

A CHRONICLE OF THE NEW MOVEMENT
CALLED POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

A thesis presented to
the Faculty of Saybrook University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Psychology
by
Jennifer Cramer

San Francisco, California
December 2010

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This thesis by Jennifer Cramer has been approved by the committee members below, who recommend it be accepted by the faculty of Saybrook University in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Psychology

Thesis Committee:

_____[Signature]_____
Eugene Taylor, Ph.D., Chair

Date

_____[Signature]_____
Eric Lehrman, Ph.D.

Date

Abstract

A CHRONICLE OF THE NEW MOVEMENT CALLED POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Jennifer Cramer

Saybrook University

This research elucidates the short history of a new branch of psychology called Positive Psychology and identifies the founders and key scholars in this movement with a review of literature that illustrates the various theories that preceded the movement. A discussion of the reaction of Humanistic Psychologists to the controversial statements made by Positive Psychologists was presented. The author presents an historical account and draws conclusions based upon the primary authors and public interpretations in academic literature beginning with the inception of the movement in 1998 at the American Psychological Association meeting in San Francisco through the present. In conclusion, this research discusses initial signs of potential movement beyond controversy, which could unite both psychologists in the humanistic tradition and psychologists in the Positive Psychology.

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Chapter 1: Positive Psychology's Conception, Birth, and History

Introduction

Since the time of William James' psychological research at Harvard University (e.g., 1875) and the publication of the first edition of Sigmund Freud's (1913), *The Interpretations of Dreams*, both physicians and psychologists have attempted to use empiricism and scientific methods to grasp the elusive mysteries of the human psyche. William James and Carl G. Jung helped redefine the prevalent scientific-oriented theories, those of Wundt's experimentalism and Freud's psychoanalysis, as via the inception of religious, spiritual, and alternative approaches to probing the unconscious realm of the mind. As a consequence of Jungian and Jamesian insights, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow formulated a school of thought called Humanistic Psychology (HP) that related to and addressed the entirety of the person, his or her experiences, and what it means to be a person. Various perspectives and thought emerged from Rogers and Maslow's accomplishments during the middle and late twentieth century. Positive Psychology (PP) is one of them. Now, with the foundation resting on James and other theorists, PP builds a new home in American psychology with the curb appeal of "...pleasure and gratification, strength and virtue and finally, the lasting fulfillment of both meaning and purpose" (Seligman, 2002a, p. xii).

This new movement has been announced as a revolutionary restructuring of psychology, promoting scientific research, clinical training, university education, and the dissemination of effective intervening therapies. The goals include the assistance of individuals to seek and cultivate meaningful and fulfilling lives; nurturing the best qualities within individuals, institutions, and communities; and enhancing everyday

experiences. This new branch of psychology was developed and founded by Martin E. P. Seligman in 1998, during his tenure as president of the American Psychological Association (APA) and unveiled at the 106th annual meeting in San Francisco, California. In *Authentic happiness: Using the new Positive Psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment* (2002a), Seligman purports that PP teaches the individual to create and enhance a life that allows for a maximum experience of happiness and fulfillment. The advent of such a movement and its theoretical, methodical, philosophical, and historical claims has stirred the psychological and therapeutic community, creating controversy. The movement seeks to understand positive emotion, build strength and virtue, and assist one in achieving “the good life” (Seligman, 2002b). It also postulates certain principles similar to its humanistic forefathers, yet polemically claiming its independence from HP. This thesis attempts to delineate the history of this new movement, define Positive Psychology according to its proponents while also shedding light on the movements and theories that preceded it, and discuss the various controversies and reactions from the psychological community as a whole.

The dialogues and conversations of Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, and others on foreign shores began the conception of PP. This was to be no mere school of thought or “ism,” but an empirically and scientifically sound new psychology. Seligman wanted PP to be an impactful and powerful vision and a refocusing of psychology (Peterson, 2006). He created an outline and schema, devised content, created methods, and built an infrastructure. Ed Diener (University of Illinois) drew up the definitions for positive character strengths and virtues; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Claremont Graduate University) led the charge for positive emotions and classification systems that would

clarify when positive strengths were present; and a classification system was produced by Chris Peterson (University of Michigan) and George Vaillant (Harvard University).

Kathleen H. Jamieson (University of Pennsylvania) directed the creation of the list of positive institutions such as the family, political systems, and education. Seligman and Peter Schulman (University of Pennsylvania) oversaw and coordinated these efforts through the Positive Psychology Network (PPN).

Unlike other movements that have sought to supplant categories of science and religion, the founders did not want to engage in grandiose and possibly disastrous schemes and ambitions. Seligman wrote, “we do not see Positive Psychology as a replacement for what has gone before, but just as a supplement and extension of it” (2002b, p. 267). Subsequently, he made the historical connection to HP. Founded in the 1960s by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, two luminescent figures, Humanistic Psychology stressed many of the same premises as Positive Psychology does: will, responsibility, hope, and positive emotion (2002a). Given the movement’s controversial evaluation of its historical roots, it is a surprising statement.

The Inception of the Movement Called Positive Psychology

During his foundational speech in San Francisco in 1998, Seligman announced that twentieth century psychology had been deficient in actively playing a significant role in two areas of human existence. One area of deficiency addresses world events. Some examples of world events that must be addressed by psychologists include the ascendancy of ethnic conflict in former communist countries, the rise of terrorism, the targeting of human populations, and other changing geopolitical factors worldwide. The second area of deficiency is the need to focus on human virtues, strengths, and genuine

human happiness and community, instead of materialism and isolation. As the sole remaining superpower, Seligman singled out the United States as being responsible for increasing behavioral patterns of selfishness, alienation, individualism, and despair within a consuming cocoon of wealth and affluence.

In his address, Seligman also added an essential component of Positive Psychology that would differentiate and sever it from its theoretical kinship to Humanistic Psychology: an emphasis on empiricism and Western quantitative scientific methods of research and testing (APA, 1998). Seligman claimed that “we can articulate a vision of the good life that is empirically sound and, at the same time, understandable and attractive” (para. 10). In putting forth a vision that accentuates human happiness, community, the good in life, self-development, and human strengths and virtues while de-emphasizing pathology, Seligman has received critical commentary and overt reactions from his peers in the psychological community (Conoley & Coloney, 2009; Peterson, 2006). Seligman has severed theoretical and ideological ties to the historical precedents set by the school of thought founded by Rogers and Maslow as well as ties to the transpersonal movement founded by Maslow (Joseph & Linley, 2006). Positive Psychology’s historical roots, however, transcend its twentieth century American milieu, reaching back to ancient Athens and to the philosophical discussions of ethics and the good life by thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle. In many ways, Positive Psychology engages in questions examined by some of the world’s religions (Peterson, 2006). Socrates, Plato’s mentor, is remembered for initiating inquiry into the self which could ultimately lead to the meaning of life, per se, by advocating first and foremost to know

thymself (Taylor, 2002). However, even Socrates was preempted by ancient philosophical traditions such as those found in the Upanishads and Confucianism.

The Development of a New Branch of Psychology: 1999-2010

Seligman (2002a), a former APA President, was able to convince many foundations of the importance of PP's ideas and goals. Most notably, he convinced the Templeton Foundation, whose mission is to financially support research among scientists, philosophers, and theologians, to contribute funds to help defray the costs of two brainstorming meetings in Yucatan, Mexico; to fund a series of summer workshops in which young scholars were exposed to the ideas; and to give monetary prizes to young investigators with a top prize of \$100,000, the largest of its kind in the field. Overall, the influx of funding aided in the creation of and solidifying a new school of thought and field in psychology. An idea by itself, however, cannot carry a subfield forward without being able to draw on a domain complete with rules, procedures, and knowledge delineating one idea from another (Peterson, 2006).

