Exploring and exploiting the complementarity between the Good Lives Model and Positive Psychology

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• Exactly what is the GLM? What is Positive Psychology (PP)?
• What are the epistemological, philosophical, theoretical and practical points of convergence between both? And...
• ...To what extent are these convergences relevant vis-à-vis the YEIP Research Project?
Ward & Stewart (2003) argue:

- “the most effective way to reduce risk is to give individuals the necessary conditions to lead better lives (‘good lives’) than to simply teach them how to minimise their chances of being incarcerated”
- “the primary aim of treatment should be to give offenders the necessary capabilities to secure important personal and social goods in acceptable ways in addition to the reduction and management of risk”
The Good Lives Model (GLM)

- The GLM is a strengths-based approach to offender rehabilitation based on the idea that in order to reduce reoffending we need to build capabilities and strengths in people.
- The goal is thus to equip offenders with “capabilities to meet their needs, pursue their interests, and therefore live happy, fulfilling lives” (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p. 109).
- Grounded in principles of Human Rights
- Human Agency
- Strengths
- Life goals and plans to implement these goal
- Expectation is that interventions aimed at improving the quality of the offenders’ life would also maximize their ability to reduce recidivism.
'There are two complementary strategies for improving the human condition. One is to relieve what is negative in life; the other is to strengthen what is positive. Mainstream psychology focuses largely on the first strategy; Positive Psychology emphasizes the second.'

Positive psychology is an umbrella term for theories and research about what makes life most worth living

- (Seligman&Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).
Positive Psychology is...

- A scientific study of strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive

- Positive psychology interventions (PPI’s) are proven to work in increasing well-being.

See:
Strengths based Models

- Motivational Interviewing
- Solution Focused
- Cognitive Behavioural
- Person Centered
- Maslow – self-actualising
- Positive Psychology
- Good Lives Model
Value of strengths

Research indicates that **knowing and using your strengths:**

- Generates optimism and resilience
- Improves relationships
- Enhances health and overall wellbeing
- Helps to develop confidence and self-esteem
- Makes you less sensitive to stress
- Encourages insight and perspective in your life
- Creates a sense of happiness and fulfilment
Underpinning Epistemological, Philosophical and theoretical assumptions of GLM and PP

• PP influenced by Socrates and Aristotle ethics (Eudaimonia = Happiness [flourishing]) ‘H does not consist in pastimes and amusements but in virtuous activities’ – Aristotle
• PP and Aristotle sees Well being and psychological growth as a sign of ‘good living’
• Concern for human agency – free choice, partnership working
• GLM: lists Primary goods. PP: lists Character strengths
• Both assume that people want to lead meaningful fulfilling lives to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work and play
• Both promote a focus on identification and growth of strengths - Know what your strengths are and practice them every day
• Workers/practitioners/therapists can help clients discover their goals and signature strengths in partnership
• Concern for both the internal state and external environment
• Both have empirical support - GLM mostly used in sex offender treatments (see McGrath etc al 2010)
GLM Primary Goods (Human Needs)

- Life
- Knowledge
- Excellence in play
- Excellence in work
- Excellence in agency (self management)
- Inner Peace
- Relatedness (relating to others)
- Community
- Spirituality
- Pleasure
- Creativity
PP Values In Action Classification of Character Strengths

**Wisdom**
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Judgment
- Love of Learning
- Perspective

**Courage**
- Bravery
- Industry
- Authenticity
- Zest

**Love**
- Intimacy
- Kindness
- Social Intelligence

**Justice**
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Leadership

**Temperance**
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Prudence
- Self-Control

**Transcendence**
- Awe
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Humor
- Spirituality
Youth Empowerment Innovation Project (YEIP) GLM/PP

• This research project aims to investigate measures that can minimize young people’s risk of radicalization. In so doing, it will challenge existing deficit based models of youth through focusing on their strengths and talents.

• Principles: collaborative, Positive, future focused, strengths focused, the internal is as important as the external (environmental supports), goal focused and rooted in Humanistic ethics.

