Chapter 15
How Can Positive Psychology Influence Public Policy and Practice?

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Abstract Positive psychologists who decline to involve themselves in government policy issues may be similar to medical doctors who refuse to work in hospitals or clinics. Both the positive psychologist and the doctor may greatly reduce their positive effect if they avoid involvement in these institutions that widely impact the population. This chapter explains what positive psychologists bring to policy discussions: An emphasis on measurable well-being, a desire to do more than just ameliorate pathology, and a broad knowledge of psychological findings. The chapter provides examples of policy relevant findings related to: (a) measurement of well-being, (b) identification of groups with particular needs, and (c) exploration of paths to the good life. The chapter also gives warnings about ways to fail in policy engagement, such as limiting efforts to legislative lobbying, ignoring lessons from policy-engaged academics, failing to consider costs, seeking to change fundamental belief systems of opponents, ignoring unintended consequences, expressing hubris, providing imbalanced emphasis on particular types of well-being, and failing to test policies incrementally. The chapter closes by proposing a strategy for policy engagement that not only promotes, but also embodies positive psychology.

Abbreviation

SWB Subjective well-being

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Why Positive Psychology and Public Policy?

Imagine a brilliant doctor who can to accurately diagnose any disease and cure any ailment. This doctor, who has a wealth of knowledge and ability, chooses to stay away from clinics and hospitals, and instead lives night and day on a secluded mountain frequented only by the occasional hiker. This doctor treats the occasional passer-by on the mountain trails and once saved the life of a climber in extremis, but in the end the brilliant doctor's contributions to the greater good fall short of what they might have been had the doctor worked at a clinic or other location that attracts people in need. If the doctor spent workdays in a clinic or hospital, the doctor would encounter and help people in need many times every day rather than every few weeks or months.

Now imagine a positive psychologist who through rigorous research becomes a prodigy in the field. As a result of countless studies, the psychologist understands much about the good life, character strengths, positive emotions, and so forth. Naturally, this psychologist publishes extensively and the research becomes well-known in academia. Despite lifelong contributions to the field in the form of well-designed experiments and top-notch academic publications, the psychologist's valuable understanding of human flourishing—knowledge that has the potential to promote positive and widespread social and institutional change—remains of interest almost only to scholars and university students.

The analogy of the brilliant doctor may seem farfetched, but serves to highlight an important distinction between individual excellence—expertise, ability, and knowledge—and practical outcomes in the form of social and institutional change. Unfortunately, the fictional case of the positive psychologist may not be far from reality in some cases. Our objective here will be to examine ways in which the many robust, interesting, and significant findings of positive psychologists can be translated successfully into policies that can improve the lives of members of society. If positive psychologists are interested in creating effective interventions, possibly the most impact will be had by influencing the ways that governments intervene in people's lives.

Is There Reason to Believe that Positive Psychology Can Uniquely Contribute to Public Policy?

Perhaps we go too fast. We do not generally question the value of a good doctor; but some could ask what makes the application of positive psychology to policy uniquely useful to begin with? Here, we discuss three reasons. First, positive psychology, at least academic positive psychology, relies on empirical measures of psychological well-being. This may sound like an abstract or even practically irrelevant

distinctive, but it is not. Many other policy perspectives will seek to maximise outcomes, such as income, education, or health, that are presumed to increase well-being. In contrast, positive psychologists seek to measure well-being more directly to assess which elements of these more usual foci (income, health, education, and other variables) contribute the most to well-being. For example, positive psychologists do not merely assume that wealth is a desirable policy outcome, but they actually study this empirically. In fact, recent research suggests that increased wealth does tend to produce greater psychological well-being, but only if certain other social factors accompany the increased wealth (Diener et al. 2013).

