truth, authenticity, real, erm real faith (P2)

Though Participant One states that Aliyah had no spiritual impact for her, this is at odds with her description of strong emotional releases, triggered by songs based in Jewish spirituality:

Emotionally, erm... every time I hear Hatikvah [Israeli National Anthem, literal meaning The Hope] I cry, erm... If I hear the song at a wedding Im Eshkachech Yerushalayim [if I forget thee, oh Jerusalem], then that makes me, makes me cry (P1)

Participant Three's identification with Israeli culture is intertwined with her spiritual essence and the open ability to practice her faith:

Very much into the earth, very earthy people. Erm very much into spiritual ... er you know the spiritual way of how they feel, how they think, is a lot like my thinking too at the same time (P3)

I don't feel, you know during the holidays are really great here because they're real (P3)

Superordinate Theme 5 – Purpose and Meaning

Participants describe becoming part of Israeli society as giving them a new sense of purpose and meaning and new goals to strive towards:

Dream Fulfilment

Participants describe Aliyah as the fulfilment of a long-term dream, each having considered relocation for many years:

I decided in my heart really, that I was gonna live here someday erm, and that I was gonna be Jewish. That being said, it, obviously it took til 2015 for that to actually happen so [laughs] er.. but yeah (P2)

I think as a... I've always wanted to come here. Erm, I had experience before as a young child being here and always wondering why I was going back (P3)

Well the fact that I'm here ... that's... that's the number one positive. Erm... the fact that I still don't believe that I'm here, erm (P1)

Contribution, Helping and Organising

Living a meaningful life in Israel translates for all participants into a sense of needing to contribute, to give back to society. Participant Three describes her desire to give to others as

also meeting her own needs for wanting to do good and fill her time in a way that facilitates her identity transition from military to civilian life:

So there's a lot of things I've had to learn how to do, which is erm... er... basically getting a schedule back which I'm now doing a lot more now, which is helping me out (P3)

I like helping the person out that's you know.... also having a bad time, trying to relate with them and help them. And if they don't want help, you know I back off. That's one thing I've learned, I've learned how to back off and just let them maybe drown a little bit, you know (P3)

I wanna do some voluntary work because it's one thing that's very big for me is to be able to give back to Israel as much as possible...I'll volunteer for the lone soldier programme, the young er soldiers that come over here and serve but they're from you know England or the United States...(P3)

For participant One, working meets her needs to contribute to society whilst also supporting herself financially and aiding her dissociation from her feelings of getting older:

I didn't want to come on a potential twenty-year holiday. Not... I couldn't afford a twenty-year holiday nice as it might have been, erm and I felt that I wanted to contribute something... to... to... to the society to... and also for my own self-esteem (P1)

I look, I look at the retired... retired erm...ladies and gentlemen who live in [mentions residential area] and they spend their days walking up and down, sitting having coffee. And... although that's very nice a couple of days a week, erm... I really felt that I needed to retain some, some movement in my brain erm... and...and... and work (P1)

Similarly, Participant Two expresses her quest for financial stability as interwoven with her need to feel that she is contributing through her work:

It's really important to me to... to invest in the next generation you know. And I, any way that I can do that is just awesome. So this .. so for the time I was investing in my own kids and now, you know I can invest in these kids, at this age (P2)

Refuge and Security

Both Participants One and Three express a sense of Israel as a refuge, revealing an underlying feeling of discrimination and never feeling completely safe or at home in their birth nations:

And [P. place of work USA] is not really one of the best places for Jews to live anyway, so erm the State itself [place P. lived] itself has its little issues and that helped at the same time so...(P3)

And I think it's very important that the Jews have somewhere and that it's open to everybody, you know subject to a bit of paperwork at the Jewish Agency (P1)

They both express a sense of serenity, completeness, seeing Israel as home, as facilitating a feeling of normality:

I'm very relaxed here, I feel incredibly at home (P1)

It's being home. It's my home. It's my... it's the home that I have in my heart, erm... it's the home of the Jewish people erm... and I just feel... I just feel that this is where I should be (P1)

I just feel as I said, erm normal. (P3)

Wow.....Erm I just feel whole again, I just ... It's so hard to really just explain. I can breathe... breathe fresh air, erm... erm ...erm...yeah it's just... it's just and unusual experience, it really, really is. (P3)

Despite her understanding of threats of war or terror attack, Participant Two, having not experienced religious prejudice, notices a communal sense of protection, compared with the individualistic behaviour she would expect in the USA:

And so you have a whole country of people that they're go to is... I got your back, OK? (P2)

So, as opposed to like in America, where you know some guys erm shooting up some place and then everybody runs and freaks out you know, here when some guy's shooting a gun, the guys, the people like the soldiers and everybody who has ever been a soldier [makes explosion sound] you know [laughs], they come and they try to apprehend the guy who's trying to shoot like they just take action, and it's just like, it's the most amazing thing (P2)

Discussion

The current study explored the phenomenon of Aliyah within the framework of IPA, as a lived experienced (Smith, 2015). As such, emergent themes evolved directly from the data, encompassing the impact on relocation of identity transition, past lived experiences, current emotional state and internal representations which were interlaced throughout the participants' narratives. Subordinate themes were interconnected rather than discrete and had time not been limited, deeper analysis may have facilitated further thematic consolidation. Nonetheless, emergent themes as reported revealed some distinctive concepts supporting both the sense of uniqueness of Aliyah as an immigration phenomenon and the concept of Aliyah as a positive psychological intervention. Despite an awareness of socioeconomic, cultural and political challenges, all participants demonstrated resilient, positively focused coping

mechanisms, expressing a sense of newfound freedom, belonging, meaning in life, rediscovery, reinvention and reconnection with the essence of self. For all participants, emigrating to Israel was framed from a positive perspective, with a sense of automatic acceptance by the host nation, gratitude for ability to openly identify as Jewish, whether religiously observant or not and a sense of relief, refuge and security.

Participants described unique, yet conceptually overlapping experiences of awareness of the difficulties of social and cultural adaptation, whilst reporting less of a sense of *culture shock* than immigrants in previous studies (Schwartz et al., 2010; Ward, 2005). Previous research has argued that a forward-thinking outlook mediates the physical and emotional effect of stress associated with managing both acute and ongoing life challenges, which is supported by the current study. Participants described a plethora of positive behaviours enabling resilient coping and a sense of their own continued personal development through their Aliyah experience (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Weiss and Berger, 2008). Furthermore, as with a previous qualitative study of women aged sixty-five and older (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2012), the current study contradicted Western societal preconceptions of older women as facing dependence and frailty; all participants expressed the intention to continue to live autonomous, active and meaningful lives, demonstrating a sense of positive aging, listening to their *inner voices* with the confidence of maturity, rediscover the essence themselves as women (Valliant, 2008).

Relocation was considered within the context of participants' stage of the life journey, as a continuation of their story, through making sense of the past and planning the future, rather than a new chapter. Echoing Erikson's (1994) life cycle theory proposing that for adults in their fifties to mid-sixties, participants focused on caring for others, contributing to a new generation and moving towards reassessment of what is important for the future. As described by McAdams (2001), the psychological influences of internal narratives were evident. Participants decisions were shaped by internal representations of their life stories, when considering their relationships with the self and with others. Particularly for Participants One and Two, reassessment of the need for hands-on parenting engendered a sense of release from maternal guilt, with the knowledge that their children were safely living their own independent lives and with modern technology allowing for *remote parenting* (Remennick, 2016). Participant Three described her release from the somewhat parental boundaries of her military career and reconnection with her sense of freedom and creativity.

Familial influences, patterns and childhood expectations were expressed through sometimes judgmental, conflicted and often self-critical inner voices. Nevertheless, as suggested by Seery et al. (2010), childhood struggles may have encouraged the development of personal resources as adults, so that despite periods of self-doubt, participants continued to evolve strategies to increase self-esteem, which Mruk (2006) argued may lead to increased experience of positive emotion. Furthermore, as previous studies suggest, the coexistence of both negative and positive emotions may facilitate personal growth, as demonstrated in this sample (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon & Worth, 2015).

Previous studies have suggested that particularly for immigrants aged over fifty, physical health and social resilience, a separate but related concept to resilience in everyday life situations, may support positive adaptation (Amit, 2008; Amit & Litwin, 2010; Friedland, Amit, Arian, Fleischer & Kirschenbaum, 2005). Participants in the current study described the opportunity for building social resilience through inclusion in social activities as paramount to their continued well-being. Nevertheless, though relocation enabled a sense of freedom and fun, hedonic happiness alone, fleeting pleasures, were not enough for the participants to feel that they were living a good life. The need for eudaimonic happiness, flourishing through meaning and purpose, was evident in all three participants' narratives. Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker and Garbinsky (2013) and Ryff (2014) described the merging of the human need for self-actualisation, for a life of both happiness and meaning, echoed by all participants. A sense of participants' self-worth was maintained through active contribution to others, whether by volunteering, engaging in meaningful employment, or supporting the development of future generations (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2013). Participants' individual tendencies towards emotional intelligence and self-actualisation included positive psychological practices such as gratitude; *counting blessings over burdens*, learning to self-soothe and self-compassion also facilitated participants' continual sense of accomplishment (Bar-On, 2010; Brown, 2012; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; Neff, 2011). Finding purpose and meaning, in both a personal and work setting (Frankl, 2006; Wong, 2013) and the ability to remain determined and passionate about one's goals and dreams (Duckworth, 2016) may all have helped participants mediate responses to both unexpected and everyday dilemmas (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno, Westphal and Mancini, 2011).

Strategies for integration through the reinvention of a social group were described by all participants who as in previous studies, described a bidirectional process of acceptance and being accepted as easing the way for new immigrants (Akhtar & Choi, 2004; Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000). Later studies have considered models of acculturation which contribute to effective integration and have found well-being amongst immigrations to be linked to a positive convergence between aspects of the culture of the host nation and the receiving nation (Phinney, et. al, 2001; Ward, 2008). Participants demonstrated tenacity in managing the sometimes-frustrating bureaucratic processes, such as passing driving tests and obtaining driving licenses. However, though participants expressed a sense of cultural acceptance, they faced their own unique challenges with social integration, including challenges with Hebrew language fluency which Amit and Bar-Lev (2015) suggest is integral to cultural integration, however, participants' self-perception impacted on social integration more than language proficiency. Whilst both participants One and Two demonstrated a sense of being socially adept at building social networks, participant Three's tendency for social comparison, her sense that she was *better than* some of the less adventurous immigrant women she met, proved challenging when forming new relationships. All participants evidenced a need to avoid loneliness, which research suggests is integral to psychological well-being (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Strengths and Limitations

Whilst every effort was made to positively recruit a homogenous sample, cultural differences between participants from the UK and USA were apparent, as were socioeconomic disparities, however, on analysis, participants described similar meaning behind their experiences. Participant One was a returning immigrant, which from a coping and bureaucratic perspective, may have been advantageous for her current relocation. However, the primary researcher felt that the homogeneity of the sample was uncompromised by these factors and participant's responses provided an abundance of rich data, suggesting that interview questions did not overtly lead the participant's responses. The primary researcher is of a similar demographic to the participants, culturally and socially, which may have influenced participants' responses, though had the researcher been from outside of the community, participants may have felt less at ease, given the nature of some of their disclosures. Overall, the study positively focused on the exploration of meaning of Aliyah for three women of similar ages, who shared life experiences as women relocating to Israel at this stage of life. The convergence of themes elicited from their interviews, suggested that

though the nature of IPA is idiographic, these women's Aliyah experiences were comparable and as such, meaning can be derived from the findings for this demographic.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Social acceptance, meaningful employment or contribution, social networks and support were essential to the participants, who arrived with a multitude of skills, from self-employment or employment in their birth countries. However, most current state sponsored immigration programmes are aimed at employment and education for younger people or families.

Mentoring, education and employment programmes for the over fifties are limited, though the current study demonstrated that older women immigrants may both want and need such programmes. There would be merit in the repetition of this study considering the experience of single Anglo males of the same age group, as well as for single Anglo women aged thirty-five to fifty, who may choose to integrate through marriage or motherhood as further studies may offer insights into factors which could enhance integration for all immigrants and help identify where there is a need for change. At the time of writing, the law has changed for Anglo immigrants who can now obtain an Israeli driving license in Israel with relative ease, thanks to a new not-for-profit organisation aiming to meet some of the needs of new immigrants currently unfulfilled by government programmes. In summary, giving older female immigrants a voice through this research not only enables the consideration of factors which may support immigration for this demographic, but may lead to the development of support programmes aimed of easing the journey of integration and increasing the perceived value of older women immigrants to Israeli society, ensuring their ability to remain in Israel as permanent, contributing citizens.

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3

What is positive energy and how is it exhibited in the workplace? A qualitative exploration of this elusive concept

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Abstract

This study set out to answer two questions: “what is positive energy” and “what behaviours emit positive energy in the workplace”. A qualitative research study was designed and data was gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. 26 participants responded to the questionnaires and 3 interviews were conducted. Through the process of thematic analysis, 14 themes in total were identified of which 6 were considered to be meta-themes that were relevant across all forms of data. These themes were: Demeanour, Direction, Support, Communication, Competence and Authenticity. The findings of this study in-part support existing research in the field of Positive Organisational Scholarship, but go further in proposing a new definition for positive energy and patterns of behaviours that emit positive energy in the workplace.

Introduction

Since the birth of the field of Positive Psychology there have been countless studies and papers into a range of positive phenomena that make life worth living. Nevertheless, the area of Positive Energy remains relatively uncommon in Positive Psychology textbooks or syllabi. There has been a trickle of studies in this area since the early 2000s, typically by a small group of researchers such as Dutton, Quinn, Cameron and Baker, but the subject hasn't made it into the mainstream in either the areas of personal well-being or Positive Organisational Scholarship. This could be because “Energy” is considered new-age or “an impossibly squishy subject” as suggested by Cross, Baker and Parker (2003 p. 52).

Nevertheless, the studies that have been published to date have demonstrated tangible benefits to us being able to understand Energy and how we can cultivate it for the benefit of organisations and individuals. Cameron (2013) states that “Positive Energizers are significantly higher performers than their colleagues” (p. 76). He also claims that people exposed to positive energy in the workplace have higher personal well-being, higher job

satisfaction and higher engagement. In the broader context, Cameron says that organisations with high energy have “more cohesion among employees, more orientation towards learning, more experimentation and creativity” (p. 55).

While instinctively we feel that we can identify people with positive and negative energy, it is much harder to be certain about how that energy is emitted or passed from person to person. Is conveying positive energy as simple as smiling? Is it about having an optimistic lense on every situation? Is it about speaking at a certain pitch or speed or gesticulating madly while talking? Is it about acts of kindness? There are all manner of things that could be considered to transmit positive energy, but to date there is very little academic research to confirm or contest any of these possibilities. Given the opportunity we have to harness energy for the benefit of individuals and organisations, this is the area that the current study sought to explore.

Method

In order to answer the questions “what is positive energy” and “what behaviours emit positive energy in the workplace” data was gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. 26 participants responded to the questionnaires of which 3 participants requested follow-up interviews.

Summary of Findings

Over 60 pages of data were analysed resulting in a total of 1195 codes being identified. These codes broadly fell into 14 themes. The most prevalent of these themes, identified as meta-themes were Demeanour, Direction, Support, Communication, Competence and Authenticity. From these findings the following conclusions can be suggested:

Positive energy is most frequently observed in the Demeanour of colleagues. This may present in the tone of their interactions, the emotions they express or their general behaviour. Not only are these ways of expressing one’s own energy, but positive energy can also be passed from person to person via this conduct.

Providing clear Direction has a strong positive reaction in those seeking guidance. Ambition supported by competence are important, but giving others the sense that they can contribute to the achievement of these ambitions and they understand how to move forward towards those goals is highly motivating and participants reported observing and feeling positive energy in these cases. This isn't only important when things are going well and participants can progress smoothly towards their goal; in challenging times, having a positive solution mind-set helps teams identify ways out of the challenge to keep moving in the right direction.

Although autonomy was a minor theme arising from the data, Support was much more significant. Participants recorded the emotional support they felt through meaningful relationships at work as well as the tactical support that others offered to help them perform well in their work. The sense of not being alone, but striving towards a common goal while being able to lean on others, outstripped the positivity of being left to one's own devices. In fact autonomy could be linked with the isolation and withdrawal that was described in times of stress and low affect.

Communication, whether verbal, non-verbal, written or other is a critical conduit for positive energy. The act of engaging with others in itself is perceived to be a positively energizing act, and the absence of interaction is often a sign that something is wrong. Once communication is taking place the content and the tone also have huge potential to express positive energy. These facets can be linked to the other themes that have been identified for maximum effect (e.g. sharing the direction of the team and a communication style that shares a positive demeanour).

Competence and Authenticity may seem like conflicting themes - one being hard and tangible and one being soft and more of a perception, but they are both important in conveying positive energy in the workplace.

Competence is important because it gives people comfort that the Direction is achievable; people have faith in expertise and observing it in others inspires people to work hard and develop their own competence.

Authenticity also links to other themes such as Support. Participants are weary of inauthenticity and if positive energy is perceived as being forced it will have a negative impact on others. They also described the extraneous effort that they would invest if they sense that someone genuinely cares about them as a person or their success and competence.

Forcing positive energy, even if driven by positive intent, is likely to have negative consequences. Therefore, finding environments where we genuinely care about the direction we are heading in; have colleagues whose expertise is available to support us or having our own competence that enables us to support others - these environments are critical for the production of positive energy. In order to express this energy we need to become mindful of our demeanour and the way and frequency with which we communicate this to our colleagues. In addition it is worth noting that positive energy won't only come from senior members of the team. Frequently the demeanour and communication of Team Members has just as important an effect on the team as a whole.

Discussion

The findings of this paper support a number of the findings from previous research across a number of different studies. However, the themes identified also provide an opportunity to provide a clearer definition of Positive Energy than those that have been proposed to date.

The Definition of Positive Energy

One striking finding from the data is that Positive Energy isn't aimless or static. There is something "agentic" about it as suggested by Cole, Bruch & Vogel (2012). The definition proffered by Quinn & Dutton (2005) which is most often cited, is that "Energy is a type of positive affective arousal". However, this doesn't reflect the notion of direction and momentum that was articulated by the participants of this study time and again. Therefore, rather than thinking of Positive Energy as a state of arousal, it is proposed that Positive Energy could be defined as a Motivational Force. The term Motivational Force is much more descriptive of an energy with direction that inspires, motivates and enables others to support and achieve the aspired outcome. Force also gives the sense of affecting the things around it - colleagues can be swept up by a motivating force; energised unconsciously to invest extraneous effort and develop competence where there was less before. This new definition again supports Cole, Bruch and Vogel (2012) that Positive Energy is more than just affect and can be implied in this description to include emotional arousal, cognitive alertness and purposeful behaviour.

What are the Inputs that Create Positive Energy?

In support of the Quinn & Dutton (2005) paper, the current participants did reflect the notion of interpreting “energy texts” which can either generate or deplete energy. These texts, which Quinn & Dutton identified in conversation, would seem to come from much broader sources according to the current participants. In fact the current data suggests that colleagues in the workplace are constantly observing and assessing the behaviours, direction, authenticity, communication acts, tone, purpose, and the competence of the people they interact with. Each one of these assessments has the potential to increase or decrease the energy that is received in an interaction.

The current findings appear to support Quinn’s 2007 paper in suggesting that energy is generated through mutual resource creation (i.e. achieving a shared purpose which could align with the theme of Direction), feedback (i.e. interpreting behaviours through energy texts which could be aligned with the themes of Demeanour and Communication) and attachment (building solidarity and trust which could be aligned with the theme of Authenticity). However, these three inputs miss the themes of Support and Competence which were identified in the current data. Support suggests that being set a direction and achieving that direction is not energising alone. Knowing that there are others around you who can offer support if things go wrong and having the opportunity to either experience the competence of others or develop your own competence - these two themes are energising too and shouldn’t be excluded from any list of inputs.

Four of the dimensions identified by Cross, Baker & Parker (2003) as generating positive energy also closely align with the current findings:

1. A compelling vision and 2. Notable progress both equate to the Direction theme
3. Meaningful contribution equates to the Competence theme
4. Being engaged in the interaction equates to the Demeanour theme

But again, not all the current findings are encompassed in this model. Cross et al. do not reflect the themes of Support, Communication and Authenticity.

Rosales (2015) picks up some of the themes that Cross et al. miss. They identified Task-enabling (Support) Trust & Respectful engagement (Authenticity) as key contributors to HQCs.

Outcomes or Consequences of Positive Energy

While the purpose of this study was not to identify the outcomes of positive energy, some of the data gathered did touch on this. At a high level, the short-term outcomes described by previous studies were also reflected by the current participants. Being drawn to work with energisers, devoting additional effort and motivating others to act were identified by Cross et al. (2003) and supported by the current findings. Cognitive engagement and processing information more quickly and thoroughly was described by the current participants as well as Baker et al. (2003) as were non-verbal signs of energy.

The longer-term benefits of organisations with positive energy cannot be analysed in light of the current data, but it is worth noting that the participating organisation is in the Sunday Times Top 100 small companies to work for and has grown approximately 75% year on year since its inception. Whether this success is due to the presence of positive energy can't be demonstrated, but it is certainly possible.

Attachment Theory

There is one final observation to make before concluding this research. While it does not relate to any of the papers included in the Literature Review, there is a notable alignment between the findings of this study and Bowlby & Ainsworth's (1965) Attachment Theory. Attachment Theory describes the development of a safe relationship from which an individual (typically a child) can explore the world, learn new things, take risks, but always return to the safe environment if they feel threatened or if they need help. There are similarities between this relationship and the relationships between colleagues at work as described by the participants of this study.

An attachment figure can set the Direction for an individual - whether it is to learn to read (for a child) or to complete a project (at work). Positive and negative reinforcement are Communicated to the individual throughout their progress in order to keep them on the right path. This communication may occur verbally, non-verbally or be interpreted by the demeanour of the attachment figure. Support is provided in the form of the attachment - the individual can explore and make progress on their own, knowing the attachment figure is

available if needed. Throughout the progress towards the directed goal, the individual is developing competence while observing and learning from those competent people around them. Finally, the relationship with the attachment figure must be authentic or else it will fall apart and the individual will seek attachment with another person.

While it wasn't anticipated that Attachment Theory would be relevant at the start of this study. There are clear parallels between the relationships children build with significant attachment figures and the expression and experience of positive energy in the workplace.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of the concept of positive energy and to identify the behaviours that emit positive energy in work environments. In response to the data analysed, the following definition of positive energy is being proposed:

Positive energy is a motivational force that affects the cognitive arousal and agentic behaviour of those who experience it. It can be emitted through a person's demeanour and acts of communication, but how it is received will depend on the interpretation of the recipient. In the workplace, the key factors that enable positive energy are setting a clear direction, providing professional and personal support to individuals, enabling the development of relevant competences and displaying authentic behaviour.

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4

Amazing Me: From MAPP to market

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Abstract

Amazing Me is a digital mindfulness-based positive psychology programme for primary schools developed by current Bucks MAPP students Tracy Richardson and Lee Newitt alongside their colleague Kelly Bishop. Tracy and Lee met on the first weekend of the MAPP in 2016 and with their shared passion for utilising positive psychology in schools, they formed a community interest company, Seahorse Education Partnerships Ltd. The first ideas for *Amazing Me* were born when a school that Lee had been successfully running coaching programmes in for several years asked us to develop some materials to use with the children. Over the course of a year, what began as a set of 6 lessons for one school has grown into a 7 module, 35-week programme complete with lesson plans, animations, mindfulness practice audios, key vocabulary lists, extended curriculum ideas and a community forum. *Amazing Me* has its official launch on Friday June 8th 2018 and will be available nationally.

5

Positive education: A whole school approach

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Abstract

This report will provide an overview of whole school positive education (PE) in the United Kingdom (UK), beginning with definitions of PE and character education (CE), and the connections and similarities between them. A brief rationale for whole school PE will follow, along with an overview of recent UK policy, some brief case studies, and an overview of challenges and solutions, including a proposed new model for whole school PE. The report will conclude that the UK still has issues to address in order for whole school PE to reach its full potential, and examine the role of external providers as the UK PE landscape evolves.

Introduction: Positive Education and Character Education

What is Positive Education?

There are two main arguments in favour of PE; *prevention* (preventing mental health issues from arising or worsening) and *promotion* (based on the positive psychology concept of *flourishing*).

Preventative interventions pre-date Positive Psychology (PP). One of the most prominent examples is Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, and Gillham's (1995, as cited in Seligman, 2017) Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), aimed at reducing instances of teenage depression. While early findings showed this to be successful (Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, & Seligman, 1995), later studies indicated PRP may not achieve the desired benefits for all children (Cardemil, Reivich, & Seligman, 2002), and cast doubts over effect sizes (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). A systematic review and meta-analysis by Bastounis, Callaghan, Banerjee, and Michail (2016) damningly concluded that the evidence did not support earlier claims; the authors of the study recommended against large-scale PRP implementation.

One highly-publicised example of the promotion approach was the introduction of a *happiness curriculum* at Wellington College - a prestigious UK independent school - in 2006. Morris (2015) outlines the rationale and extensive curriculum content, which includes prevention elements such as resilience, as well as a wealth of promotion elements. Central to

the school's ethos are the character traits developed in young people - "The Wellington Identity" (Wellington College, n.d.).

PE research and practice has recently adopted a *joint argument*; Boniwell (2018) refers to the *two pillars* of PE - *well-being* and *resilience* - which each include elements of prevention and promotion. White and Murray (2015) describe three main ways for PE to appear in schools, which can be summarised as prevention, promotion, and *character education* (CE).

PE's definitions often include a combination of PP, pedagogy and the skills required for academic success; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich and Linkins (2009) define PE as a combination of teaching academic and happiness skills. In 2013, a 3-day global well-being summit, which gathered some of the world's greatest names in PE, took place at 10 Downing Street and Wellington College to create the International Positive Education Network (IPEN) and explore the application of well-being in educational settings. According to White (2016), the consensus was that education should allow young people to flourish academically and emotionally. IPEN represents PE with "the double helix" (IPEN, n.d.), one strand being *academics*, and the other *character & well-being*.

What is Character Education?

CE is not new. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (Jubilee Centre) (2017) explains that it featured prominently in school education from the inception of schooling, but was briefly lost in the late 20th century in much of the western world. Jones wrote in 1937 about the dangers of CE being a "fad", citing contradictory interpretations and a lack of a solid evidence base as possible causes.

The Jubilee Centre (2017) define CE as the skills - *moral, intellectual, performance* and *civic virtues* - required to achieve life's highest potential: Flourishing. Many examples of character traits included under the virtue categories are essential building blocks of PP.

Are Positive Education and Character Education the Same Thing?

This report includes CE, as there are elements of CE in PE, and vice versa. White and Murray (2015), IPEN (n.d.) and the Jubilee Centre (2017) create a close connection between the two in their definitions of PE and CE respectively.

Why a Whole School Approach?

From its inception, PP included a focus on improving education (Sheldon, Fredrickson, Rathunde, Csikszentmihalyi, & Haidt, 2000) and made reference to “positive institutions” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, pp. 5, 8, 12). It therefore makes sense that PE should teach PP skills alongside a wider remit to improve schools and education. Waters, White, Wang and Murray (2015) state that, for society to function well, it is essential for schools to live up to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000) vision, and White (2016) stresses that the entire school culture needs to be centred around well-being and the provision of a safe environment that supports and cares for children.

The term *positive education* was coined when Geelong Grammar School (GGS), a prestigious independent school in Australia, brought Martin Seligman and his team over from the United States (US) to embark on a large scale staff training programme to roll out PE across the entire school in 2008. The GGS story is described in Norrish (2015); the GGS approach includes prevention, promotion and character aspects of PE, and focuses on the entire school community and beyond, with the creation of the Institute of Positive Education to propagate PE externally. GGS’s model for PE (Norrish, 2015, p.31) has flourishing at its core, with character strengths supporting six elements: *positive accomplishment, purpose, relationships, emotion, health and engagement*; essentially Seligman’s 2011 PERMA framework, plus health.

Academics and practitioners agree the whole school approach is the most effective. In 2016, the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) gathered “what matters and what works” (NCB, 2016a, para. 2). In their supporting resources (NCB, 2016b), they summarise recommended actions, provide practical tools, and make a case for monitoring progress. A key finding is the need to adopt a whole school approach, to engage the whole school community and prioritise staff learning and development.

