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ABSTRACT. Recent calls for a positive psychology that would deemphasize human pathology and dysfunction in favor of building an understanding of positive features of human life and human flourishing make two assumptions that the author questions in this article. First, he challenges the assumption that disciplinary psychology has been fixated on pathology and dysfunction by considering work in educational psychology that, both historically and currently, espouses the characteristics of positive psychology as articulated by its major advocates. Second, through a brief, critical consideration of research on the self in educational psychology, he contests the assumption that psychology has sufficient resources to develop into the positive psychology envisioned by its promoters. He argues that psychology's emphasis on the individual, whose core self resides in a deep, internal psyche, radically strips psychology of the historical and sociocultural resources that enable self-development, constrain self-understanding, and constitute the self.

Key words: education, individualism, positive psychology, self-development, self-esteem

IN HIS REPEATED PLEAS FOR A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, Martin Seligman (e.g., Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a; Seligman, Linley, Joseph, & Boniwell, 2003) claimed that psychologists and disciplinary psychology have focused almost exclusively on negative, pathological features and accounts of human functioning. Most important, this alleged negative focus has prevented the building of an understanding of positive features of human life, including "valued subjective experiences" such as "well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future), and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a, p. 5). Several commentators

(e.g., Lazarus, 2003) have pointed out the difficulty of considering positive features of human experience apart from those negative features that necessarily complete any adequate conceptualization of human functioning, and of inappropriately equating only the positive in human experience with all that is worthwhile (Guignon, 2002). Although I agree strongly with these lines of criticism, my purpose in this article is somewhat different.

First, I want to contest the soundness of the premise that disciplinary psychology has been preoccupied with negative functioning and pathology. I point out that in at least one of its subdisciplines (i.e., educational psychology), the scientific and professional programs of psychology have been predominantly fixed on creating conditions for optimal human learning and development in educational contexts and beyond. I also believe this claim could be defended in other subdisciplines, such as counseling psychology.

Second, I argue, while continuing to use educational psychology as a case in point, that disciplinary psychology generally does not have the resources to formulate plausible conceptions of human flourishing, although there are some minor exceptions. However, despite Seligman's assertions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a; Seligman et al., 2003), this limitation is not a consequence of psychology's purported preoccupation with pathology. Instead, disciplinary psychology's limited ability to yield positive proposals for living is a consequence of its focus on the internal functioning of individuals in a way that removes them from those traditions and shared practices of historically established societies and cultures through which life unfolds and individual experience is made possible. If psychologists wish to speak to what is most noble and distinguished in the human condition, they must give up their preoccupation with the mental life of individuals in relative isolation from others. They must turn to the activity of human beings within the sociocultural context and process, for it is only within traditions and forms of communal life that the resources necessary to sustain robust conceptions of human functioning and flourishing exist.

Self Research in Educational Psychology: Accentuating the Positive

Both historical and contemporary work in educational psychology has maintained an overwhelmingly positive focus on the improvement of the psychological states of children and adolescents through an emphasis on high and positive levels of mental health, personal functioning, self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. The aims of the various psychoeducational interventions developed by educational psychologists have been almost exclusively ameliorative and progressive in ways generally consistent with the enterprise of positive psychology as developed and promoted by Seligman and his colleagues.

By the end of the nineteenth century, extended public schooling had appeared along with the widespread prohibition of child labor. Whereas previ-

ously, children had been treated as small adults and workers, an extended period of childhood now became situated in schools for much of the day (van Drunen & Jansz, 2004). Formal education became responsible for the development of children in ways that respected the child's status as a child, yet paved the way for a smooth transition to adulthood, through a newly popularized stage of adolescence. Religious and medical perspectives that had dominated approaches to child-rearing and education focused on moral and health concerns were replaced by a new set of interventionist practices that respected and promoted the healthy psychological and educational development of school-aged children and adolescents (van Drunen & Jansz).

Psychologists like Granville Stanley Hall forged close relationships with teachers and their organizations and launched the child study movement (Davidson & Benjamin, 1987), dedicated to the collection of data about normal developmental trajectories in areas from children's emotions to food preferences to self-images. In both America and Europe, concerns about the perceived inadequacy of schools to prepare students for a new and evolving set of societal demands led to educational reform movements. These efforts at amelioration were targeted at replacing rote learning and coercive discipline with more progressive emphases on students' experiences and developmental and educational needs. Some psychologists, led by Lightner Witmer and others who we might now recognize as school psychologists, adopted a clinical approach to children with learning difficulties, but diagnoses and interventions were predominantly intended to contribute to the psychological welfare and improvement of individual schoolchildren (McReynolds, 1997).

