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On Baking a Cake: The Phenomenological Method in Positive Psychology

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Abstract

The field of positive psychology has burgeoned since its formal inception with Martin Seligman's 1998 APA presidential address. Aimed at better baking the positive half of the psychology "cake", the gains in research and practice over the past decade and a half have been substantial. Among the chief reasons for the rapid growth and development in this field is the express emphasis on a positivistic scientific methodology. While this methodology has undoubtedly contributed much to the evolution and growth of the field, the empirical emphasis has arguably resulted in the concomitant neglect of the more qualitative complexities of optimal human functioning. The present paper contributes to the discussion regarding the role of method in the field of positive psychology and, using as case studies two papers from the field of phenomenology, argues specifically for the utility of phenomenological psychological methods in the baking of the metaphorical psychology cake. The case studies effectively serve to illustrate the manner in which phenomenological methods, through their focus on rich description and resistance to an interpretative framework, are condusive to contributing to methodological pluralism within positive psychology and thereby providing additional means whereby not only to continue the baking of the positive psychology cake, but, more particularly, to ensure that it is baked thoroughly by adjusting the oven's heat to the optimal level.

Introduction

Launched on a platform of empirical methodology, the field of positive psychology has seen rapid growth in the past decade and a half. While research and practice focused on the nature of optimal human functioning has ancient roots and had previously found expression in humanistic psychology (Waterman, 2013), it was the formal emphasis by the founding figures in positive psychology on empirical methods that aided much of the rapid growth and synthesis both within the field itself and, more broadly, within psychology as a whole. In so doing, Seligman's seminal goal to attend to also baking the positive half of what may metaphorically be conceptualised as the psychology "cake" has seen both rapid and progressive redress (Diener, 2009; Lopez & Gallagher, 2009). It is, nevertheless, important to consider that the ancient foundations of a strengths-based ideology are not necessarily fully encapsulated in such empiricism, and that positive psychology is not simply an extension of humanist thought (Waterman, 2013, 2014). The interpretative stance incumbent, both methodologically and epistemologically, in the ideology of positive psychology necessarily runs the risk of neglecting more qualitative descriptions of the vast complexities of human experience, a danger that has been commented on extensively from within the field of humanistic psychology (see, for example, Franco, Friedman, & Arons, 2008; Robbins, 2008) and could be equated with the danger of overlooking the "things themselves" (see Finlay, 2009) that are so essentially central to the focus of phenomenological psychology

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(Morley, 2014). In the context of a field that has grown to budding domain status, this paper contributes to the ongoing methodological discussion by arguing for the utility of phenomenological methods in understanding concepts from within the field of positive psychology. Two papers employing phenomenological methods to explore what happen to be constructs related to the field of positive psychology are presented as case studies in support of the argument that methodological pluralism, which could include the incorporation of the wide range of phenomenological methods, can serve effectively to aid in the baking of the hereto underdeveloped positive half of the psychology cake.

Introducing Positive Psychology

The formal emergence of positive psychology as a distinct field within psychology can be traced to the 1998 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA) in San Francisco, where it was upheld as the central theme and initiative by the then President of the APA, Martin Seligman (Crous, 2007; Pawelski, 2003). In his presidential address, Seligman drew attention to the state of psychological science and practice both prior to and after World War II (WWII) (Seligman, 1999a, 2002). Prior to WWII, the three central missions of psychology were: (1) curing mental illness, (2) making the lives of all people both more productive and more fulfilling, and (3) identifying and nurturing high talent (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006, p. 4). Following WWII, however, the latter two of these charges receded into the background as psychology and health care increasingly came to espouse a disease ideology (Snyder et al., 2011) This position underpins Seligman's view of psychology as only "half-baked" as long as "the other side's unbaked, the side of strength ..." (Seligman, 1999b, para. 14).

