

Naming & Nurturing

2011 Fall

The e-newsletter of the Section on Positive Psychology of
The American Psychological Association's Society of Counseling Psychology—Division 17



Greetings from the Chair Danny Singley, Ph.D.

I'm thrilled to be sending along this greeting to you in the 2011 edition of Naming and Nurturing. It's been a very exciting year with a lot of growth and exciting projects in the works. In this newsletter, you'll find some updates about the work our Section's leadership and members have been involved in including attending conferences, receiving awards, conducting research, getting involved in leadership positions in the SPP, and taking part in sundry other Section-sponsored projects.

Our Section's members are a diverse group of very talented individuals whose passion for naming and nurturing "what's right with people" gives us all common ground to work together toward the goal of fostering flourishing in ourselves as well as those we serve. Each year, the Chair of the Section chooses a theme to give direction to that year's projects. Last year's theme on the "State of the Art in Positive Psychology" fleshed out the broad brush strokes of how Counseling Psychologists and trainees do – and do not – use positive/strengths-based approaches in their work. Past Chair Jeana Magyar-Moe's article in this newsletter details the data we collected in our recent survey of 480 Division 17 Members and Student Affiliates. A sneak peek of our findings is that the application of positive psychology research, theory,

and practice is thriving among Division 17. One key take-away that emerged was that although Counseling Psychologists use positive approaches in their work, they want clear guidance about how to apply best practices – particularly in clinical work.

Conducting this focused survey was a first step in a coordinated program of research with the overall goal of helping us to identify and to meet the needs of Section members. Next, we plan to conduct a follow-up study that invites participants to clarify specific examples of how they apply positive psychology. Data from that study will not only give us a clear snapshot of how psychologists are applying positively-oriented approaches, but will also help us to distribute examples widely to assist those interested in getting brass-tacks application examples.

The Section's 2011-2012 theme is "Positive Psychology that Works" and related projects will emphasize best evidence-informed clinical practices. By focusing specifically on clinical application, we intend to give clear answers to the oft-posed question, "How exactly can I actually apply this positive psychology stuff with clients?" We will also be making a series of focused efforts to build bridges with other groups and organizations who share the Section's focus on positive /strengths-based psychology. By doing so, we can at once grow our own membership and help **Continued on Next Pg**

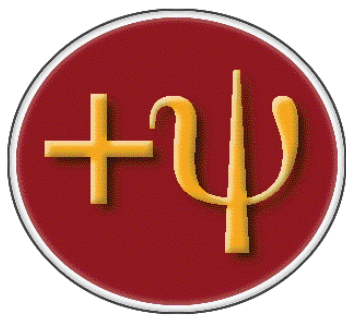
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SIPPA

to integrate ourselves with like-minded others in order to foster healthy dialogue about modern positive psychology.

Another project intended to support this year's theme involves building on last year's highly successful web-based resources effort (which is ongoing – please keep the resources coming to Christy Khan ckhan@ku.edu) by selecting a specific "Resource Highlight" written by an expert who provides input about how to apply theory, techniques, and other tools via on the Section's Facebook page (search term – Section on Positive Psychology). We'll be posting the notice to the Section listserv when the Facebook page is updated, and I strongly encourage everyone to join in on the virtual conversation about how to apply these resources!

We have grown to over 100 members with a team of eleven members of our Board and Executive Committee. As the Section continues to grow we will work to identify – and to meet – your needs as positive psychologists. Please note that our continued growth is due solely to the energy and enthusiasm of our members, and would definitely encourage you to get more involved by taking part in one or more of our initiatives as well as considering being part of the Section's leadership and Executive Committee. Note that in 2012, we will be accepting nominations from Members and Student Affiliates for several positions including Chair Elect, Communication Officer, Treasurer, Practice Representatives, and Student Representatives. So please don't hesitate to let me know any questions you might have – and trust me we don't bite! Thanks very much for your passion and enthusiasm, and hope that you "keep it positive."

Are you a member yet?

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Create or update your profile
for the members page!**

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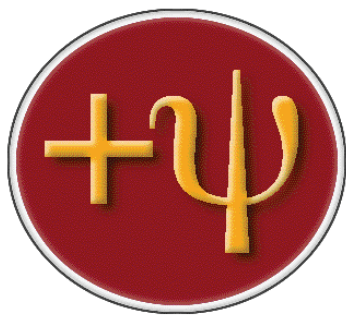
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SIPPA by Rhea Owens, M.S.