Subsequent generations of American students experienced the mental hygiene movement, with its child guidance clinics (van Drunen & Jansz, 2004), and the progressive education movement (Cremin, 1961). The increasingly child-centered nature of these initiatives paved the way for humanistic psychologies of education promoted by Carl Rogers, Arthur Combs, and others during the 1960s, which led to the educational interventions of cognitive psychology in the 1970s and 1980s. From that time to the present, educational psychologists have focused increasingly on developing specific affective and cognitive psychological capabilities of students in ways intended to enhance both their achievement inside and outside of school and their sense of self-worth and confidence.

One group of educational psychologists attempted to relate aspects of self-hood to academic achievement and social development and to intervene in an effort to ensure that the self-esteem, self-concepts, self-efficacy, and self-regulatory capabilities of students are maximized throughout their school years. This work may be especially instructive in illustrating the operations and effects of what can readily be understood as the implementation of a large-scale program of positive psychology. In the vast literature on self-related topics in educational psychology, humanistic, behavioristic, psychometric, and cognitivist conceptions and methods converged to provide educators with a set

of measures and interventions that promised a combination of humanistic concern and social-scientific resources. This scientifically sanctioned humanism appealed to a natural self about which psychologists claimed to be experts, based on their social-scientific theories and research. Such a self, and psychologists' advice concerning it, seemed ideally suited to emergent demands in schools for nonauthoritarian pedagogical approaches that would attend simultaneously to students' needs for self-fulfillment and self-governance in ways that appeared to reconcile broader social and educational mandates for the production of independent persons who were nonetheless capable of responsible citizenship.

Combs (1961) articulated the general view of selfhood that accompanied educational psychology's advance on schooling:

> We cannot rule the self out of the classroom even if we wanted to. A child does not park himself at the door. The self is the dearest thing he owns, and he cannot be induced to part with it for any reason...We simply cannot separate what an individual learns from the nature of the individual himself. (p. 17)

From this perspective, not only were students' self-conceptions considered both precious and pervasive, but they also were seen as calling for student-centered and experiential approaches to classroom pedagogy. Moreover, such methods of teaching were thought to be consistent with the educational aim of fostering democratic citizenship.

> It is a basic principle of democracy that 'when men are free, they can find their own best ways.'...The kind of openness we seek in the free personality requires a trust in self, and this means, to me, we need to change the situations we sometimes find in our teaching where the impression is given [to] the student that all the answers worth having lie 'out there.' I believe it is necessary to recognize that the only important answers are those which the individual has within himself, for these are the only ones that will ever show up in his behavior. Consequently, the classroom must be a place where children explore 'what I believe, what I think, what seems to me to be so' as well as what other people think and believe and hold to be true. (Combs, 1961, pp. 22–23)

However, despite the promise of psychology in education to reconcile the personal development of students with societal expectations for the development of productive citizens, conceptions of the self available in the theorizing, research, and practices of educational psychologists are inadequate in regard to both the production of citizens capable of responsible participation in liberal democracies and the development of authentic persons who might find value and meaning in their lives. This provides a cautionary tale about the limitations of disciplinary psychology, in both its scientific and professional arms, with respect to the positive development of persons and citizens capable of contributing to the furtherance of human flourishing, individually and collectively.

The Neglect of Necessary Sociocultural Resources

The conception of selfhood evident in the work of educational psychologists is an amalgam of humanistic and scientific perspectives that converge around the central idea of a deeply interior psyche. As is evident in much psychological work on self-esteem and self-concept in educational settings, this is a personally unique, interior core of being that defines each individual and that must be discovered and expressed through agentive choice and action. This Rousseauean self is set against any social authority, educational or otherwise, that might be perceived as restricting a student's self-development and self-expression. It demands educational emphasis on the personal, creative, and expressive development of pupils as uniquely equipped individuals who must discover and be true to themselves.

In contrast, the conception of the self that animates much work on self-efficacy and self-regulation is that which Taylor (1989) has termed the Lockean, punctual self. This is a reflective, monitoring, and calculating self, a locus of observation and experiencing, that lies behind our actions in the world and gauges their impact and effectiveness in achieving our goals and desires. Whereas the humanistic, Romantic self focuses on self-discovery, expression, and creativity, this more empirically attuned self is fixed on self-control in the service of instrumental self-fulfillment.