Following the 1998 APA meeting, Martin Seligman, together with prominent researchers such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ed Diener, David Myers, Rick Snyder and Shane Lopez (to mention only a few), began, with increasing fervour and structure, to develop an integrated network to bring scholars together in a common mission to work on human strengths and positive attributes rather than focusing exclusively on human problems (Diener, 2009). Together with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and other research psychologists such as Don Clifton (then CEO of Gallup) and Ray Fowler (then CEO of the APA), Martin Seligman organized a meeting in 1999 in Akumal, Mexico, to which 18 prominent, and also promising, scholars were invited (Campos, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2011). It was at both this meeting, now referred to as Akumal I, and the subsequent Akumal II (held in 2000), that the Akumal Manifesto was authored and a strong formalized foundation for what became positive psychology established (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2011; Linley et al., 2006). Authored by Ken Sheldon, Barbara Fredrickson, Kevin Rathunde, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Jonathan Haidt, the Akumal Manifesto (2000) defined positive psychology and the aim and commitment of the positive psychology movement as follows:

> ... the scientific study of optimal 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 on disease and disorder. (p. 1)

Growth in the Field of Positive Psychology

Seligman's seminal address and both the subsequent Akumal conferences galvanized a study of positive aspects of human functioning that has continued to grow with ever-increasing enthusiasm (Wong, 2011; Yen, 2010). There are a number of reasons for this burgeoning interest and growth that has seen an attempt to rebalance the skewed leaning towards a pathogenic orientation (Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2011) and thus to "bake" the other half of the psychology "cake". The scholarly shift toward the positive can be positioned within a broader socio-cultural catalytic process. Diener (2009) drew attention to a global societal shift where people are in many ways better off than ever before (Easterbrook, 2003). Industrialized societies are characterized by rising longevity, reduced rates of mortality, higher levels of education, greater access to resources, increasingly democratic governance, relative security, and historically unprecedented freedom, with the latter conducive to increased individualism and emphasis on self-actualization (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2001; Diener, 2009). The fundamental contention motivating this argument is that, since more basic human needs, or what Maslow (1943) referred to as lower-order needs, are now better met (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2010), there is an emergence of greater macro-cultural support, interest, and facilitation of collaborative meanings around philosophical questions regarding the good life (Diener, 2009; Triliva & Dafermos, 2008).

It is arguably through a process of what has been referred to by Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1990) as "evolutionary hermeneutics" that positive psychological concerns are increasingly coming to the fore in peoples' intersubjective understandings and sense of importance (analogous to the higher order needs put forward by Maslow, 1943). Gallagher and Lopez (2009), for instance, reflected on how positive expectancies for the future have increasingly received considerable attention in both popular media and psychological literature as a mechanism by which mental health may be achieved. Ruark (2009) confirmed this perception, noting the "mushrooming of a hungry popular market" (p. 4).

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Positive psychology does not, however, represent simply a popular resurgence in interest and return to ancient philosophical questions about what makes a "good life" and a "good person", such as in Aristotle's (c. 340 BC/ 2009) *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Diener, 2009). In stark contrast to ancient societies where human strengths were understood and expounded by a process of rational thought through "armchair methods of logic and reason", contemporary society's respect for the power of science has seen increasing importance being placed on "understanding science from an empirical point of view" (Proctor & Capaldi, 2006, p. 19). It was therefore within the historic context of a growing interest in the "good life" and of a societal respect for the power of science (along with both a need to unify scholarly psychological work on the positive aspects of human functioning and a desire to better "bake" the positive half of psychological thought) that the late 1990s saw a gathering momentum in popular interest, empirical research and practice related to positive psychology. This interest has continued to see significant growth and evolution to the present day, where the field of positive psychology stands on the cusp of domain status with the increasingly rapid publication of enchiridia such as the *Encyclopaedia of Positive Psychology* (Lopez, 2009), the first and second editions of the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002, 2009), *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), and *Designing Positive Psychology* (Sheldon, Kashdan, & Steger, 2011). In sum, since its germination in 1998, the field of positive psychology has generated extensive scholarly endeavour and considerably expanded the knowledge base in its attempt, metaphorically, to "better bake the positive half of the psychology cake".

The Method of Positive Psychology

In addition to the seemingly axiomatic interest in working with that which is positive, much of the growth in the field of positive psychology can, as pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi (2006), be attributed to the relative empirical research vacuum in which it was positioned. Central to Seligman's (1999) formalization of the field of positive psychology is the emphasis placed on conforming to the principles and methods of positivistic science. While there are certainly differences in terms of how researchers and practitioners in the field emphasize and interpret notions of optimal human functioning, the prominence given to positivistic scientific practice is consistent across all mainstream definitions. Diener (2009) noted that stressing the need for a scientific grounding to positive psychology is arguably one of the most significant contributions that Seligman made to the emerging field. In placing emphasis on a scientific grounding, Seligman allowed for the development of a platform from which a unified field of positive psychology could rapidly grow both in its own right and in a manner that would allow for meaningful integration with the larger fields of psychology in particular and social science in general.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) noted that, in the past, many of the scholars concerned with positive aspects of human functioning were positioned within humanistic psychology frameworks that were often sceptical about the scientific method. As a result, their contributions were very often difficult to systematically comprehend, organize and integrate both with each other and with more established mainstream psychological thought and practice. With the birth of a scientifically underpinned championing of research into salutary aspects of human mental processes and behaviours, positive psychology has increasingly attracted scholarly interest and attention due to its ability to guide thinking about older positive constructs.