• Useful questions for focus groups/interviews might be:
  • What does the term radicalisation mean to you?
  • How would you advise a friend who seems like they are being influenced by extremist messages?
  • What are the three top things you would want your HEI/school/YOI to do for you to help you realise your goals in life? And what could you do about the things over which you have no control?
  • What are the top three things you can do for yourself to help you achieve what you want in life?
  • What are the top three things you think your family and/or community can do for you to help you achieve what you want in life? What needs to happen to make these things you describe a reality?
  • What would be the first sign that things are moving in the right direction for you?
  • How do you know you belong? (peer group, family, religion, society)
Radicalism Synonymous with Islam?

Background

- Several hundred young British people have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join IS. Others have been recruited to commit acts of terrorism in this country.

- Extremism can take many forms including that linked to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist, Al Qaeda ideologies, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and that linked to Animal Rights movements.
Where young people, particularly young men, face a crisis of identity, disconnection and a lack of purpose and belonging, the evidence suggests that they will be vulnerable to the forces of radicalisation. They will be vulnerable to those people (Islamist fundamentalists, gang leaders or political extremists) who can offer them a sense of belonging and opportunity, of identity and individual power, of security and status.
Criticisms of PP

• It is still in an immature stage of development and there are philosophical, cultural and empirical problems with it (Ben, 2011)

• Its approach to social science is reductionist verging on ‘quasi-religious fundamentalism’ with its theory lacking the depth and self-reflexivity of mature sciences (Taylo, 2001)

• From a cross-cultural perspective it is ‘bordering on psychological imperialism’ (Richardson and Guigan, 2008)

• And in a similar vein, that it: ‘Overlooks that all human behaviour is culture bound and seems to present a Western (American) set of ideals’, (Christopher, Richardson and Slife, 2008)
Criticisms of GLM

• GLM originators Ward etc accused of being ‘theoriticists’ — that is they accept or reject knowledge in accordance with their ‘personal views and not in accordance with evidence’ (Bonta & Andrews, 2003, p. 215).

• The same authors accused the GLM approach of being ‘long on popular appeal but short in evidence’ (p. 216)

• Other critics argued that ‘there is nothing unique in GLM other than the encouragement of weak assessment approaches...and the addition of confusion in service planning’ (Andrews et al, 2011. p.751)
Problem of Definitions?

- Extremist
- Radical
- At Risk
- Vulnerable
Extreme or Radical?
Rethinking Radicalisation

**PULL FACTORS**
- Identity
- Belonging
- Sophisticated skilled Recruitment agents
- Unity
- Brotherhood

**PUSH FACTORS**
- Anger
- Alienation
- Frustration & dissatisfaction
- Perceived injustice, targeted, surveillance, suspected
- Exclusion
- Rootlessness
Re-engaging Communities

- Young people must be empowered to engage politically in society.
- Create Safe spaces – online and offline.
- Speak openly about their identity and belonging (alienation).
- Acknowledge the impact of racism, victimisation and Islamophobia.
- Role of Policing and Prevent
- This is a problem for All communities
- Include far-right violence.
- Positive connotations and role models required.
- Equip young people with skills, capabilities, confidence
- Promote free speech and creating a safe space for dialogue.
- Develop positive evidence based interventions that work
Take away
Considerations/questions

• Area lacks evidence, including control groups, on those who do not become radicalised
• Much anti-radicalisation initiatives sounds like good youth work – yet this service has been decimated in the UK
• Problem of Islam becoming synonymous with radicalisation results in the targeting and alienating of one group (and making sick mental health!) while simultaneously legitimatising far right extremist Islamophobic groups.
• Problems of definitions: vulnerable, at risk, radicalisation, extremist etc Labels?
• YEIP not problem focused instead seeking positive future oriented solutions not aimed at any one group
• De-radicalisation literature is young, as is PP and GLM. Underexplored academically, no real academic attention paid to overlaps between different approaches
• Extremist ideology aimed at giving youth an identity and purpose. GLM and PP counter this but how to prove their worth in this regard. Need empirical evidence YEIP may be a start.
• Contradiction or Creative use?: GLM rehabilitative while YEIP oriented to prevent
Last important thing: Gratitude