I attended the Second World Congress on Positive Psychology in July in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was a very exciting and engaging conference! Being a second-time attendee, it was fun to see familiar faces as well as meet new folks from around the world.

What I find so invigorating about this conference is the entire program is focused on Positive Psychology, and it is a great place to discover individuals from around the world who share similar interests. In addition, no matter what poster, symposium, workshop, or social you attend, you will learn something new about positive psychology.

Although there were a number of exceptional presentations throughout the congress, as a student I was thrilled with the success of the student programming offered for the first time. SIPPA offered a Speed Mentoring event, which was very well attended by professionals and students alike! Twenty-five phenomenal professionals representing countries around the world volunteered, including Barabara Fredrickson, Shane Lopez, Antonella Delle Fave, Robert Biswas-Diener, Martin Seligman, Carmelo Vazquez, and Helena Agueda Marujo, to name just a few! Students were lined up outside the door for this "booked" event. In addition, there was a student social with well over 100 attendants.



2011 Section Awards

Award Recipients

Each year, the Section on PP offers two awards (The **Section on Positive Psychology's Student and Psychologist Awards for Contributions to Positive Psychology**) to recognize one student and one psychologist each year who has made significant ($p < .001$;) contributions to the field of positive psychology. The winners receive a \$200 cash stipend along with a free online strengths development class from the Gallup Organization's Clifton Strengths school.

Our Awards Committee received a variety of nominations for the 2011 awards and the two recipients for this year are:

Christine Robitschek, Ph.D. – Currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Texas Tech University, Dr. Robitschek has focused her career on research and application of the positive psychology construct of personal growth initiative (PGI) for the past 20 years. Her work has yielded important developments in interventions and theory related to health and well-being of diverse people – a key intersection of multiculturalism and positive psychology.

Dr. Robitschek has also served as a highly successful, hands-on research mentor who encourages both professional growth and self-care in the students she supervises. Her 20 years of research devoted to understanding personal characteristics that help people to develop in positive ways has already contributed a great deal to the field and will doubtlessly continue to shape it for years to come.

Megan A. Martinez, M.A. – A fifth year doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Texas Tech University, Ms. Martinez' highly impactful research addresses the clinical appli-

cation of the personal growth initiative (PGI). She is

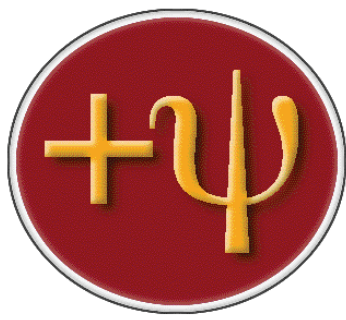


highly motivated, enthusiastic, and efficient – and these qualities have translated into a body of impressive research that is noteworthy in terms of the quantity, magnitude, and sophistication of her work as a student. Her existing accolades including awards, presentations, and publications stand alone as testaments to her existing contributions to the field of psychology and she will no doubt continue to be a

highly productive researcher in positive psychology.

Many congratulations to Christine and Megan!!





New Section Leadership

Past and Present Chairs



Shane Lopez (First Chair of the Section)
Danny Singley (Current Chair)
Jeana Magyar-Moe (Past Chair)
APA, Washington, DC 2011

New Leadership

All of our leadership positions have two-year terms, and half of them change every other year in order to provide continuity between outgoing and returning leaders. The following leaders recently joined the executive board.

Please join us in welcoming Kyle, Tami and Dustine!!

Research Representative

Kyle Telander, M.Ed. - Currently completing his pre-doctoral internship at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Counseling Center, Kyle has spent the past several years developing his commitment to the scholarship and practice of positive psychology, in line with the values of counseling psychology instilled by his mentors at Loyola University Chicago. This focus includes research exploring the cultural specificity of existing models of psychological well-being, with the intent of advocating perspectives of well-being that account for unique cultural values. Kyle also maintains a passion for the exploration and development of empirically-validated positive psychology interventions, with a desire to help practitioners uphold a strengths-based approach to helping clients reach their own inherent po-



tentials throughout the lifespan.