Much of this ability to guide thinking and synthesize ideas is directly attributable to the positivistic scientific method employed. While the field has certainly grown rapidly as a result, and therein targeted the aim of attending to the "unbaked" positive half of the "cake", the emphasis on scientific method is not without shortcomings and criticisms.

An Oven without Heat Control: Considering an Exclusive Emphasis on a Positivistic Method

Strümpfer (2005) underscored the sentiment of many in stressing that the positive psychology paradigm is not new but ancient, and that a "strengths paradigm" (p. 21) has origins preceding that of the positive psychology movement. A contemporary area where this contention has been vociferously emphasised is in the controversy regarding the contribution of humanistic psychology to the field of positive psychology (Waterman, 2013; Wong, 2011). Robbins and Friedman (2008) stressed that, even though positive psychology and humanistic psychology both focus on similar concerns, they are differentiated by epistemology and methodology. In turn, Waterman (2013, 2014), suggested that the two disciplines are distinguished by epistemological, ontological and philosophical differences that are so marked that "adherents of the two perspectives may best be advised to pursue separately their shared desire … [as] efforts at conciliation and cooperation at all but superficial levels will meet with limited success" (Waterman, 2013, p. 124). These divisions are particularly apparent in the diametrically opposed methodologies associated with the two paradigms, positive psychology being associated with quantitative methods and humanistic psychology with qualitative methods.

In considering what this lack of "methodological and epistemological pluralism" (Robbins & Friedman, 2008, p. 113) may mean for the field of positive psychology, it is useful to consider Strümpfer's (2005) perspective on the debate, given his emphasis on the significance of

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the inference of Hawkings's (2003, p. xiii) comment on Newton's acknowledgement that his achievements had been facilitated by "standing on the shoulders of giants": "Maybe Newton should have said, 'I used the shoulders of giants as a springboard'". The inspired philosophical, epistemological and methodological leap taken by positive psychology has undoubtedly positioned it as a distinct field within the broader field of psychology (see Waterman, 2013). However, the question as to whether this leap has distanced positive psychology so strongly from other fields of psychology interested in aspects of optimal human functioning that it is better, as Waterman (2013) suggests, for the fields to give up all attempts at synthesis, remains open (see Churchill & Mruk, 2014; Friedman, 2014; Moley, 2014; Schneider, 2014; Serlin, 2014; Waterman, 2014). Various authors have contended that such absolute separation is not in fact necessary, and that other perspectives indeed have something to offer to the field of positive psychology (Churchill & Mruk, 2014; Friedman, 2014; Moley, 2014; Schneider, 2014; Serlin, 2014).

The present paper is positioned within the debate about the possible contribution of greater methodological inclusivity to the field of positive psychology. In keeping with arguments posited by Moley (2014) and others, the authors contend that Waterman's (2013) rejection of the potential for synthesis between positive psychology and other more qualitative fields in psychology ignores the possible contribution of particular qualitative methodologies. More specifically, the rejection of all "humanist" psychological methods includes the blanket dismissal of phenomenological methods which, as this paper contends, can contribute significantly to understanding the "things themselves" within positive psychology. As such, it suggests that the leap made by positive psychology has not in fact irreversibly fractured the possibility for connection between certain humanist methodologies and the field of positive psychology (see Waterman, 2013, 2014) and that phenomenological methods, given their ability to interrogate the "sheer complexity of human reality" (DeRobertis, 2012, p. 7), offer an additional means methodologically to more thoroughly "bake the positive half of the psychology cake".