Second, positive psychologists are not satisfied with merely ameliorating problems. They want to help people build lifestyles enhancing positive well-being. As Gable and Haidt (2005) suggested, much of psychology has historically focused on healing, that is, bringing 'people from negative eight to zero', but positive psychologists seek to bring people from 'zero to positive eight' (p. 103). Most positive psychologists would argue that merely reducing depression, for example, is not a sufficient goal. People also deserve help in building a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Third, positive psychologists draw on a different literature than typical policy analysts. Academically trained positive psychologists will have familiarity with a broad range of psychological research that will not be familiar to and will less often be referenced by other decision makers in government bodies. Thus, positive psychologists can bring a fresh perspective to the discussion. According to Seligman et al. (2005), positive psychology involves the comprehensive study of three topics: (1) positive emotions, (2) positive character traits, and (3) institutions that enable the first two components. The third element, the study of institutions facilitating positive states and traits may be the most understudied of the three (Schueller 2009). Nonetheless, the importance of this third element is inestimable; after all, ideas cannot often effect widespread change without institutional forces to back them.

Other policy and practice analysts may bring one of these elements (i.e., focus on measures of well-being, focus on doing more than ameliorating problems, or broad familiarity with empirical findings from psychology), but fewer will bring all three of these elements. Thus, applying positive psychology to policy and practice decisions can break new ground.

The Rocky Road from Positive Psychology to Public Policy

Admittedly, the road from any clear-cut psychological finding to a public policy decision is often a rocky one, and thus the path from knowledge to societal benefit is not as straightforward as our opening analogy might imply. As a field, we may fully establish that factor X causes outcome Y at an individual level, but it does not always follow that attempting to manipulate X from a public policy standpoint will lead to widespread change in Y. Enacting public policy has many potential consequences outside of the specific effect of X➔Y. For example, overt pressures such as those implied in top-down public policy might: (a) cause reactance (e.g., Knowles

and Linn 2004), (b) invoke backfiring based on informational contamination (e.g., Conway and Schaller 2005), or (c) involve other moral or psychological principles outside of the scope of the X➔Y relationship.

Consider an example from aggression research. There is a lot of evidence that violent video games cause subsequent aggression; meta-analyses of a large body of research reveals that the effect of violent media on aggressive behaviour is larger than the effect of condoms on HIV, calcium intake on bone mass, homework on academic achievement, and a number of other commonly-accepted effects (Bushman and Anderson 2001). But that alone does not mean that, to create a better society, we should encourage a public policy banning violent video games. A ban might invoke culturally shared values about freedom of choice and possibly bring a backlash or create other reactions that could eventually do more harm than good. What we do with that knowledge of effects from violent games is itself a separate question that ought to be subject to empirical scrutiny. For example, we might think it more effective in the long run to use that knowledge to create a grass-roots, bottom-up campaign that aims for long-term cultural change and not for quick policy fixes (for the predictive power of bottom-up vs. top-down processes, see Conway et al. 2006).

Left alone, the above paragraph would support a proscription suggesting we ignore policy altogether. However, we think that would be a mistake because public policy will influence people's lives, and positive psychologists can help that influence be for the good.

There are at least three major questions when applying positive psychology to policy: (1) What can we infer from positive psychology research regarding public policies that will be helpful? (2) How does one effectively influence policy and practice in response to these findings? and (3) Does that policy when implemented have a positive impact on peoples' lives. All these questions are important. The third, policy impact, can only be researched after we engage and influence policy makers or at least policy implementers. The impact of the policy once implemented is exceedingly important and amenable to research, but we will assume, for the purposes of this chapter, that many positive psychologists need to take the first steps of developing policy positions and engaging policy-makers. Only then will the third question be feasible to address. Thus, this chapter focuses more on responding to the first two questions: implications of research findings and strategies for influencing policy.

Examples of Research Findings with Policy Implications

As a starting point, some policy implications of empirical findings will be discussed. This brief discussion can only begin to explore this topic. For further discussion of these types of issues, we recommend seeing: Mulgan (2013) and Diener et al. (2009).