Teaching Co-Representatives

Tami Kulbatski, Psy.D., C.Psych

Private Practice and the Toronto Centre for Positive Psychology Dr. Kulbatski is a registered psychologist in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In her private practice, she has been

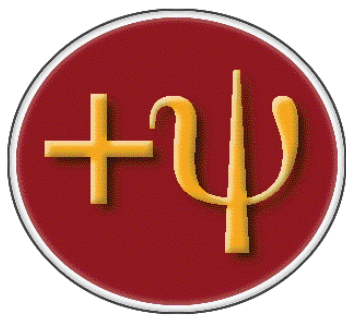


providing psychotherapeutic treatment to a diverse range of clients (including couples, individuals and adolescents) for over 13 years. Throughout her career, Dr. Kulbatski has placed a strong emphasis on the importance of educating students, clients, and the public at large. She has served as a core faculty member at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, and in 2010, she founded The Toronto Centre for Positive Psychology (TCPPSY). Education based

on positive psychology research is provided to organizations, colleges, schools, and individuals through TCPPSY. The broad range of seminars and workshops offered are designed to enhance participants' movement towards greater well-being and happier, more fulfilled lives. Ultimately, Dr. Kulbatski's goal, as it relates to teaching positive psychology, is to help bridge the gap between academic research and its accessibility to the general public.

Dustine Rey, Ed.D., is an adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. Her research interests involve identifying and generating strategies that increase positive emotions such as gratitude, compassion, and mindfulness, within the academic environment. Dr. Rey holds a Doctorate of Education in Educational Psychology from the University of Southern California where she completed a higher education teaching fellowship in the Rossier School of Education. She also holds a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in marriage and family therapy from Pepperdine University. Dr. Rey has enjoyed teaching and counseling over the past twelve years and she applies that experience to her educational consulting and coaching practice in San Diego, CA.





Positive Psychology at Work

Counseling Psychologists' Use of Positive Psychology At Work: A Survey



Jeana L. Magyar-Moe, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

It has been noted that a hallmark of those in the counseling psychology profession is focusing on the positive in psychology (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2008). Indeed, a distinctive feature and unifying theme of the work of counseling psychologists is a focus on

client strengths, assets, and potentialities regardless of the degree of psychopathology (APA, 1999; Gelso & Fretz, 2001; Savickas, 2003.) A brief review of the development of the counseling psychology specialty confirms this enduring philosophy and commitment to helping individuals to discover, develop, and utilize personal and social resources on a regular basis (see Lopez et al., 2006).

In 2006, Lopez and colleagues conducted a content analysis of four major outlets of counseling psychology scholarship aimed at identifying the amount of research devoted to the study of human strengths, positive processes, and positive outcomes over the past 50 years. Results revealed that 29% of the research in counseling psychology guild and theme journals over the past 50 years was positive-focused. When broken down by decade, the percentage of positive-focused scholarship was at 23% or greater for the past 40 years, "indicating that counseling psychology's philosophical commitment to studying the best in people has resulted in a large scholarly base fairly consistent throughout the decades" (Lopez et al., 2006, p. 218). The leadership of the Positive Psychology Section agreed to make one of the Section's initiatives for 2010-2011 to further elucidate the role of positive psychology in the work being done by counseling psychologists beyond that which could be accounted for through examination of published articles. To this end, a survey was developed and disseminat-

ed to all members of Division 17 and results of the survey were presented at the 2011 APA Convention. Although a thorough review of the results is beyond the scope of this newsletter, the major findings are presented in the following sections.

Methods

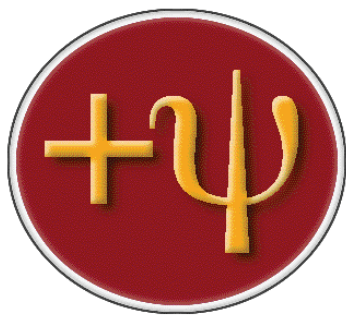
The survey included a combination of qualitative and quantitative items designed to measure the ways in which Counseling Psychologists apply (or fail to apply) positive psychology in their work as teachers, supervisors, clinicians, consultants, social justice advocates, and researchers. In addition, information was gathered regarding the utility of the Positive Psychology Section for members, as well as ways in which the Section could be improved.