The suggestion that phenomenological methods may prove useful to the positive psychology movement is based on the exceptionally diverse (Finlay, 2009) nature of phenomenology's philosophical underpinnings, which has resulted in the development of a wide range of phenomenological methodologies (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008) that can be employed to address a variety of phenomena. In-depth engagement with the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology is therefore not a prerequisite for the use of phenomenological methods within the broad field of psychology (see Finlay, 2009; Moley, 2014). This paper is accordingly positioned not as a philosophical exposition on phenomenology but, instead, as an advocate for the inclusion of the methods of phenomenology in the field of positive psychology. Phenomenological psychology is characterised by the very "methodological and epistemological pluralism" (Robbins & Friedman, 2008, p. 113) that positive psychology currently lacks, and incorporates all methods that take as their starting point specific phenomena and strive to investigate these phenomena without the pre-emptive imposition of pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Finlay, 2009; Willis, 2001).

The stated purpose of phenomenological research is to be subjective and not objective, and as such to attempt to "find a way to represent lived-experience in as raw and un-elaborated a way as possible" (Willis, 2001, p. 1). In essence, phenomenological research methods should be regarded as methods that force a researcher to act slowly and to look deeply (Willis, 2001). Finlay (2009) argued that all phenomenological research must be responsive to the phenomenon and must consider the relationship between the researcher and that which is being researched. She favoured a broad definition of the phenomenological method, one that is also espoused in this paper. According to Finlay (2009), "research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon" (p. 8).

Thus, this paper argues for the utility of the inclusion of phenomenological methods, defined in the broad sense presented above, within the field of positive psychology as a way of enhancing the recipe for the positive psychology "cake". To support this argument, we make use of two papers as illustrative examples of the way in which phenomenological methods can be used to elaborate and enrich positive psychological constructs.

Case Analysis

Based on the preceding discussion, we now turn to a case study analysis of two papers published in previous issues of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* and which serve as examples of the alchemical baking process referred to previously. Each of these papers makes use of a phenomenological method to address, to a greater or lesser extent, a construct that has found its expression within the positive psychology movement. Each of these papers, in its own way, represents a move towards a methodological expansion in relation to positive psychological constructs and as such can be positioned as attempts to more fully capture the "things themselves" in positive psychology.

The use of these papers as case studies of a phenomenon speaks to the ethos of case study research (Flyvberg, 2006), which aims to be both "transparadigmatic and

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transdisiplinary" (VanWynsberge & Khan, 2007, p. 2) and seeks to provide novel, in-depth explorations of theoretical assumptions and existing phenomena (Radley & Chamberlain, 2000). The selection of these particular papers is based on their utility in illustrating the points made above and supporting the argument of this paper. As such, we do not argue that they are the only (or even the best) possible examples, but simply that their use serves an illustrative purpose in respect of the nature of the contributions that can be made by the inclusion of phenomenological methods within the field of positive psychology.

The papers were selected through a purposive review process, which essentially involved reviewing the tables of contents of recent issues of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* (*IPJP*) and highlighting papers that have used phenomenological methods to address issues that have also found expression (albeit sometimes under a slightly different label) within the field of positive psychology. Interestingly, this brief review suggested that the more recent editions of the *IPJP* include more papers related to positive psychology ideas than do the issues published prior to 2012, suggesting that there is already a movement towards the investigation of positive psychological concepts using phenomenological methods. This was also demonstrated by a brief review of other journals, which indicates that phenomenological research methods have been used in the investigation of positive psychological concepts such as well-being (Crust, Keegan, Piggott, & Swann, 2011; Lundin, Berg, & Hellström Muhli, 2013; Russell & Moss, 2012), flow (Banfield & Burgess, 2013) and the investigation of strengths (Doutre, Green, & Knight-Elliott, 2013). Papers in two relatively recent editions (2012 and 2013) of the *IPJP* focused, for instance, on phenomena such as teachers' experiences of enjoyment (Bredmar, 2013), the lived experience of pain (Finlay, 2012), trustful relationships (Lilja, 2013), and using mindfulness to teach phenomenology (Owen, 2013). Two in particular of these papers (Bredmar, 2013; Finlay, 2012) very aptly exemplified the methodological argument presented in this paper and were therefore selected to serve as case studies. The selection of these two papers was therefore based on their aptness to illustrate the central argument of this paper, which is that phenomenological methods can be used to provide more nuanced understandings of positive psychological constructs. These two papers are discussed individually below as Case Studies 1 and 2.