McQuaid (2017) highlights that with organisational change, people tend to eventually default back to the way things were before. She advocates gaining commitment for PE initiatives by undertaking an *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI) process - driven by a celebration of positive past achievements, recognition of skills used and satisfactions gained, and their application to the achievement of future dreams – involving all stakeholders. Waters, White, Wang, and Murray (2015) describe the AI process at St Peter’s College in Australia as a way to disseminate PE throughout the entire school.

Waters (2011) also emphasises the importance of whole school PE. She recommends including elements of PP in the academic curriculum and stresses that students need to receive PP interventions/lessons repeatedly over their school years, and in different aspects of school. She points out that teachers and other staff also need to be emotionally and socially well in order to positively influence students.

Children can develop their character by catching it from role models such as teachers. The Jubilee Centre (2017) highlights the importance of emotional contagion and the impact that a school's ethos and culture have on children. This author has observed, in her professional experience of running a CE / PE programme in UK schools (RWS, n.d.), that the higher the teacher engagement, the better the outcomes.

This extends to school leaders. Parker (2016) quotes Sir Anthony Seldon in her article as saying that headteachers need to do more than "just paying lip service" (para. 18) to PE. The University of Birmingham (UOB, 2015) stress that staff involvement and training in CE is not enough without the effective support of school leaders and policies.

Whole School Positive Education in the UK

It is worth noting that CE is a much more widely-used term in the UK than PE, although according to Parker (2016), PE is experiencing a push and increased respect in UK schools .

CE is a "hot topic"; the Association for Character Education's (ACE) annual conference will take place on 6th July 2018, and Townley Grammar School hosted a CE conference on 21st March 2018. On 12th May 2018, Lichfield Cathedral School hosted "Character & Being-Centred Education with Ethical Leadership" (Lichfield Cathedral School, n.d.), where this author delivered a PE-themed presentation. Morgan (2017) asks why, if CE is so important, only a few schools - often independent ones - provide the right environment for it. As the case studies section will demonstrate, however, the state sector is beginning to catch up.

According to the NatCen (2017) report, teachers see an embedded cross-curricular approach with a strong leadership and vision as key factors to success, while highlighting the importance of having the required skills and resources, as well as encouragement, support and professional development. Relationships between staff and students, and staff role-modelling, are also seen as essential.

This author carried out a Twitter poll amongst teachers. Whilst not statistically meaningful, this simple survey of UK teachers informally confirms the findings of the NatCen (2017) report that the majority of schools engaging in CE / PE favour a whole school approach (see Figure 5.1).

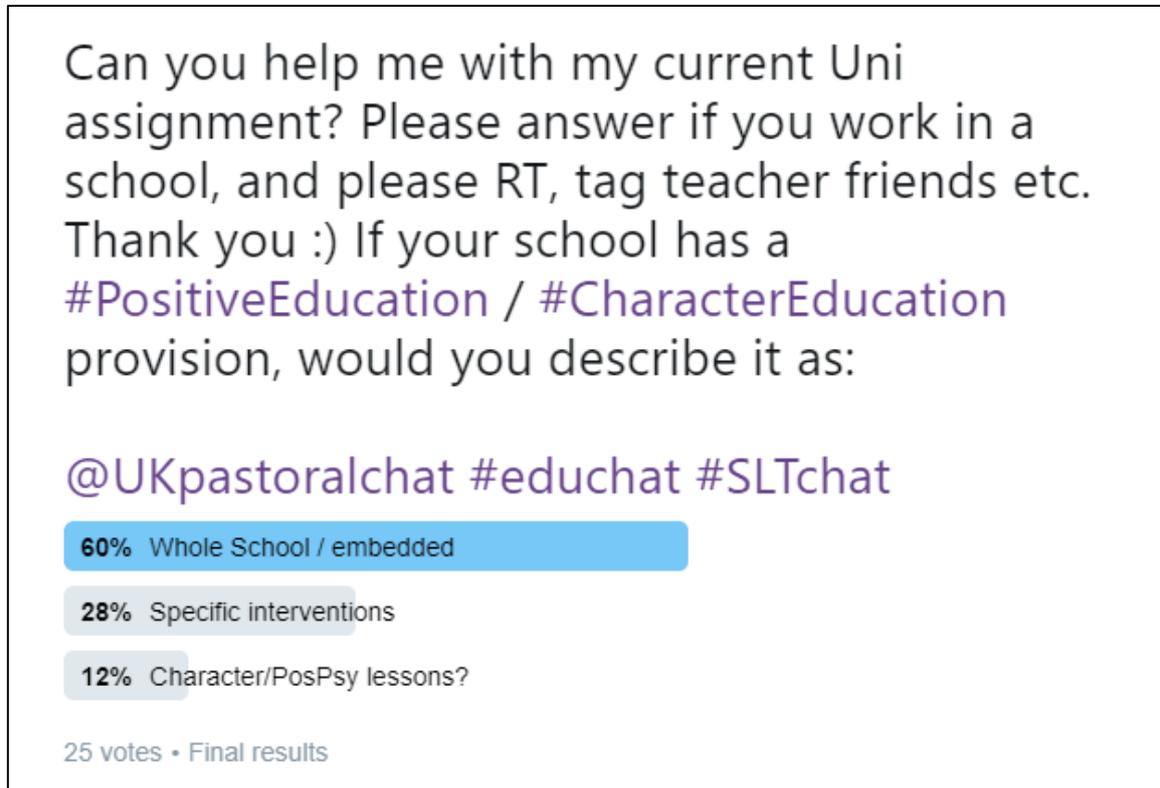


Figure 5.1. Twitter poll question and results. The poll ran on Twitter for 24 hours from 11.44pm on 14th April 2018. Follow-up tweets specified that the request was aimed at UK-based teachers/school staff (most of this author’s Twitter teacher contacts are UK-based).

Additionally, the UOB (2015) report shows that 80% of primary and more than half of secondary school teachers said their school’s CE provision was based on a whole school approach. Only a third of teachers, however, had been trained in aspects of CE, despite 60% being required to teach non-academic subjects related to it. The report also highlights that assessment of pupils in the UK “hinders the development of the whole child” (p. 5); this response reflects the view of 80% of interviewed teachers.

UK Policy

The UK has seen more public policy adoption for PE than the US, according to Kristjánsson (2012), with the Education Secretary announcing in 2007 that all state secondary schools

were to introduce happiness lessons by 2011. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) laid out an ambitious Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), which would see schools playing a central role in their communities, and increased integration between services, prioritising the needs of families, and the happiness of every child. By the time the Children's Plan was published, the government's Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative had already been launched and was, according to DCSF (2007) being used by 60% of primary schools. This programme, unlike later initiatives, attempted to place more focus on the promoting elements of PE. According to the Department for Education's (DfE) 2010a evaluation report, SEAL ran in 70% of secondary schools and 90% of primary schools, but research showed it to have had little impact. The report provides a number of possible reasons, and some recommendations – see *challenges*, “*stickability*” and *future directions*, below. 2007 also saw the introduction of the PRP, labelled as *UK Resilience Programme* (DfE 2010b) across 22 schools in three local authorities. Quantitative data indicates that, whilst the programme had an initial impact on academic achievement, attendance in school and depressive symptoms, these were short-lived and highly variable, depending on the characteristics of pupils and how the programme was run.

By the time DfE published its 2010a and 2010b reports, a new government was in power. The following General Election (GE) saw a change of government in 2015; this was followed by a change of Prime Minister (PM) in 2016 and a snap GE in 2017. With each change of government and PM, priorities change, previous policies and initiatives are discarded, and new ones introduced.

In 2015, the Secretary for Education introduced the *Character Awards*, which aimed to “identify, recognise and celebrate” (DfE, 2016a) beacons of CE. These only ran for two years; two new Secretaries of Education have been appointed since 2016.

The Healthy Minds project (Centre for Economic Performance, n.d.) is an active project involving 11,000 secondary school students from 32 schools over four years, with the aim of establishing whether developing skills for resilience and character leads to improved academic performance. The curriculum (Healthy Minds in Schools, n.d.) is mostly steeped in prevention-focused PE and the development of performance, intellectual and civic virtues.

In contrast to this fairly utilitarian approach to CE, Public Health England (PHE) commissioned a prevention-focused resource (PHE, 2015) to bolster the well-being and

emotional health of children and young people in schools and colleges. The report sets out eight principles for the promotion of emotional well-being and health in educational institutions (see Figure 5.2). It is unclear how and where this rich resource has been used.



Figure 5.2. Eight principles to promoting a whole school and college approach to emotional health and wellbeing. (Crown copyright 2015. Reproduced under the terms of the Open Government License v3.0).

Examples / Case Studies

The examples of whole school PE / CE have been selected for their diverse approaches and to illustrate the work done by state-funded schools in the UK.

Aureus School. This secondary academy in Oxfordshire has “nurturing hearts and minds” (Aureus School, n.d.a, page header) as its strapline, and describes its mission as educating the whole child so they can “grow, learn and flourish” (para. 2) – the strapline of the GLF Multi Academy Trust (MAT) (GLF, n.d.) Aureus belongs to. This ethos is reflected in the school’s timetable, which includes daily time for personal development, coaching and meditation for pupils and staff (Aureus School, n.d.b).

Floreat Education. This is a MAT founded by Lord O’Shaughnessy and comprises four free schools (Floreat Education, n.d.a) formed with pupil flourishing at their core (Floreat Education, n.d.b). Their philosophy is visually represented with the phrase “every child flourishing” at the centre of a circle surrounded by *curiosity, character virtues, core skills* and *cultural knowledge*.

XP MAT. The two schools in the XP MAT represent a radical change in education, as demonstrated through their principles - centred around community, character, and ownership (XP Trust, n.d.a) - and pedagogy (XP Trust, n.d.b), which delivers “knowledge and skills-based content through cross-subject learning expeditions” (para. 2) instead of traditional subject lessons.

University of Birmingham School (UOB School). This school operates in partnership with UOB, making it the UK’s first university training school (secondary). It also draws upon the excellent work at the Jubilee Centre for its firm grounding in CE. (UOB School, n.d.a). The pedagogy (UOB School, n.d.b) eschews traditional streaming by ability, and the extended school day (UOB School, n.d.c) allows the inclusion of a broad enrichment and CE curriculum.

Crowmarsh Gifford Primary School (CG). While running a programme in school (RWS, n.d.) and when interviewing the headteacher, this author has experienced the sense of excitement and joy conveyed in the *Head’s Welcome* (CG, n.d.). From initiatives placing a strong emphasis on being able to make mistakes, and staff modelling behaviour, to a pedagogy firmly grounded in character strengths and PP principles (F. Barton, personal communication, March 3, 2018), the school embodies whole school PE.

Challenges, “Stickability” and Future Directions

Teachers mostly convey to this author that they are interested in PE / CE because it promotes well-being, whereas policy focus vacillates between well-being as a goal (PHE, 2015), and PE as a means to achieving improved academic performance and good citizenship – as reflected in the criteria for schools winning the Character Awards (DfE, 2016b).

Combined with the education system being subject to the whims of changing governments and Secretaries of Education, this perhaps explains why the DfE's 2010a report identified low teacher interest and commitment to the SEAL initiative. Teachers perceived it as “nothing new” (p.2) and didn't feel the required energy and effort were justified in light of their many other pressures. One of the things this author has noticed in her work in schools is that there is a risk of *initiative overload* affecting engagement. Bennett (2015) laments that teachers feel confused about what CE is and how character is measured, and that teachers lack time, training and funding. He fears that “it'll be green-lit anyway. The train will leave the platform without any tracks ahead of it. And, as usual, teachers will be flogged when it fails” (para. 5).

White (2016) highlights the issue of “scientism” (p. 4), which ignores that pupil well-being may be a worthy goal in its own right. Whilst many teachers and academics value PE for its own worth, outcomes need to be framed within the current context in order to gain more traction. Noble (2017) points out that the educational achievements of a nation are generally measured by international comparisons of performance in key academic subjects. It is therefore important to highlight to policy-makers as well as teachers and school leaders that PE helps schools do better. Extensive evidence of improved academic attainment resulting from the teaching of well-being and character is available (Adler, 2016; Tough, 2013; World Government Summit, 2017).

A lack of clear school-level policies and plans could also thwart whole school implementation efforts. NatCen (2017) found that only 17% of schools had a CE policy, and only 25% a dedicated CE lead. The report also highlights that teachers feel PE initiatives would benefit from the publication of a provider and resources database, and a toolkit of proven activities to dip into. Such toolkits, though not many, are available. Examples are Boniwell and Ryan (2012), MacConville and Rae (2012), and Roberts and Wright (2018). NatCen (2017) also identified that teachers would like more government support for initiatives, and more training investment to be able to deliver CE. Waters (2011) and White

(2016) make a strong case for introducing PP into initial teacher training and further professional development.

Taking into consideration the above, and having looked at existing programmes, resources, successes and models, as well as the issues and possible solutions highlighted in this report, this author has devised a comprehensive new model of ideal whole school PE (Figure 5.3). *The LeAF (Learn and Flourish) Model of Whole School Positive Education* is based on a foundation of key elements of PE and CE, in-school factors required for the entire school community to flourish, evaluation, and government support through stable policy and adequate funding.

The title of the model acknowledges that schools are, at their core, learning establishments, but that flourishing and academic learning need to carry equal weight. See the Appendix for further explanatory notes. The intention is to use this model, supported by a checklist currently in development, and potentially supplemented by AI processes, to help schools move towards their goal of whole school PE.



Figure 5.3. The LeAF (Learn and Flourish) Model of Whole School Positive Education

Conclusion

PE is limping along at great pace in the UK; as demonstrated in this report, there is an appetite for PE (or its CE incarnation favoured in the UK) to be implemented at whole school level. This is, however, being hindered by confusion about terminology, direction and aims, conflicting priorities, lack of funding and volatile government policy. Schools in all sectors are doing great work on interventions, training and, in some cases, whole school approaches to PE, but there is still ample room for growth. The role of external practitioners like this author may change over time as this area evolves; it is likely that practitioners will be involved increasingly in the creation of resources for teachers and schools to use, training/development of existing and trainee teachers, and consultation/support to help schools move towards the goal of whole school PE, rather than direct delivery to pupils. The LeAF model could be one tool used to support schools on their journey.

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Appendix. Explanatory notes for the LeAF (Learn and Flourish) Model of Whole School Positive Education

Theoretical underpinnings. The LeAF model follows the joint approach (Boniwell, 2018) of positive education (PE) - preventing mental health issues and promoting well-being and happiness – in conjunction with character development and striving for academic excellence (IPEN, n.d.; The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2017; White, 2016; White & Murray, 2015). The model works on the premise that character can be both *taught* and *caught* (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2017; Morgan, 2017).

Content. The elements that form the content of the LeAF whole school approach to PE are the key components of positive psychology (PP) and character education (CE). In order to derive a comprehensive list, the author has used her existing knowledge of PP, and cross-referenced the main elements of PE programmes and resources (Boniwell & Ryan, 2012; MacConville & Rae, 2012; Morris, 2015; Norrish, 2015; Roberts & Wright, 2018; RWS, n.d.), with elements of PERMA (Seligman, 2011) and the 10 Keys to Happier Living (Action for Happiness, n.d.):

- **Resilience.** This represents the *resilience* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.)
- **Strengths.** This represents all VIA Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; VIA, n.d.) and the *using signature strengths in a new way* and *identifying character strengths* interventions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).
- **Purpose.** This represents the *M – meaning* - in PERMA (Seligman, 2011), and the *meaning* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.)
- **Emotions.** This represents the *P – positive emotion* - in PERMA (Seligman, 2011), the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), *emotional granularity* (Tugade, Fredrickson & Barrett, 2004), and the *emotions* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.).
- **Mindset.** This represents *growth mindset* (Dweck, 2006), which many UK schools are using as part of their PE / CE provision.
- **Body.** This represents the *exercising* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.), and the general consensus that physical well-being is important in its own right as a component of overall well-being, as well as being an important element in the development of emotional well-being (Edmunds, Biggs, & Goldie, 2013; Fox, 1999).
- **Mindfulness.** This represents the *awareness* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.) and includes meditation.
- **Relationships.** This represents the *R – relationships* - in PERMA (Seligman, 2011), character strengths such as *love, kindness, gratitude, fairness, forgiveness, leadership, teamwork, and social intelligence* (VIA, n.d.), and the *relating* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.)
- **Goals.** This represents the *A - accomplishments* – in PERMA (Seligman, 2011), the *direction* key (Action for Happiness, n.d.), and *mental contrasting* (Oettingen, Kappes, Guttentag, & Gollwitzer, 2015).
- **Fun.** This represents VIA character strengths such as *creativity, curiosity, humour, love of learning, and zest* (VIA, n.d.), the *E - engagement* – in PERMA (Seligman, 2011), and the key of *trying out* (Action for Happiness, n.d.).

The content above is currently represented by blades of grass at the base of the tree, but may be revised to have the elements shown as the tree's roots. For the purposes of this report the author adapted available ready-made design elements. As it is hoped that this model will be used by the author in her professional capacity (and hopefully become common usage in schools), the author intends to have the image professionally designed at a later date.

The infrastructure for whole school PE. The school activities, systems and processes required for whole school education to work are represented by the leaves in the tree. These were inspired by existing models such as the Geelong Grammar School one (Norrish, 2015), the 8 principles outlined by Public Health England (Public Health England, 2015), the elements required to be a “school of character” (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, n.d., pp. 34-35), and the Floreat model (Floreat Education, n.d.b).

Each of the elements below has been included because it has been identified in the report as being important.

- ***Physical environment.*** The need to have facilities and surroundings that promote optimal learning and well-being, such as having adequate daylight provision, enough space to move around school, spacious classrooms, outdoor spaces for recreational activities and outdoor learning, etc.
- ***Ownership.*** Ensuring all stakeholders – school leadership, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, parents – have a say in the design of the whole school PE provision. One way to achieve this, as seen in the report, is through an Appreciative Inquiry process.
- ***Ethos & Policies.*** The school needs to support the application of PE with appropriate policies, and an ethos that runs throughout the school in every activity and interaction.
- ***Parents.*** Parent involvement is essential to a successful school (Roffey, 2012).
- ***Well-being curriculum.*** As evidenced in the report, successful whole school PE requires the delivery of lessons in well-being (taught) in addition to all the other factors that contribute to the bigger picture (caught).
- ***Visibility.*** Along with ownership, it is essential for the elements of PE to be visible throughout the school; from the behaviour of pupils, to corridor and classroom displays, to interactions with parents and suppliers, there are many ways to keep everyday interventions visible throughout the school and beyond.
- ***Staff CPD.*** As has been shown in the report, there is a need for staff to be appropriately trained in the delivery of a well-being curriculum, in cross-curricular integration of PE and CE, and for their own personal and professional development, supporting their own well-being.
- ***Staff Well-being.*** This is of paramount importance and has been mentioned throughout the report. It can be supported through compassionate school policies and leadership, training and development, career progression opportunities, the teaching and learning environment, timetable design, to name just a few possibilities.
- ***Community.*** For PE to truly be a whole school endeavour, it needs to involve the local community the school is situated in, too (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). This can mean making school facilities available to community groups, providing PP lessons to local residents, carrying out random acts of kindness in the community, pupils and staff volunteering in a residential home for the elderly etc.

- ***Embedded.*** Whole school PE needs to be seamlessly threaded throughout every aspect of the school, but also embedded into the traditional curriculum of academic subjects.
- ***Targeted interventions.*** Much of the work described above relates to the whole school approach and therefore includes the entire school community. Targeted interventions, however, are still needed for at risk individuals or those who already suffer from mental health issues (pupils or staff).

Government support for “stickability”. As shown in the report, one of the elements that is required for PE and CE to be embraced by school staff, and to succeed in the long-term, is to have financial resources available, and to have stability in government policy for longevity of programmes and resources. Schools cannot, of course, directly influence these elements, characterised as *government support*, but this should not deter them from forging ahead with plans to be the best “positive institutions” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, pp. 5, 8, 12) they can be. The report, after all, shows case studies of schools that do this very well in the current political climate of scarce financial resources, and highly changeable government policy. But in an ideal world, this element of support would also be present. Because financial and policy support is so valuable for the growth of a whole school PE culture in the UK and in individual schools, this is represented in the model by the soil on which the tree grows.

Evaluation. As has been demonstrated throughout the report, evaluation is often a part of any new government initiative. At individual school level, this is less consistent. Whilst it is useful to evaluate any intervention and initiative with scientifically rigorous methodology, true randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are often not possible in schools. For the purposes of the LeAF model, this author suggests that, wherever possible, a solid quantitative evidence-base should be gathered, but that qualitative data, both formally and informally gathered, also plays a role, especially in a political climate in which, by the time the results of experimental studies are published, new governments have taken their positions, new policies have been devised, and old ones mothballed.

With any evaluation, it is of paramount importance to be clear about what is being evaluated, against which criteria, and for what purpose; especially important is whether the whole school PE implementation (or elements thereof), is being evaluated for its ability to increase well-being and flourishing, or simply for its ability to raise academic achievement. Governments may often expect the latter, and to some extent this needs to be accommodated, but perhaps a little push-back is also required to strive for a focus on well-being for its own sake.

6

Strickers: Exploratory research on the development of a strengths-based collectible sticker album

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Abstract

Reported cases of mental health issues in young people have consistently been on the rise over the last 25 years. Schools and the education system in general are seen as responsible for both cause and cure in this issue. However, teachers, whilst recognizing the need for additional training in mental health issues, do not feel confident in their ability to undertake such responsibilities. Recent developments in whole school educational programs, based on Positive Psychology practices and theory, show promising results in curtailing and alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, they have also been seen to boost positive attributes such as resilience and prosocial behaviour. However, due to the depth of resources needed to undertake these programs their implementation has been restricted to a select few. This project proposes 'Strickers', a collectible sticker album based on the 24 VIA character strengths, which would allow schools to build a cost effective Positive Psychology approach into their school culture. 'Strickers' have the added value of placing no extra workload on teachers, as their utilisation is primarily self-directed by students. This report examines the theoretical underpinning of 'Strickers' through character strengths and Self-determination theory. The design of the album, stickers and implementation are also discussed in depth. Furthermore 'Strickers' aim to create linkages and strengthen bonds between social spheres of students' lives. Links between home and school, peer groups, extended peer groups and local community will also be discussed.

Key words: positive psychology, character strengths, self determination theory, education, primary / elementary school, collecting, interventions

Introduction – Strickers: A Strengths-Based Collectible Sticker Album

'Strickers' (Strengths Stickers) is a novel Positive Psychology intervention (PPI) to be used by Primary/Elementary school children, aged 8-12. This particular PPI takes the form of a collectable sticker album based on the 24 VIA character strengths. The aim of 'Strickers' is to familiarize students with the VIA character strengths as well as some PP associated practices such as mindfulness, strengths spotting and mentoring. 'Strickers' are also designed to create connectedness and relationships between immediate peer groups, extended peer groups, school and home life.

This report will demonstrate the rationale and theory behind Strickers. First the context of the state of mental health in youth and Positive Education will be explored in order to give Strickers social and educational relevance.

The report will then go on to discuss the theoretical concepts that underpin Strickers. Character Strengths, in particular the VIA character strengths (Seligman and Peterson, 2004) and Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008) will be examined and related to the concept of Strickers in order to give a sound and complementary theoretical grounding to the product. Further attention will be paid to psychological observations on collecting and play in order to support the methodology of Strickers. Parts of the process will also be linked to the Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) in order to explain the importance of interactions between the social groups involved.

After a sound theoretical base has been established the report will then go on to explain the method by which Strickers would be designed, distributed and implemented. Expected results of deployment and utilisation amongst the populations involved (students, teachers, parents, whole school and local community) will also be proposed before a conclusion is given.

The State of Mental Health in Youth and Schools Today: The Role of Social Connection, Trends in Isolation-Based Harmful Behaviours and Technology

Young people across the world are showing increases in depression, anxiety (Mojtabai, Olfso. and Han, 2016, Bor, Dean, Najman and Hayatbakhsh, 2014, Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford and Goodman, 2004, Collishaw, Maughan, Goodman & Pickles, 2004) and self harm (Winter, 2015). While the confounding influences of increased awareness of and decreased stigma towards mental health issues may go some way to explaining the upturn of reported cases over the last 25 years it does not make the current state of affairs any less urgent or manageable. At present in the UK, only 25% of children with a diagnosable mental health problem are being given access to treatment (Green et al., 2004).

It is thought that high and multiple expectations, high emphasis on competition and regular, numerous and arbitrary tests at school create a high stress environment and social pressure on individuals from a young age.

Furthermore, it seems that these problems may be systematic. In the U.K Ofsted, the regulatory body responsible for assessing schools, places minimal emphasis on the wellbeing of students in its rating system. Indeed, only 32% of a sample of 50 Ofsted inspection reports

in an analysis by The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) included an explicit reference to pupils' mental health and wellbeing (Thorely, 2016).

A survey of 119 teachers in the UK by Parentzone (Rosen, 2016) found that 91% believed mental health issues in students have become more frequent and 87% believed that they had become more severe. However, the Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey (Department for Education, 2015) reported that two thirds of teachers felt they lacked the appropriate training to help identify mental health issues in pupils. This discrepancy between subjective perception and professional competence highlights the growing concern in educators about their roles in the lives of their students. Should their focus be on academic achievement or student wellbeing?

With teachers and schools now expected to buffer mental health, academic and non-academic achievement in their students it is not unreasonable to assume that increased pressure may lead to mental health issues amongst teachers. Indeed, 98% of 4450 teachers in the Guardian Teacher Network said they are under increasing pressure & 75% say their workload is having a serious impact on their mental health. It is apparent that wellbeing is not only a student centred concern but a whole school issue.

Positive Psychology (PP) has emerged in the 21st century and may provide some answers to this mental health crisis. A rapidly growing body of research is building evidence that PP practices and interventions may be effective in preventing mental health disorders, helping those with depressive disorders and enabling 'normal' people to flourish in their daily lives (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, Bolier et al. 2013).

It is known that once an individual suffers a depressive episode the chances of relapsing or recurrent episodes are around 50% (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). It would make sense then, to implement PP programmes and interventions as soon as people reach a level of cognition where they can take them on and apply them in their lives.

Positive Education: Ideology, Implementation and Evidence

Positive Education is understood to be the combination and balancing of 'regular' teaching best practice, emphasising academic excellence, with the addition of promoting 'flourishing' or positive mental health in the school community by furthering strengths that students already possess in nascent forms. Various approaches towards this end have been developed,

including focus on resilience (Brunzell, Stokes and Waters, 2016), hope, (Snyder, 2000), (VIA) character strengths (Seligman and Peterson, 2004), PERMA (Seligman, 2012), mindfulness (Zenne, Herrleben-Kurz & Walach, 2014), growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) or any combination of the above. Approaches have also varied in scope and scale from whole school approaches to stand alone Positive Psychology Interventions (Parks and Biswas-Diener, 2013).

Positive Education places much emphasis on the eudaimonic aspects of wellbeing, that is to say the focus on finding meaning and purpose in life amongst our fellows. This emphasis on self actualization and the realisation of potential through the collective has deep rooted ideological presence in Education, both in Western (Aristotelian) and Eastern (Confucian) philosophies, suggesting that it could be applicable across cultures fairly naturally.

Education, as a whole, could be attributed with a future time perspective (Zimbardo, 2008). In other words, it is mainly concerned with achievement and productivity to the detriment of present orientated behaviours such as achieving flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and savouring experiences and relationships. This contradicts children's typically present-hedonistic time orientation, which could go some way to explaining the distress and dislocation experienced by a rising number of students at school. By utilising more present oriented PP led experiences at school through practices such as mindfulness, paying attention to and finding flow and savouring, Positive Education may represent an ideal balance between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing as well as offering a balanced time perspective which both satisfies students' natural impulses and the systematic requirements of Education as an institution.

This synergistic approach is also reflected in the holistic nature of whole school Positive Education, whereby each member of the school community including students, teachers, other school workers and parents as well as local communities are invited to benefit from increases in wellbeing across physical, emotional and social spheres of their lives through active engagement with the school culture.