Historically, the domain was being nurtured and fed indirectly within the field of psychology. Under the dominance of psychoanalytical, behavioral, and cognitive trends in the field, the works and ideas of Maslow, Rogers, and May, among others, were thriving within a solid base of supporters (Joseph & Linley, 2007). Although Ed Diener, David Myers, and Rick Snyder contributed to the field of psychology as a whole, their previous work and indirect identification with the movement remained obscured and disconnected from the domain of PP. Such thinkers were not identified with any movement, much less one approximating the movement of Positive Psychology, even though they had been active for years and decades in publishing and practice. After the movement's foundation was established, various young scholars came forward and contributed significant ideas to the emerging domain of PP.

Published authors and editors such as Barbara Fredrickson, Jon Haidt, Shane Lopez, Lisa Aspinwall, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ken Sheldon, and Corey Keyes are some who produced the social scientific literature and texts of the movement. The most notable piece of literature to come from this group is the two-volume tome, the *Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology* (Lopez, 2009).

Since there are many academic and research exchanges through Claremont Graduate University's doctoral program, The Quality of Life Research Center, and Seligman's University of Pennsylvania Center for Positive Psychology and Master's Program in Positive Psychology, the domain, research strategies, and collected data are in state of flux and development. An empirically-oriented database compiling strengths and virtues, through the efforts of Seligman and Peterson, attempts to establish a scientific precedent with significant implications for clinical psychology, prevention and intervention, and coaching. Concepts such as forgiveness, flow, happiness, and mental attention have been legitimized through the application of empirically sound methodologies and innovative research strategies (Carr, 2004).

Articulating and formulating some principles, Csikszentmihalyi intentionally applied the "systems model of creativity" to their proposed ideas. Such a model influenced the creators' thought processes about the emerging subfield's principal undertakings: first, to articulate and develop a domain interpolating systematic knowledge, rhetorical devices and goals, and a menagerie of applicable tools; second, to activate a movement that sought out and encouraged young minds and scholars to labor within the domain, especially encouraging significant and useful contributions. The proposed strategies and emerging vision utilized the sub-discipline's energy in ways that cemented its principles and simultaneously garnered a dynamic corpus of knowledge and data, interlocking with the interests and needs of the international community.

Many questions, however, have been left unanswered: What is the future of PP, as a means to building healthier community? How can the domain's structural components remain relevant and of consequence to a world increasingly dominated by technology, alienation, and conflict? These matters must be kept at the heart of the system's model.

Various scenarios have materialized in response to the above challenges. Certain parties propose a single, overriding theoretical schema, creating an amalgam out of the many components of the theories, methods, and collected data, eventually producing a monolithic empirically oriented psychology of human mental health (Peterson, 2006). Other voices advocate the study of positive principles based upon the phenomena and function of psyche, sutured to the theoretical and methodological bodies of thought in subfields such as social, organizational, and clinical psychology. Generally, the latter perspective does not want PP to become a separate and distinct subfield or system. Instead, the ultimate aim is the balanced understanding of each sphere of functioning. What these two views have in common is an effort to define the shape of the domain in the future. The various future possibilities of the domain consequentially could mold PP's agenda in a variety of ways. It is very likely that a significant amount of psychologists will remain with one foot in the new movement's community and the other in psychology disciplines such as developmental, cognitive, or personality psychology. Engaged psychologists will continue to explore the theoretical foundations, research strategies, and applications for the local and global community. Theories and paradigms that are not validated and given viability through rigorous scientific methods will be discarded, thereby avoiding the misspending of human and monetary capital. In addition, there are some who wonder if Positive Psychology will fade when Seligman is no longer leading the charge. Some also await his answer to the

charge of this seeming contradiction: How does one determine scientifically what is positive if science is value free?

Positive psychology's success in the United States (U.S.) has been accomplished through applied clinical methodology and generous funding from the Templeton Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and the Pew Foundation (Seligman, 2002a).

Positive Psychology is growing in academic environments. Over thirty universities around the world are now teaching courses based on PP. Positive Psychology has been put into practice and can be seen in everyday activities such as coaching and individual, personalized exercises. Claims have been made that it has made strides in intervention, responding to the twin human needs of psychological health and well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The study and application of interventions have been directed at individual, institutional, and communal levels of human life. Scholars have channeled their time and energy into creating indicators of well-being aimed at the social and idiosyncratic climate of the U.S. and the world at large (Carr, 2004). Seligman's theoretical projections include the institutions of families, the workplace, schools, museums, and cities (Seligman, 2002a). Some in the PP community assert that implementing research and programmatic strategies on a wider collective scale are a more ambitious means to achieving PP's ends, rather than concentrating on individuals and specific strengths (Peterson, 2006). Theoretically, it is helpful to envision that the individual and collective share a reciprocal dialogue in which the one supports and enhances the other. A significant amount of advances in and development of praxes has been made in the area of organizational psychology, helping to implement PP's strategies and ends in the workplace (Peterson & Seligman, 2004.) Such instances reveal

the reality of this movement as a viable subfield in this country as Positive Psychology has burgeoned in the past decade. The field now boasts several thousand journal articles, a few dozen trade books, numerous textbooks, scientific grants, research lab centers around the world, the International Positive Psychology Association, advanced degree programs, and a website, www.authentichappiness.org, with over one million registrants.

Other websites dedicated to disseminating the movement's information are:

www.postivepsychology.org, www.apa.org/science/positivepsy.html,

www.authentichappiness.org, www.bus.umich.edu/Positive,

www.div17.org/positivepsychology, www.positivepsychology.org, and

www.authentichappiness.org.

Graduate-level educational programs in Positive Psychology have also been created at both the University of Pennsylvania and Claremont Graduate University (CGU). Both schools offer programs at the Master's level; CGU also offers a degree at the doctoral level. Seligman teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and was key in the creation of the Master of Applied Positive Psychology degree program available through the College of Liberal and Professional Studies, a nine-course curriculum over a single calendar year.

Chapter 2: Theory of Positive Psychology and Major Concepts

Positive Psychology's leaders created a structurally connected body and overarching network comprised of concepts that are intricately related and possess organic coherence.

Positive Psychology has clarified two separate emotional states connected with an individual's present moment in time: fleeting and temporary pleasure and longer-lasting gratifications (Peterson & van Dulmen, 2007). The first, that of temporary pleasure, originates within sensual sensation and experiences, while the latter, settled gratification, arises from certain states of absorption and what Csikszentmihalyi's research defines as flow. While no theory of states has been illuminated within the Positive Psychology movement, it appears that positive outcomes sometimes refer to feelings and at other times refer to activities without feeling attached to them. Seligman proposes that by using an individual's signature strengths in many areas of life, such as work, play, and family, an individual can have more opportunities for flow and for longer-lasting gratification.

One of the most significant and original works of this movement is that of signature strengths (SS) and its classification system. The personal strengths found in SS have been linked to specific values as defined in the Values in Action Classification of Strengths (VIACS) with distinctions made between virtues, strengths, and enabling and motivational themes (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Virtues are defined as possessing the core characteristics treasured by moral philosophers such as wisdom or courage. Strengths are less theoretical and are more concrete personality traits that can be used to attain virtues (Peterson & van Dulmen, 2007). There are six virtues the VIACS: wisdom,

temperance, courage, humanity, justice, and transcendence, which is defined as the connection to something larger than oneself.