The survey was sent to all 1,999 Division 17 members. Four-hundred and eighty members completed the survey, resulting in a 30% response rate (95 percent confidence; 3.8% error rate). Participant demographics were as follows: 267 Women (55.6%), 213 Men (44.4%); 80% Caucasian; 472 Counseling Psychologists, 5 Clinical Psychologists, 3 Did Not Specify; number of years since earning doctoral degree ranged from 1 year to 54 years.

RESULTS

Teaching Content	310	67%
Teaching Methods	310	51%
Supervision Content/Applications	264	57%
Supervision Process	264	57%
Client Assessment	286	71%
Treatment Planning	286	69%
Therapy Process	286	72%
Vocational Assessment	101	77%
Vocational Treatment Planning	101	73%
Vocational Counseling Process	101	74%
Consultation Content	127	55%
Consultation Methods	127	56%
Outreach Content	144	62%
Outreach Methods	144	58%
Social Justice Content	209	65%
Social Justice Methods	209	65%
Research on Positive Psychological Theories/Constructs	209	47%
Research Utilizing Positive Psychological Measures	209	38%

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Positive Psychology at Work

Of the 310 participants who taught graduate and/or undergraduate courses, 23 taught courses dedicated entirely to positive psychology and 192 infused positive psychology topics and constructs into other courses. Of those doing research, the number of publications on positive psychology topics, constructs, or theories ranged from 0 – 250 (mean = 5) and the number of presentations ranged from 0 – 500 (mean = 10). Overall, results indicate that many counseling psychologists are utilizing positive psychology regularly in their various work roles, however, some respondents indicated never using positive psychology due to: a) being averse to positive psychology; b) having no information/training in positive psychology; c) seeing no difference between positive psychology and counseling psychology and therefore not referring to what they do as positive psychology; or d) having inaccurate information or understandings of positive psychology.

Those who indicated using positive psychology in their various work roles were asked to provide details regarding which positive psychological constructs, theories, or topics they utilized. Responses to these inquiries were very general in nature, with most participants indicating they take a general strengths-based approach or perspective in the work they do. For example, of the 286 participants who engaged in mental health counseling, only one indicated using research-based positive psychological interventions or forms of therapy such as Well-Being Therapy (Ruini & Fava, 2004), Quality of Life Therapy (Frisch, 2006), Hope Therapy (Lopez, Floyd, Ulven, & Snyder, 2000), and Positive Psychotherapy (Rashid, 2008).

Statistically significant differences were found when comparing participant responses based upon date of earning doctoral degrees. More specifically, since Positive Psychology was popularized in 1998 by Seligman, the data was split in order to compare responses of those who graduated prior to 1998 versus those who graduated in 1998 or later. Results indicated that those earning their doctorates after 1998 infused positive psychology content into the courses they teach at a greater level ($p < .05$) than those graduating prior to 1998. Similarly, positive psychology content was infused at a higher level in outreach services ($p < .05$) and utilized more often in the delivery of those outreach services ($p < .05$) for those graduating after 1998.

Eleven percent of the sample consisted of current members of the Positive Psychology Section ($N = 51$). Current members reported networking, collaborations, collegiality, professional identity, and intellectual stimulation as the main benefits of Section membership. They also noted that improved communication, more involvement opportunities, and provision of workshops or webinars would improve their membership experiences. Sixty-five percent of the sample was not aware that the Section existed. Forty-eight individuals reported definitely being interested in joining the Section and 122 indicated they might be interested in joining. Major reasons cited for not joining included lack of interest in the topic, lack of time, and over-commitment.

Conclusions

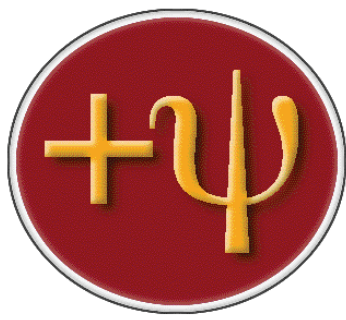
Overall, survey results suggest that there are more counseling psychologists who see the value of positive psychology and teach, utilize, or research positive psychological theories, constructs, or interventions in comparison to those who do not value or who are opposed to positive psychology. Although the sample was large enough to be considered representative of the Division, it is still possible that there was a response bias, in terms of those who value/utilize positive psychology being more willing to take the time to complete the survey in comparison to those who do not value/utilize positive psychology.

