5th Annual
Applied Positive Psychology Symposium

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Proceedings of Presented Papers

Edited by

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Contents

Introduction

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*.

Since then, the symposium has grown considerably in scope, aiming to build a community of education and new research in the fast-growing field of applied positive psychology, from across the UK and now Ireland as well. MAPP programmes can currently be found in the UK at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), Buckinghamshire New University (Bucks), and the University of East London (UEL). Other universities also offer some positive psychology courses as part of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This *Proceedings* represents the contributions of students, graduates, and staff of many of these programmes to the 5th Applied Positive Psychology Symposium held on Saturday 1st June 2019 at the Buckinghamshire New University High Wycombe campus.

This symposium has proved a real success and has only grown in popularity, scope, and engagement each year, with ever more contributions from other MAPP and university positive psychology programmes. We were delighted to be able to return for a fifth year which was our largest event yet, necessitating parallel sessions for the first time, to accommodate a full programme of talks, quickfire 'flash' presentations, practical workshops, a video presentation, poster presentations, and even a brief magic show(!), and attracting an audience of 80+. This year we welcomed a number of students from UEL and for the first time University College Cork, Ireland, to present their work, as well as Goldsmiths London, and staff from the University of Buckingham, alongside many Bucks MAPP students and returning graduates.

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. We hope you enjoy this year's exciting offerings in this *Proceedings*.

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Compassion and Trust: A Qualitative Investigation into Fostering 'Compassionate Trust' in Society

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Abstract

The study uses qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, appreciative inquiry questions and thematic analysis to explore how compassion and trust can be better fostered within society. As Western society is becoming more and more selfish and individualistic this study is concerned with how we could create a more inclusive and thoughtful society. There is an argument that positive psychology is itself contributing to the individualistic society where navel-gazing and a focus on the self are having a detrimental impact on society as a whole. It becomes the responsibility of positive psychology professionals to progress to a more socially focused field, by including psychosocial well-being in the research.

The study responds to this by exploring how positive psychology can be more focused on social issues by taking the perspective of a social constructionist, and through borrowing ideas from Lisa Feldman Barrett and Tim Lomas. Both posit developing and introducing new language concepts to increase our emotional intelligence through concepts that are more inclusive and caring. The author of the study has done this by combining trust and compassion to create 'compassionate trust': trust that is underpinned by compassion.

The analysis constructed the following themes: Trust is fundamental but nuanced; Compassionate trust has a cost; Socio-cultural system a barrier; Think global, act local; and Raise awareness: Teach and emulate right values. These represent the narratives of the participants where, despite difficulties in the current socio-economic system, there is hope for a better future through, e.g., raising awareness and using education to develop more inclusive, compassionate and trusting values.

Introduction

Positive psychology has had much success since its emergence in the late 1990s, where it has significantly increased our interest in and understanding of individual strengths and well-being (Lopez & Gallagher, 2011). However, despite Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) proposing a positive psychology that has group level virtues to create positive societies, the field has focused on the individual, where people are looking to live their own version of the good life (Diener, 2011). It is argued, however, this spotlight on the self can have a detrimental impact on society as a whole,

and this predominant emphasis within positive psychology does not pay enough attention to societal contexts (Becker & Marecek, 2008).

Martinez and Di Martino (2018) highlight more could be done to recognise that our individual choices impact the wider society. With raised awareness the individual could become part of a collective change by combining positive psychology and social psychology. Their term "social individual" (p. 414) defines the potential to become an agent of both personal and social change. When we focus beyond ourselves, we feel connected to our wider community, as it fosters a behaviour based on trust and cooperation and increases our empathy (Ricard, 2015).

The social constructionist paradigm sees language as a working vocabulary that has been constructed through our relations with one another, a meaning-making process that categorises our beliefs (Gergen, 2015). This paradigm is supported by Feldman Barrett (2017) who claims emotional experience is actively constructed through social experiences: we shape society, and society shapes us. According to Feldman Barrett we can not only re-shape our own interpretations, but the interpretations of those around us. Similarly, Lomas (2016) believes we could redress the bias in positive psychology by enriching our language to broaden our thinking to reduce the high value on individualism.

It is argued that exploring new language concepts would benefit positive psychology as it challenges some of its central tenets. For instance, claims of universal virtues and strengths (e.g. Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004) are challenged by Bellehumeur, Bilodeau, and Yeung (2017), who instead propose that virtues are shaped within cultures. Uchida and Ogihara (2012) challenge research results that are misconstrued towards a Western viewpoint. By taking a less positivistic perspective these dichotomies and differences can be embraced so as to understand more about the diversity of the world around us.

Trust

Trust has had little attention within the field of positive psychology. A considerable amount of research defines trust within behavioural economics such as in social capital (Evans & Revelle, 2008) and game theory (Tov & Diener, 2008). In effect this then becomes a process of negotiating what we can get from others, assuming the actors have self-interest, rather than virtuous intentions (Solomon & Flores, 2003).

It is argued that this approach to trust is not satisfactory as it only serves to exacerbate current economic and political discourse of inherent selfishness. Instead, according to Solomon and Flores (2003), to trust is to take personal responsibility towards our connections, as in Buddhism, where people do not collect merits for good behaviour like currency but use positive energy to do what they can for those around them (Ricard, 2015).

Zagzebski (2015) discusses epistemic trust: a belief state. Applying virtue ethics, self-trust – when built on a belief that others are like us – indicates that others can be trusted too. Trust becomes a virtue by dint of its importance to other virtues such as courage and fairness. This parallels Solomon and Flores' (2003) version of trust as a virtue, where one cultivates a mindset of fairness and care through conversation, commitment and action towards others. The social constructionist position is also applied, where there is no universal truth (Gergen, 2015); instead one needs to be open to negotiate and collaborate with others and see a new perspective of the world (Salzberg, 2017), which includes sharing human experience and reflecting on what it means to be one's best (McGeer, 2008).

Compassion

As with trust, compassion is a complex construct that is context-specific, with no universal definition (Gilbert, 2017a; Goetz et al., 2010), arguably because translating its meaning from East to West leads to inaccuracies in Western understanding (Gilbert, 2017a). Despite this, Neff (2003, as cited in Lomas et al., 2014) indicates how compassion for the self and for others enhances well-being, recognising that we are all part of humanity and all suffer.

Goetz et al. (2010) found that in research and common understanding, compassion, sympathy, and pity are often grouped together. However, they believe there is a difference, and define compassion as the desire to help that is not present in sympathy or pity. This view is shared by Gilbert (2017b), Gilbert and Choden (2013), Vrticka et al. (2017) and Ricard (2015). Compassion is therefore distinct to sympathy and pity. Gilbert's (2017a) definition of compassion is useful, setting compassion out as "a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try and alleviate and prevent it" (p. 11). Importantly to this research, our ability to care and connect can only be made when we see others as part of our unit (Fredrickson & Siegel, 2017). For this we need empathy and awareness of others, as without this a perceived breach of trust only strengthens the separateness (Solomon & Flores, 2003).

This identifies a virtuous side to compassion, where we self-transcend ourselves to connect with something bigger than us, as seen by Ivtzan et al. (2016), who suggest compassion as the cornerstone of morality, which creates genuine social cohesion. Similarly, Ozwa-de Silva et al. (2012) refer to compassion as a "moral emotion". Accordingly, it is posited, compassion is itself a virtue, and is the basis for our universal human values and ethics, because of our shared suffering and wish for well-being in others.

'Compassionate Trust'

Both trust and compassion exist because of our need to socially connect (Seppala, Rossomando, & Doty, 2013; Tov & Diener, 2008). When we interact with others it assists in the development of secure attachment (Goleman, 2007), which is important to be able to trust others. Without this one cannot easily access compassion as insecure attachment reduces faith in other people, and develops negative internal working models that prioritise self-protection over altruistic behaviour (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017).

Emotionally, both trust and compassion require one to manage one's vulnerability as neither construct has certainty, where both are enacted with hope. For instance, Goleman (2007) and Christie, Jordan, and Troth (2015) found emotions are linked to trust and feeling safer to interact with others. Taking a constructionist perspective, as posited by Feldman Barrett (2017), emotions are not reactions *to* the world, but constructions *of* the world, giving meaning to a stimulus. Importantly, emotions become a "collective intentionality" (p.135), using shared language to create social reality. This perspective then enables one to form new meanings of trust, ones that are compassionate towards others.

In this review – where both trust and compassion are presented as being virtues, and where compassion can be used to foster a more caring form of trust – the researcher proposes a working definition for the concept of 'compassionate trust':

> *A mindset that aids socially motivated action. This is a form of hopeful trust, driven by compassion for others. This trust, despite one's own vulnerability, has the intention to connect emotionally and meaningfully with others, with the objective of contributing to something bigger than oneself.*

This definition, although complex, aims to represent 'compassionate trust' as an embodied virtue with caring intentions. This form of trust has hope through connecting with and being of use to

others. Actions are compassionate and the aim is to contribute to individual well-being and the well-being of the wider society, to do caring acts for the benefit of humanity.

Method

Ontology and Epistemology

The researcher takes the perspective of a social constructionist by rejecting the idea of there being one universal truth, and instead embracing the many truths that exist within our society. These are shaped by the society itself (Gergen, 2015). Social construction commonly uses discourse analysis (e.g. Foucauldian): the analysis of language and words constructed between people in social interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This research is concerned with the meaning of *what* is said, rather than *how* something is said between people. It is suggested therefore, appreciative inquiry (AI) compliments the study better as it is future-focused and well suited to positive psychology and social construction. It creates building blocks for looking beyond the known, developing new narratives of what is possible (Gergen, 2015; Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

A benefit of using a social construction methodology is that it is not simply a research method but also a means to enact social change (Gergen, 2015) where the constructionist is in the world fully, and interprets it from one's own existence and relationships within. This form of research challenges the assumption that what is being studied is stable, and instead recognises the changeable contexts and perspectives, where multiple and often complex viewpoints are embraced (Rich, 2017). This research uses social construction as a means to emphasise one's ability to use shared values to construct meaning from the social environment that one is part of, where in doing so there is potential for a collective social change.

Design

The study is qualitative, and used semi-structured interviews, applying appreciative inquiry (AI) questioning to explore the topic through the subjective experience of each participant. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Research Question

The objective of the study was to explore the main question: How is 'compassionate trust' conceptually understood, and how could it be fostered within society?

Two sub-questions were also explored:

1. How do interviewees make sense of and externalise 'compassionate trust'?

2. In what ways do interviewees imagine 'compassionate trust' as a lived mindset, evident within society?

Participants

As the concept may be challenging, a purposive sample was used to identify four participants that worked within a field that had awareness of contemporary societal issues. Three males and one female were interviewed, two via video conferencing, two face to face.

Procedure

Email invites were sent to four professionals. All four accepted and were interviewed over a three month period. All participants received pre-interview presentation data to familiarise themselves with the concept of 'compassionate trust'. Interviews were recorded and transcribed *verbatim*.

Analysis

Thematic analysis is a flexible approach to analysing data, but it is because of this flexibility that it can be inconsistent (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). It is therefore important to be transparent and clear on how an analysis has been undertaken. This study used Braun and Clarke's (2006 & 2013) guidance in undertaking thematic analysis, and also referred to Nowell et al. (2017) who set out how to analyse data through methods that are trustworthy and transparent. A benefit of thematic analysis is that it can be used across many epistemological positions and enables the researcher to interpret the 'story' within the data whilst remaining true to what has been said.

Complete coding of the transcript was undertaken. This means that very little is left out of the coding process at early stages as it may prove to be meaningful at a later stage (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process can feel chaotic and messy at times, especially as it is recursive and requires continuous

review of stages followed, but is an important part of making sense of the data. To manage this, and ensure a transparent process, a reflective record was kept of each stage.

The first stage of creating themes resulted in seven candidate themes and nineteen sub-themes, with the final themes totalling five themes and one sub-theme.

Results and Discussion

The following data represents an overview of the results and discussion from the dissertation study. The first theme relates to participants' views of compassionate trust, Themes 2 and 3 are about barriers to compassionate trust and the fourth and fifth identify ways of overcoming the barriers (Figure 1).
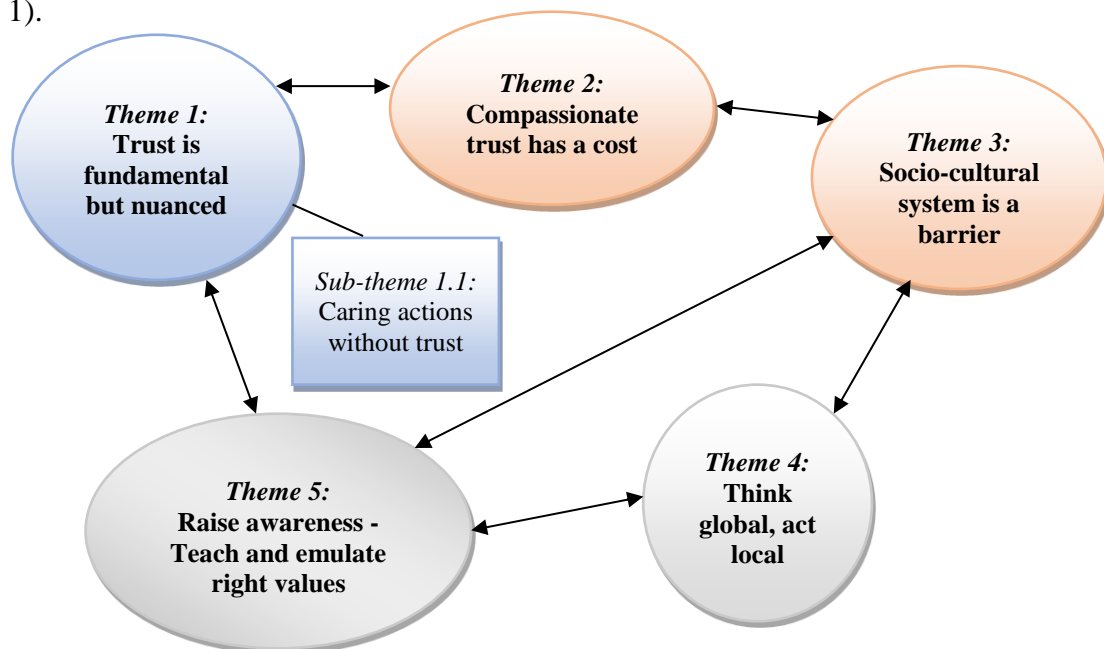
Figure 1. Thematic map denoting the five themes and one sub-theme

Theme 1: Trust is fundamental but nuanced

Unsurprisingly from a social constructionist perspective, participants had personalised ways of conceptualising and understanding trust. This is not unexpected, as trust is personal and context specific (Simpson, 2007). Two participants felt trust was fundamental: "I get the trust, because in my own working relationships, my own practices, is that trust is the basis of everything" (P1). This confirms the research that states trust is essential to aid connections (Helliwell & Wang, 2011). Trust also has a level of intensity: "It's just like, you know, a level of trust and attachment that I have never encountered before" (P4).

Participant 4 links trust with attachment, suggesting her colleague feels secure in his attachment to others, as well as being trusting of other people. The connection between trust and attachment, it is suggested, comes from what Bowlby called 'the internal working model' where one makes sense of the world to manage interactions with others (Howe, 2011), which in turn informs whether there is trust available (Naravaez, 2017). Similarly, Fredrickson and Siegel (2017) state 'positivity resonance' builds connections and compassion with others, which is at the heart of developing trust.

Participant 2 expressed a discomfort with trust and could not see the connection between trust and compassion, although recognised a need to feel secure. Mikulincer and Shaver (2017) state secure attachment induces levels of compassion whilst Simpson (2007) posits one of the principles of trust is attachment orientation, where a decline in trust is seen with insecure attachment. This appears to link trust, security and compassion to attachment. It is therefore suggested that whether one prefers to focus on 'trust' or 'security' as a critical link to compassion, both constructs are relevant, and collectively they formulate healthy relationships (Seppala, Rossomondo, & Doty, 2013).

There were also differences in participants' construal of trust. For instance, one participant saw no forgiveness in breached trust: "And he then broke that confidence and set me up as I saw it with the consultants. So I never forgave him for that" (P3). He made it clear that trust was unequivocal. This is in contrast to another participant who had a forgiving and hopeful form of trust:

> *Even when I've been undone, I still have a belief that one day I can trust it […], and often that trust is lost again […] and I hoped, there's always the hope that one day it would have been accepted that, and it was, and I trusted the process was there.* (P1)

According to Solomon and Flores (2003), 'authentic trust' has both forgiveness and hope. These virtues enable a positive attitude towards the future, where trust without hope would be fruitless. It is clear from the participants that trust is subjective and context specific (Jovanovic, 2016), where to define trust as one meaning with one context does not recognise the complex personal and social experiences that help shape a person's form of trust. By accepting and exploring the different ways a concept is construed, one can understand more about society and what influences attitudes and behaviours (Gergen, 2015).

Sub-theme 1.1: Caring actions without trust

Three of the participants shared experiences where they or others had behaved compassionately without trust being present. Participant 1 explained how a colleague showed compassion when he

helped someone whom he did not trust: "My chairman, who was always at loggerheads with her, ran out to pick her up. […] Even though they didn't - he didn't like her. Didn't trust her. Still put himself out there" (P1). This suggests we can still be compassionate to other people without explicitly trusting. Compassionate acts are often undertaken where there has been no relationship built, such as with strangers (Gilbert, 2017a; Ricard, 2015), so it is suggested, acting compassionately with someone who is not trusted is possible when the compassionate actor has secure attachment, as this implies they are not driven by ego, but altruism (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017).

Compassion without trust is also expressed in the following example, where the lack of trust is in authority, and the compassion is driven by bravery. Participant 2 is talking about a well-known gay rights activist:

> So he was, he's been a great LGBT campaigner for forty years. […] He's been unbelievably brave, he's been beaten up countless times, he's been arrested countless times, […], he's compassionate and I don't think he has any trust in authority; why would he, the evidence is against him, but it hasn't stopped him campaigning. (P2)

Courage within compassion is often overlooked in research (Gilbert, 2017b), where it is cultivated from distress tolerance. Here it is posited that compassion is more than kindness; it requires courage to confront one's own fears and act. We see this need for courage in Brown's (2015) model of trust, echoing what Ricard (2015) calls 'social heroism' (p.105). Virtuous acts, such as courage, are enacted within specific cultural and social environments. Despite the lack of trust in authority, it is postulated, the act of courage is itself a hopeful trust, a belief that one will be able to achieve an objective, not for oneself, but for the community the act represents (McInerny, 2015).

Theme 2: Compassionate trust has a cost

Participants explained how trusting and being compassionate has its sacrifices. It is important to recognise this cost, so as not to assume positive action always results in a positive experience. One participant expressed a creative metaphor in respect to creating a better world:

> …And I'm not faith based whatsoever, but as I'm talking through this, I'm seeing this perception of, a connection to positive links to God, as in a positive light, and then underneath is the Devil ((laughs)). That's trying to rip it all apart. […] when I'm trying to visualise it, that's what it makes you feel. (P1)

This dramatic metaphor emphasises the complexity of the concept, and recognises that social change is multifarious, and can never be totally free of tension (Gergen, 2015). For instance, even when we see someone who behaves with the highest principles, this is not free of difficulty, as was explained by Participant 4 when she discussed a colleague who embodies compassionate trust:

> *…And lives that to the degree that I just like, I'm so out of my comfort zone. So out of what is reasonable for me, you know. […] He's an extreme that I haven't, you know… at the same time when it comes to people, his compassionate trust means he sees things in a way that it often drives me crazy.* (P4)

She explained how this raised mixed emotions in her where she felt inspired yet ashamed. These emotions are painful but also a motivator towards becoming more conscious of what she could do, as guilt and shame highlight how we can enhance our own moral behaviour (Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2015; Lomas, 2016). This discomfort was not unwelcome and demonstrated 'positivity resonance' forming from good and bad feelings (Fredrickson, 2011), leading to 'altruistic motivation' (Ricard, 2015).

Another participant talked about giving power away as a metaphor for the cost of being trusting and compassionate. Applying it in an organisational context, he explained what it was like to develop a fully trusting service:

> *And that's what I thought epitomises what you're describing as compassionate trust, or I see it as, is, distributed leadership really, I gave them the power, with me in control, I'm not denying I wasn't in control […] Closest thing of having a service that was completely trustworthy from top to bottom.* (P3)

Kahane (2010) argues tension is the necessary balance between power and love, where one's values need to be steered between the two tensions. When one is faced with the costs of holding a virtue such as 'compassionate trust', the costs can seem high; however the participants have indicated maintaining one's core integrity and balancing this with sacrifice, this cost can be welcomed as it enables the shaping of a more caring environment. These views echo Schmidtz and Thrasher's (2015) virtue of justice as being cooperative rather than controlling, respecting one another's differences.

Theme 3: Socio-cultural system is a barrier

Institutions traditionally take a realist perspective, treating issues as unchangeable facts (Gergen, 2015). It was therefore expected that participants would want to share some of the barriers that

frustrated them in their endeavours to create a better world, as this is their reality. This is not at odds with appreciative inquiry, as it can be used to shift the metaphor from frustration to positive solutions.

The issues identified are complex and are encapsulated within the dominant culture and its economic and political institutions. There was a belief by participants that this was a barrier to 'compassionate trust'. For instance, there is often a disconnect between what political institutions think is needed and what actually is needed:

> *There was a community, very rough community. Not a nice place. The local authority went there and created this really lovely playground. And everyone was saying, 'Great job, guys.' But no-one used it. Then the drugs gangs moved into it. How come this happened? All these kids playing, then they said, these are all hungry, we need to eat. How do you expect them to say, there's a great playground three blocks away, that's what they have funded when we go hungry. The issue is so different to what the authorities thought it was.* (P4)

The importance of social trust was argued by Gruner and Csikszentmihalyi (2018) as a factor in an effective socio-cultural system that can increase positive beliefs in institutions and communities. Oishi and Schimmack (2010) also found that system mistrust impacts subjective well-being. This is a long term, systemic and political problem, according to Participant 2 who also believes positive psychology is promoting these selfish values:

> *I know Seligman has now moved a bit, but I still think that even organisations dealing with happiness – and I've had this conversation with [organisation name] – is still too much about the individual. And they won't move.* (P2)

Martinez and Di Martino (2018) entreat researchers to consider integrating positive psychology into social and community psychology, which makes better use of its practical application (i.e. praxis). It is suggested this also aligns well with social construction epistemology as the aim is for "the [enhancing of] social powers of the subject while promoting participation in community life" (p.414).

There is still nevertheless little understanding politically of what creates healthy societies, resulting in confusion of what a valid measure of well-being is. For instance, there has been much research on prosperity and its correlation with happiness, yet research to date has not found conclusive data, leading to a challenge that we need new measures (Gruner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2018).

This leads to energy being expended on fighting the people within the system, rather than working together, as Participant 1 stated:

I wouldn't end up arguing every day. You wouldn't end up fighting the system because you would build a trust on the basis of, they're telling me this because it's the right way to do it, not, they're telling me this because they're trying to block it, or they're trying to direct me somewhere else. (P1)

More pressure is being put on employees to do more with less time, creating emotional distress and poor self-worth, negating compassionate leadership (Martin & Heineberg, 2017). This means the preference for competition rather than pro-social behaviour in Western institutions has driven a political and economic discourse that does not encourage compassionate values.

Theme 4: Think global, act local

An engaging aspect of the data was the immutable connection between society and the environment, with an emphasis on looking at a long term and whole planet strategy. Such an ambition might seem unrealistic; however, participants felt this could be achieved through small actions, which bring communities together, building shared understanding and awareness.

The importance of a healthy environment on our well-being was stated by participants as an essential means to develop well-being;

There's a sense of awareness of socially and environmentally, which I think is very important. They go together, we don't just focus on one or the other, they are interlinked. This is what our society is about, caring for the environment, it helps well-being to have nature, and things like that (P4).

There is evidence of links between the environment, social connections and well-being (The Wildlife Trusts, 2017); however, there is a concern not enough people appreciate nature. Kasser (2011) believes the root cause is one's internal values. He states that when one holds extrinsically driven self-enhancing values such as power and material wealth, one is less likely to also hold values of environmental and social care. Selfish values however can be reduced through social modelling that promotes ecological values, and through the enhancement of feeling secure. Sherman (2011) states these can be powerful through the enduring positive changes of inter-groups working together with a common goal, creating "transformative action" (p. 335).

Participant 4 saw the virtue of compassionate trust as embodying this global perspective, when she discussed a work colleague:

> *He's a great person to interview on this, as he is for me one of the greatest examples of compassionate trust. He walks the talk in all ways. And that kind of, for me, really admired him, he's challenged me, all of that, so in terms of examples, [name] is a guy who, you know, has an extreme awareness of the social issues and environment issues.* (P4)

Christie et al. (2015) examined the links between trust and perception of benevolence, and found trust increases when it is believed the other person has a level of benevolent morality, also signifying compassion as a 'moral emotion' (Ozwa-de Silva et al., 2012). According to Participant 2, these values already exist within society, and despite being incongruent to the current socio-cultural model, have existed for generations. As Participant 2 stated: "People want to give back. And we're good at it in this country." This then creates an opportunity to develop this further to become part of our economic and political discourse. According to Hartley and Watson (2015) this enables citizens themselves to embody civic virtues that endorse social cooperation.

By including social conditions in positive psychology this enables the promotion of psychosocial controls and empowerment. One can also influence social issues, including the physical and natural environment, which encourages social power and participation in community life (Martinez & Di Martino, 2018). This could be achieved by doing small but meaningful things:

> *If a community or State all got together, and they started going out and everybody chose a lawn to cut, and everybody chose something else to do, and whatever, it would look better.* (P1)

These small actions create a build-up of outcomes that can exponentially grow and have a profound impact, commonly known as the "butterfly effect" (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2009, p. 225). This also mirrors the build-up of positive affect one can gain from positive experiences, as denoted in the 'broaden and build' theory. The definition of the theory, according to Fredrickson (2013), includes flourishing, not just for personal satisfaction, but in relation to doing good.

This building of bonds between people is similar to what Esfahani Smith (2017) calls 'the four pillars of meaning' (p. 41): belonging, purpose, storytelling, and transcendence. By cultivating compassion, one can also cultivate a stronger connection to others (Ricard, 2015).

Theme 5: Raise awareness - Teaching and emulating right values

To create a society where many people have a mindset of 'compassionate trust', participants believed it was necessary to articulate and demonstrate the values to others – within formal educational settings, and also in day-to-day behaviours. For instance, there was a view that people (especially the younger generation) needed to have an opportunity to learn more about issues in society and how they can make a difference. Participants thought it necessary to teach them, for instance:

> *I think we probably need to be educating our younger generation more about, you know, homelessness and poverty in general, and what that means, and some of the things we can do which is the little things that make a difference.* (P3)

This makes sense if we accept Feldman Barrett's (2017) assertion that culture wires the brain to create and perpetuate social concepts. Creating a new educational culture could develop this awareness, such as a values education system. However, Simson, Rosewarne, and Waters (2018) state to create sustained change, these programmes need to be long term, aligned with effective education policy, and delivered through a comprehensive programme.

This top-down approach would also require other institutions to develop these values, so they form part of the changing social culture. Participant 3 explains how his profession of social care (Wales) does this already:

> *We've got a phrase that we use in social care at the moment, which has come out of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act is "what matters to me". And that's the premise of every conversation with a service user, which is what matters to them.* (P3)

However, for Participant 2 there is still a prevailing selfishness in many influential institutions, where even compassionately driven institutions continue to hold values that are not altruistic enough and do not go far enough towards doing without personal reward. As Participant 2 said: "It's not […] do this for someone else - brackets - because it's good for you. Well, okay that's fine but it's not enough. You do it because it's good." Part of this problem may be due to positive psychology's insistence on being 'value neutral', which undermines moral education (Kristjansson, 2012). Raworth (2017) states, if we are to support the younger generation in shaping a new way of living, we need to create the conditions for a new model to emerge. Therefore, we should be clear on what caring and fair values look like. Participant 1 felt this could be done by encouraging those that seek selfish rewards to work in situations that could foster better values:

We've got to do something, and it's more about, some people just need the motivation or reward or something. That's the way they are. It is what it is. However, often when you see it in the voluntary sector, once they've got into that, then they start doing more of it. (P1)

We can all influence one another, as change is shaped by people in society (Napa Scallon & King, 2011), and so a bottom-up approach was also found to be an important part of the solution by participants. Participant 3 believes that his childhood experience has led to the continued use of these values. Now a leader within an organisation, he exhibits these values by being a role model to inspire others:

So, therefore, as a manager in charge of a fairly small service, I can do what I can do in my team and protect those values and behaviours by exhibiting them myself. So I can be a role model for my team, and I will be a role model, well, I will exhibit those behaviours to my peers and my managers.

Role models, including respected public figures that have expressed hope that they influence the development of core values in others, can be valuable for such messages (Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015). Zeidler, Zeidler, and Lee (2018) posit that all communities have inspiring stories and can do a great deal of good within their own ecosystem. Participant 4 talked about two people who she believes emulate 'compassionate trust', stating the importance of recognising and fostering role models in communities:

These two people for me are extremely examples of real people who live like that. Real people, not like Gandhi who, you know, did so much, but these are people in the community, in the office, They are just there.

Morgenroth et al. (2015) see role modelling as having three components: influencing behaviours, representing what is possible, and acting as inspiration to a goal. This can be used to teach, inspire and shape social values within institutions and communities. Developing role models may then be a critical part of fostering 'compassionate trust' within society through a top-down and a bottom-up approach.

Conclusion

The study was concerned with exploring the concept of 'compassionate trust' and how it might be understood and fostered within society. It took a social constructionist methodology (Gergen, 2015) and used appreciative inquiry questions in semi-structured interviews to explore with four participants the concept of 'compassionate trust'.

Participants made sense of the concept from their own experiential contexts, building their meaning from how they interpret the world. For instance, the theme of 'Trust is fundamental but nuanced' identified trust and compassion as important, yet how each participant engaged with and articulated the concept differed. As a researcher this has highlighted how often assumptions are made, when even something like trust, a well-established concept, is seen with subtle (and maybe not so subtle) differences. The constructionist approach has helped bring these differences into awareness.

It was reassuring that participants recognised life cannot just be about positive experiences, and to influence positive change, sacrifice is needed. The theme 'Compassionate trust has a cost' highlights the complexity of this, where both good and bad experiences can trigger a sense of injustice and a need to take action. It also highlights how difficult it is when someone is insecure and emotionally vulnerable to think beyond their own needs, where simply being involved in a positive exercise may not be enough to resolve inner conflicts and change one's mindset.

All participants touched upon the current political and economic system as an issue for developing healthy communities. The theme 'Socio-cultural system is a barrier' demonstrated a disconnection between decision makers and people in communities. Research has shown that selfish behaviour is negatively related to ecological concerns (Kasser, 2011). Such a message is powerful and could be a driver for more research into how communities can be empowered to take action. There is some evidence that institutions are starting to embrace these values, but there is still work to do on fostering caring values in a way that can make a real difference.

Limitations

The concept was created by the researcher who also interviewed the participants. This is not an issue in itself as social construction encourages researcher participation (Gergen, 2015). However, this inevitably will influence the participants' thinking even though the researcher attempted to give participants the opportunity to challenge and rethink the concept.

Qualitative research does not require as many participants as in quantitative research (Howitt, 2016), however only four participants were interviewed, minimising the opportunity to engage a diverse group. Three of the participants are male and would be classed as WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich(ish) and Democratic: Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), hence there may be some transferability in the research of views representative of wider WEIRD populations (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The fourth is female and from South America, although lives in the U.K. This fourth

participant did help give a broader cultural perspective than if the study just had the male participants, yet it is recognised that the research is still not fully transferable to other cultures or contexts.

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2 Wisdom as an Embodied and Embedded Process

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Abstract

In recent years, the psychological study of wisdom has begun in earnest. Numerous studies are casting light onto the nature of wisdom and its development. Whilst wisdom is often seen as the pinnacle of human development beyond the reach of most people, recent findings are suggesting that access to wise thinking may be more variable than previously thought (Grossmann, Gerlach & Denissen, 2016). Insights into situational factors that could nudge individuals towards wiser reasoning are emerging (Grossmann & Brienza, 2018) and the importance of meaning-making, emotions and social interactions are being highlighted (Grossmann, Oakes & Santos, 2018; Igarashi, Levenson & Aldwin, 2018; Westrate & Gluck, 2017). At the same time, the psychological study of wisdom has generated over 24 different definitions of wisdom (Gluck, (2017).

Using a qualitative analysis approach, an integrative review of the literature was conducted. Six themes were identified that not only synthesise multiple perspectives on wisdom, but also offer an integrative model of wisdom as an embodied and embedded process. It is argued that wisdom may emerge and develop in the combination of and interaction between individual resources, situational contexts, cognitive processing and embodied actions, which are supported through individual and collective meaning making – a synergistic, dynamic process through which enhanced levels of wisdom may be realised, leading to wiser individuals and wiser societies.

Introduction

Most people would not dispute that we are facing some of the most demanding global challenges ever faced by humans. On New Year's Day 2018 the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a 'red alert' to the world, highlighting growing inequalities, deepening conflicts, rising nationalism and xenophobia, and urgently calling for unity and common goals ("UN chief issues," 2018). As we approach the mid-point of 2019, the world's growing population is estimated at 7.7 billion (Worldometers, 2019) with the number of people aged 80 or over projected to triple in the next 32 years (United Nations, n.d.). An unprecedented 68.5 million people have been displaced as a result of conflict and persecution (UNHCR, 2017) and the UN has declared that climate change is moving

faster than we are and is "the single biggest threat to life, security and prosperity on Earth" (UNFCCC, 2018).

We are also making remarkable progress in many areas. Five-sixths of the world's surface is free of war, 83% of the world's population is now literate, extreme poverty has decreased to 10%, and life expectancy has increased to 71 years worldwide (Pinker, 2018). As systems scientist Peter Senge (1991) asserts "today's problems come from yesterday's solutions" (p. 57). The world is becoming increasingly complex and we are challenged to respond. Sternberg states conventional intelligence is inadequate (2018). We face ill-defined problems requiring an ability to embrace uncertainty, to deeply engage in foresight, thinking both long-term and systemically towards the common good. Virtues such as compassion, creativity and wisdom may be key. "If there is anything the world needs, it is wisdom. Without it, I exaggerate not at all in saying that very soon, there may be no world" (Sternberg, 2003, p. 18).

Against this backdrop, the need for psychological insight into the nature of human experience seems of more importance than ever. In 2000 the president of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman, called for a rebalancing of psychological research from a disease-based, pathogenic model to a salutogenic model that focusses on optimal functioning and wellbeing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The field of study known as Positive Psychology (PP) emerged from this call, and its academic output is now growing proportionately faster than psychological research as a whole (Rusk & Waters, 2013). Workplaces, schools, those involved in public policy and the general public have shown considerable appetite for PP topics such as happiness and positive emotions. Theories of psychological wellbeing distinguish between hedonic happiness – or the search for pleasure – and eudaimonic happiness – the search for meaning, purpose and growth (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). However, a perceived emphasis on positivity and happiness has led to criticisms that negative emotions and experiences are seen as problematic, and that the psychological and social value in embracing a more complex understanding of human experience is being dismissed (Wong & Roy, 2017).

Do we risk chasing short term pleasure at the expense of growth? Do we avoid vulnerability, holding back from speaking uncomfortable truths or listening to those with different views to our own? Are we at risk of moving to an increasingly binary interpretation of our own experience, at exactly the time when embracing its complexity may be increasingly important? In a move to address these

concerns, Second Wave Positive Psychology (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon & Worth, 2015) – or PP 2.0 – advocates balance and integration, taking a dialectical approach to understanding human experience. It is "concerned with how to bring out the best in individuals and society in spite of, and because of, the dark side of human existence, through the dialectical principles of Yin and Yang" (Wong & Roy, 2017, p. 142).

It could be argued that wisdom represents the very tenets of PP 2.0 and should be core business for positive psychology (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Wisdom has long been hailed as an aspirational characteristic of human development (Birren & Svensson, 2005) and its development is seen by many as key to human flourishing (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006; Ferrari & Westrate, 2013; Sternberg, 2018). It is proposed that wisdom is an adaptive capacity, underpinned by dialectical principles that enables humans to manage uncertainty, integrate conflicting interests, and adjust to or shape their environment towards a common good (Sternberg, 1998). At an individual level wisdom has been linked to eudaimonic well-being, personality growth, and living a good and meaningful life (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Snyder, Lopez & Pedrotti, 2014; Staudinger & Gluck, 2011; Westrate & Gluck, 2017).

The Psychological Study of Wisdom

The psychological study of wisdom is relatively recent. Whilst philosophical and theological traditions have explored this construct, it is only since the 1970s that empirical studies have been conducted (Bangen, Meeks, & Jeste, 2013). The relative recency of this interest, together with the challenges of studying wisdom – potentially the most complex of human characteristics (Birren & Svensson, 2005) – is reflected by the multiple perspectives, definitions and theories of wisdom that are apparent in the current literature (Sanders & Jeste, 2013). The Character Strengths and Virtues handbook identifies 'wisdom and knowledge' as one of six universally recognised human virtues, associated with the strengths of creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning and perspective (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Noticeably missing here, yet represented in many other psychological definitions and theories of wisdom, are additional characteristics such as compassion, empathy, emotion regulation and a desire for the common good (Jeste et al., 2010).

Despite multiple definitions, there is a general consensus that wisdom involves the balance and integration of multiple component parts. In a conceptual review of the literature, Bangen, Meeks, and Jeste (2013) identified the following most common sub-components of wisdom:

- Social decision making and pragmatic knowledge of life

- Prosocial attitudes and behaviours

- Reflection and self-understanding

- Acknowledgement of and coping effectively with uncertainty

- Emotional homeostasis

- Value relativism and tolerance

- Openness to experience

- Spirituality

- Sense of humour

Benevolence/pro-sociality was cited as the most frequent component (Ardelt, 2003; Le & Levenson, 2005; Staudinger & Gluck, 2011; Gluck & Bluck, 2013; Walsh, 2015; Grossmann & Kung, 2017). Arguably, it is in the integration of compassion, with cognitive characteristics, focussed towards the common good, that wisdom develops, transforming 'intellectual fools' into 'wise leaders' (Spannari, Ardelt, Pessi & Paakkanen, 2017; Sternberg, 2017).

It is an exciting time for wisdom research. Whilst wisdom is often seen as the pinnacle of human development beyond the reach of most people, recent findings are suggesting that access to wise thinking may be more variable than previously thought (Grossmann, Gerlach, & Denissen, 2016). New insights into situational factors that could nudge individuals towards wiser reasoning are beginning to emerge (Grossmann & Brienza, 2018). Approaches to developing wisdom are being empirically tested (McLaughlin et al., 2018; Sharma & Dewangan, 2017) and increasingly diverse research methods are being employed, casting light onto the role of emotions, the importance of social interactions, physiological aspects and the behaviours of wise people (Grossmann, Oakes, & Santos, 2018; Grossmann, Sahdra, & Ciarrochi, 2016; Igarashi, Levenson, & Aldwin, 2018; Krafcik, 2015).

At the same time, the psychological study of wisdom has generated well over 24 different definitions of wisdom; Gluck (2017) suggests there may even be more wisdom definitions than wisdom researchers. There are conflicting theories, models and approaches (Ardelt, 2004). Some propose that wisdom should be divided into different domains, dimensions or modes: *general* - insights into life in general; *personal* - insight into one's own life (Staudinger, 2013); *synthetic* - empathic and reflective; *analytical* - abstract and knowledgeable (Takahashi & Overton, 2002); practical *phronesis*; or transcendental *sophia* (Curnow, 2011). There are multiple measures of wisdom, grounded in different definitions (Gluck et al, 2013). Some are self-report, others are performance-based (Ardelt, 2003; Webster, 2003; Levenson, Jennings & Aldwin, 2005). Some measure general wisdom, others measure personal wisdom (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Mickler & Staudinger, 2008). And new approaches are emerging, including autobiographical approaches and situational measures (Gluck, 2017).

Recognising the potential within this complex, and at times confusing, body of work, there is a need for a more holistic and integrative approach to conceptualising wisdom (Walsh & Reams, 2015). Wisdom researchers are advocating multi-level, process models of wisdom, reflecting constructivist, socio-ecological paradigms (Grossmann, 2017a; Igarashi, Levenson, & Aldwin, 2017; Yang, 2008). There is a strength in diversity, looking at points of similarity and difference across the field (Staudinger & Gluck, 2011). Perhaps now is the time for developing such a framework, broad enough to incorporate multiple expressions of wisdom. An integrative conceptual model could support further exploration of not only different components, but also developmental processes (Walsh & Reams, 2015). Driven by a desire to make conceptual sense of the literature and identify factors that may influence the development and expression of wisdom, an integrative literature review was conducted.

Methodology and Method

Research Objective and Question

The primary objective of the research was to explore the construct of wisdom through a review of the psychological literature on wisdom to date, with a particular focus on factors that may influence the development of and access to wisdom in specific situations and across the lifespan. A secondary

objective was to synthesise the wisdom literature[1] reviewed at a conceptual level, facilitating a holistic appreciation of different theories and models of wisdom in relationship to each other.

Research Approach: An Integrative Review

An integrative literature review is a form of desktop research that "reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Torraco, 2005). This approach is particularly applicable in addressing emerging or new topics, where a variety of perspectives are presented, and a synthesis or holistic conceptualisation would be beneficial (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). The literature reviewed is of both a theoretical and an empirical nature and may include both experimental and non-experimental research. The search process itself typically involves both exhaustive searches and purposive sampling, with the literature being analysed through use of qualitative analytical methods such as thematic analysis (Carnwell & Daly, 2001; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). The resulting outputs are synthesised in the form of matrices, process flowcharts or network diagrams (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016).

The methodological approach underpinning this research is that of dialectical pluralism, whereby different methods and divergent perspectives are integrated. Ontologically, reality is viewed as plural, diverse and changing. It can be understood as a 'metaparadigm' in that all types of reality are acknowledged as important, including those from different paradigms, different disciplines, subjective, objective and inter-subjective perspectives (Johnson, 2012). Epistemologically, knowledge is seen as being: *dialectical*, involving synthesis and integration; *dialogical*, requiring continual and equal dialogue between different individuals and schools of thought; and *hermeneutic*, a continual process of interpretation and building on previous interpretations (Johnson, 2017). The emphasis is on learning from difference and, interestingly, it bears a remarkable similarity with conceptual definitions of wisdom.

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[1] The term 'wisdom literature' is used throughout as an abbreviation of the term 'psychological wisdom literature'. It is noted that more commonly 'wisdom literature' is used to describe philosophical and religious texts to which wisdom is ascribed.

An integrative literature review is, by its very nature, both methodology and method in that it encompasses a broad range of scientific approaches, methods and procedures, reporting standards and quality criteria (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). This integrative review was carried out in line with Onwuegbuzie and Frels' Seven Step Model (2016), outlined in Figure 1.

The Seven Step Model is an interactive, iterative and emergent process. All of the steps are interdependent and may be repeated and shuffled between as often as needed. As leads emerge from the reviewed literature or other sources, they should be followed, meaning the process is also dynamic in nature. A holistic and synergistic strategy is adopted, drawing on information from multiple sources, including unpublished or future works from prolific authors, media and secondary sources (Hall & Howard, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016; Onwuegbuzie, Frels & Hwang, 2016).
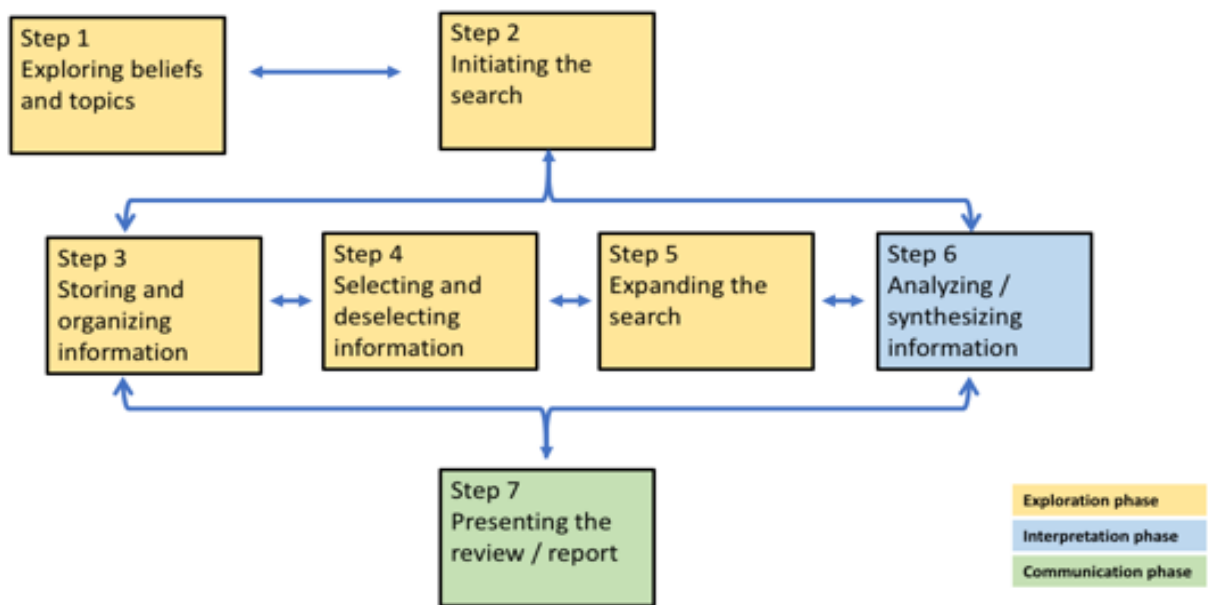
Figure 1: The Seven Step Model (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016)

Step 1

At this stage the topic of wisdom was refined to include a focus on factors that may influence development of and access to wise reasoning. Following a scoping review of the wisdom literature a problem statement was developed: 'The psychological wisdom literature is confusing to those new to the field, with multiple perspectives and approaches used to describe and study the construct'. At this stage dialectical pluralism was adopted as a methodological stance.

Step 2

The literature search was initiated with an exhaustive search, including academic textbooks, the Buckinghamshire New University library database, PsycINFO and Google Scholar. Initial search terms were for the terms 'wisdom' or 'wise' which returned 1821 papers on PsycINFO alone. Search parameters were then limited to peer reviewed publications and to exclude dissertations. This resulted in 281 papers in total and provided the basis of the primary review.

Steps 3, 4 and 5

The papers were reviewed initially by title and abstract and 145 papers were excluded based on relevance to the research objective. The remaining 136 papers were then broadly reviewed by literature review section, presentation of any conceptual frameworks, method or type of study, the findings, discussion and conclusion. Papers were selected and deselected based on *instrumental* criteria – i.e., the work was important for synthesising the literature or drawing inferences, such as a published literature review; *intrinsic* criteria – i.e., the work itself was of interest, such as research conducted with an infrequently used method; and *recency* – i.e., papers that extended or added to the existing body of work. Prolific authors were noted, and reference lists were checked for citation frequency and to help expand the search for any relevant sources not yet found.

Internet searches were also conducted to ensure 'grey' literature was considered. This included online articles, blogs, videos of talks and conference presentations. Where relevant, multiple sources were used to enhance representation, i.e. triangulation to extract meaning. For example, the author of one paper had also presented his research at a conference which was available as a video recording, and the same research had been written about in a blog post for *Psychology Today*. Particular attention was also paid to seeking multiple sources to enhance legitimation, i.e. corroboration and/or convergent findings or ideas. All sources were assessed for credibility, validity, reliability and applicability. As with any literature review, publication bias was also considered. Seven different wisdom scholars were contacted through ResearchGate and all generously responded with relevant papers, one also sent relevant pre-print copies of forthcoming book chapters.

Step 6

Informed by Thematic Analysis and the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the initial objective was to gain familiarity with the literature (Phase 1: become familiar with the data). A multiple literature analysis approach was adopted whereby each paper was annotated/'coded', using a

combined inductive and deductive approach (within-paper analysis), followed by a between-paper synthesis (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012). Emerging themes and patterns were noted (Phase 2: generating codes; Phase 3: searching for themes). This process was both iterative and recursive, leading back into purposive searches in order to refine the emerging themes and domains. Additional papers were selected or deselected, including some that had been discounted in the early stages but retained in a separate folder. Six emerging themes were reviewed for overall coherence and conceptually mapped (Phase 4: reviewing themes). Four primary and two secondary themes were then outlined in table form, with a description identifying each theme's "essence" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92), its associated 'codes' and the final selection of the most relevant literature (Phase 5: defining and naming themes). This final selection included twenty-two specific theories, papers and studies based on: *centrality* in the wisdom literature, i.e. citation frequency; the extent to which they *built on* or extended previous thinking, i.e. presented an integrated or more nuanced view; *challenged* existing thinking, i.e. used a different approach or explored new areas; and *recency*, i.e. most recently published research and pre-prints from prolific wisdom scholars.

