4th Annual Applied Positive Psychology Symposium

Saturday 2nd June 2018 9.30 am – 4.30 pm
Buckinghamshire New University - High Wycombe Campus – Room S3.04

9.00 – 9.30 am ~ Arrival/Reception ~

9.30 – 9.40 am Welcome

9.40 - 10.00 am Self-compassion as a much needed response to chronic dieting syndrome: Positive psychology in action
Helen Golstein, Bucks New University MAPP Graduate

10.00 – 10.20 am Resilient relocation: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of single Anglo females as recent immigrants to Israel
Monique Zahavi, Bucks New University MAPP Graduate

10.20 – 10.40 am How is positive energy emitted in the workplace?
Deborah Martin, MAPP

10.40 – 11.00 am Amazing Me: From MAPP to market
Tracy Richardson, MAPP

11.00 – 11.30 am ~ Break / Posters ~

11.30 – 11.50 am Positive education: A whole school approach
Frederika Roberts, Anglia Ruskin University

11.50 am – 12.10 pm Strickers: A strengths based collectible sticker album
Tom Gillson, Anglia Ruskin University

12.10 – 12.30 pm Increasing resilience in adults - does participation in Forest School increase resilience?
Jane Jennison, Anglia Ruskin University

12.30 – 1.30 pm ~ Lunch / Posters ~

Parallel After-Lunch Sessions

1.30 – 1.50 pm A positive psychology perspective on experiences of racial discrimination amongst black & ethnic minorities
Ntsoaki Mary Moseeunyane, Bucks New University

1.50 – 2.10 pm Permission to break free
Milica Sekulic

~ WORKSHOP ~ [max. 20 people]*
Character Toolkit: Putting positive and character education research into practice
Frederika Roberts & Elizabeth Wright, Anglia Ruskin University
(1.30 - 2.10 pm)
PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Helen Golstein, BNU - Self-Compassion as a much needed response to chronic dieting syndrome: Positive psychology in action

Obesity has a far-reaching impact across modern society and is on the increase, with a persistently upward trend (Hilton, Patterson, & Teyhan, 2012). McPherson, Marsh and Brown (2007) argue that there is no evidence that the national strategy for public health is reducing the incidence of obesity in the population notwithstanding an annual cost to the Health Service which is presently in excess of five billion pounds. This in itself, is compelling evidence that interventions which presently focus primarily on dieting and lifestyle are not proving to be effective. Stroebe, Van Koningsbruggen, Papies and Henk. (2013) suggest that “dieters often failing to control their weight” is almost a truism. It is intended that this presentation will share the results of a comprehensive literature review exploring previous obesity research, considering how interventions such as repeated or chronic dieting may have impacted on the obese person. Where findings suggest that the negative effects on an obese persons’ well-being are as much to do with the emotional impact of failed interventions, such as repeated failed dieting, as to do with the effects of the physical condition. Findings also point to a high prevalence of weight-related discrimination within society, bringing external and internal stigmatisation and causing high levels of shame and stress in those affected. By contrast, practices of self-compassion, shame resilience, and hope are shown to have improved well-being and result in turn, in healthier relationships with self and others. Drawing from the evidence and conclusions of the comprehensive literature review undertaken, an innovative positive psychological intervention for responding to obesity with self-compassion, shame resilience and hope theory has been developed. It is also rooted in the philosophy, theories, practises and value-base of positive psychology. It is expected that given the evidence of effectiveness of currently widely used positive psychological interventions in increasing levels of well-being, that the intervention developed in this study will evidence the same results Bolier et al., (2013).
Monique Zahavi, BNU - Resilient relocation: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of single Anglo females as recent immigrants to Israel