At this time, the leaders of the Positive Psychology Section are planning to create two additional surveys to enrich the data already collected. One survey will focus upon gathering more detailed information about what specific components of positive psychology are being utilized most in the workplace by Division 17 members versus the more general feed

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back that was provided in the current survey. The second survey will be designed to assess the perceptions and use of positive psychology by Division 17 graduate student affiliates.

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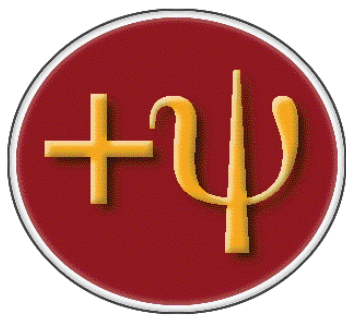
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Upcoming Events

December 1st: Deadline for submitting proposals for American Psychological Association 2012 annual convention in Orlando, FL.

December 7th: Values In Action (VIA) speaker series. Robert Biswas-Diener, PhD: Advanced Issues in Using VIA Strengths 12pm EST

January 17th: Values In Action (VIA) speaker series. Carol Kauffman, PhD: VIA Strengths in Executive Coaching and Coaching Supervision; 3pm EST



Roots & Branches

Positive Psychology and Religion/Spirituality: Intersecting Concepts for Comprehensive Thriving

By: Christine E. Agaibi, M.A., Doctoral Candidate, *The University of Akron, Division 17 Section on Positive Psychology – Practice Co-Representative*

Aristotle once said, "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." In our own United States history, one of our oldest documents, The Declaration of Independence, endorsed and paved the way for the pursuit of happiness as a national value. The achievement of mental well being has thus been an ancient quest and yet it continues to be a pursuit for people to this day. For most, mental well being can be described as the absence of a diagnosable mental illness. However, this definition is not all encompassing. Instead, wellness, from a counseling psychology perspective generally and positive psychology specifically, is better described as a multifaceted concept with focus on many interconnected components such as mind, body, spirit, and community (Witmer and Sweeney, 1992).

The potentially convoluted nature of wellness can thus make it appear elusive and difficult to reach. Indeed, Cowen (1991) states that at some point or another, all may experience a threat to wellness that is transient or chronic. However, one can achieve a restoration to wellness by achieving resilience to our stressors (Cowen, 1991) and by addressing important characteristics of wellness such as spirituality, self-regulation, work, love, and friendship (Witmer and Sweeney, 1992).

This article will focus on one aspect discussed by Witmer and Sweeney (1992), namely spirituality. While Witmer and Sweeney state that spirituality is one important component to achieving well being, traditionally psychology has focused on non-spiritual elements of wellness. Freud, Breuer, and Charcot instead focused on the relationship between physical and mental health to ascertain wellness. Additionally, Freud and Skinner actually perceived religion negatively calling it, "an illusion derived from unconscious wishes" and a "controlling agency" (Seybold, 2007, p. 304).

Other historical figures in psychology disagreed with this however. William James and G. Stanley Hall instead pioneered the discussion about the significance of religion and spirituality to the development of individuals (Kemp, 1992; Johnson, 2003). Additionally, Jung stated that the exploration of religion and spirituality was ideal for mental well being (Jung, 1933). These notable forefathers of psychology paved the way for an examination of the connection between religion and spirituality and psychological well being as we know it today.

Today, psychology has shifted from the notion that religion and spirituality is unimportant to well being and instead has begun to see that religion is vital to many individu-

als and to their well being. In fact, Azar (2010) has explored this significance stating that religion has survived for more than 100,000 years and it is woven into the fabric of most every culture to some degree. Additionally, 85% of the world's population has some sort of religious belief (Azar, 2010). Azar also reports that religion is a byproduct of the functioning of our brains and that humans use religion to seek order from chaos and to help in understanding the world around us.

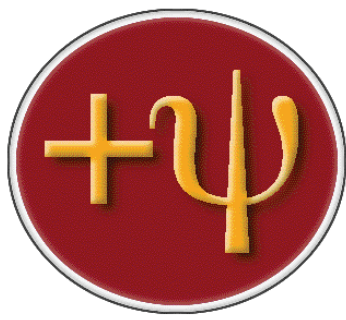
Recent Gallup Polls (2006 and 2007) further solidify the importance of religion to Americans stating that 87% of Americans are convinced or have little doubt of the existence of God and 82% of Americans find that religion is fairly or very important in their lives. Because religion and spirituality are so important to so many people, are identified with so strongly, and are salient to so many people, it cannot be ignored within psychology. In keeping with this perspective, the goals of APA's Division 36 (Psychology of Religion) and Division 17's (Society of Counseling Psychology) Special Interest Group on Religious and Spiritual Issues in Counseling Psychology are to enhance exploration of religion and spirituality in research and practice as well as understanding their relationship to well being.