Case Study 1

Linda Finlay, in her paper entitled "'Writing the Pain': Engaging First-Person Phenomenological Accounts" (2012), provides a deeply moving description of her experience of excrutiating pain during her process of recovery from a shoulder injury. The injury necessitated three major surgeries, which she describes as "probably the least traumatic aspects of the process" (Finlay, 2012, p. 4). While trauma, such as that experienced by Finlay, is known to have numerous negative outcomes (Aldwin, 2007; APA, 2000), recent research from within the field of positive psychology has focused attention on the positive outcomes of trauma, with this research attention coalescing in the generation of the term *posttraumatic growth*, which refers to "positive psychological changes experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1). Although the idea of positive outcomes following difficult circumstances is not new (see, for example, Joseph & Linley, 2008), the positive psychology movement has contributed significantly to understandings of the phenomenon, and its inclusion, under the label posttraumatic growth, in the positive psychology lexicon has enabled the generation of a vast body of empirical research concerning the potential positive outcomes of trauma (for example, Aldwin & Levenson, 2004; Bussell & Naus, 2010; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Cardova & Andrykowski, 2003; Cardova, Cunningham, Carlson, & Andrykowski, 2001; Frazier et al., 2009; Janoff-Bulman, 2006; Sears, Stanton, & Danoff-Burg, 2003). However, various researchers (Hobfall et al., 2007; Joseph & Linley, 2008; Westphal & Bonanno, 2007) have voiced concerns regarding this formidable body of research, specifically in relation to its inability to address the depth of the experience of trauma and the complex interrelatedness between negative and positive outcomes of trauma.

Finlay's (2012) paper, in a small way, offers an example of an alternate methodology that can be used to address the depth of the experience, both positive and negative, of trauma. In a creative and poetic manner, the author chose to write of her experience of trauma in order to "examine the quality and essences of a phenomenon" (p. 4), as well as to "facilitate lived understandings in others" (p. 2). Her paper reads as a celebration both of first person accounts and of "reflexive depth-full and compelling poetic-creative forms" (p. 2). In addition, her account speaks candidly about the process of trauma, encompassing both positive and negative experiences during the process and suggesting how these experiences are linked. Although the extract below is extensive, it captures in poetic nuances her experience of extreme pain and as such is worth quoting at length:

> I'm aware of layers of different types of pain … burning, throbbing, spasm … these words don't capture the experience, the layers, the colour, the flavour, the noise, the assault … . Can a body bear this agony? … The horizon of anxiety is a continual presence: Fear shrouds the pain. A helpless anxiety gnaws. What does the pain mean? … Time slows; there are only periods of more or less pain … . Pain keeps me awake yet I'm bone weary from coping and too dopey to wake properly … . I learn to be still, to relax and not resist the pain. I learn to stop fighting, to go with it … it is not so bad. It

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> is just there. It is me and not an enemy to fight … . Life as I have known it collapses and my world is reduced to minimal essential activity … . I am diminished … . A new shadow "disabled shame-self" has replaced me … . At some point I realize that this shadow-self is the new me; my old-self a faint memory. Is this forever? The spectre of uselessness and disintegration haunts me and I am tempted to give in, give in. But I don't … I re-learn the meaning of pain … . Pain is the body and pain is the world. (pp. 4–5)

This visceral experience of pain speaks to the bodily nature of trauma, and crafts a reality of being-in-the-world where the person is not separate from her pain. It is therefore impossible for her to "work through the pain" or to "grow from the pain", since this would imply that it is separate from her, an experience outside of her own being. Instead, she needs to find a way in which to incorporate this new identity as her being-in-the-world. She describes her experience of living with and through the pain in a manner that represents growth. Once again, her account is so poetic that it is worth quoting at length instead of attempting to paraphrase its gist:

> With the double-trauma of surgery and pain, my world had very abruptly and traumatically changed … . With this new way of being-in-the-world, I lost my previous existence. My previous bodily and social identity and relationships had been wrenched away … . I was existentially alienated from myself as well as others … . I got in touch with some existential anxiety. Subsequently I began to value the new possibilities that opened up for me and became inspired to embrace a more authentic life. (p. 6).