These universal concepts, as shall be later discussed, are found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, the *Koran*, *Upanishad*, Lao-Tze, and more. The strengths in character can be routes and byways to attaining the higher virtues. As long-term end goals, an individual's strengths must pursue matters that lead to fulfillment, are morally valued, not diminishing to others, espoused by institutions, portrayed by social/societal role models, and exemplified by prodigies (Peterson, 2006). Enabling and motivating themes are variables that lead individuals to manifest and exercise inherent character strengths in specific situations, contributing toward the attainment of virtue(s).

Educational and vocational endeavors and social and politics situations serve as settings for such manifestations of strengths. Seligman asserts that PP, as opposed to other schools of psychology and self-help techniques, does not attempt to correct weaknesses, instead augmenting and exercising signature strengths (Seligman, 2002b). This is a main tenet of Positive Psychology.

Getting into the ideal condition of flow, a desirable state of gratification, can take place within the providence of a controlled yet difficult action that requires learning, skill, and motivation to a certain degree (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The outcomes of such experiences are evident and well-defined to the individual with immediate results. This idea is similar to the popular notion of "getting into the zone" described by athletes, writers, and meditation practitioners of the 1980s and 1990s as a mental state, in which a person in an activity is focused singly and almost effortlessly at the task before them. In flow, the person's conscious powers and attention are wholly involved in the present

activity, and the self is gradually erased. What emerges is a strengthened and refreshed individual following the completed task. This is akin to the experiences reported by individuals that utilize eastern meditative techniques and chanting on a regular basis. As an expert on flow, Csikszentmihalyi (1991) points out that humans often choose immediate pleasures over flow. Flow creates gratifications, but it entails discipline, effort, skill, and may cause anxiety. People tend to choose easy and short-term gratification first, especially in a culture filled with fast food restaurants, easy credit, and 24-hour services.

Two extremely popular concepts injected into the national ideology of American society and also advocated by PP are those of hope and optimism. Seligman who built his early research on the findings of learned optimism, views these two positive emotions as having strong influences on an individual's mental and physical health. Researchers, such as Peterson and van Dulmen's (2007) assessment of these emotions in terms of neurobiological factors and chemical interactions, found incentive-seeking behaviors in human beings and non-human animals. Their findings support Seligman's theory. Extraversion, too, is linked to mesolimbic dopamine pathways that arise in the ventral area of the midbrain, serving as a reward system in the brain (Peterson & van Dulmen, 2007). The efficient functioning of neurotransmitter systems, involving serotonin and noradrenalin, are created and have a positive effect on the immune system while also increasing binding for memory. In women, oxytocin and opioid-based systems are associated with involvement and hopeful socially supportive relationships (Peterson & van Dulmen, 2007).

Happiness is another important and significant concept found not only in the movement of Positive Psychology but also in Western philosophy and religion, influencing much of Western civilization (Taylor, 2002). In 1983, Fordyce was among the first empirical researchers to develop and test a happiness intervention, studying the characteristics of happy people. Happiness is defined by Seligman (2002a) and Peterson (2006) as a positive psychological state, a high level of satisfaction with life, and a high positive affect with a low level of negative affect. Positive Psychology furthers this idea of happiness and strives to help an individual derive gratification and positive emotions from the exercise of their signature strengths. Tied to happiness is also the notion of well-being, popularized by HP, and used interchangeably in PP as subjective well-being (Rogers, 1980).

Some critics argue that happiness can be defined in relative terms, individually and collectively (Taylor, 2002). English utilitarian philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham wrote about varying degrees of happiness, from the lowest to the highest, dependent on varying degrees of emotional, moral, and intellectual capacities (Russell, 1972. Is happiness a subjective state depending on the aforementioned capacities and capabilities of the individual? A serial killer, for example, may derive immense pleasure and joy from stalking and murdering an individual, tying such activities to his or her own sense of well-being and meaning and, ultimately, to a type of good life. Positive Psychology would condemn such a sense of happiness, stipulating that there is no worldview or theory of morality condoning a killer's intentions or motives to devalue human life, whether belonging to another or his or herself. Positive Psychologists also assert that the scientific concept of happiness is a set point, a claimed genetically

determined stable position around which a person's mood varies over extended periods of time. In reviewing some of the above-mentioned concepts, many questions come to mind as to the purported results and consequences of Seligman and other researchers of PP. Is this new branch of psychology yielding anything surprising, innovative, or more interesting than what any religion, philosophy, or modern motivational speaker might suggest? Its proponents say yes. However, not all results of Positive Psychology are what one might expect. The movement states that some results are counterintuitive; for example, in Seligman's seminal works, his research efforts found that some individuals who attempted to maximize happiness found more unhappiness as a result of their efforts (Seligman, 2002a). He further found that worldwide, across various nations, "wealth is weakly related to happiness" (p. 274). This is consistent with the movement's mission of responding to the unlimited accumulation of wealth in the 1990s and how it equates to happiness and fulfillment.

Defining and Exploring the Positive in Positive Psychology

In the spirit of its philosophical foundations, PP is said to be "the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive" (University of Pennsylvania, 2007, para. 1).. In addition, it attempts to foster and support an empirical discipline that studies positive subjective experience. This is studied in two ways: as empirically observable through sense perception, and as an optimistic mindset as defined by the individual (Seligman, 2002a). Among its stated aims, Positive Psychology strives to improve the quality of life of human beings and hindering or preventing psychological pathologies from arising within states of alienation and meaningless (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002a). Basically, PP attempts to

foster more positivity and authentic happiness, happiness beyond that of momentary feelings and into states of well-being and fulfillment in an individual's life. Positive Psychology uses the term positivism, which was coined by Auguste Comte (1848/2010), the nineteenth century French social scientist and secular humanist. Theory and observation are utilized to understand human society and its evolution in quantifiable terms. Positivism purports that authentic knowledge comes from sense experience and positive verification. Seligman put forth the idea that the social and behavioral sciences can significantly attempt to understand and promote the nature of well-being and the dynamic growth and quality of human communities. Positive Psychologists believe that subjective experiences and interpretations are valued in the way individuals remember the past in contentment and satisfaction, the present in "flow" and happiness, and the future in optimism and hope; and they seek to create measurable methods, such as studying the way that the ratio of challenges and skills may impact subjective experiences for each individual (Csikszentmihalyi as cited in Lopez, 2009).

The use of the word positive by the psychologists in this new movement is also seen by those outside the movement as "positive thinking," a popular American notion that appears in well-known and endless quantities of twentieth century books. Some well-known positive thinking proponents include both Christian preachers, Norman Vincent Peale and Joel Osteen. The sense of individual effort and potential has been inherent in the fabric of American psychology, religion, and politics since the nineteenth century, spawning many religious as well as many spiritual and secular social movements that have swayed history (Smith, 1997; Taylor, 2000). Arising from such a historical succession, PP hopes to strengthen and accentuate human strengths and optimism,

leading to a fuller and improved participation of the individual in the human community (Peterson, 2006). Positive Psychologists also hope to spur collective civic virtues and to create institutions that will encourage individuals to become more altruistic and service-oriented citizens (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The movement also attempts to correlate the term positive to that which makes one feel lastingly happy, not momentary hedonistic experiences, to build on the genetically determined affectivity one might find as the baseline of their emotional makeup, and to measure whether one tends toward more positive affectivity or negative affectivity (Naragon & Watson, 2009). Seligman suggests using a validated test such as the Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity Scale (PANAS) created by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen to measure how one rates oneself (Watson, 1988). This psychometric scale was developed to measure the largely independent constructs of positive and negative affect, both as states and traits.