Step 7

At this stage the conceptual map was further developed with a view to visually presenting and conveying the author's ideas. Finally, the theme descriptions and conceptual map were refined again during the writing process (Phase 6: writing up).

The Conceptual Map/Integrative Model

The six themes that emerged from the literature represent different domains, or lenses, through which the expression and development of wisdom can be considered. The author proposes that considering wisdom from this holistic perspective not only offers useful insight into the potential relationships between different aspects of wisdom, but also illustrates the dynamic and dialectical nature of wisdom as an adaptive and emergent human capacity. The six themes are presented here in a conceptual map (see Figure 2).

The four inner primary themes, or domains, are suggestive of an embodied and embedded process by which wisdom emerges, is accessed and expressed:

1. Embodied individual traits

This domain reflects within-person traits and capacities that facilitate the emergence of wisdom and that may sustain the development of wisdom over time. Some may arise as higher levels of wisdom are accessed, facilitating further wisdom development.

2. Embedded, situational and social contexts

This domain reflects external conditions that may trigger, nudge or influence an individual's development of or access to embodied wisdom resources and supports wise reasoning/thinking.

3. Wise thinking, balanced decision making

Reflects the cognitive processing involved in wise reasoning, animated by dialectical tension, paradox and a search for synergy, balance or integration.

4. Wise acting, congruent action in context

Reflects adjustment, growth or change responses which may result in internal, external and/or environmental change.

Scaffolding these, two secondary themes reflecting meaning making and narrative can be seen:

1. Wise Insight/Personal Wisdom: Individual Meaning Making

Reflects intrapsychic meaning-making processes, such as narrative and reflection, as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating wise insight and complex understanding, through increased coherence and differentiation.

2. Collective/General Wisdom: Shared Meaning Making

Reflects socially constructed and transmitted meaning as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating collective insight and general wisdom.

The focus here, of both individual and collective meaning making, is on creating coherence and facilitating both personal and general (collective) wisdom, increasing resources over time and across each of the other themes (Ferrari, Westrate & Petro, 2013). Each of the six themes or domains of wisdom are drawn from the literature reviewed, codified and summarised below (see Figure 3 and Table 1). As noted earlier, the focus here is on integration, some domains within the map are

supported by a considerable body of research, whilst others are less so. Furthermore, some of the 'codes' reflect research findings that are drawn from small scale and/or single studies, included for their extension of, or challenge to existing thinking, their originality and/or their recency. A more detailed description and critical review of the research summarised here can be found in the original dissertation work from which this paper is derived (Smith, 2018).

THE COMMON GOOD

Internal

External

Wise thinking: Balanced decision making

Wise acting: congruent action in context

Embodied: individual traits and resources

Embedded: Situational and social context

Individual / 'I'

Collective / 'We'

Wise insight / personal wisdom: Individual meaning making
Reflects intrapsychic meaning-making processes, such as narrative and reflection, as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating wise insight and complex understanding, through increased coherence and differentiation.

Reflects the cognitive processing involved in wise reasoning, animated by dialectical tension, paradox and a search for synergy, balance or integration.

Reflects the within-person traits and capacities that facilitate the emergence of wisdom and that may sustain the development of wisdom over time. Some may arise as higher levels of wisdom are accessed, facilitating further wisdom development.

Reflects an adjustment or growth response which may manifest as an internal, external and/or an environmental change.

Reflects the external conditions that may trigger or influence an individual to access or draw on embodied wisdom resources and supports a transition into wise reasoning / thinking.

Collective / general wisdom: Shared meaning making
Reflects socially constructed and transmitted meaning as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating collective insight and general wisdom

Sarah Smith 16/02/

Figure 2. The conceptual map/integrative model

The Common Good

Internal

- Search for integration and the common good
- Recognition of uncertainty and change
- Intellectual humility
- Accessing tacit and explicit knowledge
- Executive processing
- Appreciation of broader perspectives and contexts
- Balancing competing interests and needs (intra/inter/extra)
- Consideration of short, medium and long term consequences
- Mediated by values

- Openness
- Reflectivity
- Cognitive characteristics Affective characteristics
- Empathy *and* compassion
- Self-transcendence
- Physiological coherence

External

- Adjustment and growth in response to the environment
- Adapting, shaping and creating environments
- Deep and meaningful connection with others
- Sharing with others
- Reflective practices
- Considerate use of environmental resources
- Engagement with cultural creative product

- Fundamental experiences
- Culturally non-normative experiences
- Positive, negative *and* emotionally complex events
- Trivial events
- Social transactions
- Social context
- Compassionate relationships
- Social roles or instruction-reduced egocentrism

Wise thinking: Balanced decision making

Wise acting: congruent action in context

Embodied: individual traits and resources

Embedded: Situational and social context

Wise insight / personal wisdom: Individual meaning making
Life reflection, self-reflection, exploratory *and* redemptive processing, narrative simulation of hypothetical and lived situations of others

Collective / general wisdom: Shared meaning making
Cultural and collective products: religious and cultural texts, proverbs, myths and fables, cultural master narratives, relatable first-person narratives.

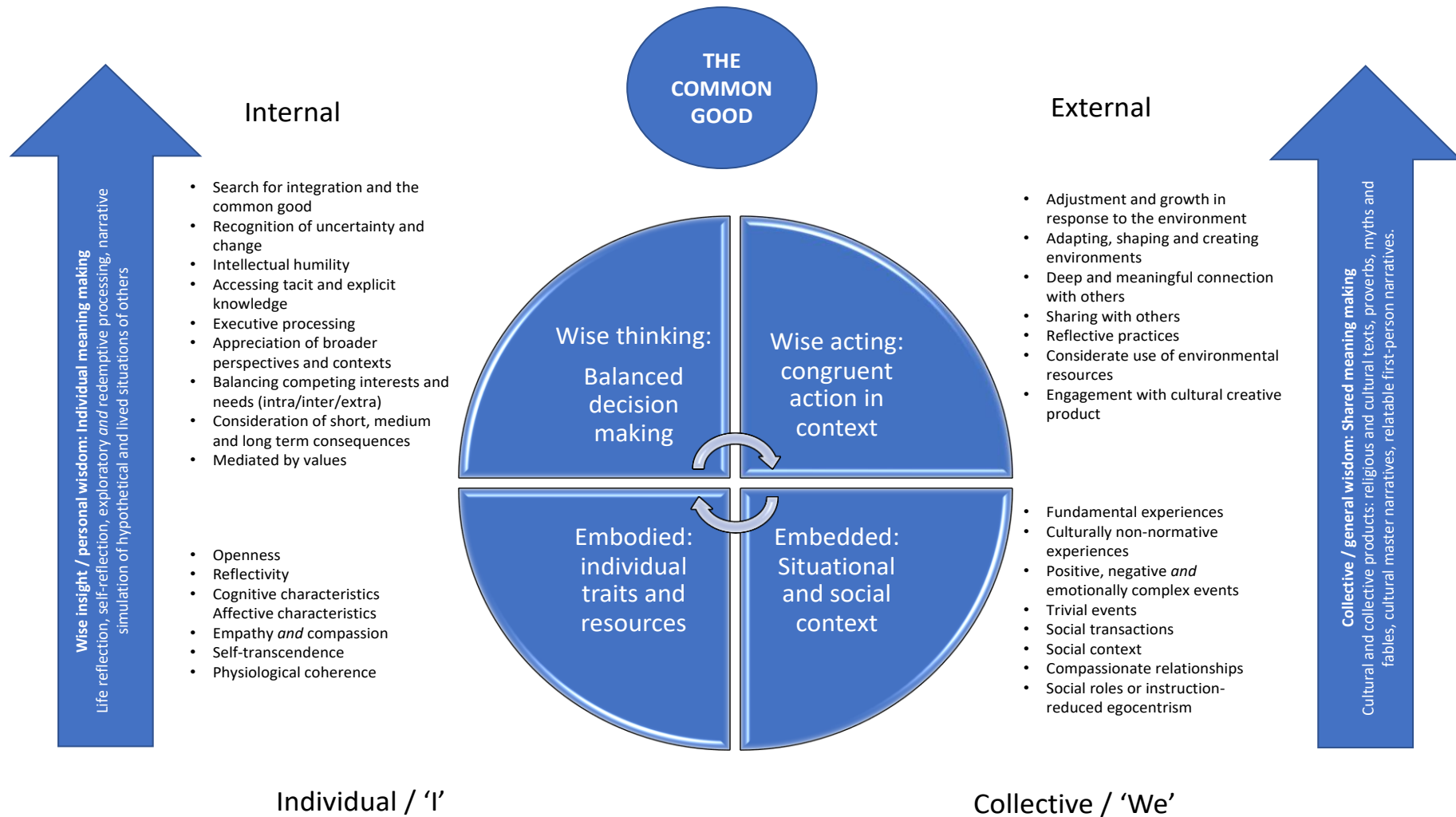Individual / 'I'

Collective / 'We'

Figure 3. Conceptual model, with suggested influencing aspects ('codes') in each domain.

Table 1.

Themes/domains, description, associated 'codes' and key data sources

Wisdom domain	Description	Associated 'codes'	Key data sources
Embodied: individual traits / characteristics / resources	*Reflects within-person traits and capacities that facilitate the emergence of wisdom and may sustain the development of wisdom over time. Some may arise as higher levels of wisdom are accessed, facilitating further wisdom development*	Cognitive Reflective Affective/Compassionate	Ardelt, 2003
		Mastery Openness Reflectivity Emotion regulation with empathy	Gluck & Bluck, 2013
		Self-transcendence	Le & Levenson, 2005
		Greater heart rate variability	Grossmann, Sahdra & Ciarrochi, 2016
Embedded: situational and social context / external factors	*Reflects external conditions that may trigger, nudge or influence an individual to access or draw on embodied wisdom resources and supports transition into wise reasoning/thinking.*	Fundamental experiences Culturally non-normative experiences Positive, negative and emotionally complex events Trivial events	Westrate, Ferrari, Fournier & McLean, 2018
		Social transactions: • Receiving compassion • Seeking expert advice • Interacting with people who are different *and* those who have similar experience	Igarashi, Levenson & Aldwin, 2017
		Social context with friends, co-workers or family	Grossmann, Gerlach & Denissen, 2016
		Compassionate relationships	Montgomery, Barber & McKee, 2002
		Intergenerational interactions Empathic listening	Tabuchi & Miura, 2016
		Reframing of the problem/situation to reduce egocentrism: • Float up and around world, look down on situation • Position problem as a friend's • Given role of 'teacher' • Adopt perspective of another detached person • Project into the future	Huynh, Santos, Tse & Grossmann, 2017

Table 1. (continued - 1)

Wisdom domain	Description	Associated 'codes'	Key data sources
Wise thinking, balanced decision making	*Reflects the cognitive processing involved in wise reasoning, animated by dialectical tension, paradox and a search for synergy, balance or integration.*	Accessing tacit knowledge Focus on common good Mediated by values Balancing competing interests and needs (intra/inter/extra) Consideration of consequences over the short, medium and long term Appreciation of broader perspectives and contexts Executive processing	Sternberg, 1990
		Integrating knowledge and character Accessing tacit *and* explicit knowledge Lifespan contextualism Relativism of values and life priorities Awareness and managing of uncertainty	Baltes & Staudinger, 1993
		Intellectual humility Recognition of uncertainty and change Open-mindedness and perspective taking Search for integration	Grossmann, 2017
		Emodiversity	Grossman, Oakes & Santos, 2018
Wise acting, congruent action in context	*Reflects an adjustment or growth response which may manifest as an internal, external and/or an environmental change.*	Adapting to the environment Shaping the environment Selection /creation of new environments	Sternberg, 1998
		Internal adjustment to the environment Internal growth in response to the environment	Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005
		Deep and meaningful connection with others Spiritual and reflective practices Sharing with others	Krafcik, 2015
		Mindful and considerate use of environmental resources Deliberate and active shaping of own environment Selective engagement with media, art, philosophy and literature Active social life, discussing things with others and inviting challenge	Naschenweng unpublished (cited in Westrate & Gluck, 2017)

Table 1. (continued - 2)

Wisdom domain	Description	Associated 'codes'	Key data sources
Wise Insight/Personal Wisdom: Individual Meaning Making	*Reflects meaning-making processes, such as narrative and reflection, as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating wise insight and complex understanding, through increased coherence and differentiation.*	Life reflection: • Life-planning • Life management • Life review	Staudinger, 2001
		Self-reflection: • Self-function • Directive-function • Exploratory processing and redemptive processing	Westrate & Gluck, 2017
		Self-reflection Narrative simulation of: • Hypothetical situations • Lived situations of others	Ferrari, Westrate & Petro, 2013
Collective/General Wisdom: Shared Meaning Making	*Reflects socially constructed and transmitted meaning as both a supportive and generative structure; facilitating collective insight and general wisdom*	Cultural and collective products: Religious and cultural texts Proverbs, myths and fables Stories of exemplars	Baltes & Staudinger, 2000
		Cultural master narratives Relatable first-person perspective narratives	Ferrari, Westrate & Petro, 2013

Discussion

The psychological study of wisdom to date is relatively recent and has primarily been grounded in personality psychology, life span development, cognitive psychology and cognitive development. Multiple definitions and approaches to conceptualising and operationalising wisdom have led to a wealth of different perspectives, some of which at first glance seem contradictory (Ardelt, 2004). The study of wisdom is flourishing (Staudinger & Guck, 2011), with new papers being published weekly. The increasing diversity of research methods, measures and approaches being utilised is expanding the field, offering broader *and* more nuanced perspectives. Wisdom itself is complex and paradoxical

(Wesstrate & Ferrari, 2013). It is not surprising that the study of wisdom should be similarly complex and paradoxical.

With multiple perspectives in new and emerging fields of study such as wisdom, there is a need to step back, synthesise and develop holistic conceptualisations (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016). This has been achieved through the process of an integrative literature review. A detailed and high-quality literature search has been conducted. The literature found has been systematically and thoughtfully reduced to an "essence" in an iterative and recursive process. Using a thematic analysis approach, multiple perspectives on wisdom have been synthesised and a new model has been produced, which it is proposed has high face validity and contributes to the understanding of wisdom. Representative literature has been summarised under each theme, providing a holistic overview of the research reviewed.

The conceptual model reflects six main domains which, when considered holistically, suggest an embodied and embedded process model of wisdom. It is suggested that it is in the combination of and interaction between different components – within-person resources, situational and social contexts, cognitive processing and embodied actions – that wisdom may emerge, develop and grow. Supported through individual and collective meaning making, it is a synergistic, dynamic process through which enhanced levels of wisdom may be realised, leading to wiser individuals and wiser societies.

Potential applications for the conceptual model are briefly considered next.

The conceptual model and opportunities for measurement

Each theme within the model categorises possible antecedents, influencing factors or components of wisdom, presenting an integrative framework within which different measures and interventions may be considered. By mapping existing measures across to the themes, opportunities for new combinations emerge, along with the potential for new measures drawn from associated fields of study such as narrative or behavioural assessments (Bauer, King & Steger, 2018; Gluck, 2017a). New approaches to measuring wisdom are being proposed (Gluck et al., 2013; Gluck, 2017a). It is already suggested that the aggregation of multiple state-level (situated) assessments may offer more reliable trait-level profiles (Huynh & Grossmann, 2018). With more complex representations of wisdom development and expression, more systemic and nuanced measures may be realised. One

wonders what kind of multi-level assessment approach could lead to the development of individual wisdom profiles? How might these be scaled or adapted to a team, group or organisational level? What possibilities exist for a measure of societal wisdom? There is considerable opportunity for exploration and research here.

The conceptual model and opportunities for interventions

Additionally, there is a pressing call for empirical research into wisdom interventions. Sternberg (2003) proposes a set of principles for wisdom in educational contexts, focussed on influencing *how* not *what* students think. Different wisdom perspectives and wisdom traditions suggest multiple and varied approaches to teaching for wisdom (Ferrari, 2008). These are not without synergy. Whilst some may emphasise expertise, some knowledge, and others self-reflection and transcendence, it is arguably in the integration of different approaches that wisdom may be fostered. Some studies suggest that aspects of wisdom may be enhanced through use of interventions over the course of several weeks or months (McLaughlin et al., 2017; Sharma & Dewangan, 2017) but empirical studies into the efficacy of specific interventions or teaching for wisdom are limited to date (Huynh & Grossmann, 2018). Through the lens of the conceptual framework presented here and the psychological literature, a range of strategies and interventions emerge. Might a combination of interventions, drawn from the different themes, work in synergy to optimise or scaffold wisdom development over time? Might some interventions enhance both state and trait-level wisdom? Furthermore, by adopting a holistic systems perspective, interventions may be considered in relationship with each other, *and* with the individual, his or her environment and the social-cultural context. One also wonders what interventions may be efficacious at a group, organisational or societal level? Empirical and longitudinal research is needed.

The conceptual model and research patterns

There is also a compelling need for increased inter-disciplinary collaboration and use of more diverse research methodologies and methods in the study of wisdom. The importance of open-mindedness, integration of different viewpoints, of intellectual humility and the recognition of the limits of one's own knowledge are integral to wisdom. Bringing a wisdom approach to the study of wisdom seems crucial. With increasing diversity of perspectives comes the need for integration. Stepping back to take a holistic perspective is important.

Conclusion

Finally, whilst the different themes reflect the multiple approaches and conceptualisations of wisdom by scholars, the author proposes that it is in the integration of the themes or domains that the richest opportunities for understanding may lie. Here wisdom can be seen as a systemic and dynamic construct. The importance of recognising and embracing uncertainty, of deeply noticing and questioning self, others and the world around us, of sitting with discomfort, allowing exploration and not rushing to resolution or closure. The importance of not only holding multiple aspects and perspectives at the same time, but also seeking them out and valuing them. Wisdom is paradoxical, it is truly 'both and' not 'either or'. Integration and balance are key: the integration of individual traits; of affective and cognitive domains; of body and mind; of the subjective and the objective; of tacit and explicit knowledge; of knowledge and uncertainty; of acceptance and action; of hindsight, insight and foresight; of self, others and the wider ecosystem; of different and at times opposing needs; of love, power and perspective. Wise integration transcends what was before, driven by a desire for the common good. The importance of meaning making in scaffolding wisdom can also be seen. The ways in which we construct and interpret our experience: reflecting in time and through time; seeing connections between ourselves, others and the world around us; through social connection, relationships and communication with others; through our own stories and simulations of stories passed between peoples and across generations. To focus on components in isolation of each other risks overlooking some of the richest, subtlest and deepest layers of human experience, belying the complexity of a construct such as wisdom. Perhaps wisdom is ultimately to be found in the striving for equilibrium between human system, the self and the environment.

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3

Towards Making Sense of Spiritual Intelligence: Two Contrasting Approaches

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of, and comparison between, two contrasting approaches to spirituality, as sketched in Stephen Hayes' classical paper Making sense of spirituality, *and in* Spirituelle Intelligenz, *a book by Julius Kuhl, respectively. The former approach is firmly grounded in behaviourist psychology, and Hayes' paper constituted a crucial stepping stone in the development of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a popular and evidence-based form of "third wave" cognitive-behavioural therapy. The latter approach is an outgrowth of Kuhl's Personality Systems Interaction Theory (PSI), an elaborate theory of human motivation that is close to theories that are popular in Positive Psychology (e.g., Richard Ryan, one of the founders of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), referred to PSI as a "sibling theory" of SDT). Related topics include: Relationships of these two approaches to mindfulness, modern holistic somatic practices (in particular the Feldenkrais method), Vallerand's theory of Harmonic Passions, and Carl Roger's Person-Centred Psychotherapy (which has been recently argued to be deeply related to Buddhist meditation practices).*

Important Note: *These are preliminary notes for conference proceedings; a more elaborate and complete version will appear elsewhere in due course.*

Introduction

Scientific interest in 'spirituality' has increased considerably during the 1990s and early 2000s, and has remained at a high level since then. This can be seen from the share of publications
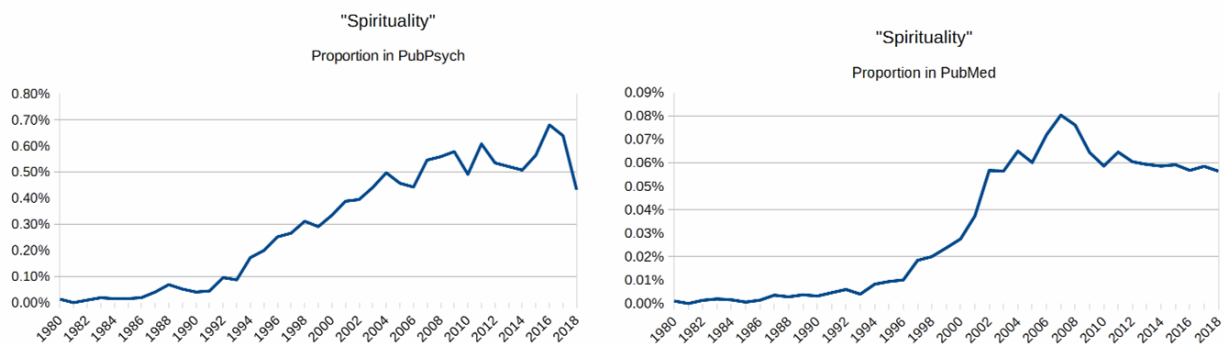

Figure 1. Proportion of publications relating to spirituality (1980-2018)

relating to it both in psychology in general (as measured by publications in PubPsych) and even in therapeutically oriented work (as measured by publications in PubMed); see Figure 1.

No comprehensive survey of this topic will be attempted here. Rather, this brief note contributes to this field of research by outlining and comparing two radically different approaches to spirituality: one emanating from an attempt to bring personality and motivational psychology into a common framework with Christian religiosity (Kuhl, 2015), the other rooted in an attempt to understand spirituality as behaviour within a modern behaviourist framework (Hayes, 1984).

Approach 1: Personality Systems Interaction Theory

Personality Systems Interaction (PSI) Theory is a general theory of personality that grew out of an attempt to understand why some people seem more easily able to enact their intentions than others (Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994, p. 1f, p.9), a theory whose main exposition amounts to over 1200 pages and is available in German only (Kuhl, 2001); outlines available in the English language include Kuhl (2000); Kuhl and Koole (2004); Kuhl, Kazén and Quirin (2014); Koole Sander, Caroline, Tobias and Nicola (2019) as well as the recent volume edited by Baumann, Kazén, Quirin and Koole (2018). One aspect of this comprehensive theory is a theory of the self (Kuhl, Quirin & Koole, 2015), which in turn is the basis for Kuhl's attempt to prove compatibility of religious (specifically, Catholic) faith with today's scientific knowledge (Kuhl, 2015).

Intelligence, Cognition

Talking about spiritual *intelligence* puts the subject matter in an obvious relationship with psychological theories of cognition. A widespread psychological approach to the latter is based on dual process models of cognition (Kahneman, 2011; Evans & Stanovich, 2013), which distinguish between what roughly can be described as an intuitive, fast, unconscious, automatic, inflexible, error-prone type of cognitive processing on the one hand, and a deliberate, conscious, slow, flexible, rational, intelligent way of processing on the other hand.

Nevertheless, this kind of model is not universally accepted: psychotherapist Milton Erickson is usually associated with the idea of a 'smart unconscious', and the philosopher and client-centred psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin emphasized the importance of the pre-logical 'felt' dimension of experience (Gendlin, 1997), to name only two among many examples from psychotherapy;

there are also a number of critics within psychology, as well as in applied research (e.g., Klein, 1998). Concerning type 2 (rational) processing, Stanovich (2010) distinguishes between two subtypes thereof, resulting in three types of cognitive processing in his theory.

By comparison, PSI splits *both* conscious and unconscious processing into an elementary and a high-level type, resulting in four distinct cognitive systems (*Erkenntnissysteme*); see Table 1.

Table 1.

Fourfold processing model in PSI

	Sequential Processing, Conscious	Parallel Processing, Unconscious
"High Level"	Keeping goals in mind that currently cannot be enacted: **Intension Memory (IM)**	Extensive memory of life experiences ("self"): **Extension Memory (EM)**
"Elementary"	Conscious processing of details (e.g., for context-independent recognition of dangerous objects): **Object Recognition (OR)**	Unconscious perception and cognition for enacting behaviour: Grasping, Walking, etc. (cf. blindsight) **Behavioural Activation System (BAS)**

Intention Memory (IM) is the 'intelligent' part of conscious cognition; it is concerned with keeping available for later action those goals that can for some reason not be acted upon immediately.

Object Recognition (OR) is the low-level aspect of conscious cognition, concerned with recognizing objects even when they appear in a new context (e.g., 'is this the same kind of plant I ate, which made me sick last week in the other forest?').

Behavioural Activation System (BAS) is responsible for immediate action; it has its own information processing ability (as reveals itself, for example, in the phenomenon of blindsight, where someone is able to grasp something without being conscious of seeing it).

Finally, *Extension Memory (EM)* is the accumulated experience which allows one to put new events into context and is theorized to be (essentially) the Self.

Crucially, there are posited to be antagonistic relationships between these systems, relationships that are in turn moderated by emotions: Delayed action (IM) and immediate action (BAS) are

antagonistic, as well as contextual processing (EM) and context-independent processing (OR); in both cases strong emotions tend to inhibit high-level processing and facilitate elementary processing: increasing positive emotions tend to lead to immediate and unconscious action, whereas negative emotions favour conscious and de-contextualized processing.

Personality Systems

These four types of information processing map into a hierarchy of seven levels of personality functioning that were derived from a survey of the relevant psychological literature:

At the top is self-regulation, based on global personal goals as represented in EM; next comes high-level conscious cognition (e.g., IM); below that are motives. The fourth (middle) level comprises stress responses and is crucial in determining whether under stress one uses high or low level processing; below are the remaining three layers of low level processing: Importantly,

> *…Instead of regarding these ... as different "perspectives on personality" ... or trying to decide which one provides the best approach to explaining behavior, PSI theory considers them as seven levels of functioning and, thus, potential sources of behavior and experiencing.* (Kuhl & Quirin, 2011)

Spiritual Intelligence

Based on the theory outlined above, Kuhl (2015, p. 145) uses the term "spiritual intelligence" to describe the cooperation of all systems in the psyche (*psychische Systeme*). According to Kuhl (2015, p. 315), analysis of the four cognitive systems (*Erkenntnissysteme*) implies that the combination of systemic intelligence, respect for the complexity of Being and existential *ur-trust*, which is taken to be constitutive of spiritual intelligence, is best provided by the Self (thus by the EM), which in turn has developed during human evolution to deal with what is claimed to be the most complex system of all: oneself and other *persons*. Furthermore, this is taken to imply that spiritual intelligence is best developed in contact with other persons, and even more so in contact with what is taken to be the ideal other: the loving personal god of Christianity (Kuhl, 2015, p. 141ff).

Approach 2: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Behaviourism and Spirituality

Few scientist (or philosophers, for that matter) today are substance dualists. Despite this, contemporary psychology is replete with mentalist concepts. One branch of psychology that is consistent in its rejection of dualism is the branch which developed out of Skinner's 'radical behaviourism'. Such an approach may appear to be far from fertile ground for the study of spirituality and/or the self. Nevertheless, behaviourist Stephen Hayes (1984) pointed out that talk of spirituality is just another form of verbal behaviour and argued for the importance of a behavioural analysis of the same.

Hayes' behaviourist understanding of the 'self' was based on Skinner's observation that there is a difference between behaving and talking about one's behaviour – which of course is also a form of behaviour, but not the same behaviour as the one that is being reported on. According to Skinner, this behaviour of reporting on one's behaviour is what constitutes *self-knowledge*. Skinner's analysis was augmented by Hayes (1984) with the observation that it is "also critical to the verbal community that this behavior occurs from a given and consistent perspective, locus, or point of view" (p. 102). Furthermore, Hayes posits that "in some real sense, 'you' *are* the perspective" and – crucially for his following discussion of spirituality – that "you-as-perspective is not itself fully experienceable as a thing or object by the person looking from that perspective".

'Spiritual is usually seen as an antonym of 'material', and synonymous with terms like bodiless, formless or immaterial. Hayes (1984, p. 104) put it this way: "Spirit is defined as an 'immaterial' being; and matter is the stuff of things. Spirit is thus a being non-experienceable as a thing." The crucial connection to the above behaviourist discussion of the self was provided by arguing that "[y]ou-as-perspective seems to fit this definition rather well ... It seems plausible, then, that the matter/spirit distinction has as its source the content/perspective distinction established as a necessary side effect of language." Furthermore, Hayes argued that various aspects widely believed to be characteristic of spirituality can be explained in this framework.

For example, when people speak of "God as love" they usually are referring to a quality of a metaphysical God of absolute acceptance. In a sense, God is seen as the context of all contexts.

Note that you-as-perspective is perfectly accepting of all content. Pain and pleasure are equally welcome. The fact that we do not like pain (and so on) is just more content that is also equally welcome (Hayes, 1984, p. 105).

Acceptance Commitment Therapy and Spiritual Intelligence

This work of Hayes was an important step in the development of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT[2]; for a definition see Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012, p. 97) out of an earlier therapeutic approach called 'comprehensive distancing' (Zettle, 2011, p. 78). In ACT, you-as-perspective is usually referred to as *self-as-context* (Hayes et al., 2012, p. 85ff), which in turn is one of the six processes that contribute to the general goal of ACT: increasing *psychological flexibility*. In fact, "spirituality ... on empirical and conceptual grounds ... appears to be foundational for psychological flexibility" (Zettle, Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Biglan, 2016, p. 57). Here, psychological flexibility denotes "the ability to contact the present moment more fully as a conscious human being, and to change or persist in behavior when doing so serves valued ends" (Hayes, n.d.). This in turn suggests that psychological flexibility has at least considerable overlap with those (broad) conceptualizations of intelligence that stress the ability to adapt to one's environment so that one's decisions lead to actions in line with one's goals (Stanovich, 2009, p. 12), at least under the assumption that one's goals are indeed in line with one's values (for the importance of this, compare Grund, Fries, & Rheinberg, 2018, Baumann, Kaschel, & Kuhl, 2005, and Chase, Houmanfar, Hayes, Ward, Vilardaga, & Follette, 2013). If so, then it seems fair to interpret self-as-context, in cooperation with the other five basic processes of ACT, as a possible conceptualization of spiritual intelligence.

Towards a Discussion

Two approaches to spiritual intelligence were outlined above, one explicitly argued for by Julius Kuhl and grounded in personality systems interaction theory, and a second one that appears to be at least implicit in ACT. This section contains some observations that may provide the basis for comparing and contrasting these approaches and drawing general conclusions. *Please note that what follows are just ideas that are far from having been worked out in anything like final form.*

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[2] ACT is embedded in a general behavioural theory of language called RFT (relational frame theory); see, for example, Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, and Roche (2001) and Dymond and Roche (2013). Discussing this would considerably exceed the scope of this short article.

Possible Issues with Kuhl's 'Spirituelle Intelligenz'

Viewing spiritual intelligence as an integrative, holistic, non-verbal, essentially intuitive way of understanding seems congenial with many forms of spirituality. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that make Kuhl's approach look less attractive than it might appear at first sight. Concerning PSI in general, the modulation assumptions seem overly simplistic. For example, will high positive affect really always encourage immediate action? This seems implausible for deep serenity, tranquillity, or other forms of low-arousal positive affect.

Related more specifically to Kuhl's portrayal of spiritual intelligence, the following problems seem to arise:

Growing as a human being involves both learning from one's parents (or other caregivers) and also learning at a suitable time to become independent from them and finding one's own way. Even if the former may be plausibly associated with a role for religion in human development via god(s) as some kind of *über*-parents, the second seems incompatible: becoming independent of the god(s) seems no part of any religion I am aware of (except maybe some interpretations of Buddhism) and certainly not of Christian religion. More importantly, the claimed superiority of belief in a personal (e.g., Christian) god over a less personal religion (e.g., Buddhism) for enabling human development (e.g., Kuhl, 2015, p. 228) seems incompatible with empirical data available, as can be seen in Montero-Marin, Perez-Yus, Cebolla, Soler, Demarzo, and Garcia-Campayo (2019) or Huang and Wang (2019).

The belief that your point of view as provided by your accumulated experience (EM) – without any need for additional critical analysis – provides the highest possible form of intelligence might be construed to imply that nothing outside one's EM exists (or at least that nothing outside it has any relevance), thus leading us right into solipsism.

Finally, many of the examples that Kuhl gives for the exercise of spiritual intelligence (e.g., his discussion of the Christian cross sign: Kuhl, 2015, p. 78) look to me more like ex-post rationalizations of rather limited interpretations of facts and experiences rather than deep wisdom arising from EM taking into account all available relevant information.

Assuming these thoughts are on the mark, could recourse to ACT help remedy some of these deficiencies? Concerning the first two points, ACT does stress the need not to become dependent

on the therapist. A popular ACT metaphor is that everyone is climbing his own mountain; the therapist can be useful in as far as from his more distant point he may see things differently (and likely has more experience in mountain climbing). The importance of the personal therapeutic relationship, which ACT does recognize, need not compel the acceptance of belief in personal god(s); as can be seen for example by the many points of contact between ACT and Buddhism (Hayes, 2002). An optimistic interpretation is that ACT might also defuse issues three and four by allowing us to get less entangled in (i.e., fused with) our inner lives, via de-fusion from cognitions and emotions and recognizing self-*not*-as-content.

I am calling this an optimistic view since, in practice, many opinions in the ACT community seem far from being de-fused from mental rigidity. It is fair enough to put exclusive emphasis on pragmatism, on what works to further one's valued goals, but how can you possibly know whether you indeed do further them if you dogmatically declare that you find "[n]o place for reality and truth" (Barnes-Holmes, 2000). Or do you not care? Is the only thing that counts whether in your mind there is the impression that you further your goals (so that we are back to solipsism)?

I also sense a major problem with the declared goal in ACT: prediction-and-influence of behaviour. Skinner argued that there is nothing wrong with manipulating others (Skinner, 1972, p. 91ff); however that may be, letting others manipulate us seems hardly an attractive approach to life in many circumstances. There are presumably situations where we can expect others to act in our best interest (like our parents, or – hopefully – a therapist that we consult), but in general it might not be such a great idea to rely on the kindness of strangers. This becomes a particular problem once one maintains a background philosophy of pragmatism-without-reality, as many in the ACT community profess to do: with no recourse whatsoever to reality, how do you know whether you are being manipulated and maybe manipulated to your disadvantage? If I am right in claiming that ACT overemphasises controlling others' behaviour relative to dealing with oneself, and also that PSI neglects low-arousal-affect (see modulation assumption), then these two problems may be related, in that our society's underappreciation of low-arousal emotions is arguably tied to a preference to influence the behaviour of others (Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung Helene & Yeung, 2007).

One point where I see Kuhl's approach as distinctly superior to what ACT provides is that Kuhl recognizes that a comprehensive, contextual viewpoint is necessarily too complex to be

expressed in language, whereas ACT easily falls into overemphasizing verbal behaviour (e.g., the claim that values are necessarily verbally constructed (Hayes et al., 2012, p. 92ff).

Finally, both approaches seem to me to be quite literally too self-centered. As I understand it, spirituality has to do with awe in the face of the vastness of the universe[3] and the mystery of existence, and/or with living in accordance with the natural way of things (e.g., *dao*, *dharma*) or submission to the will of god(s) (which is, for example, the root meaning of *islam*). Elevating my haphazardly accumulated life experiences (i.e., extension memory) to the highest possible form of intelligence, or my gut feelings about what seems pragmatic to the sole guideline of behaviour, makes me feel like something important has been left out. But then, feeling like this is just another form of behaviour (presumably produced by one or the other of my personality systems in combination with momentary circumstances).

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[3] After all, we sit on the crust of a mediocre planet in an unremarkable solar system somewhere close to the suburbs of a reasonably respectable galaxy among a myriad of other galaxies in one of the galaxy clusters contained in one of the superclusters ...

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4

Positive Pagan Psychology

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Abstract

This presentation showcased the elements of positive psychology present in the author's past and current research exploring Neo-Pagan practices through a psychological lens. In the first half, findings from interviews with 8 modern Pagan practitioners about their ritual practices were discussed. Ritual workings are a mental operation where the practitioners raise energy, imbue it with a purpose, and then send it out to its intended target. This work cannot be conducted in an ordinary state of consciousness, and so an altered state must be realised to craft the singularity of intent necessary (Adler, 1986; Orion, 1995; Starhawk, 1986). The altered state that practitioners describe shares many features with Csikszentmihalyi's flow state. This presentation discussed the conditions that each of these states share as well as their mutual phenomenological features. The second half presented findings from current research exploring the relationship between Nature connectedness, happiness, and religious orientation. In this study, the NC scores of multiple religious groups were compared to establish if the nature worship inherent in Paganism (and some other religions) is related to higher NC in those groups. A measure of happiness was also taken as NC has been linked to increased eudaemonic and hedonic well-being (Capaldi et al., 2014; Pritchard, Richardson, Sheffield, & McEwan, under review). Participants aged 18+ years, from a range of religious groups, were recruited online using opportunistic sampling. NC was measured using the Biophilic Values Scale (Lumber, Richardson & Sheffield, 2017), the Connectedness to Nature (trait) scale (Mayer & Frantiz, 2004) and The Childhood Experiences of Nature Scale (Wells & Lekies, 2006). Happiness was measured using the Psychological Wellbeing scale (Ryff, 1989). Data were analysed using ANOVA.

The work is soon to be published elsewhere. Please contact Charmaine at the email address above for more information.

5

The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Skychology – An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Looking Up at the Sky

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Abstract

What do people experience when they look up at the sky? What role, if any, does the sky play in the experience of wellbeing? Against a backdrop of unprecedented global urbanisation, and the erosion of interactions with nature, the answers to these questions matter. Research has neglected intentional interactions with the sky, thus a gap and opportunity exist to understand the phenomenological experience of looking up (the proximal goal of this study) and evaluate its efficacy as a Positive Psychology Intervention (the distal goal). Four participants, who self-reported as having a fascination with the sky, shared their experiences during in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The results surfaced three super-ordinate themes: 'It's one of my needs', 'This is gonna make me feel better' and 'Amazement. Almost every time' which suggest looking up could be operationalised as a PPI, with future directions presented for researchers and practitioners to positively impact lives across the world.

Introduction

Looking up at the sky ('looking up' hereafter) is an activity many consider ordinary. We do it every day, often without realising. Art's most enduring muse, the sky has been revered for millennia from Ancient Greece to the Incan empire, yet little is known about the psychophysiological effects of doing so. A significant body of *nature wellbeing* research extols the benefits of interacting with nature to enhanced psychological wellbeing and physical health (Bloomfield, 2017; Larson, Jennings, & Cloutier, 2016), however research has primarily focused on green and blue spaces (e.g. natural areas in wilderness and urban settings, oceans, lakes, and rivers; Finlay, Franke, McKay, & Sims-Gould, 2015). Compounded by a dearth of research exploring intentional interactions with the sky, a significant gap, and opportunity, exists to deepen our understanding of the phenomenological experience of looking up – the proximal aim of this study – and operationalise those insights through the creation of new Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) – a distal goal beyond this study.

Skychology – a neologism defined as scientific endeavours to understand and operationalise intentional interactions with the sky to enhance wellbeing - is especially salient given the unprecedented rise of global urbanisation, widely acknowledged as one of the most significant health issues of the 21st century (World Health Organisation, 2015). Global urbanisation, which will rise to an estimated 66% by 2050 (United Nations, 2014), has significantly reduced the frequency and quality of interactions – developed over millennia – between humans and natural environments (Cox, Hudson, Shanahan, Fuller, & Gaston, 2017), with recent research suggesting on average less than 10% of each day is spent outdoors in many affluent, industrialised countries (MacKerron & Mourato, 2013; Matz et al., 2014). Crucially, and unlike green and blue spaces, the sky is 'always on', unbound by geography or urbanisation and available to virtually everyone. Exploring the potential of the sky to augment psychophysiological wellbeing and operationalising the data through empirically-informed PPIs could positively impact the lives of countless people across the world.

Wellbeing and Nature

A universally agreed definition of wellbeing has proven elusive. Wellbeing has been conceptualised as Subjective Wellbeing (SWB: Diener, 1984), from the hedonic tradition, emphasising how individuals evaluate the quality of their lives based on how they think (cognition) and feel (affect). The SWB 'formula' comprises high positive affect, low negative affect and satisfaction with life (1984). Psychological Wellbeing (PWB: Ryff, 1989), from the eudaemonic tradition, instead posits psychological wellbeing across six domains: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Later conceptualisations of wellbeing emphasised mental health (Keyes, 2002) and 'flourishing' individuals, communities and organisations: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011).

A significant body of research suggests interacting with nature positively impacts health and psychological wellbeing. Since Ulrich (1984) first identified restorative health benefits from noticing nature for postoperative patients, a multitude of studies have identified links between nature involvement, improved physical health and psychological wellbeing, including higher levels of life satisfaction, attention, positive affect, and decreased levels of stress and anxiety (Capaldi, Dopko, & Zelenski, 2014; Hartig, Evans, Jamner, Davis, & Gärling, 2003). Whilst

findings are consistent, conclusions are often generalised because nature is conceptualised as an amorphous entity; despite being omnipresent in virtually all outdoor nature interactions, the specific influence of the sky on wellbeing is unknown. A gap, and opportunity, therefore exist to understand if and how specific interactions with the sky influence wellbeing.

There is ongoing debate about which psychophysiological mechanisms imbue wellbeing when noticing nature, and how they work (Joye & de Block, 2011). Within the context of this debate, three alternative prevailing theories within the field of ecopsychology will now be highlighted.

First, Attention Restoration Theory (ART: R. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) suggests natural environments elicit involuntary attention in humans (a passive state, requiring little or no effort) and, through this effortless "soft fascination", replenish reserves required for effort-driven, "directed attention" (1989; S. Kaplan, 1995, p. 172). Second, Stress Reduction Theory (SRT: Ulrich, 1981) proposes that natural environments can enhance both positive affect and stress recovery, with their restorative effects triggered when we experience emotional change. The simple act of viewing a natural vista can have an immediate effect on an individual's psychological and physiological functions, rapidly lowering stress levels (Hartig et al., 2003; Ward Thompson et al., 2012). Finally, the Biophilia hypothesis (Kellert & Wilson, 1993) posits the development of a biological and emotional need to connect with other forms of life, a consequence of human evolution in natural surroundings over millennia. Gathering extensive knowledge about the natural world satisfied primary psychological needs of autonomy and mastery, whilst enhancing mental, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development (White & Heerwagen, 1998.)

Noctcaelador

Research relating to intentional interactions with the sky appears limited to noctcaelador, a psychological construct defined as a "psychological attachment to the night sky" (Kelly, 2004, p. 100). Noctcaelador influences how frequently individuals look at the night sky and where they choose to live (Kelly, 2004) and correlates with absorption (Kelly, Daughtry, & Kelly, 2006), openness (Kelly & Kelly, 2010), and curiosity (Kelly, 2016). The Noctcaelador Inventory (the scale designed to measure noctcaelador) has high internal reliability and validity (Kelly, 2004).

There are limitations within noctcaelador research: The definition is based on similarities with place attachment theory, broadly defined as the emotional attachment between person and place (Low & Altman, 1992), however the strength and accuracy of this association is not empirically evidenced, nor is there any explanation of how noctcaelador attachment occurs. Additionally, noctcaelador studies have almost exclusively been limited to student populations, limiting the generalisability of its findings.

Whilst extant research demonstrates clear links between nature interactions and wellbeing, little is known about intentional interactions with the sky. Drawing on the review presented above, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the phenomenological experience of looking up in response to the following research questions:

(1) What do people experience when they look up at the sky?

(2) What role, if any, does the sky play in the experience of wellbeing?

Method

'Seek first to understand, then to be understood'

– Covey (2004, p. 237)

Design

A necessary first step towards the distal goal of skychology (the development of sky-based PPIs) is seeking to understand the experience of looking up at the sky, hence the selection of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative approach:

> *…committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences [and] what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people.* (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 1)

IPA is an inductive approach, embodied by a hermeneutic circle between participant and researcher, as I attempt to make sense of participants making sense of their experiences. Accordingly, this study represents an *interpretation* of the participants' lived experience and is inevitably influenced by my own interpretative biases.

Participants

Drawing upon IPA recommendations for small, homogenous samples (Smith et al., 2009), four people (female = 3) aged between 23 and 45 were invited (through social media) to participate in this study, as detailed in Table 1.

To ensure sampling was consistent with the qualitative paradigm, a purposive sampling approach was employed, with selection based on relative expertise with the phenomena being studied (participants self-reported as having a fascination with the sky). I knew three participants to varying degrees, which helped establish rapport (Peltier, 2010) and the fourth was introduced via referral. The selection criteria required that participants were not experiencing symptoms of vertigo (an ethical requirement) and were available within a four-week period.

Table 1.

Participants' demographics

Name	Sex	Age	Country	Occupation
Neil	M	45	U.K.	Currency Trader
Aurora	F	23	Germany	Postgraduate Student
Daphne	F	31	U.K.	Copywriter
Cielo	F	41	U.K.	Psychotherapist

Interview Protocol

Four 60-minute video call interviews were conducted over a four-week period. An interview schedule (see Appendix A) ensured consistent phrasing of questions, and was adapted based on participants' responses (Smith et al., 2009). Participants were invited to go outside and look up at the sky during their interviews (with no time limit).

Clean Language, an approach to questioning that "facilitates exploration of a person's inner world through their own, naturally occurring metaphors [to] gain a deeper understanding of each participant's symbolic world" (Tosey, Lawley, & Meese, 2014, p. 634) was integrated into the schedule. Clean Language minimises the "propensity for researchers inadvertently to

introduce extraneous metaphors into an interviewee's account, [enhancing] the authenticity and trustworthiness of qualitative research" (Tosey et al., 2014, p. 630). An example of a Clean Language question used was, "And looking up at the sky is like what?"

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from my institution prior to commencement. Respondents were sent an invitation letter explaining the nature of the study, ethics, confidentiality, data protection and right to withdrawal. A date and time for each interview was mutually agreed. Participants signed a consent form prior to interview and were debriefed upon completion to reaffirm confidentiality and their right to withdrawal.

Transcription

I manually transcribed each interview verbatim to maximise familiarity with each account prior to analysis. Grammatical and semantic adjustments were kept to a minimum to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the verbatim data and names were replaced with a non-identifiable code to safeguard anonymity.

Data Analysis

I implemented the IPA data analysis stages detailed in Smith et al. (2009). First, following transcription, interviews were re-read to maximise familiarisation. Second, detailed notes were created for one interview. Third, notes were analysed and synthesised to surface the participant's main themes. Fourth, Stages 2 and 3 were repeated for the remaining participants, to create a list of main themes for each (see Appendix B). Fifth, participants' main themes were analysed and synthesised to create a master list of three super-ordinate themes (see Appendix C). A prevalence table of themes is included in Appendix D.

Rigour

To ensure rigour, a critical component of qualitative research (Yardley, 2017), and enhance objectivity, I maintained a reflexive journal to raise awareness of personal assumptions and challenges. The analysis was also audited by an experienced IPA researcher, who had no prior connection to the data, to assess validity, plausibility, and a logical, robust chain of evidence (Smith et al., 2009).