Flourishing implies not only having virtue but expressing it; therefore, it constitutes an activity rather than a state. Moreover, cultivating one's flourishing is not just a self-interested activity. Many of its constitutive virtues necessarily (logically and/or empirically) include other people. (p. 100, Kristjánsson, 2017)

Exercising Character Strengths and Self Determination within a Social Ecology – A Theoretical Background for Strickers

Character Strengths as Shared Language in Organizational Culture

Character Strengths, as defined in the VIA classification, are universally acknowledged across cultures, generations and belief systems to be positive attributes (Dahlsgaard, Peterson & Seligman, 2005). The taxonomy comprises 24 strengths, separated into 6 virtues (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. *The Six Virtues and Twenty-four Character Strengths as denoted by the VIA Institute (with colour coding according to Strickers album)*

Wisdom & Knowledge	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
Creativity	Bravery	Love	Leadership	Prudence	Humour
Curiosity	Perseverance	Kindness	Teamwork	Forgiveness	Spirituality
Love of Learning	Honesty	Social Intelligence	Fairness	Humility	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
Perspective	Zest			Self-regulation	Gratitude
Judgement					Hope

Whilst individuals may, to varying degrees, possess all the strengths, some character strengths will be more dominant and identifiable as ‘signature strengths’. ‘Signature strengths’ are those that the individual finds effortless to exert, remain stable across time and may be easily identifiable to others when ‘strength spotting’.

Some strengths will be less prevalent in individuals but evidence has shown that working on these ‘lesser strengths’ to be no less beneficial than working on ‘signature strengths’ (Proyer, Gander, Wellenzohn & Ruch, 2015). Although character strengths are seen to be stable, deliberate interventions can be used to influence them (Borghans, Duckworth, Heckman & Ter Weel, 2008).

If an organisation or institution wishes to make an approach or ideology wholesale across all aspects of its ecology then it is vital that these values be embedded in the culture of that

organisation or institution. The VIA strengths, with their universal appeal and application, manageable classification and number and adaptability provide a solid conceptual language and framework from which wider understanding of wellbeing as a whole may be approached and embedded within the school culture.

Self Determination Theory: The Impact of Motivation and Engagement on Achievement and Wellbeing

Self Determination Theory (SDT) was originally developed to examine the interplay of intrinsic, extrinsic, cultural and social factors on individuals' motivation. (Deci and Ryan, 1985) and was furthered by proposing that autonomy, competence and relatedness were interrelated conditions or 'Basic Psychological Needs' required to maintain an individual's wellbeing in order to produce conditions that could lead to flourishing or maximising motivation and engagement (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Motivation is the potential and direction of a student's energy whereas engagement is that energy being used to learn actively. It is thought that engagement is the wellspring from which motivation is born, with environment playing both a supporting and supported role in the fostering of engagement (Jang, Kim and Reeve, 2016, Skinner, Furrer, Marchand & Kindermann, 2008).

Furthermore, school engagement is seen as being multidimensional with aspects of behavioural engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement. 'Behavioral engagement refers to active participation in school-based activities; emotional engagement refers to students' affective reactions in school, including their interest, values, and emotional attachment; and cognitive engagement refers to students' willingness and effort invested in learning and performance.' (pp. 117, Yu, Li, Wang & Zhang, 2016).

If an intervention were available that could support and encourage students to engage with school life on all three levels, behavioural, emotional and cognitive, it goes without saying that feelings of competence and relatedness would be increased, leading to greater wellbeing and arguably towards other desirable school based outcomes such as achievement and prosocial behaviour. How much autonomy the students were given and indeed felt to be given would depend largely on the structures around it as well as how intrinsically motivated the students were to engage with it.

‘Intrinsic motivation is considered within SDT to reflect a growth-oriented tendency; it denotes the natural tendency to discover and enact one’s emerging interests such that one can realize oneself, enabling one to experience a sense of eudaimonic well-being over time.’ (pp. 341, de Bilde, Vansteenkiste & Lens, 2011).

Therefore, by supporting the individual with activities and learning experiences that they find engaging and support their autonomy they may satisfy their needs for hedonic wellbeing through engagement and gain a more eudaimonic sense of wellbeing through their autonomy. The greater sense of autonomy an individual has the more intrinsically motivated they will be to engage with the learning process in a meaningful way.

The increase in autonomy, through choosing and completing tasks will also increase the chance of generating feelings of competence across social, behavioural and cognitive areas. Through building their sense of competence participants may then be more willing to attempt tasks that are more challenging and by completing tasks that are seen as challenging competence will be increased further still. This would have the added benefit of cultivating a growth mindset in the students as they see their own progression through achieving clear, quantitative and related goals.

The importance of intrinsic motivation in learners has been established as the factor that acts as a bridge between individual wellbeing and academic achievement. Conversely it seems that although the individual and the opportunity to express their individuality are the driving force behind feeling autonomous they may only be able to find such self-assurance when the catalysts of supportive relationships and social structures are present around them. Numerous studies have demonstrated linkages with children’s perceptions of peer, social and emotional support to their academic goals, engagement, and self-concept (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; Felner, Aber, Primavera, & Cauce, 1985; Harter, 1996; Murdock, 1999; Wentzel, 1994, 1997, 1998). Social connectedness or positive relationships with close peers has been associated with improving psychological wellbeing (Lynch, 2013). Feelings of relatedness affiliated by measures of school climate and quality of teacher–student relationships, as well as feelings of belonging, acceptance, importance, inclusion and interpersonal support, have been linked to crucial academic outcomes such as, self-efficacy, achievement values, success expectations, positive affect, engagement, effort, interest in school, task goal orientation, and school marks. Children who reported a higher sense of

relatedness also showed greater emotional and behavioural engagement in school, in both self-rated and teacher-rated measures.

‘Providing students with the opportunity for autonomy within educational contexts may aid them in internalizing what they are learning as being intrinsically motivated. Internalization of educational activities and their perceived propensity to satisfy psychological needs may lead an individual to actively pursue similar need-satisfying behaviours in other contexts.’ (pp. 391, Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2016)

In other words, if educational experiences can provide autonomy that builds intrinsic motivation then students are much more likely to replicate those behaviours in contexts outside school, possibly in their daily lives long beyond their schooling. If students are made aware of the importance of finding autonomy, competence and relatedness in their lives through engaging with activities that encourage these foundations for wellbeing they are more likely to make these behaviours habits. If such behaviours and habits could be those that boost both subjective and psychological wellbeing through supporting hedonic and eudaimonic happiness then the individual is certainly on course to flourish across their lifespan.

Design

Strickers is a collectible sticker album, similar to already popular products such as football stickers and Pokemon cards. Part of what makes Strickers unique is that they are based on the twenty-four, universally acknowledged character strengths, as proposed by Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson (2004).

Strickers are designed to build individual self-awareness and social connection between the social ecologies of the classroom, whole school and home life in children of elementary / primary school age (approx. 8-12 years old). Each strength has its own page in the sticker album comprising of a description of the strength and spaces for seven stickers to be placed (see Figure 6.1.). Each sticker features a Mini Positive Psychology Intervention (MPPI) based on one of the character strengths. The seven stickers for each strength exhibit consistent content throughout the album. That is to say that each strength has one sticker that features an avatar for that strength, that is a character designed to exemplify the strength. Each strength also has six stickers that feature a series of MPPIs. One MPPI is mindfulness based, one is based on mentoring, one makes use of a specified location around the school, one is based at

home, one invites the participant to think of a paragon of that strength and give reasons why they exhibit this strength so well and one sticker asks the participant to design their own MPPI to exercise that strength.



Figure 6.1. Example of Sticker Ibum page (Honesty) before and after stickers

The reasoning behind aiming the intervention towards children of eight years old or above is due to developmental factors. It is thought that at around 8-10 years old children learn how to relate to peers, adjust to social rules, and evolve from free play to more elaborately structured interactions and expectations. Furthermore, this is the stage where they begin to desire greater independence but also gain the ability to consider the intent behind an action or choice, along with the ability to take another’s perspective (Harter, 1999). These emergent skills of social and emotional self-control, empathy and cooperation would be vital to successfully engaging in the MPPIs. There is also a level of literacy that would be required to engage with Strickers successfully. Children between 8-10 years old have generally graduated from learning to read to reading to learn and have developed comprehension strategies to overcome difficulties in unknown or unrecognised words (Anthony, 2017).

Sticker and Album Design: Identification and Mapping

Each page in the sticker album has a short description of the designated strength that typically shows how the strength is intrinsically felt, outwardly acted and related to others. For example, *Bravery - I never let fear stop me from doing what I want or what I feel is right* (intrinsically felt). *I always say what I believe, even when others don't agree* (outwardly acted). *I stick up for people if I think they're being treated unfairly* (related to others). This is meant to give students a multi-perspectival awareness of how to spot this strength in themselves and others. This allows them to both recognize if this may be one of their signature strengths, or more likely that they possess at least some qualities of this strength, as well as linking behaviour to strengths in concrete examples.

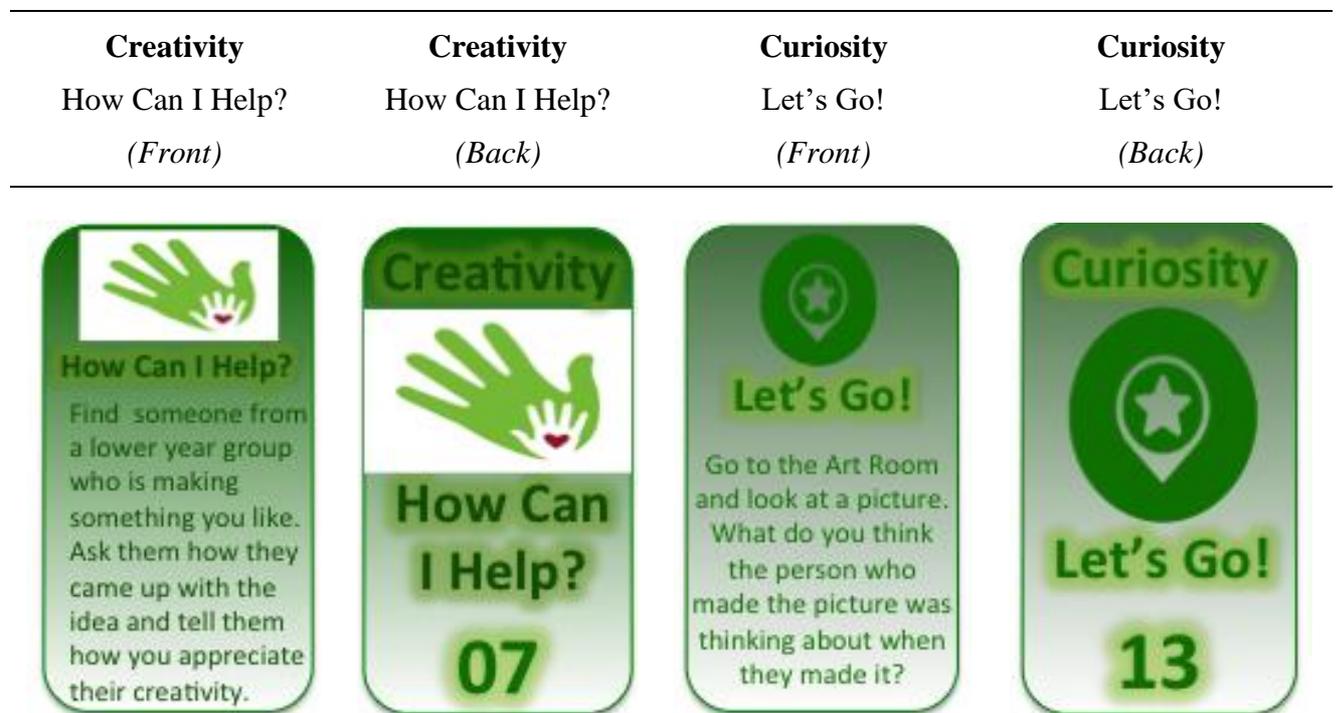


Figure 6.2. Front and Back of Two Stickers

The Psychological Benefits of the Collecting Process

Strickers are designed to be collectible for two main reasons. Firstly, it is thought that the collectible element will generate a process of swapping stickers in order to make progress in an area of the album the student is trying to complete or in order to gain stickers whose MPPIs the student is more comfortable enacting. This swapping process is aimed to encourage a dialogue between the collectors mediated by the language of character strengths. Through this process students may become more aware of their own relationship with their

strengths and also the strengths of their peers. Also, as collecting and swapping is a process that many children already engage in it should enable them to interact with Strickers more organically and from a position of intrinsic motivation.

For example, I may notice that I enjoy and find the MPPIs of creativity easy to do; therefore I might understand that it is one of my signature strengths. By seeking out the creativity stickers and completing that page in the album I am reinforcing that notion. By swapping my stickers with my peers and explicitly asking for creativity stickers they are made aware of my preference for them and that this is a higher character strength of mine. Through this interaction I might become aware of your preference for Bravery MPPIs and so I understand that Bravery is one of your signature strengths. We might also come across strength that we both find challenging and talk about why this is. We might also find another student who is looking for that strength and so we could engage in conversation with them about why they value this strength and how they see it, broadening our own understanding of it in an organic process of face to face communication.

The second reason for making Stickers as a collectible sticker album is the reinforcement of self-determination through the process of collecting. As William D. Macintosh states in *Collectors and Collecting: A Social Psychological Perspective* (2004)

While the motivations behind collecting are clearly complex and multifaceted, it is notable that many of the motives offered as central to collecting revolve around the self, and especially the development of a more positive sense of self. We suggest that collectors are drawn to collecting as a means of bolstering the self by setting up goals that are tangible, attainable, and provide the collector with concrete feedback of progress. (pp.87)

That is to say, an increase in autonomy is provided by the act of collecting. A greater sense of competence and a more positive sense of self are achieved in the setting and completion of concrete goals. The inherent sociability of collecting and swapping stickers would also seem to increase relatedness as:

...interacting with other collectors may facilitate the formation of a new group identity. In Formanek's (1991) survey of collectors most collectors named relationships with others who shared similar interests as an important factor in their motivation to collect. Sharing a common cause or goal often has the effect of strengthening bonds among group members (e.g., Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). (Macintosh, 2004, pp.89)

Participants will see their own agency, combined with interactions with others, facilitating their own growth. Due to this combination of intrinsic motivation, outward action and social interaction the interconnection of autonomy, competence and relatedness will be concretized in the process of collecting the stickers, engaging in the MPPIs and completing the album and targets.

MPPIs: Design, Justification and Relevance to the School Context

Strickers contain six variations of MPPIs. By giving individuals greater choice over how and when MPPIs are attempted they may choose tasks that are more attuned to their favoured learning styles and ‘signature strengths’. By engaging in interactions with character strengths in various social, cognitive and experiential contexts students are given more control over their learning and therefore a greater chance to internalize it through a period of gradual progression. This ‘shotgun approach’ is supported by Sin and Lyubomirsky’s meta analysis of PPIs, suggesting that a variety of activities reinforcing one strength is more effective than repeating one PPI for an extended period of time (Sin & Lyubormirsky, 2009). Therefore it is reasonable to expect that, as long as each MPPI is effective in its own right, the approach of exercising strengths through six different MPPIs will be more beneficial to participants’ wellbeing and understanding of character strengths. Furthermore, it has also been shown that a variety of Brief Positive Psychology Interventions (BPPIs) can be effectively implemented in school settings by teachers, independently and without specialist training (Shankland and Rosset, 2015). Therefore it is expected that the same may be true of MPPIs.

The following section will describe each MPPI in detail, giving justification for their inclusion and the expected benefits that they may provide.

Mindful Moments – Mindfulness-based MPPIs

Mindfulness is a practice that is rapidly gaining momentum in both the field of education and across society in general. The practice of mindfulness has been defined as the psychological capacity to stay wilfully present with one's experiences, with a non-judgemental or accepting attitude, engendering a warm and friendly openness and curiosity (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Interestingly, the language of mindfulness and character strengths seem to be fairly intertwined. Curiosity, judgement, kindness and self-regulation are concepts that are frequently noted as being integral to mindfulness practice. It is reasonable, therefore, to

assume that practicing mindfulness through the lens of character strengths would be mutually beneficial and could lead to a virtuous circle and upward spiral of awareness (Niemic, Rashid & Spinella, 2012).

Mindfulness and meditation in children has been found to help concentration, develop imagination and creativity, cultivate self-acceptance and understanding as well as provide the opportunity to experience physical relaxation (Fontana & Slack, 2012). A meta-analysis of mindfulness studies in schools found the results to be promising ‘particularly in relation to improving cognitive performance and resilience to stress’ (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz & Walach, 2014).

The mindfulness based MPPIs in Strickers have been designed to incorporate a variety of mindfulness based practices that include meditative noting of thoughts and feelings, paying attention to sensations and stimuli, visualisation and paying attention to the breath. It is thought that by being exposed to a variety of techniques and practices participants may become more aware of applications of mindfulness to their own lives in authentic contexts. Furthermore, the variety in applications should cater for individual differences and preferences.

How Can I Help? – Mentoring-based MPPIs

Peer to peer mentoring programs have been shown to enhance self-esteem, academic improvement, peer relationships and reduce problem school behaviour (Dennison, 2000) in both mentors and mentees as well as increase feelings of school connectedness (Karcher, 2009). It is worth noting that most of the studies that found such outcomes were directed at teenagers, as opposed to younger children the same age as those who would be interacting with Strickers. However, it is thought that the brevity and light-hearted nature of the MPPIs would reduce the chance of conflict and harmful behaviour by either participant.

These MPPIs are intended to work on a few levels pertaining to wellbeing and self-determination. Firstly, the leading participant is demonstrating autonomy by choosing to engage in the MPPI and by choosing a younger student to work with. Secondly, the intended prosocial interaction patterns, between participants and other students younger than themselves, are expected to increase the peer groups of those engaging in the MPPIs, therefore increasing feelings of relatedness in both parties and across the whole school. Thirdly, by demonstrating an understanding of the character strength in a mentoring context

the leading participant is showing competence, both to themselves and to the student they are working with.

Finally, by being involved in the process of the MPPIs but without needing to take on the more challenging literacy and cognitive aspects of them, younger students at the school (below the age of 8) will feel included in this whole school activity and will become familiarized with the culture and language of character strengths in preparation for future, deeper interaction with them.

Hometime – Home-based MPPIs

The thought process behind including home based MPPIs in the Strickers portfolio is to create linkages between home and school, again with the aim of creating a shared language and culture of character strengths. It is thought that by connecting these separate yet interlinked domains of the students' lives, coherence and congeniality between the two will be reinforced.

These MPPIs are particularly concerned with taking a social ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) view of these students' lives and of the implementation and effect of Strickers. A social ecological view would see the school and home of a child as representing two aspects of the microsystem. The microsystem being the areas in which the child has direct social interaction, even though those areas may not interact directly. The interaction between two such areas is known as the mesosystem. The mesosystem represents the fact that these distinct areas of the microsystem have a 'bi-directional reciprocal influence over each other.' (Sheridan, Warnes, Cowan, Schemm & Clarke, 2004).

In terms of creating relatedness between the mesosystem of home and school life it is proposed that Strickers will benefit both major areas of childrens' social ecologies by relating to both through the shared language of character strengths. The direct involvement of home life in the 'home time' MPPIs provides the opportunity for family members to develop interest in the project and its subject. By generating curiosity though direct involvement the students may relay their experiences at school, thus creating relatedness between home life and school life via Strickers. This would hopefully result in extended dialogue between home, school, student, teacher and parent from the perspective of character strengths and wellbeing. This dialogue may have multiple positive outcomes for the children as students who perceive congruence between school and home life accompanied by high parental

involvement and a positive school atmosphere have the highest achievement outcomes (Paulson, Marchant & Rothlisberg, 1998).

Unfortunately, it has been observed that parents are sometimes put off direct involvement with schools due to self perceptions based on academic achievement levels (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Shifting the conversation towards non-academic and strengths based topics may assuage these fears and increase the likelihood of interaction.

Strengths Heroes – Paragon-based MPPIs

These MPPIs require the participant to choose a paragon of that strength and give reason(s) why they exemplify that strength. This MPPI ties in directly with the tenets given by Seligman and Peterson (2004) in their categorisation of the strengths; namely criterion 7 ‘A character strength is embodied in consensual paragons.’ (pp. 24)

This MPPI attempts to engage the student’s understanding of the character strength by relating it to their own understanding of it within the world they inhabit. By ‘strengths spotting’ the student is able to appreciate the difference in individuals all around them as a positive and appreciate the concept that everyone has strengths and these should be celebrated.

This particular MPPI would be reinforced by the ‘Hall of Heroes’, an area in the school where individuals that have been described as ‘Strengths Heroes’ by students would be displayed and ‘blown up’. A picture/photo of that individual and the reason(s) given as to why they are a ‘Strength Hero’ would be visually prominent

It is believed that this may also give opportunity for recognition of members of the school community who may not be commended in the standard, academic, musical or athletic achievements. In a very simplistic way, it is extending the range of achievements recognised within a school by twenty-four.

In addition, it may lead to other school workers gaining more recognition than is usual. A cleaner, grounds person or dinner lady may be deigned as a paragon of perseverance, humour or humility, again reinforcing the whole-school culture and sense of relatedness therein. Finally, there would be no doubt that students’ parents would be seen by them as paragons of one kind or another. Perhaps by seeing their own picture in the ‘Hall of Heroes’, or at least

being told that they were being celebrated this way, parents may feel more included in school life and may become more involved bringing with that all the benefits mentioned before.

Of course, the range of paragons will not only be represented by members of the school or extended school community. Cartoon characters, celebrities, historical figures and even pets may be deemed worthy of these titles. This is particularly useful from a research perspective as it may lead to greater understanding of how children's conceptualizations of character strengths are defined and change alongside their own development.

Let's Go! – Location-based MPPIs

As mentioned earlier, one of the requirements of establishing a culture is that it should be placed within a shared geographical location. Of course, the shared geographical locations of the school, the neighbourhood, the town/city and the nation will all contribute to the culture(s) individuals within the school are part of and interact with. However, if the school intendeds to create its own micro-culture it must feature physical representations that differentiate it from those outside cultures and reinforce the culture it is attempting to establish.

For example, the more students engaged with the 'Strength Hero' MPPI, the more individuals from around the school would be recognized in the 'Hall of Heroes'. This would reinforce all the values and aims of this project within the minds of the individual students and the school culture itself. Furthermore it could aid in the creation of a 'virtuous circle', whereby individuals are reminded of their successes, the positive emotions created through that engagement and the relatedness they feel through engaging with this whole school practice. This would prompt them to engage in further MPPIs and increase momentum behind their positive, prosocial behaviours as well as guard against depressive symptoms (Garland et al., 2010).

By establishing novel or utilising established locations around the school campus the students will be given consistent and repeated yet authoritatively neutral reminders of their character strengths, how they have used them and the successes they have achieved in completing the MPPIs. Furthermore, by associating psychological constructs with physical spaces the students will be aided in the concretization of abstract ideas such as relatedness, forgiveness or mindfulness. As many students will still be in the early stages of their cognitive transition between concrete and abstract thinking the scaffolding given by these physical

representations will surely help in absorbing these concepts. It is also thought that by engaging in MPPIs across a range of locations around the school the chance for interaction with a wider range of peers would be encouraged, again increasing the relatedness amongst the school cohort.

In support of the project as a whole would be a Strength Bank where students would put the used backings of their stickers once the MPPI has been completed. The Strength Bank would be transparent so that students could see it filling up with the sticker backings. Clearly marked target levels would be visible and, when achieved, could trigger a whole-school celebration of some kind. This would give external reinforcement to those students that are externally motivated, guiding them towards intrinsic motivation, whilst maintaining the overall ethos of community and celebration.

By engaging with and contributing to the various displays students are demonstrating their autonomy and competence. By observing the displays grow, the more engagement with them is generated, participants will also increase feeling of relatedness. Therefore, locations designed for purpose, combined with the students' own input and engagement would promote self-determination and a culture of character strengths that would be psychologically self-reinforcing through its physical manifestation.

DIY – Self-designed MPPIs

Perhaps the most experimental of all the MPPIs, these are essentially freeform, with the caveat that an MPPI must be designed under a particular strength. How, when, where and who is done with and by is entirely up to the participant. By giving the students the autonomy to design their own MPPIs the DIY Strickers are reinforcing the concept that they are masters of their own learning, that their opinions and ideas are worthwhile and should be celebrated. Ideally, these self-designed MPPIs would also have an opportunity to be displayed somewhere within the school, supporting student engagement as well as feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Furthermore, from the point of view of research and assessment, these student designed MPPIs would give a true representation of how much 'deep learning' and understanding of character strengths and MPPIs has occurred. By applying what has been learnt to another context it is thought that the student has mastered that concept. This would be useful in determining, at least on a cognitive level, how effective Strickers are as a pedagogical tool.

Finally, it would be reasonable to assume that amongst all the MPPIs that were designed by students, particularly if the project becomes widespread across multiple schools, some would be genuinely plausible designs and could be incorporated into future editions of Strickers, with their creators celebrated and rewarded accordingly. This would truly be a success story for both the student and the product and could even encourage young people to see PP as a future area of study and employment as they see their ideas made manifest in the world.

Participants may strengthen relationships across extended peer groups by engaging in the MPPIs. The interaction between children in different year groups and therefore the opportunity to create friendships outside immediate peer groups is encouraged, either explicitly through the mentoring 'How Can I Help?' MPPIs, or more indirectly through the 'Let's Go!' location specific MPPIs and whole school elements. By generating increased interaction between extended peer groups through MPPIs at school it is possible that participants may develop closer social bonds within their local communities by making more friends who live nearby. This, in turn, could aid in developing relationships between families, thus increasing relatedness between the microsystems of home, school and local community.

Implementation and Maintenance

As stated earlier, teachers recognise the need for interventions to cultivate wellbeing and buffer against mental ill health in young people. However, they already feel under pressure with regards to their workload and often do not feel competent in their ability to lead these interventions themselves.

It has been shown that school staff may be more receptive to Brief Positive Psychology Interventions (BPPIs) than the more training-intensive and resource-heavy, long term PPIs (Shankland & Rosset, 2016). However BPPIs still require hands on time from school staff in delivery to the students. MPPIs are designed to be brief enough to be done within a fifteen-minute period, such as a typical break time at school, and are self-directed by the students. This would minimize the burden on teachers whilst, ideally, allowing them to observe the benefits in their students of a PP approach. This may produce more intrinsic motivation in the teachers and school staff to engage in a deeper Positive Education implementation further down the line.

Expected Outcomes

Strickers aim to strengthen linkages and relationships between individuals, peer groups and communities within the microsystems of school and home and so expected outcomes between and within these areas should be clarified in order to assess future results.

The most essential and explicit outcome of Strickers is that students would gain real, concrete and applicable understanding of character strengths, both related to themselves and others around them. It is expected that they would experience increases in those characteristics of self-determination, autonomy, competence and relatedness. Furthermore it is expected that participants would be able to extend their usage and application of their understanding to areas outside the immediate context of Strickers themselves. In other words, they would see the intrinsic value of applying character strengths to the various social and cognitive environments of school / learning, play and home / relationships. This is expected to foster a more generalised awareness and appreciation of the symbiotic relationship between these spheres of life for the student.

In terms of outcomes at a whole school level it is expected that Strickers would aid in creating a culture of character strengths within the school. This school culture would encourage the appreciation and celebration of difference, acceptance of self and others, social interconnectedness across all levels, autonomous and active participation and engagement with the school environment and prosocial behaviours. It would also be reasonable to assume that other positive, school related outcomes, such as improved academic performance and enjoyment of school, seen in studies related to practices included in Strickers like mindfulness and using character strengths might be observed as indirect outcomes associated with engagement in the program.

Relating to the participants' wider social network it is expected that students' would increase both the quality and quantity of relationships across their social strata. By engaging in positive, meaningful and self-determined interactions with members of their immediate and extended peer group at school as well as with family members and adults within the school

community, Strickers aim to reinforce social bonds, feelings of relatedness and connectedness and the benefits an extended social network brings.

Furthermore it is expected that indirect interaction with Strickers by teachers, parents and other senior members of the student's social network may increase the likelihood of interaction between them, again reinforcing the benefits associated with perceived coherence in expectations between caregivers by children.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, when all these factors are taken collectively, it is hypothesised that engaging with the MPPIs, building and strengthening social networks, gaining feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness students may be armed with some mental tools, behaviours and experiences that will insulate them from the dangers of isolation based mental health problems and the negative behaviours entwined with them.

Conclusion

The mental health crisis in youth today seems to be trending towards isolationist tendencies and negative self-behaviours. Schools are seen as, at least partly, responsible for both cause and cure of this situation. As a result, teachers recognise the need to address mental health issues at school but feel ill equipped to do so themselves. Furthermore, governing bodies, such as Ofsted are much more focussed on academics and achievements than on students' wellbeing and so schools are not encouraged to engage with a more holistic approach to education.

Positive Education, although in its infancy, has shown through evidence-based research that a focus on character and resilience can be hugely beneficial to students, both in terms of their wellbeing and their academic engagement and achievement. However, thus far, whole school Positive Education programmes have been limited to a select few of mainly, wealthy, independent schools. This is likely to be partly due to the cost in time and resources needed for training school staff when engaging in whole school programmes. Strickers may pose an attractive option as a cost effective, exploratory alternative to established PP based programmes.