The planning and implementation of a positive intervention invokes a breakdown and analysis of PP's three pillars: The study of positive emotions (hope, confidence, and trust), the study of positive traits (strengths, virtues, and abilities), and the study of positive institutions (stable families and strong democracies, and liberty, freedom, and speech). Included in strengths and virtues are courage, fealty, integrity, and authenticity. The goal of this movement, and the way its advocates plan to use what they deem as positive, is to transform psychological theories and practices from a pathological orientation to a strength and wholeness orientation. However, in carrying out these goals, the domain still requires a cluster of knowledge, laws and rules, and methods.

Philosophy of Happiness

After delving into how the founders and scholars of Positive Psychology were able to build this new movement and after reviewing the research used to propel it forward to create a new direction for American psychology, a cursory review at the potential movements, philosophies, and religious influences that may have served as foundations and inspirations for its concepts is needed.

The concept of happiness is of monolithic weight and importance for PP. In fact, the stated goal of this new branch of psychology is to help one achieve authentic happiness. The desired emotional state of happiness is used as an overarching term to describe the panoply of intentions for functional and life-affirming institutions, groups, and individuals. The notions of happiness and the larger community are concepts that lead one to the history of western philosophy and culture and specifically to the Greco-Athenian society of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as well as to stories in the *Torah* and *Old Testament*.

Plato believed in the realm of ideas, a reality beyond time and space, casting its impression in the sensory, material, and natural world (Durant, 1961; Rubenstein, 2003). Concepts such as goodness and beauty possessed the same reality as mathematical and geometrical truths, originating in a “realm of eternal Forms and Ideas” (Rubenstein, 2003, p. 29). Needless to say, Platonic theories influenced Judeo-Christianity and western civilization as a whole (Durant, 1961).

In Western philosophy, and ethics in particular, the question of genuine happiness and the pursuit of excellence through self-introspection have been associated with Greek culture. These ideas have been inherited by the Enlightenment and modern thinkers and

stitched to the seams of American political ideology much like the pursuit of happiness. Equally important, the consideration of right and wrong have been attached to the attainment of happiness; pursuing happiness through immoral or wrong means may result in pernicious consequences for the individual. The Greeks used the term *Eudaimonia* to refer to the state of being happy. Seligman (2002a) became highly influenced by this concept.

Eudaimonia means, literally, to be possessed of a good demon, and this conveys the idea of extreme good fortune on the part of its possessor...as blessed beyond measure, as having won something of supreme worth and, at the same time, something very elusive and hence very rare. (Taylor, 2002, p. 108)

Greek philosophy and western philosophical inquiry made this matter one of particular importance and significance for human existence in earlier decades. Humanistic Psychology had developed the notion that happiness and its appropriate pursuit were correlated with well-being (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1980).

Well-being and lasting, fulfilling happiness are qualifiers and desired outcomes that assist one in determining a specific type of happiness over another. This idea is agreed upon by both HP and PP (Rogers, 1980). Socrates attempted to place virtue and knowledge as a means to happiness and ends unto themselves (Durant, 1961). Well-being and “making the soul as good as possible” are the resulting rewards of modes of behavior that are appropriate (Stumpf, 1982, p. 41). Others rely on pleasure, health, love, materialism, and wealth for their feelings of happiness. For instance, in the U.S., material wealth has been associated with the pursuit of success and happiness, often interchangeably. The humanistic, existential, and more spiritual definitions of happiness are associated with consistent and long-term states that focus on being, completion, and

fulfillment (Taylor, 2002). A state of well-being is consistent with lasting and fulfilling happiness and contributes significantly and qualitatively to an individual's soul and life.

In James' (1990) view, happiness was central to humanity's concerns and reasons for action, "the secret motive of all they do, and all they are willing to endure" (p. 77). He connected happiness with a lasting state of being and as not conditional, or temporary relief or exaltation. Happiness was also related to religious states of mind and actions such as selflessness, elation, sympathy, benevolence, and mercy. Once an individual embraces these concepts, a person's psyche is transformed (James, 1990). Happiness was a priority for the leaders and participants of many the popular eastern religious and spiritual movements that found a home in America. Paramhansa Yogananda (1946), a famous yoga master and author of the spiritual classic *Autobiography of a Yogi*, addressed the empty materialism and illusory ways of American and western culture, making authentic and lasting happiness a priority in his writings. He wrote that:

Happiness is not a thing: It is a state of mind. It must be lived. Neither worldly power nor moneymaking schemes can ever capture happiness...temporal power and money are not states of mind. Once obtained, they only dilute a person's happiness. (Yogananda, 2006, p. 15)

The Christian Gospels can be said to resonate with such ideas as seen in the advice of Jesus Christ who repeatedly taught that material possessions were of no value and that true value is only found in things like love, devotion, and the eternal state of the soul. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus responded to the questions of a young affluent man interested in heaven: "If you want to be perfect, go sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, you will have treasure in heaven" (The New American Bible, 1987, p. 1041).

Tibetan Buddhism, a religion that has received worldwide attention through the publications and speeches of its leader, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, has strong beliefs regarding emotions, especially those of anger and happiness. In *The Art of Happiness at Work*, the Dalai Lama composed a short list of the role of happiness in human existence (Gyatso & Cutler, 2003). First, life's purpose is happiness. Second, state of mind determines happiness more than external conditions, once basic biological needs are satisfied such as food and shelter. Lastly, re-educating the mind, attitudes, and heart can bring happiness (Gyatso and Cutler, 2003).

It has been asserted that underlying and overt themes of Positive Psychology have their origins in ancient philosophical, religious, and spiritual systems of thought (Peterson, 2006). Peterson wrote that the most recognized figures in some of the world's major religions have attempted to ask and answer the question that psychologists and PP specifically have wrestled with for some time: What is the nature of happiness, the good life, community, and freedom? Within such a framework, Maslow (1954) made the point that spiritual values and religious elements possess a naturalistic meaning that transcends the providence of organized religious groups, belonging to and grounding humanity in the study of its own being. Peterson (2006) stated that PP is not only linked to a past as far back as the Athenian philosophers in the West, but also to Confucius and Lao-Tsu in the East. The concerns of these great thinkers are the same as those faced by PP today.

Chapter 3: Key Scholars in the Positive Psychology Movement

Clearly, Martin Seligman is considered the official founder of the Positive Psychology movement. As he reached out to the population of academic psychologists, he culled the work and dedication of the following people to help establish this movement and the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center: Ed Diener, University of Illinois, was charged with setting up the Positive Experience Center and focuses on the pillar of positive emotion. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Claremont Quality of Life Research Center, was charged with coordinating the Positive Character Center. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, University of Pennsylvania, was asked to create the Positive Institutions Center. Christopher Peterson, University of Michigan, led the project of creating the VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues. Randy Ernst, Lincoln, Nebraska Public, created the Teaching of Positive Psychology Curriculum.

Seligman then created research pods to initiate research and scholarship under the umbrella of Positive Psychology. Most of the pods consist of young faculty at the assistant and associate professor level who often collaborate with senior scientists at universities around the world.

Martin Seligman and Positive Psychology

The advent of PP can be traced to Seligman's initial presidential address to the APA in 1998 that also introduced a thematic agenda for his tenure. He discussed an epiphany he experienced while gardening. His young daughter, Nikki, challenged him to get over his grumpiness since she had overcome her whining. Seligman told the audience that this experience was a catalyst for his thoughts and reflections on the possibility of psychological changes as they relate to being a positive person. Further, Seligman

illustrated an observation that before World War II, psychology had three missions: to help people live better lives, cure mental illness, and nurture skills and talent. He posited that the creation of the Veterans Administration (VA) in 1946 and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in 1947 shifted the focus of the profession toward both a disease and healing model, leaving behind the studying, researching, and cultivating of the positive aspects of psychology (Seligman, 2002a). The cultivation of positive human qualities, according to Seligman, is psychology's forgotten mission.