> *Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things . . .*
> *I am tempted to think . . . there are no little things.*
>
> – Barton (in Covey, 2004)

The Extraordinary in the Ordinary

As I write this, nearing the end of this fascinating journey, I have come to understand one thing above all: looking up at the sky is an ordinary *activity*, and an extraordinary *experience* – an experience that embodies the *raison d'être* of Positive Psychology, "to make life better" (Lomas, Hefferon, & Ivtzan, 2014, p. 16). The overarching theme of this study – *the extraordinary in the ordinary* – is comprised of three super-ordinate themes surfaced from analysis, shown in Figure 1.
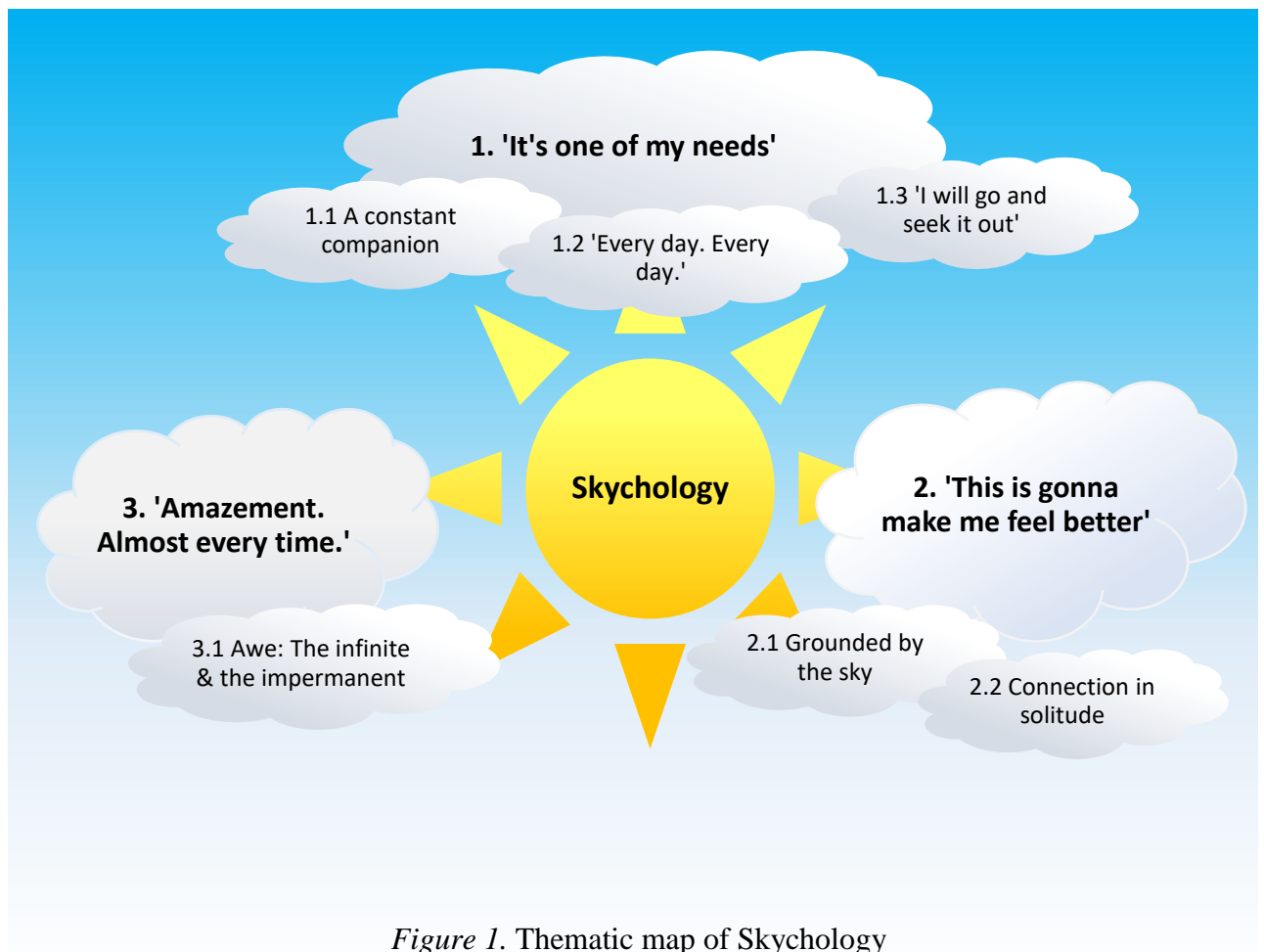

Figure 1. Thematic map of Skychology

This section introduces these themes, evidenced by the participants' own words, to support the results.

Theme 1: 'It's one of my needs'

The sky plays an important role in the participants' lives, manifest as a constant, reassuring presence – akin to a relationship – and as a predilection to be "close to the sky" (Aurora), operationalised as a frequent, intrinsically motivated, self-regulating behaviour.

Sub-theme 1.1: A constant companion

The sky was perceived by participants as a constant, valued presence, often from childhood. Daphne felt "like I've always done it", and Aurora was "fascinated by the sky when I was little child". The sky is a reassuring, constant companion:

> *I will actively seek out to go and spend time each day to go and look at the sky on my own. To me it feels very special, and important and also normal. It's come to be something that I've recognised in my life, over the last 10 years and probably also as a child… it's something I need actually. It's one of my needs.* (Cielo)

Like a friend, guardian or mentor, the sky can nurture, support and encourage. Indeed, for Daphne, the sky was a constant, nurturing presence during a time of significant personal difficulty and uncertainty:

> *[Mum] just broke up with my dad – and then the day after her dad died… she went into full on depression mode and literally didn't get out of bed for a couple of years … my brothers were away at boarding school and … I just got very attuned to being able to be by myself and just being outside … whenever you're in a stressful situation, you can just like look up, you know… I think that helps a lot.*

At the heart of this relationship is relatedness. Human emotions are in flux, but so too is the sky. Weather embodies emotion, and through this *emotional weather*, a shared experience of the human condition, through the simple act of looking up:

> *Even though you're feeling kind of very fluctuating … in your emotions or your thoughts… there's that reassurance and encouragement of … the sky that's going through all the motions of the… weather… and the seasons and the days.* (Daphne)

Fascinatingly, the participants had never discussed their *experience* of looking at the sky before, its significance becoming apparent during our interviews, prompting internal dialogue:

Even as we're talking about it, I'm realising how important to me this is – in fact probably a lot more important than I've ever really thought before. (Cielo)

A realisation – possibly for the first time – of the extraordinary in the ordinary, perhaps because it was hidden in plain sight, because it was experienced every day.

Sub-theme 1.2: 'Every day. Every day.'

The participants looked up frequently, equating to "six or more times a day probably, at least" for Neil, whilst Aurora "got up at half past five every day to watch the sunrise" the week before we spoke. Looking up is intrinsically motivated and rewarding:

Unless something strange is happening, then it's all intrinsically motivated… not even a conscious thought, just a sort of, "I WILL do that" and you find yourself doing it. (Neil)

This intrinsic dimension was also evidenced as a predilection to be, and feel, "close to the sky" (Aurora):

I lived in a flat… it was an under construction and … all the windows [had] this mesh… felt like you were like in a prison, like in a cage and the sky was just very obstructed… that feeling of being so closed off from the sky… from day one I felt like very oppressed by that feeling of like not being close to the sky. (Daphne)

This predilection influences significant life choices, including where to live, with three participants prioritising hilltop and rooftop properties to be and feel closer to the sky. Aurora's apartment has rooftop access, facilitating daily sky watching and "was my main feature why I chose this flat", whilst Daphne chose to:

…Live [on] top of the hill, so you kind of feel like you're really close to the sky… I've noticed before in places where I've lived … when I feel close to the sky or not, and I do get a lot from that feeling.

In addition to being intrinsically rewarding, looking up is also self-regulating.

Sub-theme 1.3: 'I will go and seek it out'

The participants' accounts suggest looking up is a self-regulating activity, associated with self-care, and is both reactive – "if I'm not feeling great, or I'm a little bit low then I will actually go and seek it out" (Neil) – and proactive, as powerfully described by Cielo:

I used to work for four years at a therapy clinic … doing psychotherapy on a volunteer basis… for women mostly who'd been abused and … if I was having a day where I feel,

oh, I'm a little stressed or… I know I've got difficult clients coming, I would purposefully go 'right, take five minutes to pause' and go and look at the sky first. And that would help me feel better.

What is being regulated and with what aim? The participants' accounts suggest the answer may be linked to wellbeing.

Theme 2: 'This is gonna make me feel better'

I have come to understand that when I look at the sky, I know I will feel calmer in my body … so is there a desired outcome? Yes, because I know there will be an outcome … I know that if I need to feel calm, or… I need to go and find a window that looks up. (Cielo)

Looking up was described as a multidimensional experience, enhancing psychological wellbeing and ameliorating physical discomfort. In addition to feeling calmer, participants experienced a greater sense of connectedness, a more expansive sense of perspective, and became present in the moment. They felt grounded by the sky.

Sub-theme 2.1: Grounded by the sky

Two participants described feeling 'grounded' by the sky, a nebulous concept that proved elusive to pinpoint, comprising elements of calm, awe, mindfulness, perspective and psychophysiological wellbeing:

It resets your worries, calms your mind… that kind of 'wow'…grounds you in that kind of way… it brings some reality back to your concerns…that's what I would call grounding. It…puts in perspective what's going on. (Neil)

Being grounded by the sky also has striking parallels with meditation and mindfulness practice – deep breathing, feeling present in the moment, calmness in the body and mind:

When you're truly in the moment and you realise you're looking up to the sky… being in the moment…it's very moving. (Aurora)

[Looking up] made me feel relaxed and made me notice the other senses… I sat, closed my eyes, I breathed in... noticing the air and... the sensations. (Daphne)

In addition to feeling grounded by the sky, a further mindfulness-related phenomenon experienced by the participants was feeling connection in solitude.

Sub-theme 2.2: Connection in solitude

Participants experienced a deeper sense of connectedness, internally and with the world around them, predominantly when alone. Through an expansive sense of perspective, participants transcended immediate, insular concerns by recognising themselves as being part of a 'bigger picture':

> *It makes me feel really connected to the world…. when you look up you look up you just realise [pause] there's so much, but it's all out there.* (Cielo)

Paradoxically, this sense of connectedness appears to blossom in solitude:

> *It's nice when you think I'm looking at the moon and someone else is looking at the moon… I think it's quite a unifying, um, unifying thing and yeah, it just kind of… brings you comfort I think in moments of solitude.* (Daphne)

In solitude, participants experienced an inner sense of connection and coherence because the experience was free from judgement: When looking up, they could be themselves:

> *…A sense of coming back to my inner core like coming back to my authentic self… it brings me back to my values or what's important for me.* (Aurora)

Connection was also experienced as feeling closer to the natural world: Looking at the sky appears to be a conduit for 'tuning in on nature':

> *[Looking up is] nourishing for the soul… you're not closed in… just very... you know, closer to nature, which is I think my, my religion. So yeah, I would say that it brings me closer to my religion.* (Daphne)

It is notable that the experience of looking up was significantly less enjoyable and efficacious for the majority of participants (n=3) when instructed to do so during their interviews (with practical implications for potential PPI design), encapsulated succinctly by Neil:

> *I was thinking about what I would say… and therefore it made it kind of false… it completely took away the experience of looking up - the normal experience [and was] very different, just because it's something I'd been asked to do.*

It might be logical to conclude that, over time, looking up would lose its effectiveness. Yet, remarkably, frequency does not appear to dampen its potency. The next theme may hold the key: looking up, it seems, never gets old.

Theme 3: 'Amazement. Almost every time.'

By embodying a paradox – "it always changes but it never changes" (Aurora) – the sky becomes an everyday opportunity to experience the extraordinary in the ordinary. "Like looking at a piece of art" (Cielo), the sky is a frameless window to the infinite and the impermanent, prompting existential questions about our place in the universe.

Sub-theme 3.1: Awe - The infinite and the impermanent

According to Neil, looking up is "awe-inspiring" and described his experiences kaleidoscopically as "humbling, amazing, calming, phenomenal", resulting in feeling "amazement. Yeah. Almost every time", an experience echoed by Cielo, who suggests:

> *It's about being in awe… when you can't quite believe something. And I think that's the general theme maybe of all of this… we understand the science behind it [but] have no control over it as humans, and I think that's pretty special.*

Just as eyes are said to be the window to the soul, looking up is a window to the infinite and the impermanent – a feeling of infinite, limitlessness potential and possibility:

> *It's just a feeling of openness… and of possibility and potential… that feeling of like, you know, limitlessness… it could be overwhelming I guess, but it's not. It's very... comforting.* (Daphne)

Looking up was a (sometimes poignant) reminder of the impermanence of all things, a call to action to savour each moment before it is gone:

> *The clouds were moving and yet I was still, and I really noticed… that even when we're still... life goes on… the universe would keep going on… I'm here and this is this moment... but it's going to keep going on.* (Cielo)

In unison with the participants' more expansive sense of perspective, looking up prompted existential dialogue relating to their place in the universe:

> *It's phenomenal that we're here and we're in this universe… that's what I get almost every time I look up… going 'wow'. Of all the billions of inhabitable planets and millions of stars and everything and – this is us. This is where we are, this is what's going on and I've got my speck of a life on it, and so, yeah, kind of calming and awe-inspiring.* (Neil)

Looking up appeared to stimulate an innate existential curiosity towards "what's out there" (Cielo), occasionally surfacing poignant emotions. When asked what emotions came to mind when he thought about looking at the sky, Neil replied:

> *It can range from sadness that there's only this speck of time to see what it's all about – what the universe is all about, and where it's gonna go – and that I'll never see it. That I won't see it – to… utter awe that it's happening.*

To summarise, looking up at the sky is an intrinsically rewarding, self-regulating activity, that helps the participants feel better. Being grounded by the sky encompassed being in the moment, instilling calm, connectedness, and an expansive sense of perspective. The sky is an awe-inspiring window into the infinite and the impermanent, stimulating an innate existential curiosity with the universe and their role within it. Looking up is "an absolute wonder" (Neil) and an everyday experience of the extraordinary in the ordinary, encapsulated beautifully by Cielo:

> *I'm trying to encourage my children to appreciate things in life that are free, that make you feel good, that not everything has to have a value that's monetary. And this happens to be something that's there every day. That for a few moments you can go, 'wow, that's pretty amazing. I don't even know how that happens, but it's happening.'*

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to gain insights into the subjective experience of looking up at the sky, a prerequisite first step towards understanding if, and how, the sky augments wellbeing. In summary, the sky plays an important role in the lives of the participants; it is a valued relationship and a frequent, intrinsically motivated, self-regulating experience, conferring beneficial outcomes. Looking at the sky also imbues feelings of greater connectedness, to others and the natural world, alongside a heightened sense of perspective and awe. Challenges are re-evaluated with renewed clarity, their significance ameliorated through an existential realisation of their place in the universe, knowing that they too shall pass, like clouds, across the infinite, impermanent sky.

Aspects of individual experiences suggest possible links to noctcaelador (Kelly, 2003) and place attachment theory, defined as "the experience of a long-term affective bond to a particular geographic area and the meaning attributed to that bond" (Morgan, 2010, pp. 11–12). First, there is a sense of connection with the sky, often from childhood, which may be a

form of place attachment. Whilst place attachment in children correlates significantly with exploration of outdoor places (Korpela, Ylén, Tyrväinen, & Silvennoinen, 2009; Morgan, 2010), further study is required to understand if, and how, the sky facilitates place attachment. It is also unclear if the sky itself constitutes a *place*, as it does not fit conceptualisations of place within the extant literature (see Lewicka, 2011, for a review). Second, 'feeling close to the sky' was a determinant in where three participants chose to live (interestingly, only by those raised in the countryside). Third, participants described (directly and indirectly) experiencing absorption. And, fourth, there was a recurring theme of curiosity, especially in relation to existential questions relating to 'our place in the universe'. Aspects of the participants' experiences also deviated from noctcaelador: whilst three participants enjoyed aspects of night skies (predominantly celestial bodies like stars and the moon), none of the accounts suggest a specific attachment to night skies with most participants (n=3) instead expressing a predilection towards transitional times of day, specifically sunrise and sunset.

As posited earlier, looking up appears to be a self-regulating activity. Self-regulation is a goal-directed behaviour defined as the "self's capacity for altering its behaviours" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p. 115) but what is being regulated when participants look up, and what is their goal? The participants' experiences suggest looking up at the sky is a form of emotional regulation, experienced as a sense of greater calm, clarity and perspective. The defining characteristic of emotion regulation is the "activation of a goal to influence the emotion trajectory" (Gross, 2015, p. 5). Although the outcome of looking up is unknown beforehand, invariably it *does* produce an outcome, and when the goal – regulation of one's own emotions – *is* the outcome, looking up at the sky may be a form of intrinsic emotion regulation (Gross, 2015).

Manipulating our surroundings is another effective form of self-control, as posited by the process model of self-control (Duckworth, Gendler, & Gross, 2016), achieved by successfully targeting one or more stages in a sequential cycle: situation, attention, appraisal, and response (the earlier in the cycle, the more effective the outcome). Looking up constitutes an example of this type of self-control; participants removed themselves from unhelpful situations or states by shifting their attention towards the sky, resulting in more constructive appraisals, and resulting in an efficacious response.

Figure 2 represents one of Neil's experiences using the process model of self-control:

The theme of looking up as a 'need' and its intrinsic nature highlight parallels with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits our natural inclination is towards psychological growth, manifest as intrinsic motivation to engage in activities that satisfy three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000.)
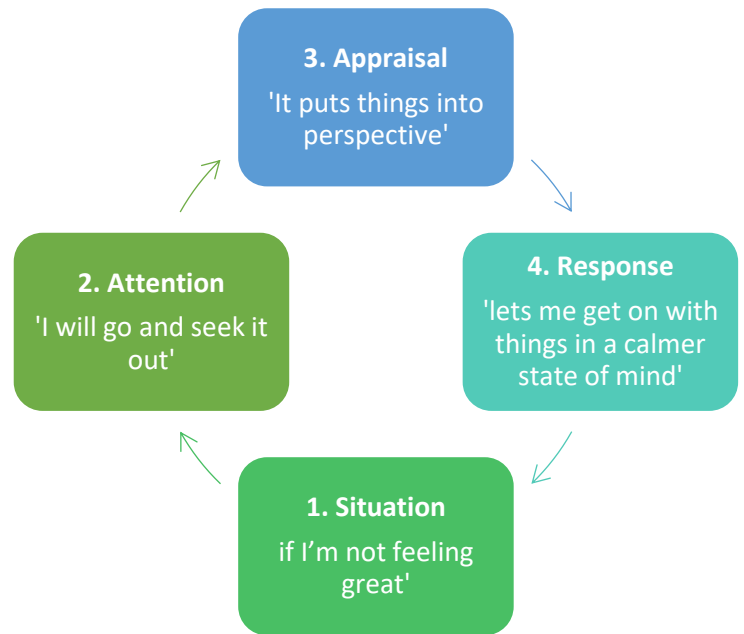
Looking up is autonomous, with participants expressing a predilection to do so when alone. There is also a derived sense of competence from looking up, manifest as enhanced self-efficacy, suggesting links to social cognitive theory, where self-efficacy is a primary motivational driver (Bandura, 1991). Looking up also engages the psychological need for relatedness, through feeling more connected interpersonally and intrapersonally with the wider world and the universe. Significantly, looking up appears to satisfy all three SDT needs simultaneously, which has practical implications for interventions designed to augment motivation, efficacy, and personal growth.

Looking up may be an act of passion, in line with the Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) proposed by Robert Vallerand and colleagues, with passion defined as:

> *...a strong inclination toward a specific object, activity, concept or person that one loves (or at least strongly likes), highly values, invests time and energy in on a regular basis, and that is part of one's identity.* (Vallerand, 2015, p. 42)

The DMP posits passion as a key motivational driver for engaging in personally meaningful activities and as an essential dimension of wellbeing. Passion is the result of a process of 'internalisation,' whereby an activity, person, object or belief becomes aligned with one's identity, with the nature of the internalisation process determining whether the passion is 'harmonious', resulting in adaptive outcomes, or 'obsessive', resulting in maladaptive

Figure 2. Looking up as situational self-control, using the process model of self-control (Duckworth et al., 2016).

outcomes (Vallerand, 2015). Individuals engaged in harmoniously passionate activities have full autonomy over how often, and to what extent, they engage in it, as opposed to obsessive passion, where the activity controls the individual. Harmonious passion appears to align with the experiences of all four participants, which may provide insights into why they described experiencing positive emotions, self-efficacy, persistence and enhanced psychophysiological wellbeing. However, further research is required to determine the extent to which the experience of looking at the sky is linked (correlational / causal) with the construct of passion.

The experience of looking up has striking parallels with meditation and mindfulness practice, the latter defined as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Mindfulness usually incorporates both focused attention, "sustaining selective attention moment by moment on a chosen object", and open monitoring, being "attentive moment by moment to anything that occurs in experience without focusing on any explicit object" (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008, p. 168), both of which were present in the participants' accounts, their initial focus on the sky giving way to a broader sense of awareness, perspective and connectedness as part of a 'bigger picture'. The Self-Awareness, Regulation, and Transcendence (S-ART) theoretical framework aligns closely with central themes (in brackets) in this study: self-awareness (mindfulness, perspective); self-regulation (calm); and self-transcendence (connection, awe). Mindfulness positively correlates with enhanced subjective well-being, behavioural regulation and reduced psychological symptoms and emotional reactivity (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011) all of which surfaced, to varying degrees, in this study. The participants' experience of *connection in solitude* is also a phenomenological dimension of mindfulness (Adair, Fredrickson, Castro-Schilo, Kim, & Sidberry, 2018).

Extant research on nature and wellbeing is often predicated on an assumption that people will use natural spaces they have access to, and derive beneficial effects from those interactions (Bell, Phoenix, Lovell, & Wheeler, 2014). As highlighted earlier, this is increasingly not the case, with the frequency and duration of time spent in natural environments decreasing, particularly in industrialised nations, compounded by the increasing pervasiveness and prevalence of screen time, especially for children (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Looking up at the sky could have significant practical efficacy by promoting wellbeing in areas without easy access to natural space, and as an easy-to-use intervention for introducing more frequent connection with nature (and its corollary beneficial effects) into one's day.

Looking at the sky appears to correlate with: the affective dimension of Subjective Wellbeing and PERMA; self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy and environmental mastery within PWB; and engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments in PERMA. However, a potentially more significant correlation with wellbeing is posited by *chaironic wellbeing*, defined as "feeling blessed and fortunate because of a sense of awe, gratitude, and oneness with nature or God" (Wong, 2011, p. 70). Chaironic wellbeing represents the "existential spiritual pathway to happiness' and requires a willingness to be mindful, attuned to 'transcendental reality' and is typically associated with 'peak experiences, mindful meditation, and transcendental encounters' (2011, p. 70). Chaironic wellbeing is theoretical, with a virtual absence of empirical research to validate its claims, as acknowledged by the author (2011), however the experience of looking up has striking parallels with this conceptualisation of wellbeing, so could provide fertile opportunities for further *skychology* research.

Experiencing awe, defined here as "the experience of humility and wonder – adventure – towar living" (Schneider, 2017, p. 103), was a central theme in the participants' accounts, with striking similarities to Kirk Schneider's phenomenological studies of awe. His identification of six 'lenses' through which participants cultivate a sense of awe featured prominently in the present study: (1) an acute awareness of the passing nature of time; (2) attunement to wonder and surprise; (3) the realization of a cosmic context to everyday experiences; (4) perception of the intricacy and subtleties of life; (5) the experience of being deeply, emotionally moved; and (6) an appreciation for solitude (Schneider, 2009). Similarities between the participants' experiences of looking up and Schneider's phenomenological 'lenses' are significant and further research is recommended.

In response to recent calls for more qualitative and mixed-methods studies of awe (Schneider, 2017), skychology may offer a rich, practical means to deepen our phenomenological understanding of awe, whilst the participants' experiences could have significant implications for practice. Intentional interactions with the sky could be used to augment interventions designed to impart the beneficial effects of awe, enhanced wellbeing, physical health, social

connectedness, prosocial attitudes and expanding cognitive repertories (Chirico & Gaggioli, 2018). Before concluding this discussion, let us return to the distal goal of skychology, by evaluating the potential efficacy of looking up as a PPI.

Positive activities boost positive emotions, thoughts, behaviours, and needs satisfaction, all of which enhance well-being. PPIs are most effective when features of the person (motivation, effort, efficacy beliefs, baseline affective state, personality, social support, demographic factors) optimally fit with features of the activity (dosage, variety, sequence, social support) (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Research suggests an optimal "person-activity fit" (2013, p. 58) is more likely when the intervention is self-concordant and intrinsically motivated (Thompson, Peura, & Gayton, 2015).

The participants' experiences suggest looking up is conducive to an optimal person-activity fit: it is effortless, intrinsically motivated (with reduced effectiveness when instructed to look up), infinitely fascinating, requires little social support (whilst enhancing prosocial attitudes), and invariably results in desired wellbeing outcomes. Finally, a significant obstacle to continued engagement with PPIs is 'hedonic adaptation' as the "rewards of positive activities dissipate with time" (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013, p. 61). However, the participants' accounts suggest looking up negates the effects of the hedonic adaptation. Despite being an everyday activity over a lifetime, its potency remains undiminished; the experience of awe may hold the key. Within the context of the person-activity model, looking up appears to have efficacy as an effective, enduring PPI.

Limitations

Whilst this study represents a significant first step towards deepening our understanding of the phenomenological experience of looking up at the sky, it has limitations which, if addressed, will enhance the effectiveness of future research. First, the small, homogenous sample, and its relatively narrow ethnic and socio-economic composition (Caucasian, born-and-raised in industrialised European countries) limits the transferability of findings to wider populations. Future research comprising greater socio-economic and cultural diversity is recommended. Second, this study represents participants' perceived correlations between looking up and wellbeing, not causality; quantitative and qualitative studies are required to explore the findings posited here. Third, all participants self-reported as having a fascination

with the sky, which could indicate the presence of a trait, with implications for practice and theory. Future research is required to establish whether a trait is present, and the extent to which perceived effects and benefits of looking up are trait-reliant (crucial to the effective development of skychology PPIs). Finally, this study represents a snapshot in time. Longitudinal studies would illuminate the temporal efficacy of looking up across life stages.

Impact and Future Direction

The participants' experiences suggest looking up at the sky: (1) integrates easily into daily life; (2) imbues one with an almost immediate sense of calm; (3) brings a renewed sense of clarity and perspective; (4) augments intrapersonal and interpersonal connectedness; (5) is an omnipresent conduit to the experience of awe; and (6) augments psychological and physiological wellbeing. The impact – and practical implications – of such an experience to enhance the efficacy of interventions across an extensive range of clinical and non-clinical populations are potentially significant. The experience of looking up could be operationalised to: enhance the quality of person-centred interventions predicated on open, non-judgemental spaces (e.g. coaching, therapy, and counselling sessions); ameliorate the effects of rumination by experiencing nature and inducing mindful self-focus (Bratman, Daily, Levy, & Gross, 2015; Huffziger & Kuehner, 2009); augment the efficacy of mindfulness interventions (Keng et al., 2011); support psychological wellbeing in children and adolescents as an emotional self-regulation technique (van Genugten, Dusseldorp, Massey, & van Empelen, 2017); enhance the effectiveness of metacognitive learning approaches for rehabilitation following traumatic brain injury (Ownsworth, 2015); reduce stress and augment positive affect during issue resolution and negotiation (Jäger, Loschelder, & Friese, 2015); ameliorate cognitive dysfunction and enhance the wellbeing of prison populations by providing an 'always on' conduit to natural space (Meijers, Harte, Jonker, & Meynen, 2015); support individuals coping with chronic pain through emotional self-regulation (Van Damme & Kindermans, 2015); and help adolescents overcome substance abuse through emotional self-regulation (Stanis & Andersen, 2014). Whilst further research is required to establish a robust evidence base, the potential efficacy of skychology PPIs may be as far-reaching as the sky itself.

Conclusion

For the participants, looking up at the sky is an experience of the extraordinary in the ordinary – a constant companion that grounds, connects, amazes, and makes life feel better. The participants' experiences offer a fascinating glimpse into the potential of skychology to positively impact people's lives all over the world, and this study represents a significant first step towards deepening our understanding of the phenomenological experience of looking up at the sky, and the potential for intentional interactions with the sky to be operationalised as PPIs to enhance wellbeing. In the face of extraordinary global challenges, let us seek inspiration from the ordinary. The challenges to wellbeing are great, but so too is the response: the future of wellbeing is starting to look up.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

*Clean Language question

1. And looking up at the sky is like what?*
2. And is there a relationship between [metaphor 1] and [metaphor 2]?*
3. When you look up at the sky, what would you like to have happen?*
4. Is there a desired outcome, if so, what?
5. To what extent is looking up at the sky deliberate or spontaneous?
6. What is your earliest memory of looking up at the sky?
7. How does looking up at the sky affect your life?
8. Is there a relationship between looking up at the sky and your wellbeing?
9. How often do you look up at the sky?
10. Are there any prerequisite conditions?
11. To what extent is the experience of looking up at the sky consistent?

Other Prompts: *What else can you tell me about that? What is the significance of that? Can you elaborate further? Can you give more some specific examples?*

Appendix B

Participants' Main Themes

Name	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
Neil	Awe	Calming, grounded	Perspective - our place in the universe
Cielo	Wellbeing	It's very important to me	Awe
Daphne	Nurturing / Supporting	Connection in Solitude	Brings me closer to my religion
Aurora	Perspective	Beautiful Infinity	Self-regulation

Appendix C

Master List of Super-ordinate Themes

1. It's important to me	2. This is gonna make me feel better	3. Amazement. Almost every time.
Actively seeking out the sky (frequent, intrinsic, self-motivated behaviour)	Calming	Awe
Valued - like a relationship	Connection	Infinite and impermanent / beautiful infinity
Starts in childhood	Perspective	
Significance in living space / environment	Present in the moment	

Theme Prevalence Table

Super-ordinate / sub-themes	Neil	Cielo	Daphne	Aurora	Prevalence
1. It's one of my needs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
1.1 Constant Companion	**No**	Yes	Yes	Yes	**75%**
1.2 Every day. Every day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
1.3 I will go and seek it out	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
2. This is gonna make me feel better	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
2.1 Grounded by the sky	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
2.2 Connection in solitude	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
3. Amazement. Almost every time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
3.1 Awe: The infinite and the impermanent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%

6

The Wave Model: A Holistic Exploration of the Sea's Positive Effect on Wellbeing

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Abstract

A multidisciplinary research initiative, Blue Health, has recently formed, highlighting essential connections between water, health and wellbeing and shifting focus from the therapeutic effects of Blue Space to investigating outcomes after closer contact: immersion in nature. Within Positive Psychology, interventions are increasing as a means of applying research into the positive effects of nature-integrated immersion; however, there remains an absence of empirical evidence for the potential positive effects of sea-immersion on wellbeing, which could form ground for a future water-based intervention. For this purpose, eight self-reporting recreational sea users, participated in 60-minute semi-structured interviews with the aim of answering the research question, How does sea-immersion in hostile weather conditions positively affect wellbeing? to gain a constructivist understanding of the subjective experience of the phenomena within a qualitative research design, grounded theory. Consequently, The Wave Model (TWM) emerged, consisting of four main themes: Awareness, Connectedness, Time and Growth, with a notion of Duality running throughout: awareness of both positive and negative emotions, connectedness and disconnection. Within growth, a sense of self as an ongoing process related to the concept of ongoing time with a simultaneous necessity for mindfulness and an awareness of the present moment to allow the possible self to emerge. This study adds to existing research and implies a framework for a wellbeing model to be drawn on within applied positive psychology and coaching psychology with ground for future testing.

Introduction

> *Know yourself as the seeing not the seer and you will find yourself everywhere.*
>
> – Rupert Spira (n.d.)

As Summer sun weakens and Autumn becomes Winter, beaches grow quieter, with the exception of the remaining few continuing to embrace the waves, leading to question what they know about wellbeing following sea-immersion in hostile conditions, and could it be modelled, theoretically, to advance the discipline of Positive Psychology (PP)?

Emerging integrative research is raising awareness of the powerful benefits of the sea (and water) on the human psyche. Health, psychology and neuroscience studies are finding our brains, after periods of exposure to water, become significantly calmer, clearer and happier, turning into a 'blue mind'

(Nichols, 2015) in contrast to the 'red mind' many people inhabit from daily life stress and stimulation. The Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984) states we have an instinctive bond with nature in our genes; we seek experiences with other forms of life, including the sea. We need it and the sea needs us (Kelly, 2018). Yet, time spent in nature is declining and we are more disconnected from nature than ever (Kellert, Case, Escher, Witter, Mikels-Carrasco & Seng, 2017).

Until now, PP has been offering the beginnings of a solid literature base for nature as a positive precursor to happiness, although criticised by some (Capaldi, Passmore, Nisbet, Zelenski & Dopko, 2015) as being an under-researched area, calling for more empirical evidence. With this in mind, it is time to highlight and remedy the lack of research within PP exploring the positive effects of the sea, as a specific area of nature investigation.

Within Applied Positive Psychology (APP), Positive Psychological Interventions (PPIs) are empirically-based "treatment methods or intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive findings, behaviours or cognitions" (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, p. 468) administered for various periods of time. Given the current absence of a water or sea-based PPI, the primary aim of this research is to create the theoretical framework for a future sea-based PPI to be used in APP including integrative coaching practices. If a theoretical model could be applied to an intervention, it is suggested that the world's largest, free resource – the sea – could be further utilised to improve the mental health of thousands.

Sea-based interventions are, however, currently recognised in conjunction with surfing. Doctors in Devon and Cornwall can now prescribe surf therapy for children to improve mental wellbeing, in collaboration with *The Wave Project,* inspired by research examining the positive impact of structured surfing courses on the wellbeing of young people (Godfrey, Devine-Wright & Taylor, 2015). The charity *Surf Action* successfully helps to reduce PTSD symptoms among war veterans by teaching them to surf. Without undermining the benefits of surfing interventions, a simpler, cheaper and more accessible PPI should be developed, to harness the wellbeing properties of the sea without the need for equipment or prescription.

Last year, a study followed the two-week intervention of open (cold) water swimming to treat anxiety and depression in a 24-year old woman who had been taking prescription drugs for seven years. With positive results, she remains medication-free one year later (Tulleken, Massey, Tipton & Harper 2018). The study was the first of its kind, paving the way for similar research to follow.

A sea-immersion PPI could even be accessible to non-swimmers (taking the relevant safety precautions) or nervous swimmers. One of the participants interviewed in this study was new to swimming and another simply 'dipped'. There is a broad scope of activities available to those who are willing to immerse, yet just sea immersion itself offers enough to positively enhance wellbeing.

For the purpose of this research, sea immersion is defined as a full body immersion into the sea or ocean in any part of the world, with or without a wetsuit, with or without reference to partaking in recreational activities or sport. The focus of this research was exploring what drives people towards sea immersion for wellbeing purposes in hostile winter conditions (defined as low temperatures, high winds and other adverse weather conditions, including snow) and what are the reported experienced wellbeing effects following sea-immersion. The following literature review serves to expose any gaps in research to provide further rationale for this study.

Literature Review

The Sea

Research into the wellbeing effects of the sea have emphasised place and proximity, i.e. living by the sea (Wheeler, White, Stahl-Timmins & Depledge, 2012) and the benefits of Blue Space (Bell, Graham, Jarvis & White, 2017; Foley & Kistemann, 2015). One study found the *sound* of the sea to help stress recovery (Alvarsson, Weins & Nilsson, 2010). But what more does physically being *in* it offer?

Open cold water immersion (CWI) has been reviewed as both a hazard and a treatment (Tipton, Massey, Corbett & Harper, 2017) but research on it is still limited. The benefits of cold-water immersion have become a popular health fad and may serve to drive extrinsic motivations to immerse for health benefits. Such an application has been suggested as a potential treatment for depression, although alternatives like taking a cold shower (Shevchuck, 2008) neglect the possible additional factors offered by the sea which contribute to wellbeing, such as the nature element or unknown therapeutic elements of the sea itself. 'Blue Exercise' has been coined for any exercise undertaken in and around any natural aquatic environment and has been reported to result in health benefits (White, Bell, Elliot, Jenkin, Wheeler & Depledge, 2016) but this does not solely isolate sea immersion as a subject of investigation.

Nature

Research shows that nature immersion can benefit wellbeing by making us more caring, authentic and feel more connected as well as feeling more compassionate to ourselves (Weinstein, Przybylski & Ryan, 2009) although Weinstein et al.'s study only involved exposing participants to slides depicting images of nature or sitting among plants in an office space. More recently with PP, the benefits of connecting with nature and its application as wellbeing interventions (Passmore & Holder, 2016) have found restorative effects on "suboptimal levels of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing" (Capaldi et al., 2015) and positive affect, including increased connectedness. Recently, there have been prompts for researchers interested in facilitating nature connectedness and its associated benefits to "focus specifically on activities that involve contact, meaning, emotional attachment, or a compassionate relationship with nature that includes engaging with nature's beauty" (Lumber, Richardson & Sheffield, 2017).

Exposure to nature promotes feelings of wellbeing in a variety of different ways. Paul Wong's concept of chaironic happiness defines a type of happiness aroused through connection to something bigger than ourselves (2010b) by encouraging mindfulness (Howell, Dopko, Passmore, & Buro, 2011) and by evoking the positive emotion of awe (Rudd, Vohs, & Aker, 2011). Awe-inducing stimuli caused participants to report more spiritual or supernatural beliefs about deeper existential questions (Valdesolo & Graham, 2013). The "oceanic feeling" was a term used by Romain Rolland in a letter to Sigmund Freud to convey a feeling of being one with the universe. But why is that oneness not referred to as "the mountainous feeling"? What is the sea providing that nature research is missing, if anything? Why are people often drawn to immerse first thing in the morning when sea temperatures are close to freezing?

Motivation

Much research exists on motivations behind partaking in dangerous sea-based recreational activities within the domains of Leisure (Beard & Ragheb, 1983), Sport Psychology (Fortier, Vallerand, Briere, & Provencher, 1995), and Tourism (Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002). On surfing, research into motivations and values (Farmer, 1992) explored what intrinsic rewards surfers prioritise against the hazards surfing poses. How surfing has affected mood has been explored by Pittsinger, Kress, and Crussemeyer (2017) in a study examining the effect of a 30-minute surfing session through a thematic analysis, exploring the "captivating nature of surfing" to understand surfers' subjective

experiences (O'Fuchs, 2007). They found *lifestyle, health, competition* and *sharing* to be major themes. Quantitative research on anglers and rafters revealed *status, solitude* and *relaxation* as motives (Thapa, Confer & Mendelsohn, 2004). However, all recreational studies include the exercise induced affect of the various sports.

Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) outlines two modes of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to act in the absence of operationally separable rewards or external (extrinsic) motivators. Self-determined, internally-motivated behaviours lead to more positive experiences by honouring the human need for autonomy (Vallerand & Losier, 1999). It is proposed that exploring motivation among participants for sea-immersion in the absence of extrinsic influencing factors in summertime, such as social interaction (Triguero-Mas et al, 2015; Beard & Ragheb, 1983 as cited in O'Connell, 2010), or for the sport alone, will offer deeper insight into intrinsic rewards experienced as a result of regular sea-immersion.

Research Question

Calls for research in this area to employ qualitative methodology (O'Connell 2010) as well as to examine non-surfing populations (Pittsinger et al., 2017) provide scope for research into a wider variety of populations who regularly choose immersive sea-based recreation activities. Shifting political, cultural and societal structures also illuminate the limitations of focusing on quantitative measures of PP and PPIs to understand complex human phenomena such as wellbeing (Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013 as cited in Wong, 2017). Drawing on the review offered above, the current study's aim was to conduct a qualitative exploration of mixed aged international men and women, who self-reported regularly immersing in the sea during hostile conditions, to explore motivations and outcomes for wellbeing, in order to create a theory based on the research question: *how does sea-immersion in hostile weather conditions positively affect wellbeing?*

Method

> *Language serves as a representational system for our experiences*
>
> – Bandler & Grinder, 1975, p. 24

As a social constructivist philosophy underpins this research, the most fitting methodology was Grounded Theory (GT) which allows data to emerge based on limited assumptions, exploring the phenomenon of the sea via the constructed, subjective, *social experience* of the sea. In contrast to a

scientific realist framework (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000), constructionism recognises that the interaction between participants and researcher may influence one another during the collection of data (Anderson, 1986) and participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis are intertwined from the start, proceeding and interacting simultaneously (Wainwright, 1994).

Participants

Eight self-reporting regular recreational sea users responded to research advertisements on social media and a university noticeboard. The sample was intentionally mixed sex and from different countries, who participated in a range of immersive sea activities (see Table 1). The type of activity was irrelevant to the sampling process as the research aimed to include all mediums of sea-immersion to isolate the experience of the sea above activity-related experience.

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Gender	Country	Type of sea-immersion
M	Italy	Surfing
M	Canada	Scuba Diving
F	Denmark	Ice swimming 'dipping'
F	USA	Swimming
M	UK	Swimming
F	UK	Swimming
F	UK	Swimming
M	UK	Kite Surfing/ Swimming

No indication or distribution of reward was given at any stage of the recruitment or research process. Theoretical sampling emerged as the research progressed; the researcher decided to pursue interviewees who participated in sea-swimming without wetsuits, constituting a more immersive experience. The researcher recruited participants until theoretical saturation occurred (Charmaz, 2014).

Materials

Data were collected by a 45-60 minute Skype interview (Seitz, 2016), which provided adequate time for a deep interview (Schostack, 2012, as cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014) and opened an interactional space allowing ideas and issues to arise (Charmaz, 2014, p. 58).

Initially, questions were as open as possible (Newton, 2010) with each interview beginning "*Tell me about your experience with the sea*" to begin research with a general question (Bowers, 1988) and on provision that the shorter the question, the longer the answer (Barbour & Schostack, (2005, p. 43, as cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014). Questions were mostly semi-structured to elicit the greatest emotional response and to allow depth to be achieved (Andreas, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 88, as cited in Alshenqueeti, 2014). Questions were not asked in regard to the nature of the activity or sport.

The researcher's coaching background enabled a professional conversation by employing a range of relevant skills: self-awareness, being fully focused on the client (Garfinkle, 2005 as cited in Pennington, 2009), employing empathetic listening skills, and encouraging the participant to talk (Charmaz, 2014). Questions were asked strategically to expand on nominalisations to help explore ongoing processes present for the interviewee (Bandler & Grinder, 1975) using a 'clean language' interviewing technique (Sullivan & Rees, 2008), e.g., "*What kind of power is that power?*" (Interview 7). Both the researcher's and interviewees' assumptions were challenged (Charmaz, 2014, p. 115) by asking for more definition, e.g. "*What would you say the opposite to grounding is?*" (Interview 8) based on the clean language question, *'What is it not?'* for further expansion.

The researcher learnt that unstructured interviews, undertaken in a coaching manner, garnered richer data as the interviewer was more able to listen attentively rather than being preoccupied with question structure. This was a positive decision as negative emotions and negative self-concept disrupt interactive flow (Miczo, 2003, p. 480, as cited in Charmaz, 2014).

Procedure

After responding to the research advert, participants emailed the researcher to formally register interest. Henceforth, participants were sent the participant invitation letter by email and consent form and a mutually suitable interview time was scheduled. Participants were informed in the consent form of the confidentiality of their data and their right to withdraw. The participants were observed for non-verbal consent cues continuously (Horrocks, 2010). Participants were thanked in advance for

their time and willingness to participate and at the end of the interview a verbal debriefing was given before a debriefing email reiterating risks associated with sea-immersion and recommended safety information provided by RNLI for adhesion to ethical recommendations. Participants were notified when the audio recorder was operating. All interviews were conducted via Skype, except one by telephone recorded with an App called Call Recorder. Interviews were stored as mp3 files on a password protected device. The researcher transcribed three interviews manually, using Google Voice, voice recognition software, and submitted the remaining five to an instant transcription software service website, Temi.com, due to time restrictions. Temi offers full data protection and privacy, stating "[transcripts] are securely stored and transmitted using TLS 1.2 encryption, the highest level of security available. Files are transcribed by machines and are never seen by a human" (Temi, 2019). The transcripts were reviewed by the researcher for automatic transcription errors as Temi claims to provide ~90% accuracy.

Data Analysis

Open coding (line by line) was firstly applied to transcriptions using Charmaz's constant comparative method (2014) in between data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The short codes, formed of gerunds as a heuristic device, to iterate sense of process and action (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 116-121), were categorised on a visual display to form axial codes while continuously being compared against new data for dissimilarities and likeness (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Focused coding was employed to transition original codes to more inductive, higher codes (Glaser, 1978).

This resulted in the emergence of several categories: Time, Mindfulness, Freedom, Stopping, Positive Emotions, Discomfort, Self-efficacy, Awe/Unknown, Self-as process/ Growth and Sharing/Being with/Connectedness. The use of comparative analysis condensed these into the final themes: Awareness, Time, Growth, Connectedness & Duality as depicted in Figure 1 and the following prose:
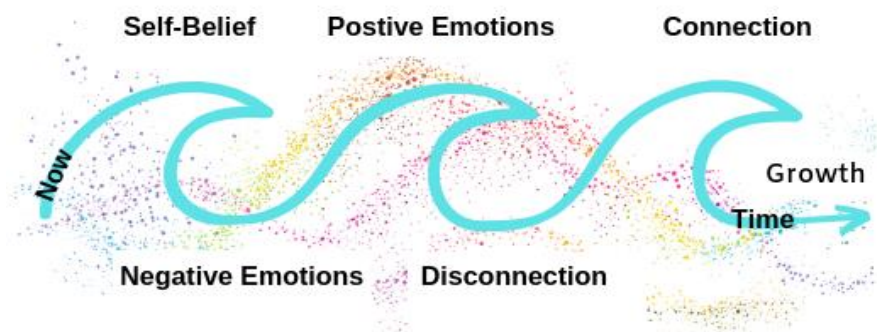

Figure 1. The Wave Model (TWM)

Prose

I am nothing.

Standing on the shoreline I see myself reflected: I see power.

I connect: feet rooted in earth, body embraced by water, mind filled with spirit and vital life force burning strong.

What pains me nourishes me.

I am here now so my future self remembers.

I am everything.

Results

The analysis resulted in four closely interrelated key categories emerging from the data: *Awareness*, *Connection, Time*, and *Growth,* overarched by a prominent theme of *Duality*.

Awareness

The subcategories within the theme of awareness include positive emotions, negative emotions and sensing. We must have awareness to experience any feelings; it is fundamental.

Positive emotions

An abundance of positive emotions were recorded, including: joy, calm, completeness, pride, curiosity, wonder, awe, speechlessness, warmth & cosiness, surprise (pleasant), luckiness, gratitude, bravery, realisation, excitement, feeling alive, admired, grounded, liberated.

Participants also sensed positive, bigger feelings such as "life is beautiful" the "need to coexist and protect", a similarity between nature and us, a hidden or secret world, a sense of space and expansiveness and a feeling of weightlessness. A sense of freedom was observed predominantly within this subcategory among other sensations in the form of feelings. Often, participants could not find the words to describe the feeling that sea-immersion gave them and many metaphors were offered:

You're like a pot of sauce or something, you've just been stirred up really fast...it feels like it's as close as you can get to ... in the womb or something ... you know, that feeling of the waves it feels like ... it's like the heartbeat of the world or something. (G)

It's like a kind of warm, cosy feeling throughout your body. (C)

Negative emotions

However, there was a prevalence of discomfort and negative feelings in order to arrive at the positive feelings:

Excruciatingly painful. (H)

It was almost like it's assaulting every sense you've got...and that's when I did put my face in and that's when I was like, oh, this is what people are talking about, clearly. And it was pain. Um, but like a burning pain, it felt like burning. Not that I've ever burnt my face, but it's a horrible, burning sensation. (H)

...Cold in your bones which turns into pain as well but yeah that's what you're looking for...there's wind that makes you scream from the cold, it's something you know you're gonna face - it's part of the game. (U)

A sense of anticipation was recorded multiple times, often described as a mix of fear and excitement (duality) and included in the category of negative emotions was the subcategory of anxiety. Anxiety, as well as depression, was a much-noted precursor for sea-immersion, with participants reporting relief from anxiety in the hours after immersing. Many participants reporting that they just "feel better". The positive feelings had a time limit of a few hours before anxiety resurfaced, requiring repeated immersion.