Strickers has been designed as an intervention that can engage the whole school in PP practices and character-based learning without placing further pressure or workload on teachers. Furthermore, the self-directed and game-oriented nature of the intervention is

expected to aid the development of self-determination in students who engage with the product. The multifaceted and multidirectional MPPIs are designed to aid interaction across social groups and life domains creating a cohesive and synchronistic understanding of the self, relationships and community through the lens of character strengths. Theory supports the idea that through increasing feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness and understanding and exercising character strengths individuals may build up resources that protect them from mental ill health and guide them towards flourishing.

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7

Does participation in delivering Forest School increase resilience in adults?

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Abstract

This paper seeks to build on the body of research on Forest School. It addresses the sparsity of scientifically rigorous research into resilience and subjective wellbeing, particularly with reference to the adults engaged in delivering Forest School. The research was conducted with adults who deliver Forest School activities during term-time. This allowed the author to use their first measure as their base-line. They then submitted measures six weeks into Forest School, and at the end of the twelve-week term. The research was a mixed methods study, using two seven-point Likert scales. The first was the Satisfaction With Life Scale, and the second was Taomina's Resilience Scale. At the end of the third survey, participants were also sent six qualitative questions, with equal positive and negative weighting, for them to record how they felt about participating in Forest School. The results show a high level of participation in the research, with a statistically significant increase in Satisfaction with Life from 4 to 4.13, and from 5.76 to 6.6 in resilience. The majority of participants were Forest School Practitioners, and were female. At the time of publishing, the thematic analysis on the free-text answers has yet to be completed. The conclusions are that Forest School impacts positively on Subjective Well Being, and on resilience. There is further analysis to be done, and this could help indicate areas for further research.

Reflective Statement

The author's anecdotal experience as a parent-helper for two terms in Forest School is that it improved her subjective well-being and her resilience. As an adoptive parent of two children who she and her husband 'therapeutically parent' (Cairns, K., and Cairns, B., 2016), she experienced the activities that have an explicit purpose to increase the children's resilience, have also improved the parents' resilience. The author was keen to research this experience. The researcher was aware that her own interest and experience may have impacted on the research process, data analysis and the conclusions reached. The author's experience is participation in Forest Schools improved her resilience, and she hypothesized this may be the case for other adults.

Ethics

The research was conducted ethically. The researcher strove to comply with the British Psychological Society's guidelines (Coolican, 2014). She endeavoured to have respect for participants and their welfare, be competent, responsible and have integrity. She has considered the scientific worth and quality of her proposal, to avoid trivial subject matter, or to replicate existing research. Participants were briefed at the start of the research process. After the research was completed, the purpose and aims of the research project were revealed to the participants in a debriefing process (British Psychological Society, 2009). The British Psychological Society's aims are for the participants to feel the same about themselves after the research process, as they did before it began. She aimed to exercise caution and sensitivity at all times.

The participants were assured that the participation was voluntary, and they were able to withdraw at any time. All information was anonymised, but this would have been ceded if there were concerns about the safety of other persons who may be endangered because of the participants' behaviour (British Psychological Society, 2009). All data will be stored securely.

Introduction

Forest School

Forest Schools are an intervention used mainly in primary schools (Blackwell, 2015), and for students with additional needs (Price, 2016). There are an increasing number of nurseries and pre-schools being run either as Forest Schools, or using Forest School principles (Guardian, 2014), and an increasing number of secondary schools are also engaging with Forest Schools (Guardian, 2014). This identifies them as a widespread and increasing intervention aimed at increasing resilience and well-being, and therefore the increase in resilience for adults could be significant.

Forest Schools have a specialised learning content (Forest School, 2017) that is significantly different from what is taught as part of the National Curriculum, and how children access and engage in learning. Full details can be found on the Forest School Association website. Forest School is part of a wider network of woodland and outdoor education. Forest Schools are run by trained Practitioners. The Forest School environment offers opportunities to achieve and to develop confidence and self-esteem through experiential learning in an

outdoor area with trees, or woodland context. The activities are learner-centred: participants are viewed as competent; able to explore and take risks; entitled to initiate their own learning and develop positive relationships with themselves, their peers and the natural world, and able to experience regular success. Forest Schools are a long-term series of regular sessions, developing resilience, confident, creative and independent learners.

Positive Psychology and Forest School

The link between social engagement and well-being is of interest to Positive Psychology. (New Economics Foundation, 2008.) This would indicate that our well-being increases with increased social engagement. It is well-documented that Positive Psychology Interventions involving doing things that benefit other people rather than self also increase wellbeing (Lyubomirsky, 2017). Using these two research areas, the author also hypothesised that the increase in well-being through engagement in Forest Schools may be because it increases social engagement, and as the primary focus of the adults engaged is to facilitate the children – ie ‘other’ rather than ‘self’. Other factors that are of interest to PP and improve SWB include: purposeful activity; being outside; physical activity or exercise; a sense of spirituality or ‘other’ greater than self, and being engaged in activity which the participant is totally absorbed, or in a state of ‘flow’ (Seligman, 2011).

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2017) defines resilience as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; mental toughness. It is linked to self-esteem. It is a state of mind, rather than something that can be empirically evidenced. The principles of Forest Schools (Forest Schools, 2017) state that participation creates resilient and confident learners.

Table 7.1. *Areas of interest for Positive Psychology (PERMAH, and overlap with Forest School Practices*

PERMAH (Seligman, 2011)	Forest School Practices
Positive emotion	Play
Engagement	Adult-facilitated play Being engrossed in the activities
Relationships	Peer-to-peer engagement Helping each other Camp fire cooking and eating together each session
Meaning	Engaging with each other and the environment Quiet time each session listening to the sounds around us
Accomplishment	Building, making, creating Risk-taking (using knives, saws, cooking over fire)
Health	Being outside, eating together

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis was that those who engaged in Forest Schools or attended sessions in school gardens that used Forest Schools philosophy, had a measurable increase in resilience and self-confidence. The aim of the literature review was to identify research in this area. It summarised the existing research and looked at what gaps there are in the research field, as areas for future research. The literature review focussed firstly on Forest Schools and was widened to include organisations that include using the Forest School ethos and methods, outdoor classrooms and the use of green spaces in the school environment. Adult participants are defined as teachers, non-teaching assistants and parent helpers. Students are defined as children from the age of three to 18. Figure 7.1 shows the search strategy used, the databases and online resources. The search terms, “forest school*” and “resilien*” were entered, and the results narrowed down to articles, English Language, and then, if necessary, further refined by relevance.

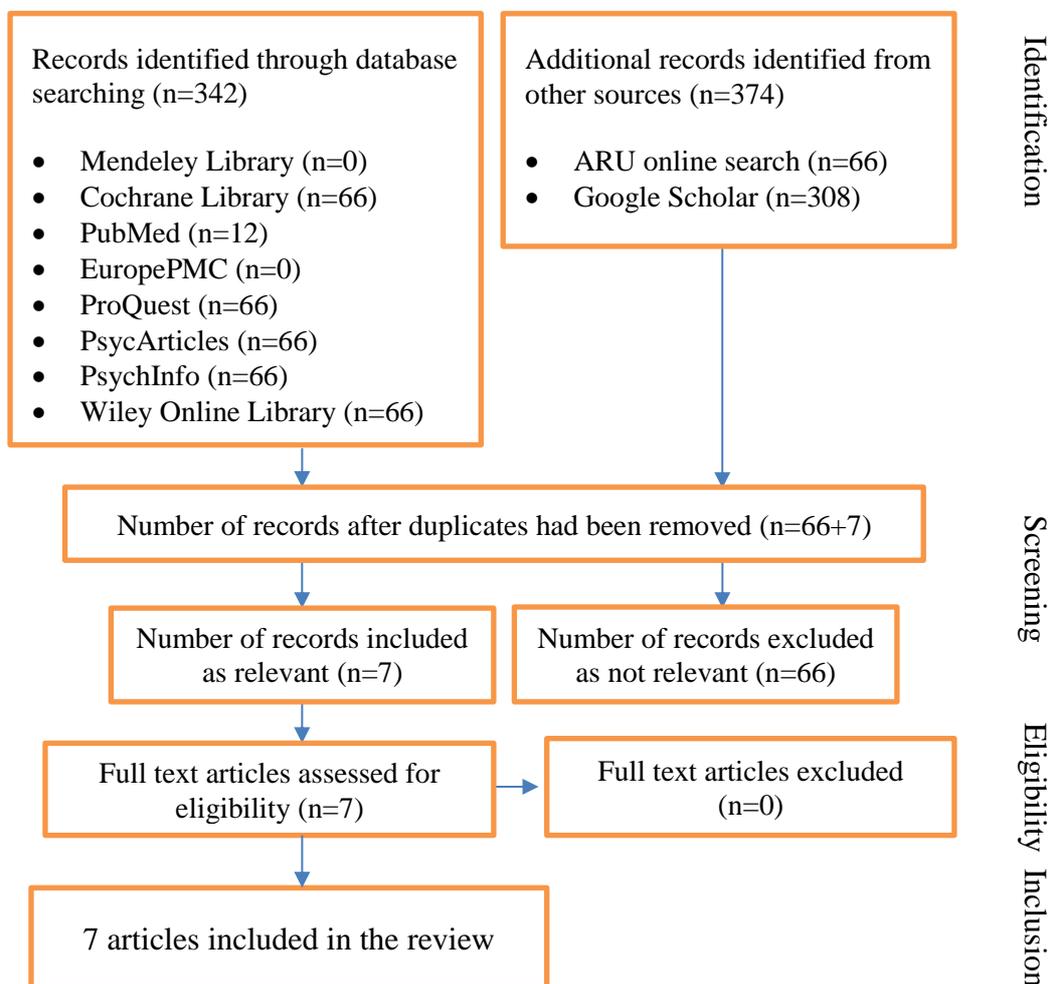


Figure 7.1. Flow chart of study literature review

Literature Review Findings

Seven pieces of literature were assessed. Two were literature reviews, and five were original pieces of research. Of the five research papers, two were specifically focussed on Forest Schools, Price, (2016) and Roe and Aspinall (2011). Chawla et al (2014) and Pacey and Morris (2010) looked at school gardens, and Robson and Rowe (2012) at ‘outdoor learning spaces’ within the ideological framework of Forest Schools.

Areas of Interest and the Research Objectives

The two literature reviews had slightly different positions; Blackwell (2016) aimed to establish the impact of Forest Schools on children’s resilience and wellbeing, and Leather (2012) to provide an informed and critical examination of the concept of self-esteem in outdoor learning. Both looked at existing research. The five pieces of research studied the participants’ experience of outdoor learning and whether it affected well-being and resilience.

Methodology

The literature reviews had different approaches. Blackwell (2016) used a qualitative methodology, of illuminative evaluation, making meanings and finding understandings, rather than looking for empirical proof. Leather (2012) spent relatively longer exploring the psychological construct of the terms used, from a phenomenological perspective.

The three research papers specific to Forest Schools had pragmatic approaches, using a mixture of approaches to access interpersonal meanings and subjective realities. Price (2016) had an action research design frame; his research was a practitioner-led process, allied to the ‘plan, do, review’ model. Robson and Rowe (2012) applied socio-cultural theory to the social constructs of learning. They have a social psychological approach to the social personality. Roe and Aspinall (2011) used quantitative measurements and qualitative analysis of personal reflections. The two papers specific to school gardens, Chawla et al (2014) and Passey, Morris and Reed (2010) used observation and interviews.

These methods are a good fit for illuminating the inner realities of those participating in Forest School activities and green spaces in outdoor school areas. This is because the study of resilience is self or observer-determined, rather than something that can be measured objectively. It has no external reality, so the research will be looking at how self-belief affects behaviour and ascribing that behaviour back to those beliefs.

All of the research stated the time-line of their study: they were all longitudinal studies, over varying lengths of time, from one term, to an academic year. One of the Forest School philosophies is that it is a long-term process, so the length of time given to research the participants fitted well with this perspective.

Method

All of the papers focussed on children, with no mention of how involvement in Forest Schools impacted on adults. Nor did the studies measure the participants' resilience prior to participation. This will be commented on below, in 'limitations'.

Blackwell's paper was a substantial document of 40 pages plus references. However, in this, there is just one short paragraph, on page 32, outlining her research approach. She gave no indication of where she found the papers she evaluated, or what the selection criteria were. An examination of the references showed that of the 49 documents Blackwell research, only nine of these titles were specific to Forest Schools, and only six to resilience. Without an explanation of what was included and why, it is hard to understand why these other documents were included as evidencing the efficacy of Forest Schools for increasing resilience in children. Leather's research looks at the definitions of self, and then applied this specifically to the UK. This is in contrast to Blackwell's research. She did not differentiate the findings of research on forest schools, green spaces or outdoor classrooms. She also specified whether the research was in the UK, America or Australia, and included all of these. Leather came across as more considered and rigorous, but as with Blackwell, there was no explanation of what the inclusion criteria are for the literature review.

The research projects assessed the participants during their participation in Forest Schools, Forest School-type activities, or 'green' playgrounds. All used a mixture of methods. For the two studies not directly citing Forest Schools, Passey, Morris and Reed (2010) started with phase one, a quantitative desk study of 6235 schools, then phase two moved to qualitative observational studies of 37 adults and 43 students. Chawla et al. (2014) studied 122 students in the United States of America, in green schoolyards, using ethnographic observation and interviews. For the three studies focussing on Forest Schools, these were all small-scale longitudinal studies with a qualitative approach.

Definitions and Criteria for Inclusion

The literature reviews of Leather and Blackwell both offer definitions of Forest Schools. Leather (2012) defined Forest Schools as being primarily focussed at children aged three to seven years old, where the underpinning philosophy is of child-initiated play. Blackwell (2016) described the theories that underpin Forest Schools and described them as being founded on the philosophy of encouraging individuals of all ages to enjoy the benefits of natural play, which leads to increased independence and self-confidence. She continued saying that the principles are founded on creative and learning principles, to motivate adults and children, and to enhance academic performance.

For articles to be included in this literature review, they either were commenting specifically on Forest Schools, or the principles of Forest Schools were being applied in outdoor environments such as school gardens and playgrounds. They also needed to be evaluating the impact of this environment on the resilience of the participants. Resilience was measured by recording observable behaviours that are interpreted as evidencing increased self-confidence, and higher levels of social engagement with peers. In older students, self-recording was also used.

Findings

Observational analysis was carried out on younger age-groups. Application of Forest School activities and participation in green schoolyards and school gardens has been used for adolescent students, where self-reporting was used as well as some observation. Observation and self-reporting both evidence that participation was consistently beneficial, with higher benefits being measured among students with 'poor' behaviours (Roe and Aspinall, 2011), increased positive moods, and decreased negative behaviour (Chawla et al, 2014), as the natural areas in the school increased resilience in the students. Child-initiated play is one of the key principles of Forest Schools, and Robson and Rowe (2012) found that child-initiated activities increased the number of observationally defined examples of resilience in they children.

The role and attitude of the adults involved was key: if school staff did not value students' participation in Forest School, then they were less likely to facilitate participation and may place barriers to prevent participation (Price, 2016). Passey, Morris and Reed, (2010) also evidenced that more robust support was needed for facilitating participation in school

gardening. Price (2016) suggested that outdoor learning could be used to deliver accredited learning. This may give extra validity to them, and staff would see it as worthwhile. Garden learning is OFSTED-measurable (Passey, Morris and Reed, 2010), and this may also give it credence amongst school staff. There is opportunity for the Royal Horticultural Society to work more closely with schools to develop this. All this would help integrate Forest School and outdoor learning into the schools and be of measurable and evidenced benefit to the students.

In summary, the robust analysis of existing research into Forest Schools and self-esteem shows that there is evidence that outdoor learning and adventure education, typified by Forest Schools, can have a positive influence on participants' sense of self, and increase their resilience. Leather highlights the difference in the results of teachers' and educators' measures of students' self-esteem, where they score behaviours as evidence of self-esteem, and that while this works well with younger children, and that self-reporting is a more reliable method for adolescents (Leather, 2012).

Table 7.2. Summary of literature review findings

Author/s	Blackwell (2015)	Chawla, Keena, Pevec, & Stanley (2014)	Leather (2012)	Passey, Morris, & Reed (2010)	Price (2016)	Robson & Rowe (2012)	Roe & Aspinall (2011)
Title	Impact of long term Forest School programmes on children’s resilience, confidence and wellbeing	Green schoolyards as havens from stress and resources for resilience in childhood and adolescence	“It’s good for their self-esteem”: the substance beneath the label	Impact of school gardening on learning	Improving school attendance: can participation in outdoor learning influence attendance for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties?	Observing young children's creative thinking: engagement, involvement and persistence	The restorative outcomes of forest school and conventional school in young people with good and poor behaviour
Research Objective	To establish the impact of Forest Schools programmes on children’s resilience well-being and confidence	How do students experience natural areas on their school grounds? What values do students find in these natural areas?	To provide an informed and critical examination of the concept of self-esteem when used in outdoor learning and adventure education	To assess the impact of school gardening on children’s learning and behaviour	To establish how participation in Outdoor Learning Programmes affected student attendance levels	How do children express their creativity and creative thinking in early childhood settings?	Is Forest School more advantageous in raising mood and improving reflection, than equivalent time in an indoor school setting? Will the ‘poor’ behaviour group have a greater positive shift than the ‘good’ behaviour group?
Research Approach	Qualitative method. Illuminative evaluation. Meanings and understandings rather than proof	Ethnographic observation and interviews. Ecological psychology. Transactional paradigm; interdependent relationships	Exploring the psychological construct of the terms used; phenomenological approach. Historical perspective.	Desk study. Interviews and observation	Action research design frame; practitioner-led process which focusses on improving interpersonal practice. Allied to ‘Plan, Do Review’ model	Socio-cultural theory and the social constructs of learning. Social psychological approach to the social personality.	Quantitative measurements and qualitative analysis of personal reflections.

Table 7.2 (continued)

Author/s	Blackwell (2015)	Chawla, Keena, Pevec, & Stanley (2014)	Leather (2012)	Passey, Morris, & Reed (2010)	Price (2016)	Robson & Rowe (2012)	Roe & Aspinall (2011)
Analysis Type	Literature review. Comparison of existing research	Triangulated data from interviews and observations. Data analysis and coding.	Literature review: comparison of existing research.	Qualitative study using quantitative data. Two phases: data analysis of schools information, then a two-stage case study of ten schools.	Constant comparative method to provide a data-driven theory, triangulation using a reflective research diary, field notes diary, and transcripts	Analysing Children's Creative Thinking Framework (ACCT). Reflective dialogues with children and their key person	Mood Adjective Checklist, personal reflection, (6-point score), used pre- and post- Forest School day and 'normal' school day.
Length of research project	Reviewing research of participants who had attended Forest Schools for 9-12 months	2006-2010	Not stated.	Phase one not recorded. Phase two Summer term 2008/09.	School year	Five months	Winter-Spring 2007
Number and age of participants	N/A: Review of existing research	122 students aged from 5 years to 18 years	N/A: Review of existing research	Phase 1: desk study of 6235 schools from 8863 entries on the Campaign for School Gardening on the RHS website. Phase 2: 37 adults, 43 pupils	Four to six students, aged 12 to 13 years	52 episodes with 30 three to four year olds	Eighteen participants aged 11 years.
Environment	N/A	Green schoolyards in the United States	N/A	School gardens	Forest schools and Outdoor Learning Programme	Children's Centre with indoor and outdoor space	Forest School

Table 7.2 (continued)

Author/s	Blackwell (2015)	Chawla, Keena, Pevec, & Stanley (2014)	Leather (2012)	Passey, Morris, & Reed (2010)	Price (2016)	Robson & Rowe (2012)	Roe & Aspinall (2011)
Key results	Long term Forest Schools Programmes improve resilience, confidence, and well being in children	Natural areas in the school provided refuge and reduced stress, increased resilience and supportive relationships, and gave students a sense of competence.	Multi-dimensional constructs of self. Lack of congruity in terminology used by previous researchers. Definition of self-esteem. Research relies on observable behaviour and is open to interpretation	Pupils involved in school gardening had: Greater scientific and subject skills; wider vocabulary; increased understanding of food production and the seasons; self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience; physical skills; sense of responsibility; positive attitude regarding healthy food; positive behaviour and increased emotional well-being	Drop-out will have a negative impact on effectiveness of the programme.	Gardening and construction supported creative thinking. Adults facilitated the children's initial engagement, and child-initiated activities had the highest levels of involvement.	Forest school was consistently beneficial to participants, with the higher benefits being measured among the 'poor' behaviour group. A positive trend was identified suggesting participants may be more effective at realising their goals after participating in Forest Schools.

Table 7.2 (continued)

Author/s	Blackwell (2015)	Chawla, Keena, Pevec, & Stanley (2014)	Leather (2012)	Passey, Morris, & Reed (2010)	Price (2016)	Robson & Rowe (2012)	Roe & Aspinall (2011)
Key themes	Long term Forest Schools improve resilience, confidence and wellbeing in children	Increased positive moods, reduced negative behaviour. Recognised the interdependence of people and the ecological landscape.	Little evidence to support the view that outdoor education improves self esteem.	Garden-learning is OFSTED measurable. Suggestion to link school gardening to wider community, promote community cohesion. RHS could look at how to work more closely with schools, to encourage sustainability, and help schools with staffing issues and succession planning.	Schools' role in facilitating participants' attendance. Need to remove barriers stop participation. Accreditation of courses may give extra validity and 'rewards' for the participants and facilitate the reflective process	Child-initiated activities had higher levels of risk taking persistence and resilience. Outdoor play showed high levels of creative thinking.	Forest school had a restorative effect on; stress, anger, energy and hedonic tone. This was significantly higher for those from the 'poor' behaviour group.
Areas for future research	Identified need for primary research in this area. No research on adults involved. Clarity needed re definitions.	Identified need for further studies. No research on adults. No definition of 'Forest School'	Identified the need for robust studies.	No research on adults. No definition of 'Forest School'	Does providing an accredited course impact on participation and reflection? No research on adults. No definition of 'Forest School'	Risk-taking behaviour very low, worthy of further study. Different levels of creative thinking in indoor/outdoor play may be significant. No research on adults. No definition of 'Forest School'	Research did not show whether goals are actualised after participating in Forest Schools, and this is identified as an area for further research. No definition of 'Forest School'

Discussion

Limitations

Of the papers included, only Blackwell and Leather defined Forest Schools, indicating a need for a more robust and rigorous approach to language use. A more detailed description of research processes would also enable them to be replicated by future researchers. All the research highlighted a need for further research, and none of them included adults in their research findings. Roe and Aspinall (2011) identified in their research that goal-setting was not then measured after participation in Forest Schools to see if those goals had been actualised. This showed the need for further research to be carried out with Forest School participants after their participation had finished. There was also no ‘before and after’ assessments, so the base-line for measuring improvement in resilience was unclear in all the studies. They evidenced improvement during participation in Forest Schools. There is an opportunity for longitudinal studies of ‘before, during and after’. It could be that the participants’ resilience was increasing coincidentally to their involvement in Forest School activities. The studies could have done an assessment of the participants prior to their involvement in Forest School activities, so that they were their own control-group.

All the studies reviewed were small-scale qualitative longitudinal studies. These gave a depth of understanding and interpretation that large-scale quantitative studies would not be able to provide. However, it does mean that generalisability is reduced. This gives opportunities for further research in this field.

Research that relies on observable behaviour can be open to interpretation (Leather, 2012) (Robson and Rowe 2012). For nursery and primary-school aged children, they do not have the vocabulary to be able to self-evidence, so observation is used. For older participants, this can be avoided by using self-evaluation, or, as with the studies included here, the researchers can use both methods. By using both, the researcher can reduce interpretation. Over-scoring in self-assessment is mitigated if both methods are used. (Leather, 2012)

Blackwell and Leather both mentioned Forest Schools as based on Positive Psychology, but this was not retrieved when the terms “positive psychology” and “forest schools” were used as search terms, in any of the online searches. This may be because it was used only once in the article, so was not flagged up as a keyword, but as the searches were set to ‘any’, it

should have still been retrieved. This could evidence the need for more robust search engines.

That the Forest School philosophy is that participation benefits everyone (Forest Schools, 2017). Blackwell (2016), says that Forest Schools are for individuals of all ages, motivating adults and children. However, there is no research found that referred specifically to adults who are participating in Forest Schools. The adult participants in Forest Schools are engaging in outdoor activities as well as the students. They are facilitating and supervising the students, so may not benefit from the ‘play’ aspect of Forest Schools to the same extent, but they are experiencing the outdoors, fresh air, sunlight and rain (Passey, Morris and Reed, 2010). None of this has been researched.

Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions (Forest School Association, 2017), which was recognised by all the research studies included in the literature review. However, the lengths of the studies varied from one term (Roe and Aspinall, 2011) to four years (Chawla et al 2014), so comparing the results cannot be done on a ‘like for like’ basis.

Future Research Areas Identified Within the Research

Table 7.3. *Research areas identified by gaps in existing research*

Areas for Future Research	Reference
More primary research on Forest Schools	Blackwell (2015)
Would providing accredited courses impact on levels of participation and reflection	Price (2016)
Levels of risk-taking behaviour in Forest Schools	Robson and Rowe (2012)
Levels of creative thinking in indoor play compared to outdoor play	Robson and Rowe (2012)
Are goals actualised after participation in Forest Schools?	Roe and Aspinall (2011)
Further robust studies into the effects of Forest Schools on participants	Leather (2012)

Forest School is delivered by adults, led by qualified Forest School Practitioners, and supported by school staff such as Learning Support Staff, parents and school governors. There is no research on how participation in Forest School affects them. This is a significant

gap in research that shows whether Forest School impacts on resilience. The Practitioners and adult helpers are there throughout the school year, which gives the potential for longitudinal studies.

Forest School is not age-specific, there is also the opportunity for further research in how Forest School participation affects students at secondary school ages. There are a number of established Forest Schools, such as Middlewood Nature Nursery as mentioned by Blackwell, (2015), and these are a fertile ground for more in-depth research on resilience. As they are set up wholly on Forest School principles, these afford the opportunity for longitudinal research in a way that schools who offer one session a week for a term, do not.

Research Question

The searches carried out, and the literature above, suggests that Forest Schools and Green Classrooms have a beneficial impact on the learning, peer relations and behaviour of the students engaged. The research shows that there is an increase in resilience in the students, alongside other measures of subjective wellbeing and self-efficacy. There is no research on whether engagement with Forest Schools impacts on the resilience of the adults involved. From this, a suitable research question for an MSc Dissertation was:

Does participation in Forest Schools improve the resilience of adults?

Research Proposal

Research Methods

The research was conducted as a mixed methods study. This comprised a longitudinal study of resilience, conducted at three points in time with 60 participants. The detail of this will be covered under the heading ‘choice of research methods’, below. This will be followed by ‘research design and method’, which will look at the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches.

A literature review of meta-analyses for identifying resilience measures for adults was carried out (Figure 7.2). Taormina’s new measures for Adult Personal Resilience was identified as the tool to measure resilience in adults (Taormina, 2015). This measure was chosen as it covers: determination; endurance; adaptability, and recuperability. It is a comprehensive measure. It uses a 7-point scale and has high levels of replicability. Professor Taormina

recommended using a 7-point scale rather than 5-point, for native English speakers, as he believes this makes the conceptual, logical and psychological interpretation of results easier.