Psychological Well-Being Can Be Measured

Positive psychology researchers have devoted much effort toward developing valid measures of psychological well-being (see Proctor et al. 2015) and there is evidence these can work well (e.g., Veenhoven 2015). According to Diener et al. (2009), however, current government policies are often built: (a) without awareness of which population groups have different levels of psychological needs, and (b) on erroneous assumptions regarding factors that promote well-being. Thus, they recommend that measures of subjective well-being (SWB) be regularly administered to populations and consulted when making policy decisions. These measures would help identify subgroups with elevated needs. The measures could also provide feedback on the effectiveness of the interventions. Governments currently gather information on many indicators of performance: Just as indicators of gross national product, current account deficits, and employment rates are regularly tracked by government bodies, likewise, psychological well-being could be regularly measured and tracked.

From a more technical perspective, it is worth noting that some measures of psychological well-being may place excessive emphasis on hedonic indicators of well-being (e.g., short-term happiness) and comparatively neglect eudaimonic indicators of well-being (e.g., life purpose, self-actualisation, sense that one is contributing to society, belief that one is living a good life). As a result, selecting the best set of psychological measures will require careful thinking (Diener and Diener 2011; Hone et al. 2014; Proctor et al. 2015).

Particular Subgroups Have Elevated Needs (e.g., Youth at Risk of Mental Illness and Caregivers)

The approaches from the prior section would serve to add psychological measures to the data that policy makers may use when making decisions, but these measures of course do not directly ensure other specific policy changes. As such, positive psychologists who stop there would be like doctors who provide data to patients but refuse to do surgery. Thus, it is useful to also look more deeply into some examples of additional policy changes that might be implemented based on positive psychology research. A few specific examples will be mentioned here.

One relevant finding relates to the decreased SWB scores evident among one subgroup of the population: People who have experienced ongoing issues with mental illness. In response to this finding, Diener et al. (2009) recommend preventive treatment targeting youth at risk of mental illness. In particular, they recommend school-wide screening to identify children with risk indicators and subsequent targeted preventive treatment with the identified children to reduce their likelihood of progression to full-scale mental illness. Just like a polio vaccine can inhibit the onset of disease, some research suggests that psychological training targeting kids in this situation can reduce the likelihood of future depression (Seligman et al. 2007). In this case, there is not only research on the X➔Y relationship, but also

research on the positive consequences of attempting to directly manipulate X from a top-down, policy level.

Measures of SWB also indicate that people who provide daily care for infirm significant others tend to experience particular SWB deficits. Thus, Diener et al. (2009) recommend policies to support caregivers through connection to support groups and counselling in order to reduce the negative effects brought upon by the burden of caregiving. These steps and others to support this subpopulation could potentially lower the chance of depression in relation to caregiving (Lin et al. 2013) and thereby the chance of institutionalisation for the person receiving care (Diener et al. 2009). More research is needed on the specific implications of policy change. Nonetheless, the current findings do suggest that efforts toward an ameliorative policy make sense.

Relationships Matter, but Pursuit of Wealth Can Be Problematic

Humans are inherently social beings. One of the largest lessons learned so far from SWB research is the importance of relationships in comparison to financial pursuits. While we need financial resources to live, some research suggests that pursuit of money at an intensity above the population average, tends to make people less happy (Kasser and Ryan 1993). More generally, life goals related to wealth, fame, and good looks are associated with poor psychological outcome, but life goals related to building relationships and contributing to the community are associated with well-being (Kasser and Ryan 1996). Further evidence comes from the fact that there has been a steady increase in wealth for developed nations following WWII, but this is associated with relatively static levels of well-being (Marks 2011; http://www.worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl). This disconnect suggests reconsideration of the issues currently driving public policy. Nic Marks (2011) argued that once basic needs are met, chasing primarily material wealth is an unsustainable and ill-informed approach to achieving societal well-being. In response to this type of finding, Tim Kasser (2004) has suggested practical solutions to reduce the materialistic impulses induced by advertising. His suggestions include media literacy campaigns for children and their parents, new regulations for psychological research in advertising and marketing, reductions in the amount of advertising children are exposed to in the educational system, and more dissemination of information on the negative well-being effects of a society that equates wealth with happiness (2004).