The self-control of the scientific, rational self and the self-expression of the humanistic, affective self may reflect the classic liberal tension between individual freedom and responsibility in the face of societal conventions and expectations. However, in the hands of educational psychologists, the methodologies and interventions associated with both humanistic and scientific conceptions of self are individualistic, as psychology itself is concerned primarily with individual experience and action, and psychologists and educational psychologists are sanctioned by their disciplinary, professional affiliations and credentials to put forward their claims to expertise. By claiming unique psychological expertise at the level of inner, individual experiencing, educational psychologists have brought together humanistic, Romantic, and scientific, Enlightenment conceptions of selfhood. In doing so, they have promised to reconcile tensions between self-control and self-fulfillment while simultaneously reconciling conflicts between institutional, societal mandates for student learning and achievement and demands for personal development from students, parents, and an increasingly psychologically-minded public. Thus, selfhood studies and interventions of educational psychologists must serve the needs of disciplinary and professional psychology. However, it is unclear if they also serve legitimate educational and societal goals with respect to the development of persons and citizens.

The mixed conception of selfhood that characterizes, and is reinforced by, the school-related activities of educational psychologists is a private, isolated self removed from others and the contexts it inhabits, yet tutored to strategize effec-

tively in aid of its own self-expression and goal attainment. The view that such a self is capable of achieving the goals set by positive psychology is strongly promoted by many influential educational psychologists. Consider, for example, both the preceding quotations from Combs in 1961 and the following recent remarks by Marsh and colleagues:

> Self-concept is valued as having a powerful mediating influence on human behavior. A positive self-concept is widely considered fundamental for psychological health, personal achievement, and positive relationships. Self-concept is thought to make such a difference, that people who think positively about themselves are healthier, happier, and more productive. Hence, enhancing self-concept is considered necessary [for] maximizing human potential, from early development and school achievement, to physical/mental health and well being, to gainful employment and other contributions to society. (Craven, Marsh, & Burnett, 2003, p. 96)

This is a straightforward example of positive psychology. And yet, is it reasonable to view this kind of self-advancement in mainstream contemporary educational psychology in such an unabashedly positive manner? Is the individual psychological self, which is focused on its inner functioning and bent on its own self-expression and instrumental gratification, capable of contributing to society or to its own happiness in the way envisioned in these quotations?

Guignon (2004) wrote about authentic self-expression and fulfillment. Noting that the authentic person is one who understands his feelings and expresses them transparently in his actions, Guignon recognized that authenticity cannot be just a matter of emotional experience and expression. It also requires a commitment backed by reason, which can only arise in the context of shared practices and values. Similarly, Taylor (1991) recognized that any human agent who seeks significance and meaning in life must exist within a horizon of important questions, and that such a horizon is only available within a historically established, sociocultural way of life. Thus, productive forms of self-expression and self-fulfillment, as envisioned by Combs (1961) and Marsh and colleagues (Craven et al., 2003; Marsh, Craven, & McInerney, 2003), cannot issue from the activities of an isolated, detached psychological self attentive primarily to its own internal operations. As Guignon (2004) wrote, "the person who is inauthentic is not just betraying herself, but is betraying something we regard as essential to all of us. We feel that the inauthentic person is letting us all down" (p. 159).

Democracy works when it is populated by persons who exercise discernment and judgment with respect to some shared goals and beliefs. When an individual does not stand behind his beliefs, he fails to sustain a democratic social system that is predicated on what he is failing to do. A free, democratic society is possible only if its members are committed to the unrestricted exchange of views. However, such exchange assumes that citizens are persons with moral commitments and reasons, who are knowledgeable about the issues that confront them and their society. Consequently, education must ensure some minimally accept-

able level of knowing and understanding that extends well beyond our own the environment, and we must disseminate our knowledge about the world in which we live to others (even if such knowledge is changing and uncertain). Authentic selfhood or personhood is possible only in the context of shared traditions, practices, and ways of life. When psychological conceptions and models of self-esteem and self-regulation focus only on the feelings and strategies of individuals, they provide too narrow a venue for personal development and effective citizenship.

References to the advantages of knowing one's self populate Western culture, from the Socratic injunction to "know thyself" (Plato, 1989, p. 110) to Shakespeare's Polonius-delivered counsel, "To thine own self be true" (Shakespeare, 1987, p. 176). Yet, Socrates' Delphic dictum is best interpreted as advice to know one's place in the scheme of things. For Socrates and Plato, self-knowledge included understanding one's role in a cosmological order, in part by discerning ideals for human functioning contained in that order. It was not a matter of turning inward toward one's self, but of comprehending one's place and function within a wider world. Similarly, the comic figure of Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* tells us that we should be true to ourselves so that we might be true to others. There is no suggestion that being true to one's self is possible in inner isolation, or desirable as an end in itself.