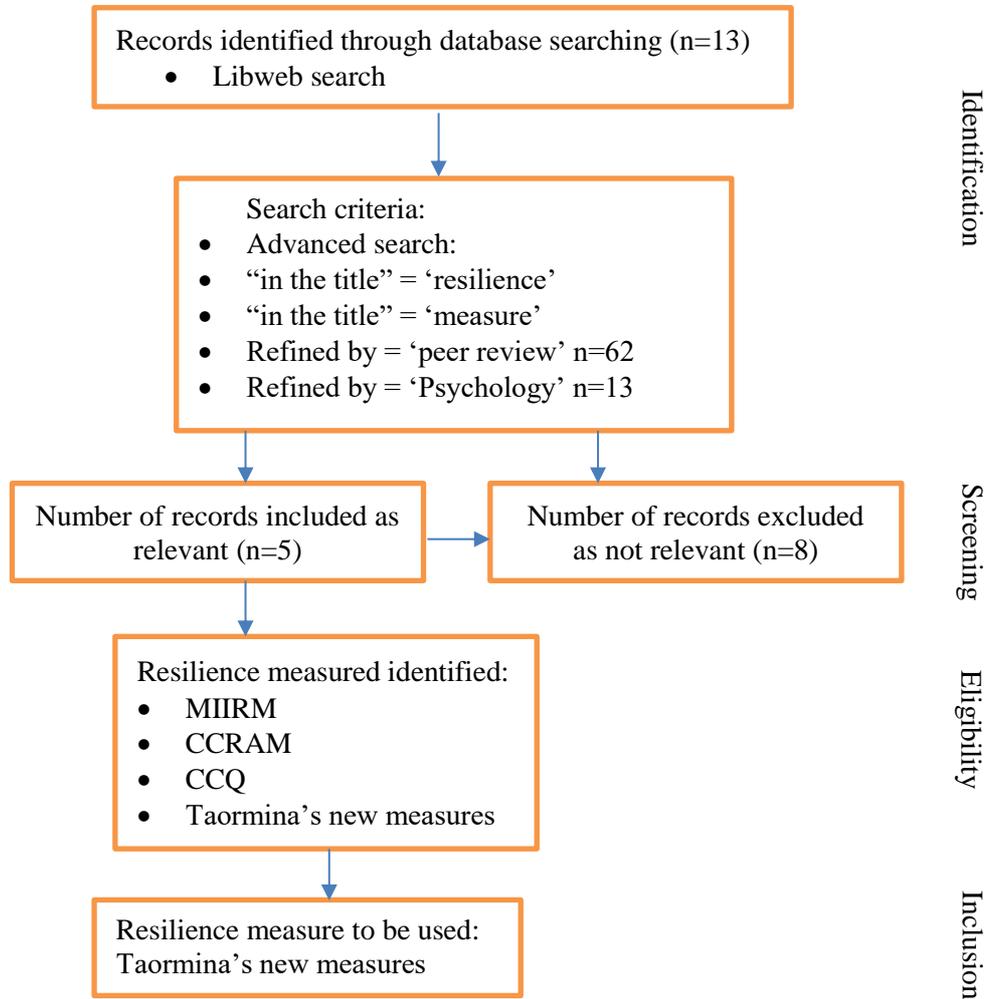


Figure 7.2. Flow chart of meta-analysis literature search for resilience measures.

The longitudinal study was over three points in time, from September to December 2017. The self-evaluations forms, created on Qualtrics, were emailed to 64 Forest Schools adult participants to complete before the start of the school term in September, at the end of the first half-term, and at the end of term. In the final questionnaire, an additional section was added to retrieve qualitative data. The questions are show in Appendix 1.

The research was conducted using mixed methodology, combining Taormina's Likert summated ratings scale (Likert, 1932, cited in Coolican, 2014) and theory-led thematic analysis of the data retrieved through the qualitative questions. It was anticipated that by using these two methods together, the subjective reality of the participants' experiences of Forest School will give depth and meaning to the outcomes of the longitudinal study. It also acknowledges the limitations that both approaches have, as discussed below. By using both approaches, the researcher captured the resilience measures of the participants at three points in time. The researcher then conducted a theory-led thematic analysis of the free text data, to go beyond the description given by Taormina's scale, to develop themes that tell a compelling story, described by the researcher and evidenced by the data (Coolican, 2014). Thematic analysis is not allied to a specific epistemological position or analytical format (Coolican, 2014). This allowed the researcher to find themes and meanings in the data, without trying to fit it to a wider construct or world-view. Other research methods were considered, but do not allow for this.

The author hoped the research will evidence that adults' participation in Forest Schools improves their resilience. This will build on previous research on Forest Schools which shows that participation in Forest Schools is beneficial, to show why they are; because they are shown to improve resilience. This research looked at Forest Schools as a whole and recognised that that future research could look at individual components of Forest Schools, such as social eating (Dunbar, 2017) and social engagement (Cherry et al, 2013).

Choice of Research Methods

The author conducted a longitudinal study. The participants formed their own control group, as the first measure was recorded prior to their engagement with Forest Schools. This gave a 'baseline' reading. The second measure was recorded part-way through the term, to capture whether there had been any change from the first measure. The third measure was recorded at the end of the term. A school term is typically 12 weeks, so this gave an indication of the long-term impact of Forest Schools on adults' resilience. Participants were identified via training organisations for Forest School Practitioners, such as The Green Light Trust, emails to schools with Forest School, and via social media interest groups. Participants comprised qualified Practitioners, school Learning Support Assistants, parent helpers and Trainee Forest School practitioners: anyone who regularly engaged with Forest Schools. Their role and hours engaged were asked as part of the study.

Research Design and Method

By combining qualitative and quantitative processes, the research benefitted from the strengths of each, to outweigh their weaknesses. Quantitative research such as the self-assessment questionnaire do not capture the depth and nuances that the qualitative data gave access to. It may be the very act of completing a self-assessment survey increased well-being, but as the measure is for resilience, it was anticipated that any impact will be minor. The first measure was completed at the start of term. This could be impacted by the participants returning to work after the summer holidays. There could be negative and positive affect from this. This could impact on how they recorded their resilience in the first measure.

The participants have been selected because of their involvement with Forest Schools, and it was hoped the research evidenced how this may impact on resilience. The researcher will have no knowledge of any other factors in their life that may occur in the 12-week self-recording period. These factors could have an impact on their resilience.

There are acknowledged problems with Likert Scale surveys, which are summarised as follows:

An 'undecided' score could be recorded if the participant is undecided, or has neutral feelings, and there is no way for the researcher to be able to tell without further analysis; there is a response-bias – people find it easier to agree with statements than to disagree; the participants may start to interpret the aim of the research and this could influence their answers, there may also be an aspect of responding in a way that is seen as socially desirable rather than a true response. (Coolican, 2015)

It was anticipated that by combining the quantitative self-assessment with qualitative data, any of these variables may be identified. The qualitative data allowed us to collect data that gave greater depth and meaning to the survey.

Data Analysis/Results

The data analysis of Taormina's new measures for Adult Personal Resilience was conducted using SPSS software, and presented as line charts to show progress over time, and also as histograms to show the whole data set. The results were also analysed by the researcher and findings presented.

The qualitative data was retrieved in recognition that Taormina’s scale captured a partial picture of the participants’ experience of Forest Schools and how it impacts on resilience. The researcher accepts the relativist nature of knowledge; that there are different perspectives and interpretations of reality (Coolican, 2014). The data was then analysed, guided by Braun and Clarke’s article on using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). This will be an immersive process, and the researcher identified themes as the text was read and re-read, and this guided the coding. The researcher accepts the subjectivity and reflexivity of this process.

Quantitative Results

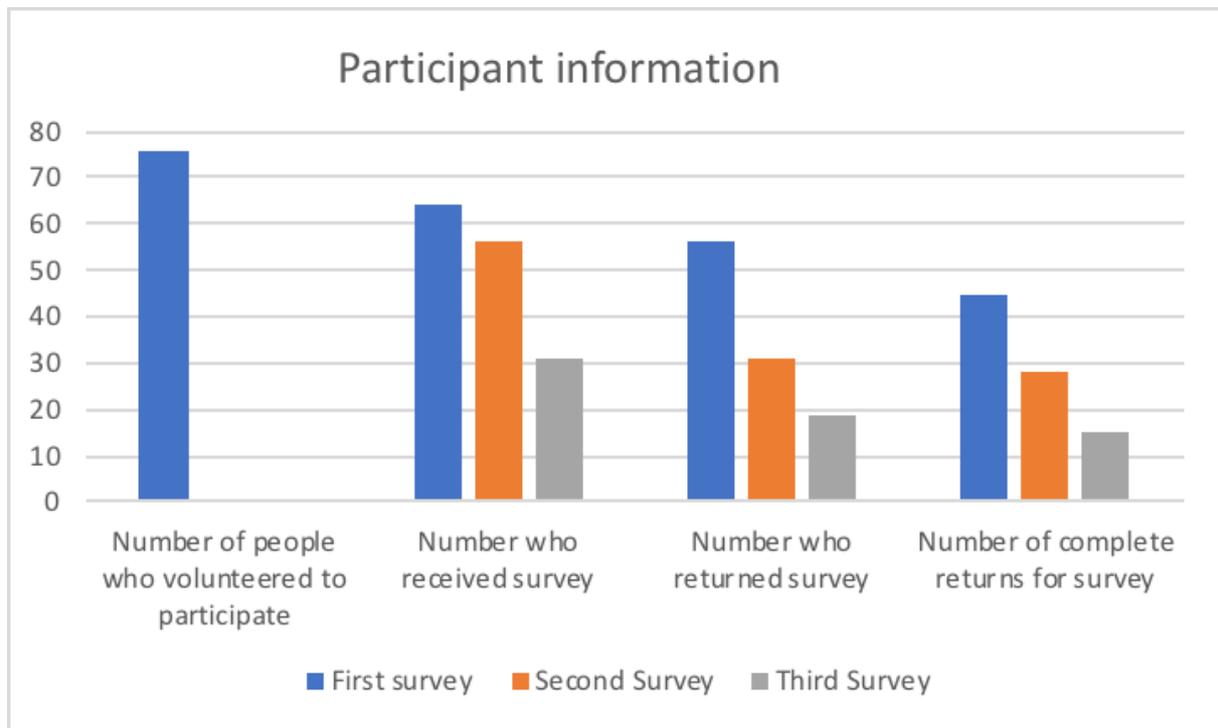


Figure 7.3. Recruitment descriptive data.

Recruitment took place from June to August 2017, once Ethical Approval for the research had been received (see Figure 7.3). Of the 76 people who wished to take part, twelve were excluded as they were not eligible. They did not work term-time only in Forest School. The participants were their own control-group, by having a six-week period (the summer holidays) of not participating. So, people who worked all year in Forest School would not have this base-line.

Of those who received the first survey, n=64, n=56 submitted responses, and n=45 of these were complete. The second survey was sent to those who had completed the first one, and

n=31 submitted responses, of which n=28 were complete. The third survey was sent to those who had completed the first survey, and n=19 submitted responses, of which n=15 were complete. The final survey also asked qualitative questions as well as the Likert scales of the first two surveys.

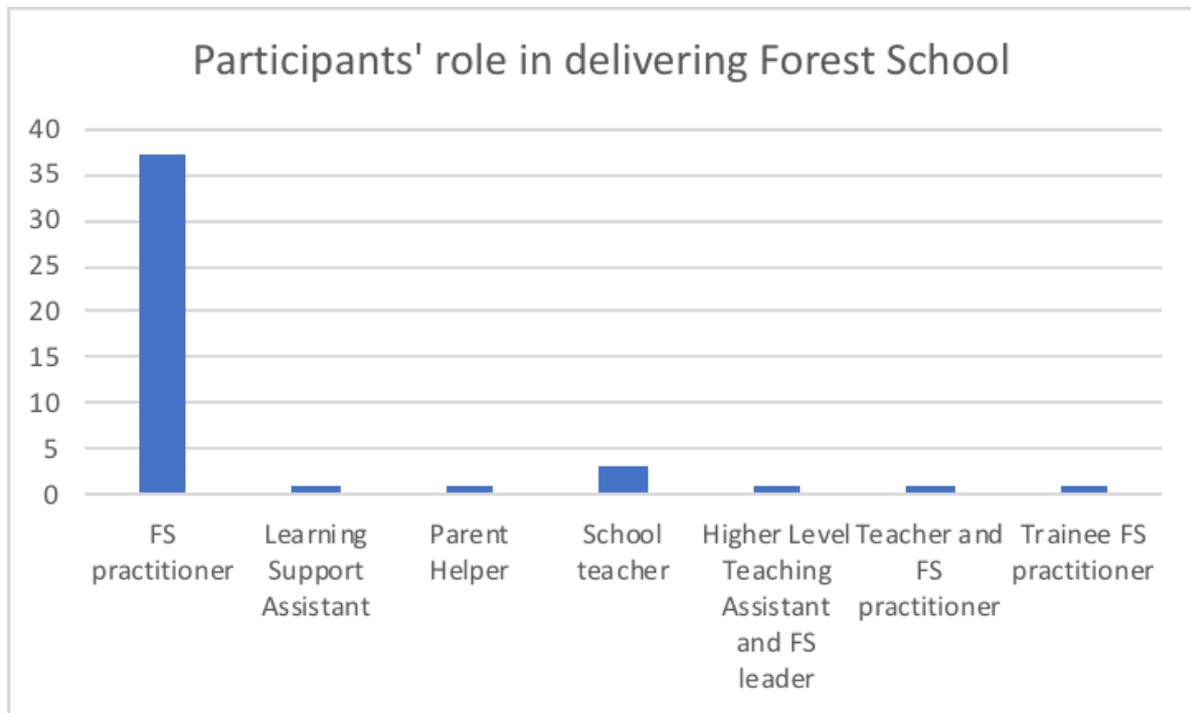


Figure 7.4. Participant roles in delivering Forest School

The majority of participants were FS practitioners, n=37. There were three teachers, and one Learning Support Assistant, one parent helper, one Higher Level Teaching Assistant who was also a FS leader, and one trainee FS practitioner (Figure 7.4).

The data showed that resilience scores increased from an average of 5.76 in the first test, at the start of term, to 6.26 after six weeks, and to 6.6 after 12 weeks (Figure 7.5).

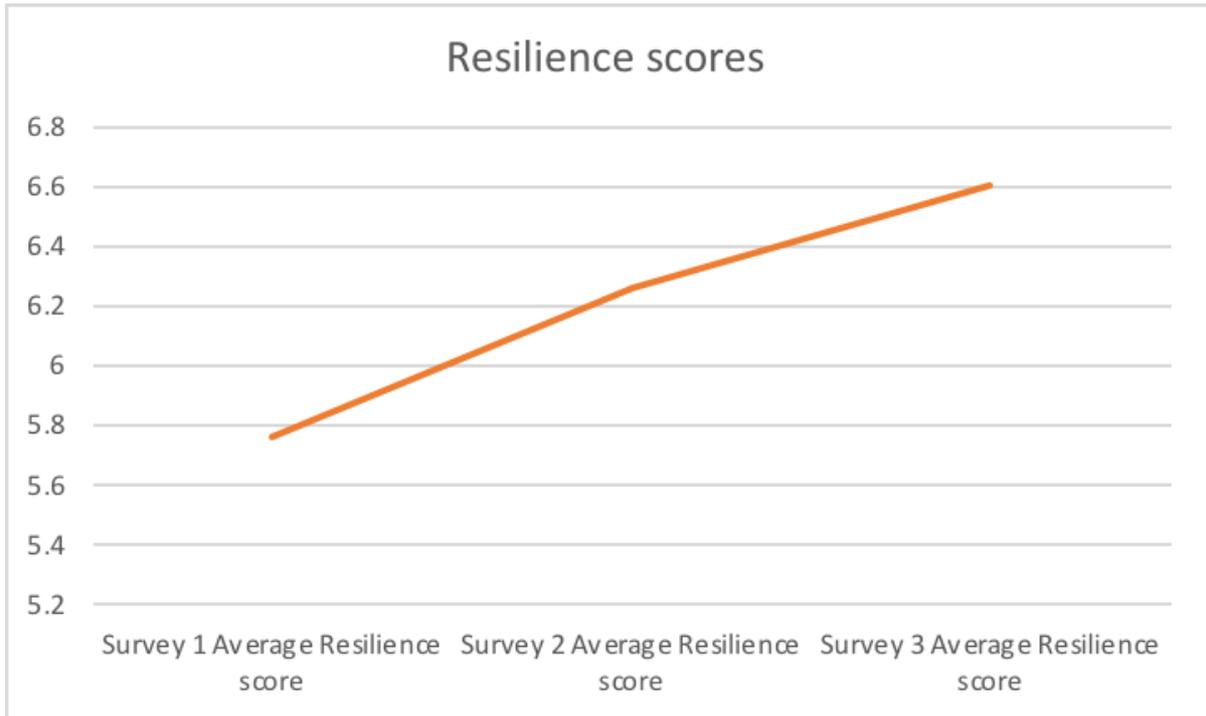


Figure 7.5. Change in resilience measure scores over three time points.

Interestingly, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) showed a different pattern (Figure 7.6). The first measure was 4, the second 4.4 and the third was 4.13. So, although there was an increase from the first to third, there was a dip from the second to third. This could be an area for further research.

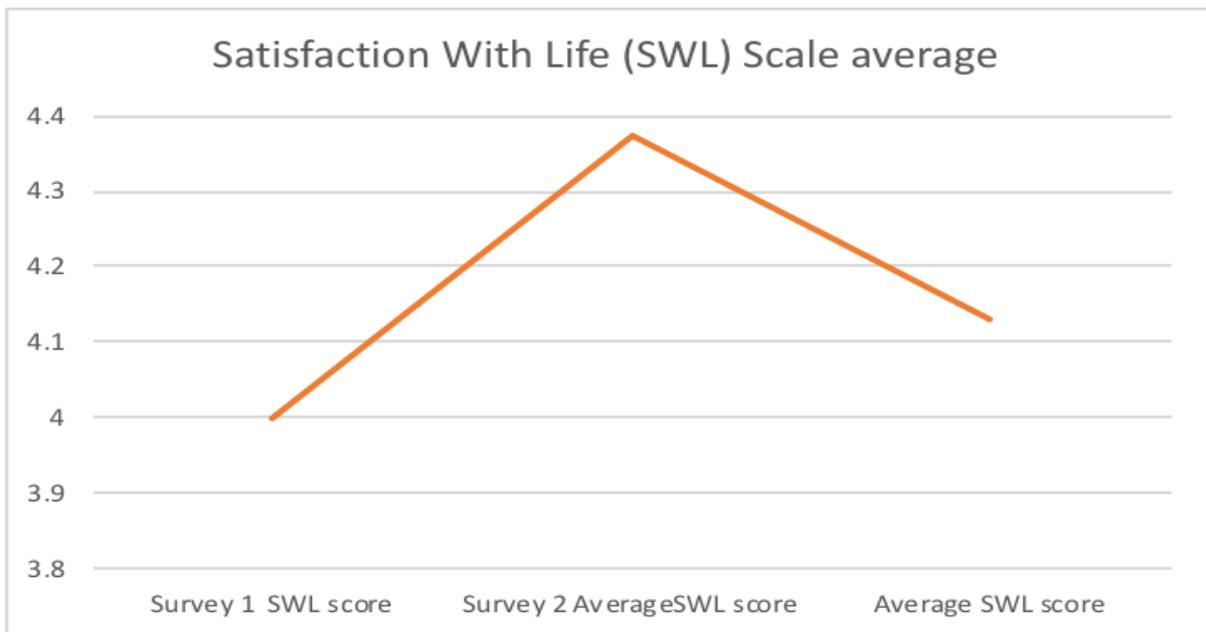


Figure 7.6. Change in Satisfaction with Life Scale measures over three time points.

Qualitative Results

The final survey included questions aimed at capturing the subjective reality of the participants. The questions gave them an opportunity to write freely about their experience of FS. This is currently being analysed using thematic analysis to draw out key concepts. At the time of going to print, the researcher has not yet completed the thematic analysis of the responses.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The author was particularly interested in how participating in delivering Forest School impacted on resilience. Her research included the SWLS as well as Taomina's new resilience measure. They gave slightly different results, although both indicated that FS increases SWB and resilience. This indicates an opportunity for further research in both areas.

The cohort size was relatively small, with a drop-off at each measure. The author had not included a way to retrieve information on why participants stopped engaging with the research. At the start of the data-collection, two potential participants withdrew as their role had changed and they were no longer involved in FS. It would be both useful and interesting to be able to gather data on why participants dropped out, and this could increase our understanding further.

The majority of participants were FS Practitioners, and this could have impacted on the results. It may be that they are more aware of the benefits of FS, and hence became FS Practitioners. Further research with a cohort made up of Learning Support Assistants, or parent helpers, would give a comparison for this. The non-FS cohort-size was too small to be able to make statistically robust comparisons.

Further analysis of the demographic information could show variations in responses. In the cohort, the significant majority were female, n=39. The number of male participants was significantly smaller, n=6. An opportunity for further study could be whether the number of FS practitioners also has this gender gap, or whether it was specific to this survey.

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Appendix 7.1. Questionnaires

These are scored on a scale of 1-7, lowest to highest.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Taormina's Resilience Scale

Determination

1. Once I set a goal, I am determined to achieve it
2. I persevere at the things I decide, despite difficulties
3. Being determined is an important part of my character
4. I keep trying for the things I want until I reach them
5. It is in my nature to be persevering

Endurance

1. I am able to live through difficult times
2. I can withstand difficult situations
3. I can endure the problems that life brings
4. I can survive even the hardest of times
5. I can endure even when I am attacked

Adaptability

1. I have the ability to adapt to difficult situations
2. I can change to fit into many kinds of circumstances
3. I can find ways to adapt to unexpected conditions
4. I am well able to adjust to problems that confront me
5. I am very flexible when my environment changes

(Appendix 7.1 continued)

Recuperability

1. I recuperate even from things that hit me hard
2. I recover from any misfortune that happens to me
3. I am able to bounce back from any kind of adversity
4. I always resume my life regardless of the type of setback
5. I can recover from any type of problem

Qualitative Questions

1. Have you experienced any personal benefits from taking part in Forest School?
2. Are there any particular things that you valued experiencing? What about them was positive for you?
3. Have you experienced any personal costs from taking part in forest school?
4. Were there any particular things that you disliked experiencing? What about them was negative for you?
5. How has taking part in Forest School impacted on your emotions?
6. Please list what, if any, emotions you feel have changed as a result of your experience, and what Forest School activities you feel have led to this change.
7. What are your favourite things about being involved in Forest School, and why?

Forest School Role Options

FS Practitioner

School teacher

Learning Support Assistant

School Governor

Parent Helper

Other (please specify)

Average number of hours per week engaged in FS per week in term time

Demographic Information

Gender

Highest academic qualification

Appendix 7.2. Principles of Forest School and Criteria for Good Practice

Principle 1: *Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.*

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2: *Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.*

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: *Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners*

- *Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education*
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4: *Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.*

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.

- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Principle 5. *Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.*

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification. Find more information on Forest School qualifications here.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

Principle 6. *Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning*

- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into ‘scaffolding’ and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

Retrieved May 16, 2018 from <https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Appendix 7.3. Regular Activities in FS Environments

Each session lasts from 2 hours to all day (ie over 5 hours), and runs for a calendar year, to allow immersion in the natural environment, and also relationship-building.

Quiet/reflective time

Story-telling

Appropriate risk-taking behaviour, e.g. using tools, making a fire

Cooking over open fire and eating together

Participant-led play

Circle-time; sitting together around the fire and sharing what they have experienced/enjoyed in the session

Creating artefacts from found objects

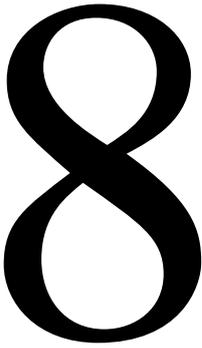
Quotes from Forest School deliverers

“Sessions are influenced by the children's ideas, interests and personalities; by the weather, the season and the woodland area they're in; by unexpected discoveries or observations in nature; and by the group dynamic and the general mood.”

“Just be a ‘nature pointer outer’. Show the kids a new birds nest and see what they want to do. Find some sticks and a fallen tree and see what they want to do. Show them what they didn't realise was already happening around them and see what they want to do.”

“Forest School is the mum's ‘yes’ place. The one day a week where she isn't constantly saying ‘no’, or ‘be careful’ or ‘not right now’. The one day a week where ‘yes’ is the answer and her kids just get to be kids.

I wonder how much that has a positive impact on the parents' mental health. Being a parent in modern society is exhausting.”



A positive psychology perspective: Navigating life experiences of racial discrimination amongst Black and Ethnic Minorities (BME)

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Abstract

Vast empirical research points to the negative impact of life where racial discrimination permeates, and how people employ coping strategies. The present Positive Psychology (PP) research still lacks clear focus with regard to interventions tailored to atrocities associated with racial discrimination. PP science is dedicated to finding what makes life worth living as people meet atrocities across the life span. This paper presents research findings on the experiences of racial discrimination amongst a sample of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) lecturers in higher education. The report highlights the negative impact of racism on well-being (Subjective well-being (SWB) and Psychological well-being (PWB)). It will highlight Positive Psychology interventions (PPI) as potential coping strategies employed by participants. The participants shared their narrative through semi-structured interview. To make sense of the narratives, data were analysed through thematic analysis. The major findings were divided into external and internal overarching themes relating to experience as well as coping. Some of the themes were; Lack of positive regard, victimization, cognitive coping, positive-self, ethnic belonging, appreciative dialogue, and privilege. The exploration of PP aspects highlighted some coping processes as possible ways of coping. The coping processes relate hugely to most resilient literature within PP when dealing with the 'dark side' of life within discriminatory society. Potentially, the participants' processes point towards the potential use of PP, or further research, in the areas of appreciative dialogue, ethnic and cultural identity.

Keywords: Racism, discrimination, well-being, positive psychology, coping.

Introduction

Despite all of the social and technological advances of our time the tendency of humans to discriminate on the basis of difference continues. Research posits that race and ethnicity are social constructions and not biological facts, and yet racism continues to play as a human divide, as one race identifies as superior to others (Liang et al., 2009). They further posit that Racism exists every day in overt or subtle manner, passive or active with negative outcomes to well-being and flourishing for those for whom it is intended (Villegas-Gold and Yoo, 2014). Daily perceived discrimination is expressed by most individuals within the Black and

Ethnic Minority (BME) within society regardless of their success or social status (Kim et al., 2015).

The present research explored life experiences of racial discrimination and how people cope with such atrocity. The paper will present: how the research was carried out, data analysis, and findings in links with PP theories. The clinical implications will be highlighted, especially how the narratives will further contribute to the body of PP knowledge. Some conclusions remarks will be stipulated as a forward to further research. Key objectives:

1. The impact of racism on well-being (subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being PWB) making a case why PP needs to pay attention to the atrocity of racism.
2. How people whose lives are affected by racism, navigate everyday life, how they cope with setbacks of discrimination to lead a life that is fulfilled and engaged (Seligman, 2002).
3. Which aspects of positive psychology, as potential coping mechanisms, are evident while people are challenged by discrimination?

In many ways this research has been 17 plus years in the making. The author moved to England about 18 years ago. Coming to a different country came with experiences that were baffling and shocking as opposed to the 'dream' the author had of a life full of new experiences for growth. It is important that the reader understand that the author came to England with no filters in matters of race and racism. Despite studying and living in South Africa during apartheid, racial discrimination is one the author had no experience of. The author was shocked by the reality of life in England, in a manner that was horrific, and challenged the very essence of the value of human interactions and relationships. To understand the experience, the author wrote a memoir (My Life in England, 2015) the story that inspired this research. The research is the story of the author's life in contrast with how others experience racial discrimination to provide a way to compare narratives in line with empirical research. Despite the disturbing reality of discrimination, the story stood out in the choices the author made to live a good positive life.

The corner stone of positive psychology (PP) science is centred on discovering and promoting factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive and live a good life (Seligman, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Wong, 2011). Such movement was geared to finding out how people navigate challenges to help them flourish and live fulfilling lives. As

such human strengths of resilience, optimism, hope, etc are listed as some of the most positive and life affirming traits and behaviours of humanity that sustains one through trials (Masten, 2001; Snyder, 2002). Evidence suggests that resilient individuals manage to live fulfilled lives despite atrocities; in fact they seem to manage their challenges positively (Masten, 2001, Fredrickson, 2010).

Rationale

As racism is a different form of stress (multidimensional complexity), it calls for a different attention in tackling. Shawn et al. (2000) state that stress of racism forces one to borrow repertoire of coping mechanisms to ameliorate its impact as the microaggressions are constant. Racism affects every aspect of life for those who experience it with lower levels of self-concept, depression etc (Liang et al., 2009). So far even the psychological measurement devices in use within PP do not reflect the minority as they were developed and standardised primarily on white people, thus they may be inappropriate and pathologising (Jasinkaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Perhoniemi, 2006). Richness of study should be geared to understanding and investigating individual-level, and collective factors that may buffer/mitigates effects of discrimination (Brondolo et al., 2009). The examination of coping is critical to fostering the protection and promotion of the health of BME in society (Hudson et al., 2016). Lowe & Okubo (2012) highlight that micro-aggressions are significantly associated with mental distress above and beyond stressors such as acculturation and poverty and with drug and substance abuse, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure and strokes (Clark and Youth, 2006; Juang and Alvarez, 2012). There is association between life experiences of discrimination to life satisfaction, and self-esteem (Barnes and Lightsey Jr, 2005). Racism manifests itself in different daily situations such as being followed in a shop, ignored, or dismissed (Shawn et al., 2000).