Connection

Through positive and negative emotions, participants connect to a sense of self, to the environment and to others: interacting with and connection with nature and animals related to the sea; laughing and playing with other sea swimmers; connecting through inspiration and following advice and guidance from others to initiate their sea-immersion; then sharing experiences across many mediums in the hope to inspire and initiate others in an ongoing chain, each connecting to the next. Connecting also leads to positive feelings. Within connection lay two subthemes – spirituality and disconnection:

The sea is like an old friend. (U)

The way they were watching us…. Maybe there was a bit of admiration. (U)

When I arrive, I say 'hello sea!'...'thank you, sea, love you!' (G)

So whenever I share ... Facebook pictures ... people comment or they'll see us the next day that 'you guys are crazy' or someone else: 'can you tell me? I'd really love to do that'. So even talking about it kind of gets you excited. So I think while it may just last that day, the idea of re-experiencing it through conversation is powerful. (R)

Spirituality

Participants spoke of an emergent sense of spirituality, becoming spiritual as a *result* of sea swimming, as well as considering 'the bigger picture', sensing 'something bigger' and more often than any other code, was the need to, or enjoyment of, being or feeling 'part of' something. Participants felt supported through discomfort by feeling 'part of' something bigger and by also feeling part of the social group that initiated them or inspired them (connecting). A sense of identity and a sense of self was shaped through being part of something. Spirituality provided meaning, with participants offering existential comments concerning feelings of insignificance, being inconsequential, and awe-related feelings of wonder and marvel:

It just feels right. (G)

You feel like you're at one with everything around you. (R)

It's like being embraced by something that is really powerful. (U)

I'm not a religious person, but I can imagine that when you're confirmed and you have that full immersion. (J)

You're just at one with everything, there is nothing else at that moment when you were in that cold water...all of the elements seem to...come together. (J)

Disconnection

While participants felt a need to connect with nature and feel 'part of' something, be it a group or the bigger picture via nature, they simultaneously wished to disconnect from technology, material things such as swimwear or wetsuits, and to mentally leave baggage at the shoreline. A sense of weightlessness and lightness was prominent as well as 'feeling liberated', 'free from obligations' and a general sense of freedom. The need to be alone and alone with nature fell under a sense of connecting with self as well as disconnecting socially:

You get to go at the times where there's no bugger else on the beach, it's the best! (G)

I don't want to listen to music when I swim. I don't want it, you know, I don't want to be distracted by notifications...Knowing you can't be got. (J)

The swimsuit, sometimes feels like a bit of a barrier… it feels just so real and how we're meant to be...there's no stuff. There's no issues. There's no baggage. (J)

Time

The theme of time interlaced much of the data. Participants told how they came to sea-immersion as a story, chronologically, starting with childhood, remembering. Then in the future, anticipating the next time, before settling into establishing a routine, like clockwork. Under the broad theme of time lays the category of mindfulness, which is closely linked to awareness and stopping.

I used to find as a teenager, I would get on my bike with my Walkman and would go and cycle for miles along the beach. I used to love, I'd just sit and watch the waves. (H)

Mindfulness

Participants reported the waves evoking mindfulness, spoke of the multisensory experience and of noticing nature multiple times. Breathing consciously, a meditative experience, and being present also arose.

Stopping

The notion of stopping within the category of time is also related to disconnection. Participants spoke of "clawing back time", valuing precious moments, capturing time by taking photographs, realising the importance of 'time-out' as well as sensing their morning sea-immersion as separation from the rest of their day, using language such as "before the day begins", highlighting the notion of 'the day' as a metaphorical part of their life from which they wish to disconnect. Transcripts were rich with time-constructed concepts such as "making a day of it" and "making time for it". Relocation, with the intent of more frequent sea-immersion or a desire for closer proximity, was largely reported, giving way to convenience – *saving* time. Within the category of stopping is the notion of slowing down, resting in the sea, standing still and having an awareness of age and mortality preliminary to the ultimate stoppage, death.

So it's nice you know, sort of looking through [the diary] and going: 'When can I find time to go in?' (G)

Growth

With time as the medium, growth was the end result of the process. By enduring negative emotions, enjoying positive emotions, and developing a new sense of self, over time, what emerged was a

happier, more resilient person with stronger self-belief and energy for whatever life brought to them. Under the theme of growth lay the categories of challenge and subcategory of self-as-process.

> *When I'm in the sea, everything feels all right. Everything feels good. Everything feels like it's achievable.* (H)

> *If you can do that then you can do other stuff so it builds a sense of confidence that you can push through discomfort and achieve things.* (C)

Challenge

Self-reassurance, cultivating strength, facing discomfort, self-motivating and overcoming fears and negative self-talk all served as challenges participants had to face with regards to sea-immersion. Dealing with the elements, preparing with rituals before and afterwards, making time in a busy schedule, and setting challenges to 'stay in longer' against previous times and against others. Being dared, rebelling, and obtaining validation from self and others fell under this category. Some competed in challenges, races and other forms of competition as part of their immersion but, regardless of activity, all participants reported having to push themselves or push their boundaries in order to immerse due to the conditions.

Self-As-Process

What emerged was the concept of the self as one of change, positively growing with each immersion – adapting, accepting, renewing, cleaning, self-assuring, identifying (having an awareness of self) self-regulating, learning about self, integrating sea immersion as part of a broader self-care regime.

Duality

As discussed, dualities were observed throughout the themes, in numerous ways; e.g., where participants spoke of empowerment, they also spoke of feeling powerless to the force of the sea. They felt liberated while feeling grounded:

> *Because you can be standing completely still can't you?... on solid ground ... but not be in any way grounded at all because your brain's just scattered, whereas you can literally be floating in the sea and feel more grounded than anything.* (G)

The negative sensations provide even more energy; the more difficult it is, the better you feel:

> *I mean everything was cold...I couldn't coordinate my mouth to speak, everything had just got so cold. But actually when I got out, I actually looked at a video...where I've got uncontrollable afterdrop so I am shaking so much I can't even hold my camera still, but actually the energy*

that gave me afterwards... it's like an adrenaline shot... I would say these cold water swims and especially that one, that was 4.2°, was like having several shots of caffeine. (H)

As well as feelings being dichotomous, "I have that kind of excitement. Stroke, fear almost." (G)

TWM shows these themes like waves ebbing and flowing with troughs and crests before rejoining the matter from which they arose, in an endless cycle, bound together by time, resulting in growth (Figure 1).

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

Overall, it was found that sea-immersion positively affects wellbeing by enforcing enhanced awareness to a number of positive and negative emotions, increases a sense of connectedness to nature, others and spirituality, as well as offering disconnection from anxious thoughts, technology and others. Through the multisensory nature of the sea, mindfulness occurred naturally. Participants were able to stop anxious thoughts about the past or the future and become present to their feelings and surroundings. By overcoming the challenge of immersing in cold water, the end result was an enhanced sense of self leading to an overall positive outcome of growth.

TWM adds new information to the discipline of PP among existing models of wellbeing by a unique display of dualities within the themes – a simultaneous need for disconnection *and* connection, negative *and* positive emotion, stopping *and* a sense of continuity – unlike any known model of wellbeing. Moreover, there are currently no models for wellbeing that invite nature as a key modality. These findings add to the existing evidence on wellbeing, illuminating similarities between models of wellbeing such as PERMA (Seligman, 2011) and the Hero's Journey model of development (Campbell, 1990).

Nature's Effect on Wellbeing

These discoveries support the substantial amount of research on nature's positive effect on wellbeing, including the studies that initiated the rationale for this research: nature immersion increases connectedness as well as positive affect (Capaldi, et al. (2015). TWM is a representative example of participants who have increased their sense of connectedness as part of an overall increase in wellbeing through exposure to nature. Furthermore, Kaplan's findings (1995) that nature

reduces mental fatigue is reflected in these findings, with participants reporting increased energy following immersion. TWM reiterates results that positive emotions are evoked even on brief contact with nature (Mayer, McPherson Frantz, Bruehlman-Senecal, & Dolliver, 2009; Nisbet & Zelenski, 2011) as six out of eight participants in this sample were immersing in the sea for less than ten minutes at a time. However, this research only partially corroborates Ulrich's study (1984) which found nature to have restorative effects, including increasing positive emotional states and sustained attention, with participants in this sample reporting positive emotional states but neglecting to comment on sustained attention.

Self-Concept

Emotional states are closely connected with a sense of self. Huitt (2009) explains, "self-esteem is the affective or emotional aspect of self*"* and TWM observes the self as process as an integral concept for wellbeing. Kahneman's (2011) multiple-self theory offers insight into the dual concepts of self: the experienced self and the remembered self. The experienced self lives in the moment, employing awareness, cognition and making choices. The remembering self is the hindsight that *analyses* our experience. We spend 100% of the time in the experiencing self, as we experience memories, but the two selves are radically different in their interpretation of events. Essentially, *"*the experiencing self does not have a voice" (p. 381) and it is the remembering self that makes decisions with regard to creating future memories through experiences, the most memorable. Kahneman presents this dilemma as a conflict of interests, a paradox, between the two selves. The experiencing self answers the question, 'Is that painful?' while the remembering self answers, "How was it on the whole?" Memories form the timeline and narrative of our lives and are the only true collectables we have: to remember gives life narrative and meaning. Often participants would stay in the water for less than five minutes due to the intolerable pain it caused. So why go back the next day? In addition to this, Kahneman's findings on the peak-end rule is relevant: if an experience ends well, we will discard all negative experience and vice versa; if that end point is one of a feeling of achievement – as many participants reported feeling on successfully immersing – that memory serves as a positive experience. Therefore, the very *memory* of immersing acts as a wellbeing resource by reminding participants of their self-efficacy, ability and resilience, and provides a sense of growth and self-belief which improves self-esteem.

Regarding motivation, as hypothesised primarily, Franken (1994, p. 443) states the self-concept is the basis for all behaviour. Without a self-concept, we have no possible self, and the idea of a

possible self creates motivation for behaviour. Bandura (1997) provides ground that self-efficacy is the best predictor for accomplishment of the task. This calls for future testing of TWM to determine the individuals' self-efficacy levels in order to fortify the model based on the observation that if all participants have a higher than average self-efficacy level, sea-immersion may not have a positive effect on those with lower self-efficacy levels who lack the required level of courage to immerse. One way of testing this would be using quantitative methods, issuing the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Ched, Gully & Eden, 2001), a self-report scale, to test participants. Similar learnt self-regulation through physical discomfort occurs in the teachings of yoga (Gard, Noggle, Park, Vago & Wilson, 2014).

Awareness

The operative modality of the discomfort felt in yoga is mindful awareness. Awareness offers us the *choice* to sit with discomfort and observe with openness and acceptance rather than avoiding it. The unique difference between the sea and yoga is that the sea forms part of our natural environment as well as being something *outside of our control,* therefore *initiating* us into a state of mindfulness by its natural temperament. Ecopsychology encourages fostering more states of intense consciousness of environment (Kahn & Hasbach, 2012). Arne Naess (1995) conceives the notion of the 'ecological self', a seminal concept which is a sense of our identity that acknowledges our interdependence on the rest of nature. However, this concept has been criticised as simply echoing a sense of belonging to a place (Valera, 2018).

We must apply metacognition to gain a sense of self as awareness of thoughts; this allows for enlightenment to our authentic selves and our ego self (Ivtzan, 2015). To attain growth, we must use mindfulness to connect with our sense of a best possible self, one that is separate from our current self, and to reconnect with the experiencing self in order to later benefit the remembering self: reiterating the paradoxical sense of separation while being a part of something bigger, mirroring the participant-sea relationship.

Connectedness

To feel 'part of' something illustrates a need for relatedness, inclusion and belonging. The findings demonstrate a correlation between wanting to feel part of something and the act of caring. Being at one with the universe is categorised alongside sensing awe, and the emotion of awe increases prosocial behaviour (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg Stancato, & Keltner, 2015) The study also supports

Weinstein, Przybylski, and Ryan's (2009) evidence that nature makes us more caring, presenting a paradox: as previously considered, nature needs us to care about it now more than ever (Kellert et al., 2017; Kelly 2018).

More broadly contextualising these findings, Wilber's holon theory (1997b) philosophises that a holon is a whole that is simultaneously part of another whole, i.e. a person is a complete entity, yet a *part of* the universe (another whole). The LIFE Model (Lomas, Hefferon, & Ivtzan, 2014), inspired by Wilber's theory, is used within APP to derive wellbeing initiatives from observing the four ontological dimensions of the person. Within the interobjective quadrant lays the ecological system: again, our relationship with the environment is crucial to wellbeing.

The underside of connectedness was disconnection. The researcher speculates that the desired sense of disconnection stems from the notion of fragmentation pervading society, referring to the absence or underdevelopment of connection among society and societal groups resulting in poor interrelationships (Hooks, 1995). Disconnection currently operates within the mind as a form of separation, constant disruptions to our daily life and work, from technology with notifications from mobile phone apps, shorten and further fragment our attention span, affecting our ability to be present. Sea-immersion offers disconnection from these stresses and anxieties.

Time

By 'clawing back' time, participants possibly experience "pure time" (Bergson, 2007) in contrast to "measurable time" which participants consider makes up the "rest of their day". According to Bergson, the flow of real time can only be experienced by intuition (2007, pp. 162-163). Interestingly, intuition is a deep awareness unclouded by reasoning, outlining the parallel between intuition and mindfulness. Thus, a sense of 'pure time' may be experienced by mindfulness.

Nonduality

The duality of experiencing both positive and negative emotions in order to flourish has illuminated dialectics research within PP (Ivtzan, Lyle, & Medlock, 2018; Lomas & Ivtzan, 2015), where dialectic refers to the tension between two opposing forces; the binary opposites are interdependent. These findings signpost a striving for balance and further understanding of the holistic human experience to live fully and meaningfully, as well as paving the way for future interventions which acknowledge the dialectic nature of wellbeing, additionally answering calls for more meaningful

interventions, which this research has revealed are also lacking within PP, as well as serving to answer criticisms of PP being too focused on the positive (Wong & Roy, 2017).

Nonduality has been articulated by Blackstone (2006, p. 31) "as nondual consciousness, we do not sense ourselves as separate from our experience". Thus, ultimately, wellbeing is dependent on our interconnectedness and absolute disconnection from everything is impossible.

Limitations

Emergent grounded theory is both fluid and temporal; the inability to replicate this study exactly due to recognised ongoing changes with both research participants and the researcher is not a concern within this epistemology.

Some technical issues ensued; i.e. sound quality issues, due to the method of data collection, led to uncertain transcription and the audio recorder having inadequate storage space to record the entire interview for Participant 4, resulting in a shorter interview transcript for analysis.

Furthermore, analysis can only take place within the context of the researcher's existing knowledge. Moreover, time resources led to a small sample size. With additional time, a more refined theory could have been produced. It is acknowledged that eight interviews fall short of the recommended ten to ensure saturation (Bodan & Biklen, 2006). Further delimitations of the study include socio-economic status of participants. Although care was taken *not* to include a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) sample (Pollet & Saxon, 2018), participants were all middle-class, white and educated. Wellbeing is constructed differently across different cultures (Lomas 2015; 2017) and so testing this theory on a larger sample than the cross-cultural representation that this study surveyed could be beneficial.

A suggestion for future research entails interviewing participants during or immediately after sea-immersion for a more accurate portrayal of the discomfort felt, due to a proposed closer recall of the associated experience of sea immersion.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

In this phenomenon, negative emotions served to propel participants into an improved version of themselves. Within a coaching framework, sea immersion could be integrated. A PP Blue Health coach would initially guide clients through immersion, instructing until they become self-regulatory;

coaching has been found to have a significant positive effect on self-efficacy (Moen & Allgood, 2009). Inherent in the practise would be mindfulness. Mindfulness has been applied to help with coping and for the self-regulation of pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1985; 2013). Therefore, to employ mindfulness as both a coping mechanism to overcome difficulty and to savour such immersion in a natural environment creates a dually beneficial outcome for wellbeing, in the short and long term, encouraging healthy individuals to flourish and serving to remedy anxiety and depression.

Conclusion

This study has founded a new, holistic model of wellbeing which encompasses the sea as a primary and necessary modality. It highlights the interdependence between humanity and nature, adding to previous research findings of a positive correlation between nature immersion and wellbeing and offers a novel perspective for an intervention that answers calls within PP for more meaningful work, for not only humanity, but what the world needs now. By raising the profile of nature as a precursor for wellbeing, we augment the necessity of nature's wellbeing and as such, the benefits serve all.

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7 Narrative Identity: Building Castles and Cathedrals

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Abstract

This presentation shared the preliminary findings from a wider and ongoing semi-systematic review of narrative identity literature using a meta-ethnographic approach. It first aims to interpret each of the three established narrative identity theories: McAdams' 'Life Story Model', Hermans' 'Dialogical Self' and White and Epston's 'Narrative Therapy' in order to contrast how self as meaning may be created. Second, an experiential model of narrative identity was developed, derived from the synthesis of these theories and wider research. In this model, it is proposed that a person's relationship between their self and their world may create four distinct yet overlapping modes of meaning. It was further suggested that polarity might play an important role in forming these complex and coherent meanings. The standpoint is taken that meaning making in life stories may be construed as a dynamic position of equilibrium between polarities in experiences that may lead to narrative themes such as agency, communion and growth. The aim is to demonstrate that the interplay between these modes of meaning may create a person's sense of agency, communion and growth and suggest recent research to support this. Finally, the poetic narrative of Dante's 'Divine Comedy' is used as a story to demonstrate how movement through these modes of meaning over time may create a person's life story.

Keywords: *Narrative Identity; Life Story; Meaning; Complexity; Coherence.*

This topic is also explored in a recently-published paper (reference below). Please email Lee at the above email address for more information.

Reference: Newitt, L., Worth, P., & Smith, M. D. (2019). Narrative identity: From the inside out. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly.* https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2019.1624506
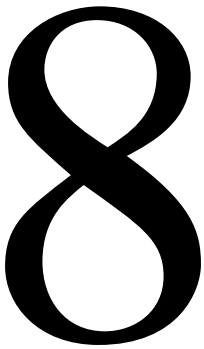
Older Icelandic Adults' Perception of Well-being: A Qualitative study

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine older Icelandic adults' perception and definition of well-being and explore what they believe to be the factors involved in well-being at an older age. A thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse seven pre-existing interviews with self-selected older adults age 70-79. Seven primary themes and eleven subthemes were identified:

1. *"You create your own well-being", with subthemes of:*
   a. *Maintaining a positive attitude*
   b. *Living a life of contentment, and*
   c. *Celebrating life and everyday experiences;*
2. *Establishing and nurturing warm, trusting and close relationships, with subthemes of:*
   a. *Family is the most fundamental element,*
   b. *"To have good friends is 50% of life", and*
   c. *Having a social network;*
3. *Regular physical activity, with subthemes of:*
   a. *Benefits for the body,*
   b. *Benefits for the mind, and*
   c. *Exercise is a social activity,*
4. *Having a sense of purpose and meaning in life with subthemes of:*
   a. *Making yourself meaningful to other people, and*
   b. *Having something that positively captivates the mind,*
5. *Experiencing positive emotion,*
6. *Connectedness with nature, and*
7. *Well-being despite adversity.*

The findings are discussed in the theoretical context of four common conceptional models of well-being, including the six-factor model of psychological well-being by Ryff (1989), the Gallup Model (Rath & Harter, 2010), the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), and the framework of flourishing by Huppert and So (2013). Six themes fit well with the well-being models mentioned above. Connectedness with nature, however, is not part of any of the four well-being models, even though several investigations have found positive links between nature relatedness and well-being (e.g. Howell, Dopko, Passmore, & Buro, 2011; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011; Orr, Wagstaffe, Briscoe, & Garside, 2016). A possible explanation is that the models focus more on individual aspects of well-being than the bigger context in which people are embedded. Establishing and nurturing warm, trusting and close relationships is the most dominant theme in the study. Proactiveness is a habit consistently exhibited by the participants and interwoven with the themes identified. The study adds to existing knowledge about ageing and well-being by providing valuable insights into older Icelandic adults' perspectives.

Please contact Ingrid at the above email address for more information.

Coaching Character Strengths and Mindfulness for Achieving Flow in Tennis Performance

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Abstract

Tennis is a game of two parts – the physical game and the mental game – which Gallwey (2015) calls the 'inner game' of tennis. While most players at club level can deal with the physical game, it is the mental game that can result in a poorer performance and the difference between winning and losing a match. Using Ryan Niemiec's (2013) Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP), the aim was to explore whether developing strengths and mindfulness during tennis coaching sessions improves performance. Coaching sessions of 90 minutes' duration were carried out by the researcher with a group of five amateur tennis players over the course of 8 weeks. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with each participant after the 8 weeks and data were analysed using thematic analysis. In total, four main themes were identified: Strengths Awareness and Strengths Blindness, Mindfulness Awareness and Practice, Tennis Performance and Evaluation of the Course. In conclusion it was found that the course was beneficial to all tennis players who participated, as it created greater awareness and mindfulness of character strengths and how to use them, which resulted in changes both on and off the court, with some report of flow experiences.

Please contact Urszula on the above email address for more information.

10

Positive Psychology in Practice at a Professional Football Club Youth Academy

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Abstract

This paper provides a descriptive account and personal reflections of sport/positive psychology interventions with young footballers at a professional football club academy. It argues that positive psychology is well-placed to meet the psychological support needs of young footballers.

Introduction

Despite emotion regulation being a major developmental achievement, which predicts better outcomes across a number of domains in childhood and adolescence (Fox & Culkins, 2003), and lays the foundation for individual differences in emotion regulation in adulthood (Gross & Thompson, 2007), self-regulation in youth sport has received relatively little attention (Ntoumanis & Cumming, 2016).

Self-regulation refers to a person's exercise of influence over their thoughts, feelings, behaviours and motivation. According to social-cognitive theory, it operates through three main functions – self-monitoring of one's performance, judgement of one's performance (against standards, values, and circumstances), and emotional reactions to one's judged performance – and incorporates self-efficacy, a person's belief about their capability to exercise control over themselves and events facing them (Bandura, 1991).

Emotion regulation refers to "extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals" (Thompson, 1994, pp. 27-28). It is one aspect of emotional competence along with, for example, emotion awareness of self and others, emotion understanding, empathy/sympathy, and emotion socialisation (Southam-Gerow, 2016). Acquiring the skills of emotional competence is crucial to self-efficacy (Saarni, 1991). Unlike emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), emotional competence emphasises that emotion regulation develops in stages throughout childhood and adolescence, and largely in social and cultural contexts (Lau & Wu, 2011).

Emotion research in sport has centred on anxiety and coping with stress, including the association between emotion and achievement goals (Harwood & Biddle, 2002). Achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1989) postulates that positive emotions should be associated more with task orientation (mastery goals involving learning and improving) and negative emotions associated more with ego orientation (performance goals involving outperforming others). However, the evidence for this is conflicting (Ntoumanis & Biddle, 1999). This might be explained by the need to incorporate approach and avoidance components of achievement goals (Elliott, 1999), and by the moderating effect of situational factors such as motivational climate (Ames, 1992). The link between motivational climate and emotion is clearer, with enjoyment being associated with mastery climates, and anxiety being associated with performance climates (Harwood, Spray, & Keegan, 2008). Task and ego goal orientations have been associated with different stress coping strategies, with task orientation associated with adaptive problem-solving strategies, and ego orientation associated with less adaptive or maladaptive strategies such as emotional outbursts (Ntoumanis, Biddle, & Haddock, 1999).

Emotion regulation involves more than coping with stress (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004). Furthermore, positive psychology has established convincingly the benefits of a range of positive emotions beyond enjoyment (Fredrickson, 1998), and has shown that negative emotions such as anxiety also have positive functions (Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2015). For a positive psychology practitioner working in a role typically filled by sport psychology consultants, the need to investigate the emotional states and emotional climates that enable individual young athletes to flourish in pursuit of consistently producing their best performances has been paramount.

Sample Interventions

This section outlines a selection of interventions used with pre-, early- and mid-adolescent youth academy football players to help them regulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in pursuit of valued goals.

Across all age groups (U9-U16), the interventions started with all players a) completing the VIA Youth Survey of character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2006), and b) being introduced to the following mind model:
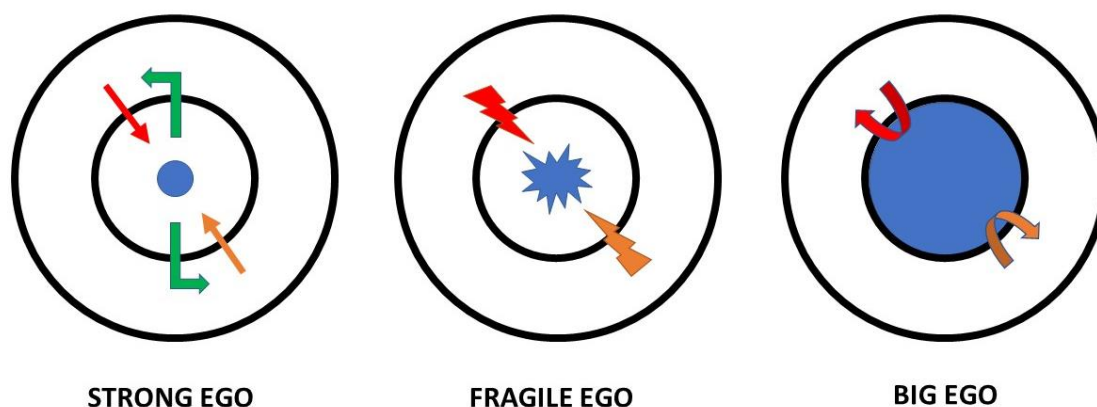
Figure 1. Model based on Jung's theories/psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1974; Stein, 1998)

The model is a personal attempt to understand Carl Jung's theories (for example, see Stein, 1998), and was inspired by the classic 'egg diagram' of psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1974). The task here was to introduce players to the idea that thoughts and feelings automatically 'pop into their heads' and that sometimes this can be overwhelming, and that the skill is to become aware of those thoughts and feelings but not react to them. In this way a strong-minded person (a person with a strong 'ego') can reflect on what is needed in any particular situation and choose what action they want to take; by responding positively, they can start to influence intrusive negative thoughts and feelings. Having a strong ego is different to having a big ego. A person with a big ego – in other words, a 'big head' – has such a big ego that they have little room for awareness in their minds, and therefore act on their thoughts and feelings as if they were all that mattered. In contrast, a person with a strong ego is aware, considerate, and adaptable. (NB the only character strength that correlated significantly with coach rankings of ability of the players was humility.)

This model went down surprisingly well with the players. The younger players, with their fresh and open minds, lapped up the ideas. (They were also introduced to mindfulness at this time.) Among the older players, many experienced a discernible 'light bulb moment' when they thought through its implications.

Work within the Youth Development Phase (U13-U16)

The most successful intervention used with older players was a 'match script' (Abrahams, 2012). A match script refers to two or three actions or behaviours, that a player can control, that are the basis

of them performing at their best, that help them prepare mentally before games, and most importantly help them stay in the present or regain focus during games.

NAME: DOB: AGE GROUP:

MY MATCH SCRIPT

3 actions or behaviours I can control that will help me play with confidence and focus

I can control my thoughts, feelings, behaviour, attention, motivation, and imagination

Concentrating on my process goals will help me achieve my performance and outcome goals
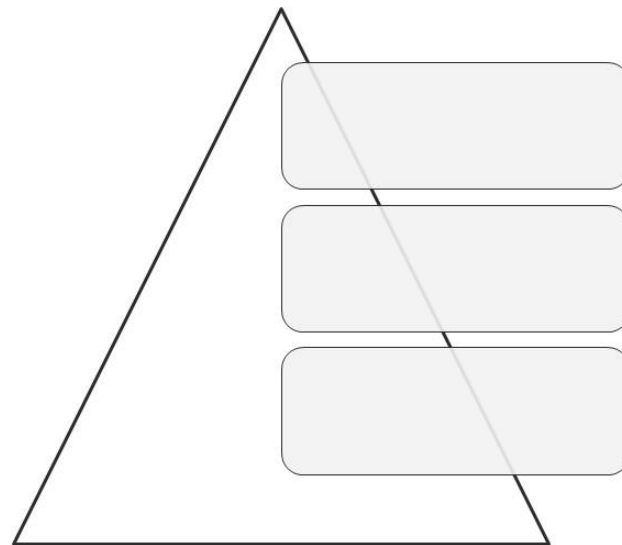
Figure 2. Sample match script.

A real-life example is that of an ex-professional, now a first team coach at the club, whose match script during his playing days was: *work hard*, *get my first touch right*, and *relax when finishing*. He was a renowned goal-scorer who realised that in order to score he needed to work hard to get on the ball, make sure he 'secured' the ball when it was passed to him, and keep his composure in front of the goal. Rather than putting himself under pressure by thinking about scoring – something that he could not control – he focused instead on those elements of his performance he could control.

The positive psychology 'spin' put on this intervention with the academy players was to not only focus on their playing strengths, but also to integrate their character strengths, and build in their emotional preferences, i.e., how they preferred to feel in games. They had already completed the VIA Youth Survey so that information was available to them. To identify their emotional

preferences, they undertook a simple task that resulted in them selecting their four most important emotions/feelings for them as a footballer from a list of nearly 300.

As an example, a talented thirteen-year-old, a striker who is regarded to be a very good prospect, was referred for support because he was 'beating himself up' whenever he lost possession of the ball. His signature strengths were teamwork, fairness, forgiveness, and gratitude. Tapping into his teamwork strength might help him transition from attack to defence more readily and directing his fairness and forgiveness strengths toward himself might help him take a more self-compassionate stance. His preferred feelings were composed, aware, relaxed, and quick. It would be important to shift his awareness to these more soothing emotions if possible as he had described feeling defenders "breathing down my neck".

The match script developed with this player consisted of: *be the best for the team*, *seize the moment*, and *no regrets*. He was used to being, and being expected to be, the best on the team, so reframing this to be the best *for* the team took the pressure off him as well as tapping into his character strength. Seizing the moment encouraged him to be aware and stay active in the present, while no regrets reduced the impact of threats and encouraged a more compassionate self.

An important observation to make about this work is that, on the whole, it was the better players who 'bought into' the process of developing a match script and were more likely to use it in games. So, rather than this being a tool that enabled weaker players to bridge the gap between them and stronger players, what happened was that the better players pulled further ahead with several going on to excel, 'playing up' at higher age groups.

Work within the Foundation Phase (U9-U12)

Another important observation is that the simpler the intervention, the better. A squad of U11 players completed the 'most important feelings' exercise described above, then before their next game their chosen feelings were displayed on the wall above where they sat in the changing room. The challenge given to the players was simple: if that's how you want to feel in the game, what are you going to think and do during the game to feel that way? No other guidance was given, other than to encourage them to stay active in the present, responding to what was happening now. This had been a failing squad, but three-quarters into the game they had powered into a 6-0 lead. At this point their coach demanded that they keep a clean sheet, which predictably enough resulted in them conceding a

goal almost straightaway. Nevertheless, they ran out 7-1 winners and went on to put their troubles behind them and push onwards for the remainder of the season.

What seemed to have been important was that, not only were the players playing in the present, but also, they were being themselves. Just as it is unlikely that two players will have the same character strengths profiles, it is unlikely they will share the same emotional preferences. All clubs have values that they expect their players to demonstrate, but this must not be at the expense of tapping into individual differences. The emotions that were most important to players varied widely. Most were emotions associated with the drive system, but many were associated with the social safeness system (Gilbert, 2010). Players wanted to feel achievement and activation, but they also wanted to feel affiliation, in their own ways.

A slightly more elaborate intervention was conducted with a squad of U9 players. The players were introduced to the idea that there are things they can control (i.e., their thoughts, feelings, behaviour, attention, motivation, and imagination), things they cannot control (e.g., the weather), and things they can only influence (e.g., the result of a game); and they were advised to both focus their attention on what they can control and stay in the present as they cannot control the past and can only influence the future (Figure 3).
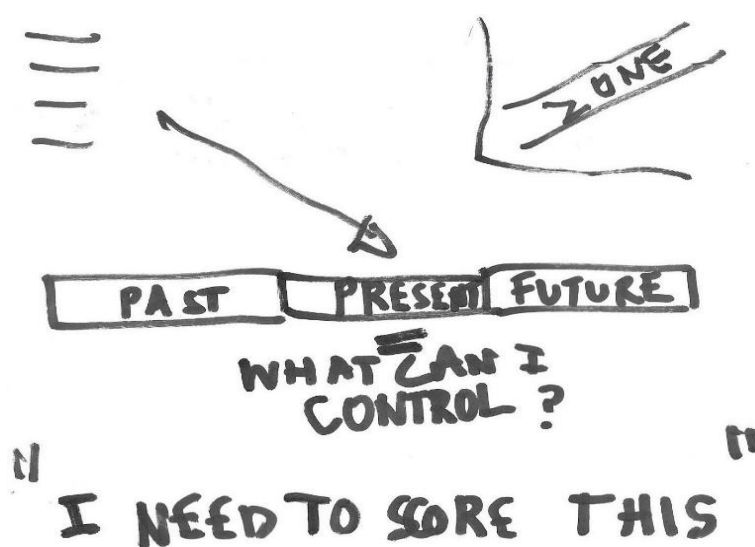

Figure 3. Explanation of what players can and cannot control.

In the changing room before their next game, they were further introduced to the flow channel (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002: Figure 4).
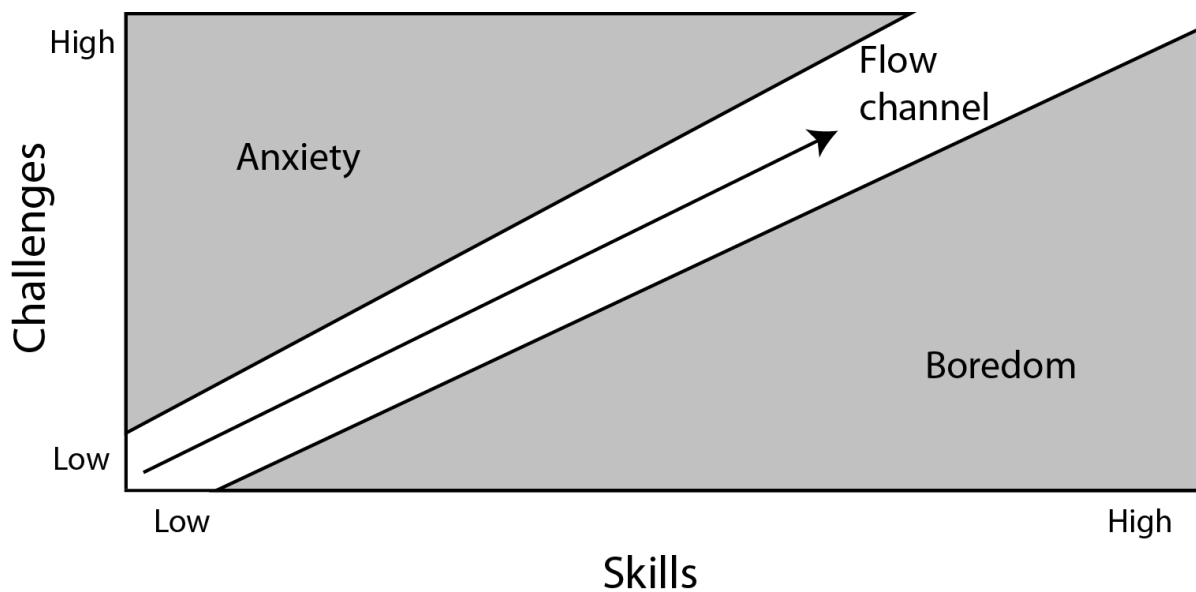
Figure 4. Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow channel' model (2002).

They were encouraged to accept higher challenges in the game as this would require them to use higher skills and reminded them to stay in the present and focus on what they can control. In a final twist, they were informed that to test them, if they scored a goal, they would then be required to take a penalty, which they would have to score in order for their goal to count. The aim was to put them under pressure in a playful way to allow them to practice focusing on what they can control (when taking a penalty) and staying in the present despite being disappointed or annoyed (if they missed a penalty).

The players responded to the task enthusiastically. Even players who were known to have emotion regulation difficulties were able to bounce back quickly after missing a penalty and get straight back into the game. However, by half-time no one had scored a penalty. So, one of the less confident players was briefed to advise his teammates to concentrate on what they can control (e.g., striking the ball well) rather than the outcome they wanted (i.e., scoring). In the second half, most of the penalties were scored.

After the game, the players were asked to indicate on the flow channel diagram where they felt they had performed that day. All the players placed themselves high up the flow channel. The players who were prone to experiencing emotion regulation difficulties were particularly pleased with how they had performed. This proved to be a very useful, graphic way of capturing how the players thought and felt about their performances.

Discussion

The interventions were designed to help players achieve their goals by developing their emotional competence (Saarni, 1991) and feelings of social safeness (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016). The focus was on harnessing rather than controlling emotions, and on helping them to develop the capacity to enhance and release emotions that optimally maintain their attention and effort in response to continually changing game circumstances. The interventions addressed several of the recommendations included in the BASES Expert Statement on Emotion Regulation in Sport (Lane, Beedie, Jones, Uphill, & Devonport, 2011), principally that practitioners should identify emotional states associated with good and bad performance, help athletes understand the cause and effect of their emotions, and examine the use of emotion regulation strategies to create the most effective emotional climate for competition.

Positive psychology interventions in sport can enhance players' emotional competence and compassion for themselves and others, reduce their emotional reactivity, and create a motivational climate that emphasises social safeness. It can achieve this by:

- helping players understand their emotions better, including the three emotion systems (Gilbert, 2010), the action tendencies of emotions (Lowe & Ziemke, 2011), and the complementarity of positive and negative emotions (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000);

- facilitating the three different 'flows' of compassion (Irons & Beaumont, 2017), namely, giving compassion to others, receiving compassion from others, and giving compassion to ourselves, i.e., self-compassion; and

- giving players opportunities to practise compassion and use their emotions constructively.

Moreover, although sport psychology is still dominated by mental skills training, there is a movement toward a more holistic approach, particularly with young athletes, which could provide fertile ground for positive psychology. This new approach (Henriksen, Larsen, Storm, & Ryom, 2014) recognises that young players have special, developmental needs, that they are embedded in an environment, and that interventions should foster long-term development. The holistic skills package advocated includes:

1. Developing the core individual beyond their athletic identity;

2. Managing the psychological effects of non-sport influences on performance;

3. Recognising the dynamic relationship between thoughts, feelings, physiology, and behaviour;

4. Building capacity, maintaining motivation, fulfilling potential.

In essence, this means that developing the person is more important than developing the player, and that *how* interventions are carried out is more important than what interventions are carried out. It is the relationship that counts in terms of supporting the young player. Positive psychological approaches can provide the committed, wise, strong, warm, non-judgemental, accepting, compassionate support they seek most.

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"Without Music, Life Would Be A Mistake" - The Impact of Music Listening and Playing on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Wellbeing

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Abstract

Positive Psychology researchers have written quite extensively about hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Whilst the disciplines of Music Therapy and Music Psychology have reported the effect of music on physical and psychological wellbeing, this is not an area into which Positive Psychologists have ventured. This paper summarises two qualitative research studies examining the effect of music on wellbeing from a Positive Psychology perspective. Study # 1 researches the effect of playing a musical instrument on wellbeing; Study # 2 investigates the impact of listening to personally selected playlists on wellbeing and perceived workplace performance. The findings indicate that playing a musical instrument and listening to music contribute to both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

Note: *The quotation in the title is from Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).*

Introduction

Whilst Positive Psychologists have researched hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, there are very few studies in this field examining the impact of musical playing or listening on wellbeing. The majority of research that exists has been completed by Music Psychologists – where much of the research focuses on the impact of listening to music on emotions or as a distractor to performance, and Music Therapists – where research focuses on musical playing and listening in a therapeutic context. The two studies reported expand existing research by applying positive psychology theory to understand the impact of music listening and playing on wellbeing. The author believes that the findings add to current thinking relating to hedonic and eudaimonic theory.

Research Study # 1 – The impact of *playing* a musical instrument on wellbeing

The intention of this research was to explore the impact of playing a musical instrument, alone and with others, on wellbeing. The researcher was additionally interested in the difference in

experience between playing alone vs playing with others to understand the impact of social interaction and relationships in the context of musical playing.

Research Study # 2 – The sound of music: The effect of *listening* to personally selected music during the working day on subjective wellbeing and perceived workplace performance

This research augments studies conducted in the workplace into the effect of musical listening on performance by addressing an aspect of music listening that has not been explored – the impact of music listening on subjective wellbeing (SWB) and perceived workplace performance. The researcher also sought to understand circumstances at work that might be augmented by listening to music, whether there are situations at work where music listening might be a negative distractor and exploring why individuals choose to listen to music at work and what benefit they accrue from the activity.

Literature Review

The literature review is an abridged summary of literature pertinent to both research study 1 and 2. Due to limitations on word count, literature reviewed on the effect of music on task performance is excluded from this paper.

Hedonic and Eudaimonic Wellbeing

The concepts of hedonism and eudaimonism have been debated since the fourth century. Aristippus stated that the goal in life is pleasure; Aristotle argued that seeking pleasure was vulgar and that the route to wellbeing should be through eudaimonia (Henderson & Knight, 2013); consequently a distinction emerged equating 'lower' pleasures with hedonia and 'higher' pleasures with eudaimonia (Waterman, 2005). Positive Psychologists have continued this debate in the context of defining wellbeing and the route to The Good Life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Research has been influenced by perception that hedonia and eudaimonia are distinct from each other, resulting in a number of diverse and overlapping theories. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the main theories.

Hedonic wellbeing is typically defined as resulting from an in-the-moment pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment (Kahneman, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001), maximising pleasure and minimising pain (Seligman, 2002), and the "hedonic mindset" (Huta & Ryan, 2010) has been described as having a focus on pleasure seeking, comfort and carefreeness. Diener (1984) proposes three aspects – life

satisfaction, positive mood, and absence of negative mood – that lead to SWB, a measure of individual happiness. Waterman (1993) describes hedonic happiness as enjoyment associated with feeling relaxed, excited, happy, which is accompanied by losing track of time and forgetting personal problems. Fredrickson (1998) identifies 10 positive emotions – joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love – that result in thought-action tendencies that broaden an individual's mindset and responses, referring to this as the 'broaden-and- build' theory (Fredrickson, 2003). This broadening of mindset associated with positive emotions provides access to physical, intellectual, social and psychological resources, resulting in changed thinking, behaviour and accrual of resources. For example, Fredrickson suggests that the positive emotion of interest creates a thought-action tendency of exploration and learning, resulting in accrual of knowledge. Whilst Fredrickson's positive emotions are aligned with hedonic wellbeing – e.g. joy, amusement – the outcome of some of these emotions, as indicated by the broaden-and-build theory, are more closely associated with eudaimonic activities.

Table 1.

Summary of the main hedonic wellbeing theories

Hedonic wellbeing theories	
Diener, E. (1984)	Subjective wellbeing (SWB) – positive affect, balance of positive to negative affect, life satisfaction
Isen, A. (1987)	Positive affect
Fredrickson, B. (2001)	Positive emotions; Broaden-and-build theory; Positivity resonance
Seligman, M. (2003)	Authentic happiness
Lyubomirsky, S. (2007)	Subjective happiness

Table 2.

Summary of the main eudaimonic wellbeing theories

Eudaimonic wellbeing theories			
Maslow (1968)	Self-actualisation; Peak experiences	Csikszentmihalyi (1975)	Flow – challenge relative to skill, loss of sense of time, immersion, deep engagement, loss of self-consciousness
Deci & Ryan (1985)	Intrinsic motivation and pursuit of intrinsic goals – personal growth, relationships, community contribution; Self-determination theory	Waterman (1993)	Personal expressiveness; self-realisation – authenticity, purpose and meaning, effort in the pursuit of excellence.
Ryff (1989)	Psychological well-being – actualisation, autonomy, growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, positive relatedness	Keyes (2002)	Psychological well-being (dimensions as per Ryff, 1989) and social well-being – social acceptance, social contribution, social coherence, social integration
Bauer (2008)	Lifespan approach – personal narratives – motivation towards personal growth; maturity of personal character – self-awareness, transcending self-interest, seeing self as interdependent, taking others' perspectives	Fowers (2010)	Life devoted to knowledge, beauty, belonging, excellence, virtue, collaborative relationships – resulting in a life of meaning, purpose, personal growth, positive relationships
Vitterso (2010)	Experiences that include engagement, flow, interest; preference for complexity, curiosity, personal growth, meaning and purpose in life, self-actualisation	Seligman (2011)	Flourishing – PERMA – Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement/Accomplishment; strengths and virtues
Delle Fave (2011)	Optimal experience (flow) across cultures, activities, ages; meaning-making	Huta (2013)	Eudaimonia as a motive for activites – striving to use and develop the best in oneself in a way that is congruent with values and daimon
Steger (2013)	Self-expression aligned to personal values and intentionality; self-reflection to gain personal insight; self-development and improvement		

Eudaimonic theorists have generally suggested that hedonic theory is incomplete in accounting for wellbeing. Key elements of eudaimonic theory propose that eudaimonic wellbeing is achieved by living a life of virtue, having meaning in life, striving for one's best possible self, engagement, achievement, personal growth, and living authentically and in truth to one's 'daimon' (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). Ryff (1998) identified six elements that contribute to actualisation – autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery and positive relatedness. Ryff and Singer (2000) propose that living a life that encompasses these elements results in psychological wellbeing (PWB) and can also positively influence physical health, as evidenced by improved immunological functioning.

Waterman (1993) defined the eudaimonic approach as the pursuit of the best possible self which he termed "personal expressiveness". He identified that those activities that enable personal expressiveness involve intense focus, a "special fit", feelings of being intensely alive, and a sense that this is what you are meant to do. He additionally proposed that activities that produce eudaimonic happiness require a balance of challenge and competence, afford personal growth, and development of potential. Waterman's (1993) theory has similarities with other theories – e.g., personal growth and development of potential are represented in Maslow's (1968) theory of self-actualisation; intense focus and balance of challenge and competence are cited in flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Deci and Ryan (2000) purport that human beings are generally curious, have a desire to learn and apply their skills, wish to stretch their abilities, and are self-motivated – characterising this as 'intrinsic motivation'. Again, this is not dissimilar to Maslow's (1968) theory of self-actualisation. Deci and Ryan (1985) propose a theory of self-determination, indicating that individuals have three basic needs – for competence, relatedness and autonomy. Satisfaction of these needs results in greater intrinsic motivation, growth and personal development, positively impacting psychological wellbeing. If these needs are thwarted, there is a resulting passivity and decreased impetus for actualisation. Compared with extrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) propose that intrinsic motivation generates greater interest, excitement and confidence for an activity or task completion, resulting in superior performance, persistence, creativity and enhanced self-esteem.

Currently, there is lack of clarity regarding any relationship between hedonia and eudaimonia. They have been viewed as independent constructs and have predominantly been researched as such, leading to opposing views on the pathways to wellbeing. Hedonic pathways are linked to pursuit of

activities that promote positive emotional experiences (Fredrickson, 2011; Lyubomirsky, 2007) and eudaimonic pathways are associated with activities that encourage personal growth and actualise potential (Delle Fave, Massimini & Bassi, 2011). Although both Fredrickson (2011) and Lyubomirsky (2007) focus on hedonic wellbeing, they recommend happiness-inducing activities that appear to be based on eudaimonic activities – nurturing social relationships, increasing flow experiences, committing to goals, practising spirituality, performing acts of kindness, and applying strengths. The difference between their approach and that of eudaimonic theorists is that they propose these activities in the *pursuit* of happiness. Eudaimonic theorists suggest that happiness is a possible by-product, rather than an end in itself, identifying that eudaimonic activities might not always yield pleasure (Ryff & Singer, 2000). However, it is suggested that individuals who engage in a lot of eudaimonic activity have high life satisfaction and enduring positive affect (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Seligman's (2011) theory of flourishing includes both hedonic and eudaimonic components. Expanding on his original theory of authentic happiness (Seligman, 2003) – a hedonically-oriented theory for achieving happiness and increased life satisfaction – he developed PERMA, a model that combines both hedonic (positive emotions) and eudaimonic orientations (engagement, meaning, positive relationships, accomplishment) in the pursuit of a flourishing life.

Huta and Ryan (2010) were interested in understanding the motives for pursuing an activity. They conclude that an activity pursued with a hedonic motive is with the intent of pleasure or comfort seeking. An activity that is eudaimonically motivated is done in the pursuit of growth and developing the best in oneself. However, they also deduce that, in some instances, there appear to be overlapping outcomes. For example, both hedonic and eudaimonic activities are related to reports of life satisfaction and vitality, suggesting that you could follow either pathway and achieve the same end. You could also propose that an activity can have both eudaimonic and hedonic characteristics – i.e. one might engage in an activity that is intensely enjoyable in-the-moment whilst also engaging in the application of one's best possible self – playing a musical instrument might fulfil this criterion.

Huta and Ryan (2010) indicated that those individuals who engage in both eudaimonic and hedonic activities experience a more diverse and greater sense of wellbeing than those who engage in either one or the other, evidenced by reported higher positive affect over individuals with predominantly eudaimonic pathways, and higher meaning and vitality over individuals who follow predominantly hedonic pathways. This suggests that there would be benefit in understanding our personal hedonic

or eudaimonic orientation (i.e. are we drawn to predominantly hedonic or eudaimonic activities?) in order to ensure we experience both. An integrated approach may be the holistic route to The Good Life.

