The Future of Positive Psychology: Perils and Possibilities

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Looking Back: JOPP 2006

The (possible) future of positive psychology?

1. Flourish in isolation
2. Disappear through integration
3. Flourish in isolation, but with integration
Looking Now: ECPP 2010

The current state of positive psychology

1. Flourishing and expanding

2. Institutions of positive psychology (e.g., ECPP, IPPA, MAPP, JOPP, CAPP)

3. Growing evidence base, increasing influence
Looking Forward: 2020 Vision

Where next?
The Possibilities

1. Win the battle of ideas
2. Change the paradigm
3. Renew society, strengthen the world

Where not?
The Perils

1. Give up the fight
2. No evidence base for change
3. Make no difference
1) The Battle of Ideas

In the red corner...

Negativity Bias
(of evolutionary origin)
Negativity Bias

Negativity Bias: Psychological

1. Negative events more potent
2. Negative events more quickly negative
3. Negative stronger than positive
4. Varied negativity
5. Negative contagion

Negativity Bias: Social

1. Public policy - problem focused
2. Economics - ‘the dismal science’
3. Psychiatry - constant expansion of the DSM
4. Psychology - medical model, deficit approach, competency frameworks
The Battle of Ideas

In the white corner...

Positivity Payoff
(with increasingly recognisable benefits)
Positivity Payoff

The Positivity Payoff - What We Know So Far...

- Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-build model of positive emotions - the standard-bearer for positive psychology
- Individual flourishing - 3:1 positive to negative ratios - the importance of the “1”
- Happiness associated with and predicts a range of positive life outcomes
- Strengths use associated with and predicts a range of positive life outcomes
(2) Change the Paradigm

**Philosophers:**
Asking the big questions

**Policymakers:**
Setting the policy frameworks

**Practitioners:**
Making the difference everyday

**Researchers:**
Providing the evidence foundations
Paradigm Changing

• It’s not only about strengths / happiness / positivity
• Developing more holistic models of human development, performance and flourishing...
Our Integrative Advice...

1. **Marshal** Realised Strengths

2. **Maximise** Unrealised Strengths

3. **Moderate** Learned Behaviours

4. **Minimise** Weaknesses
Psychometric Properties

1. 59/60 alphas >.70, mean of .82 (Incubator = 0.68).

2. Test-retest: $r = .634 - .802$ over one week, all $p < .001$.

3. Social desirability: 3/60 exceed $r = -.15$ (small / very small effect sizes).

4. Intercorrelations very low (typically less than $r = 0.2$) - only 6 of 60x60 were large effect sizes (0.37 or above). Highest between Creativity and Innovation ($0.550 - 30\%$ shared variance)
## UK Prevalence (n = 1,047)

### Realised Strengths
1. Improver (779)
2. Pride (773)
3. Esteem Builder (742)
4. Resolver (716)
5. Humility (675)

### Unrealised Strengths
1. Legacy (281)
2. Innovation (275)
3. Connector (240)
4. Mission (234)
5. Enabler (226)
### UK Prevalence (n = 1,047)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learned Behaviours</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Work Ethic (651)</td>
<td>1. Adherence (369)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Detail (559)</td>
<td>2. Competitive (346)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unconditionality (507)</td>
<td>3. Courage (296)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Adherence (482)</td>
<td>4. Scribe (207)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Personalisation (462)</td>
<td>5. Detail (205)</td>
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(3) Renew Society, Strengthen the World

Levels of intervention:

- Individual - Coaching and therapy
- Group/family - Interventions
- Organisational - Strengths-based organisations
- Community - ABCD Institute
- Social policy - National well-being accounts
My 2020 Vision: The Catalyst

For everyone in the world to be able to know what their strengths are.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

_Margaret Mead_ (attr.)
We are all catalysts...

- As individuals in our daily lives
- In our families and communities
- In our schools
- In our organisations
- In shaping social policy
We all have a role to play...

• Find your greatest contribution - playing to your strengths

• The power of more than one - complementary partnerships

• Live in your own skin - be authentic

• Role model positivity - be the change you want to see in the world

• Enjoy life!
Together We Will Make the Difference

DAY 5

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Where Next...

www.strengths2020.com

- Weekly Strengths Tips
- Positive Psychology Bulletin
- Strengths: The Evidence
- Sample chapters
- Strengthspotting Scale
Thank You

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Get involved -
Weekly Strengths Tips, Positive Psych Bulletin:
www.strengths2020.com