Literature within the field of PP that directly addresses perceptions of racism is scarce, except for generalised statements of how the use of positive emotions allows one to see interrelatedness of people and not their skin colour (Fredrickson, 2010). The aim of the study was to step into this existing gap to explore lived experiences of life within discrimination, and find out what positive psychology aspects are present as potential coping strategies amongst a sample of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) staff in Higher Education.

Method

Participants were a purposive sample of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) people working within higher education who perceive discrimination as affecting their wellbeing, recruited via email. They were representative of a population with characteristics of interest to the theoretical concerns of the researcher (Biggam, 2015). This was to avoid the assumption that everyone within BME perceives discrimination as impacting well-being. All 5 participants held senior or principal lecturer positions, and were well accomplished in their different fields (Table 1). They were of Afro Caribbean and Asian origin. It was important for the research to be directed to this group to exclude challenges associated with perception of discrimination such as; poverty, lower-socioeconomic status, lack of education, disability etc. Racism is current, cuts across the life span, transcends and manifests as historic with no regard to social hierarchy (Beagan et al., 2012).

Table 8.1. *Participant demographic information.*

Participant	Gender	Position	Organisation	Highest qualification
1	Female	Principal Lecturer	University	Doctorate degree (PhD)
2	Male	Senior Lecturer	University	Master's degree
3	Male	Senior Lecturer	University	Master's degree
4	Male	Head of Department	University	Doctorate degree (PhD)
5	Female	Senior Lecturer	University	Master's degree

Data was collected through scheduled individual semi-structured interviews to guide the conversations with structure and purpose (Cramer and Howitt, 2017). The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke's six phases, 2006: Appendix 8.1). The initial coding of emerging patterns was done using Quirkos version 1.5.0 which is an online software package for analysing qualitative data.

The participants were asked to share experiences of their life where racism exists, and what they deemed contributed to the ability to cope and live a relatively "good life" amidst the atrocity (Wong, 2011). As such age was not considered significant in this study, and therefore age was not requested even though some did give their age. An interpretivist paradigm was used to conduct the research to tap into the social context of narratives (Biggam, 2015). It was a phenomenological approach to understand peoples' lived experiences (Smith, 2015).

Themes were identified inductively and compared with theories of PP (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Due to the researcher's own personal experiences and interest in the subject, a guard against possible bias was employed throughout (Howitt, 2013).

Discussion and Analysis of Results

The findings from data were huge and went beyond the scope of the level of the project. What the participants shared were deep, but as the reader the author tried to make sense of the major story and help manage other readers. To illustrate the narratives, direct quotes from participants were used where applicable as; p1, p2 etc.

The findings addressed the 3 major objectives:

1. How people whose lives are affected by racism, navigate everyday life, how they cope with setbacks of discrimination to lead a life that is fulfilled.
2. Which aspects of positive psychology, as potential coping mechanisms, are evident while people are challenged by discrimination?
3. The impact of racism on well-being (subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being PWB) making a case why PP needs to pay attention to the atrocity of racism

Daily discrimination is defined by Sue et al. (2007, as cited in Juang & Alvarez, 2010, p.168) as "a brief and common place daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities intentional or unintentional". The term discrimination applies to racial discrimination, and includes both conscious and unconscious bias (Forsyth & Carter, 2014). Throughout the participants stories; it was evident that discriminatory attitudes perpetuate despite one's success. Many studies point out how the collective consciousness of society, especially that Whites Label Blacks as aggressive, hostile, violent, and criminal perpetuates bias (Devine and Elliot 1995; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997, and Sniderman & Piazza 1993 cited in Mancini *et al.*, 2015). There is a sense of internalised oppression with consequent impact on well-being (low self-esteem, self-worthlessness and disengagement (James et al., 2008).

Well-being comprises subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB). SWB relates to Self-esteem, a sense of personal control, life satisfaction, and the meaning of

life (Myers & Diener, 1995) They refer to PWB as the aspects of personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, and positive relatedness. It is a way in which people experience the quality of their lives; including the emotional reactions, the cognitive judgements and conclusions they reach when evaluating their existence (Myers & Diener, 1995; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

PWB is commonly associated with Ryff (1989) who suggests six dimensions; autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Figure 8.1). Feagin and Sikes (1994) cited in Mellor (2004 p. 56) suggest that the “experiences of racism not only are painful and stressful in the immediate situation, and the aftermath, but also have a cumulative negative impact on the individual, families, and communities. Salvatore and Shelton (2007) highlight the cognitive costs of exposure to racial discrimination as a challenge to the core of human need for optimal social function as one seeks to understand others’ motivation for their behaviour.



Figure 8.1. Ryff’s (1989) 6 domains of Psychological Well-being

The major findings were developed into two overarching themes; experiences of racism, how it impacts well-being, and coping. Links to existing body of PP are woven into discussion. And finally, how positive psychology as potential coping strategy manifests within the narratives.

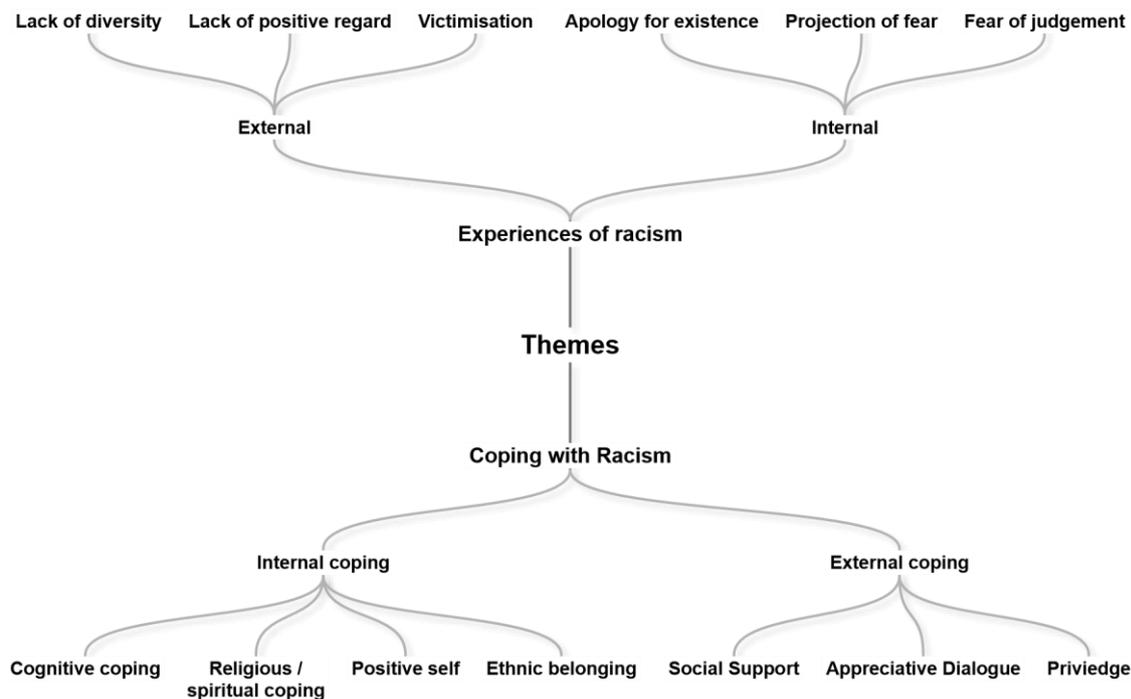


Figure 8.2. Themes on experience and coping

Experiences of Racism

The participant's experiences were contextualised as external and internal appraisals (fig.2). Actions experienced from the external are those views society holds about BME based mostly on negative stereotypes. The actions affect individuals and how they respond which often involves internal responses (Mellor, 2004). All appraisals were linked with high emotional discharge manifesting as current, historic, and perpetual (Beagan et al., 2012). All forms of racism (overt or covert, conscious or unconscious) were experienced. They were divided categorised as external and internal factors (fig 2). Due to the interrelatedness of these factors, the author extrapolated the findings the best way to demonstrate the narrative.

Lack of Diversity. Lack of diversity within the hierarchical structure of universities (HE) contributed to feelings of isolation, being ignored or not existing (Shawn et al., 2007). Many studies points to this across organisations despite their skills and diversity of population (Roger, 2014). This legitimises the negative assumptions about BME's lack of ambition possibly diminishing their sense of worth (Shawn et al., 2007).

“And I think as a black woman, certainly I don't see people who look like me in positions that can make a difference. You can look up but you see no-one who looks like you there, so your aspirations are somewhat limited because you can't aspire to be there if you can't see anybody there who might pull you up you know, who can coach you and guide you and share that. I think discrimination exists; it's no different to when

I was a child. Yes, it is different, it's more subtle, it's more hidden. It's more. It's like discrimination now has a PhD". (P5)

The experiences were varied but the feeling of isolation due underrepresentation of BME was a factor observed by all participants. Interestingly the awareness to their isolated existence helped to heighten their resilient spirits, and deeper engagement with their work (Masten, 2001; Rogers, 1998; Seligman, 2002).

"I can tell you it has done is made me take more time to do things because I think it's easier for people to blame people who look like me but if I have all boxes ticked, I have a stronger defence". (P1)

Despite these challenges, it appears that Individual's desire to grow towards fulfilment, to become best-self was heightened (Seligman, 2002). People with self-actualising tendencies will seek ways for growth by changing negative emotions to positive ones (Seligman, 2002). Potential for growth even in challenges is possible (Ivtzan et al., 2015).

A study of Asian-American points to how racism affects every aspect of life with lower levels of self-concept, depression etc (Liang et al., 2007). The participants demonstrated proactive coping and able to face the isolating impact of racism through acknowledgment of existing emotions due to racism.

One of the participants highlighted that where positions are granted, it serves to tick diversity policy boxes for political gain, and not based on humanity.

"A lack of diversity in the team, so I suspect that's part of the reason why they brought me up here. My boss was a white guy, the one that I followed here or Jewish guy but the first NSS students were fed back how they felt some of the staff were racist. You could say and apart from my manager who I came here for, I think they had very little experience of working with people who are different from them except the students". (P4)

Even when one is in a managerial position, the racial undertones of disapproval exists demonstrating systemic bias often followed by offensive comments:

"I'm under no illusions those feelings were here and people hold those and the person who said 'Who's left, how many have left ' I was under no illusions that these kinds of fools were here and attitudes were here". (P4)

Lack of Positive Regard. This impact one's sense of self and meaning of life (Forsyth and Carter, 2014). Brondolo et al. (2009) points out how institutional racism is evidenced by lowered expectations or refusal to acknowledge knowledge, skills and performance of

minority groups, and yet place unrealistic expectations of performance. One participant mentioned that this position is very unsettling and leads to over-examining of self.

“I over-examine things that I’ve done because I know the repercussions might be later, questioning about my ability to perform a task that I really had a real comprehension and understanding of. I’m a black man and sometimes I’m talking, and I can see people’s non-verbal cues, the way that they engage with me, the way that they talk to me is that they don’t believe that I add real value.” (P3)

Racial stereotypes have a bearing regardless of one’s position and achievements as one participant said:

“There is this power differential with them where they regard people in a certain way and so how does that manifest itself - of course me being a black man from South London. And they don’t regard me any different from that kid in the street gear. No one really would let you know how valued you are to the institution-that doesn’t happen. You have to get your own feedback as it were.” (P4)

Contributions to the institution are often not upheld or recognised.

“There’s recognition if somebody else says the same suggestion that I said 2-3 weeks previous. And so, you’re asking yourself why does this happen.” (P3)

While the participants were asked about experience of discrimination within their role, all the participants referred to previous experiences, their histories confirming that racism is present across the life span with historic links in time. Brondolo et al. (2009) highlight how existence of racism influences the way other people think and feel towards target group, and that it unfolds over time across generations and life span

Participants were aware of being treated differently by white colleagues, teachers and white peers throughout their journeys. Some recalled incidences from school age where white teachers made assumptions about their intelligence, almost writing them off with lowered expectations. Today she holds a biomedical science PhD.

“The perception was because you are this colour, you should be in this particular box that is, not achieving. So regularly I was teased; I was bullied; I was isolated throughout my whole primary school years. I had no more than one or maximum two friends and I was made to feel like I was not as good as.” (P1)

Representation of BME in managerial posts remain limited, and that even when one’s skills and knowledge supersede non-BME colleagues, the participants had sense of being trivialised over others and having their knowledge used to the advantage of white colleagues.

“...there were 3 of us managers together and one of the chaps who was white and he used to say [name], you do the work. I do the presentation and if they get in, they get junior posts. It’s like always a bridesmaid, never the bride.” (P2).

“If you look at here, how many black people are there in senior posts? Are you telling me black people are not good enough?” (P2)

In line with vast empirical research, institutional management or executives do not represent their clientele (Rogers, 2014). There is a high number of BME students for instance in HE, but most lecturers are white, even in the non-red brick universities.

“As an institution I think we’ve kind of failed to capitalise on that, because if you’re not reflecting the composition of your client base in your management base then you’re saying we want your money. We want you but well, I don’t want you running the case, that may be an interpretation.” (P5)

Racism is structurally constructed within the fabric of society alluding to institutional as well as interpersonal racism (Hagelskamp and Hughes, 2014). Racial stereotypes are embedded in the subconscious mind, and practiced without thoughts to actions that inflict harm to its target in deep ways (Lowe et al., 2012).

“It’s a real challenge because you start to say to yourself it must be you and you want to change your behaviour because now you’re saying to yourself ‘I didn’t do this, but I said to myself maybe if I’m less black.’”(P3)

The lack of regard transcends to views of BME lecturers by some students, demonstrating disrespect to their work. A student for instance in one narrative sought second opinion on grades given from a white lecturer.

“And she sent an email to my colleague who’s actually a lower rank than me and said: ‘I don’t think [mentions name] has marked me fairly therefore I would like you to review it for me’.”(P1).

The participant went on to mention that the terms *black* and *white* are labels that devalue humanity, perpetuating negative associations, that people should be identified by their origins not colour.

“Equality, let’s do things equally okay. I’m actually dark brown, I’m not black; they are not white and by using this kind of I feel colour label, I think you are devaluing a whole group of people.” (P1)

“White and black have really heavy connotations. Black Friday, okay, so black sheep of the family. Every single phrase that is negative has the word ‘black’. Don’t put that on me!” And the ‘white’, white wedding dress and everything pure and wholesome is white”. (P1).

Interestingly some participants used “Black” as an empowering statement of strength and confidence.

“I’m a formidable black woman when I’m at my best. And when I’m at my worst I am still a formidable black woman just waking up.” (P5)

It is apparent that lack of positive regard has links with being victimised, especially when diversity still lacks across organisations.

Victimization (Social Profiling). This manifests in various forms: negative profiling; less expectation to be intelligent, and only suited for lower jobs.

One participant recalls a conversation with a white woman who was a career adviser, about future goals.

“We were talking about careers and stuff and she said, you’ve got such a great personality, you’ll be really good, a nice job in Woolworth’s she said. A nice job in Woolworth’s, I’d be really good at that, meeting people and talking to people. I think it comes into play, where people who really don’t know us have their own negative perception or notion about who we are or what we can or can’t do, and based on their perception of us, then they put barriers in the way because, no, no, no, you can’t be the manager.” (P5)

“The perception was because you are this colour, you should be in this particular box that is, not achieving.” (P1)

These perceptions permeate in time and society to date still have lowered expectations of BME and question their achievements. Even in their successes, they are still victims. One participant described the disbelief written on the face of a student when she learned she was the Dr supervising her.

“I was completely the opposite. I wasn’t Caucasian, I wasn’t of age and I certainly wasn’t male. So this particular student walked in and said to me “Are you Doctor [name]” “Yes I am”. Oh! Oh I see. I can’t be because I know what the psychology is of people from a different race.” (P1)

Another element is students’ views of BME lecturers by all students (not just white) resulting in them make demands they would not otherwise make of a white lecturer.

“I want to make this clear to you I need a first from you. I said to myself you would never I’m sure say this to any other Caucasian male, you wouldn’t say this ‘I want a First from you.’” (P1)

Some mentioned how racism is a handicap to success preying on its victims, and one that discourages BME individuals to apply for certain positions.

“I think for younger people, younger ethnic minority or black people in the organisation, if you are not seeing others like you at those levels then it can inhibit you from applying because you think that the progress is going to be denied you.” (P5)

Unrealistic demands also manifests where one is forced to work over and above their white colleague in the same category.

“I get a feeling that the expectation of me is bigger; if I do something, I have to do it bigger for it to have any credibility.” (P3)

“The way I always cope with this is again I had another mentor who always tell me to success in this place you have to give 110%. Some people may give 80% and will pass but as a black Asian, you need to give extra.” (P2)

This has been interpreted by participants as being ‘set up’ for failure.

Apology for Existence. Reactions to the external actions of others precipitates internal psychological and emotional reactions as individuals try to make sense of the experience, and its implications for sense of place in the world (Forsyth and Carter, 2012; Lowe, Okubo, and Reilly, 2012). Constant microaggressions cost PWB due repertoire of internal processing based on previous and current insults. Sharing the experience was intensely emotional, but the participants appreciated the opportunity to talk things through. Some mentioned it was part of healing to be able to share, and not apologise.

“In the moment that we’re sharing together, there’s a lot of healing because I’ve realised that the possibility to share is something that I don’t know if we’ve made sure comes across but the possibility to share.” (P3).

One participant mentioned that the notion that racism is perceived, and not actual, trivialises people’s experiences, so as there is no acknowledgement or ownership of offences.

“I don’t think it’s a perceived, I think it’s actual. To perceive something is to almost look at it from a distance. I think when you experience whatever it is it’s no longer perception, it’s reality, and I think that reality is there”. “You perceive it to be so, it may not be so. Why do I need to justify my feelings? You’ve done something to me and I’ve interpreted it this way”. (P5).

Dovidio *et al.* 2002 (cited in Gushue and Constantine, 2007) highlights how society especially white people greatly underestimate the existence of racism and its consequent disparities, undermining its reality.

“And it’s not, people will say that’s how you perceived it, no, if you have lived that experience you become fine-tuned to the subtleness of racism”. And I make no apology for expressing it in those terms, because that was my reality, when people were told, monkey, black monkey, where’s your tail.” (P5)

Expressions of a sense of loss of control and fear were mentioned by some. Control is understood as the extent to which one believes that he or she can predict or influence events (Bandura, 1989).

“Yes absolutely. I think the main thing that gets in the way is when you feel you’ve lost control of things.” (P1)

The experience of loss of control affects people’s decision-making processes where one may succumb to “resigned acceptance” and create self-doubt in one’s abilities (Beisswingert et al., 2015). It is a way of disempowering one, to have no voice.

Projection of Fear. Internal reactions demonstrate fear as the main variable, each was portrayed by the participants in different ways. One participant highlighted how effective and positive it would be for organisations to acknowledge existence of racism, and put strategies in place instead of “tip toeing” (p4) around it due to fear and anxiety.

“I always say that it would be best more healthy if we assumed that this place was institutionally racist and started planning how to tackle it rather than going looking to see whether there have been incidents or just assume it’s blimming there. You acknowledge it’s there, you know it’s there, it’s ever-present and some people who believe in terms of your inferiority no matter what you do, people who are probably waiting for you to trip up.” (P4)

He further said that even though it is hard to address it, it is a better strategy to tackle it with respect than choosing silence.

“If a person came up and faced me at that time and said ‘Look, are you okay, is there something wrong?’ I don’t know because it’s hard to verbalise you sussed them out.” (P4)

People can also project fear through loss of control, Self-doubt or self-criticism, and feelings of being undermined.

“If I was presenting something, I was getting put down but if I give it to him to present, what a good idea, what a sort of... so that’s how I used to survive.” (P2)

Fear of Judgement. Being racialized added a burden to their daily experience. The desire for success is inherently associated with the fear of failure and anxiety over the potential shame

of affirming negative stereotypes labelled as inherent in BME. The fear of judgement can result in: anxiety, mistrust, and psychological harm.

“I was stepping back because I’m on top of it now, but it took 3 or 4 years to get and in that time you’re working with about 15 academics so you’ve really got to because they’re watching you like a hawk and people above you also.” (P4)

The negative assumptions about one’s skills and knowledge perpetuate this fear should failure occur. Fear failure and harsh consequences, forces one to constantly watch their back.

“It still creates a lot of anxiety for me about and questioning about my ability to perform a task.” (P3)

Coping with Racism

Despite the pervasive and detrimental effects of racism, BME achieve success and thrive across settings (Malott and Schaeffle, 2015). The researcher was seeking to find out what sustains their ability to cope and succeed. Coping strategies are defined as the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding people’s resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The participant narratives demonstrated various external and internal responses in navigating the threatening stimuli of racist attitude. These involved different psychological activities or attention processes such as vigilance or in some cases cognitive avoidance depending on the nature of the threat/stimuli, and appraisal of the event to buffer well-being (Mellor, 2004; Brondolo, 2009). Negative coping was highlighted if pointed to positive outcomes. Fifolt and Lander (2013) points to a need to appreciate the negative, as it can make a room to develop positive outcomes. Ivtzan et al. (2016) explain that it is from dark experiences, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that people seek the meaning of life.

Important elements of coping were categorised as internal & external (fig. 2). Processing micro-aggressions calls for repertoire of outlets or what is called adaptive coping mechanisms to ameliorate racism (Malott and Schaeffle, 2015). The mechanisms shared by participants were either emotional-based (emotion regulation and expression) or problem-based coping (Brondolo, 2009).

Cognitive Coping. For every incident, single or cumulative, participants explained that they are forced to process the event/s to make sense of its meaning. Most of these coping

strategies were aimed at focusing one's energy to protecting self through self-control (Mellow, 2004). He further highlights that the processing involves reinterpretation of the situation to take the sting out of the experience, most often interpreting the perpetrator as one with moral deficits. Avoidance may provide protection in some situations and allow one to process and reaffirm sense of self as one with superior moral standards (Mellow, 2004; Liang et al., 2009).

"You're not disappointed, it's not my problem, it's them. And yes, and you think less of them and that's why I said it affects your interaction because one thing I can't stand is insincerity; when someone is insincere, do you know what I mean. You acknowledge it's there, you know it's there, it's ever-present and some people who believe in terms of your inferiority no matter what you do, people who are probably waiting for you to trip up." (P4)

Brondolo et al. (2009) identify how dealing with racism needs mobilisation of resources involving suppression as well as expression of emotions.

"And sometimes I choose to deal with it and other times I choose not to, depending on whether I want to fight that battle on that day. And at that time I was very cross. I proceeded to go and see her boss to talk about it." (P5)

When racist attitude are obvious, one tries not to racialize everything.

"For a long time I wanted it to be about other things than what I thought it was about. For a long time I thought is it because I'm a man. I have a lot of other reasons why; they're tired, burnt out, emotional anxiety." (P3)

Participants expressed a need to acknowledge the existence of racism to avoid being in denial which could be more damaging.

"It is going to happen but to me, the important thing is don't get flustered with that." (P2)

Some participants mentioned how learning and writing about the reality of it prepared them for when racism happens as it was already anticipated. In PP literature this is proactive coping to help minimise the stress in advance through cognitive reappraisals (Mallett & Swim, 2009).

"I was doing a lot of reading and of writing about race in education, racial equality in education and I had a few pieces published elsewhere so I went quite deeply about that and how that manifests, how it works. And so once you know how these things work and how they're maintained and talking about race bias and racism etc., once you know then you're a bit wiser, you're a bit more armed against it because you can analyse what you see." (P4)

Learning through experiences was described as a strong tool for survival of racism. Learning from others in similar situations as well as teaching about racism played part in helping participants to come to terms of that reality.

“Sometimes your experience is your best teacher, what you’ve learnt through life you can use it. I use the pain I’ve had in the past and reflected on other people that people are going through the same thing.” (P2)

They expressed that one has to constantly check their reactions due to constantly being racialized.

Vassilliere (2016) highlighted that BME groups show more emotion-focused coping than whites, that this is not related to the BME as a people, but added impact of racism.

Religious and Spiritual Coping. Religion and spiritualism have been investigated in stress literature. These demonstrate protective buffers towards stress (Hudson et al., 2016). This element was significant to the participants.

“What makes me satisfied is work, a mixture of work, family, of joy, of laughter and my religion and my faith. In my interview I want you to know that that is something that lifts me. That is something that gives me satisfaction.” (P3)

“there’s something else about the coping mechanism that I haven’t yet mentioned and it’s quite an important one for me and it’s the spiritual aspect and this is something that I’m so proud to say that underpins so many people from African/Caribbean descent.” (P1).

People with some elements of spirituality cope better with chronic illnesses as this has links with hope and optimism (Snyder, 2002; Seligman, 2002).

Positive Self (Resilience). The participants mentioned that they have internal resources of coping inherent in their personal traits.

“I think for me, there were things from within me that helped me to cope.” (P5)

“You have to be able to go out into your own self, your own psyche to manage and for me I can only give credit to my parents. When you think you’re going through a problem that’s going to knock you down, in fact you look back and think actually that helped make me who I am.” (P1)

The anticipation of racist attitudes seem to provide resilience. Ryan et al. (2016) makes a very important observation regarding strengths shown by Black people even in the most brutal events of innocent men being killed by police in the USA.

“It’s frustrating but you develop a mechanism of survival, never let this affect me. So I think from what I’ve been through, I’ve built resilience”. (P2).

Focusing on personal goals of being successful can buffer race insults.

“I just had things I wanted to do. And I think some people don’t always have that framework against which to battle through the system. I think it made me bold. It made me want to show them whoever they were”. And I was bright you know, and I think that made a difference. I don’t think I was innately bright in that sense, I don’t know if there’s such a thing, but I think I was surrounded with people who valued education, who valued knowledge”.(P5).

The stress of racism is constant, and taxes all emotional coping repertoires, and somehow, this was a factor in building resilience (Masten, 2001).

“It’s resistance. So you live with it rather than fighting, it’s like fighting against a brick wall and you’re only getting bumps in your head”.(P2).

Ethnic Belonging. Collective understanding of the experiences had a protective value as one does not feel this in isolation. The knowledge that the systems of the world are frequently blinded to be against a whole group of “humans” on the account of difference, is a confirmation of a ‘sick world’ claimed participants in various ways.

“Instead of struggling with myself in the dark, I sometimes pull on what other people have said, their experiences, to then add value to my own, to help me and I feel it’s a really good resource not tapped into. In order for me to achieve and do well as an adult, I need to be in a mixed environment, a positive environment”. (P1).

Identities are a rich source of drawing positive self which can enhance functioning (Malott and Schaeffle, 2015). Alludes to strength in unity as some highlighted.

“I do actually and I think this is why I think it’s important, it hurts me when I see how fractured the black community has or is becoming and it also hurts me to see how divided we are becoming and how because I think with unity you gain a lot of strength”. (P1).

Social Support. Pulling on external sources of support was demonstrated to protect self through sharing of experiences. Social networks for shared experiences were significant in various forms; relationships (family, friends, religious groups, value students gave through positive feedback). These were tools of resilience (Masten, 2001).

“So for me it was both a family support network but also a character. And I think a lot of that came from my great grandparents who, when my parents came to England we

were left with for a number of years. And so I think a lot of that empowerment came from them, because they were my great grandparents but they remembered their grandparents who remembered slavery. They were lots of words of wisdom. (P5).

One participant particularly mentioned how awareness of positive Black people images like Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, etc, and supporting such courses of positive activism heightened their own experiences, as somewhere to fall back.

“It made me realise that, and I think I was fortunate in that I grew up in the era of Martin Luther King, but particularly the Malcolm X, Angela Davis, real people”.(P5).

Students’ feedback stood out as an element that kept the participants interested and motivated to keep up with their jobs.

“Being valued by the students but I think people tend to use you here, But otherwise I’m very satisfied here. I think it’s because the student is clapping, they’re looking for you to come so it must be something that you’re giving to people that is and to me that’s my satisfaction”. (P2).

Mentoring is linked with strength building which enhances well-being (Eby, 1997).

Mentoring provides freedom to explore and learn, and get support in finding one’s own interests (Worth, 2010). One participant highlighted how mentoring helped her through situations. That there are positive people regardless of differences.

“But I think one of the things that help me; I was very fortunate in that I met some. So part of my progression, I met some very good people, both black and white, who became mentors”. (P5).

Overall the support was viewed as bolstering elements of positive affect.

Appreciative Dialogue. In both explicit and implicit ways, participants expressed the significance of the conversations during the interview. They expressed that sharing such sensitive information without judgement, gave them some hope and optimism for social change. PP points to such positive activities such as hope and optimism (Snyder, 2002; Seligman, 2002). One participant said they felt that this positive approach might bring a different way of thinking race and racism.