As the interaction between hedonia and eudaimonia has not been widely researched, there remain many avenues to explore. Are there circumstances in which hedonia precedes and, therefore, contributes to eudaimonia? Isen (2008) and Fredrickson (2003) imply that positive emotions *can* contribute to eudaimonic outcomes – e.g. creativity, broadened thought-action repertoires. What might the role of hedonic 'reward' be? Are there eudaimonic activities that, if accompanied or 'rewarded' by pleasure, are more likely to be engaged in? Could hedonic experiences encourage engagement in eudaimonic activities? In the field of music psychology, Hallam (2010) suggests that to engage with musical playing in the long-term requires early positive emotional experiences associated with playing – i.e. hedonia must accompany eudaimonia – and Persson et al. (1996) propose that hedonic motives are important for ongoing musical activity, alongside social and achievement motives. It seems appropriate to consider both hedonic and eudaimonic activities as legitimate and equally valid undertakings, albeit with potentially differing outcomes.

Music and Wellbeing

Dating back as far as 600 BC, Greek priests used music to evoke emotions, believing that music had the power to uplift. During the second half of the 18th century, physicians used music-making in treating patients who had physical or mental illness (Davis & Gfeller, 2008). The field of Music Therapy began to emerge more formally following the return of traumatised veterans from the Second World War when interest in the therapeutic and rehabilitative effects of music increased. Examples of the impact on wellbeing from the field of Music Therapy include: improvements in mood and social interaction following traumatic brain injury or cerebrovascular stroke (Nayak et al., 2000); raised positive affect in patients with depression (Field et al., 1998; Maratos et al., 2008); improved social, emotional and cognitive skills in people with dementia (Koger, Chapin & Brotons, 1999); increases in confidence, self-esteem, social skills and psychological wellbeing in young offenders (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Baker & Homan; 2007).

Music listening and playing are reported to fulfil many functions that contribute to both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing – influencing mood regulation and positive emotions (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003), aiding concentration (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007),

absorption and transcendence (Lamont, 2011; Schafer, Smukalla & Oelker, 2014), creating flow-like states (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), provoking reflection on positive experiences (Groarke & Hogan, 2015), developing understanding of self-identity (Hays, 2005), creation of social connectedness and meaningful relationships (Haslam, Jetten & Haslam, 2012; Groarke & Hogan, 2015), and providing a sense of companionship and social relatedness (Schäfer, Sedlmeier, Städtler, & Huron, 2013).

Recent advances in Music Therapy include a bias towards group or community-based activities (Andsell, 2004) and a specific discipline of Community Music is emerging. Community Music focuses less on therapeutic effects and more on creating access to social and musical activities outside of an institutional setting – e.g. community choirs and percussion classes (Hallam & MacDonald, 2008). The effects of these community musical activities include psychological benefits – increased perception of wellbeing, self-esteem, freedom of expression (Clift & Hancox, 2001; Hallam & MacDonald, 2008), decreases in negative mood and increases in positive mood (Kreutz et al., 2004).

Some music teachers report flow in their teaching activities and the more frequently that they experience flow, the more their students also report undergoing flow-like states (Bakker, 2005). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) reports that collective flow does occur and Walker (2010) proposes that collective flow creates higher feelings of joy than solitary flow. This has implications for both teacher and student and may be one reason that some teacher-student relationships are not as satisfying or productive as others might be. Flow can produce positive emotions in-the-moment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) – i.e. a hedonic experience accompanying a eudaimonic activity; but flow is more likely to occur in the presence of positive emotion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) – i.e. a eudaimonic experience made more possible by the presence of hedonia. This again raises the question of the relationship between hedonia and eudaimonia. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) proposes that the intrinsic reward associated with flow encourages practice as the musician seeks to repeat the flow experience. Fritz and Avsec (2007) also confirm that the autotelic aspect of flow motivates individuals to engage in an activity again in order to repeat the experience. They specifically identify that getting the skill-challenge balance right is important and is most strongly related to reports of subjective wellbeing and flow in musicians.

The author proposes that it is possible that music students who do not have the optimal balance of challenge and skill feel frustrated with their playing and that it is the presence of negative emotion, and absence of positive emotion, that interferes with flow, subsequently discouraging practice. This

in turn may affect the progress they make in their playing, contributing to negative feelings that they are not improving in their playing ability. Frustration with lack of achievement or progression may further limit flow, and so the cycle continues. This phenomenon may contribute to the number of people who start to learn an instrument but subsequently give up because there is a lack of pleasure (hedonia) associated with learning (eudaimonia).

Maslow (1968) identified *peak experiences* linked with achievement of self-actualisation. He surmised that when an individual describes a peak experience, and who they are within that experience, they are describing what is the closest to their authentic and best selves (Maslow, 1968). Panzarella (1980) reports "intense joyous experiences" associated with listening to music. Subsequent analysis identified four aspects of these experiences: *renewal ecstasy*, described as an altered, "more beautiful" perception of the world; *motor-sensory ecstasy*, reported as physical changes such as shivers, changes in heart rate, feeling high or floating; *withdrawal ecstas*y – loss of sense of the environment; and *fusion-emotional ecstasy* – a feeling of merging with the music. These experiences have similarities with both flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and peak experiences (Maslow, 1968).

A more recent study aimed to obtain an understanding of the physical, behavioural, perceptual, cognitive, emotional and social elements of strong experiences related to music (SEM) – either listening or playing (Gabrielsson & Wik, 2000). Participants reported:

- *Physical* reactions – tears, thrills, chills

- *Perceptual* responses – feeling surrounded by the music, feeling the music travel through their body

- *Cognitive* responses – complete absorption, loss of sense of self and time, as though someone else is playing through them, transcendence

- *Emotional* responses – joy, happiness, low arousal as well as high arousal, contentment, increased self-confidence

- *Social* responses – a feeling of community between listeners or performers or both.

Taking into account research on flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), peak experiences (Maslow, 1968), intense joyous experiences (Panzarelle, 1980), and SEM (Gabrielsson & Wik, 2000), the author

proposes that musical listening and playing have the potential to elicit simultaneous eudaimonic and hedonic experiences.

Many would regard the ability to play a musical instrument as an expression of creativity. Soriano de Alencar (2012) proposes that the urge to create is a part of being a healthy human being and that creativity is accompanied by positive feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. Creativity is seen as a sign of positive mental health and psychological wellbeing, with creative therapies in the arts and music being deployed as a means of supporting wellbeing (Simonton, 2000). Richards (2010) offers the concept of "everyday creativity", defining this as activities that are engaged in that "bring us alive in the moment", and which provide a sense of wellbeing, satisfaction and actualisation. Further, both Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1961) propose that expression of creativity is linked to the urge to self-actualise and the desire to fulfil one's potential.

Music provides an opportunity for musicians to present themselves to others, to express identity – an aspect of edaimonic wellbeing. Congruent with McAdams' (1985) theory of identity formation, musicians have imagoes – sometimes multiple – associated with their musical identity. A musician's imago may be as broad as "I am a musician" or it may more specifically defined by the instrument they play – "I am a drummer". Genre of music can also confer identity – "I am a rock musician" or "I am a classical musician". Aligning oneself to a particular genre may be an expression of who you are. For example, punk music is associated with rebellion, therefore if I choose to play this genre of music, I may be expressing myself as rebellious. A musician may also adopt a performance identity (Davidson, 2000), someone they are when they are on stage, who they perceive as different to their everyday identity. These identities are not mutually exclusive; a musician might be one or many, however their musical playing affords them the potential for eudaimonic wellbeing through the expression of that identity.

Musical playing has the potential to contribute to flourishing by satisfying the characteristics of PERMA (Seligman, 2011) - positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement. Several researchers have noted the impact of musical activity on positive emotion (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Creech et al., 2013; De Nora, 2000; Pinker, 1997; Sperber, 1996). Musicians experience flow/engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; Lowis, 2000). Achievement is a characteristic of musical playing – learning to play a scale, mastery of a technique or piece – and there are opportunities to build relationships with other musicians in group playing.

Music Listening at Work

Wartime and post-war factory workers experienced music played over loudspeakers as it was felt to contribute to workplace productivity (Jones, 2005). *Music While You Work* was a popular BBC programme that provided a national soundtrack for factory workers (Korczynski & Jones, 2006). Music tempo and rhythm were believed to contribute to assembly line productivity, overriding a workers' natural tendency to slow their pace of work over time (Korczynski & Jones, 2006). It was thought to be psychologically beneficial in distracting employees from menial, repetitive tasks (Jones, 2005). Industrial Psychologists proposed that, to increased productivity, music should be administered in short periods across the working day to match "fatigue curves" (Burris-Meyer, 1943; Kerr, 1943 & 1944; Smith, 1947 – all as cited in Jones, 2005). A series of studies conducted in the 1950s/1960s provided support for the positive impact of music whilst performing repetitive or monotonous tasks (Konz, 1962), in error reduction (Roberts, 1959), and for enhanced productivity (Roberts, 1959).

The practice of playing music to workers and allowing employees to listen to music continues to this day. A study conducted by PRS for Music (2014) noted that 62% of employers surveyed believe they can positively influence performance of employees by playing music and 87% of employees stated that music contributes to morale, although it is noted that Harley-Davidson banned the practice in their factories stating safety concerns associated with music being a distractor (Toner, 2013). The advent of personal music listening devices provides many with an opportunity to listen to music at work and this is evidenced in diverse workplace situations including operating theatres (Ullmann et al., 2008), office environments (Lesiuk, 2010), and factory floors (Jones, 2005).

There are far fewer field studies than laboratory studies examining the effect of music listening in the workplace. Studies conducted in the workplace examine a broad range of aspects of music listening including: ability to manage the environment through listening (Bull, 2005); everyday engagement with music (Greasley & Lamont, 2011); effects of music on mood and reduction in anxiety (Lesiuk, 2008, 2010); effects of music on work quality (Lesiuk, 2005); what individuals listen to and why (Haake, 2011); and music listening as a means of reducing stress at work (Lesiuk, 2008).

Haake (2011) examined music listening in computer-based office environments, identifying a number of functions of music including improving mood or affect, reducing boredom, enhancing focus on tasks, blocking out surrounding distractions, helping creativity, and promoting stress relief. Hallam (2013) also notes that individuals are adept at selecting music to meet specific needs -

relaxation, enhancing concentration, creating positive affect – including turning off music if it becomes too distracting for the task being performed (Hallam, 2013; Haake, 2011).

Negative Emotion

Are negative emotions 'bad' and to be avoided? Negative emotions have been recorded as creating physiological changes in the autonomic nervous system, including increased heartrate, raised blood pressure and release of cortisol, resulting in an increased risk of cardiac events (Verrier & Mittleman, 1997). Fredrickson and Levenson (1998) demonstrate that if positive emotions are experienced after negative emotions they have an undoing effect on the negative emotion both cognitively and physiologically – individuals' cardiovascular measurements return to baseline more quickly than those who do not experience positive emotions.

Allowing the expression of negative emotions may contribute to understanding of self and meaning (Pennebaker. 1997), echoed by Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon and Worth (2016), in their book on Second Wave Positive Psychology. The authors suggest that the challenging experiences, thoughts and emotions we experience in life may create opportunities for growth.

Although negative emotions are purported to narrow thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001), implying less creative responses, in the realm of musical composition negative emotions can also engender creativity. Akinola and Mendes (2008) noted that negative emotions can create self-reflective thought that leads to creativity. In examining the lyrics of many popular songs, expressions of loss or unrequited love are not uncommon, a requiem is written as a repose for the soul of the dead – indications that the composer is inspired by negative emotion.

Research Methods

Both studies employed qualitative methods, conducting semi-structured interviews, either face-to-face or over Skype. Figure 1 depicts the process used for identifying main themes from interviews. Although shown as a linear process, it is an iterative process requiring initial coding and repeated reviews of coding and themes.
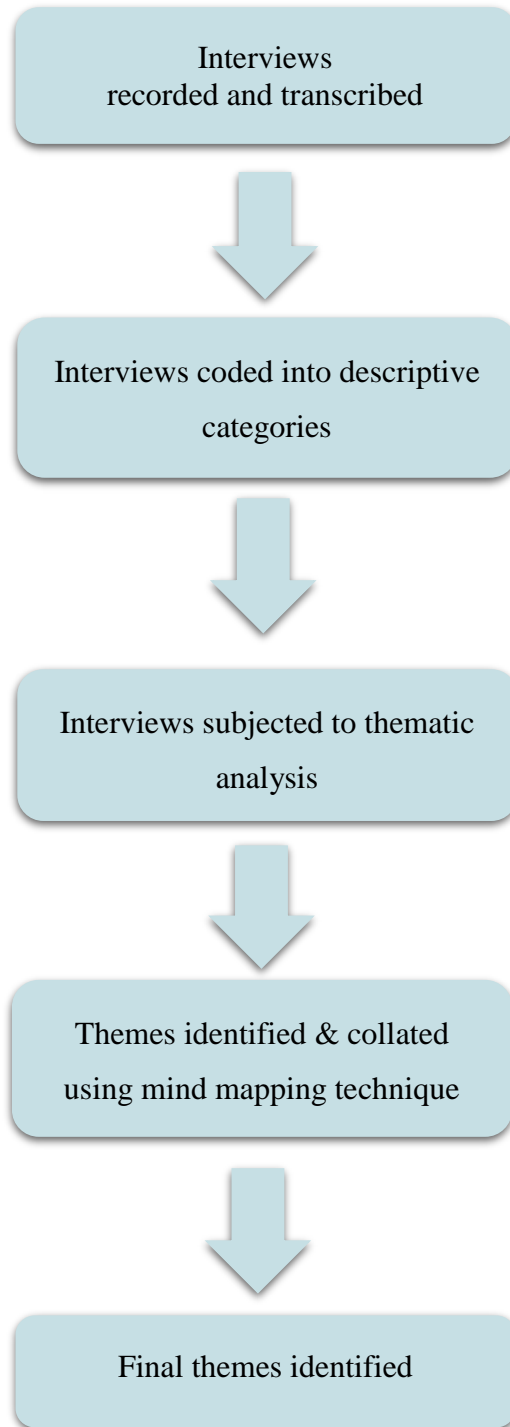
Figure 1. Data coding, theming and analysis process

Sampling for Study # 1 was purposive – musicians were selected who play at least one instrument to a standard beyond beginner level, and play a minimum of twice per week alone and once per month with other musicians in order to gain an understanding of both the experience of playing alone and

playing with others. Musicians included in the study were male and female, aged between 20 and 56 years, and play diverse genres of music – classical, rock, pop, punk, folk, country and indie – and a variety of instruments. Interviews included questions relating to emotions evoked when practising a specific piece or technique to improve musical performance, emotions evoked when playing alone for pleasure, and emotions evoked when playing with other people. Of additional interest was to understand how the musicians use musical playing to provoke or align to a specific emotion in themselves, how they use musical playing to change their emotional state and how a pre-existing emotional state affects their choice of music to play.

Participants for Study # 2 were recruited using a convenience sampling method from a global professional services organisation at which the researcher worked. At recruitment it became apparent that some individuals interested in participating were not currently listening to music but would like to try doing so and share their experiences. It was decided to structure the study to include six participants who were already listening and six participants who were not currently listening to music at work, who would try to do so at various times over a three-week period. By contrasting the findings from existing listeners with those who do not normally listen, it was anticipated that the study would provide greater insight into why individuals might choose, or not, to listen to music and how listening and non-listening practice is optimised. Interviews for habitual listeners and 'new' listeners were initially coded and themed individually, then within groups, and finally across the two groups, in order to compare and contrast experiences across the data. The process yielded a substantial number of initial codes which were further grouped into potential themes with similar meaning.

Findings and Discussion

The following is an abridged version of the research findings and discussion for each study.

Study # 1: Playing music

The research findings suggest that, for the musicians in the study, playing a musical instrument positively impacts their emotional state and engenders feelings of pleasure and comfort – hedonic happiness. However, the results also indicate that their musical playing affords varied opportunities to connect them with other aspects of wellbeing that can be equated with eudaimonia.

Musical playing appears to offer eudaimonic opportunity for intrinsic motivation, engagement, purpose, mastery, growth, relatedness and expression of potential. Hedonic experiences are more frequently reported when playing in a group or performing – *"fun", "excitement", "buzz"*. However, whilst the emotion experienced appears hedonic, playing with others involves eudaimonic activity – connecting with bandmates, balancing challenge and skill, bringing the best of oneself to a performance. The author proposes that in this situation hedonia and eudaimonia are experienced simultaneously.

Eudaimonic experiences that are not immediately pleasurable were reported when playing alone, particularly when practising challenging pieces or developing technique, but not when playing with others or performing. The results provoke thinking about the possibility that hedonic pleasure might in some instances act as a psychological 'reward' and, in doing so, motivate future eudaimonic activity.

The main findings are summarised in Table 3, identifying linkages with positive psychology theory**.**

Playing and Emotion

The impact of playing a musical instrument on emotion appears diverse and multi-faceted. The musicians in the study relayed several instances where playing connects them with positive emotions – fun, joy and excitement – associated with playing. Each of Fredrickson's (2011) positive emotions were mentioned in the context of playing. The musicians commented on using their playing intentionally, as a means of emotional self-regulation - to lift negative emotion, restore positive emotion, and relax. This is consistent with having hedonic motives for activities associated with pleasure or comfort-seeking (Huta & Ryan, 2000). It also aligns with Fredrickson (2011) and Lyubomirsky's (2007) proposition that intentional activities can be embarked on to increase happiness and positivity.

There is an indication within the data that playing supports recognition of emotion and feelings, and that playing may be used to inform, create awareness of and acknowledge emotion. Playing can bring a 'voice' to an emotion, where the individual might not otherwise have been able to express or give 'form' to the emotion. Each of the musicians in this study use their musical playing to acknowledge difficult emotions – playing is also used as a way of feeling, indulging and exorcising emotions, a cathartic experience. Some of the musicians report very powerful, overwhelming emotions associated with their playing and for others it was likened to feelings of love. In this

context, it is proposed that emotion has a eudaimonic component; acknowledging and bringing a voice to emotions may bring insight, acceptance of oneself, enabling an understanding of meaning and purpose, and provide growth – all of which are consistent with contributing to wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Seligman, 2011; Waterman, 1993). Research indicates that suppressing negative emotions adversely impacts physiological and psychological wellbeing (Butzel & Ryan, 1997; DeNeve & Cooper, 1999; King & Pennebaker, 1998). By using musical playing as a strategy for acknowledging, expressing and releasing emotion, the musicians may be supporting their wellbeing.

Table 3.

Findings from interviews and links with Positive Psychology theory

Findings: Participants report…	Associated Positive Psychology Theories
Playing alone:	
Joy; happiness; relaxation Using playing to change emotional state	Positive emotion Positive affect Subjective wellbeing (SWB) Flourishing (positive emotion)
Playing for achievement, growth, self-actualising, mastery, competence	Personal expressiveness Intrinsic motivation & Self determination Flourishing (accomplishment) Psychological wellbeing (PWB)
Playing can cause frustration that results in positive emotion (feelings of elation) once competence is achieved	Eudaimonic effort and outcomes Possible intersection between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing
Loss of sense of time, balance of skill and challenge	Flow Flourishing (engagement)
Playing with others:	Subjective wellbeing
Performing in front of an audience – uplifted emotions – *"buzz", "fun", "excitement"*	Positive emotion Positive affect Flourishing (positive emotion)
Connection/relatedness with other players & with audience; emotion of others affecting player emotion	Emotional contagion Positivity resonance Flourishing (relationships) Possible intersection between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing

Table 3 (continued)

Findings: Participants report…	Associated Positive Psychology Theories
Playing with others *(continued)*	***Playing with others*** *(continued)*
Peak Experiences	Peak experiences
	Flourishing (accomplishment)
Playing and emotion:	Eudaimonic wellbeing – meaning, self-awareness,
Using playing to inform about emotional state, create awareness of/recognise emotions, release emotions, bring a voice to emotions that are otherwise unable to expresss	Flourishing (meaning)
	Personal expressiveness
	PWB – growth, self-acceptance
Sense of identity:	
Music as the core of who I am – "daimon"	Self-realisation, authenticity
Musical playing enabling an alternative identity	Eudaimonic wellbeing
Playing as an expression of identity	Life stories
Creativity – participants report:	Positive affect and creativity
	Broaden and build
The creative process of writing music and songs – alone and with others	Creativity and Self-actualisation
	Flourishing (achievement)

Playing Alone vs Playing with Others

Musicians play alone for a variety of reasons – to practice technique or rehearse a specific piece of music (competence), to develop skill (growth) and stretch their playing ability (achievement), to write music (creativity), and for the pure enjoyment of playing. This indicates both hedonic and eudaimonic motives (Huta, 2013) for playing. Playing alone is commented on as being a different experience to playing with others – it is described as a more private experience and with that feeling of privacy there appears to be greater freedom of emotional expression and connection.

Playing is not always a positive experience – noted particularly in relation to musicians practising a difficult piece or technique. The musicians are prepared to continue with the activity, even though it can engender frustration and is not immediately gratifying, as part of a discipline to master the piece. The musicians seem to accept negative emotion as part of the mastery process. Some indicate that they relish the challenge and know when they are striving for mastery it is going to take time, but ultimately, they will achieve their desired outcome. Musicians commented that effort is rewarded,

with a strong feeling of achievement and resulting positive emotion experienced as euphoria or elation, *"like reaching the top of a mountain"*.

Why would a musician persist at something that is difficult, frustrating or not enjoyable? It is possible that the activity itself, whilst not immediately rewarding fulfils autonomous motives such as intrinsic motivation (being motivated by pure interest and enjoyment), integration (motivation linked to personal identity), or identification (engaging in an activity because it aligns with personal goals or values) (Cameau, Huta, Lu & Swirp, 2019)? This behaviour is congruent with eudaimonic theory which identifies that eudaimonic activity may not yield pleasure in the moment (Ryff & Singer, 2000; Waterman, 2015). It is also consistent with Vallerand's (2007) theory of harmonious passion, indicating that where there is passion for an activity it predicts deliberate practice towards mastery goals.

What is not clear is whether there could be a causal or reciprocal relationship between hedonia and eudaimonia in this context. How important is this hedonic 'pay-off' in the motivation of the musicians to apply themselves to eudaimonic effort? Eudaimonic theorists suggest that emotional pleasure can be an outcome of achievement or mastery but do not clarify the role of positive emotion in motivating effort. The researcher hypothesises that the hedonic end result is important – it fuels the musicians to keep going until they achieve, because when they do *"it feels absolutely amazing, it's this huge buzz, you feel absolutely brilliant"*.

Each of the musicians commented on the positive emotions experienced when playing in a group setting, reporting pleasure, a lighter and freer feeling than when playing alone. Although describing group playing and performing using language that describes a hedonic experience – *"incredible rush", "overwhelming happiness"* – the social aspect of the experience, the sense of connection and connectedness both with audience and other players, appears very much integral to the positive emotion, implying a eudaimonic quality. The presence of an audience appears to engender shared emotions – "*feeding off the audience and other band members"* – which may be interpreted as emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002) and positivity resonance (Fredrickson, 2004). The connection with the audience includes an awareness and sensitivity to their performance and how it is received – the musicians want to portray the best of themselves. The musicians recall experiences of hedonia and eudaimonia co-occurring – in-the-moment feelings of positive emotions and positivity resonance, combined with eudaimonic experiences of engagement, relatedness, competence and personal expressiveness.

All musicians reported experiencing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) – most frequently characterised by loss of sense of time and self-awareness. They were also able to relay peak experiences (Maslow, 1961), associated with realisation of a goal, something they had worked hard to achieve, or when performing to an audience that was particularly appreciative and engaged with the performance. Both flow and peak experiences are noted to positively impact SWB (Fritz & Avsec, 2007).

Musical Playing and 'Daimon'

All of the musicians inferred their identity is linked to their playing, the ability to play being at the core of who they are, their 'daimon'. This internalisation of 'musician' as part of their identity seems strongly connected with needing the opportunity to engage with or express oneself through music. They appear to be engaging in an activity that allows expression of strengths and is an integral part of how they see themselves, to the point that it meets a core need within them. Although there may be circumstances in which other priorities get in the way of playing, the musicians appear to have an inner drive to return to it, again indicating that it is their daimon. Further evidence for this is noted when the musicians describe strong feelings of loss at the thought of a life without playing: *"It would take my life away from me if I couldn't play music. I don't know that I'd know how to express myself."*

The researcher proposes that this strong reaction to not being able to play is linked to the fact that, for these musicians, playing fully engages them, provides authenticity and vitality; it offers an activity that enables them to experience positive affect, creativity, growth, purpose, self-acceptance, mastery, achievement and actualisation; and it is at the core of who they are. Playing a musical instrument appears to be an important pathway to both their hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

Study # 2: Listening to music

Findings are reported according to four main themes identified during a process of thematic analysis. Each theme is labelled with the title of a song felt to reflect the underlying content of the theme – *Sweet emotion, Let's work, Let the music play, Much to my surprise*. Two of the main themes – *Sweet emotion and Let's work* – each have three sub-themes. These themes were consistent across both the existing or habitual music listening group and the 'new' music listening group. The theme – *Let the music play* – was noted as being more predominant for habitual listeners, and the theme *Much to my surprise* was noted only for the new listeners.

Given available word count, the themes *Let the music play*, *Much to my surprise* and *Let's work* are not reported in detail as these themes are more related to workplace productivity. The theme *Sweet emotion* has relevance for the discussion on the impact of music listening on wellbeing and is reported more fully.
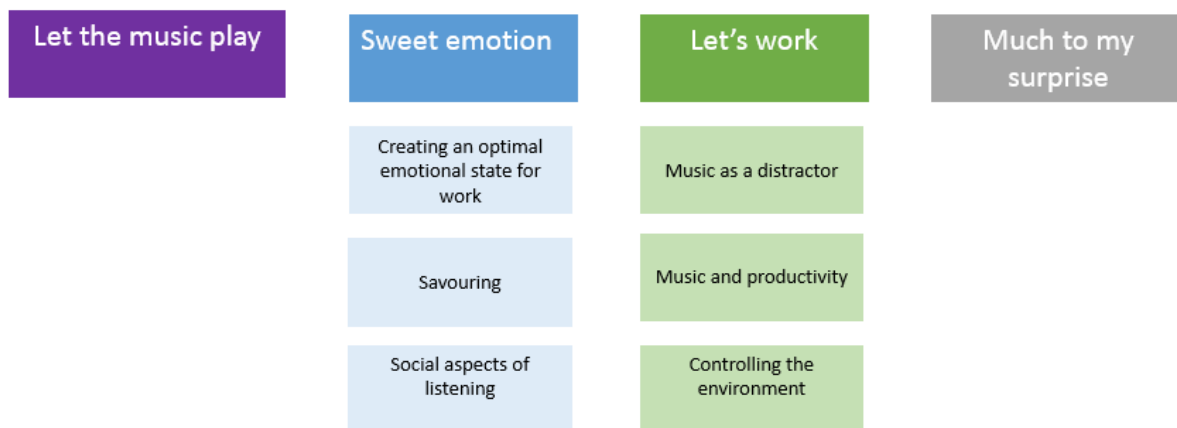

Figure 2. Final themes and sub-themes of Study # 2 (listening to music)

Findings indicate that music listening contributes to SWB and workplace performance for participants in this study. The benefits of music listening at work perceived by participants – positive mood, enhanced task focus and concentration, affect regulation, ability to manage distraction in the environment – align with findings from other studies (Haake, 2011; Juslin & Sloboda, 2010; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003) and appear to outweigh any downsides of listening – possible reduction in sociability or social interaction. Congruent with findings in laboratory studies (Christopher & Shelton, 2017; Young & Nolan, 2015) participants note potential negative distraction effects of music on cognitive task performance, however individuals are adept at knowing what genres of music to avoid and when to stop listening so that distraction is managed. Whilst music listening at work is noted to contribute to hedonic wellbeing, participants also used listening as a tactic to engender the psychological state that will enable them to apply the best of themselves at work – which can be considered a eudaimonic outcome of listening. The hedonic effect of music listening appears to support a mindset that creates the opportunity for experiencing eudaimonic wellbeing – focus, engagement and productivity – which in turn appears to create positive affect.

Let the music play (Barry White, 1976)

Let the music play reports an over-arching theme of intentional use of music by participants who were already listening to music at work. Participants appear to give forethought to their listening.

They described initiating listening to regulate mood, to increase motivation for work, and as a tool for proactively supporting optimal workplace performance. Overall, participants who had already established music listening practices at work appeared to be more aware of the potential for intentional use of music, and therefore more deliberate in its use, than those participants in the 'new' listening group. Participants were also intentional in *not* listening to music. They were aware of situations in which listening to music does not promote an optimal state for work and is, therefore, avoided.

Much to my surprise (Gordon Lightfoot, 1998)

Changing attitudes in the workplace and changes in technology have made music listening at work both more acceptable and accessible (Bull, 2005). The theme *Much to my surprise* reports on the unexpected pleasures and benefits of listening to music at work for new listeners and their changing attitude towards listening. Older participants in the study (age groups 40-59) appear to experience some conflict about the acceptability of listening to music whilst at work, although recognise it as something that a younger generation do frequently, suggesting possible generational differences in perception of whether listening to music whilst working is appropriate.

'New' music listeners cited reasons for not previously listening, generally associated with not wanting to disturb colleagues, feeling it was not professional to listen to music at work or concerns about personally being distracted by listening. Following the study, they reflected on their change in perception of listening, influenced by the positive benefit they derived from having done so and indicate that it is something they will continue to do.

Sweet emotion (Aerosmith, 1975)

The overarching theme *Sweet emotion* encompasses the perception that positive emotion and positive affect were experienced by participants in the study when listening to music at work, both of which are seen to contribute to SWB (Diener, 1984; Fredrickson, 1998; Isen, 1987). The theme of *Sweet emotion* has sub-themes (Figure 3) of *Creating an optimal emotional state for work*, *Savouring*, and *Social aspects of music listening,* each of which are discussed below.
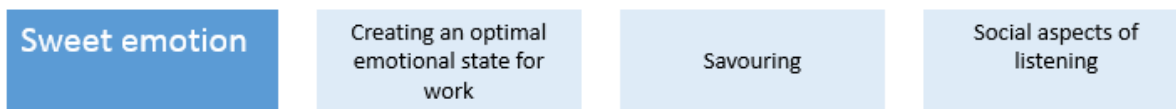
Figure 3. Sub-themes within the *Sweet emotion* theme

Creating an optimal emotional state for work

The intentionality of listening is apparent – music listening is proactively engaged in by participants to create, regulate and maintain positive emotions. It is noted that the rationale for listening appears to be more than a desire to experience positive emotions as an end in itself. Their intent seems to be with the aim of engendering an optimal emotional state for productive work, implying hedonia is a precursor to eudaimonia.

The breadth of emotional states participants chose to regulate includes managing energy, reducing stress, engendering joy, fun, and to create a feeling of calmness. Awareness of the importance of having the right frame of mind for work and using music to create an optimal emotional state to facilitate successful performance in the workplace suggests that participants are using music to create the potential for eudaimonic outcomes – striving to be at one's best, engagement and achievement.

Savouring

Savouring is the process of mentally recalling an experience that results in positive affect (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Participants describe using music to access positive emotions through the act of savouring – *"Today I chose a playlist that I used for a family holiday"*. There is a sense that the music can momentarily transport an individual to another place that is not work: "*I can remember where I was sitting when I used to listen to that song"* and in doing so triggers positive emotion. Savouring sometimes provokes nostalgia: "*The music might be sadness, like, oh my god I miss those days*". However, experiencing nostalgia was not reported as a negative emotion. This is consistent with other research that indicates that nostalgia engenders a sense of wellbeing, is predominantly accompanied by positive emotion and a sense of social connectedness and meaning in life (Biskas et al., 2018). Participants commented that they would not listen to music at work that might engender negative emotions. The fact that they do not avoid music that creates nostalgia would also suggest that the emotion experienced is positive.

Social aspects of music listening

SWB is enhanced by having positive relationships with others (Keyes, 1989; Ryff, 1989; Seligman, 2011). It was therefore of interest to the researcher to understand whether listening to music at work encouraged social interaction. A predominant comment was that, in open plan offices, people listened through headphones so as not to disturb colleagues, a practice consistent with findings by Haake (2011). However, participants also commented that use of headphones was felt to reduce social interaction and may be socially isolating for the listener: *"If I'm sitting with my headphones on all day, it can get a little bit lonely".* Participants appear aware of the potential for headphones to limit social interaction and take steps to address this. They use listening to create personal space and reduce distraction but are also aware of the importance of maintaining social 'availability'; this may relate to a requirement to balance needs for solitude with those for social interaction (Bull, 2005).

Music is used to create companionship, particularly for participants who are working in home office environments where they might not have interaction with colleagues: *"When it was too quiet, I'd put music on".* As social relationships are identified as being important contributors to eudaimonic wellbeing (Keyes, 1998; Ryff, 1989), one could infer that music is supporting wellbeing for participants in the study.

Let's work (Mick Jagger, 1987)

The theme *Let's work* further indicates that participants in the study intentionally use their music listening to stay focused, manage the workplace environment to reduce distractions, and enable themselves to be productive. The results of this study suggest that music can be both a positive and negative distractor to performance. Participants appear to be aware of when music has the potential to be negatively distracting – either due to music genre or engagement with a specific work activity – and therefore manage this by avoiding listening to specific genres at work or turning music off whilst performing particular tasks, mirroring findings by Hallam (2013) and Haake (2011). Tasks requiring high cognitive effort are activities that can prompt participants to work without music accompaniment. Listening to music with lyrics appears, universally, to be more distracting than music without lyrics, aligning with findings from other studies (Shih, Chien & Chiang, 2016; Shih, Huang & Chiang, 2012). The positive distraction effects of music are noted to divert from negative mood and reduce stress (Haake, 2011; Lesiuk, 2008).

Participants in this study intentionally use music listening to achieve a psychological state that is conducive to effective work. This 'state' – positive emotion, calmness and pleasure – contributes to their hedonic wellbeing, but is not always the end goal. In many instances the intent of generating positive affect appears to be to create an optimal state for effective and productive work – eudaimonic outcomes. Therefore, it could be surmised that, as a result of listening to music at work, participants in this study experience eudaimonic wellbeing facilitated by hedonic wellbeing. The intentional use of music by participants in this study, with the explicit aim of achieving the right psychological state for work, implies that hedonic wellbeing mediates eudaimonic outcomes, which in turn produce positive emotions – hedonic wellbeing.

Conclusion

The two studies reported indicate that musical playing and musical listening can engender both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing – positive emotions, flourishing, self-expression, flow, peak experiences and achievement. Participants in both studies used music listening or playing with intent, to create positive emotions. They were seen to leverage these positive emotions to engage in eudaimonic activity. Engaging in eudaimonic activities further contributed to positive affect, suggesting a connectivity between hedonia and eudaimonia, implying that one can mediate the other. Participants in Study # 1 (music playing) engaged in eudaimonic activities that were not immediately pleasurable; in some instances these activities caused frustration. However, they did so in the knowledge that this activity would ultimately result in an intense sense of achievement, accompanied by strong positive emotions, again implying that eudaimonic activity can mediate hedonic wellbeing.

The author proposes a model for the interaction between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing in the context of listening to personally selected music and playing a musical instrument (Figure 4).
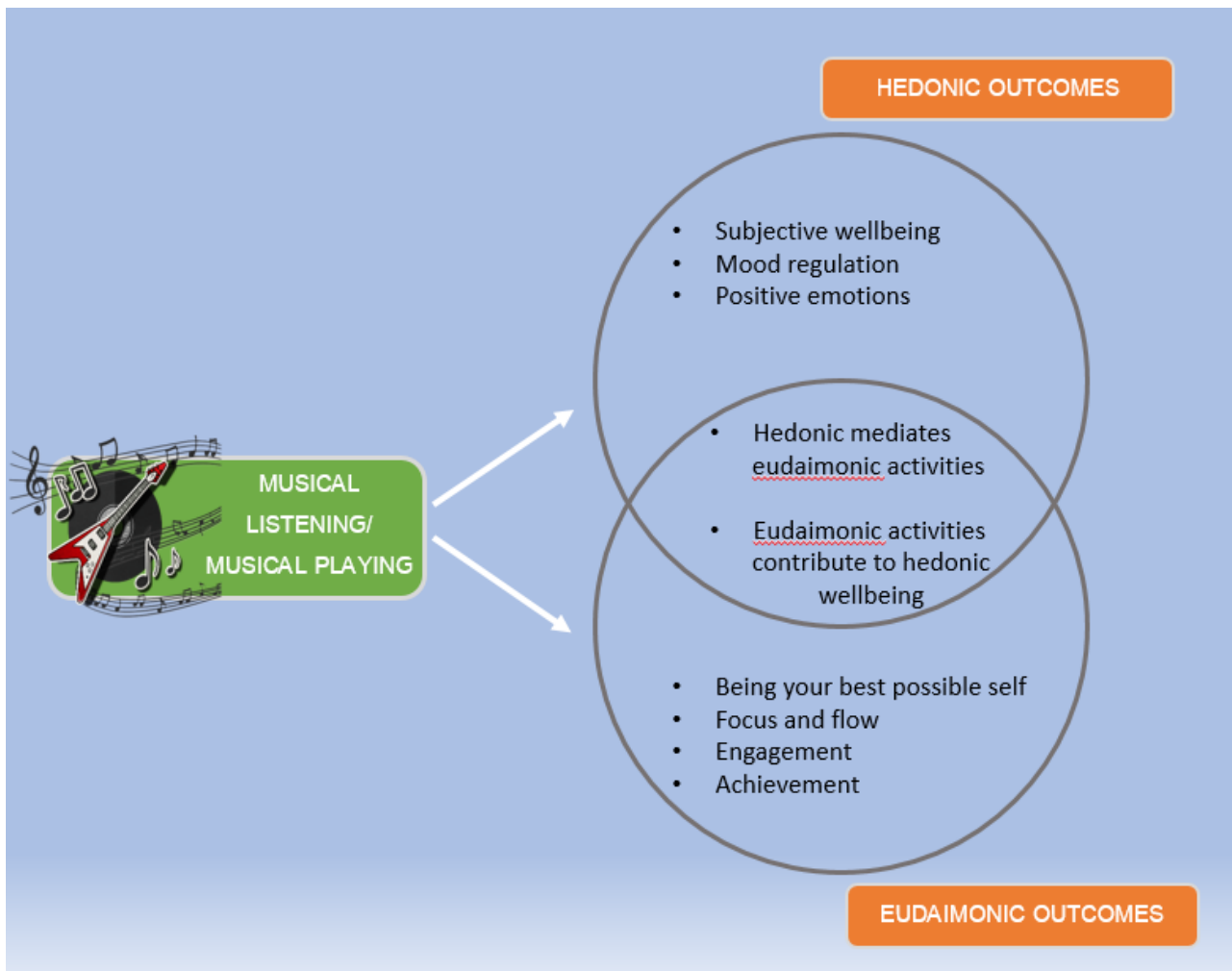
Figure 4. Hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes of music listening and playing

The model is explained as follows: listening to music and playing a musical instrument can have both hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes. In some instances, these activities are engaged in for the pure pleasure that the activity can bring – i.e. hedonic wellbeing. On other occasions, these activities are engaged in with the intent of creating a positive psychological state as a precursor to eudaimonic activity – i.e. hedonic activity mediates eudaimonic activity. Musical playing/listening may be engaged in with eudaimonic motives – for personal development, engagement, intrinsic value – and may not always engender in-the-moment wellbeing. However, the knowledge that this eudaimonic activity will ultimately result in achievement and expression of one's best possible self, accompanied by powerful positive emotion, leads the individual to persevere at the eduaimonic activity – i.e. eudaimonic activity mediates and is rewarded by hedonic wellbeing.

Implications for Future Research

Viewing hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing as interrelated and potential mediators of one another is a unique way of looking at wellbeing given that these constructs have largely been considered separate and adds to existing research. Rather than viewing each as a separate construct, to be studied as such, future research should be aimed at understanding the possible relationships between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. This could include ascertaining whether positive emotions are a necessary pre-cursor to eudaimonic wellbeing, establishing whether hedonic reward is required for continued engagement with some eudaimonic activities, and understanding how eudaimonic activities become a pathway to SWB.

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12

How Do Creative Individuals Experience and Cope with the Process of Being Creative Within an Organisation?

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Abstract

Whilst creativity is seen as being a highly desirable business skill given the pace of change in society, the creative process can be uncertain, contradictory and a source of tension (Cropley, 1997). The purpose of the research is to better understand how people, working within a creative role in an organisation, experienced the process of being creative, to what extent they perceived it as being a source of uncertainty, risk and tension, and if so, how they coped with this. I was interested in exploring how it feels to be creative within an organisation, how creative people cope when situations were uncertain or ambiguous, and how the organisational culture fosters creativity and copes with the challenges of the creative process. Data were collected by means of 11 semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of eleven individuals working in creative roles in a range of organisations for whom creativity was a core business requirement. The data were analysed inductively, driven by patterns found in the participants' experience. Results from the research suggest that participants experience creativity at work as a paradoxical source of tension emanating from the conflict between their identity as creative people and the sense from their organisation that creativity was only valued as a means of making money. I have identified the paradox of commerciality and creativity as a powerful force in shaping the experience of the creative process at work, influencing the extent to which creativity is valued over and above its ability to generate financial returns. A conclusion is that, rather than simply viewing creativity as a process, organisations should pay attention to the conscious and unconscious messages regarding how creativity is valued that are being communicated by the organisation's culture and behaviours.

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13

Passion at Work: Innate or Created?

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Abstract

Passion at work: is it innate or can it be created? A qualitative study aimed to explore the construct of passion in a very specific setting: the realm of work. Passion as a psychological construct has been studied in various environments, especially connected with subjective and psychological well-being. The interest in passion at work is increasing in recent years mainly due to global business competitiveness. An extensive literature review has been conducted in order to explore independent but interrelated constructs such as eudaimonia, self-determination theory and intrinsic motivation. Participants were chosen among a population of individuals who claim to be passionate about their work. Eight individuals, four male and four female, all self-employed or small-business entrepreneurs, were interviewed by Skype. A thematic analysis was performed on translated interview transcriptions. Research results confirm previous research and theoretical findings on this topic and suggest a new way of representing basic needs and motivations for passion at work. Future applications could be focused on these findings in order to confirm the existence of a circumplex model of a dual balanced structure based on focus on meaning (self and others) and focus on dimensions (mind and body), not based on a specific activity, and it could be a starting point to be able to 'build' or to 'create' our own passion.

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14

Vulnerability & Leadership:
Exploring the Influence of Gender, Environment and Psychological Processes on Leaders' Willingness to Show Vulnerability

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Abstract

Despite surging advocacy of vulnerability in popular leadership publications, the distinct lack of empirical evidence and limited academic articles is apparent. This research explores: what influences vulnerability in the context of leadership? To what extent do psychological processes, gender and environmental factors moderate willingness to be vulnerable? How can coaching practices harness this empirical knowledge? Using mixed methodology and convenience sampling, leaders participated in semi-structured interviews (n=10) and an online survey (n=34). Thematic transcript analysis identified factors impacting willingness to be vulnerable, causes and consequences. Imposter Phenomenon (IP), Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) and Authentic Leadership (AL) were also tested in relation to vulnerability. Gender showed no statistically significant link to LSE, IP, AL nor vulnerability. AL was found to be significantly related to vulnerability; LSE and IP were not. Qualitative analysis highlighted dominance of external influences on vulnerability, implying that external factors outweigh internal factors in leaders' willingness to share vulnerability. Subsequently, critiquing and readapting the AL model to encompass 'Mutual Positive Modelling' between leaders and followers alike, this research empirically demonstrates that Leadership and Organisational Coaching Practice must focus on nurturing psychologically safe environments through positive psychology practices, where vulnerability is normalised, and provides an operational mechanism for vulnerability, benefiting individuals, teams and organisations.

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15

Building and Fostering a Positive Classroom Environment and Community

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YouTube podcast on cultivating teacher wellbeing: https://youtu.be/sGwI2uu7nlE

Abstract

International teacher Brittany Rehal has been teaching first grade for three years and is currently the Grade 1 Team Leader at an International School in Qatar as well as a distance-learning student studying MAPPCP at the University of East London. This paper outlines a workshop Brittany conducted at the APP Symposium, on how to create a positive classroom environment and build a positive classroom community. The workshop focused on the physical environment by looking at what's being communicated to students by simple yet meaningful choices such as the arrangement of desks/seating options, displays on the walls, and encouraging messages or reminders. Also explored was how to implement routines and activities that foster positive psychology principles for all ages (e.g. growth mindset, gratitude, kindness, etc.). Brittany applies concepts and research positive psychology and coaching literature to create these classroom adaptations that can be applied to curriculum as well as community within classrooms/schools. The concept of growth mindset is showcased through various resources, and ways to explain this important concept to students and parents, and language framing how to best help teachers guide their students to embrace their growth mindset and flourish academically, socially and emotionally, are discussed. Included are pictures from Brittany's classroom, examples from fellow teachers, online resources and tangible activities that teachers, educators and parents can use and implement right away.

Introduction & Background

My name is Brittany Rehal and I am an International Teacher, Grade Level Leader, founder of Wellness Committees in Shanghai and Qatar, and current student working towards my Masters in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology as a distance-learner at the University of East London. I am passionate about teaching other teachers how to create and foster a positive classroom community and environment. I had the pleasure of presenting this topic at the 5th Annual Applied Positive Psychology Symposium at Bucks New University this June, 2019.

As Positive Psychology students, we are very familiar with how positive emotions broaden and build once we learn how to acknowledge and foster these emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). Additionally, we've read study after study of how embracing a grateful disposition can quite literally change our life and rewire our brains to function at their optimal level (Achor, 2011). But what are we doing with this knowledge? How are we disseminating these life changing research findings to those who aren't yet familiar with positive psychology or positive education? Questions about how to apply or share research have surfaced time and time again when research articles conclude or limitations are revealed. I believe we just need to start. Wherever we can, as often as possible, and as visibly as we can. Rather than be the keepers of this knowledge by restricting exposure to only those academic enough to understand our papers full of positive psychology jargon, we can model our thorough understanding and belief by putting our knowledge into terms and actions people can grasp! As a teacher, I believe this starts with how we teach and how we choose to live our lives.

Creating A Positive Atmosphere from the Start

I integrate positive education in daily classroom routines and love creating joyful atmospheres (both emotionally and aesthetically) to promote positive community within my classroom. At the beginning of each school year, I invest time and creativity in developing a bright, inviting and personalized entry to my classroom. I choose a color theme ahead of time that embodies positivity and makes me feel joyful and energized. For example, my favorite theme is "RADIANCE" and I use bright yellow, orange, and teal to turn my classroom into a radiant room for my first graders. Throughout the year, I connect the multiple definitions of radiance to what we learn; primarily the definition of a person who emulates health, love and joy.

When the year starts, I'm careful to leave my walls mostly bare with the exception of our calendar, a simple growth mindset and fixed mindset bulletin board, and a few decorations hung on the ceiling and around the room. I explain to my students that we are a community and we learn together, therefore I won't put anything on the walls until we learn about the concept together. This way they understand all displayed material and can use these resources interactively to reinforce their learning.

The exception is the growth mindset bulletin board. I begin teaching this instrumental concept on the first day of school. Guiding my students in differentiating between growth mindset and fixed mindset language, actions, and ways of thinking is integrated in my curriculum every day for the entire year. Regardless of which grade I teach, my overarching goal is for my students to move forward filled with belief in their own capabilities and a resilient growth mindset to guide their academic and life journey.

Cultivating Gratitude

Once I do begin decorating the walls, I create interactive displays that students are part of. For the past two years, I've chosen to display "CHOOSE TO BE GRATEFUL" in our hallway.

The letters were created by an artistic student teacher who worked with me during my first summer in Shanghai and I've brought them with me to Qatar. While the title stays the same, student responses and prompts are changed, edited and revised throughout the year. The first time they write what they're grateful for, I see a lot of material responses (e.g., my toy ponies, my LEGOs, Minecraft, etc.). However, as they learn more about the paradoxical depth and simplicity of gratitude, their responses evolve the second time they respond to include people who help them, parents who love them, or friends who make them feel special. Teachers can laminate the beginning of the sentence, "I am grateful for _____" and students can use whiteboard markers to write their response. This could be done weekly, daily, or every semester to see how students are progressing in their writing, grammar and their understanding of what gratitude means.