Research suggests that whether as an asylum seeker, refugee or through choice, immigration poses psychological challenges which may continue long after physical relocation (Strang & Ager, 2010). Aliyah, meaning ‘ascendance’, uniquely references the global phenomenon of Jewish immigration to Israel as an ancestral, spiritual homeland. Though studies have largely considered Jewish mass immigration to escape the global resurgence of anti-Semitism (Cotler, 2010; Remennick 2016), immigrants from ‘safer’ communities described a similar sense of ‘coming home’ (Elias, 2008). Israel is culturally and politically complex; though theoretically gender equal, women are expected to marry, become mothers and may face marginalisation within the workforce (Ben-Porat, 2013). The researcher found studies relating to older lone women immigrants to Israel to be limited and acculturation studies rarely exploring immigration from positive psychological viewpoints of thriving and resilient coping (Berry, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Employing the qualitative methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009, the current study explored the lived experience of lone female immigrants to Israel, aged between fifty and sixty-five, having relocated in the last two years, from the UK or the USA. Three semi-structured interviews comprising open-ended questions were conducted, with pertinent points followed up. Analysis revealed five superordinate themes, common to all participants; “Life Journey”, “Acculturation”, “Transcendence”, “Intrinsic Identity” and “Meaning and Purpose”, with subthemes also common to all participants, to various degrees. Despite cultural and social challenges, findings suggested the perception of Aliyah as a beneficial life decision. Relocation represented a time of rediscovery, reconnection with self, resilient and positively focused coping mechanisms, a sense of newfound freedom, belonging and meaning in life. Findings could inform mentoring or coaching programmes for older female immigrants with future studies considering the effectiveness of positive psychological interventions, not only for this demographic, but for other immigrant communities.

Deborah Martin, BNU – How is positive energy emitted in the workplace?

This study set out to answer two questions: “what is positive energy” and “what behaviours emit positive energy in the workplace”. A qualitative research study was designed and data was gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. 26 participants responded to the questionnaires and 3 interviews were conducted. Through the process of thematic analysis, 14 themes in total were identified of which 6 were considered to be meta-themes that were relevant across all forms of data. These themes were: Demeanour, Direction, Support, Communication, Competence and Authentic. The findings of this study in-part support existing research in the field of Positive Organisational Scholarship, but go further in proposing a new definition for positive energy and patterns of behaviours that emit positive energy in the workplace. Future studies are suggested to build on the findings of this work.

Tracy Richardson, Affiliation? - Amazing Me: From MAPP to market

Amazing Me is a digital mindfulness-based positive psychology programme for primary schools developed by current Bucks MAPP students Tracy Richardson and Lee Newitt alongside their colleague Kelly Bishop. Tracy and Lee met on the first weekend of the MAPP in 2016 and with their shared passion for utilising positive psychology in schools, they formed a community interest company, Seahorse Education Partnerships Ltd. The first ideas for Amazing Me were born when a school that Lee had been successfully running coaching programmes in for several years asked us to develop some materials to use with the children. Over the course of a year, what began as a set of 6 lessons for one school has grown into a 7 module, 35-week programme complete with lesson plans, animations, mindfulness practice audios, key vocabulary lists, extended curriculum ideas and a community forum. Amazing Me has its official launch on Friday June 8th 2018 and will be available nationally.
Frederika Roberts, ARU - Positive education: A whole school approach

In her presentation, Frederika Roberts will outline a model for a whole school approach to positive education, with examples from the UK and around the world. She will also explain her future vision and rationale for a whole school approach, which includes ensuring that interventions and initiatives are underpinned by a positive education ethos within the school that includes staff wellbeing, visibility, community inclusion and ownership of the objectives by all stakeholders. Frederika is a speaker and author (‘Recipe for Happiness’, 2013; ‘Character Toolkit for Teachers’, 2018, with Elizabeth Wright, and Foreword by Kristján Kristjánsson). She is on the iMAPP programme at Anglia Ruskin University and is the European Representative for IPPAed (International Positive Psychology Association, Education Division). She is co-founder of ‘RWS | Resilience Wellbeing Success’, an organisation that delivers a positive and character education programme, as well as workshops and presentations to students, teachers and parents.