Religion and spirituality are somewhat different in meaning yet are interrelated and are both highly personal in experience. Religion has been defined as, "becoming reified into a fixed system of ideas or ideological commitments" while spirituality is, "used to refer to the personal, subjective side of religious experience." (Hill and Pargament, 2003, p.64). How one manifests or utilizes these concepts is different for each person. While spirituality is subjective in experience by definition, one can also experience religion in a personal way even within a fixed system of ideologies (e.g. how one interprets a system of ideologies within a religion is highly personal).

Despite being somewhat different, religion and spirituality both provide people with key elements towards the quest for well being. Religion and spirituality give people guidelines for conduct, something to strive for, rules related to what is moral and lawful, resilience and motivation to endure despite difficulty, hope in the goodness of the world despite difficulty, and gives them a reason to create and achieve goals (Park, 2007). Larson and Larson (2003) also found a negative correlation between those that are religious and/or spiritual and things like suicide, substance abuse, risky sexual behavior and depression. Additionally Larson and Larson found a positive correlation between religion and spirituality and mental and physical health. Religion and spirituality also help people to form large social groups of people with a commonly held belief system and gives people meaning in times of uncertainty (Azar, 2010).

Park (2007) further elaborated on religion and spirituality and the development of meaning by stating that meaning is influenced by religion and

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Roots & Branches

Positive Psychology and Religion/Spirituality: Intersecting Concepts for Comprehensive Thriving (continued from page 8)

spirituality also help people to form large social groups of people with a commonly held belief system and gives people meaning in times of uncertainty (Azar, 2010). Park (2007) further elaborated on religion and spirituality and the development of meaning by stating that meaning is influenced by religion and spirituality and that meaning making is important for psychological and physical health. Religion and spirituality influence one's global beliefs, goals, and sense of purpose and meaning and are lenses through which many filter life experiences (Park, 2007).

The contributions that religion and spirituality bring to one's life thus may assist one in dealing with stress and increase coping and resilience. Religion and spirituality therefore may become an important component in the development of well being and in striving towards optimal human functioning and thriving. Not addressing religion and spirituality in positive psychology is untenable because of the evidence of its importance to so many people and because of its contribution to psychological health. In utilizing religion and spirituality within psychology, it is important to assess the importance of spiritual and religious beliefs in people being treated or that are participants in research. Additionally, it is important to ascertain the influence of these beliefs on the problem at hand, and to ascertain the use of these beliefs and practices in the recovery process. Furthermore, it may be useful to determine how religion and spirituality interact with one's virtues and values to achieve optimal health (Saunders, Miller, and Bright, 2010).

For thousands of years, religious and spiritual beliefs have guided people's conduct, their understanding of the world, and have provided people with virtues and values. For thousands of years, religion and spirituality have also given people the tools to cope and to achieve well being through their beliefs and ideologies. Within psychology's history, religion and spirituality were often ignored and were thought to be unimportant to the quest for well being. However, this history is changing as psychological research and theory is beginning to address the importance of examining religion and spirituality to the development of well being. Counseling psychology and positive psychology's missions have been devoted to ascertaining what helps humans to thrive in their individual lives as well as in their interactions with their families, communities, and society. Religion and spirituality have focused on similar questions particularly in focusing on what connects one to that which is larger than him/her self and that well being is achieved when there is harmony among oneself, one's community and one's society. Therefore, fostering a relationship between religion and spirituality and positive psychology may assist both in learning from one another and greatly increasing understanding

of what helps humans to thrive and to have optimal, holistic well being. Religion and spirituality are so ubiquitous in contemporary societies across the planet that taking a holistic view of psychology which addresses the benefits of religion and spirituality should more fully explore how to optimize human functioning and will likely facilitate the common goal of overall well being. In sum, research, theory, history, and personal experience all suggest that true well being exists at the intersection of mind, body, spirit, and community thriving. Working to understand how to achieve this goal of comprehensive well-being is a step toward fostering thriving for all.

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