Another way I incorporate gratitude in my classroom routine is by teaching students how to keep a gratitude journal. My students choose colored paper to cover their journal and design their journal with pictures, stickers, and words that bring them joy. Each day, we either end or begin our day by journaling. The format changes as my writers grow and I switch up the prompts to keep students engaged. For example, some days we will write three reasons why today is good, other days we will write about three people we're grateful for and why. When they're ready to write more and more, I encourage my kiddos to include a 'positive moment of the day' (P.M.D.) to write about in detail.

These journals stay in our class throughout the week and go home on the weekends for students to maintain the routine throughout the weekend. This creates an opportunity for parents and family members to learn about the practice of gratitude and see the change in their child when they begin routinely and meaningfully practicing gratitude.

When you walk into or see your classroom, how do _you_ feel? What messages do you choose to convey to students, parents, and teachers who pass by your room? As teachers, we are repeatedly taught and guided to believe that everything we do is for the growth and success of our students. However, if we ourselves are not happy and flourishing as individuals, how will we positively influence our students? Our physical environment greatly impacts our emotions and is wondrously within our control to change. Rounding the corner to your classroom or approaching your room from down the hall should ignite your beautiful smile to start radiating and propel positive thoughts of how great your day is going to be.

Inspirational Quotes

Quotes at the front of your door are a great way to have a far-reaching impact, gently remind you what's important and pay forward positivity. You can change these quotes weekly or monthly and

make them interactive by using them as a writing or discussion prompt for your students. Once they are displayed, students have an opportunity to create and share their own interpretation. Later in the week, you can choose to have a class discussion and facilitate students in appreciating their peers' perspective while simultaneously opening their minds to what the real world application looks like. Not only do your students see, read and notice this quote every time they enter your room, but your colleagues down the hall and/or supervisors/teachers who visit your room also have a chance to walk away with a smile and sense of encouragement that could completely enhance their day and recharge their mindset.
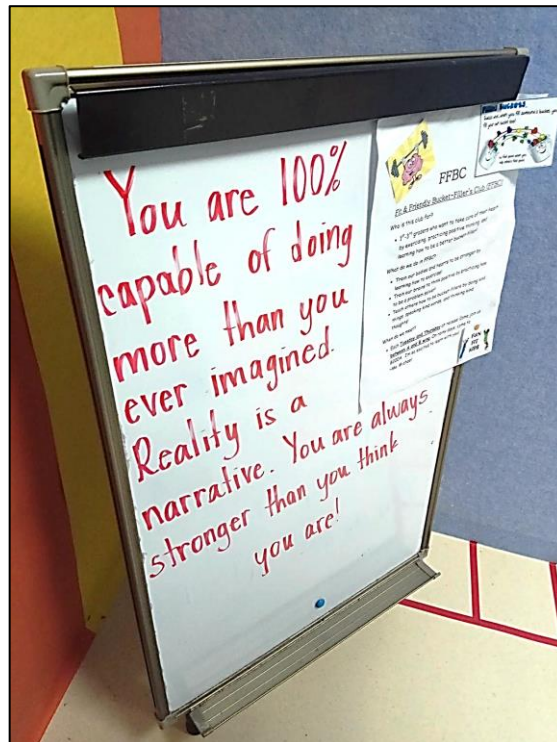
Another way I incorporate quotes is at the very beginning of our day. How we start our day is so important. Sometimes our students come into our classroom after being rushed out of the house, without breakfast, lacking a hug or kiss goodbye and inadequate sleep. While these are factors outside of our control, how their day starts when they enter our room is completely within our control. I like to hang a few short but powerful quotes above my doorway or in the entry to my room. Before students enter, they read at least one quote aloud and change the quote to first person. Instead of proclaiming, "you are always stronger than you think you are!" they announce, "I am always stronger than I think I am!" All of my students are ELL's (English Language Learners) and this is a great exercise to help them develop their oral speaking, apply grammatical skills, practice reading aloud, and, most importantly, begin building a firm foundation of believing in themselves.

Building Confidence

Part of teaching my students to believe in themselves is teaching them how to embody confidence and explaining why confidence is important. During the first week of school we talk about what confidence looks like, sounds like and feels like. I utilize differentiated seating and confidence is a fantastic supplication to teaching differentiated seating and setting expectations for what each seat looks like. How we teach and model seating offers phenomenal opportunities to build students' confidence by modelling good posture and explaining why we hold our heads high and pull our shoulders back. Teachers can additionally incorporate yoga into classroom community through child-friendly yoga brain breaks and letting students choose a seating position that either works best for them or challenges them (sitting with legs crossed, sitting with shins against the floor and legs tucked underneath for a deep quadricep stretch, etc.).

How we carry ourselves says a lot about our self-worth, and I strongly believe teaching confidence can and should be taught throughout routines and classroom expectations. The seating options I utilize include a high desk used as a standing desk, tables low to the floor where students can sit on pillows, high stools where students can write with a clipboard, carpet seating (where yoga seating is allowed), and tactile seats for students who benefit from sensory stimulation (fuzzy chairs, beanbags, bumpy inflated cushions, etc.). I teach each seating option and let students try each seat through rotations during the first week of school. Once they learn how to sit and work at each location, they get to choose their seat throughout the day and are allowed to change their location for different activities.

In addition to how students sit, how they speak about themselves, their peers and to others is a big part of confidence in our classroom. I encourage 'confident voices' by asking students, "can you please speak with confidence?" instead of asking students to speak louder or look at their peers. While confidence doesn't always mean you're loud, confidence does mean you speak clearly. It's up to you, their teacher, to set, model, and reinforce your expectations clearly, firmly and consistently. This is just as important for how students speak about their peers and incredibly important for you to interfere during teachable moments. If a student bravely decides to narrate a long, detailed story about a trip to the mall during our 'weekend share' time in morning meeting, I look for students listening attentively and verbally encourage their listening skills. If a student sighs loudly or starts whispering to a friend, I pause the student who is sharing, "I'm so sorry to interrupt you Alicia, let's just wait for your friends to make a better choice." This type of language increases student autonomy and reinforces the reality that students are in control of their actions and each action will create the

type of person they want to be. Your tone is very important in how your guidance is received and should be light and genuine rather than sarcastic. Soon, your students will respond to "confidence please" by automatically straightening up their spines, lifting their chin, pulling their shoulders back, and looking speakers directly in their eyes or looking directly at their audience if they are presenting.

Growth Mindset

Another goal I set and work towards daily with my students is for my tiny humans to move forward with a full understanding of what growth mindset is, what fixed mindset is, and what growth mindset sounds and feels like. Dweck (2017) developed growth mindset and I believe these
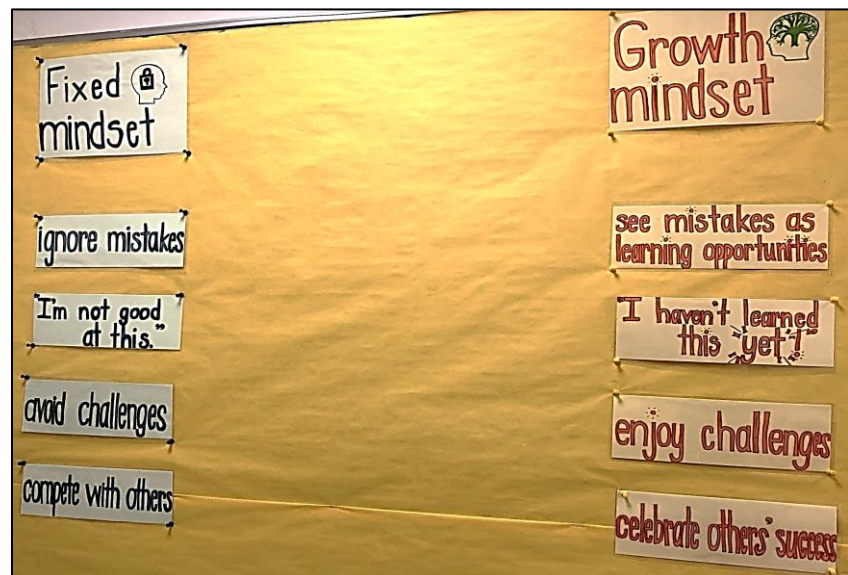
principles can (and should) be taught to students of any and every age. I start teaching growth mindset in chunks to ensure students understand each component of what growth mindset is and what fixed mindset is. When I teach one aspect of growth mindset, such as "I haven't learned this yet!" I teach the parallel aspect of fixed mindset: "I'm not good at this."

As with everything else I teach, I make as many real-world connections to this as possible throughout each day. This includes spotlighting students who use the word 'yet', celebrating failure as a chance for us to learn, and sharing my own growth as a learner. My students especially love when I practice my language skills with them (in China, I would share how was I learning Mandarin, in Qatar, my students know I'm learning Arabic). How you embody what you teach as a teacher makes what you teach so much more powerful and lasting.

My students quickly learn to replace the word 'smart' with 'problem-solving' and eradicate the perpetual overuse of the word 'easy'. While the word 'easy' proliferates through academia, exercise classes, and a seemingly never-ending list of examples, I explain and model how something 'easy' for one person could be incredibly challenging for someone sitting right next to them. When someone hears another conclude, "this is so easy", they may feel more frustrated with not learning how to solve a problem yet. Instead, we choose to celebrate our differences and appreciate how we

get to learn from others. We use hand motions to show our brain getting bigger when we make a mistake, learn a new way to solve a problem, or practice a new skill to reinforce our understanding of what growth mindset looks like in the real world.

Building Trust and Communication Skills

In order to maintain and build a positive community, trust is essential. One of my favorite ways to build trust and communication is by personalizing greetings for each student every morning. I'm at the door ready to welcome them with a warm smile when they arrive and ask each student how they are each morning before they come inside. While responses are similar at the beginning of the year, students soon feel comfortable expressing their feelings and this becomes a vital routine to know how I can help my tiny humans have a great start to their day. From each, individual response, I learn who was rushed out of the house without breakfast, which students didn't get enough sleep, who argued with siblings before arriving to school or which students started their day with anxiety because their guardians or caretakers forgot to mention who was picking them up from school and now they're worried they will be left at school all night.

While seemingly trivial, these feelings and situations have a huge impact on how students learn, communicate and feel throughout their school day. We've all had days that begin with challenge after challenge. We wearily look at the clock coldly proclaiming it's only 8 AM and feel baffled as to how we are going to survive, let alone thrive, throughout our day. Imagine this heavy weight as a six or seven-year old! By giving students an opportunity to express their anxiety, anger, sadness or physical needs (hunger, sleep, etc.) at the door, they are able to put down this weight and choose to restart their day.

We take a deep breath together and I create a space for students to let out all the feelings they don't want to bring in our classroom when they exhale. I remind them how amazing they are and how much I love them. If they are upset because they didn't have breakfast, they go to their backpack to eat a snack they have packed or I have a few options I keep in my room for these situations (dried fruit, nuts, etc.). If tears resulted from sharing feelings, they can drink water outside before coming in or spend some time alone if they want a minute to themselves. Before they come in, we start our whole greeting again and I remind them, "Today is a brand new day! I'm so excited to see what you choose to do with your today."

Students Become Teachers

Part of encouraging students' verbal communication and building communication skills is leading a morning meeting every morning. I use a song to signify the time for students to clean up and come to a circle on the carpet. Once all students are seated, I stop the music and join them on the carpet. At the beginning of the year, we start with a simple "good morning ___ (student name)" greeting that goes around the circle as each student greets the peer next to them. As the year progresses, we add kinaesthetic actions such as handshakes (a great opportunity for a mini-lesson about the importance of a confident, firm handshake!), high fives, fist bumps, hugs, and a litany of other choices that students love to take ownership over when it's their turn to choose the morning greeting.

To enhance the importance of celebrating differences and expanding the meaning of being an 'international school', we also learn language greetings. The languages usually depend on the country I'm teaching in and the nationalities of my students. When I was in China, I had students from Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea. These students got to be teachers and teach our class how to say "good morning" in Thai, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean while the local students got to be teachers when we did a Chinese greeting. This helps build community by increasing students' connection to their peers, illuminates similarities, celebrates differences of neighboring countries and creates an opportunity for students to feel special and important. Students who are locals or speak the local language get to be teachers to non-natives, and students who are learning the local language get to teach their peers about their native language. This creates a shared experience where each student knows the feeling of being the "teacher" and the "learner" and the similar qualities needed to be effective for each role.

Another way students learn how to teach is through opportunities to be a 'Peer Tutor'. I choose 3-4 students each day to proudly wear the Peer Tutor badge and be our Peer Tutors for the day. During morning work time, they receive a mini-lesson from me on the difference between teaching and telling. I've expanded our mini-lesson to include tools and strategies I've learned from coaching and

remind students that telling someone an answer does not help them. Instead, asking a student a question about what they did, what they think, etc., will help the student create their own answer or learn from a mistake. When students have a question during the day, they can go to any one of the Peer Tutors to ask instead of raising their hand . When I hear tutors answering a student with a question, e.g., Student: "I don't have a pencil!" Peer Tutor: "What do you think you should do?" I make sure to make a big deal out of noticing this interaction and celebrating how the student was able to be a problem-solver with the help of their Peer Tutor's question. This is a great way to model what growth mindset sounds like, build confidence in Peer Tutors and students, and teach coaching style questioning and listening to my kiddos.
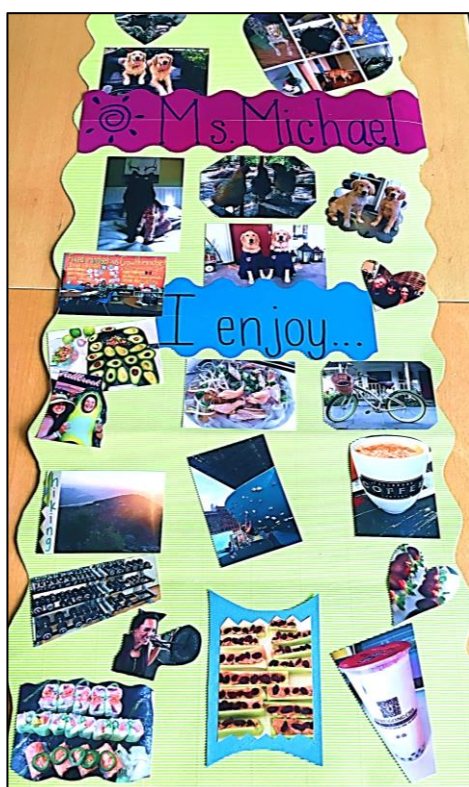
Personalisation

As I've previously mentioned, trust is essential for building and maintaining a positive classroom and community. To foster trust at the beginning of the year, I invest time in getting to know my students. Their first homework assignment is to bring a "me bag" to school with 1-3 items they'd like to share with our class. I model the activity by bringing my own "me bag" and showing my students a picture of my family, a red heart sticker and a book or article. I explain the picture of my family, introduce each member, and tell my students I love my family and I miss them when I'm teaching far away from home. I show the heart and tell my kiddos that I love making my heart stronger by exercising my body and practicing kindness every day. I show them the book or article and explain that I love growing my brain by learning new things, taking on challenges and reading every day. By participating in the activity with my students, I am able to model my expectations of appropriate items to bring as well as share a bit about myself! Students quickly learn that we are all learning together. By displaying the picture on my desk or creating a picture wall of things I enjoy, students have an opportunity to ask me questions, see the important people in my family and understand I am a person and their teacher.

I let students know the
photo they bring can
become a part of their
desk if they would like
to have a photo next to
their name. I point out how teachers have their own desk with pictures, artwork from students, etc. and that students have their own space as well. This is wonderfully powerful when students need reminders to use a growth mindset and I ask them to look at the picture of their family. I remind them of how much their family believes in them and loves them. I tell them they are important, and their family knows how challenging having a growth mindset is but they believe in their son/daughter and they want their son/daughter to believe in themselves. The pictures are also a great way for students to connect to each other when they get to see their peers' photos on their desk. During a snack break, they will walk to different desks and ask questions about the pictures, different families, and where the picture was taken. They get to find out who else has travelled, who has pets, who has siblings, and already they've learned so much about someone who sits across the room from them.

Creative Flair

While creating your physical environment, choose to be different and pointedly make your class special. Even if your school has a regulated display sign for each classroom, decorate your sign to reflect your class colors or theme! Your students will feel like they are a part of something special and you can choose a theme that embodies your teaching philosophy and ideals. When your class is represented or your students are participating in a school-wide event, this increases pride in their community when they can say, "we are RADIANT ET1D!" or "we are the sharks of ET1C!" Adding a little flair to your classroom room number, regulated name or school-mandated title will set your class apart and help make your classroom a happy space for you and your students.

Positive Reminders

How our classroom looks says a lot about our ideologies as a teacher and as a person. I love displaying simple, meaningful reminders in our classroom that are used throughout the year, interactive, and consistently applicable to situations throughout the day. One of my favorites is this

reminder about thinking before we speak. Before I display this sign, I teach the concept and conduct a Think Aloud to ensure my students understand how to connect this to their life. For example, I might say, "Today, I felt frustrated because the sun wasn't shining and I almost said, 'I hate clouds!'. But then I remembered to THINK. Is it true that I hate clouds? No! I love the rain and I love watching the clouds make different shapes in the sky! Is it helpful for me to say that I hate clouds? No, this doesn't help anyone or anything. Is it inspiring to say that I hate clouds? No, hate is not an inspiring word. Is it necessary for me to say that I hate clouds? No, especially since it's not true. Is it kind to say that I hate clouds? No, what if someone I know really loves clouds and they heard me say I hate them. I bet they would feel sad." Using an example students can comprehend helps them learn how to apply this questioning process to their own thoughts and consider while listening to others. Helping students identify moments when they need a reminder to THINK is crucial. When a student speaks unkindly to a peer or reacts instead of responses, simply directing them to read this chart and think about their choice can help them build their autonomy and self-regulation.
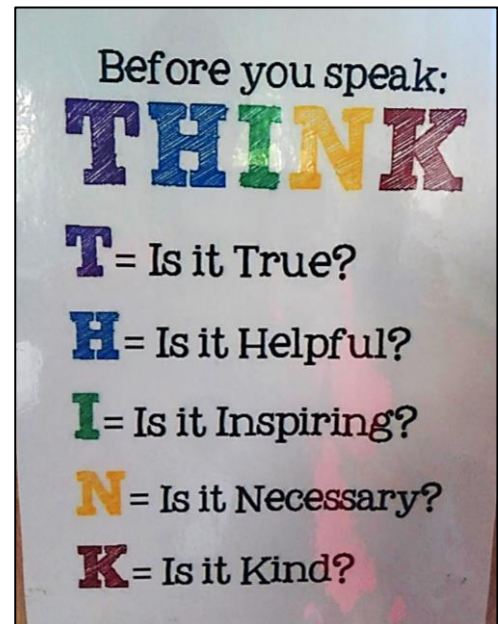
Including Parents and Families

In addition to teaching students about self-regulation, metacognition, and kindness, teachers have an opportunity to inspire parents as well! I learned a fabulous way to include parents in our classroom community from an amazing teacher, Heather Cash, whom I worked with as a student teacher. She created a 'Family Journal' in which students write a letter to their parents/siblings/family members at the end of each week of school. The whole class brainstorms ideas for what we learned during the week week, recalls any exciting events, and then creates their own letter using a template. By using a simple template in addition to the brainstormed ideas written on the board, students have enough material to either write their own letter or follow the template. Both fulfil the purpose of taking ownership over their learning and practicing the valuable skill of reflecting. The template is flexible and can be changed/enhanced as writers develop. The template additionally models positive framing by changing "we have to_____" to "we get to_____". During the weekend, parents/siblings have time to write back to their son or daughter. Creating a Family Journal routine is the first step to

encouraging students to keep their own journal and helps them look forward to sharing their learning with family and friends at the end of each week. Here are some examples!
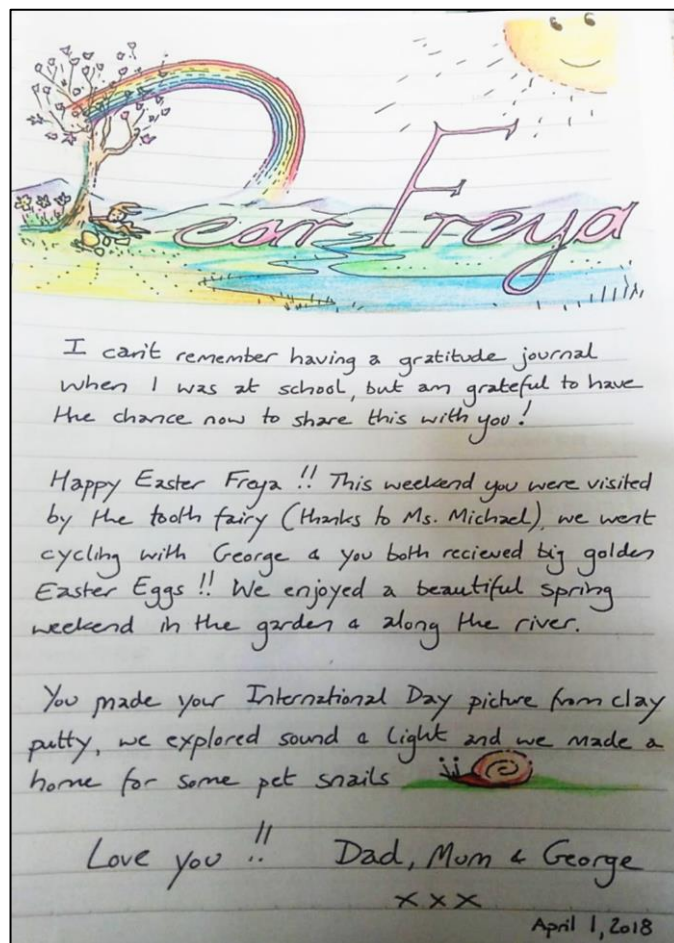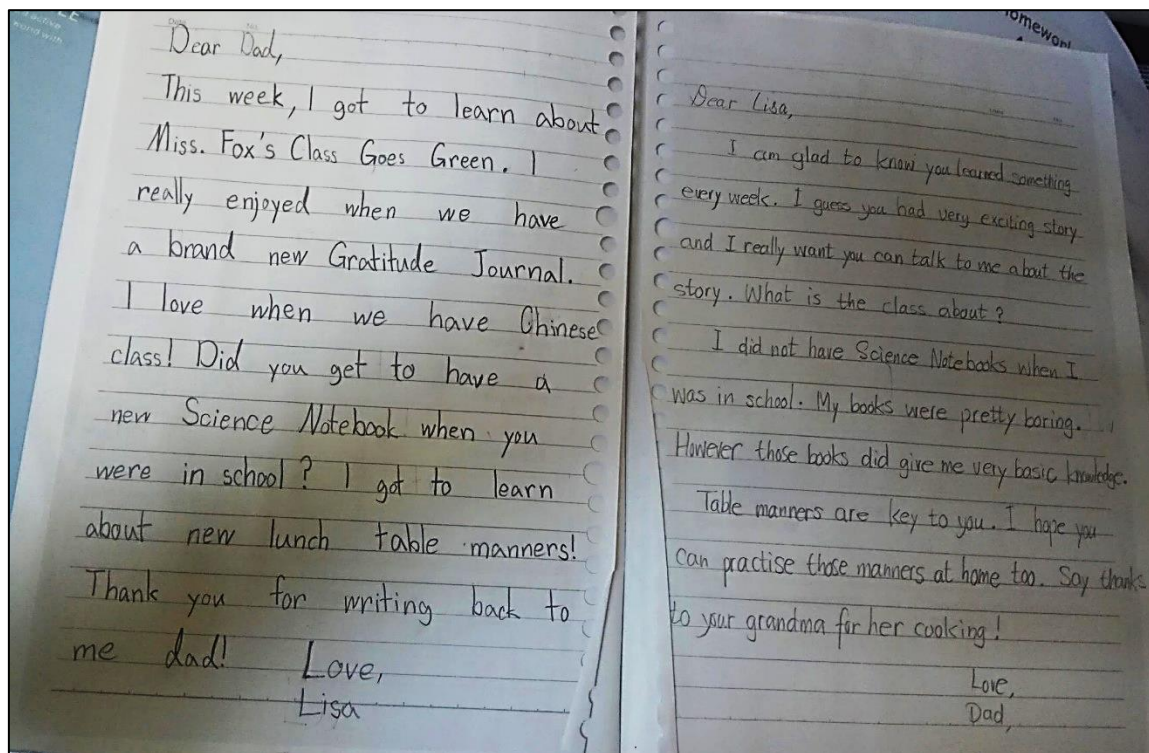
As you can see from these examples, this is also a wonderful way for families to note down their memories and share their talents and passion to inspire their children! Dates help keep track of family, school and childhood memories. This is also a safe place for parents to ask their children questions that may not be fully answered at home. Above all, this journal helps create positive, frequent communication between students and their parents. While I've always had a few students whose parents aren't able to write back each week, I either write back to the students or I let one of their friends write back to them so they always have something to read before we write our journal.

Other ways to communicate positively with parents and include them in their child's learning include utilizing weekly posts and messages on ClassDojo (https://www.classdojo.com) or other education-based websites to show pictures and videos of what students are learning in class! I also like to put a positive spin on the dreaded "phone call home" by calling parents to tell them an amazing choice their child made, a way their child demonstrated growth mindset during class or how their child chose to be kind to others. Parents get the joy of hearing about their son or daughter in class, their child receives encouragement from me and their parents for a specific action, and other students see examples of real-world application of good choices, growth mindset and kindness (just to name a few). These calls can be about academic progress, or social and emotional skill progression. If parents are comfortable sharing their child's photo or a picture of their work/kind choice/etc., I will post their great choice on ClassDojo to give other students examples of what these choices look like and celebrate individual victories as a class community. I also send occasional, personalized emails throughout the year to thank parents just for being parents! Parenting is quite possibly the most difficult and daunting job in the world. They deserve to hear how they are appreciated and how their efforts are helping their tiny human grow and develop into a person they are proud of.

Modelling Positive Language and Action

The impact of how we choose to speak on a daily basis extends far beyond how we speak to our students and their parents. This includes how we speak to our colleagues, our supervisors, friends, and, most importantly, ourselves. The 'self-talk' we model for our students is critical to their development and should be carefully chosen to reflect self-love and thoroughly examined for hidden lessons. Many schools claim to use PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) yet still use phrases like "Don't run", "Stop talking", etc, when trying to correct behavior. Rather than starting with a negative, teachers can guide students by what they should be doing. "Please walk! Please turn your voice off! Thank you for making a better choice! Is this a safe choice for people around you?"

My favorite adjustment I've made as a teacher and as a learner myself is changing obligation into opportunity. Instead of thinking or saying, "I have to ___ (read this paper, change my citations)" I replace "have" with "get" and become instantly more grateful. "I get to_____." This one-word swap may be simple, but it does take time to thoroughly implement into your thought process and your students thoughts/speech. The impacts are far reaching in terms of developing your students' gratitude, modelling growth mindset and creating opportunities for students to shine.

How students speak to each other is incredibly important as they're developing into the person they want to be. It's our job, as teachers, to consistently make time to intervene in teachable moments rather than pretend we didn't hear a rude comment or press on through content to meet mandated deadlines. This extends to interactions between student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-student. There have been a few times when I have reacted instead of responded to a student who was pressing my buttons and I got to model humility (and swallow my own pride) by apologizing to the student, in front of our class, for my reaction and explaining that next time I would take a breath before I responded to be sure I was responding instead of reacting. These types of moments are critical for students learning and for demystifying the myth that teachers "know everything". Intellectual humility is tremendously powerful and necessary in order to be a lifelong learner; a goal I set for each of the tiny humans I have the pleasure of teaching.

When intervening with situation specific moments, teachers should consistently model the type of language they expect their students to use. If a student's self-talk is negative, "I can't do this! It's too hard." Teachers can make this a teaching moment by reiterating growth mindset language, "what's that one little word, my favorite word, that changes everything?" "YET!". Then, ask the student to repeat their exclamation with a few revisions. "I can't do this yet! It's hard but I'm going to keep trying!" Part of getting growth mindset to really stick is teaching the language that accompanies growth mindset. Most of this language is self-talk which can be modeled through Think Alouds, sentence framing and narratives. However, the language also extends to how students encourage their peers.

Teaching phrases that celebrate others' success and highlight others' growth is a skill students need to hear and learn in order to practice. The phrase "problem-solver" can go a long way with teaching self-talk, identifying autonomous actions students take, and celebrating peers who make problem-solving choices. When teachers make a big deal out of students who solve problems on their own or use resources they have to solve problems (dictionaries, anchor charts in the room, words written

around the room, etc) other students have tangible examples of what problem solving looks like and the problem-solving student is encouraged for being in charge of finding their own solution.

How we treat others is witnessed and processed by our students. Think about what your face typically looks like when you meet someone in the hall or when you walk your students into the cafeteria and greet the cafeteria helpers. Are you smiling? Do you say something kind? Do you genuinely ask them how they are and personalize your greeting with their name(s)? I've found that how we act on a daily basis is what we teach. We can give great speeches, tell students all about kindness, put up wonderful posters about growth mindset; but until they see us living what we speak about-words are just words.

Random acts of kindness are a fantastic way to model kindness and a great pick-me-up for a long week. If you feel like it's been a long week, chances are you're not the only one! Bringing an extra cup of coffee for your neighboring teacher or simply writing a note or email to thank a colleague for how they've inspired you creates a marvellous energy and can set forth a ripple effect of paying kindness forward.

Brain Breaks

In addition to random acts of kindness, acknowledging the work your students do throughout the day/week is paramount. Brain breaks are a fantastic way to give your kiddos a chance to release their creative energy, move their bodies and activate communication between their left and right brain. I love using gonoodle.com, mindyetti, class games (four corners, dance circles, laughing yoga), yoga, outdoor laps around the playground or school, breathing exercises, or a teacher share where I share photos or videos from something in my life.

I make brain breaks a part of our daily classroom routine by having a brain break after morning meeting and as needed throughout the day. Your classroom routines play a huge role in how your classroom community develops and can be a wonderful opportunity for you to showcase your passions. If you love music, use music for transition cues instead of verbally asking students to sit down, come to their circle, line up, etc. If you love to sing, teach your students a song they can sing when they're rotating centers or getting ready for lunch. Once you learn more about your students' interests, incorporate what they love into class routines! If they love a certain song, use that song as a cue, if they love to dance, have them dance into their line; this will increase engagement and give students more opportunities to do what they love while their learning.

Be YOU! If you're the only teacher in the school who lets your students have a 2 minute dance circle after finishing an exam or just because, good for you! Be proud to be different and unique and choose to celebrate these qualities in your peers and spotlight teachers who choose to be different and courageous.

Positive Traditions

Celebrating Birthdays

Birthdays are a great opportunity to set a class tradition. I learned and adapted the tradition I currently use from a teacher I got to work with during my student teaching in Santa Barbara. Whenever a child had a birthday, each student in the class would share, "I'm grateful _____ was born because____." I love this concept of paying forward gratitude on birthdays and sharing why the child is special and important from the perspective of each student and teacher. I began making birthday books to give to each student on their birthday as a way to preserve the memory of our class and remind them to be grateful. I added a few questions for the birthday boy or girl and wrote

their responses on the first page of their birthday book so they could look back when they're older and see a few of their favorite things from first grade. These questions can be modified for different grade levels/ages.
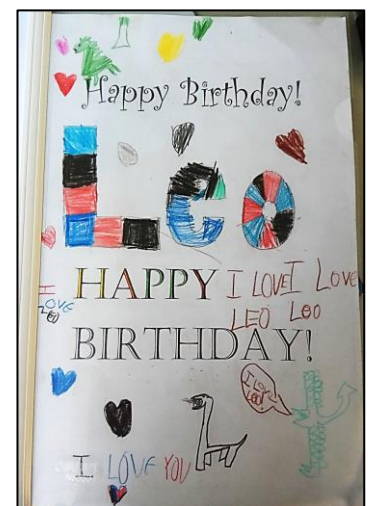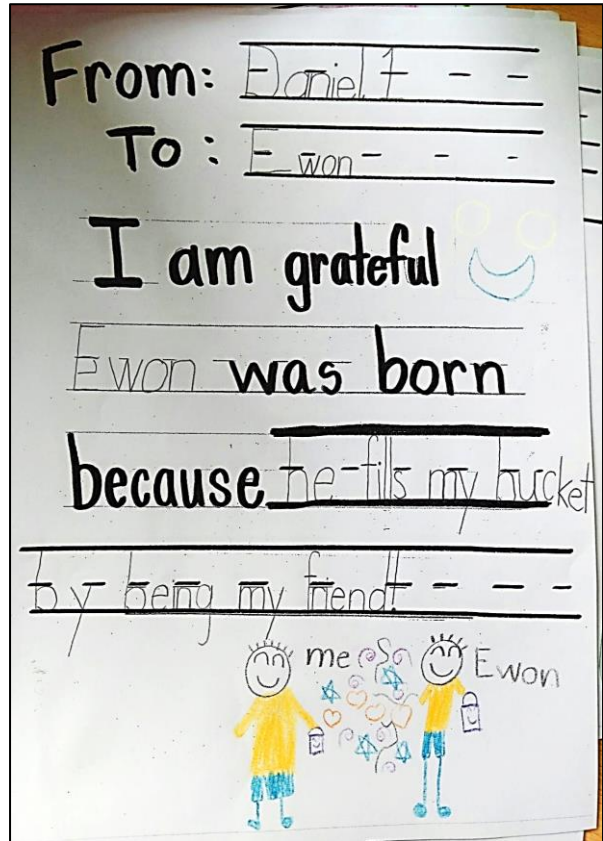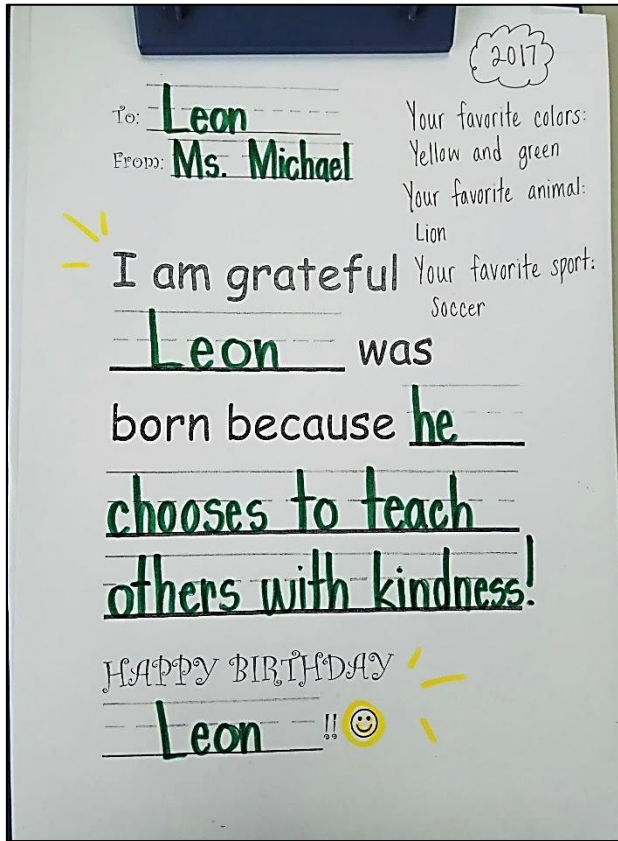
Hopes & Dreams

Another tradition I pay forward is starting the year with a discussion on hopes and dreams. I share my hopes and dreams for the school year and then facilitate a discussion for students to share their hopes and dreams.

We write our goal for the year on a speech bubble to mount next to their first day of school photo and we create a "Hopes and Dreams" wall that stays up the whole year. This is a great reminder for students to revisit throughout the year and I additionally added the "Adjective Me!" activity underneath.
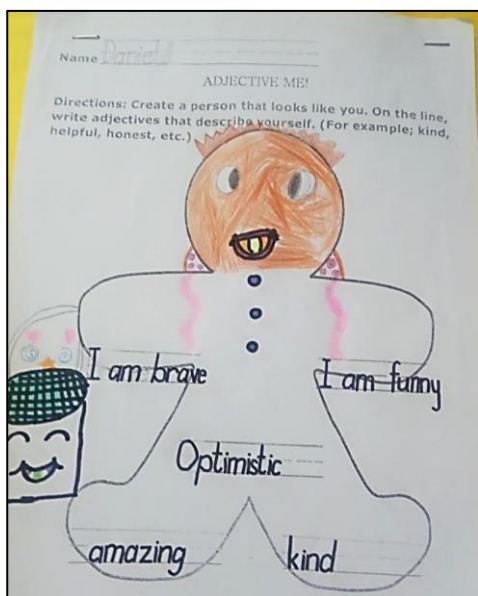

During the first week of school, students create their "Adjective Me" and we discuss adjectives that describe who they are (or want to be) as a person rather than what they look like. Once they fill out and publish their adjectives, the display is a wonderful confidence booster and a great way to incorporate character strength language.

Finishing the Hopes and Dreams activity aides in transitioning into a discussion about what guidelines we need to follow in order to reach our hopes and dreams. I explain we are a community so we work together, which means we get to create our own pledge to make sure we are kind and mindful of what we should do to make sure everyone has a chance to reach their goals. The conversation is facilitated by asking students, "What do we need to do to make sure we can reach our

goal of ____?" Then students come up with suggestions. These are typically framed negatively, e.g., "Don't push each other" and present a great opportunity for teachers to help students frame their responses in a positive way. "Okay, if we aren't pushing each other, what are we doing?" You can continue asking deductive questions until students come up with a clear response. The pledge can be completely student led if they are already able to write and they can work together to write their class pledge, or students can color the important words in younger grades after the teacher writes out the words. All students sign the pledge after they've read and understood the purpose. The class pledge can be read aloud each morning during Morning Meeting and a copy should be sent home for parents to view, read with their child, and sign.
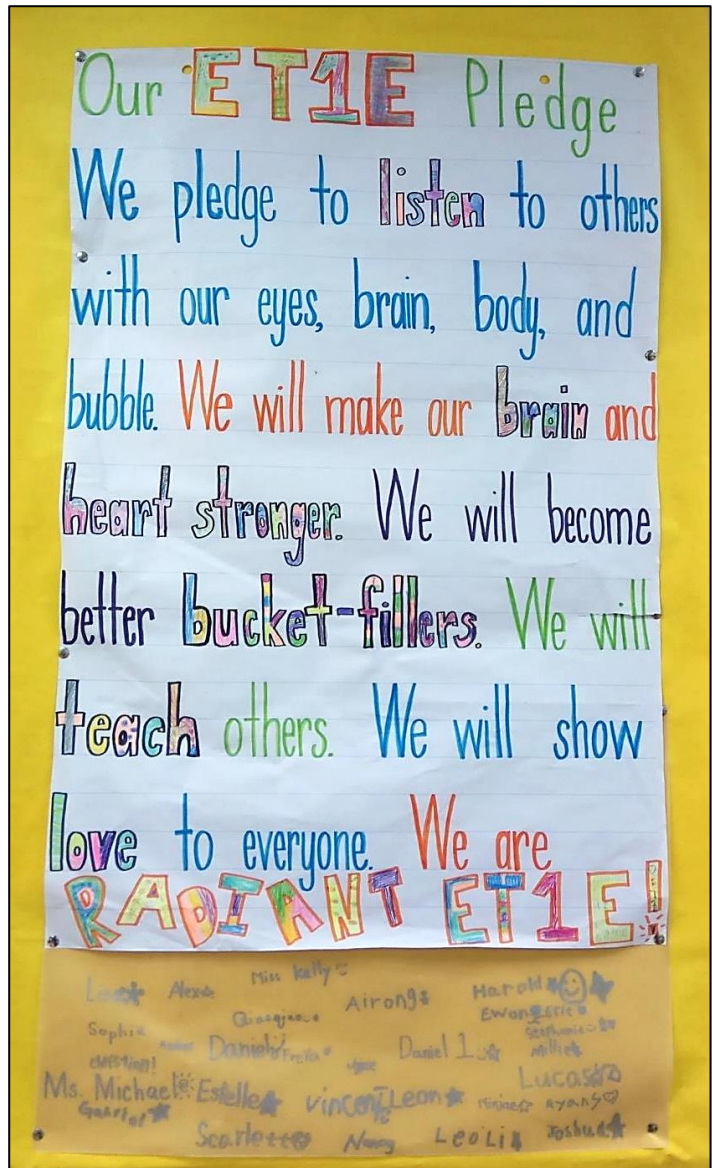
Autonomy

I look for as many opportunities possible for students to demonstrate autonomy in our daily routine. This includes what our classroom looks like when I let *students* decide which work they want to 'publish' by hanging their finished work outside or inside our classroom. I teach constructive critique and feedback skills by letting them 'comment' on each other's work and this can be used as a sponge activity to soak up extra time if students finish an assignment early. Publishing their own work increases their pride in doing their very best and builds their confidence in whichever skill they chose to display.
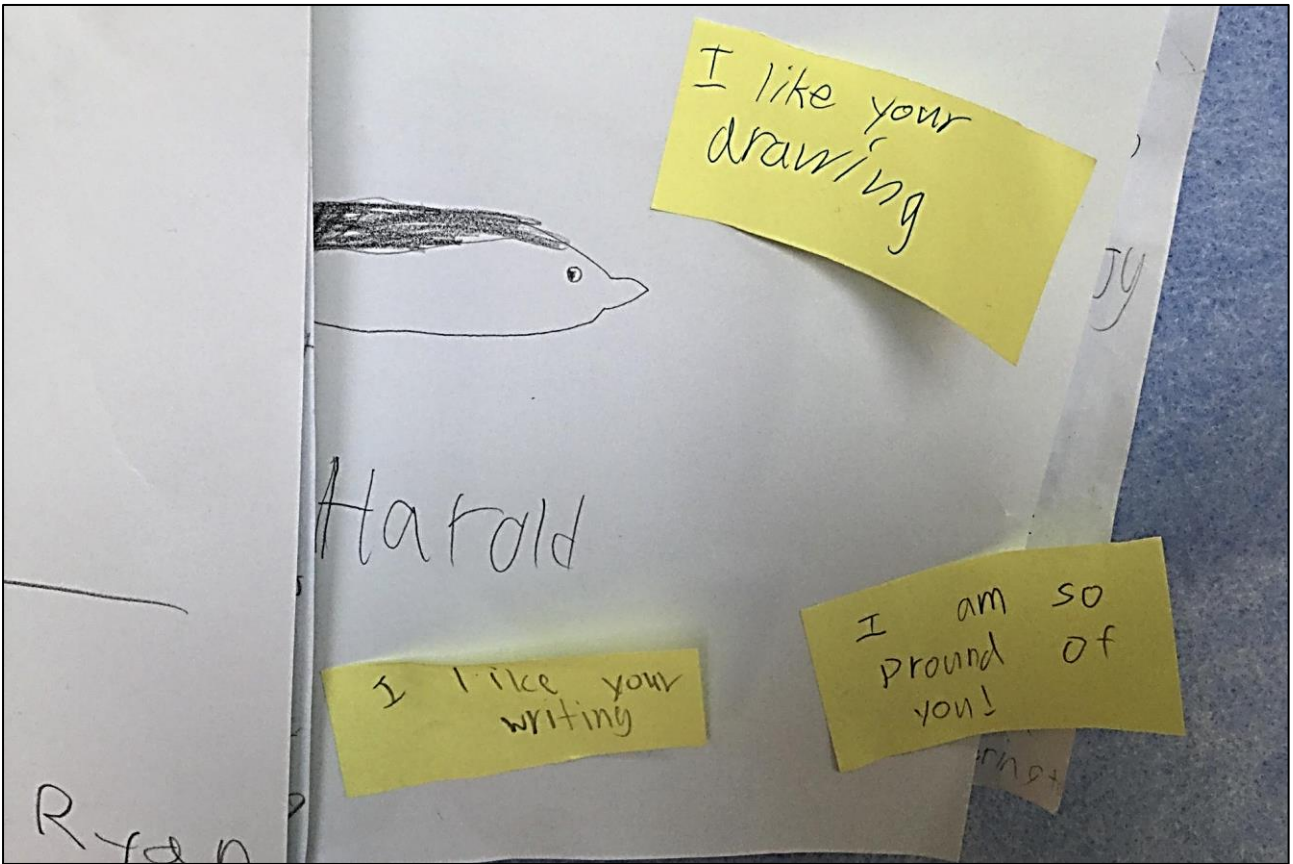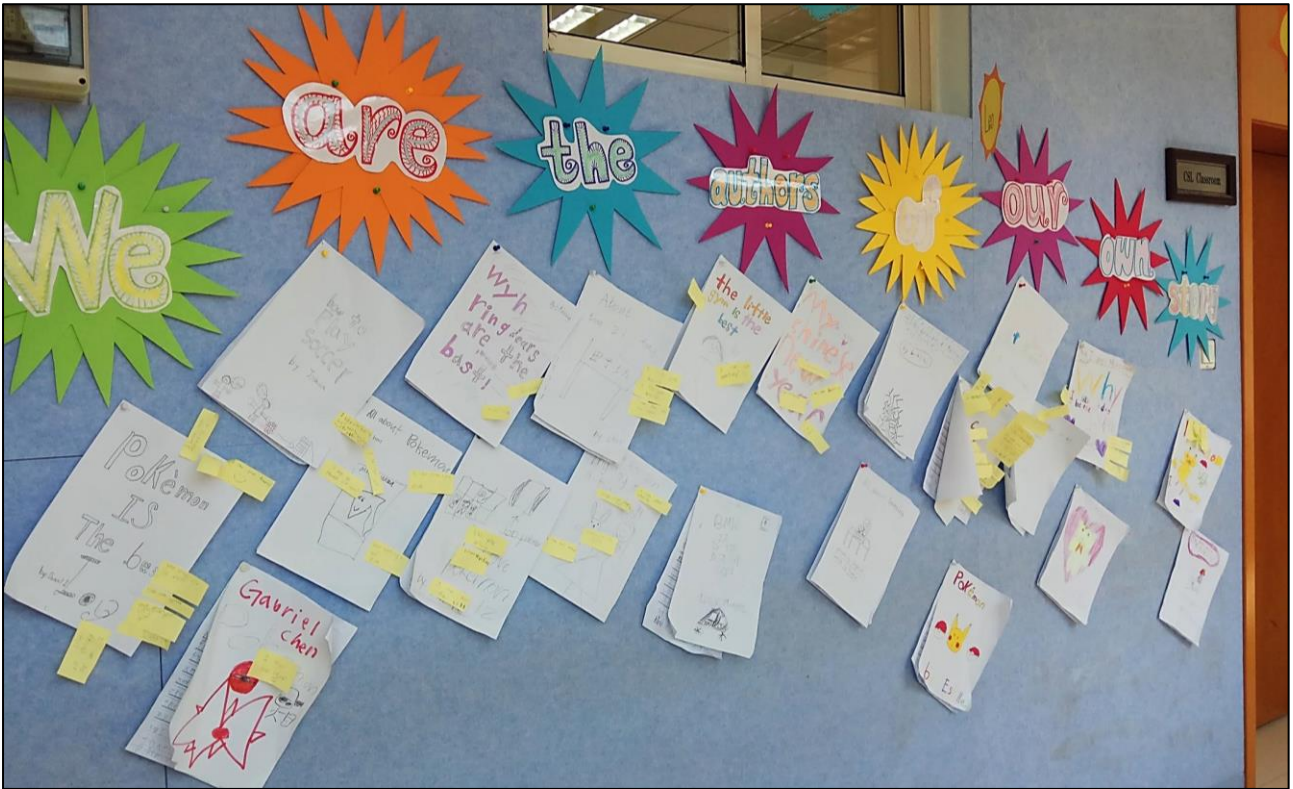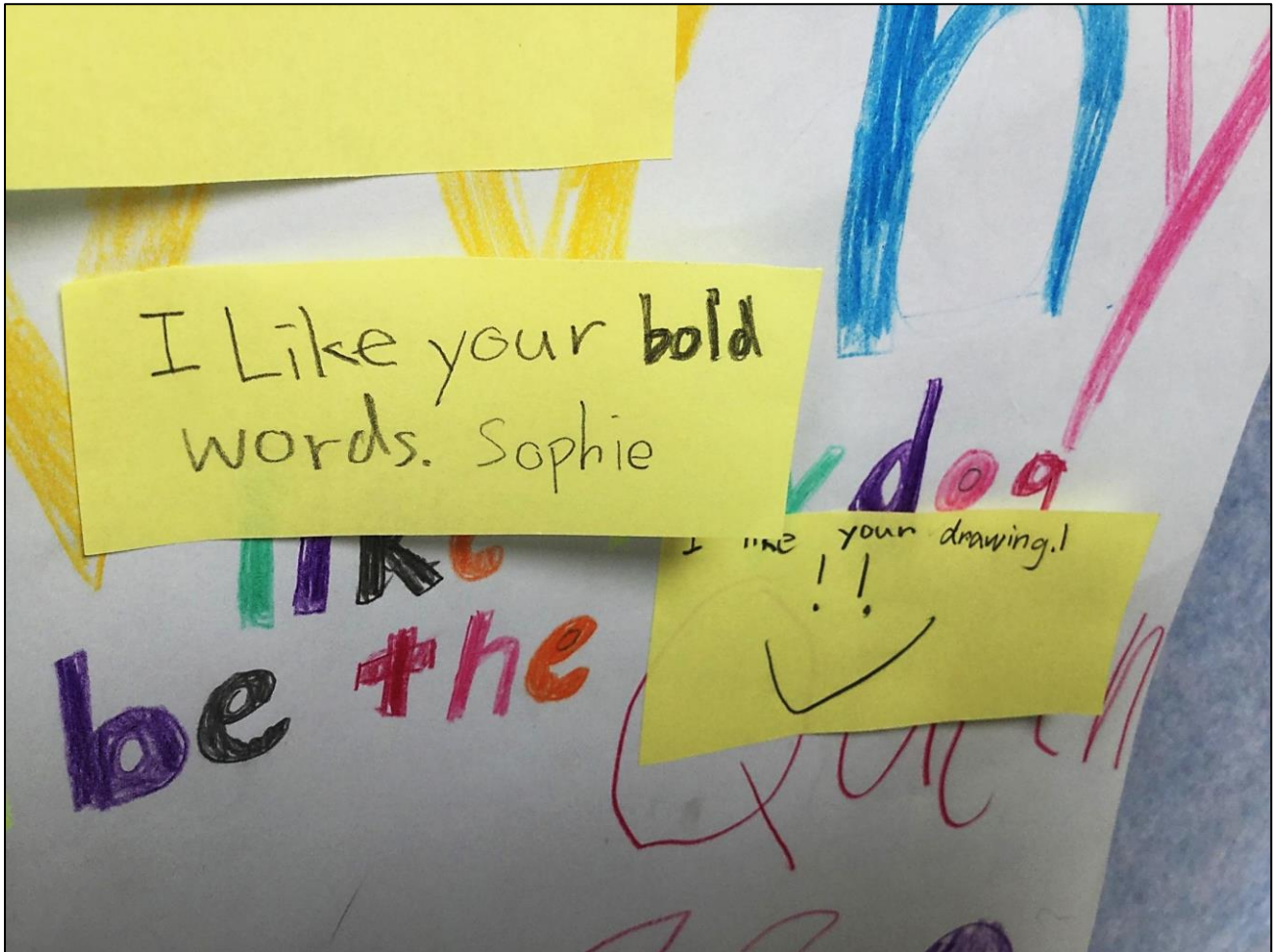
Conclusion

Thank you very much for taking the time to read how I build and foster a positive classroom environment and community! I hope these ideas are helpful to you and I look forward to feedback and questions, which you can send to me at my email address. I appreciate you!