Tom Gillson, ARU - Strickers: A strengths based collectible sticker album

As my major project for the IMAPP at ARU I designed Strickers - a collectible sticker album (similar to a football sticker album) based on the 24 VIA character strengths, which would allow schools to build a cost effective Positive Psychology approach into their school culture. ‘Strickers’ have the added value of placing no extra workload on teachers, as their utilisation is primarily self-directed by students. The sticker album consists of a page for each of the 24 character strengths. Each strength has seven stickers to collect. One sticker features an avatar of the character strength; the other six are composed of six ‘MPPIs’ (Mini Positive Psychology Interventions designed to take no longer than the typical school break time to complete). The 6 MPPIs for each character strength exercise a variety of reflective, fun and interactive exercises that aim to aid the development of character strengths and relationships. One MPPI is mindfulness based, one is based on mentoring, one makes use of a specified location around the school, one is based at home, one invites the participant to think of a paragon of that strength and give reasons why they exhibit this strength so well and one sticker asks the participant to design their own MPPI to exercise that strength. I am aiming to reach primary / elementary schools, educational institutions and children with this product. I see it as an enjoyable and free approach to introducing PP practices and habits of wellbeing to young children in a natural and playful manner. This approach also aims to incorporate multiple aspects of the children’s lives under a coherent and positive perspective. I would be looking to use the talk at the conference to share my experience in creating the product as well as using it as a platform to build relationships with potential future collaborators.

Jane Jennison, ARU - Increasing resilience in adults - does participation in Forest School increase resilience?

Definition of resilience. Introduction to Prof Taomina’s new measure of resilience. Introduction to Dissertation Research Project on Forest School participation and its impact on resilience. Closing summary and suggestions for further research. Discussion on increasing resilience in adults.

Ntsoaki Mary Mosoeunyane, BNU - A positive psychology perspective on experiences of racial discrimination amongst black & ethnic minorities

Positive Psychology (PP) science is dedicated to finding what makes life worth living as people meet atrocities across the life span. This paper presents the qualitative research findings relating to a study exploring the experiences of life within which racial discrimination exists amongst a sample of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) lecturers in higher education. It reports on the impact of racism on their well-being (Subjective well-being and Psychological well-being), and how participants thrive in the face of such stress. It highlights some aspects of positive psychology as potential coping strategies employed by the participants. The participants shared their narrative through semi-structured interview. To make sense of the narratives, data were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The major findings were divided into external and internal overarching themes relating to experience as well as coping. Lack of positive regard, victimization, fear of judgment and lack of diversity cognitive coping, positive-self, and ethnic belonging. External: social support, appreciative dialogue, and privilege. While within existing knowledge of PP atrocity of racism still lacks attention, it is evident from report summary that the participants’ coping processes has some presence in
existing PP work, yet also goes beyond it. The coping processes relate hugely to most resilient literature within PP. This research presents the use of PP when dealing with the ‘dark side’ of life with the experience and impact of racism. All participants demonstrated narratives that were historic and cut through time. Potentially, the participants’ processes point towards the potential use of PP, or further research, in the areas of appreciative dialogue, ethnic and cultural identity. Keywords: Racism, discrimination, well-being, positive psychology, coping.

Milica Sekulic - Permission to break free

Permission to Break Free How to live life that you always wanted when you feel whatever you are doing is not working A lot of people find themselves in the position that they are not happy with their life and they want to change something. Research is saying that clear goals, positive mindset and clear steps to achieve this goal will help you to get where you want. Last few years I have been focusing on people who follow those steps but found that you had to make too many sacrifices or that there were too many obstacles on the path, so they gave up. Or perhaps they managed to make changes and for a while things were going well, but then it all seemed to go into reverse and they found themselves back where you started. Instead of going around the same circle and feeling that they are constantly failing, that other can do it, it happens to others but not to you, the missing ingredient is not just changing your goals and mindset, but relearning the skills that will support this. You need to learn new way of nurturing your new script so you will be able to live a life that you always wanted. The life script of successful and happy people opens up pathways for them to stroll towards success.

Una McGarvie, BNU - Positive psychology as a leadership intervention

When you are leading a major complex change programme and you have politicians, the media and influential stakeholders demanding you deliver more, in ever shorter timescales, to tighter deadlines and against a backdrop of increasing uncertainty, does the world of positive psychology really have anything to offer you? With a background of over 25 years in project management, in the public and private sectors, before focusing her energies as an executive coach, Una McGarvie provides insight into how her positive psychology inspired coaching has helped Senior Leaders address and ‘survive’ their very real challenges. In this short presentation, Una provides insights into some typical leadership challenges faced. She discusses the positive psychology bedrock underpinning interventions she uses and the mechanisms to get these ideas over to hardened programme leaders for whom risk management, high adrenaline, tight control and high stress are major parts of their success stories to date. Una also shares the leadership model she has developed which has its heart in the field of positive psychology combined with her own experience in coaching over 100 Leaders. This is a practical and revealing insight into the world Una has come to love and be ever inspired by.