Seligman wanted those attentive to the birth and growth of PP to consider the resources, energy, and time that has been spent in the field identifying and cataloguing illness, as shown in the creation of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd edition (DSM-III)* by the American Psychiatric Association (1980) and its medical designs (Kendell & Jablensky, 2003). Such efforts leave out similar research endeavors that may be directed at the elements that make an individual or group happy, fulfilled, and fully functional. The immersion of psychology into medical endeavors has various antecedents in history. Psychiatry, being more of a medical science than psychology, focused on the healing of disease within a medium of the physically visible (Brennan, 2002; Robinson, 1995). Originally, psychological training took place in psychiatric hospitals under the guidance of psychiatrists that were trained in medicine (Robinson, 1995; Smith, 1997). Turning away from this spirit, Seligman decided to shift the focus to positive research and study the best in human nature, organizations, and communities.

In choosing to study human excellence, it appears that Seligman is following in Maslow's wake, although not according to Seligman. After choosing this path, Seligman

gathered junior and senior psychologists and academics in order to create a new movement, mapping out their agenda (Peterson, 2006). One year later, *American Psychologist* dedicated an entire issue to the new movement with articles on PP's stock concepts: happiness, excellence, self-determination, positive development, well-being, optimism, and more (Seligman, 2000). In response, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* also put out a special issue on what they called "So-called Positive Psychology" (Greening, 2001, p. 4). Initially, Seligman completely rejected the humanistic, transpersonal, and existential movements of psychology, qualifying them as unscientific. In turn, those that felt his statements were an absolute negation of preceding theories and work were highly offended. He blatantly spoke of the work of psychologists before him in HP and similar traditions as unscientific and narcissistic. Seligman asserted that HP was not able to penetrate mainstream psychology because it was alienated from empirical and conventional science although both Maslow and Rogers were APA presidents at one time. Seligman further stated that HP remained mostly confined to the therapeutic realm. He went on to ignite criticism of his new movement when he wrote in the special issue of *American Psychologist* (Seligman, 2000):

Unfortunately, Humanistic Psychology did not attract much of a cumulative empirical base, and it spawned myriad therapeutic self-help movements. In some of its incarnations, it emphasized the self and encouraged a self-centeredness that played down concerns for collective well-being...one legacy of the humanism of the 1960s is prominently displayed in any large bookstore: The "psychology" section contains at least 10 shelves on crystal healing, aromatherapy, and reaching the inner child for every book shelf of books that tries to uphold some scholarly standard. (p. 7)

The historical, methodological, and theoretical errors that PP claims it is attempting to correct instead created a discipline of professionals concerned with emphasizing empirical methods of research (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Seligman

(2002a) had reached the conclusion that, after Maslow's death, subsequent leaders in HP were quite skeptical about conventional empirical methods. They, instead, coupled their important premises with sloppier, radical epistemology, stressing phenomenology and individual case history. Regardless of the reactions to PP, it continued to expand into the mainstream through concerted efforts and strong funding.

More expansion of PP grew with the founding of the *Journal of Positive Psychology* (JPP), the annual International Positive Psychology summits, biennial conferences, meetings, websites, educational classes, and a doctorate program focused on this subfield (Peterson, 2006). Positive Psychology's ascendancy has gained cultural momentum. A cursory search on Amazon.com can yield close to 1500 books categorized under the search term Positive Psychology.

Review of Scholars' Literature in the Movement Called Positive Psychology

In a sense, it is difficult to review the literature of the movement because it is such a new initiative and has only a handful of original work published since its inception. The public and mainstream face of the PP movement is the national best-selling book, *Authentic Happiness* (2002a), written by Martin Seligman. This book is the official statement of how PP is shifting psychology away from mental illness, pathology, and the deficient medical model of treatment to the study of positive emotion and positive mental health. In it, Seligman offered tools for individuals to take charge of their own well-being; these are supported by research studies (happiness studies) focused on improving happiness and fulfillment in life. A solid database of scientific works was created through Seligman's efforts and that of many other researchers.

The following literature has been published in support of PP and to further its mission to establish a domain of information. Interestingly, in many of the works, the topic of PP's severing from HP and TP is addressed, further illuminating the fact that a controversy exists.

In *Positive Psychology Coaching: Putting the Science of Happiness to Work for Your Client*, Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) define the essence of coaches as “personal change agents” and as human catalysts for the transformation of people's lives. Coaches aid people in reaching their innate potential. Hoping to use PP to create a scientifically driven coaching field, the authors desired to produce more evidence-based coaching and accurate measurement tools, suggesting the interface of coaching with PP.

Maslow's brilliant writing was largely overlooked by both the general public and the practicing psychologists. In recent years, however, legendary psychologist and former president of the APA Martin Seligman succeeded in touting the importance of the development of a strength-based Positive Psychology. (p. 11)

The book shared the findings of PP and ways that current coaches can use the strategies to help clients build happiness. Biswas-Diener and Dean called for more happiness research, such as studies on which the brain activities of monks are measured, especially when meditating on compassion.

The authors gave practical advice that directly addresses the business of being a coach and earning a living, “You can use the research on the benefits of positive emotion to help sell your services” (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007, p. 93). The Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI), developed by Michael Frisch, a Baylor University psychologist is also discussed. This assesses an individual's quality of life as well as satisfaction with life in domains such as health, work, goals, creativity, and children.

Carr's (2004) book, *Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths*, touched upon many of the themes surrounding an emerging branch of psychology focused on studying strengths and happiness in human life. A discussion of client resilience, resourcefulness, and a capacity for renewal in order to complement deficit-based approaches are covered as well as understanding and facilitating happiness and subjective well-being.

Conoley and Conoley's (2009) work, *Positive Psychology and Family Therapy: Creative Techniques and Practical Tools for Guiding Change and Enhancing Growth*, asserted that therapeutic change in the family comes through abandoning pathologically-oriented behaviors in favor of strength-based treatment.

Peterson (2006) wrote, *A Primer in Positive Psychology* to be used as a semester long college course, written from a viewpoint of general psychology, specifically, the science of the good life. Peterson covered topics like pleasure and love, work and happiness, and what psychologists know about these areas of life. The book reviewed scientific research and major topics of concern to the field, including positive experiences such as pleasure and flow; positive traits such as character strengths, values, and talents; and the social institutions that enable these subjects. Peterson also offered a discussion of what recent research could contribute to this field.

In the handbook, *Oxford Handbook of Methods in Positive Psychology*, Peterson and van Dulmen's (2007) attempted to embrace the best in methodological design by sampling statistical procedures and inference-making foundational sources in order to guide future resources in PP. The authors emphasized the need to obtain population samples of persons of all ethnicities, ages, and abilities.

Character Strengths and Virtues, by Peterson and Seligman (2004), is a handbook of human strengths and virtues that was created by the Values in Action Institute. This handbook is the first attempt to identify and classify Positive Psychological traits in human beings, the anti-*DSM*. Researchers and practitioners can use the handbook to provide a theoretical framework for practical applications of PP. Peterson and Seligman created six classes of virtues and twenty-four strengths by assessing repeated virtues and strengths across many disciplines, cultures, religions, philosophy, and psychologies. Each of the twenty-four character traits were defined behaviorally, with psychometric evidence demonstrating that it can be reliably measured. Snyder and Lopez (2007) stated in their book, *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths*, that future psychologists need to integrate the two approaches of understanding human nature: the negative attitudinal, physical illness, and deficient sides of human functioning and the positive attitudinal, healthy, optimal sides of human functioning.