Also, the UK's Foresight programme (Aked et al. 2008) has advocated for publicly sponsored campaigns teaching the populace about five reliable ways to well-being. They use the following terms to summarise the strategies: Connect, Be active, Take notice, Keep learning, and Give. Also, other relationship-sustaining policies such as provision of skill training for parents at-risk may help build positive relations within families (Mulgan 2013; Sanders et al. 2014), so are worthy of consideration.

Admittedly, healthy human social relationships are complex and hard to manufacture widely across society. For example, enforced social interaction through

population-wide interventions such as cohousing and meal sharing could manufacture many relationships, but many of these relationships will be negative. Furthermore, clashing value systems regarding relationships can create resistance to government policy in this domain (Mulgan 2013). As a result, more research is specifically needed that directly ties policy change to relationship facilitation, and in turn to more SWB. Nonetheless, it would be foolish to ignore this research on the value of relationships when developing policy. It is a good goal to at least consider how policies might influence the success of people attempting to meet their social needs.

Physical Activity Promotes Well-Being

In quite a different domain, much research indicates that regular physical activity is associated with increased well-being (e.g., Marks 2011; Mutrie and Faulkner 2004). Some research suggests that regular physical activity may also reduce depression, with effects possibly as large as the impact of antidepressant medication (see Daley 2008 for a review). In some regions such as Canada, tax breaks have been provided for parents who enrol their children in regular programmes of physical fitness. Initially, the credit in Canada was especially problematic because families whose incomes were too low to pay income tax were not eligible for any benefit. The policy was later made more universal, but, then, after an election, the subsequent government completely removed the policy. Nonetheless, this is one example of a policy to increase well-being by inducing activity while still letting families choose the programme in which to enrol their children.

Many Other Findings Have Policy Implications

Many more topics could be discussed in terms of policy implications from positive psychology. Diener et al. (2009) argued that empirical findings linking commute time with reduced well-being justify policies aimed at reducing commute time. Mulgan (2013) has argued that because well-being is associated not only with actual victimhood, but also fear of crime, police agency benchmarks should measure not only actual crime rates, but also fear of crime; he argued that police agencies would then probably engage with citizens more and focus more on reducing antisocial behaviour that frightens citizens. Mulgan (2013) also argued that much of government spending on the arts, sports, and culture is focused on large, spectator events, but much research instead shows that participation is conducive to well-being (e.g., playing sports and producing music and art). Thus, he argues that governments should spend less on spectator activities and more on participation opportunities and incentives. Also, some evidence suggests that positive psychology character education in schools promotes well-being and improved relationships (Proctor et al. 2011; Quinlan et al. 2015). Many other studies also have implications for public policy.

Some Ways to Fail in Policy Engagement

As we have discussed, the road from psychological findings to policy recommendations is a rocky one. Premature implementation of policy can cause problems; however, an equally concerning mistake would be failure in persuading policy makers to successfully implement effective policies reflecting findings from positive psychology. If our hypothetical doctor cannot get patients to receive surgery when they need it, then she is of little value to society. As a cautionary note, here are some failure-inducing strategies that may be worth avoiding.

Ignore Lessons Shared by Others Who Have Succeeded (and as a Result, Bore Policymakers)

The instincts of academics may often guide them to ineffective strategies for engaging policy makers. Bogenschneider and Corbett (2010) wrote a helpful guide based on years of work facilitating relations between policy makers and academics. Based on surveys, interviews, and experience, they suggest the engagement with policy makers will be most effective when the academics: (1) provide brief oral (rather than only written) presentations summarising several studies and the policy implication; (2) describe comparative policy and practice from other jurisdictions; (3) conduct interactive seminars encouraging cross-talk between academics, policymakers, and policy implementers; (4) maintain an ongoing relationship with the policymaker; and (5) when speaking to an elected official, tell a story about a person in that electoral district who will be affected by the policy. This last point might not seem obvious to academics accustomed to discussing theory and data, but the relevance would be dangerous to ignore. Bogenschneider and Corbett (2010) quote one high-ranking politician who said, ‘If you give legislators the research and facts, and I tell a heart-wrenching story, I will win every time’ (p. 41; cf. Slovic 2007).