Reece Coker, BNU - The colours of courage: The art behind the science

What colour do you visualise when you think of courage? You may be surprised to realise how many people relate to the same colour. An exciting new way of modelling and measuring colour will be demonstrated within a highly interactive presentation using colour as a medium, and the art behind the science. Consider the primary colour elements within the palette of fear, hope, control and risk and how they may mix together. The use of colour to gain an insight into the virtue of courage and the way in which it operates may change your perception...

Rachel E. Evenden & Callum E. Cooper, Northampton - Positive psychology in the clinical parapsychology setting

This presentation expands on the guest lecture given at the Buck New University 2nd Positive Psychology Symposium (Cooper, 2016), regarding the union between positive psychology and areas of parapsychology (from the lab to the field). A recap will be given, on links between positive psychology and parapsychology, and how the two areas have been seen to compliment each other. Focus will then be given to one of the previous areas mentioned at the 2nd
symposium, this being instances of 'sought experiences'. There has been much research into the benefits of counselling for anomalous experiences, now seen within the domain of clinical parapsychology, bridging anomalous experiences with an understanding of the therapeutic benefits and transformative features within these experiences. Looking to the typical studies within clinical parapsychology, again, much research has focused on the overlaps between anomalous experiences following a bereavement. Therefore, focus will be given on the lead author’s own research, specifically exploring mediumship as a form of counselling, where people seek out experiences which appear to aid symptoms of grief and loss. It will be argued that mediumship can be seen as a form of holistic intervention, in enhancing positive psychological attributes within the bereaved to help with coping and post-traumatic growth.

**Angus Meichan, BNU - Personal qualities of professional football club youth academy players**

This presentation will report the initial findings of a study conducted in a Football League Club youth academy on factors associated with the performance and wellbeing of players aged 8-18 years. Specifically it will detail whether the personal qualities of hope, resilience, and empathy predicted satisfaction of basic psychological needs in the players, the relative contribution of each of the personal qualities, and what type of empathy was most predictive of needs satisfaction. The choice of these three personal qualities in the model described draws on and extends attachment theory and strengths theory, and is largely derived from the researcher’s own experience and reflection. The inclusion of empathy is the model contrasts markedly with current models such as PsyCap and Mental Toughness.

**Lee Newitt, BNU – An answer may not be the greatest gift**

“To be or not to be; that is the question.” (Shakespeare, 1602). Although Shakespeare was exploring this question from a different perspective it is perhaps the most profound question a person might ask himself or herself. Do I have the courage to be? Do I have the courage to trust in being me? To listen to my inner voice as it whispers? To fully express me? What is it about a question that can so fully grasp the wholeness of human experience? This discussion aims to explore the role narrative structure might play in creating questions that lead to the development of who we are. Furthermore it is proposed that as a person’s life progresses and their narrative becomes ever more complex, the narrative structure itself might be responsible for creating and resolving polarities in experience through the adaptation of meaning. Finally it is suggested that by considering evidence from developmental theory, it is the increase in complexity in narrative structure over a lifetime that contributes to the formation of life stages. Ultimately, may the answer be found in not finding an answer, but in holding the paradox?