Chapter 4: Humanistic Psychology, a Precursor to the Movement called Positive Psychology

Humanistic Psychology began as an innovative treatment in the mid-twentieth century as therapeutic and academic spheres of psychology. “Therapeutic treatment had been almost completely dominated by the Freudian approach which (also) controlled clinical teaching in psychology and psychiatry at the time” (Taylor, 1993, p. 263). The means and ends of the humanistic movement were concerned with moving psychology away from its exclusive focus on and treatment of human pathology onto higher goals, such as human growth and development. This third force in psychology focused on the subjective experiences of the individual and the totality of personhood in therapy (Rogers, 1980). Humanistic Psychology attempted to find a niche within the narrowly defined field shared by ideological psychoanalysis and positivistic behaviorism. Positive Psychology, in light of its humanist-based heritage, has at times sought to distance itself from these roots. Peterson (2006) has written that:

In one of the early discussions of Positive Psychology, Marty Seligman and Mike Csikszentmihalyi tersely distanced this new field from Humanistic Psychology, one of psychology’s venerable perspectives that was particularly popular in the 60s and 70s and still has many adherents today. (p. 8)

While in a sense affirming the movement’s link to HP, Peterson considered the differentiating aspect to be its advocacy of quantifiable-empirical methods.

This alternative form of therapy was evinced in the early 1940s in academe and was initiated by Rogers’ client-centered and non-directive sense of psychology, challenging the prevalence of Freudian and behavioral thought. According to Eugene Taylor, Rogers asserted that “the therapist’s role was to encourage self-reflection, to empathize with the client’s struggle to understand personal problems, and to extend to the

client what Rogers came to refer to as unconditional positive regard. Contrary to psychodynamic and experimental forms of therapy, person-centered therapists do not believe that the therapist-patient relationship should be radically separated and circumscribed. Psychotherapy was developed around the human being and his or her autonomy; simultaneously, the humanities were brought into a relationship with science (Maslow, 1954). Figures such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, and Anthony Sutich directly contributed to the foundations and development of Humanistic Psychology.

The aforementioned founders helped to create publications such as the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (JHP) and the American Association for Humanistic Psychology in 1961. The 32nd Division within the APA and its publication, the *Humanistic Psychologist*, was also established. Rogers' (1951) work, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory*, became a formidable force threatening both psychoanalysis and behaviorism in the universities (Taylor, 2000). For his labor and the outcomes produced, the APA gave Rogers its first Distinguished Contributions to Psychology Award.

Others, such as Rollo May, worked heavily in the existentialist tradition, writing works such as *The Meaning of Anxiety* (1950) in which "the goal of psychotherapy," May wrote, "is not to free patients from anxiety but, rather, to help them accept, bear, and live constructively with it" (Taylor, 2000, p. 265). Maslow evinced pioneering theories in the middle of the twentieth century and elaborated a hierarchy of needs and the concept of self-actualization. Self-actualizing individuals have the following characteristics: a tolerance for uncertainty and innovation, independence and acceptance of the self, a high

regard for interpersonal relationships and caring for others, a sense of direction originating from within, and a high degree of creativity (Joseph & Linley, 2006). There is a possible and indelible connection between PP and the humanistic writings of Maslow (1954) found in his book *Motivation and Personality*, and the term Positive Psychology is mentioned.

Chapter 5: A Negative Attack, a History, Dilemma, and a Humanistic Response

In Humanistic Psychology's enterprise, Maslow (1954) contributed the idea of self-actualization, Rogers (1980; 1989) the actualizing tendency, while Karen Horney (1945) discussed an evolutionary constructive force toward helping people realize their potential. Horney believed that the goal of society was to foster the social-environmental conditions that were conducive to an individual's self-realization. All three psychologists posited that human nature was inherently upwardly directed with an inevitable tendency toward goodness, growth, and health (Horney, 1945; Maslow, 1954). Rogers (1980; 1989) expounded on the ways that the fully functioning person was synonymous with optimal psychological maturity and adjustment, openness to experience, the practice of values, and the discovery of purpose and meaning in life.

While Seligman was touting a new branch of psychology and refocusing psychology toward the study of human strengths, he was alienating the HP community whose traditions were already in place for decades and was dedicated to the study of optimal human functioning. However, it was when Martin Seligman wrote that HP does not represent the movement called Positive Psychology because it "generated no research tradition, is narcissistic and is antiscientific" did he bristle the HP community (Friends of Positive Psychology Email List, 1999). These statements made by an APA president who was dismissing work founded by Abraham Maslow, a former APA president, were addressed publicly when the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology's* 2001 special issue on Positive Psychology was published. A cacophony of reactions from within the field of Humanistic Psychology attempted to refocus the discourse and join the two movements (Greening, 2001). Those unified voices called attention to the intentional negation of PP

movement's forerunners and to the solid base of research culled, which offered Positive Psychologists the opportunity to learn from their HP predecessors like Dewey, James, and Maslow.

Specifically, Eugene Taylor's (2001) reply to Seligman took him to task on his three marks against HP. Taylor, holding a doctorate in the history and philosophy of psychology and teaching at both a school specializing in Humanistic Psychology, Saybrook University, and one of the country's top-ranked psychology programs and research centers, Harvard University, writes on the amalgam of traditions and research that created American psychology today:

After 1969...the content and methods of Humanistic Psychology were appropriated by the psychotherapeutic counterculture, causing the humanistic movement in academic psychology to recede...Seligman mistakes this group for the original personality theorists who led the humanistic movement for more than a quarter of a century in the academy and were concerned first and foremost with generating a rigorous research tradition—variously called personality, personology, and a science of the person. (Rogers as cited in Taylor, 2000, p. 23)

Taylor used specific references to the larger humanistic tradition of American psychology's research and scientific tradition through the discussion of the works of William James, the personality and social psychologists of the 1930s and 1940s, in addition to the Humanistic Psychologists of the 1950s and 1960s (Allport, Murray, and Murphy as cited in Taylor, 2001, p. 13). He concluded, "Seligman may be rushing to exclude on a priori grounds the very tradition his own theory represents" (Taylor, 2001, p. 13).

Bohart and Greening (2001) responded to the general tone that suggested HP has no research tradition and is self-centered in an *American Psychologist* special issue on Positive Psychology

We wish that Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi themselves had done a more scholarly job of investigating Humanistic Psychology. Neither the theory nor practice of Humanistic Psychology is narrowly focused on the narcissistic self or on individual fulfillment. A careful reading of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow would find that their conceptions of self-actualization included responsibility toward others. (p. 81)

Reactions continued when Jeffrey Froh (2004), an adjunct professor at St.

Joseph's College, wrote in the *New York State Psychologist* summarizing that Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, PP's leading proponents, have been accused of not giving enough credit to Humanistic Psychology for the origins of Positive Psychology (Taylor, 2001).

Humanistic Psychology is largely concerned with the quality of human experience and can be defined as "primarily an orientation toward the whole of psychology rather than a distinct area or school...concerned with topics having little place in existing theories and systems: e.g., love, creativity, growth, self-actualization, peak experience, courage, and related topics" (Misiak & Sexton, 1966, p. 454).