Although Finlay (2012) herself never uses the positive psychology term "posttraumatic growth", her entire paper speaks to this phenomenon: the phenomenon of being-in-the-world following a trauma and having to accept and incorporate a new way of being that is very different from the old. Thus, her experience of living with pain does not result in a return to a previous pain-free state of being, but instead leads to the development of a new sensibility and way of being. Through the use of poetic language and first person narrative, Finlay (2012) provides an examination of this process in an immediate and experiential manner that allows for the depth of the experience of growth to emerge within her writing.

Case Study 2

The second paper to be discussed as a case study was published in a special edition of the *IPJP* in 2013, and is entitled "Teachers' Experiences of Enjoyment of Work as a Subtle Atmosphere: An Empirical Lifeworld Phenomenological Analysis" (Bredmar, 2013). The paper makes use of a very specific theoretical framework and methodology, termed the lifeworld phenomenological approach (Bengtsson, 2013a, 2013b), in order to explore teachers' experiences of enjoyment in the classroom. The concept of enjoyment can be linked to the positive psychology construct of *well-being*, which very broadly incorporates all traditions related to positive, social and desirable states. In the frame of positive psychology, well-being is conceptualized in accordance with two dominant views, namely hedonistic and eudaimonic well-being, which dominate understandings of well-being within positive psychology (Ong, Horn, & Walsh, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Schnell, 2009; Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). The concept of hedonic well-being relates to a person's subjective affect in respect of the sense of being happy with, interested in, and generally satisfied with life (Diener, 1984; Hervás & Vázquez, 2013; Keyes, 2009). In contrast, eudaimonic well-being places an emphasis on subjective evaluations regarding pursuits relevant to personal growth, virtue, excellence, authenticity and autonomy (Huta, Pelletier, Baxter, & Thompson, 2012). Eudaimonic well-being is usually divided into eudaimonic psychological well-being (as exemplified by the work of Ryff, 1989) and eudaimonic social well-being (exemplified by the work of Keyes, 1998, 2002) (Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, ten Klooster, & Keyes, 2011). There is much debate within the field of positive psychology regarding the relationship between these different facets of well-being, focusing specifically on the extent to which these two positions are distinct, converge or complement each other (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & King, 2009; Helliwell & Barrington-Leigh, 2010; Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). This debate has led to calls from within positive psychology for a clearer delineation of the concept of well-being in a manner that does not abandon theory and complexity, but rather furthers understandings in the context of the existing tensions within the construct (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & King, 2009; De Prycker, 2010; Fave & Bassi, 2009; Kashdan et al., 2008; Ryan & Huta, 2010).

Bredmar's (2013) exploratory study of the experience of enjoyment provides the possibility of an alternative methodology for the exploration of facets of well-being. The study made use of the lifeworld phenomenological approach, a phenomenological approach pioneered by Bengtsson (2013a, 2013b), as a methodological framework within which to view the subtle atmosphere created within the classroom and experienced by teachers as a sense of joy. Bengtsson's lifeworld phenomenological approach holds that life and the world are intertwined, and that a phenomenon can thus only be understood in the context of both the life and the world with which it is entwined. Thus, as Bredmar (2013) stated, "If we want to study a phenomenon in the lifeworld, it must be studied both in relation to the one experiencing the phenomenon and in relation to its context" (p. 2). The study accordingly made use of conversations about

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the teachers' experiences of joy, based on the premise that "conversations about things that are unclear or that have not previously been expressed in words lead to new discoveries for those involved in the dialogues" (p. 4). The findings of the study suggest that enjoyment or joy is not a discrete occurrence, but instead forms part of the "everydayness" of the experience, and that, while specific situations may serve as high points, the sense of enjoyment permeates the work of the teacher. Thus, while difficult to articulate, teachers experience "joy as something that takes place in [their] own bod[ies], in [their] actions as well as in the activity in the class-room" (p. 6). In the concluding section of her paper, Bredmar states in summary that: "Enjoyment of work as an atmosphere appears to be fundamental in the work of teachers. This mood is common in teachers' daily lives, but is often unnoticed and taken for granted. Despite this, a joyful mood is powerfully effective in their work and of utmost importance. In this way it serves as a floor, grounding their work" (p. 12).

Bredmar's (2013) study has several interesting connections to the traditions of well-being research discussed earlier in this section. For example, the sense that the teachers provide of enjoyment as being something that is subtle and pervasive suggests that perhaps well-being should be conceptualized as occurring on a continuum and that the pervasiveness of a feeling (as opposed to the intensity) needs to be included in conceptualizations of well-being.