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16

The Effectiveness, Feasibility and Acceptability of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention in Two Irish Primary Schools

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Abstract

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have demonstrated effectiveness among children. However, in Ireland, there seems to be much practice-based evidence, yet little evidence-based practice. Thus, this research aimed to examine the effectiveness, feasibility and acceptability of an MBI in two Irish primary schools using a quasi-experimental design. Data were collected from children (N= 165) and teachers (N = 9) from one urban school and one rural school. Participants from 3rd to 6th class were assigned either to the intervention (n = 99) or to a control group (n = 66) using convenience sampling. The MBI was administered over six weeks and consisted of evidence-based mindfulness strategies taught by the researcher and further conducted by class teachers. The control consisted of information sheets regarding the same strategies, but participants were not asked to practice the strategies. Baseline and post-test quantitative measures included the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale - Revised, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale and the Resilience Scale - 14 for child participants and qualitative surveys for both teachers and children. While analyses do not indicate a main time effect for either wellbeing or resilience, there was a significant time effect for mindfulness with intervention group scores increasing at post-intervention testing (p = .006). Our data suggest high feasibility and acceptability of this MBI. Mixed between-within subject ANOVAs indicate no significant main effects for group on all three quantitative measures. Effectiveness findings were largely inconsistent with previous literature. Feasibility and acceptability findings were consistent with international empirical research. This study adds to the growing evidence for mindfulness in education in an Irish setting. Limitations, implications and recommendations for further research are discussed further in Di Blasi and Rice (2019).

This paper has been published as a book chapter (reference below). Please contact Aoife at the email address above for more information.

17

Magic-based Community Building and Wellbeing Workshops

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Abstract

There has been a growing interest in utilizing magic to enhance wellbeing and improve people's lives (Bagienski & Kuhn, 2019). While the existing empirical literature highlights some promising benefits, improved methodological approaches are needed to gain a deeper understanding of how magic can enhance wellbeing. To address this, we present the largest randomized controlled trial to date that investigates the impact of learning to perform magic on student wellbeing. A cohort of first year university undergraduates participated in either a magic workshop (three over the course of six weeks), or a control workshop that learned mindfulness. Dependent variables were students' self-esteem, sense of community, closeness, and general wellbeing. We hypothesized the magic workshops to be beneficial for first year undergraduates because the transition to college requires students to become independent and is often accompanied with challenging new experiences. Results indicated that students perceived the magic workshops to be more helpful in improving their self-esteem, sense of community, closeness, and wellbeing than the mindfulness workshop. While pre and post measures revealed a numerically larger positive effect for the magic intervention, the increase was not statistically significant between groups. These results are discussed in the context of how learning to perform magic can help enhance psychological and community wellbeing.

This paper is currently in the process of being published as a journal article in the International Journal of Wellbeing. Please contact Steve at the email address above for more information.

Reference: Bagienski, S., & Kuhn, G. (*in press*). The crossroads of magic & wellbeing: A review of wellbeing-focused magic programs, empirical studies, and conceivable theories. *International Journal of Wellbeing.*

Trauma: When Standing Witness to Your Own Trauma Helps with Release

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Abstract

Trauma is broadly defined as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. At times for some people it is easier as a protective psychological mechanism to avoid thinking about trauma, whilst others may ruminate and think of little else. Often this will depend on your integrative emotional capacity as to how you process traumatic events, as well as how endangered the trauma has made you feel. It is the subjective experience of the objective events that constitutes the trauma, and the more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be (Allen, 1995). Psychological trauma is defined also as when an individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). It appears that it is the lack of integrative emotional capacity to process this traumatic event that can cause the greatest negative impact. It is this negative impact and potential solutions to this, allowing for an individual to reframe, move forward and move into post-traumatic growth (PTG), which is explored here. There are several measures or self-reporting mechanisms to measure PTG one of which is the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, which identifies five domains: 'personal strength', 'new possibilities', 'relating to others', 'appreciation of life', and 'spiritual change' (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). The efficacy of this type of measurement will also be explored here. Therapy can be a great way to begin to heal from trauma, but an individual must first acknowledge that they have been a victim of trauma of any kind, including health trauma, in order to even seek this support, which does not always happen. This paper aims to look at how trauma can affect us, as well as what can be done to reduce the effect of trauma where it has been psychologically hidden as a protective measure, and how standing witness to your trauma is the first step in moving through it.

Trauma is something that we will all almost certainly face at some point across our lives and can come in many forms. This is subjective, so what affects one person may not affect another to the same degree if at all. "Following a traumatic event you are likely to experience a range of unfamiliar psychological, emotional and physical reactions" (BACP). Some people carry their trauma, sometimes without even realizing it is there, whilst others are deeply affected at the time of the traumatic event and will go into crisis. This crisis can be short term and classed as post-traumatic stress, or enduring and classed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). There are protective factors which can lower the impact of trauma such as how resilient we are (a dynamic process that encompasses an efficient adaptation in aversive circumstances: Bonanno, 2004), how supported we feel and whether it is chronic or acute trauma. Trauma can be physical such as with illness or

accident, circumstantial, emotional or mental. We can also experience it about something that happened to us, to someone else or because of a larger scale catastrophe or act of terrorism. How we cope has a lot to do with our capacity to emotionally regulate too, however this depends on our ability to look at a trauma in the first place. When we disengage or dissociate from whatever has happened, we slow down the healing process. It may be that if we have not stood as witness to our own trauma by allowing ourselves to look at what has traumatized us, then we cannot move through the process towards growth and recovery and are instead stuck.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is considered to be growth through adversity, with 'cognitive appraisal variances, problem-focused acceptance and positive reinterpretation coping, optimism, religion, cognitive processing, and positive affect reported consistently as associated with adversarial growth" (Joseph & Linley, 2004). Calhoun and Tedechi (1996) attribute some of these growth phenomena to changes in belief systems after trauma. It can be the positive reinterpretation of trauma that allows for recovery. Some personality characteristics may influence the development of PTG. Empirical studies suggest that four of the 'Big Five' characteristics (extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness) positively associate with PTG, whilst the last 'Big Five' characteristic – neuroticism – would appear to be negatively associated with growth (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

So if someone has compartmentalized their trauma, or has not discussed it openly, then this can lead to ongoing symptoms of the trauma. Therefore, emotional disclosure could be a key component in recovery from trauma and moving into PTG. This could take the form of counselling, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), or emotional freedom techniques, as just a few examples. In order for this to happen, a person has to be able to stand as witness to the truth that some event has happened which has traumatized them, and this is sometimes where the problem lies. Emotional disclosure is considered a positive response when managing feelings of trauma (Taku et al., 2009), leading to more positive outcomes around distress reduction, better physical functioning and enhanced immune system functioning (Lepore et al., 2004). It is clear that how we cope is associated with either recovery from trauma and a move into growth, or conversely, poor outcomes such as those seen in denial of trauma (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Sometimes as a coping mechanism or adaptation, our consciousness will hide the trauma impact from us in order for us to carry on and endure daily life. This is when it becomes embedded into the subconscious. When this happens we might continue to experience other knock-on effects, often physical but sometimes impacting our mental health or wellbeing. These effects may still be

enduring from the time of the trauma but may have been normalized, and include: being on edge, being jumpy, difficulty sleeping, intrusive memories, feeling overwhelmed, guilt and shame, anxiety, sadness, anger, withdrawal, mental avoidance, physical reactions, drink and drug addictions, and more. These impacts then appear to act as a filter to the actual unacknowledged trauma that could be seen as a catalyst to these seemingly unrelated or even consequential events. We may even become so used to these breakthrough symptoms that we begin to see them as personality or character traits, rather than linking them to an event in the past. If we still experience breakthrough unwanted thoughts about the trauma, flashbacks and depression, even whilst in denial, this can be classed as acute post-traumatic stress. This can become PTSD, which is usually the result of a singular event causing ramifications. PTSD involves a traumatic event in which there is exposure to actual (witnessed) or threatened death (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). To gain agency in this instance can be quite difficult, particularly when the trauma might be related to the circumstances of another person or an illness over which the person felt powerless. What I want to bring to the discussion here is how being witness to our own trauma then allows for us to process and transition through it into PTG. This appears to involve many factors, from how we perceived ourselves before the trauma (resilience), whether we can personally look at what has happened and sit with it in a comfortable space, if we can emotionally disclose what happened with another, preferably a therapist, and our character traits.

Often when we experience trauma, we have become a victim, either to circumstances or as a direct result of another person's actions. There are numerous studies into victim mentality, and it is often painted as a weakness or flaw. Kets de Vries (2012) suggests that someone with a victim mentality feels that they are beset by the world, and are always at a disadvantage because of other people's machinations or lack of consideration. They usually have an external locus of control and feel that fate or providence is at play. To be clear, this is not what is referred to here when discussing trauma and the victim. Perhaps as a result of general consensus about this 'victim mentality', what can happen is that we refuse to see ourselves as a victim and use protective mechanisms to avoid this. When this happens, it does not mean that we have not been affected by trauma, it means that we cannot or will not acknowledge it.

Yet we know that increased self-disclosure about personal negative experiences enhances our interpersonal relationships (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), which can lead to reflexive thinking and increased positive relationships. This in turn could lead to someone having the resilience to confront their trauma after acknowledgement and disclosure. So resilience is also a consideration in how well

we recover after trauma, as long as the person does not associate resilience with just getting on with things. So if a person considers themselves to be high in resilience, this could also lead to avoiding looking at their traumatic experience. So even a reframing of self-identity may be necessary in order to move into the right conditions for growth. Family identity could play a part, if someone feels that they come from a line of resilient or strong people who 'just overcome' whatever they face. This could mean someone feels the need to put on a front around those closest to them.

One theory about PTG is that it is an innate biological tendency to protect oneself from the distress of trauma, leading to an individual feeling stronger for having emerged from trauma (Ford, Tennen, & Albert, 2008). This seems to yield away from true PTG as a process of moving *through t*he trauma and into a stance whereby the person has emerged stronger because of the trauma. This would conversely seem to involve a process whereby first the ability to sit with the trauma happens, then self-disclosure leads to seeking help, positive reframing and then into PTG. The process seems pivotal to whether PTG happens, rather than it being a given that with the right character traits and predisposition, or as a coping mechanism, it will happen anyway. The idea of developing stronger relationships, becoming wiser and stronger as we emerge through trauma and re-evaluate our lives, as a *result of* the trauma – without any need to acknowledge or actively manage this – is a noble one, but one which does not allow for the involvement of a process rather than a timeline.

In many studies on this topic the growth that can be achieved if defined as perceived growth, because of course it is so subjective and not an easy measure; before and after is also subjective and it is uncommon that someone has had their wellbeing measured in an effective way before trauma happened. One study however did attempt to evaluate the validity of self-reported post-traumatic growth from pre- to post-trauma, whereby perceived growth was related to positive reinterpretation coping. They did however conclude that the measure used (PTGI) does not appear to measure actual pre- to post-trauma change (Frazier et al., 2009).

Self-authority allows a person to look at their trauma in order to begin to move through it. Stepping into the power that is autonomously your own experience of your trauma, acknowledging it and allowing yourself to feel those feelings leads to a state of self-compassion, empathy, understanding and freedom, if you choose to drive the experience that way. In order to be a force within your own healing of trauma and to facilitate movement towards PTG, self- compassion is pivotal. A willingness to accept a trauma as it is can be as cathartic and empowering as it is initially perhaps terrifying to conceive. This also involves the ability to be able to self-regulate, but also, if necessary, seek support with emotional regulation, to face whatever has happened.

One study that has looked at emotion regulation found that there is a suggestion that reappraisal of negative stimuli following a traumatic event may be a key component of PTG (Orejuela-Dávila et al., 2019). It is intuitive that in order to move forward and away from a trauma one must be prepared to look at what has happened and re-appraise it, much as is done when working with phobias in a therapeutic session, because trauma inevitably must carry some phobia too.

A counsellor or therapist who has experience of helping someone to manage and reframe such a burden seems to be an intuitive necessity in moving through this process. To move away from the notion that to acknowledge one's 'victim' status even to ourselves means that we are in a victim mentality stance, and instead focus on the healing process which this acknowledgement brings, seems the most likely and intuitive way to begin the healing process and move into an altered perception or growth 'shift' or reframing after trauma. Similarly, the belief that we are resilient may hamper our capacity to reach PTG if it means that we cannot acknowledge that something happened which meant we were not resilient in that moment. This seems to be particularly salient when recovering from health crisis, such as cancer, or life-limiting conditions, which bring their own form of trauma, as without this acknowledgment, people appear to sometimes move into rumination instead.

To conclude, perhaps recovery from trauma is reliant on a cognitive and emotional process which allows a person to sit with, bear witness to and then begin to move into a post-traumatic growth stance. Making meaning of trauma, acknowledging that it has happened and then beginning to reframe, as suggested in previous empirical research, appears to be the driver in facilitating PTG. The capacity to self-disclose and acknowledge what has happened in a therapeutic environment such as counselling, access to and feelings of acceptance from a social support network as well as practicing self-compassion, and positive personality traits or characteristics are all associated with a greater potential to move into PTG after trauma.

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19

The Emotional Weight of Losing Weight

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Abstract

*Obesity is a complex phenomenon, seriously affecting health, besides the social and emotional difficulties it presents. However, limited attention has been given to the psychosocial concerns of obesity. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to promote wellbeing and has been used successfully with weight related issues. Though previous research has mainly focused on reducing the symptoms of the disorder. **The objective** of this research was to investigate whether introducing a positive mindfulness program to participants previously engaged in weight loss, would enhance their positive emotional states, and buffer the common deleterious effects of obesity, as well as enhance self-regulatory behaviours, encouraging greater weight loss. **Method & Procedure:** 15 adults were assigned to the experimental condition, which involved attending 8 weeks of a positive mindfulness for obesity intervention, whilst continuing on their weight-loss program. 16 participants were allocated to the control condition, which involved continuing with their weight loss program, only. Data were collected at pre- and post-intervention, from both the experimental and control groups. **Results:** Post-test measures from the experimental participants have shown a strong significant improvement in all wellbeing measures (self-awareness, self-compassion, positive & negative affect, self-esteem, measured via Body-Image Acceptance and Action Questionnaire) and weight loss ($F(1, 29) = 7.5$, $p < .0001$). **Conclusion:** Our results suggest that increasing the wellbeing of participants attempting to lose weight, through mindfulness programs could have a significant impact on weight loss and on the quality of an individual's life.*

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Weight Loss, Positive Psychology Intervention, Wellbeing, Self-control, Self-awareness.*

Introduction

Obesity and other weight-related disorders have increased exponentially worldwide. In 2017, the World Health Organisation reported that at least 2.8 million people are dying each year, as a result of these conditions. This is causing a major public health burden to the world's economy and severely impacting the quality of life for obese individuals. As well as the physical effects, obesity presents serious mental, emotional and social concerns, with many individuals exhibiting poorer psychological profiles than other chronically ill groups (Corica, Corsonello, Apolone, Lucchetti, Melchionda, & Marche, 2006; Kolotkin, Meter, & Williams, 2001).

Research has shown there is a close connection between obesity and psychological concerns. These include anxiety, self-esteem issues, body-shape embarrassment and depression (Molyneaux, Poston,

Ashurst-Williams, & Howard, 2014), with a great number of obese people presenting signs of unhealthy eating patterns and avoiding exercising (Puhl & Heuer, 2009). These behaviours have been determined to trigger further negative consequences, such as stigma and social discrimination, since overweight individuals can often be regarded as lazy, or lacking in control, which can lead to unfair treatment in the domains of employment, health care and education (Hayward, Vartanian, Pinkus, 2018). As a result of feeling stigmatised by society, obese individuals tend to isolate themselves, thereby internalising emotions such as shame or humiliation (Miller, & Kaiser, 2001; Dolezal, & Lyons, 2017). This alienation reduces morale even further, resulting in additional weight gain and potentially violating any attempts to control weight management. At risk of feeling trapped in a vicious cycle, these individuals are more vulnerable to mental health disorders (Tomiyama, 2014).

Considering the significance of these afflictions, promoting health and wellbeing within the overweight population must become a much higher priority for public policy and researchers. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence has been attempting to set up a multidimensional intervention for treating these disorders (NICE, 2018). Whilst this is a commendable initiative, the need to address the psychological and social aspects of obesity is still lacking attention (Leske, Strodl, & Hou, 2012; Vallis, 2016). Additionally, such initiatives have mainly been based on clinical assessment, focusing largely on reducing pathology, rather than increasing wellbeing (Stevenson, 2017).

The aim of this research was to seek an alternative approach to the treatment of obesity, by introducing a model which would embrace a multifaceted view of this complex disorder. The intention was not only to promote weight loss, but to increase wellbeing variables, with the emphasis on the positive aspects of life, hoping to strengthen the mental states of all those who have been afflicted by this condition.

Mindfulness offers much potential on this quest. This research has chosen to use an adaptation of the Positive Mindfulness Program (PMP; Ivtzan et al., 2016) amongst participants already engaged in a weight loss program, with the main intention of enhancing multiple aspects of wellbeing. This was underpinned by two hypotheses: (1) eight weeks of Positive Mindfulness for Obesity (PMFO) would enhance the wellbeing variables of participants engaged in weight loss; (2) each enhanced variable would, in turn, facilitate the self-regulatory behaviours involved in weight loss.

Mindfulness-based Interventions

Mindfulness is an ancient meditative practice, which has been used for thousands of years. More recently however, we have seen a surge in evidence through both research and application, supporting the effectiveness of the practice through the use of mindfulness-based interventions (MBI; Godsey, 2013). MBIs have been growing in popularity as significant tools to alleviate psychological suffering (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). These interventions have been extended into a myriad of settings and have increasingly been gaining a reputation for treating weight loss disorders (Olson, & Emery, 2015).

In general, the conceptualisation of Mindfulness varies according to the context, but most researchers underline the ability to focus attention to the current internal and external experiences, as a crucial feature of the practice (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). When practicing mindfulness, it is vitally important to approach each situation in an open, non-judgmental manner. This involves simply noticing what is appearing in awareness with kindness, curiosity and acceptance, resisting any attempt of being judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 1982).

Using MBI to target weight-loss and increase wellbeing

The principles of MBI can be highly significant when battling the numerous pressures of obesity, such as the feelings of guilt and failure, triggered when a diet or exercise has been broken (Tangney, Boone, & Baumeister, 2018). Research has shown that, in the attempt to liberate oneself from such unpleasant feelings, obese individuals tend to turn to food as a coping mechanism, to distract attention from the negative feelings or 'disengage' from the distorted self-view (Shloim, 2014). However, this 'disengaging' process can involve letting go of self-control in food consumption, undermining efforts to monitor food intake and, in many cases, lead to binge eating and triggering even greater emotional distress (Macht, & Simons, 2011).

Given these negative consequences, MBIs present a valuable opportunity to obese individuals, particularly those susceptible to psychological dysfunction, such as anxiety, mood swings and a range of addictions (Striegel-Moore et al., 2000). A large number of studies have been conducted to test the efficacy of these interventions; for example, McIndoo, File, Preddy, Clark, and Hopko (2016) used mindfulness-based therapy with college students suffering from major depressive disorders and demonstrated significant (75–85%) enhancements, including levels of depression, rumination and stress. These improvements were mostly maintained at a one-month follow-up. Likewise, Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, and Oh (2010) tested the efficacy of mindfulness for reducing the

symptoms of anxiety and depression in serious illnesses such as cancer. They found the intervention to be promising for alleviating distress associated with a wide range of medical and psychiatric conditions. In relation to addiction, the use of MBI has primarily focused on the arena of pathological gambling; for example, Toneatto, Pillai, and Courtice (2014) found a significant decrease in the gravity toward gambling, gambling cravings and psychiatric indicators at end-of-treatment. These were maintained at the three-month follow-up.

Despite these promising possibilities, there has been considerable debate in positive psychology over the emphasis on dysfunction (Ivtzan, Niemiec, & Briscoe, 2016), claiming that, whilst the empirical models are overly focused on reducing psychological distress, they could risk neglecting the incredible potential of mindfulness in enhancing wellbeing and building strengths (Goyal et al., 2014). According to the ethos of positive psychology, eliminating illness alone does not provide the conditions for flourishing. Likewise, simply removing the 'fatness' from obese people could be limiting, neglecting the potential of mindfulness to create a chain of other benefits, such as increasing self-awareness (Tapper, Shaw, Ilsley, Hill, Bond, & Moore, 2009), positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), self-regulation (Greenberg, & Pascual-Leone 2006) and self-esteem (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which are vitally important in supporting the dietary and physical activity changes involved in weight management (Godsey, 2013).

This study was conducted focusing predominantly on MBIs' positive influences, anticipating that once any of the positive variables had been boosted, it would momentarily broaden participants' attention, enabling them to draw on a wider range of thoughts, projecting them on an upward spiral (Fredrickson, 2001). This initial 'broadened' awareness was estimated to help them to further increase their personal resources, such as mindful attention, self-acceptance, and positive emotions, which have been shown to contribute to good physical and emotional health (Kok, Waugh, & Fredrickson, 2013).

Arch et al. (2016) demonstrated this kind of growth in attention towards a more enjoyable sensory experience of eating, which also reduced calorific intake, even after a very brief MBI. Additionally, Hong, Lishner, and Han (2014) confirmed that mindfulness stimulated greater levels of savouring in one's life. This increase in awareness, according to Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, and Cordova (2005), is one of the fundamental roles of MBI – it is in the capability to switch attention, like a 'zoom lens', flexibly moving back and forth between thoughts, feelings and present stimuli (Bishop et al., 2004). Not only can it help people to become more aware of the goodness in life and themselves, per se, but

also it encourages individuals to relate differently to their unhelpful thoughts and feelings. Learning to monitor the inner world and raising awareness of unhelpful thoughts such as 'I'm a failure' and, instead, replacing them with kindness and acceptance (Neff, 2016), is expected to encourage a much more positive and sophisticated understanding of the self (Bishop et al., 2004).

Since mindfulness has the potential to increase a wide range of positive variables and considering these are all contributors to an individual's sense of wellbeing (Lambert, Passmore & Holder, 2015), this intervention was conducted with the intention to increase such variables, anticipating that they would strengthen participants' levels of wellbeing as they were attempting to lose weight. In addition, it was predicted that increased wellbeing variables, via an upward spiral, would strengthen the self-regulatory behaviours necessary to achieve a greater weight-loss.

Method

This study was conducted within the post-positivist paradigm, employing empirical methods to investigate the efficacy of mindfulness in weight-loss success. In the process of trying to understand the relationship between variables, it has questioned the underlying assumption that experimentation can provide general laws for human behaviour (Mertens, 2014). Accordingly, it challenges the way in which the clinical model has traditionally produced its knowledge, through focusing mainly on the removal of the illness, leading researchers to see individuals as damaged and in need of fixing (Krentzman & Barker, 2016). In contrast, this investigation suggests that when obese individuals initiate a weight-loss program, more than the liberation of the weight, they desire well-being with it (Selligman, 2008). Therefore, it has aimed to achieve this, through focusing on increasing the positive variables. Aware that any piece of research may be susceptible of previous influences (Cook, Campbell, & Shadish, 2002), it carefully adjusted the PMP to suit the obese population, hoping that new findings would emerge to produce additional understandings in this field (Klingner, & Boardman, 2011).

Design & Participants

This between-participants **design** consisted of one independent variable (IV) with two conditions: one experimental condition (PMFO) and one control group with no intervention. **Participants** were recruited via social media, Facebook and Nextdoor – a neighbourhood social website in Surrey – using an advert calling for participants interested in a psychological research project, based around a

combination of mindfulness and positive psychology exercises, to help with the emotional struggles of weight loss.

Data collection

Following the completion of four online questionnaires, 64 responded. After publication of the venue, timetable and the allocation of conditions, the number of participants reduced, and within a couple of weeks of the intervention some dropped out, resulting in 15 completing the eight-week PMFO program and 16 in the control group. Inclusion criteria required participants to be above the age of 18 and engaged in any form of weight loss plan, with no minimum weight criteria requirement.

Weight was recorded online, via self-report measures, at the start and at the end of the eight-week period. The other variables were measured by quantitative self-report scales, completed online via Qualtrics software. Four scales were used as pre- and post-measures in both conditions:

The *Mindful Attention Awareness Scale* (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003) is a 15-item self-report measure, designed to assess the role of mindfulness in psychological well-being. Participants responded on a six-point Likert scale from "Almost always" to "Almost never". Higher scores indicate receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present and is related to a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The MAAS has strong internal consistency (Cronbach's α of r =.87) and has been widely used.

The *Self-Compassion Scale - Short Form* (SCS–SF; Raes et al., 2011) is a 12-item scale designed to assesses participants' ability to respond with kindness or judgment when experiencing emotional pain or failure. This questionnaire is scored on a five-point Likert scale with a good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.875$). Self-compassion was an important element to be measured in this study, being a crucial element for psychological well-being (PWB), as well as encouraging the relationship between mindfulness and happiness (Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011).

The *Body Image - Acceptance and Action Questionnaire* (BI-AAQ, Sandoz, Wilson, Merwin & Kellum, 2013) was chosen to assess participants' responses to their body-related thoughts and feelings. This questionnaire is scored on a seven-point Likert scale from "Never true" to "Always True", with good reliability between items and strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$).

The ***Positive and Negative Affect Schedule*** (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was chosen for its brevity and simplicity of 20 items. Ten of these items are designed to measure positive feelings and the other 10 to assess negative feelings, and the balance between the two. This is scored on a five-point Likert scale with a good internal reliability (Cronbach's α from .81 to .90).

The mean age of the PMFO group was 52.60 (SD= ± 10.43) with two males (13%) and 13 females (87%). For the control group, mean age was 52.58 (SD= ± 10.70) with one male (6%) and 15 females (94%).

Data Analysis

SPSS version 23.0 for Mac was used for all data analyses. The enquiry involved one independent variable (IV) with two conditions – the intervention (PMFO) group and control group, and five dependent variables (DV) – weight and the levels of wellbeing, measured by the previously mentioned four self-report scales.

Tests of normality were conducted to ascertain the validity of using parametric tests. All dependent variables met the requisite criteria (e.g., the significance level for the Shapiro-Wilks test was greater than 0.05 in all instances).

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London's research ethics committee. The researcher is a mindfulness teacher, experienced in leading group workshops, as well as being a counsellor practitioner, trained to deal with the safe guiding of participants through the potentially sensitive nature of the exercises. Participants in the control group were offered an opportunity to partake in the intervention at a future date. All participants gave full consent, reported their weights in kilos and answered the four self-report questionnaires online, at two time points eight weeks apart, where their responses were kept confidential and safe. All participants were informed of their withdrawal rights and no ethical issues were raised during the process. There were also de-briefing instructions at the completion of questionnaires. As an appreciation for participating in the research, all subjects were offered a private coaching session with the researcher. No monetary incentive was offered for participation.

Results

To examine if the scales were adequately chosen, a reliability test was run for each separate scale (see Table 1) and all have shown a strong consistency for this study.

Table 1.

Reliability statistics for each scale used in study

Scale	Cronbach's α
MAAS	.76
Self-Compassion	.72
BI-AAQ	.95
Positive Affect Schedule	.94
Negative Affect Schedule	.85

A mixed between-within ANOVA was run on the pre- and post-scores of each scale, comparing the evolution of experimental and control conditions over two points in time, in a per protocol fashion.

Mindful Attention Awareness (MAAS)

With respect to the MAAS data (Figure 1), analysis revealed a significant main effect of time (F (1, 29) = 11.90, p = .002). There was no main effect of group (F (1, 29) = 0.27, p = .607); however, there was a significant interaction effect (F (1, 29) = 15.70, p < .001). The effect size (eta-squared) was .35. This is considered a large effect size, indicating a substantial increase in the level of mindfulness for the intervention group at Time 2 (T2; post-intervention) compared to Time 1 (T1; pre-intervention).
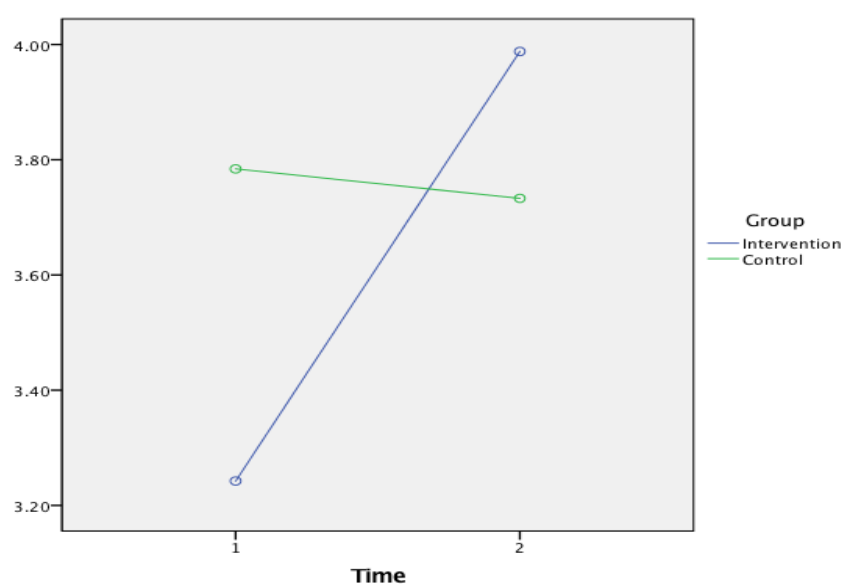

Figure 1. Estimated marginal means of Mindfulness (MAAS)

Follow-up tests were conducted to explore this interaction further, using a repeated measures (paired) *t*-test, finding a significant increase in MAAS in the experimental group from T1 to T2 (t (14) = -4.10, p = .001), while the control group showed a small, non-significant decrease from T1 to T2 (t (15) = 0.51, p = .615). These results suggest that PMFO had a significant effect on participants' level of mindfulness over time.

Self-Compassion

Analysis of the self-compassion scale data (Figure 2) revealed a significant main effect of time (F (1, 29) = 5.80, p = .022). There was no main effect of group (F (1, 29) = 0.00, p = .964); there was however a significant interaction effect (F (1, 29) = 4.90, p = .033). The effect size (eta-squared) was .64. This was a large effect showing a substantial increase in the level of self-compassion in the intervention group at T2.
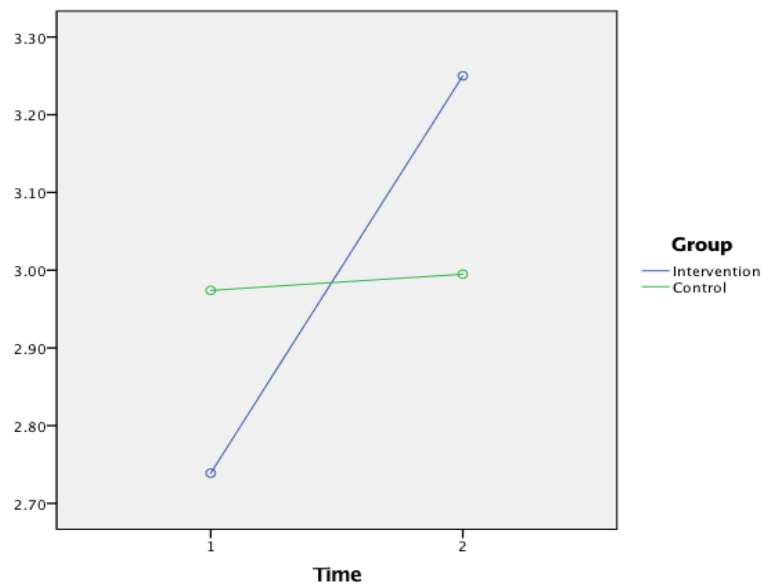

Figure 2. Estimated marginal means of self-compassion

Follow-up paired *t*-tests revealed a moderately significant increase in self-compassion from T1 to T2 in the experimental group (t (14) = -2.27, p =.040), while the control group showed no statistically significant increase from T1 to T2 (t (15) = -0.89, p =.388), confirming that PMFO seems to have a significant positive effect on participants' levels of self-compassion.

Body Image-Acceptance and Action

Analysis of the BI-AAQ data (Figure 3) revealed a significant main effect by time (F (1, 29) = 57.60, p < .001); there was no main effect by group (F (1, 29) = 0.13, p = .723); there was a significant interaction (F (1, 29) = 65.60, p < .001). The effect size (eta-squared) was .69, presenting a large effect with a substantial increase in the level of Body Image-Acceptance & Awareness for the intervention group at T2.
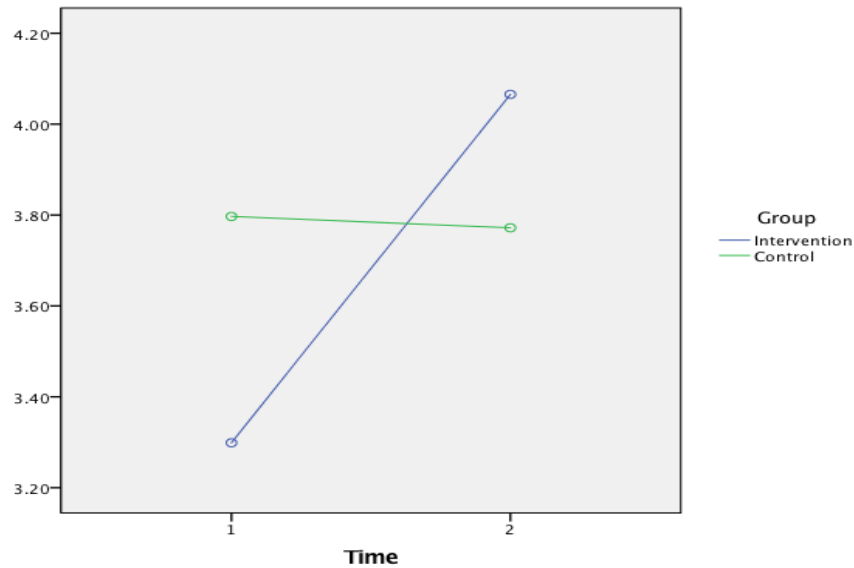
Figure 3. Estimated marginal means of Body Image Acceptance & Awareness (BI-AA)

Follow-up *t*-tests disclosed a significant increase in BI-AA from T1 to T2 in the experimental group (t (14) = -7.68, p < .001), while the control group showed a small but non-significant decrease from T1 to T2 (t (15) = 1.73, p = .104), suggesting that PMFO had a significant positive effect on participants' acceptance of their body image.

PANAS – Positive Affect (PA)

Analysis of the PANAS for the positive affect (PA) items only (Figure 4) revealed a significant main effect of time (F (1, 29) = 7.01, p = .013); there was no main effect by group (F (1, 29) = 0.00, p = .968). There was however a significant interaction effect (F (1, 29) = 8.70, p = .006) on the experience of positive feelings. The effect size (eta-squared) was .20, therefore displaying a large effect, with a substantial increase in the experience of positive feelings for the intervention group at T2.
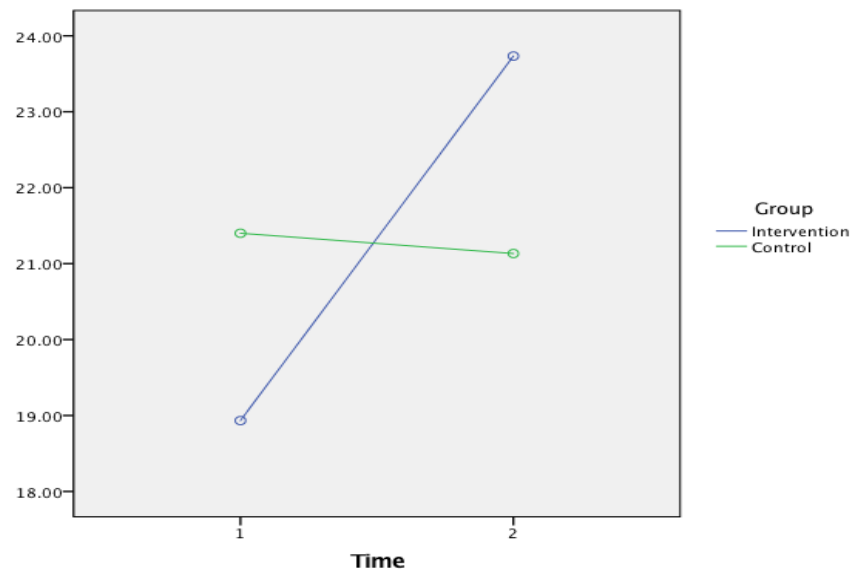

Figure 4. Estimated marginal means for PANAS – Positive Affect items

Follow-up *t*-tests showed a significant increase in mean PA from T1 to T2 in the experimental group (t (14) = -2.83, p =.014), while the control group showed a small, non-significant decrease from T1 to T2 (t (14) = 1.29, p =.217), suggesting that PMFO has a significant effect on participants' experience of positive feelings over the course of the intervention.

PANAS – Negative Affect (NA)

Analysis of the PANAS for the negative affect (NA) items only (Figure 5) revealed there was a significant main effect of time (F (1, 29) = 5.03, p = .033); there was no main effect by group (F (1, 29) = 0.19, p = .663); but there was a significant interaction (F (1, 29) = 7.03, p < .001). The effect size (Eta-squared) was .148, showing a large effect with a substantial *de*crease in the experience of negative feelings for the intervention group at T2.
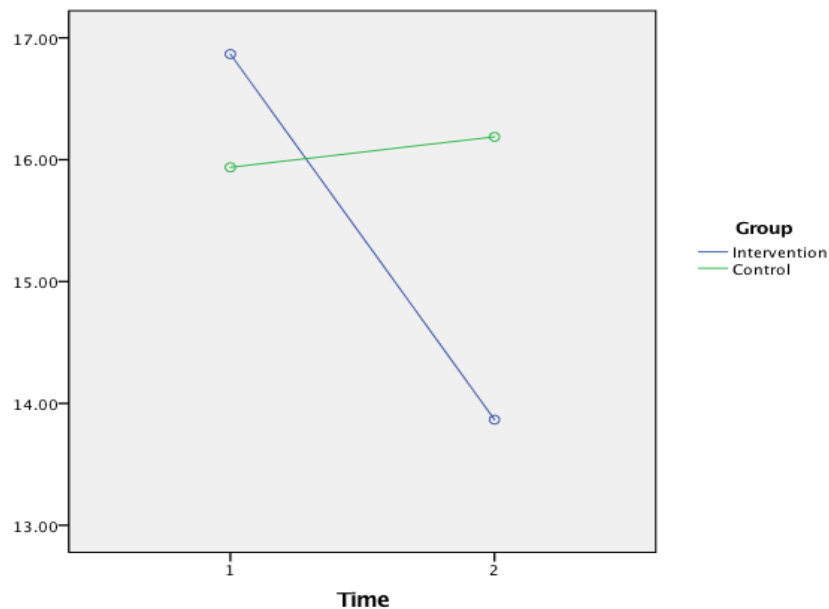
Figure 5. Estimated marginal means for PANAS – Negative Affect

Follow-up *t*-tests showed a significant decrease in NA from T1 to T2 in the experimental group (t (15) = 2.42, p =.030), while the control group showed a small but non-significant increase in negative feelings from T1 to T2 (t (15) = -1.00, p =.333), suggesting that PMFO has a significant decreasing effect on participants' experience of negative feelings.

The combined results of these four self-report scales suggest that PMFO really does seem to have a positive effect on wellbeing, therefore supporting the first hypothesis.

Weight

Analysis of the weight measures (Figure 6) revealed a significant main effect of time (F (1, 29) = 8.10, p = .008); there was no main effect of group (F (1, 29) = 0.03, p = .864); however there was a significant interaction effect (F (1, 29) = 7.50, p < .001). The effect size (eta-squared) was .22; this was a large effect showing a statistically significantly greater weight loss for the intervention group from T1 to T2, compared to the control group.
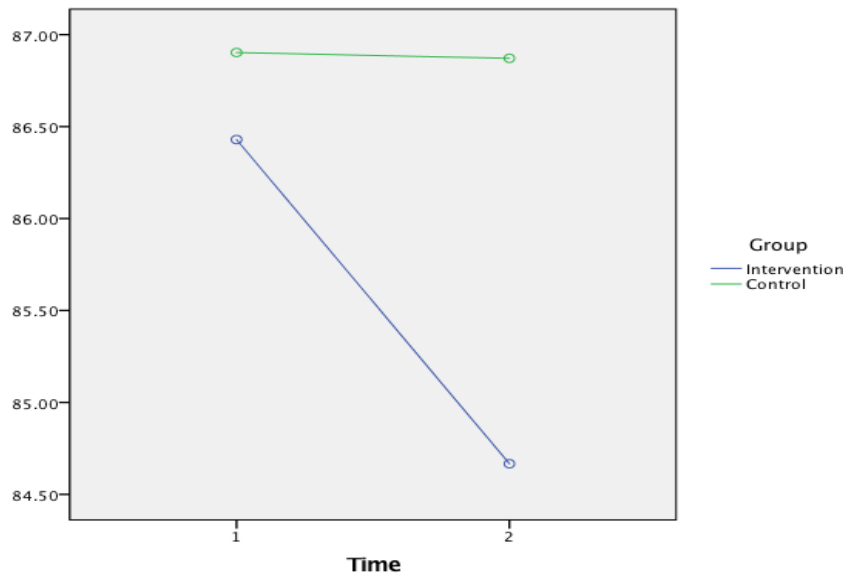
Figure 6. Estimated marginal means for Weight

Follow-up *t*-tests revealed that the experimental group showed a statistically significant decrease in weight from T1 to T2 (t (14) = 2.72, p = .016), while the control group showed no significant change from T1 to T2 (t (15) = 0.44, p = .669).

These results suggest that increasing the wellbeing of participants attempting to lose weight through PMFO could have a positive effect on self-regulatory behaviours involved in weight loss and therefore supports both hypotheses, regarding the expected positive effect of PMFO on both wellbeing and weight loss. All descriptive statistics can be seen in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2.

Descriptive and t-test statistics showing changes from T1 to T2 for the experimental group.

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2–tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1	Pre_BIAAQ – Post_BIAAQ	–.76667	.38668	.09984	–.98080	–.55253	–7.679	14	.000
Pair 2	PrePositAffec – PosPosAff	–4.80000	6.58136	1.69930	–8.44464	–1.15536	–2.825	14	.014
Pair 3	PreNegAff – PostNegAff	3.00000	4.79583	1.23828	.34416	5.65584	2.423	14	.030
Pair 4	What is your weight in kg? – PostWeght	1.76267	2.50629	.64712	.37473	3.15060	2.724	14	.016
Pair 5	PreSelfComp – PostSelfComp	–.51111	.87280	.22535	–.99445	–.02777	–2.268	14	.040

a. Intervention = 1

Table 3.

Descriptive and t-test statistics showing changes from T1 to T2 for the control group.

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2–tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1	Pre_BIAAQ – Post_BIAAQ	.02500	.05774	.01443	–.00576	.05576	1.732	15	.104
Pair 2	PrePositAffec – PosPosAff	.26667	.79881	.20625	–.17570	.70903	1.293	14	.217
Pair 3	PreNegAff – PostNegAff	–.25000	1.00000	.25000	–.78286	.28286	–1.000	15	.333
Pair 4	What is your weight in kg? – PostWeght	.03125	.28687	.07172	–.12161	.18411	.436	15	.669
Pair 5	PreSelfComp – PostSelfComp	–.02083	.09379	.02345	–.07081	.02914	–.889	15	.388

a. Intervention = 2

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the efficacy of the PMFO intervention in increasing the wellbeing of participants engaged in weight loss, and to explore whether boosting the wellbeing variables would, in turn, enhance the self-regulatory behaviours involved in weight management and therefore also stimulate greater weight loss. In support to hypothesis 1, the PMFO intervention led to statistically significant higher post-test results in all scales for the experimental group, as opposed to participants in the control group, demonstrating its efficacy in assisting obese individuals with their emotional struggles. More specifically, the results showed higher levels of mindfulness, positive affect, body image acceptance and self-compassion. There was a decrease in negative affect, showing PMFO may act as a buffer to the unpleasant symptoms shown to be commonly experienced by individuals engaged in weight loss. Additionally, the combined weight loss for the intervention group was significantly higher than within the control group, therefore supporting hypothesis 2.

The increase in emotional resources was noticeably continuous over the eight-week course. Concentrating on each separate variable, allied with mindfulness meditation, enabled participants to build and strengthen their mental states, week by week. Within the first week, participants started reporting feeling more satisfied with their lives, as well as experiencing fewer of the negative consequences of obesity.

Self-awareness was an important construct to start with and the results confirm its efficacy in this study, by showing a significant increase in MAAS, which was consistent with previous studies (e.g. Birnbaum, 2005; Brown & Ryan, 2003), proposing self-awareness to be notably connected to mindfulness, as well as being one of the key elements in an individual's wellbeing (Sutton, 2016). It has shown that, whilst participants became more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, mindfulness meditation assisted in "maintaining awareness of and attention to oneself and one's surroundings" (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010, p. 268). Following on from this increase in awareness, the results from the PANAS were also found to be congruent with Geschwind, Peeters, Drukker, van Os, and Wichers' (2011) research, showing MBIs being effectively used to increase momentary positive emotions. Additional studies (e.g., Erisman & Roemer, 2010; Kiken & Shook, 2011; Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009) suggest that once positive emotion has been activated, it sets people on an upward spiral. This prompts further positive emotional experiences, by broadening an individual's viewpoint, allowing them to notice and take advantage of their personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001). An example of this occurred just after the first session, when one of the participants reported having felt a huge positive boost, after using her newly learned self-awareness sense and practiced mindfulness while shopping. For the first time in a while, she had managed to just buy healthy food and also stick to buying only what she needed, as opposed to filling up the trolley with junk food. Fredrickson et al.'s (2008) research indicated that recurrently experiencing positive emotions in this way sets people on trajectories of growth, which, over time, encourages building significant personal resources, such as developing more mindful attention, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and better physical health. With practice, individuals potentially become more satisfied with their lives.