Froh also concluded that one must only be slightly familiar with the work of Positive Psychologists to see the similarities between HP's basic tenets and what Seligman (2002a) referred to as signature strengths and virtues. Froh (2004) wrote

There is a preponderance of evidence that suggests that Positive Psychology has roots going at least as far back as William James. Furthermore, it is very clear that Positive Psychology and Humanistic Psychology share common goals and interests: The main difference between these two movements appears to be their partiality to different research methodologies. The humanistic psychologists tend to opt for more qualitative methods so as to increase the chance they are assessing the whole person, positive psychologists, in contrast, tend to employ more rigorous, quantitative and reductionist methods. It is argued here that Positive Psychology will not self-actualize itself until it embraces its history and is more accepting of phenomenology. (pp. 18-19)

Barbara Held (2004), professor of psychology at Bowdoin College, joined the conversation when she presented a paper at the 110th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Chicago during August 2002, titled “The Negative Side of Positive Psychology.” Held explored the ways in which the Positive Psychology movement’s construction and presentation are steeped in negativity to which she cites a “dominant, separatist message, negativity within the spokespeople of the movement, and reality problems” (p. 27). She put forward the question: Are all negative emotions problematic? Held and Taylor encapsulated and reiterated the collective opinions of Humanistic Psychologists. Both delineated the problems within a new movement that severed itself from any historical foundation, dismissed a rich tradition of research and progress, and co-opted the humanistic agenda, and finally, ignited a debate on both why this group of psychologists shall deem what is positive for all mankind and why this same group may determine what methods constitute science?

However, Held noted that some in the new movement have credited the precedents of HP and the need to be inclusive of historical influences, rather than exclusive. She further noted a rising awareness of the movement’s early mistakes and the need to align with HP, yet there is a lingering message that the movement should remain a solely empirical and a distinctly separate discipline. In addressing the movement’s claims to authenticity in the face of the legacy of HP, it is important to isolate the singular factor differentiating the two schools: Western science. The two movements are separated along a continuum by the way that science and, in particular valid research, is defined by each. They differ in terms of gradations and degrees, not in a qualitative sense. Each school attempts to answer the question: What is science? The type of science espoused by

PP tends to be of an empirical nature, but its applications are for measuring and, ultimately, creating happiness and well-being, among other human-centered goals.

The qualitative methods typically used by HP attempt to focus on human subjectivity, life meaning, perception, and experience in an environment and situations not contrived or separated from naturally occurring human events or community. Taylor (2000) wrote “if ‘Positive Psychology’ is to become an enduring movement in American psychology, it must become more historically informed and more philosophically sophisticated” (p. 13). There exists a long trail of studies and research that suggest strands of HP, such as person-centered therapy, have been validated via empirically sound data found in various professional journals (Joseph & Linley, 2006).

For example, Maureen O’Hara (1995), both a student and colleague of Rogers, wrote in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*:

The one orthodoxy Carl did embrace in those early days was that real science was exact science, and that objectivity was possible and necessary and that even the most subtle activities can be approached through the scientific experimental method. Following these principles, Carl, his colleagues and graduate students embarked on what remains today one of the most productive and successful programs of scientific research in psychotherapy ever conducted. His book, *Psychotherapy and Change* describes a program lasting almost a decade, conducted by over 30 scientists, postdoctoral students, and graduate students at the University of Chicago Counseling Center. (pp. 44-45)

O’Hara went on to explain that Rogers’ use of Q-sort to measure subtle changes in self-concept and the Thematic Apperception Test were just a few of the instruments used alongside numerous personality and adjustment scales to create reputable scientific data.

Humanistic Psychologists state that experience and personality were left out of psychology’s great endeavor, an issue noted by James (1990). In a certain sense, PP might be undoing the American tradition started by James and continued by Rogers and

Maslow by insisting on experimental work. Certain proponents of PP asserted the contrary, “Research in Positive Psychology topics has gone on for decades and might even be traced back to the origins of psychology itself...in William James’ writing on ‘healthy mindedness’” (Joseph & Linley, 2006, p. 3). Such proponents add that PP can learn from HP and, in turn, add to the validity of the latter (Joseph & Linley, 2006).

Analyzing another component of PP’s trajectory, the thought arises as to Seligman’s intentions in creating PP. Was he trying to stake out a name for himself as the founder of a significant subfield, creating a legacy, and accomplishing these tasks while he was the APA president? In his haste to create a legacy within the allotted one year as APA President, he focused on the optimistic aspects and themes of HP and shifted the focus back on the strengths of the school’s view of humans. Instead of staying within HP, he went further by re-baptizing the shift in focus and claiming the creation of an entire new movement. Something that Greening (2001) contended is only Humanistic Psychology reclaimed.

However, it is a worthy endeavor, as Seligman believes, to study the positive as well as the negative in human beings and life. In all fairness, there is nothing wrong with certain strands of psychology focusing on the disease model, as it was the necessary focus in the nineteenth century (Brennan, 2002). The founders of PP have claimed that thus far, psychology has carried out its vision and mission in human history: There have been huge strides in the understanding and therapy for mental illness; at least fourteen disorders, previously intractable, have yielded their secrets to science and can now be either cured or considerably relieved.

In addition to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*'s special 2001 edition on Positive Psychology, others have voiced their concern over the severing of PP from HP. In *The handbook of Humanistic Psychology*, the controversy of PP and HP abounds (Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2001). The foreword alone, written by California State Senator, John Vasconcellos, speaks of the goals of Humanistic Psychology eerily mirroring the clarion call of PP. "Today's new revolution amounts to a most profound shift in our view of our own selves, from a fundamentally negative view of human nature to a fundamentally positive one" (p. xiii-xiv). He credited Jourard, who proposed people become their transparent selves; Bugental's search for authenticity; Rogers's idea that humans are naturally life affirming, responsible and trustworthy; May's idea that human will was naturally responsible; and Maslow who spoke of our democratic character structure (Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2001).

The reaction of Humanistic Psychologists and their opinions were initially glossed over by the spokespeople of the movement of Positive Psychology. However, over the years, there has been a significant acknowledgement that this new branch of psychology omitted important historical facts and that HP has merit. Held (2004) calls this the second wave of the Positive Psychologists.

Chris Peterson (2006), author of *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, wrote that he is a committed scholar to PP who welcomes all criticism because it means that people are paying attention to the movement and because the scholars of the Positive Psychology movement can learn from such criticism.

Peterson credits humanistic psychologists, such as Maslow and Rogers, with popularizing ideas such as self-actualization and that of striving to maximize one's

potential. Peterson (2006) elucidated the opinions of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi in light of PP's legacy and differentiation from HP. Firstly, PP regards the good and the bad of life as genuine. Humanistic Psychologists typically conceptualize human nature and people as being good. Secondly, PP is strongly committed to the scientific method, while humanistic scholars are usually skeptical of such methods and believe they miss the essential in human beings. However, he conceded that a significant amount of psychologists working in HP, since the middle of the twentieth century, have been just as committed to science as other psychologists (2006). He stated that there exists solid evidence that science should not have preference of one method over another and that empirical science can learn from case studies, interviews, and surveys as well. In sum, "Positive Psychology and Humanistic Psychology are close relatives...no good purpose is served by wrangling...a debate that likely has no resolution" (p. 10).

Conclusion

Is Positive Psychology, as many humanistic psychologists contend, a usurper of an established tradition in the social sciences and therapeutic realm? Tom Greening, former editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, weighed in on the debate in a special issue on Positive Psychology and noted that Positive Psychology is conveying key humanistic concepts to the mainstream while making "no connections with and giving no credit to Humanistic Psychology" (2001, p. 4). On the other hand, is Positive Psychology a scientifically superior new movement in the field of studying human strengths?

It seems as though the controversy over this movement has stemmed from some negative comments and a dismissal of the humanistic tradition as a whole and has stirred a debate over the question: what constitutes real science? However, in all the research,

not one person takes issue with the practice of studying human strengths. Clearly, there is an interest in Positive Psychology as a subfield even if its call for a declaration of independence has not resulted in the APA creating a separate division for it. All one has to do is look at the mainstream media's coverage, the growing courses and programs, the millions of dollars in funding research around the globe, and even Harvard University professor Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar's claim to CNN anchor Carol Lin that his Positive Psychology class of 855 students has the highest enrollment of any class in the history of the school.