“It’s very strange talking about something and trying to share and this has been, I’m sharing it in my entirety and feeling, hearing things come out, it is emotional to hear them come out. It’s challenging to hear what I’ve been thinking I can hear it myself and for it now to be confirmed for me that is this really a possibility”. It doesn’t change somebody else’s behaviour but it helps you to understand and recognise that it isn’t just you, that it is somebody’s behaviour. it’s been my pleasure to hear. I think it’s useful

for us to continue to challenge and that's what I think this will do; I hope that's what it will do". (P3)

Some felt it is time to talk race. That institutions should create a way of dealing with racism instead of tip-toeing around it.

"I always say that it would be best, healthier if we assumed that this place was institutionally racist and started planning how to tackle it rather than going looking to see whether there have been incidents or just assume. People would say there goes a forward-thinking institution, so I want to be part of that but they're not ready, they're terrified of it". (P4).

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" - Martin Luther King Jr speech (1958)

Privilege - Caring for the Other. All participants perceived their privileged positions in academia and social status as a tool to empower through teaching and learning, to be able to share the knowledge that extends beyond self.

"But I like the notion of empowering people, of seeing that light at the end of that tunnel. And then seeing them through that tunnel and waving them, knowing that you know". (P5)

There was a mention of how systems knowledge can help navigate obstacles that are structurally placed to prevent BME in accessing necessary tools for success. Knowing the system enables one to challenge some of the discrimination.

"And the obstacles should be the same for everyone. Why should it be different because of your race." (P5).

Some highlighted the significance of knowledge within the system to promote learning together of students.

"The culture, we have to mix all of our groups to ensure that students are mixed well". (P1).

The privilege of their success has enabled facilitation of teaching others in similar group's stated one participant, which she dimmed adds value to their life-satisfaction.

"And I also feel quite privileged to be in a position to help those who are also from my category who have sought help from those who are a different category and haven't been able to receive it. So I have a function in life I feel that a lot of satisfaction comes from helping others and I am in a really good position to do that. So satisfied, yes I am". (P1).

Understanding the system allows for individuals to communicate their concerns and better manage expectations. All participants were aware of unrealistic expectations based on BME as a collective group, and a need to assert self to prevent over-exhaustion.

“I try and deal with that by managing other people’s expectations so [name] the deadline is so and so. Thank you for telling me the deadline. Unfortunately, I will not be able to meet the deadline because XYZ”. That’s how now I’m managing it. I’m managing it by communicating with people. I’m human. I have other tasks outside of what you want me to do. This is where I’m prioritising. “I have not responded because unfortunately this takes priority”. (P1).

Links Between Participant Coping Process and Positive Psychology Subjects /Research

The summary Table 8.2 demonstrates how participants’ narrative links with PP, and provides a case for further exploration. In summary the primary coping mechanisms that appeared as linked to PP were as follows:

Table 8.2. *Links between PP and participants’ narratives about coping.*

Coping Strategy	Positive Psychology Links
Cognitive	Some participants mentioned as per findings that writing, learning and teaching helped them position the reality. Expressive writing is associated with psychological well-being (Pennebaker, 1997). Expressive writing helps one to process difficult emotions and make sense of the meaning of the experience as a therapeutic process (Pennebaker, 1997). This also links with appreciative dialogue, an element of gratitude to appreciate and write about what is good despite challenges.
Emotional Processing	Emotions have both positive and negative qualities according to context (Ivtzan et al., 2016). Through emotion regulation one may use turning points for growth (Keyes and Haidt, 2003). Anxiety and anger experienced led participants to focus their attention to the constant emotions through regulation of how to manage, and gaining understanding. Negative emotions can also be good in certain situations. E.g. Anxiety helps to spot danger of being racialized (Kashdan and Biswas-Diener, 2015).

Table 8.2
(continued)

Coping Strategy PP Links

Religion/ Spirituality	<p>How people maintain happiness in good and bad times? Wong (2011) highlights aspects of religion; oneness with nature of God, blessings. Gratitude and gift of happiness is associated with eudamonic well-being. Also links of spirituality with positive emotions, hope, optimism and meaning (Snyder, 2002; Seligman, 2011; Keyes & Haidt, 2003).</p> <p>Some participants mentioned spiritual aspects of coping as a major strength to navigating racism. It helped them to find meaning of life beyond the current circumstances. Some initial efforts of religion and spirituality and link to growth (Joseph, Linley, & Maltby, 2006).</p>
Positive-Self (Resilience)	<p>Participants demonstrated inner strength to keep positive functioning (Huppert and So, 2013) Evidence of some innate resilience (Ego-resilience), further affirmed by challenging experiences (Block and Kremen, 1996; Masten, 2001). Higher trait resilience is associated with high positivebroaden and build (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004; Fredrickson, 2010). In line with PP resilience empirical studies Masten (2010) posits that people facing atrocities seem to have ability to cope better and flourish: rising to life challenges, using turning points for growth, engagement and meaning (Keyes and Haidt, 2003; Seligman, 2011 PERMA)</p>
Ethnic (Cultural) Belonging	<p>Ego-resilience is associated in predictions of levels of SWB with religion in ethnic groups as added value providing optimism, gratitude or altruism (Snyder, Lopez and Pedrotti (2011). Pride in racial heritage is associated with high resilience, strengths, and provides for collectivist sense of belong which helps in growth and development through support (Forsyth and Carter, 2012).</p>
Social Support	<p>PP refers to “care of the other” with compassion and understanding buffering effects of negative experiences. A need to support “other” looking beyond self helps one flourish (Keyes and Haidt, 2003). Positive relationships boost PWB and growth (Ryff, 1989). Can be achieved through coaching and mentoring to enhance or identify one’s strengths for potential growth (Worth, 2010).</p>

It is evident from the summary above that the participants’ coping processes have some presence in existing PP work, yet also goes beyond it. This research appears to present the use of PP in a life span struggle with the experience and impact of racism.

Potentially, the participants' processes point towards the potential use of PP, or further research, in the areas of: Religious and spiritual activity, appreciative dialogue, and ethnic and cultural identity.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

The study provided a vision for PP potential development on research tailored to finding activities that help in navigating issues of racial discrimination. While proactive coping can minimise stress, it will not prevent racism or the emotional burden associated with it.

Especially that racial discrimination cuts across the life span with historic leaving scars to victim's well-being. More empirical studies on PPI strategies should be geared to the atrocity of racism. Strategies to dislodge unconscious bias, appealing to the consciousness of society, may help reduce snap reactions based on biased judgment of the 'other'. Mindfulness, appreciative dialogue-breaking the silence of racism, and education may provide added value.

Hope and a dream: "A solitary fantasy can transform a million realities." - Maya Angelo

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9

Permission to break free

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Abstract

'Permission to Break Free' is a self-guided step by step programme, that takes a person through self-exploration to discover their authentic self, its passions, strengths and weaknesses, beliefs or sabotages, in order to bring the life script into awareness. This process allows the individual to make changes to their own life story that will allow them to achieve their goals, which will make their life fulfilled. This process uses a combination of language and diagrams from Transactional Analysis (TA) - which is a theoretical model - and Positive Psychology concepts and interventions which have scientific proof.

Introduction

One question that everybody asks themselves over and over again throughout their life is 'Am I happy?' They ask, 'Am I living the life that I want?', 'do I feel fulfilled?', 'is this as good as it gets?', 'is there a purpose in my life?'

If we are living the life that fulfils us, process of change will become a personal growth. If we are not, we would like to change something. Change will become part of our life as a constant search to achieve our happiness. There are many programmes and research suggestions what you can do to achieve your happiness, and this is my attempt to try to give some answerers or view how this can be achieved and how we can increase a possibility that we will have meaningful life.

Recently, beginning of 21st century, positive psychology is seen as a science that focuses on giving us some answers on these questions.

'Permission to Break Free' is a programme that I have designed in order to give people another path towards happiness. The programme is focused on the people that feel that they are stuck in an unhappy place in their life; they feel that they have tried different programmes, methods and techniques and nothing works. That they gave it a go but found that they had to make too many sacrifices, or that there were too many obstacles on their path, so they gave up. Some of them managed to make changes, and for a while things were

going well, but then it all seemed to go into reverse and they found themselves back where they started.

The programme is here to find different ways of looking at how people can move forwards after being stuck. Instead of going around the same circle and feeling that they are constantly failing, what they need to do is rewrite the life script that is undermining their ability to make positive change. When in this position in life, you need to make life script work *for* you, not against you. You need to learn a new way of nurturing your new life script so you will be able to live the life that you always wanted. The life script of successful and happy people opens up pathways for them to stroll towards success.

‘Permission to Break Free’ is a programme that works using two positive concepts – Transactional Analysis (TA) and Positive Psychology (PP).

People feel they are not living up to their potential in their personal or working life, or perhaps they are not as happy and fulfilled as they want to be. When people are feeling like this they are searching for the reasons, for the part of their life that they are not happy with and they want to change. It might be their appearance, job, relationship, family situation or other things that they focus on and think it is a reason for their unhappiness? ‘Permission to Break Free’ is looking at this from another angle. It is not looking to fixing one thing, one goal, but looking at what is causing for somebody not to achieve their goals, even with the best plans and techniques. Research is showing that some simple everyday activities can make us feel happier, so why there are still some people that this is not happening. The answer that I am looking is into combining the theoretical model of Transactional analysis and combined tools and interventions from TA and positive psychology.

Transactional Analysis (TA)

International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) defines Transactional Analysis (TA) as ‘a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change’. Transactional Analysis (Steward & Jones, 1987.p.3) gives us a structural three-part model of personality that is simple and easy to understand. TA gives us a functional analysis as a theory of child development of how one’s life script develops in an early age and then becomes a framework of our understanding of us – our behaviour, thoughts and feelings our interaction with others and our understanding of others thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

TA also gives us a theory of psychopathology – why and how we interpret ourselves and others in the way that is undermining us.

In my approach I will not use TA as a psychotherapy that is used to treat psychological disorders, but I will use as a concept that understand everyday life. That can be used with individuals, couples, groups and families. I will be using TA model to create personal growth and life satisfaction.

Main TA concepts that are used in ‘Permission to Break Free’ programme are:

Structural Analysis of Ego States – Structural Analysis of Personality

Erik Bern (1964. P23), founder of TA, explains ego states as a consistent pattern of feelings with corresponding thoughts and behaviours. Bern also points out that each ego state will have distinctive words, tone of voice, gesture and body language. There are 3 ego states: Parent, Adult and Child (Figure 9.1)

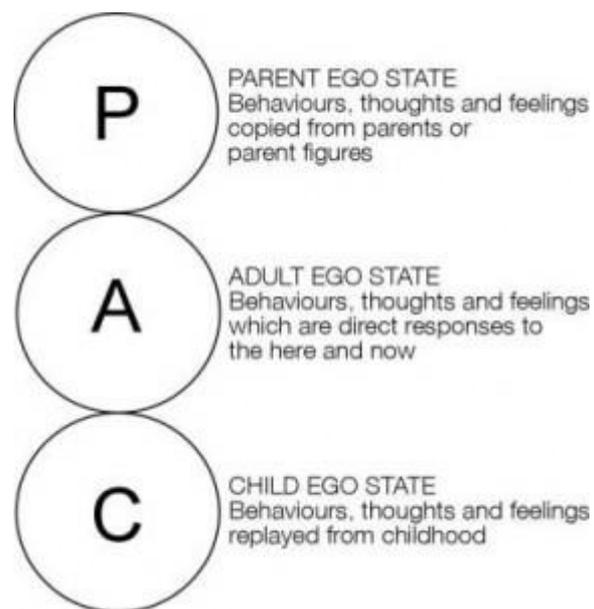


Figure 9.1. First-order structural diagram: The ego –state model
(from Steward & Jones, 1987)

- **Parent ego state** tends to be ‘oughts’, ‘musts’, ‘always’, ‘nevers’ ‘shoulds’ and other judgements and belief messages. Those messages originally were come from parents and authority figures in our life and now are internalised and become a part of our personality. Many of these are useful rules for living, but some might be less helpful for us today.

- **Adult ego state** is based on here and now reality. When you use your Adult you are making your own choice of how to be, not responding to outdated messages from the past. Adult ego state should be an objective assessment of reality.
- **Child ego state** tends to be how we learn to respond to parent figures as a child, usually using infant thinking and behaving. Child type thought would include ‘I like dislike, they like me or not, etc.

Functional Analysis of Ego States: Analysis of how the ego states interact one with one another (Steward & Jones, 1987, pp. 21-26)

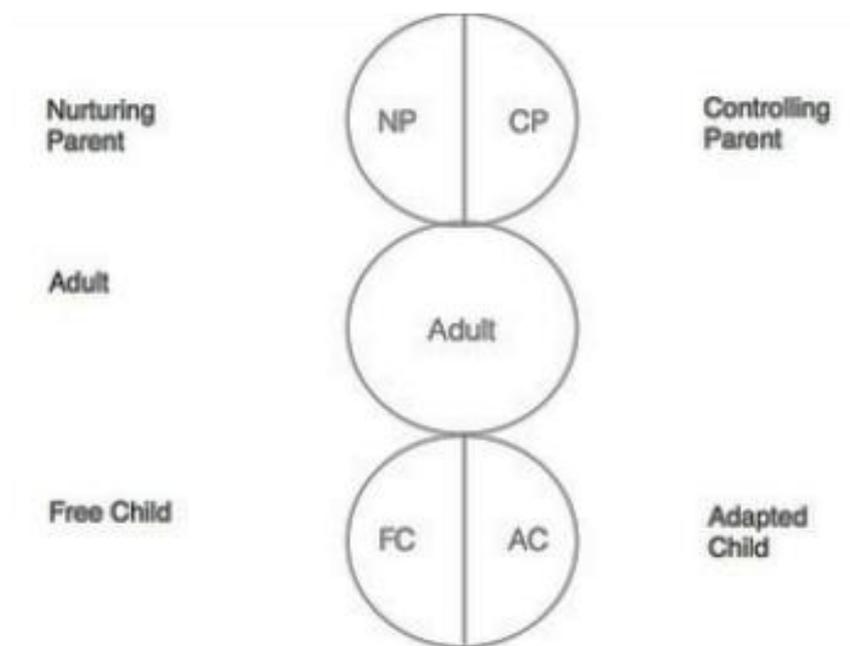


Figure 9.2. Functional analysis of ego states (from Steward & Jones, 1987)

Parent Ego States

Parent ego states can be *Critical/ Controlling (CP)* and *Nurturing Parent (NP)*. Those two Parent ego states can either be *helpful/positive* or *unhelpful/negative*:

- *Helpful Critical Parent* are messages, rules and boundaries that protect you and your well-being
- *Unhelpful Critical Parent* are messages and behaviour that involve put-downs or discounts or your personality

- *Helpful Nurturing Parent* are messages of caring or helping
- *Unhelpful Nurturing Parent* are messages that help is given because they think you are not able, this is over-protective, which discounts your feelings and abilities

Child Ego States

Child ego states can be *Free Child (FC)* or *Adapted Child (AD)* or *Rebellious Child (RC)*.

Depending on the situation in which we are acting from this ego states, they can be seen as *positive* or *negative*.

When we are acting from *Free Child (FC)* we are behaving as we want.

- *Positive Free Child* is when we are acting from our natural needs and feelings that are productive, life-enhancing or purposeful.
- *Negative Free Child* is when we are acting freely regardless if it will have negative impact on us or others.
- *Adapted Child* is when we are acting as a learned behaviour to the response or demands of others. When we are behaving in the way which is expected of us.
- *Positive Adapted Child* is when we are complying to demands and rules in the way that is productive to us.
- *Negative Adapted Child* is when we are behaving in this pattern of the behaviour to please others so we are not making our own choices as a grown-up person.

Some practitioners recognise as a separate ego state *Rebellious Child (RC)* when it is confronting something that they think it's not fair or they don't like.

- *Positive Rebellious Child* is when you are giving yourself a permission to refuse something.
- *Negative Rebellious Child* is when you are doing it in a hurtful or unhelpful way.

Adult Ego State is when we are making choices from here and now. In this ego states we are using grown-up resources and analytical and problem-solving skills.

In analysing the dynamic process of how ego states relate one to another, TA uses the terms *transactions*, *strokes* and *discounts* (Steward & Jones, 1987, pp. 59-86):

- **Transactions** refer to communication, messages passed from one ego state to another and reactions based on your understanding.
- **Strokes** in TA are ways of being recognised, noticed and to get attention. We all need strokes to survive and have good wellbeing. Strokes can be physical (touching, hugging, kissing), or verbal (saying positive things). Strokes send a message to you that you are important, recognised that you are here and worthwhile. There are different kinds of strokes and they can be put in four categories:
 - *Positive conditional* – I like something you do or how you present yourself
 - *Positive unconditional* – I like you
 - *Negative conditional* – I don't like something you do or how you present yourself
 - *Negative unconditional* – I don't like you
- **Discounting** is when we are ignoring the information about ourselves, others or a situation. Ways of discounting can also be a passive behaviour with can be – doing nothing; agitation – playing stupid; over-adaptation which is complying to what others believe you need to do or violence towards yourself or others where you turn your frustration not towards problems solving and is usually directing not at the source of discomfort.

Life Script

Bern (1972, pp. 25-26) describes life script as a story that gives a reference to our social actions, created in early childhood. Bern believes that this life script sits in our subconscious so it is outside of our awareness. This script can be updated while we overcome various life challenges described by Ericson in his life phases. Some people might stay with their infant script throughout their lifetime.

Life Position

The OK Corral

This model distinguishes four different life positions known as the ‘OK Corral’ (Harris, 1973):

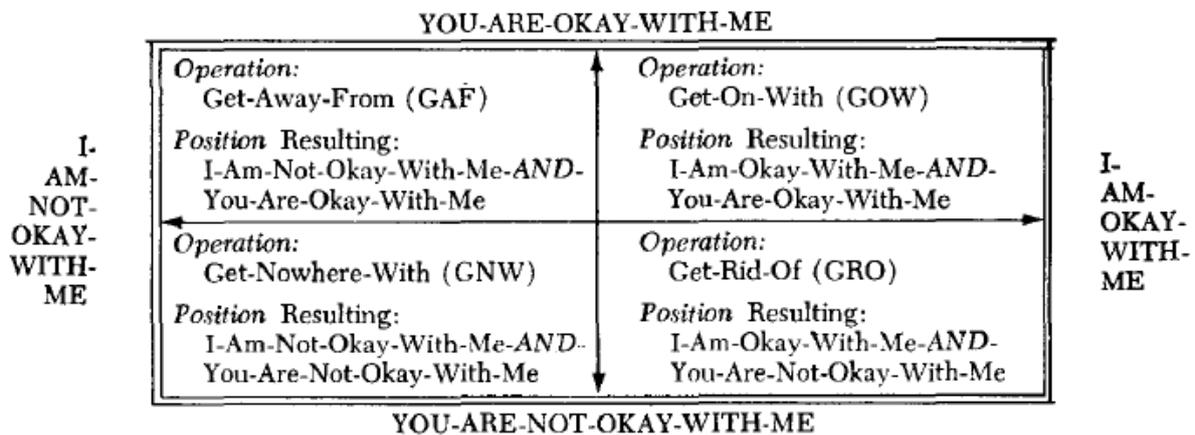


Figure 9.3. The OK Corral grid (Harris, 1973; from Steward & Jones, 1987, p. 120)

- ***I Am Not OK, You Are OK*** is the position that we start in in life, as babies are helpless and need care and support from supportive others. If the child continues to receive negative strokes and discounts from a power position, they will stay in this position.
- ***I Am Not OK, You Are Not OK*** – in this position the Adult does not provide or recognise positive strokes, so the person is in a hopeless situation where they or others do not have positive solutions.
- ***I Am OK, You Are Not OK*** – in this position a person thinks that they are better than others, and see others as worthless
- ***I Am OK, You Are OK*** is a healthy position. The person accepts themselves and others, with all their strengths and weaknesses.

TA and Change

TA (Steward & Jones, 1987, p 178) believes that we can change our script by analysing transactions, becoming aware of our authentic self and changing statements and messages to support us in a positive way. TA believes that positive change can happen from the position *I Am OK, You Are OK*. It believes that the grown-up person has resources and ability to

problem solve and understand situations by looking from both sides of ourselves and others. As a grown-up, each time something happens we have a choice. We can use thinking, feeling and action to solve the problem or we can go into our script and use infant thinking, feeling and behaviour. A majority of people who are stuck use their script, as it is a familiar, comfortable way of dealing even if it is not helpful. This is why some people struggle to change or fall back to old ways.

Just pushing and giving somebody strategies and tools that might solve their problem is not enough. We need to help them to rewrite their script to reflect their true self and then give them tools and positive experience to start gathering evidence that this new script is possible and working for them. Also we need to retrain or teach them to accept positive nurturing and critical parent ego narratives.

Positive Psychology

Definition of Positive Psychology

My own definition/approach is the closest to Peterson's (2008) definition as a scientific approach to answer what makes life most worth living. Topics that positive psychology discusses include life satisfaction, flourishing, flow, character strengths, positivity and negativity ratio, hope and optimism, resilience, gratitude, wellbeing, etc.

Strengths

Alex Linley (2008) defined strengths as a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic and energising to the person, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance (p.9). Biswas-Diener (2011, p.112) talks about strength constellations as a unique profile of strengths.

Biswas-Diener (pp.113-114) explains strengths sensitivity as people feeling disappointed as a result of strengths use, especially when they are using it with goals that can make them vulnerable. However, Linley, Nielsen, Wood, Gillett and Biswas-Diener (2010) showed that people who use their strengths are more likely to achieve their goals. As Linley pointed out, one needs "the right strengths, to the right amount, in the right way and at the right time." (Linley, 2008, p. 58)

Positivity

Barbara Frederickson (2013) has become a leading researcher in the field of positive psychology. Her “Broaden-and-Build Theory” explains how increasing positive emotions creates upward spirals, that lead to the person having positive emotions that open, widen our thinking processes, enhancing our problem-solving skills, psychological strengths, enabling us to develop better social connections, better physical health that will lead to feeling better. She also explains that the purpose of negative emotions are to protect us, and for this to happen effectively, the mind would narrow and focus on survival.

Building on this work, she also discusses the ‘Positivity Ratio’ concept where if the ratio of positive to negative emotions is greater than 3:1 in favour of positive, people experience flourishing. Frederickson (2013, p 39- 48) discusses ten forms of positivity which are: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love.

Frederickson (2013, pp. 179 – 198) presents tools and strategies that can increase positivity such as finding positive meaning, savouring goodness, cultivating kindness, counting blessings, following your passion, dreaming about your future, applying strengths, connecting to others, connecting with nature, and opening your mind and heart.

Gottman (Gaffney, 2012) also discussed the relationship between positive and negative emotions but he felt that there need to be more (5:1) positive to negative experiences so the person can flourish. He includes in the experience not only what is said, but also nonverbal aspects of communication.

Gottman also discussed the negativity bias as inbuilt from infant age. This means that positivity needs to be taught, and we must be helped to learn what to do to be happy, in order to use our resources and potentials to flourish.

Change for Good

In their theory of change, Prochaska and colleagues (1994) describe six stages of change, and for each stages they looked at over 400 interventions that give the best results.

Stages of change that they identified:

1. ***Pre-contemplation*** (resistant) – People in this stage are usually in denial, not accepting that there is a problem; they might also minimize the problem, project that others are the

reason that there is a problem, or they might internalize the problem and think that nothing can be done.

2. **Contemplation** (serious thinking about the problem) – they might have ‘wishful thinking’ that the problem can easily go away or they might panic and go into the premature action.
3. **Preparation** (getting ready) – they start exploring ways to address the problem
4. **Action** – start doing something about the problem.
5. **Maintenance** – sustaining the achieved change, effectively dealing and addressing challenges, lapses and relapses.
6. **Termination** – there is no need to manage the problem, as it has now become a natural way of living. This is not possible for all problems; some might never get to this stage.

Prochaska and colleagues, in this extensive research, managed to match the best processes for each stage. There are ten processes of change, and each of the process would have appropriate techniques that are most efficient for that stage.

Authentic Happiness

Martin Seligman (2011), in his research of happiness has identified five pillars that promote wellbeing: PERMA. He describes positive emotions (P in PERMA) as very important in experiencing happiness, and that people need to be absorbed by activities (Engagement). Connecting with others (Relationships) is very important but also life needs to have Meaning and people need to have a goal that they wish to achieve (Accomplishment).

We also know that learning is also an emotional state, and that positive and encouraging teachers can help us enjoy the learning. The importance of helping individuals to have positive experience, Piers Worth explained in the ‘Four Questions of Creativity’, is that the “key starting point is the question of what you loved doing as a child” (Worth, 2010, p. 27). This puts even more value on working with children and the importance of being a ‘positive mentor’, particularly for very vulnerable children who may have a very limited pool of supporters.

Set Points and Activities That Can Improve Happiness

Lyubomirsky (2007, p.20) gives us a happiness formula which consists of a biological set point that is genetically determined and represents 50%, circumstances in our life that represent 10% and 40% are activities that we choose to do to improve our happiness.

Lyubomirsky (2007, pp. 87- 235) identifies 10 groups of activities that can improve our happiness – expressing gratitude, cultivating optimism, avoiding over-thinking, practicing acts of kindness, nurturing social relationships, developing strategies for coping, learning to forgive, increasing flow experience, savouring life’s joys, committing to your goals, practicing religion and spirituality, and taking care of your body.

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) define strengths as a combination of talents (naturally recurring patterns of thoughts, feeling and behaviour) – child ego state, knowledge (facts and lessons learned), adult ego state, and skills (the steps of the activity), nurturing and positive critical parent ego state.

Summary

Script – positive, meaningful permission to change

‘Permission to Break Free’ is a programme that uses the change of life script as a main turning point in moving forwards. The life script that is presented in the ‘I Am OK, You Are OK’ position (++)’ is a healthy position to build the change on. It begins with accepting that the infant life script can be limiting, but also understanding the natural position of an infant life script and how it needs to be updated with new skills, knowledge and resources.

In this way, by raising the life script from our subconscious, we can understand why some people feel stuck and why they are not able to move forwards even when they are trying different strategies. When aware of our subconscious messages, we can then, from Adult Ego state, decide to make changes that will help us rather than undermine us, and we can give ourselves the permission to change and update our life script.

The majority of the positive psychology element in the programme would focus on Child Ego state – strengths, positive and negative emotions, resilience and sabotage - and it will develop tools to promote these traits, which construct a rich resource of techniques that can be used in the programme.

Adult Ego state – problem solving, mindfulness, awareness

At the same time, the relationship between the Parent and Child Ego states will be moulded so that the Child state has a broadened view of life, and Parent messages will be encouraging, motivating and accepting.

The process of change will address how those Ego states relate to each other, and then find the appropriate intervention. This will first recognise types of transactions, then use appropriate tools to learn new ways of communicating and then develop an appropriate network of support and positive relationships. These external influences will support the new transactions.

Interweaving the tools from TA and positive psychology opens us to work with 3 levels of permission. These are: permission to be ourselves, permission from our incorporated Parent to be ourselves, and permission from others that influence us to be ourselves. Working through tasks in the programme, an individual can be guided to overcome obstacles, develop skills and knowledge, and engage in and practice positive activities which will lead to be free to live the life they wanted. They give themselves the permission to break free.

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10

Positive psychology as a leadership intervention

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Abstract*

When you are leading a major complex change programme and you have politicians, the media and influential stakeholders demanding you deliver more, in ever shorter timescales, to tighter deadlines and against a backdrop of increasing uncertainty, does the world of positive psychology really have anything to offer you? With a background of over 25 years in project management, in the public and private sectors, before focusing her energies as an executive coach, Una McGarvie provides insight into how her positive psychology inspired coaching has helped Senior Leaders address and 'survive' their very real challenges. In this short presentation, Una provided insights into some typical leadership challenges faced. She discussed the positive psychology bedrock underpinning interventions she uses and the mechanisms to get these ideas over to hardened programme leaders for whom risk management, high adrenaline, tight control and high stress are major parts of their success stories to date. Una also shared the leadership model she has developed which has its heart in the field of positive psychology combined with her own experience in coaching over 100 Leaders. This was a practical and revealing insight into the world Una has come to love and be ever inspired by.