Limit Efforts to Legislative Lobbying

Though legislators often dictate formal written policy, the reality in practice is that operational managers at a variety of levels have much influence on how policies are implemented (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010). As a result, positive psychologists interested in influencing policy may reasonably choose to work with officials lower down in the system that determine how policy is implemented and who feed information into the system. Focusing exclusively on legislative lobbying could be unnecessarily restrictive.

Ignore Unintended Consequences

Any step forward in new policy directions will inevitably have unintended consequences. For example, once well-being measures are implemented, any effect could be undermined by governments that could manipulate these statistics just as some have manipulated statistics on GNP, debt, and unemployment rates (Frey 2011). Alternatively, subgroups of the population could alter their responses on questionnaires to get more funding. Furthermore, tax policy changes intended to promote positive behaviour may cause people to game the system (e.g., creating false fitness programmes to get tax breaks), thereby defeating the intended purpose of the policy. Unintended consequences are hard to predict. Groups proposing new policies will need to carefully monitor effects to maximise the chance of success.

Fail to Consider Costs (and Be Perceived as Irrelevant or Unrealistic)

Positive psychologists are mostly untrained in economic analysis. However, to motivate those who ultimately enact policy change, positive psychologists will have to consider cost issues. An impressive model of this type of analysis has been provided by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (e.g., 2014a). That group has assessed a variety of possible interventions including specific programmes for parent training, early prison release, nurse home visits, and many others. For each intervention, they calculated the overall cost to government, the financial benefit to society as a whole, and the return to government in cost savings or increases in tax revenue. These analyses are not easy; for example, some may require estimates of the reduced earnings due to substance abuse or even the monetary cost of pain and suffering resulting from victimisation (Washington State Institute for Public Policy 2014b). Nonetheless, cost-benefit analyses provide information that policy-makers value. Some positive psychologists could apply for grants to conduct exactly this type of analysis of the cost-benefit outcomes of implementing positive psychology components into government policy. This type of analysis could require much effort, but the information could potentially greatly extend the reach of positive psychology and provide information regarding which interventions should or should not be expanded.

Indeed, it is worth noting that if positive psychologists continually call for vastly increased government spending without simultaneously being open to, or even suggesting strategies for raising government revenue or reducing other government expenses, their missives might seem unrealistic and unworthy of attention. The kneejerk responses of saying governments can save money through reducing politicians' pay or expenses might seem tempting to policy neophytes, but these are often relatively small portions of government budgets. Big policy changes often require big budgets and big increases in tax or reductions in spending. Similarly, the idea of raising corporate taxes often seems to be popular among academics, and this may be appropriate, but academics should be aware that simple ideas like this often have unintended consequences. For example, some corporations may counteract the tax increase by booking their profit in other countries, by reducing the number of

employees, or by raising prices charged to consumers rather than reducing profits. We are not recommending or countermanding particular tax directions here, but simply urging caution and awareness of budget limitations. Positive psychologists need to learn about budget limitations and consider these realistically given their proposals. Some possible positive psychology interventions can be successful at a relatively low cost. For example, online positive psychology interventions even without any face-to-face therapy have produced promising outcomes in randomized control trials (e.g., Boettcher et al. 2014; Bolier et al. 2014). Low cost interventions like these may deserve attention as first steps when advocating policy related to positive psychology.

Focus on Changing the Fundamental Belief System of Opponents

Positive psychologists also need to recognise that some disagreements will not be resolved in their lifetime, so they will need to find common ground amidst continued disagreement. Yuval Harari (2015), for example, pointed out the societal conflict between equality and individual freedom. He argued that enforced equality (e.g., seizing and redistributing tax dollars) reduces liberty, but utter liberty (freedom to run one's business as one pleases) can reduce equality. He argues that such conflicting values are normal in societies. Individuals will often differ in the extent to which they value each of two conflicting values, and empirical findings may not be able to override that conflict. At that point, the conversation might need to shift away from trying to change fundamental beliefs of others toward finding common ground and common goals (Fisher et al. 2011). Fighting against fundamental belief systems in others may be like fighting the rising of the sun, but seeking common ground may promote collaborative and synergistic efforts.