Although behavioral and cognitive forms of thought as well as medical models, which have contributed to the increasing use of pharmaceutical aids, have come to dominate much of the field, various elements of the above mentioned humanistic-type schools have been integrated to one degree or another into the mainstream therapeutic culture and practice. Another factor that has helped psychology and psychiatry has been the use of the *DSM* as a reliable and valid guide (Kendell & Jablensky, 2003). The *DSM* is used to diagnose and treat frequently, and half of the American population will suffer from one of the various conditions catalogued by the *DSM* during their lifetime (Pettus, 2006).

But is this really a tragedy? What Seligman calls "psychology's forgotten mission" can be viewed much like the triage system. It seems that the bloodied and battered psyches must be cared for first, as they are the most needy. When the *DSM* was created, it did wonders to classify, teach, and explain many disorders that ail human beings. Much like Maslow's hierarchy, as we meet these lower needs, we are then able to reach the higher aspects of living: fulfillment, purpose, and happiness. And while the

medical model was dominating, there were the Humanistic Psychologists calling out for a more holistic approach to psychology. One of the main complaints of the movement's scholars is that the science of Humanistic Psychologists of that time was not considered empirical science. However, at the time, did Maslow and his cohorts have the sophistication and growth in science to measure things that may be more subjective? Or is this an area that can grow alongside more empirical methods of research?

It is possible that Positive Psychology with an emphasis on both empirical and humanistic themes will gain more acceptance into the current clinical culture and scenario. The pendulum of historical ideas and trends tends to swing from one extreme to another, and eventually the pendulum must stop swinging and remain in the middle, creating a psychology that is integrated and informed about all traditions and forms of research. However, it is possible that in the final outcome, Positive Psychology may become a mere tool of the larger humanistic tradition, one that offers only a piece of the research as it attempts to understand the mystery of what it means to be a human.

As Held (2004) noted in her paper on Positive Psychology, it appears that a not-yet-unified message is arising from the PP scholars calling for a less separatist, non-dominant agenda. This second wave of PP scholars appears to be calling for a common ground. Joseph and Linely (2006) acknowledged that initially, at least, Positive Psychology may not have paid sufficient tribute to its lineage from Humanistic Psychology, and this led to some criticism from the Humanistic Psychology community, yet this situation is beginning to change as a common ground is being sought by both schools.

In that light, why should Americans who are affected by one condition or another have to pick either cognitive or behavioral or even a humanistic approach to wellness? Humans are made up of observable, invisible, and fragmented behaviors, cognitions, and positive and negative emotions. A sensible approach would be to foster the prerogative of choice for clients or to utilize a system of integration and respect for all traditions. In returning to the question posed by Seligman and his Positive Psychologists, it is important to note how history will judge those intentions and the reactions of HP and others in the status quo. Taylor (2000) asserted that PP's efforts have sharpened the dualism in the sciences between quantitative and qualitative designs and methods, fostering a reductionistic sense of psychology. It is highly possible, however, that Seligman and this new branch of psychology can realize, foster, and synthesize a more integrative approach to the psychology of happiness amid the materialism, ethnic strife, and alienation in the world.

It is time for the Humanistic Psychologists to accept the influx of this new psychological movement that has edged into their domain. While some in the humanistic tradition may feel that Positive Psychologists are just objectivists whose goal is prediction and control of behavior and that the dignity of the individual may be overlooked in the statistical average, there are others who see that continued research in growth centered motivations can rise above mere rhetoric and potentially begin to add to the postulates of the humanistic tradition.

In addition, the notion that humanistic theories and quantitative methodologies are inherently contradictory can be reassessed. As Sheldon and Kasser (2001) discussed in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, their findings in motivation research based in

humanistic theory were culled from quantitative methodologies, causal modeling techniques, and longitudinal designs.

In addition, Positive Psychologists need to recognize that not everyone in academia has agreed on the meaning of good science or that good science is only found in objective research. This is a debate that is far from over.

Positive Psychologists are also urged to become more historically informed, instead of merely acknowledging humanistic contributions or that the two schools of thought are kindred spirits. Rathunde (2001) stated in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* that “more worthwhile would be the integration of their core insights on experience, optimal functioning, and scientific research” (p. 150).

Let us allow certain scientists to refocus their study of psychology toward the study of human strengths based on their empirical science and others on humanistic traditions. It seems there is much to learn from one another. Finding ways to bridge the gap can only result in enriching both fields and hopefully serving humanity in terms of positive interventions, prevention, progressive research, and more education in the field of psychology as a whole. As to the more philosophical question, asking if these two movements will be considered as equals that may merge at one point or if the PP movement will merely serve as a research arm of the humanistic tradition has yet to be answered.

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A Glossary of Terms and Concepts

(Source: Seligman, M.E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: Free Press and The Positive Psychology Manifesto: Sheldon, Fredrickson, Rathunde, Csikszentmihalyi, & Haidt, 2000)

Broaden and Build Theory: A view that positive emotions broaden momentary thought-action repertoires and provide opportunities for increased creativity and productivity that cumulatively lead to the enhancement of psychological resources and personal growth.

Eudaimonic: An approach to studying well-being that defines happiness and the good life in terms of achieving one's full potential.

Happiness: A positive psychological state characterized by a high level of satisfaction with life, a high level of positive affect, and a low level of negative affect. Happiness is also defined as the act of deriving gratification and positive emotion from the exercise of an individual's signature strengths.

Happiness and Well-being: Both used interchangeable to describe the goals of the PP enterprise. They use positive feelings and positive activities that have no feeling attached like flow or absorption or engagement. Sometimes they entail feelings, at other times, activities, but these are always the desired outcome of PP.

Happiness Set Point: The genetically determined stable point around which a person's mood varies over extended time periods.

Hedonic: The hedonic approach to studying well-being defines happiness and the good life in terms of pleasure seeking and pain avoidance.

Hedonic Treadmill: A process of rapid habituation or adaptation whereby people react strongly to both positive and negative events with sharp increases and sharp decreases in happiness, in most instances returning to their happiness set point over relatively short periods of time.

Negative Affectivity: A dimension along which unpleasant emotional feelings of different intensities fall.

Positive Affectivity: A dimension or continuum on which pleasant emotional feelings of different intensities fall.

Positive Psychology: The scientific study of optimal human functioning. It aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive. The positive psychology movement represents a new commitment on the part of research psychologists to focus attention upon the sources of psychological health, thereby going beyond prior emphases upon disease and disorder.

Psychological Well-being: The achievement of one's full psychological potential.

Quality of Life: A complex construct which covers and interconnects health status, capacity to carry out activities of daily living, work-role status, availability of opportunities to pursue recreational interests, social functioning in friendships and relationships, access to health care resources, standard of living, and general well-being.

Signature Strengths: PP selected 24 strengths. The criteria for strengths are: notions that are valued in every culture and in their own right in-themselves, not just as means to an end but as desired ends in-themselves, and malleable and subject to adjustment.

Social Comparison: The process of comparing oneself to others. Downward social comparisons, those worse off than ourselves, increase happiness, but upward social comparisons, with those better off than ourselves, decrease happiness.

Social Well-being: The optimal functioning within an individual's social network and community.

Subjective Well-being: Happiness as defined above.

Virtues: A universal term borrowed from western philosophy and religion that is divided into several core virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence. Each core virtue can be subdivided for the purpose of classification and measurement.