Many psychologists who examined the possibility and development of self-understanding (e.g., Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Wittgenstein, 1953) concluded that it would be impossible without recognition and understanding of others gained through participation in social interactions. Historically established social practices and the conventions and norms that accompany them give us criteria, concepts, and roles that define us as persons with first-person experiences and social and moral obligations. We understand ourselves as the doers of actions that are worthy of praise or blame because we participate in social engagements that unfold within ways and traditions of living that are permeated with values, goods, and injunctions that define both communal and personal life. We recognize ourselves as separate because we interact with others in social contexts (Mead). We do have first-person experiences and "gut reactions" about what we should do in particular situations, or occasional experiences of doubt and turmoil. However, these personal experiences occur because we are social beings who exist in sociocultural contexts of meaning, purpose, and value.

Similarly, it is instructive to note what has and has not been picked up by contemporary educational psychologists from Enlightenment and Romantic thought about selfhood and identity. For example, although it is easy to detect some ideas of Locke (1690/1964) and Rousseau (1762/1979) in psychological work on self-regulation and self-esteem, respectively, little evidence of their influence on contemporary moral or political concerns exists. In fact, disciplinary psychology addresses little about either politics or morality, aside from some attempts to describe the development of moral reasoning in children, or studies

of bias, prejudice, attitudes, and preferences, which may have some relevance to political affiliation and commitment. However, even in these areas of psychological theory and research, questions concerning what is and is not moral, or which ethics or politics individuals should adopt, are absent, with the assumption that individuals make personal decisions in areas outside of the province of scientific or professional psychology. Yet, morality and politics are important to life, personhood, and citizenship (Guignon, 2004). That psychology does not address moral and political matters exposes its pervasive individualism and lack of resources with respect to the social and cultural (including the moral and political) constitution and concerns of fully functioning persons.

Conclusion

When educational psychologists encourage individuals to value and express themselves, but also to engage in strategic planning in pursuit of personal goals, it is important to understand that such valuing, expression, and instrumental strategizing are available only because we understand ourselves as persons in ways that are supported and made possible by our communal relations with others. We can only discern and judge our agentic efforts at creative accomplishment in relation to criteria and conventions available in our communal lives and joint understandings. Persons will not find understanding or self-understanding by analyzing a deep, inner psychological core. For example, consider the engagement with, and critical analysis of, a diversity of perspectives emphasized by educational theorists such as Gutmann (1990) as desired educational attainments of students who might become productive persons and citizens. Such engagement and critical consideration would be impossible outside of an open consideration of alternative perspectives. Also, diversity of perspectives does not reside within socioculturally isolated individuals. Individuals can only function ethically in the social and political area, or expand their self-understanding, through sustained, serious engagement with others' perspectives (Mead, 1934). Education helps individuals expand their horizons, not narrow them through self-absorption.

Yet, the need to emphasize broader sociocultural perspectives, possibilities, and constraints in the education and psychological development of selves is routinely ignored in psychologists' practices and pronouncements. The special issue of *American Psychologist* (the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association, by far the largest organization of psychologists in the world) devoted to positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000b) included little information about social and cultural contributions to selfhood and human well-being. When social context was mentioned, it was typically enlisted as a set of factors that might affect the self and its development positively or negatively (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000). The necessary, constitutive function of social and cultural practices in the formation of selfhood was only recognized once, and the author of that article (Schwartz, 2000) seemed to hold reservations:

> I have tried to suggest that there is a dark side to all this emphasis on individuals as the makers of their own worlds, their own destinies. It leaves people indecisive about what to do and why....Thus, in aspiring as a culture to offer individuals self-determination without constraint, we are not doing those individuals a favor. (p. 87)

Self-focus is problematic because individuals cannot exercise self-determination in social vacuums. Agentive self-determination can emerge only through interactions with others within sociocultural and biophysical contexts (Martin, 2003).

The positive psychology that has pervaded the subdiscipline of educational psychology cannot accomplish the tasks to which it aspires. If disciplinary psychologists, and educational psychologists in particular, want to contribute to human flourishing, they must recognize in their operating assumptions and in their theoretical, empirical, and professional practices that the persons about which they claim to be experts are not primarily natural psyches detached from their worldly involvements; they are historical and sociocultural agents who emerge through their worldly activity within traditions and forms of communal human life. Without such realization, those calling for positive psychology are likely to stumble in isolated individualism that lacks the communal and historical resources for either personhood or citizenship. Human flourishing is not established by the self for the self, and the reflective self-inquiry frequently posited as necessary for such flourishing cannot be self-created. Both understanding and self-understanding rest on more than "me." The education of persons and citizens must move beyond individualistic perspectives that consider the egocentric self to be the measure of all things.

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