Delivering the adaptation of the PMP in person has been considered to be a valuable asset. Although Ivtzan et al. (2016) praised the online version for facilitating accessibility on a larger scale, the face-to-face interaction gave the participants an added opportunity to be involved in group settings and experience positive relations with one another. This has allowed them to practice a loving attitude towards themselves and others, whilst exercising self-acceptance, as well as giving and receiving

social support. Mantzios, Michail, Giannou, and Kyriaki (2014) saw the group dynamic as a most constructive setting for supporting people who are trying to lose weight. Group work has also been positively linked to increase in positive emotions and consequentially to a variety of personal resources (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

The BI-AAQ data also corresponded with the findings above, as well as backing up studies showing the effectiveness of mindfulness training in promoting emotion regulation (Chambers, Gullone & Allen, 2009; Teper, Segal & Inzlicht, 2013). These results have established that once participants became better at noticing their emotional state, they improved at settling themselves into a non-reactive, non- judgmental stance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). During the third week's training, there was a particular emphasis on the importance of emotional acceptance (Davidson et al., 2003), and Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM) was then introduced to the program. The newfound self-acceptance encouraged a shift from the usual self-critical focus, towards a more positive emotional state. For example, one participant reported that after breaking the diet, instead of typically berating herself and giving up on the regime, she chose to do an extra session at aqua-class. After sharing this with the group, others decided to make similar adjustments to their lifestyle as well. This astonishing knock-on effect carried on 'broadening & building' (Fredrickson, 2001) more personal resources each week, confirming also Hutcherson, Seppala, and Gross' (2008) concept that LKM not only increases positive emotions, but it continues spiralling growth in terms of feelings of social connectedness, causing additional mental and physical health benefits.

As shown in the example above, in simply directing awareness to the present moment and activating acceptance, rather than yearning to control or change a situation, this participant (mindfully) chose to accept that, although breaking the diet was an undesirable behaviour, she found no need to despise herself, but instead, chose to do something positive about it. Repeatedly selecting or reframing behaviour in this way reinforces previous findings that mindfulness may facilitate a number of direct-change mechanisms, including self-regulation (Garland, Gaylord, & Park, 2009), which may support how the increased wellbeing variables contributed to greater weight loss. Some of the participants found, paradoxically, that the process of learning to accept their failures and giving up control has actually led to greater self-control in their lives.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite encouraging results presenting greater measures of wellbeing and significant weight loss, there are several limitations to this study, leaving abundant opportunity for future research to evaluate and refine its findings.

First, there is a problem of generalisation relating to normal weight and overweight individuals, because the sample was quite small. Whilst there is a wide spectrum of overweight, and since there was no specification of weight criteria during recruitment, most of the participants were at the lower end of the scale, which may have influenced these findings. Additionally, when recruiting participants via social media, there was an expectation for a greater variability; in reality however, because the study was conducted face-to-face, vicinity was unavoidable. Furthermore, this sample was composed of predominantly female, well-educated participants, from a similar social background. Future studies will require recruitment from a wider sample, in order to create greater generalisation.

Second, due to the relatively short period of the research, it has not been possible to investigate whether enhanced wellbeing was sustained beyond the intervention, or whether participants continued exercising mindfulness until achieving the desired weight, or even retained the loss achieved during the program. One of the greatest challenges about weight loss is the ability to retain the loss (Kramer, Jeffery, Forster, & Snell, 1989; Tapper et al., 2009). Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine whether the effect was sustained beyond the intervention, or whether longer interventions might be advisable, until consolidated change has actually taken place.

Third, the total dependence on self-report measures risks confounding data through social desirability response bias. An even stronger constraint for this current study was collecting the weight measures through self-reporting online. Although unlikely that participants would have deliberately lied on their responses, future studies could provide more rigorous, objective ways of collecting these measures, for example, having participants weighed by researchers, using the same scale pre- and post-test for all partakers.

Fourth, this study chose to use only four self-report scales for measuring wellbeing, taken prior to intervention and once again eight weeks later/post-intervention, and this was a carefully selected and deliberate act for making the study as straightforward as possible for the participants. Although the study has shown an encouraging total change, it has not been possible to identify which particular

week's training had the strongest effect. Therefore, it is suggested that future research would gain a better understanding, especially if measures are taken weekly, pre and post, against each training.

In spite of all these limitations, overall the success of these measures, and the possibilities presented by such a short intervention, appears to show stunning possibilities for the PMFO program to be implemented successfully, suggesting that further enquiry is worthy of consideration.

Conclusion

This research has shown that PMFO strengthened mindfulness, boosted positive feelings and increased the ability to respond with kindness rather than judgmentally, when experiencing emotional pain or failure. It has helped overweight participants to improve their body-image acceptance, whilst reducing the negative feelings about the self. In addition, the results demonstrated statistically significant reduction in weight. It is concluded therefore that PMFO is a promising intervention to help with the emotional struggles experienced by people engaged in weight loss.

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Flourishing Futures: Strengths-Based Autism Development Parent Workshops

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Abstract

Previous theories of autism have inadequately explained autism, autistic children's development and co-morbid mental health problems. The author proposes Autistic Development Theory (ADT), based on current evidence, to describe autistic children's development and escalating mental health problems. ADT considers a cognitive difference in perception causes affective development delays and escalating anxieties which lead to the presentation of behaviours and delays associated with autism and the commonly occurring co-morbid mental health problems.

Flourishing Futures *has been developed for parents to learn about ADT's approach to understanding autism, strategies to help manage daily life and use a strengths-based developmental approach to parenting. Various positive psychology approaches are taught to parents to help enhance well-being for the whole family.* Flourishing Futures *is currently being evaluated with an evaluation group (EV) and waiting list controls (WLC). Participants complete a range of well-being measures for themselves and the SPENCE children's anxiety scale and the Autism Treatment Checklist for the child at three timepoints, pre-workshops, post-workshops and 12 weeks post-workshops. The WLCs complete the initial measures and 12 weeks later. WLCs are then given the workshops and complete post-workshop measures. Early qualitative findings will be presented and discussed with suggestions for further research.*

Background

Outcomes for autistic children can be poor (Dillenburger, Jordan, McKerr, & Keenan, 2015): mental health problems (Mazefsky, Folstein, & Lainhart, 2008; van Steensel, Bogels, & de Bruin, 2013) and under-employment in adult life. The economic cost of autism in the UK is estimated to be £32 billion per annum (Iemmi, Knapp, & Ragan, 2017). However, some autistic children flourish and are considered 'optimal outcomes' whereby they no longer meet the diagnostic criteria in later childhood (Fein et al., 2013).

These issues give rise to the question of why there are such polarised outcomes for autistic children. They may be partly explained by our incomplete understanding of autism. Currently, understanding of autism is based on the diagnostic criteria of social and communication deficits and restricted and repetitive behaviours. This deficit-focused, top-down approach provides little explanation for the

high rates of anxiety and mental health problems within the autistic community. Prevailing theories of autism are mainly neurocognitive (Baron-Cohen, 2009; Happe & Frith, 2006), and whilst they provide insight into cognitive functioning, they do not easily provide explanation for all aspects of autism, such as communication difficulties, or presentations such as Pathological Demand Avoidance syndrome (PDA; Newson, Le Maréchal, & David, 2003).

Most cognitive theories use a deficit approach to explain research findings, in contrast to the Enhanced Perceptual Functioning model (EPF: Table 1), which provides a robust and evidence-based view of key differences in autistic perceptual processing, seeing differences as an enhancement rather than deficit (Mottron et al., 2006). The model highlights eight 'principles' of autistic perception, describing them as a different processing system (Mottron, Dawson, & Soulières, 2009). The superiority of low-level cognitive operations in visual and auditory modalities in autistic individuals has been shown in numerous studies (Mottron et al., 2009). Mottron et al. consider enhanced perception to be involved in the development of savant abilities and special interests. They state that autistic individuals are drawn to patterns and show an enhanced ability in pattern detection. Repeating patterns are often found in structured materials and an interaction with such may lead to a special interest: the material becomes associated with positive emotions and leads to increased preference towards similar patterns. Repetitive play engaged in by autistic children usually groups information or objects and is also associated with positive emotions (Mottron et al., 2009, 2006).

Principle 3 of the EPF model highlights that autistic infants show a high degree of lateral glances. These glances are thought to be early adaptive behaviours to decrease perceptual input. Therefore, we may presume that superior performance and processing can lead to both enhancement in some tasks and perceptual experiences that the infants find intolerable, leading to adaptive behaviours (lateral glances) to decrease stimuli. These early adaptive behaviours provide insight into the infant's agency over their lived experience and their need to control stimuli from an early age.

The EPF model provides evidence-based insight into autistic perceptual processing; however, other aspects of autistic presentation and the development of anxiety and potential development of other mental health problems are not unaccounted for. Taking a bottom-up approach, the researcher theorised that EPF is the single, core difference in autism. Subsequently, it was necessary to explore how EPF could lead to the observable differences in autistic children associated with the diagnostic criteria. Mottron et al. (2006) observed adaptive behaviours related to perceptual differences in infancy. It may be postulated that these differences are inborn and therefore present from birth.

Table 1.

The Enhanced Perceptual Functioning (EPF) Model (Mottron et al., 2006, pp. 30-39)

Principle 1:	*The default setting of autistic perception is more locally-orientated than that of non-autistic perception (enhanced detail perception).*
Principle 2:	*Increased gradient of neural complexity is inversely related to level of performance in low-level perceptual tasks (diminished movement perception).*
Principle 3:	*Early atypical behaviours have a regulatory function towards perceptual input.*
Principle 4:	*Perceptual primary and associative brain regions are atypically activated during social and non-social tasks*
Principle 5:	*Higher-order processing is optimal in autism and mandatory in non-autistics*
Principle 6:	*Perceptual expertise underlies Savant Syndrome.*
Principle 7:	*Savant Syndrome is an autistic model for subtyping PDD's.*
Principle 8:	*Enhanced functioning of primary perceptual brain regions may account for autistic perceptual atypicalities*

At 2-3 months, an infant's attention is captured by variations in colour or movement, while at 9 months they show a stronger focus towards faces. This attentional difference is said to show a transition of attention towards the meaning of social stimuli (Johnson, 2013). Amso (2016) hypothesises that the immature visual system in typical infants may have a developmental benefit and suggest the possibility that the development of attention is interlinked to the development of vision. The infant relies on caregivers to direct their attention to events, objects or a face, which in turn provides emotional support, information or serves to label objects. Caregivers work to gain an infant's attention and help to shape the infant's attention, using a variety of means such as loud voices and gestures and colourful toys; this directs the infant's attention to the caregiver's face and teaches the infant attentional priorities and the importance of people.

If an infant's visual perception is enhanced during these early development stages, this may disrupt these early interactions that are crucial for the development of attention, communication and social interaction. The consequences of disruption may be delays in the development of these elements of development. There is a growing body of research that provides empirical evidence to support this.

In a study with autistic 3-5-year-olds and typically developing children, they found that autistic children outperform typical children on visual attention orientating tasks and rely more on external salient features to guide visual attention orienting than controls. They suggest the possibility that the

more mature pattern found in autistic children interferes with the need for the infant to use adults to help visual orienting in early life (Amso et al., 2016).

Enhanced visual perception in autistic infants may negate the need to seek information from caregivers, and, consequently, the development of attention and language may be hindered as infants are not learning from adults' attentional priorities as typically developing children do. Thorup et al. (2016) stressed the importance of early joint attention: to learn new words, children need to form an association between the object an adult is looking at and the word that is being said. Consequently, language development can be expected to be impacted by poor gaze-following, which they found to be the case in studies of autistic infants (Thorup et al., 2016). Autistic toddlers of 20 months were found to focus attention more on background objects then on the activities of others and while spending the same time looking at people as controls, they spent less time looking at heads and more time looking at bodies. They suggest monitoring social activities of other people is disrupted early in development and this limits observational learning in the future (Shic, Bradshaw, Klin, Scassellati, & Chawarska, 2011).

A study assessing the early interactions of autistic children and controls up to 18 months of age used home videos to retrospectively analyse interactions (Cohen et al., 2013). Autistic infants showed less intersubjective behaviours and social orientation. Caregivers adapted their behaviour by using more touching, and regulating up (to excite) or reg down (to calm) interactions. Reg-up behaviour of the caregiver was full of 'parentese' (exaggerated speech with higher pitch and slower tempo) which appeared to be positively associated with the level of the infants' response (Cohen et al., 2013). Parents appear to naturally respond to the infant to encourage intersubjective interactions and this may play a part in the spectrum of affectedness – how much the parents are working to gain an infant's attention and interactions, and how successful they are in gaining interactions with the infant. This may influence the degree of delay in the development of language, social communication and attention.

Differences in social-emotional reciprocity have long been accepted as part of autism and a meta-analysis of 48 studies found there is a general impairment in emotional recognition (Uljarevic & Hamilton, 2012). An online study assessing the accuracy of recognising basic emotions from photos varying from low to high intensity found the autistic children to be less accurate than controls, regardless of intensity, and showed the same pattern of errors as controls (Griffiths et al., 2017). The level of emotional competence within the population is varied, with some significantly impaired and others performing at typical levels (Bird & Cook, 2013). Alexithymia is difficulty identifying and

describing one's own emotional state; Bird and Cook (2013) report between 40-64% of autistic adults have alexithymia. They hypothesise that the "emotional symptoms of autism" (p. 2) are due to the higher rates of alexithymia in the population. They highlight that people with high alexithymia have difficulty recognising emotional facial expressions and show reduced empathy.

Emotion knowledge has been linked to self-regulation and social competence; children who are more able to understand the emotional cues of others develop better social skills and interpersonal relationships (Trentacosta & Fine, 2010). Regarding emotion knowledge in children, a study by Ben-Itzchak et al. (2017) have found that autistic children exhibit delays. Participants were in age-related groups of 6-8 years and 8.2-11years. Typical children in both age groups were able to give responses that highlighted their understanding of which life events led to basic emotions and describe them clearly. The autistic children gave coherent responses only in the older group and only for the emotion of happiness. The differences between the groups increased with age and were more apparent with the negative emotions. These findings support the theory that autistic children are likely to be experiencing developmental delays, as older autistic children are recognising events that involved happiness, though notably when older than their peers. Emotion regulation and competence in basic emotions (happiness, anger, sadness) has been found in 3-4-year-old typically-developing children (Denham et al., 2003) and this, again, highlights the potential that autistic children may experiencing delay in social-emotional development rather than deficit.

These early disruptions in development may begin as early as 2-3 months old during the interpersonal attention phase (Lewis & Granic, 2010). Infants may experience disrupted interactions with caregivers or be unresponsive as some infants were found to be in the Lavelli and Fogel study (2013). These very early interactions may begin to give rise to the spectrum of affectedness – less disruption will lead to fewer delays. Female autistic presentation may be explained by this concept. Females are often missed diagnostically, which may be reflective of the current criteria, or an alternative suggestion is that they "genuinely cope better in some way" (Dworzynski, Ronald, Bolton, & Happé, 2012, p. 793). Generally, when females interact in dyads (Lavelli & Fogel, 2013) they tend to interact with their caregiver for longer periods of time than males. From the perspective of ADT, female autistic infants therefore have greater opportunity to develop the early social-emotional and communication skills than males, and consequently are not being recognised as autistic.

Mottron et al. (2007) highlighted early adaptive strategies to decrease sensory input by way of lateral glances. These atypical behaviours highlight the infant's need to gain control over their perceptual

input to attempt to keep the level tolerable. A longitudinal study with autistic toddlers found that sensory over-responsivity remained stable over time, but anxiety increased, with higher levels of anxiety in higher functioning children. They suggest this could be due to more awareness of the environment and understanding and expectation of unfavourable events (Green, Ben-Sasson, Soto, & Carter, 2012). A meta-analysis of studies concerned with anxiety in autistic children found that higher rates of anxiety were found in studies with a higher mean age of participants (Van Steensel, Bögels, & Perrin, 2011), highlighting that anxieties may increase with age.

A theoretical model has been offered, to show the potential pathway from sensory over-responsivity (SOR) to phobias and generalised anxiety (Green & Ben-Sasson, 2010). It is suggested that SOR may lead to specific phobias through classical conditioning and to generalised anxiety through context conditioning. Increased anxiety and intolerable experiences are associated with intolerance of uncertainty, insistence on sameness, and restricted and repetitive behaviours that are found in autistic children (Boulter, Freeston, South, & Rodgers, 2014; Wigham, Rodgers, South, McConachie, & Freeston, 2015). Anxiety presents through a range of behaviours: challenging behaviours; avoidance or withdrawal or escape; arousal; sensory behaviours such as humming; and obsessional and repetitive behaviours (Ozsivadjian, Knott, & Magiati, 2012). Ozsivadjian et al. note that parents often report autistic children have difficulty sharing their thoughts, and their style of thinking can be negative and make anxiety worse, though this is hardly surprising given the delays in emotional development as previously discussed. Insight into state anxiety and the characteristics of thoughts has come from a real-time study (Hare, Wood, Wastell, & Skirrow, 2015) with adults. They found that significantly more time was being spent on thoughts by autistic participants than those in a control group, with 22% of the autistic group spending between 5-10 minutes on thoughts, and 30% spent over 10 minutes on the same thoughts, significantly longer than controls. This suggests that autistic people may ruminate, and negative affect rumination has been linked to the development and maintenance of mental health problems (Bijttebier, Raes, Vasey, & Feldman, 2012). The Hare et al. (2015) study found that there were also differences in the focus of and forms of thoughts. Only 4.6% of the control group showed an internal focus to thoughts, in contrast to 34% of the autistic group. For the autistic participants, these thoughts were shown to be related to anxiety, with anxious thoughts plaguing 6.3% of the typical group, compared to 16.3% of the autistic group. The autistic group reported finding 36.5% of thoughts distressing in comparison to 20.6% for the typical group. These findings highlight that anxiety may also be related to rumination and the type of thoughts in autistic individuals.

Ozsivadjian et al. (2012) suggest that anxiety leads to restrictive activity, with children becoming less exposed to the world as they avoid ever more experiences to avoid situations that are perceived as confusing and threatening. These restrictions may serve to compound the delays that are experienced by autistic children.

Strategies employed by autistic children in response to sensory overload and anxiety will be the result of their unique experience, response from caregivers, and the individual's personality. These adaptive behaviours may be an attempt to control their environment and experiences, that manifest in apparent inflexibility and a need for sameness and routines, as well as behaviours previously discussed. Decreased exposure to new experiences and opportunities may lead to further delays in development and functional skills, with anxiety similarly impacting the child's ability to learn. Anxiety has also been associated with functional skill delay in autistic children (Kerns et al., 2015) and parental intrusiveness or overinvolvement has been found to have a role in maintaining childhood separation anxiety in children (Wood, 2006), with suggestion that development of self-care skills may be impeded by parental overinvolvement, creating a dependence on parents, which preserves child anxiety. A study assessing the effects of cognitive-behavioural therapy on daily living skills of autistic children with anxiety found a correlation between anxiety and daily living skills, and that increasing these skills may reduce anxiety (Drahota, Wood, Sze, & Van Dyke, 2011).

Autistic Development Theory (ADT) draws on current theories and research described above to provide an overview of enhanced perceptual functioning and the consequential potential development trajectory of autistic children (Figure 2). ADT considers autism to be a perceptual enhancement which disrupts development, leading to delays in developing social-emotional and communication skills from infancy. Environmental factors, stress, anxiety and behavioural adaptations serve to further the delays and increase anxiety. Differences in presentations may also be understood from the perspective of ADT as the influences of individual characteristics in response to stress and anxiety will lead to different behavioural presentations of the autistic child. Caregiver response to the child's distress, stress and anxiety may then serve to reinforce or minimise the child's perceptions and consequential behaviours. Caregivers' own perceptions have the potential to feed into the loop as parental stress, anxiety and over-responsiveness can reinforce and increase child anxiety and developmental delays.

Integrating research into a developmental framework brings opportunity to understand individual differences and provide individualised support to the child and family. The model creates opportunity for innovative interventions to help families cope with the increased demands autism brings and aid resilience. It is reported that when children are supported in environments where their tolerance is not challenged, enhanced perception serves to *aid* development rather than hinder it (Jones, Dawson, & Webb, 2017).
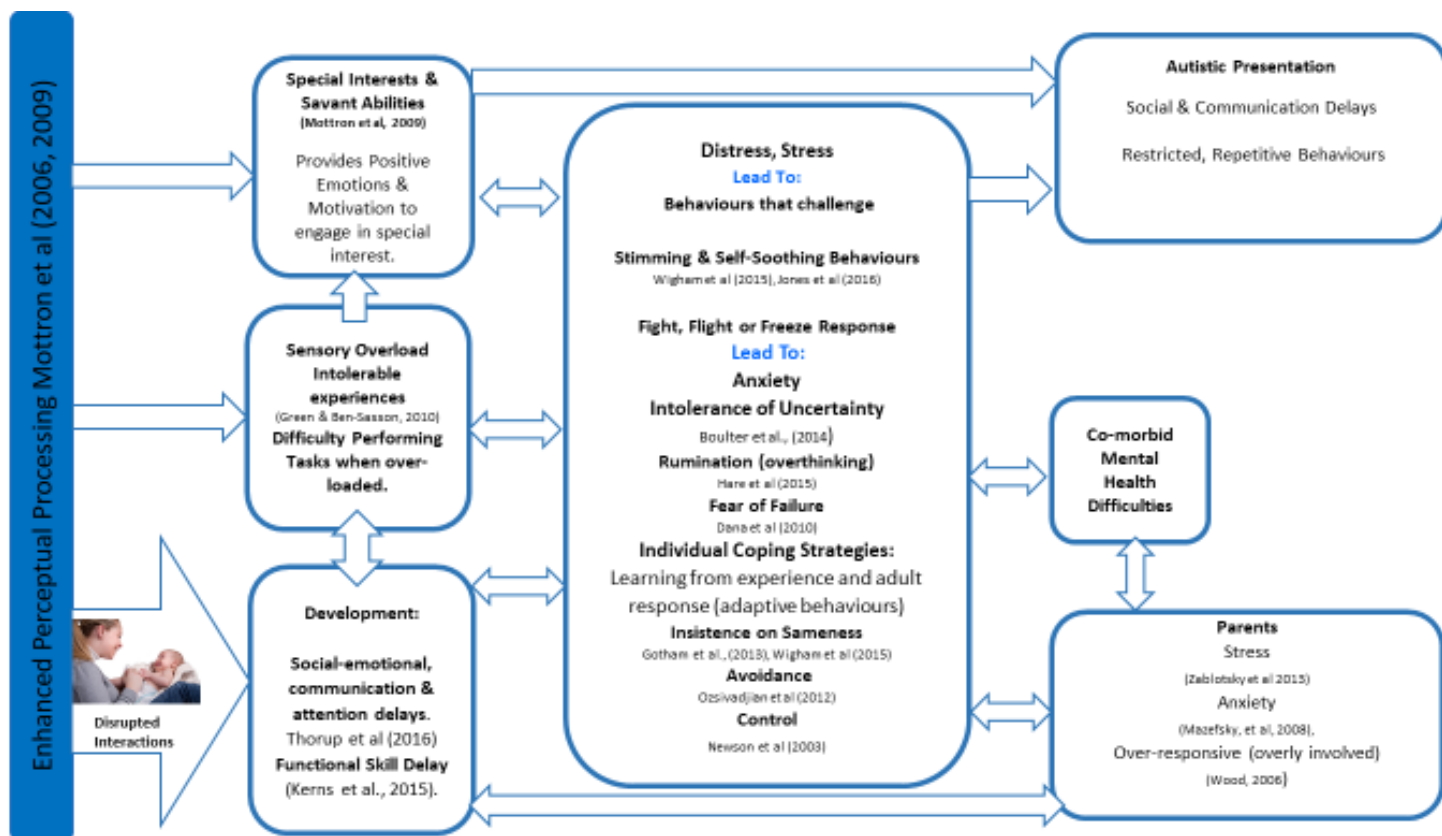
(Boulter et al., 2014; Dana, White, & Crowley, 2010; Drahota et al., 2013; Fagley, Miller, & Jones, 1999; Gotham et al., 2013; Green & Ben-Sasson, 2010; Hare et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017; Kerns et al., 2015; Mazefsky et al., 2008; Mottron et al., 2009, 2006; Newson et al., 2003; Ozsivadjian et al., 2012; Pozo et al., 2014; Thorup et al., 2016; Wigham et al., 2015; Wood, 2006)

Figure 2. Autistic Development Theory (ADT)

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held with parents of primary-school-aged children, secondary-school-aged children and young adults under the age of 25 years. The discussions were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The themes identified were used to further inform the design and content of the workshops. The themes and how they influenced the design and content can be found in Appendix A.

Flourishing Futures **Parent Workshops**

Content

The *Flourishing Futures* workshops have been grounded in Autistic Development Theory, review of literature, applied positive psychology approaches, and feedback and suggestions from parents who participated in focus groups. How the focus group feedback has influenced content and the design can be found in Appendix A, the influence from literature and ADT is found in Appendix B.

Hope theory suggests that hopeful thoughts are associated with the perception that you have the capacity to find paths to achieving your desired goals and have the motivation to use them. When faced with a stressor, people who have higher levels of hope tend to come up with more strategies and are more likely to use them than those with low hope (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Parental hope is a key outcome aim of this research.

The literature review and focus groups have highlighted that autistic children's anxiety increases with age and may become life-limiting. Decreasing autistic children's anxiety levels is a key outcome aim of this research.

ADT enables participants to understand their child's unique presentation and what leads to various behaviours and developmental delays using a visual model. The aim of this is to help participants support the child by dealing with the underlying causes of developmental delays and self-imposed coping strategies.

If ADT provides participants with an effective means of understanding and supporting their child, this should lead to a decrease in behaviours and delays associated with autism and anxiety.

Flourishing Futures aims to:

- Empower participants to cope with and decrease their stress, to enhance their well-being and ability to support their child through difficulties and improve developmental progress.

- Enable participants (parents) to respond to the child from the perspective of ADT, adapt parenting style and sensory stimuli to decrease sensory overload and anxiety to potentially improve development experiences and outcomes.

- Provide participants with the knowledge and skills to employ a parenting style that focuses on developing children's strengths and talents.

- Use adapted positive psychology interventions to support well-being and resilience for the whole family.

Handbook

A parent handbook and corresponding slides were developed. Videos of autistic young adults were put into the slide show to give participants insight into autistic adults' lives, and includes an example of strengths-based development. The aim is to decrease parental uncertainty of the future and increase caregiver hope.

Online Resources

Participants who participated in the focus groups requested online support from peers and the researcher and the inclusion of other family members in the programme. To achieve this, a website hosts a private forum for participants to discuss progress and ask questions, with the researcher available to respond to participants and moderate the forum. To give access to other family members in the programme, a slideshow is uploaded onto a private website.

Method

Study Design

This is an on-going study using a pragmatic non-randomised controlled study design. The initial phase has used an evaluation group (EG) in Leicestershire, and a waiting list control (WLC) group will be held in Enfield. Additional EGs and WLCs will be recruited in June 2019. The researcher is the only facilitator of the groups and is an experienced practitioner and trainer in autism.

Participants from the EG will complete measures pre-intervention (T1), post-intervention (T2) and after three months (T3); WLCs will complete measures upon recruitment (T1), pre-intervention three months later (T2), post-intervention (T3) and three months post-intervention (T4).

Participants

Participants were main caregivers recruited in two distinct geographical areas using organisations and social media as recruitment methods using standardised emails and flyers.

Inclusion Criteria: Participants (main caregiver) of autistic children between the ages of 2 – 19 years. The child must have received a formal diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Families who had previously worked with the researcher.

2. Families of children whose autism may be related to another condition, such as tuberous sclerosis or chromosome 22 deletion syndrome where children often experience multiple challenges.

Main Caregiver Measures

To provide a quantitative measure of stress, hope and well-being, the following measures were used:

- *Scale of Positive and Negative Experience* (SPANE; Diener et al., 2010)

- *The Adult Hope Scale* (Snyder et al., 1991)

- *Flourishing Scale* (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2009)

- *The Perceived Stress Scale* (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)

Child Measures

These were reported by participants pre- and post-programme to assess the impact of the programme:

- *Spence Children's Anxiety Scale* (Parent Report; Spence, 2000)

   This asks caregivers to report on 39 items associated with anxiety using the responses of Never, Sometimes, Often, or Always.

- *The Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist* (ATEC: Mahapatra et al., 2018)

   This measure was created for researchers and practitioners to assess the impact of treatments or interventions. The caregiver responds to questions in the domains of: speech, language and communication; sociability; sensory and cognitive awareness; and health and physical behaviour.

Protocol

The protocol for the evaluation group and waiting list controls is described in Figure 3.
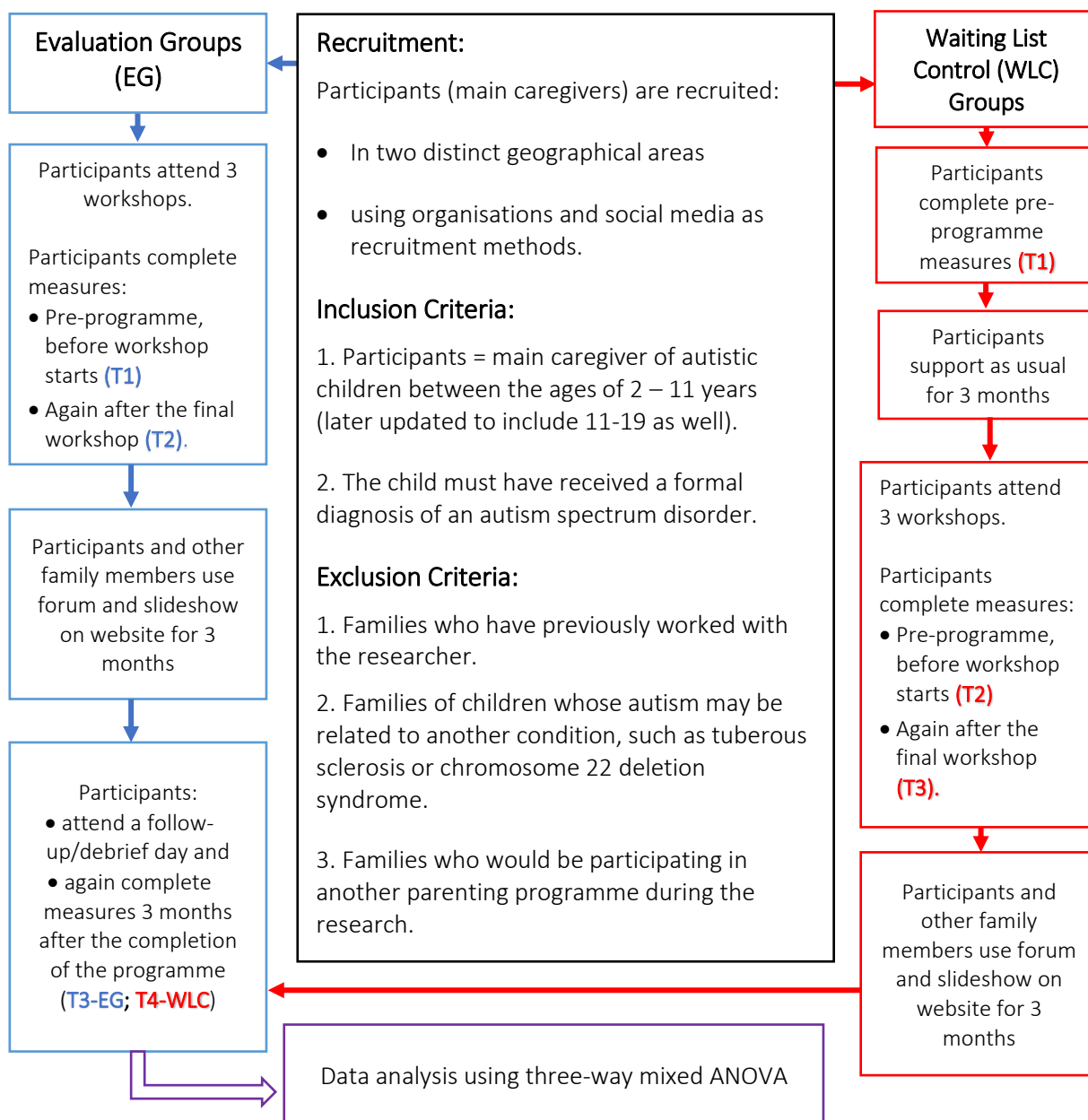
Figure 3. Study Protocol

Procedure

During the initial recruitment phase, it became evident that the project needed to be pragmatic and the researcher needed to have a flexible approach. Changes were made to age of children included in the study, taking the age of 11 years to 19 years.

Recruitment of participants was challenging. There was a high degree of interest from parents, but low sign-up; 13 parents signed up for the evaluation group (EG) and 9 for the waiting list controls (WLC). In both groups, two parents pulled out before the workshops, leaving 11 participants in the

EG and 7 WLCs. One parent from the EG was removed from the study after the workshops for not meeting the inclusion criteria, having completed the application forms as if she did, in the end leaving 10 EG participants. Challenges to participation were: day of week, child-care of pre-school-age children, work commitments, children being home-schooled, and location.

Encouraging parents to complete and return measures took a lot of time; this appeared to be regarding issues of time for parents rather than reluctance. Two participants from the EG did not complete the second, post-workshops measure set as they left early and did not return to the researcher via email.

The researcher ran the workshops for the EG over three days. Participants had lively discussions and appeared to enjoy participation. The focus groups suggested an online forum, and this was set up. It was decided that the researcher would moderate the forum and the parents lead it. There was some initial activity of one question to the researcher, and two photos of positive psychology activities a participant had undertaken, however there has been no activity or comments for two months from the EG.

This is a pragmatic study and the researcher has taken field notes to capture the nuances of the study, adaptations that are made and examples that are given in the workshops. These will be used to further inform future studies.

Parent Feedback

Two EG participants have provided feedback on the workshops and using the strategies at home with their child and family.

Parent Response to ADT

> *The old theories made me think there would be no quality of life. ADT says you have ASD, but you can do it and the family can do it.* (EG03)

> *When I came from university [autism course] they teach you it's gospel truth. They are more able. No theory of mind, that he doesn't understand; we show him now, empower him to understand and it works. It may be true of adults [ToM] who have not had the scaffolding.* (EG03)

> *It has massively helped me to understand him; he's not having us on, he is struggling with things. I understand him more.* (EG12)

Workshops are brilliant! Everyone should do it. It makes you think, it doesn't contradict others, but it makes sense of the little things that we pick up on, from when he was younger that people were saying were nothing to worry about. (EG12)

Parent Stress & Hope

The impact on us, we are calmer, more positive and that is having a better effect on R. He still has his moments but helping him to move on is helping his self-esteem. (EG03)

There are not as many outbursts 'cos we are talking about things. It has had an impact on the whole family, his brother doesn't lose his temper with him so much. I am calmer and definitely, the belonging thing. We have started going to church, and he has spoken there. He loves it. (EG12)

It opened my eyes to another way of helping, he will get there, just maybe later. I look more positively at the diagnosis and us as a family. Before I was obsessed with the world around me, of other people's views, I have closed the negativity I projected. Now we are surrounded with people we love, positive. I am not people-pleasing anymore. (EG03)

I hope he will go on to do whatever he wants to do. (EG12)

Parent Feedback on Strategies & Activities

It was the 80/20%. He can do this 80%, now a bubble of support of things he is good at and capable of. It was put into my head by professionals he can't do that, but they are wrong. (EG03)

I can see it works, slow progress with N as he doesn't like change. After school he would focus on bad things, that was his focus, had to dig really deep to find the good, he would say 5 or 6 bad things, now it's just one or two. Yesterday the worst thing was that his sausage was late at lunch time, so he is getting better as there are not as many bad things. (EG12)

321 [activity] is good. It helps him to work out the day. In bed he's calmer and not stressed without being able to express what was wrong 'cos we have talked about the good and bad throughout the day. (EG12)

Parent Confidence & Empowerment

I've got fight in my belly now. I am very empowered! (EG03)

It gave me more confidence; I knew more after doing it. I feel more confident telling people what my child needs. I always thought that I knew and researched but it's my confidence, I am even looking forward to his EHCP meeting. More confidence to put him 1st and that I can do it. (EG12)

It has helped me know how to deal with things, also helped me speak to school about his needs. Now school are listening to suggestions and putting in place, they are doing more. (EG12)

Development of Child

We have started using different words, bigger words, and for emotions, school has noticed and they have said it has helped with his reading, I don't know why. I mentioned bigger words to the Deputy Head and she said that I would be amazed. School have said, this has proved it. N is flying now. (EG12)

Me and my husband are surprised how much progress he has made, his reading has surprised us. We have always known he needs to learn to read. Just seems the last 2-3 weeks reading is phenomenal. Don't know where it's coming from, is it because we are using bigger words with him? (EG12)

[Impact?] Only at home and not at school so not as much impact on him as I had hoped. (EG03)

Discussion

Early qualitative findings from an on-going study evaluating *Flourishing Futures* workshops for parents of autistic children have been reported. The overall response from participants has been positive and encouraging. Participants have reported early success with various Positive Psychology strategies, with a decrease in rumination, negative focus and consequential stress (EG12) and parents' strengths-based focus of support (EG03). Unexpectedly, the development of emotional literacy has been linked to significant improvement in reading ability in one child (EG12). It will be interesting to see if the qualitative feedback from parents is supported by the future analysis of the quantitative data and if the impact of the intervention holds over time.

The hypothesis was that an incomplete understanding of autism may in part lead to escalating anxiety and mental health problems. A model that helps parents to understand their child more effectively and potential difficulties should enable parents to make the adjustments needed to support their child's development. Early parental reports suggest that this may be the case, with both participants stating that ADT has helped them understand their child.

Parental stress was a key outcome for this study and participants have both reported feeling calmer, and this has positively impacted upon their children, with reports of increased self-esteem (EG03) and less conflict within the family (EG12).

One participant also reported feeling more confident advocating for her child's needs (EG12) while the other feels more empowered (EG03), which is also expected to have an impact on the child's development. If parents can understand and communicate their child's needs effectively to educators,

there is greater likelihood of the child's needs being met in an educational setting, enhancing the child's opportunity for development.

To summarise, early participant feedback indicates that *Flourishing Futures* may be achieving the intended impact of:

- Empowering participants to cope with and decrease their stress, to enhance their well-being and ability to support their child through difficulties and improve developmental progress.

- Enabling participants (parents) to respond to the child from the perspective of ADT, adapt parenting style and sensory stimuli to decrease sensory overload and anxiety to potentially improve development experiences and outcomes.

- Providing participants with the knowledge and skills to employ a parenting style that focuses on developing children's strengths and talents.

- Use adapted positive psychology interventions to support well-being and resilience for the whole family.

The study is on-going; it is the researcher's intention to run more EG and WLC groups and statistically analyse measurement outcomes for autistic children and their families. Whilst too much credence should not be given to these early findings, indicators highlight that *Flourishing Futures* may positively impact the development of autistic children and family wellbeing.

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Appendix A

Themes identified in focus group discussions reflected in intervention design

Themes identified in focus group discussions to be reflected in an intervention design:

Themes:	How the intervention design will address the themes:	Pg. of Parent Handbook
Strategies for De-escalating Parental Stress and Anxiety	A variety of Positive Psychology approaches will be utilised with an aim for a whole family approach. The stress cycle and controlled breathing will be taught to the parents and they will be given the opportunity to practice during the workshops.	p. 10
Need for Positive Focus Balance Positives and Negatives Include Strength Development	The intervention is designed to focus on strength-based parenting and child development and how to develop their child's functional skills.	p. 26
Accessibility Issues Family-wide Difficulty Attending During Working Hours Provide childcare Child's behaviour being a barrier to access	Facilitate the programme during school hours [alleviate the need for childcare or bringing child]; Provide parents with an accessible handbook [parents with specific learning difficulties]; Provide a video of the programme workshops online to include wider family members and working parents. Enable the on-line access requested for the duration of the research via a member's forum on the website. Should the programme be up-dated, provide these up-dates on-line or via email. This project is not funded therefore childcare provision is beyond the scope.	
Positive Adult Stories What to Expect in the Future Unknown Future	Show parents videos of young adults describing their lives to decrease uncertainty about the future.	p. 5

Themes:	How the intervention design will address the themes:	Pg. of Parent Handbook
Have On-line Support for Parents On-line Follow Up Live Chat Support Building Social Support Isolation Peer Support Parental Anxiety	On the website there will be a private forum that parents will have access to for peer support and the researcher will respond to questions. The forum will provide parents with social support, peer support and is envisaged to decrease parental isolation and anxiety. Live chat support is beyond the scope of the project.	
Experiential Learning as a means within the intervention	The intervention will teach parents how to plan their child's development and explicitly teach skills. The parents will have opportunity to trial this within the workshop.	p. 20
Limiting Beliefs	Actively planning their child's development is anticipated to enable parents to become less overly involved (doing things for the child) and develop greater expectations for their child's development.	p. 23 p. 34
Need for hope Need for Expectations	Providing parents with insight into the lives of autistic young adults is expected to decrease limited beliefs and increase hope and expectations.	p. 5 p. 26
Involve Support Workers Involve Schools	These are beyond the scope of this small-scale project.	
Need for Timely Advice [post-diagnosis]	This is beyond the scope of this small-scale project.	
Knowledge and Expert Support to Understand the Child Access trusted Information, advice & Guidance.	Autistic Development Theory (ADT) will be explained to parents within the programme. Parents will be given opportunity to explore how their child is presenting within the framework of ADT and how to support them according to their individual need.	p. 6 Trusted information & guidance throughout

Themes:	How the intervention design will address the themes:	Pg. of Parent Handbook
Information on co-morbid diagnoses	Autistic Development Theory provides possible explanation and opportunity to support the child with various co-morbid diagnoses.	p. 6
Parents Retraining Thoughts	The intervention will stress the modelling of explanatory style and work with parents to develop optimistic thinking.	p. 13
Transitions	Life transitions will be covered in the development planning and goal setting sections.	p. 23
	Parents will use the transition of change model for themselves, it will also be highlighted that their children will also face similar thoughts and feelings and that rather than decrease expectations, supporting the child through the transition is important.	p. 5
Strategies to Handle School Experiences	Understanding the child from the perspective of Autistic Development Theory is envisaged to help parents become empowered to advocate for their children and explain their needs in a variety of settings.	p. 6
Ways to Decrease Potential Over-involvement	This will be discussed in relation to Autistic Development Theory. It is envisaged that meeting other needs (de-escalate sensory over-responsivity, anxiety, parental fears for the future) and parents planning their child's development, that over-involvement will decrease and expectations for development will increase.	p. 6
Child dependent into adulthood	Parents actively planning and developing children's functional skills should decrease the likelihood of being dependent in adult life.	p. 22
Developing Life Skills	Parents will discuss various ways to motivate their child to learn and understand the need to develop functional skills.	p. 22
Repetitive learning style	Parents understanding how sensory overload and stress affects learning.	p. 8

Themes:	How the intervention design will address the themes:	Pg. of Parent Handbook
Explicit teaching	Parents actively plan their child's development through goal setting, planning and motivating child.	p. 20
Motivating child	Parents learn to motivate through linking learning to desires of child and reward systems.	p. 20
Delayed Development Development social/emotional skills Communication difficulties	Parents assess child's current skills and develop goals and plans to develop functional skills. Parents will be taught how to teach children social skills and norms through visual supports and social stories.	p. 22 p. 33
Child self-harming during meltdown	De-escalation techniques will be taught to parents to utilise when the child is escalated.	p. 10
Anxiety Avoidant Behaviour	A number of anxiety reducing strategies will be taught to parents, for example brain gremlins.	p. 11
Hard to reach parents Less informed parents	It is beyond the scope of the project to actively attempt to involve hard to reach parents. Recruiting parents through charities and support groups may help less informed parents become aware and involved in the research.	
Advocacy	It is beyond the scope of the project to provide advocacy to individual families.	
Child Presentation Sensory Differences Own coping strategies Unable to cope Masking Aggression Behaviours that challenge	The challenges that parents reported the children may be experiencing are explained in ADT. By giving parents insight into the effects of sensory over-load, it is expected that parents will be enabled to understand their children's distress and alter their environment.	p. 6 p. 9 p. 7

Themes:	How the intervention design will address the themes:	Pg.
Not recognising difficulties Stress	Sensory differences will be explained to parents, and discussion will take place to plan how to decrease the negative impact this may have on the child. These alongside de-escalation techniques may help to decrease the aggressive and challenging behaviours parents report.	p.10
	Parents will be taught how to motivate their child to develop new skills (social skills, communication) and explicitly teach their child.	p. 22
	By providing parents with strategies to help the child cope with life, or adapt the environment, it is expected that distress, anxiety and resultant behaviours will decrease.	
Parents reporting that they experience a 'bereavement' process when child is diagnosed.	We suggest that the parents are experiencing a transition of change, post diagnosis. The Fishers transition of change model shows the change transition with associated thoughts and feelings and possible responses. It is predicted that this visual resource will help parents to accept that their thoughts and feelings are usual, and by enabling parents to identify where they are in the process, they will be enabled to move forward through the change with greater resources.	p. 5

Literature review findings influencing intervention design

Literature Review Findings	How to Address	What Aspect of Programme	Pg. in Parent Handbook
Autistic children and adults have higher rates of mental ill-health and anxiety which increase over time.	Adapt positive psychology approaches to increase resilience. Provide strategies to de-escalate anxiety.	Gratitude interventions. Building Positive Emotions. Brain Gremlin for anxiety. Developing optimistic thinking. Controlled breathing to de-escalate.	p. 29 p. 30 p. 11 p. 12 p. 10
Autistic children have intolerance of uncertainty and insistence on sameness.	Provide certainty to decrease behaviours resulting uncertainty and insistence on sameness.	Teach parents how to use different types of schedules and adapt for age.	p. 15
Autistic children have a fear of failure.	Teach children it's okay for things not to be perfect.	Teach parents to use process praise with children. Teach parents how to change child's catastrophic thinking.	p. 22 p. 13
Autistic individuals ruminate.	Help individuals move on from thoughts.	Teach parents how to change child's catastrophic thinking to optimistic and move on from thoughts using the ABC model.	p. 13
Autistic children experience delays in functional skills.	Support development of functional skills.	Teach parents how to assess and plan development.	p. 22
Autistic children lack motivation to learn new skills.	Motivate the children.	Use strategies to motivate the child.	p. 21

Appendix B (continued)

Literature Review Findings	How to Address	What Aspect of Programme	Pg. in Handbook
Autistic individuals have enhanced perception that leads to anxiety and self-soothing & repetitive behaviours.	Decrease sensory overload.	Teach parents about enhanced perception and how over-load affects learning and leads to anxiety.	p. 7
		Enable parents to experience over-load themselves.	p. 8
Autistic children show adaptive response to sensory over-load which may be linked to delays in development.	Decrease sensory over-load and anxiety.	Teach parents about enhanced perception and how over-load affects learning and leads to anxiety	p. 7
		Enable parents to experience over-load themselves	p. 8
Parents experience anxiety and stress.	Decrease anxiety and stress.	Include whole family in the anxiety reduction strategies for the autistic child. Encourage parents to model behaviour.	Reinforced throughout the programme.
Autistic children experience stress.	Decrease stress.	Teach parents how to …. help manage sensory over-load.	p. 7
		…. help de-escalate child's stress using controlled breathing.	p. 10
		… reduce catastrophic thinking and rumination.	p. 13
Autistic children develop their own, often life-limiting strategies to decrease anxiety, stress and sensory overload.	Decrease sensory overload, uncertainty and provide more appropriate strategies.	Teach parents how to… … help manage sensory over-load.	p. 7
		… help de-escalate child's stress using controlled breathing.	p. 10
		… reduce catastrophic thinking and rumination.	p. 13
		Provide parents with strategies to reduce uncertainty (time timers and schedules).	p. 15