Discussion and Conclusion

The two phenomenological case studies discussed above serve to provide practical examples of the way in which phenomenological methods, defined in their broadest sense as directed at the description of "experience as lived" and hence on experiential phenomena ("the things themselves") "in their appearing" (Finlay, 2009, p. 9), can contribute to the expansion of the field of positive psychology. These two papers provide specific examples of the way in which current understandings of the positive psychological constructs of well-being and post-traumatic growth have been supplemented and enriched through the use of phenomenological research methods. However, it should be noted that these two papers have served simply as case study examples of the potential contribution of phenomenological methods of inquiry to the field of positive psychology, and that there are numerous other positive psychological constructs that could also benefit from phenomenological exploration. The case studies highlighted here suggest two aspects of phenomenological methods that may be particularly useful for furthering the endeavours of positive psychology.

Firstly, phenomenological research methods allow for the emergence of rich descriptions of lived experiences (Finlay, 2009) by means of in-depth and contextualized exploration of concepts in a manner that forces the researcher to act slowly and to look deeply (Willis, 2001). The sense of deliberateness and depth epitomized by phenomenological methods stands in stark contrast to the rapid growth in positive psychology, which has been buoyed by a centrifugal enthusiasm (Csikszentmihalyi, 2006) and has become characterized by rapid growth and expansion, perhaps at the expense of depth of knowledge and understanding. Thus, the (re)turn to phenomenological methods within a strengths-based domain such as positive psychology would allow for the deliberate and slow exploration of concepts that have perhaps, at this point in the development of the positive psychology movement, been expanded so rapidly as a result of empirical research that aspects of them are only partially understood. An example of such a concept may be posttraumatic growth, where there is a need to understand the relationship between posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth experiences and the way in which these two lived experiences interact and change over time. McNulty and Fincham (2012), for instance, conjoin the broader contextual considerations of positive psychology process and well-being in a manner that extends beyond labels of "negative" and "positive" towards intra-individual domains. Phenomenological methods are a utile means by which greater richness of experience may serve to bridge, broaden and even diffuse such labels.

Secondly, through their avoidance of the imposition of pre-emptive interpretative frameworks (Finlay, 2009), phenomenological methods contribute to the field of positive psychology by allowing for precisely the type of methodological and epistemological pluralism (Robbins & Friedman, 2008, p. 113) that is currently lacking in the positive psychology movement. Avoidance of the imposition of interpretative frameworks allows for the exploration of concepts without any theoretical or interpretative bias or presuppositions, thus allowing a phenomenon to reveal itself and emerge in a manner that enables exploration and description of its uniqueness in all its own richness. An example of where such an approach may have specific utility would be in the investigation of the strengths framework proposed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), where phenomenological methods could be used to investigate the "experience as lived" of individuals manifesting specific strengths, without the imposition of any specific framework regarding how these strengths should function in every-day life. For instance, as Seligman and Peterson (2004, p. 126) noted, in the case of the strength of curiosity, individuals differ not only in the depth, breadth and threshold of the strength, but also in their "willingness to experience it". Phenomenological examination that extends beyond numerical quantifications within a pre-determined framework would offer an understanding of idiographic "willingness to experience" curiosity that would effectively allow the heat of an epistemologically pluralistic oven to more thoroughly bake understanding of this phenomenon of human experience.

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By taking a leap off the shoulders of giants (see Hawking, 2003; Strümpfer, 2005), positive psychology has had a significant impact on the field of psychology and has undoubtedly achieved significant gains in its attempt to better bake the positive half of the psychology cake. Many of these gains may justifiably be ascribed to the specific positivistic methodology employed by positive psychology. Nevertheless, the methodology used seems simultaneously to have led to the neglect of more subtle aspects of human functioning in relation to positive psychological constructs. The present paper argues that, while the gains made by the field of positive psychology are undeniable and substantial, the current burgeoning domain status of the field demands the reconsideration and inclusion of alternative – and, in particular, qualitative – methods of inquiry, such as those of phenomenology. Methodological pluralism would provide positive psychology with additional means by which to continue the "baking" of the metaphorical "cake". While positivistic science switched on the oven and turned up the heat in order to allow the positive psychology cake to rise rapidly, a phenomenological focus would serve to adjust the oven's heat to the optimal level required to ensure that the cake is more deeply baked to richly textured consistency throughout.

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