Express Hubris

Also, positive psychologists who enter policy discussions might find a temptation toward hubris. In our experience, policymakers often have a dichotomous response to social science evidence: They want to treat social science evidence as either indisputable or worthless. They often have difficulty remaining cognizant of the fact that much evidence from social science is valuable, justifiably convincing, but seldom equivalent to absolute proof (the same could be said about much of the evidence policymakers deal with every day, whether it be in the domain of health, economics, education, or other domains). When positive psychologists become the explicator of the evidence, it may be tempting to likewise treat your own evidence at one of these extremes.

In reality, however, some intellectual humility might be appropriate. Even well-researched interventions often show shrunken effect sizes when implemented on a larger scale (Welsh et al. 2010). Also, much of positive psychology is based on correlational studies, longitudinal studies, or small-scale experiments on nonran-

dom samples. As discussed earlier, often positive psychologists will not have evidence directly related to policy implementation (element #3), and will only have evidence concerning the X➔Y relationship at the individual level. Thus, positive psychologists would do well to proceed with humility and caution. They can, nonetheless, provide valuable perspective – especially because the alternative is often policy guided by gut feelings, party policy, or current practices. Bogenschneider and Corbett (2010), suggest that academics may be wise to sometimes refrain from using the term 'evidence-based policy', and instead discuss 'evidence-informed policy' or 'research-shaped decision making' (p. 4). Such a change may seem small, but this small change in terminology communicates intellectual humility by admitting that the research evidence will not always be able to give a definitive answer regarding policy, but can give some guidance about the types of policies most likely to produce desirable outcomes.

Provide Imbalanced Emphasis Regarding Well-Being

When positive psychologists refer to well-being, they often assume this means frequent positive emotion, infrequent negative emotion, and high life satisfaction (the 'Big Three' model of well-being). A recent analysis, however, suggests that this Big Three framework puts excessive emphasis on one type of well-being called hedonic well-being and neglects any indicator of pure eudaimonic well-being (Proctor et al. 2015). Measures of life satisfaction seem to assess a mix of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, and the frequency of emotion measures assess hedonic well-being.

Here's a clarification of why a focus on eudaimonic well-being matters: Consider an example of a psychotherapist. The therapist might get short-term hedonic pleasure from daily life experiences such as food and entertainment. The therapist might also get deeper joy and stability from eudaimonic experiences such as using her strengths and serving others. If the therapist, when working with clients, seeks to facilitate only hedonic pleasure and avoidance of pain, then she will be failing to help them achieve the deeper joy and stability that she gets from eudaimonic experiences. When providing therapy, the clinician will ideally provide clients with strategies not only for finding hedonic short-term happiness and avoidance of pain, but also the longer term eudaimonic well-being that derives from finding meaning, using one's strengths, and serving a purpose beyond oneself. The same care to be balanced may be necessary for policymakers. Their policy work should also seek to facilitate both these types of experiences among citizens. Even people in extremely difficult circumstances often can find joy in eudaimonic experiences of helping others (Schwartz and Sendor 1999) and using their personal strengths (e.g., Tweed et al. 2012).

The value of eudaimonic experiences suggests that the inauguration speech of at least one politician, John F. Kennedy (United States and Library of Congress 1961), expressed wisdom from a positive psychology perspective. He suggested that the populace not ask what their country could do for them, but instead ask what they could do for their country. The research on eudaimonia suggests that policies help-

ing people do exactly this, use their strengths to serve their neighbourhood, country, and even world, might promote a broader well-being, something to add to the short-term pleasure of hedonia. Also, this eudaimonic emphasis would support innovations such as public ministries devoted to facilitating volunteer work or facilitating time banks or other strategies promoting eudaimonia among the populace. It would also support monitoring of eudaimonic well-being in the population in order to assess needs and monitor the success of interventions. Thus, focusing exclusively on promoting hedonic well-being would be a failure in terms of promoting policy reflective of empirical findings from positive psychology.