11

Positive psychology in the clinical parapsychology setting

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Abstract

This presentation expands on the guest lecture given at the Bucks New University 2nd Positive Psychology Symposium (Cooper, 2016), regarding the union between positive psychology and areas of parapsychology (from the laboratory to the field). A recap will be given, on links between positive psychology and parapsychology, and how the two areas have been seen to complement each other. Focus will then be given to two of the previous areas mentioned at the 2nd symposium, these being instances of spontaneous and sought experiences. For example, there has been much research into the benefits of counselling for anomalous experiences, now seen within the domain of clinical parapsychology, bridging anomalous experiences with an understanding of the therapeutic benefits and transformative features within these experiences. Looking to the typical studies within clinical parapsychology, again, much research has focused on the overlaps between anomalous experiences following a bereavement. Focus will therefore also be given the lead author's own research specifically exploring mediumship as a form of counselling - where people seek out an experience which appears to aid symptoms of grief and loss. It will be argued that mediumship can be seen as a form of holistic intervention, in enhancing positive psychological attributes within the bereaved to help with coping, post-traumatic growth, and other positive psychological attributes.

Introduction

Positive psychology is defined as “The scientific study of what makes life most worth living” (Peterson, 2008, p.214). We are interested in emotions, motivations, and exploring the purpose behind our cognitive processes and actions towards various aspects of life. Clinical parapsychology is as a branch of parapsychology where “if a client or patient is asking for professional help” regarding anomalous experiences, then qualified parapsychologists or relevant professionals acquainted with parapsychological findings “evaluate these experiences and how to deal with them in a clinical, counselling and social welfare settings” (Kramer, Bauer, & Hövelmann, 2012, p.3). By anomalous experiences (AEs), we mean, for example, instances of precognitive visions, accounts of telepathy, apparitions/hallucinations

(typically of the deceased), witnessing spontaneous movement of objectives (psychokinesis, PK), through to sought phenomena such as mediumship, in which a person claims to be able to perceive voices, visions and feelings from the dead, and relays them to the living (see Gauld, 1982). All such phenomena may be termed as ‘psychic experiences’ or ‘psi’ for short. Braud (2010, p.1) defines anomalous experiences (AEs) as “those that depart from our own familiar personal experiences or from the more usual, ordinary, and expected experiences of a given culture and time”. How these experiences impact on our health and well-being will be the focus of this paper (cf. Kennedy & Kanthmani, 1995). In this instance, we are not interested in the ontological roots of such seemingly anomalous phenomena, which would typically be the focus from a purely parapsychological perspective (for those interested in such findings, see Cardeña (2018) and Radin (2018, pp.94-168) for recent summaries). Instead, focus is given to the clinical aspects of parapsychological occurrences, and how positive psychology emerges and can be fostered within a therapeutic setting, to help those have found such experiences confusing, traumatic, or experienced them while bereft.

Previously (Cooper, 2016), discussion was made as to the general links between positive psychology and parapsychology, as had been given initial groundwork by Krippner (1980; also see Krippner & Murphy, 1973). The positive and negative impacts within the laboratory were discussed, and more so, how the participant feels in relation to the researcher (the experimenter/participant rapport) which appears to influence the outcome of studies testing for psi. In such instances, it has been argued that it is not so how the researcher ‘purposefully’ behaves around the participant, but rather, how the participant felt about the entire experience following the studies completion (e.g. Roe, Davey & Stevens, 2004, 2006) which influences the outcome. Several factors within the laboratory setting which the participant perceives as positive appears to lead to positive scoring, while any negative feelings or anxiety has been found to hinder scoring (e.g. Palmer, 1977). Broughton (2015) discussed how parapsychology had noted and given strong awareness to the impact of the experimenter effect within experiments, long before other areas of science began to give it serious attention. Certainly, there is a need for greater awareness of this effect, and the impact of positive and negative attitudes on the outcomes of studies, as a standard consideration across the sciences (Sheldrake, 1998). Many of these important issues which parapsychology has given considerable attention to have strong ties to the interests of positive psychology (e.g. Krippner, 1980; Macleod & Moore, 2000; Peale, 1990; Norem & Chang, 2002; Scheier & Carver, 1993).

Beyond elements of positive psychology in the parapsychology laboratory setting, AEs particularly in bereavement were also given discussion, especially with regards to the positive emotions they appeared to promote in aid of coping and recovery (Cooper, 2016, 2017). The following sections within this paper will therefore expand on both anomalous experiences in the natural world, and how counselling interventions can offer aid, and how mediumship can benefit the bereaved. Therefore, focus will be given to the clinical parapsychology approach, and the emergence of positive psychology within this domain.

Counselling for Anomalous Experiences

Surveys have consistently shown that a high proportion of the general population believe in or experience AEs (Pechey & Halligan, 2012). Common reactions to AEs include fear, anxiety and distress (Siegel, 1986). Regular, traditional medical and psychological services tend to neglect the existential questions that arise after having an AE (e.g. counselling experiences of bereaved people who sense the presence of the deceased; Taylor, 2005). Very little research has investigated the incidence of clients seeking support for AEs from secular counselling services, nor has anything been conducted in the UK (hence the rationale for this research).

Roxburgh and Evenden (2016a) investigated the experiences of clients who report anomalous experiences (AEs) in counselling services, to better inform therapists as to how to respond to such clients and seek to explore views on AEs and how discussions take place in therapy (e.g. what experiences they have found helpful or unhelpful in terms of therapeutic intervention?). The research aimed to help in the design of accessible mental health and counselling services that meet the needs of diverse clients. A qualitative approach was applied to expand upon the theoretical research into the counselling experiences of clients who reported AEs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with clients who report AEs and had sought counselling. A thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted and founded four key themes highlighted by clients:

- (1) “It kind of shut the door”
- (2) “You have to go digging to get support”
- (3) The need for a ‘Whole Person’ Approach

- (4) “Why are you looking at that airy-fairy crap?”

The overall findings suggest that social norms and risk of mental health diagnosis pose as risk factors in preventing clients from seeking professional support following an AE. Key themes surrounding the needs of clients, helpful resources and accessibility to services, were highlighted as the focus for future implications moving forward.

Having explored the impact on clients who seek counselling for AE's and therapists experiences of working with clients who report anomalous experiences (Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016b), a third study by Roxburgh and Evenden (2016c) was carried out. This consisting of two focus groups and was designed to explore the training needs of counselling students in relation to the issue of AEs, with students undertaking counselling and clinical psychology programmes to investigate how useful they have found any training on working with clients who report AEs, and if this training had not been provided, whether there is a need for such provision. Thematic analysis elicited four themes:

- (1) “Quite often we get taken by surprise because it's a subject we don't talk about”
- (2) “It's just having this in our vocabulary”
- (3) “Demystifying and valuing AEs as normal human experiences”
- (4) “To ask or not to ask?”

Therapists disclosed feeling unprepared upon hearing clients report AEs and this was dependent on the context in which AEs are shared by clients since some counselling settings may be better prepared for managing AEs; for example, bereavement work normalising client's experiences of sensing the presence of the deceased. Therapists felt that they should be introduced to AEs whilst training so that they would be better prepared to work with such issues in generic settings, and that this could include relatively straightforward activities such as group discussions, case studies, having a list of AEs, and independent learning group tasks.

Therapists questioned whether they needed to be able to distinguish between what was considered pathological and a mental illness and what was considered a normal human experience which led to the importance of considering the client's level of psychological distress and any associated risks, rather than the necessity of making such a distinction between what is 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Therapists were divided in terms of whether AEs

should be enquired about at the assessment stage, with some feeling that such issues would be better discussed when a therapeutic relationship had been established, and others felt inviting clients to talk about such issues could reduce the stigma surrounding AEs with what could be conveyed as a routine assessment question. Most of the therapists that took part in the focus groups felt that they were unequipped to work with clients who reported AEs and stated that they had not received any training on these issues

The research can be applied to counselling, psychotherapy and clinical domains which may benefit from forming links with parapsychological research (Hastings, 1983). The most prominent focus being the wider implications for the design of counselling services and counsellor training surrounding AEs, specifically at a therapeutic level to generate a better understanding of client/therapist experiences; therapeutic relationship and client needs/outcome. At a service and training level the findings may inform the design of services/increase accessibility and allow feedback to students engaging with counselling programmes in the form of CPD workshops; training guidelines. It was noted by Cooper (2017) that a forum in which AEs can be openly discussed, with a person that the experiment knows is familiar with parapsychology, can promote many positive reactions. Not only can the experiences themselves be very transpersonal and enlightening in their nature (e.g. Lawrence, 2014), so can the process of counselling for such experiences. Empathy from health care practitioners or professionals in the fields of psychology and parapsychology towards the person and their AEs can bring comfort, assist in post-traumatic growth, foster levels of hope, produce expressions of love and joy, support the process of continued bonds (with the deceased in the case of the bereaved) and reduce anxiety surrounding any assisted stigmas (e.g. Cooper, 2017; Devers, 1997; Drewry, 2003; Parker, 2005; Rees, 1971). All such positive outcomes can be taken by both client and practitioner and applied to aid in coping, resilience, and expanding on experiment worldviews and attitudes within their personal and social progression.

From observations of the research conducted around counselling for anomalous experiences several observed overlaps with applied positive psychology are noted. Firstly, the importance in seeking support for clients to more freely explore possible conceptual frameworks for these experiences, so they can positively reframe what were initially frightening or distressing experiences which appears to result in transformation (e.g. Lawrence, 2014). Secondly the findings also highlight the resilience factors that arise through aversive

circumstances in line with Taylor's (2012) argument that great positive psychological transformation can be achieved following periods of intense turmoil.

Mediumistic Counselling

If the impact of bereavement were what we consider a 'high grief' death (sudden and unexpected) or the symptoms of loss continue over time despite possible coping strategies available for the bereaved, we could look to mediumship as a form of 'first response' to aid and sooth the grief. For many, they may prefer this than social stigmas surrounding the notion of going to see a counsellor or psychotherapist regarding their psychological issues. They may see it as defeatist, or being self-labelled as having a mental illness, or even being mentally weak. Depending on how open the individual may be, mediumship like counselling still comes with assurance of confidentiality, a significant aspect within counselling practice and the ethical considerations of this domain. It also comes with what is perceived to be the direct ability to communicate with the dead, settle differences, have final goodbyes, and words of love and care, through which the medium supports the open dialogue (Beischel, 2015).

Many would seek to criticise this approach to dealing with bereavement, and this has certainly been the case for people holding large public platforms (e.g. Brown, 2007, pp.315-351; 2017, Dawkins, 2006, pp.398-399) but with no involvement in parapsychology and certainly limited to no awareness for the research literature and evidence (both for and against). To say that seeking mediumship during a time of personal loss is damaging for the bereaved, or that it is wrong for the medium to do what they do - especially if they earn money from this practice - are often unjust and ill-informed comments. The assumption in many such circumstances is that the medium is deliberately lying to the client, and although such a claim could be put to the test (cf. Robertson & Roy, 2004; Wiseman & Morris, 1995), within a clinical parapsychology approach, this does not particularly matter. If the sitter is pleased with what the medium has to say to them, and positive gains are noted, then how genuine the medium is becomes a side issue at that point. However, this is not to say that there are no negative instances of visiting a medium ever reported, they are simply lacking in research, but are certainly a minority of instances. The evidence thus far has produced findings which show positive gains in favour of the process contributing to a person's well-being.

Many pioneers of psychical research (an earlier term for parapsychology before it reached university settings in the 1920s) testing the claims of various mediums knew of the positive impact perceived communication with the dead could have on coping and post-traumatic growth. For example, the eminent physicist Sir Oliver Lodge once commented on an extensive study of the famous medium Mrs Gladys Leonard, carried out by Mr Kenneth Richmond and Miss Nea Walker, in which bereaved participants were used to gather various readings via Mrs Leonard. Sir Oliver's comments echo what is only just being rediscovered today, or more so, finally accepted by the wider sciences and in clinical settings, in much the same way the work of Rees (1971) brought research on the bereaved which had already gathered by psychical research in the 1880s into the forefront of medical science (Cooper, 2017). Sir Oliver's comments are as follows:

[Miss Walker] tells me that she hesitated often in deciding to experiment in this way upon people in real distress, but that, to do something which might ultimately help more than one individual and perhaps throw a little more light upon a puzzling subject, seemed the only justification for the work she was doing. The response on the part of these bereaved people showed that they appreciated as keenly as anyone the importance of an outlook wider than their own immediate sorrow and need. If any of them should feel, when they see it published, that the material has been handled in too critical a fashion, I trust that they will not be hurt, but will realise that this is not a piece of propaganda, but a fair presentation of the facts and an attempt to gain more knowledge about the processes involved. (Lodge, 1935, pp.10-11)

Bringing these thoughts into the present, although there is extensive literature on the testing of mediums, there are barely half a dozen formal studies - at present - which focus on the impact of mediumship on the bereaved and the positive coping mechanisms fostered as a result. Evenden, Cooper and Mitchell (2013) conducted a small scale preliminary investigation into how the process of mediumship - acting as a form of bereavement counselling - affected those who were bereft and sought out the experience. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, purposive sampling was used to gain participants against a close set of criteria:

(1) Participants must be aged 18+

(2) Must have experienced a bereavement within the last five years; specifically, the loss of an immediate family member, spouse or partner, with the hope to gain participants who had experienced a mix of both expected and unexpected losses.

(3) Had experienced visiting a registered medium with the Spiritualist National Union (SNU) during their grief period and all believed they had made contact with their loved one via this experience with the medium.

A qualitative approach was adopted to explore adaptive outcomes of grief following a specific AE (i.e. mediumistic readings) by examining participants' unique experiences of bereavement. Results suggest that those who experience mediumistic counselling produced a high sense of agency, resulting in adaptive coping. Thus, demonstrating how certain character strengths enhance resilience in the ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances. The key to achieving this seems to lie in the importance of having needs met whether that is via a continued bond or positive relationships, the ability to find agency to have hope (see Snyder, 1994), and knowledge to put these to good use. Hope of there being some form of continuation beyond death, and the bereaved embracing this emotion, also seemed to be experienced by all participants which relates well to previous thoughts and findings (Cooper, 2013, 2017; Devers, 1997, Drewry, 2003). The findings highlight the ways in which mediumship, can foster adaptive emotions following a negative life event specifically bereavement; and the therapeutic benefits in aiding the development of post-traumatic growth and resilience in overcoming negative emotions specifically trauma and grief - the findings of which are also supported by Bartlett (2016, p. 106). Various character strengths and virtues (hope, optimism, love, joy, appreciation of beauty and excellence) have found to be present following a continued bond with the deceased individual resulting in a more positive outlook on life and higher levels of self-enhancement (for an overview of the continuing bonds model, see Klass & Steffen, 2018). Mediumship appears to be a valid healing resource in addition to other spiritual practices (sought experiences) which would benefit from further exploration to reduce stigma and perception surrounding anomalous phenomena (e.g., Radin, 2018; Sheldrake, 2017). In addition, further exploration of adaptive outcomes of grief may contribute in widening knowledge on resilience within positive psychological research.

A similar study of mediumship which was conducted parallel to Evenden et al. (2013), was produced by Beischel, Mosher and Boccuzzi (2014-15). The research explored the possible effects of mediumship on bereavement following personal readings, thus adhering to the continuing bonds model used within counselling. This enables the bereaved to work through issues of grief due to the ongoing relationship between the living and the deceased, by receiving readings from psychic mediums with seemingly positive outcomes of this practice

ranging from relief of grief symptoms, reassurance and acceptance. This approach contradicts more traditional grief counselling approaches which a continuing bond with the deceased is an abnormality in behaviour, resulting in unhealthy outcomes which prevent closure from being fully achieved and largely focus on the client's acceptance of separation and integration of loss (Stroebe, Schut & Stroebe, 2007). The wider implications of this research may provide professionals and counsellors with an alternative suggestion to offer to the large population of individuals following a bereavement choosing to receive mediumship readings.

A follow up study by Cox, Cooper and Smith (2017) adopted a positive psychology perspective, drawing upon a qualitative approach to explore the effect that mediumship has on the bereaved. Themes of hope, resilience, and post-traumatic growth were explored further (extending the work of: Beischel, et al., 2014-15; Evenden, et al., 2013) to understand how a sitting with a medium is seen to promote these character traits or emotions from the "sitter's" (the bereaved) phenomenological perspective. Seven participants gave retrospective accounts of a sitting which was felt to be meaningful to them, while explaining reasons for this belief. This was explored using thematic analysis. Findings suggested that mediumship appeared to furnish some resilience. Coping mechanisms were linked to hope and post-traumatic growth which appear to facilitate coping when someone experiences a sitting with a medium and believes they have had 'confirmation' of survival of the deceased. Hope appeared to be increased, and resilience and coping were reported as strengthened after a subjectively meaningful sitting with a medium. These findings are supported by the work of Cooper (2017) where a measurable change in hope noted following anomalous experiences in bereavement, and significantly more so than the bereaved who did not report such experiences. The implication therefore is that mediumship appeared to offer positive psychological tools to enable better coping styles post-bereavement.

Conclusion

There is much opportunity to take this research further, and in greater depth, especially within the domain of applied positive psychology. Through this brief discussion of the literature the therapeutic nature of having an AE has been highlighted via the processes of counselling intervention and sitting with medium. Discussion was also given as to the benefits of both methods for assisting the bereaved. Clinical parapsychology aims to assist those who require clinical intervention for experiences which may suggest anomalous processes, although these experiences are naturally therapeutic, even in exceptional cases where people report negative

AEs, interventions from psychologists, parapsychologists, counsellors and even mediums, appear to help ease these event that challenge our views of the world, and promote understand, awareness for the research findings, and foster positive traits that emerge. Additionally, Evenden et al. (2013) - and research that followed - illustrated how qualitative research can draw on the complex theory within bereavement work, counselling and existing research within positive psychology, to demonstrate useful alternative approaches to parapsychological issues.

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12

Personal qualities of professional football club youth academy players

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Abstract

This presentation reported the initial findings of a study conducted in a Football League Club youth academy on factors associated with the performance and wellbeing of players aged 8-18 years. Specifically it detailed whether the personal qualities of hope, resilience, and empathy predicted satisfaction of basic psychological needs in the players, the relative contribution of each of the personal qualities, and what type of empathy was most predictive of needs satisfaction. The choice of these three personal qualities in the model described draws on and extends attachment theory and strengths theory, and is largely derived from the researcher's own experience and reflection. The inclusion of empathy in the model contrasts markedly with current models such as PsyCap and Mental Toughness.

13

An answer may not be the greatest gift

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Abstract

Shakespeare's "To be or not to be?" may be the most famous question in the history of humanity. It may also be the most profound question a person might ask himself or herself. So what is it about questions that can so fully encompass the wholeness of human experience? Is it because questions start journeys, open up thinking, or because questions remain the same when answers change? This paper reviews narrative psychology literature to explore the role questions might play in driving the development of a person's life story. The relationship between narrative and meaning suggests that because of a question's role in reasoning, it may act as both a meaning bridge and a driver of authoring the process. How a person relates to or holds their questions might also influence how conflicts, contradictions, and paradoxes are integrated into their life stories. Finally, evidence from critical thinking research suggests character strengths that might help a person relate to their questions so that a journey of discovery is begun. Ultimately, may the answer be found not in finding an answer, but in the exploration of a question?

Keywords: Meaning, Narrative, Questions, Dialectics

Living Narratives

"People are externally frustrated by asking questions which never lead to the right answers or they become lost in a potpourri of contradictory answers" (May, 1953, p.31)

If life is a journey then the story of this journey is who we are - a person's life story is their identity. 'Life stories' (McAdams, 1993), 'Self-narratives' (Polkinghorne, 1988; Hermans & Hemans-Jansen, 2001) or 'Personal myths' (May, 1991; Hollis, 2004) are dynamic, evolving maps of reality that create a sense of self, how the world works and how a person fits into their world. They are for Bruner (1990, p.46) a "metaphor of reality" and May (1991, p.20) "self-interpretations of our inner life in relation to the outside world". These life stories evolve from the structuring, interpretation and integration of our experiences into a unifying and coherent whole across a lifetime (McAdams, 2001). When we ask questions to gain insight from the gifts offered by every experience or we retrospectively connect life's parts,

we critically shape our story (Hollis, 2003; Botella et al, 2004). When we live our choices in each moment, we intuitively unfold our story (Angus et al, 2004; Greenberg & Angus, 2004).

Opening Life's Experiences

“Life is an expression of consciousness” (Campbell, 1972, P.120)

“Consciousness – the necessary precursor to meaning” (Hollis, 2004, p.30)

If our life stories house life's experiences creating form for content, so they are meaningful (May, 1991). It then follows that these stories are the ongoing process of meaning making; creating our maps of reality (Gonçalves, Henriques & Machado, 2004). The external 'world' is whole and may be deconstructed into its constituent parts by a person's consciousness (what they are aware of and focus attention on). In contrast, their map of reality is an internal

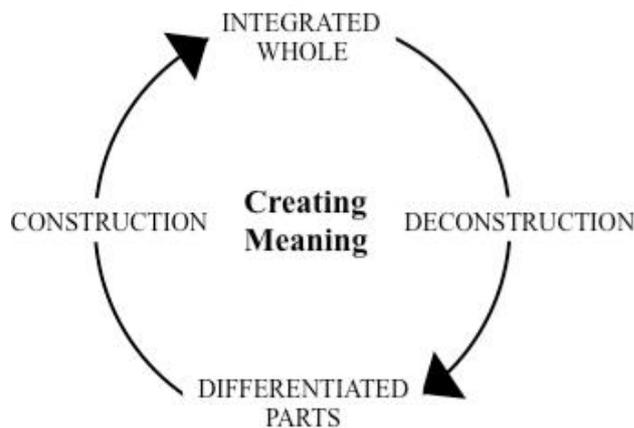


Figure 13.1. Meaning making.

construction from which they express meaning, figure 1 (Polkinghorne, 1988; Hollis, 2004). Literature suggests that meaning making is a narrative process with our stories acting as *'meaning bridges'* across the divides in a person's internal and external landscapes, figure 2 (Anderson, 2004; Booker, 2004; Stiles et al, 2004). A person populates these landscapes with their parts of experience such as goals, actions,

drives, emotions, and ideas (Reker & Wong, 2013). They create a complex map of reality containing polarities in experience, 'multiple voices' either in conflict or harmony. Living is experiencing polarity that creates paradox. Being open to the experience of life is as Hollis (2004, p.88) implies *“full of paradox that cracks the brain and divides the heart”*. Any tension or anxiety that arises is likely due to the life story not yet bridging these polarities.

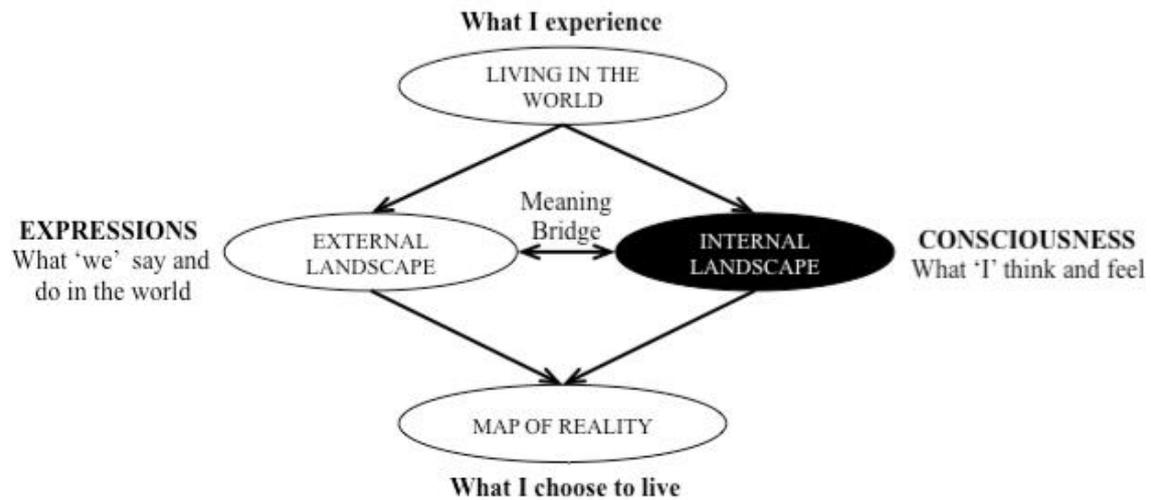


Figure 13.2. Meaning bridge.

Embracing Life’s Questions

“Life consists of living contradictions, living contradiction takes courage” (May, 1991, p.73)

“Mythic sensibility is found most in our curiosity, our capacity to ask questions” (Hollis, 2004, p.23)

If life’s polarities are bridged by our stories then it is our questions that invite the authoring of our stories. Perhaps life consists of a ‘surface-story’, a visible story created through choices, actions and expressions and a ‘depth-story’, an invisible story that is intuitively lived, figure 3. It is proposed that reasoning bridges these stories and therefore can be considered as a process for authoring meaning. Through reasoning a person conceptualises and assesses the coherence, reliability, novelty and believability of beliefs (Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Reasoning is also a precursor to choice and action that is driven by questions rather than answers. As Elder and Paul (1998, p.297) suggest, answers *“often signal a full stop in thought”*, questions drive thinking and stories. Questions hook people

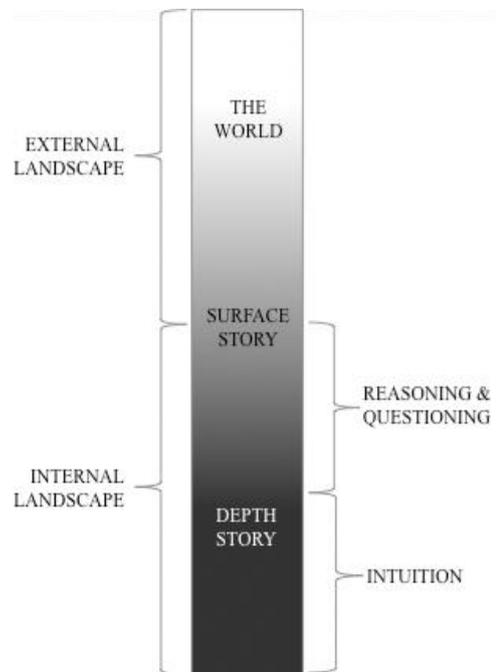


Figure 13.3. Life story

into wanting to know what comes next, they unfold stories. Different questions reveal the different depths and properties of stories such as in Socratic questioning (Walker, 2003). Different verbs used in questions signpost to different orders of thinking as in Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al, 1956). Questions guide and change stories, Table 13.1. Are our guiding questions then, the ‘big’, ‘open-ended’ life questions that bridge divides, illuminate the invisible and invite learning? Hollis (2004, p.114) similarly writes, “*If we do not ask large questions our lives will be small*”.

Table 13.1. *Example guiding questions.*

Polarity	Guiding Questions
Wants – Needs	For what do I suffer?
Internal – External	For whom am I living?
Cause – Effect	What do I value?
Right – Wrong	Who am I?
Personal – Social	What purpose do I serve?

Absorbing Life’s Learning

If the questions we ask ourselves shape our stories, then how we live with our questions may shape who we are. How we relate to or ‘hold’ our questions may allow learning to unfold, to be experienced and absorbed or not. ‘Holding’ may allow a person underneath their surface-story to experience the complexity that lies beneath (Elder & Paul, 1998; Cousineau, 2001). Facione et al (1995) have identified seven dispositions or ‘*character strengths*’ of critical thinking. It is proposed here they may also positively affect a person’s relationship to their questions; truth-seeking (*Honesty*), open-mindedness (*Perspective*), self-confidence (*Courage*), inquisitiveness (*Curiosity*), and maturity, analyticity, systematicity (*Judgment*). What else might a person need to venture beyond their known? Self-compassion? Perseverance? If awe and wonder are felt on the journey that certain questions afford, might meaning then become something experienced rather than found like an answer? A lived wisdom? Hollis (2004, p.114) states, the “*meaning of our life is really wrapped around specific questions*”, not answers.

Humans' deepest need is for meaning (Somner, Baumeister & Stillman, 2013). It is not "answers we are seeking, it is understanding" (Cousineau, 2001, p.24). From our experiences meaning is absorbed and then may be expressed. In expressing meaning a person re-receives it, evolving the meaning. To express meaning is to create a depth of meaning and to reveal a depth-story (Polkinghorne, 1988). Campbell (1972) proposes that a person can reinterpret meaning literally, morally, metaphorically or mystically. Is it that the questions we ask ourselves offer chances to explore the 'mystery' in ourselves - the depths, the unknown or the spiritual? Do 'big' questions invite us to see beauty in the double nature of life, to 'hold' that and let a 'whole' story unfold?

"An answer is not always the greatest gift, rather coming to a deeper and deeper understanding of the question itself can give us a place to stand in the presence of mystery" (Pat Schnieder, 2013, p.64)

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