Do Not Include Separate Sections on Policy in Texts, Conferences, and Courses

Many positive psychologists attend conferences, teach courses, or write text books. To the extent that policy-related issues are ignored in these domains, future positive psychologists will lack skills. Adding sections on public policy in conferences, texts, and courses could help overcome this deficit. Public policy could receive attention more broadly in positive psychology conferences, texts, and courses. In graduate programmes in particular, students may benefit from exposure to more general introductions to public policy analysis (e.g., Bardach 2012; Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010; Diener et al. 2009; Cartwright and Hardie 2012; Manski 2013; Mulgan 2013).

Fail to Test Policies Incrementally

Polices will have the greatest chance to succeed if the policy can be tested on a small scale in order to identify effect sizes, problems, and unintended effects prior to broad implementation. The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab provides a helpful model of such research (http://www.povertyactionlab.org). Pilot programmes testing policy changes on a small scale could save vast resources that would be spent on ineffective programmes and could protect the reputation of positive psychologists by enhancing the chance of success when large-scale positive psychology interventions are implemented.

Concluding Thoughts: A Positive Psychology of Facilitating Policy Changes

Social change of any kind is fraught with difficulties. Interestingly, in pursuing social change based on positive psychology, it may be that positive psychology can offer lessons to itself about how best to pursue that change. Scott Sherman (2011)

argued for an approach that in some ways befits positive psychology. His quantitative analysis of social movements also suggests this method is particularly effective. In his model, a person will uncover injustice within society, recruit others to help demand change, and then not demonise those committing the injustice; but rather, seek to collaborate with others—including former enemies—to create the change. Working with people who disagree about fundamental values or who come from a different political orientation is difficult. The relation may break down without any malicious intent on either side. For example, each party may insult the other party through word choice, through negative assumptions about motives, or through other actions that are not consciously malicious (for a helpful framework for productive conversations amidst serious disagreements, see http://www.livingroomconversations.org).

As a historical example, consider Martin Luther King. According to Sherman (2011), a central motivating element of Martin Luther King's nonviolent methods was, in conjunction with his religious beliefs, the fact that King envisioned a better world for all, even his enemies. Bringing harm would be inconsistent with those values. According to King:

> A big danger for us is the temptation to follow the people we are opposing. They call us names, so we call them names…I remind you that in many people, in many people called segregationists, there are other things going on in their lives: this person or that person, standing here or there may also be other things—kind to neighbors and family, helpful and good-spirited at work…Let us not do to ourselves as others (as our opponents) do to us: try to put ourselves into one all-inclusive category—the virtuous ones as against the evil ones…there is the danger: the 'us' or 'them' mentality takes hold, and we do, actually, begin to run the risk of joining ranks with the very people we are opposing. I worry about this a lot these days. (Coles 1994, p. 32)

Sherman (2011) suggests this type of attitude need not be relegated to the past. He argues that this method of uncovering injustice, demanding change, but not demonizing and instead working with all people, including those committing the injustice, to enact a better future is still particularly effective in promoting positive social change. Sherman recognises that anger has great value for mobilising people, so they are ready to take action; however, Sherman (2011) suggests that subsequent action for positive psychologists will be more likely to produce lasting change if the anger that initiates motivation is transformed. The anger that helps motivate can subsequently be transformed into something that changes society while building relationships rather than destroying them. Sherman claims to have been surprised when his empirical analysis showed this approach to be more effective than alternative strategies for creating broad social change. If Sherman is right that this method is effective, we should pay attention. This would be a truly positive psychology approach to influencing policy. His findings suggest that if we ultimately want to avoid being like our hypothetical doctor who does not fulfil her potential to help society, we should not only recommend positive psychology to others, but also enact positive psychology in the way we pursue change.

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