**WORKSHOP [max. 20 people]*

**Frederika Roberts & Elizabeth Wright, ARU - Character Toolkit: Putting positive and character education research into practice**

Frederika’s aim is to help children progress through the education system with a wealth of internal resources to guide them through any challenges they may face. In this workshop, she will bring you a range of activities she regularly uses in her school workshops for staff and pupils, for you to experience first-hand and adapt for your own use. Be prepared to join in and have fun – this workshop will be highly participative! Frederika is a speaker and author (‘Recipe for Happiness’, 2013; ‘Character Toolkit for Teachers’, 2018, with Elizabeth Wright, and Foreword by Kristján Kristjánsson). She is on the iMAPP programme at Anglia Ruskin University and is the European Representative for IPPAed (International Positive Psychology Association, Education Division). She is co-founder of 'RWS | Resilience Wellbeing Success', an organisation that delivers a positive and character education programme, as well as workshops and presentations to students, teachers and parents.
Mia Jakeman & Callum E. Cooper, Northampton - **Negative spontaneous post-death experiences and the bereavement process**

There has been much corroborative research on how anomalous experiences during a time of personal loss can be helpful to recovery. Research has shown that between 50-60% of people report such experiences, which range from 'sensing the presence' of the dead and dreams about them, to witnessing apparitions and poltergeist type activity. Given the personal meaning attached to such experiences, it has become clear why these experiences are reported in a positive light (with various positive psychological attributes), however, there is still a minority who report such experiences to be frightening, or not at all helpful in coping with loss. This study set out to understand for the first time what impact such negative experiences have on the bereaved, their well-being, and ability to move forward in life following loss.

Abigail Wright & Callum E. Cooper, Northampton - **The impact of positive reinforcement on ESP ability**

The poster will summarise the results of a study where positive reinforcement was given to a group of people engaging in an ESP task, compared to a control group. Previous research has demonstrated that engaging tasks, and motivation to do well, can result in significant ESP scores. This has also been highlighted in recent times through discussion of the 'experimenter effect'. The poster will highlight some of this key literature, and present the results of this second year (BSc Psychology study) independent project. A fuller and more detailed abstract with follow at a later date.

Sareena Dhamrait, BNU - **Strengthening hope in ill-health: An IPA of the British-Indian experience of hope during medical diagnostic investigation**

The psychological definition of hope remains conflicted among researchers. Snyder's (2000) hope theory provides the most popular explanation of hope in positive psychology; however, there has been limited cross-cultural research and real-life application to support its claims. Existing research suggests that hope is particularly fundamental in patients' coping during the medical diagnostic investigation (MDI) stage of illness (Giske & Gjengedal, 2006). Though, there is minimal comprehension of how hope is experienced and manifested during the investigation process. In this case, the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of hope within the MDI of four British-Indians. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and were then analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Five super-ordinate themes were established: "Hoping for health" which comprised of sub-ordinate themes "Instinctive vision", "Trust for resolution" and "Transcendent beliefs"; "Recognition" which included "Interpretation", "Information seeking" and "Connecting mind and body"; "Causal attribution" including "Introspection", "Awareness" and "Social norms"; "Anticipation" which included "Uncertainty" and "Fear"; and finally "Preparative coping" which consisted of "Cognitive effort", "Change" and "Social buffering". As a result, themes reflected participants' exhaustion of various resources to regain control of circumstances and prepare for the future; thus, strengthening hope was essential in maintaining perseverance through MDI of illness. In this case, identified themes may have highlighted the potential for hope to also possess a natural, protective purpose in health related adversity. However, additional cross-cultural research is required. Such accounts may facilitate the development of all-encompassing and culturally sensitive definitions of core positive psychological constructs like hope.
The aim of the research is to explore whether an intervention programme that develops character strengths and mindfulness during tennis coaching sessions improves the performance of amateur tennis players. Tennis is a game of two parts, the physical game and the mental game which Gallwey (2015) calls the Inner Game of tennis. Whilst most players at club level can deal with the physical game, it is the mental game that can result in a poorer performance and the difference between winning and losing a match. Whilst a lot of research exists within the sports psychology literature and within the field of Positive Psychology on the use of character strengths and on mindfulness, there is little that examines character strengths and mindfulness in sports performance. One program that does look at strengths and mindfulness is Ryan Niemiec’s (2013) Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP). Using the MBSP program and applying it to sport, coaching sessions will be carried out by the researcher (who is a qualified tennis coach) with a group of amateur tennis players over the course of 8 weeks each lasting in 90 minutes duration. Incorporated within the program is the VIA Strengths Assessment, which respondents will be asked to complete at the start of the sessions. Participants will be invited to keep a record of their experiences in a paper/electronic journal. In addition, semi-structured interviews will be carried out with each participant after the 8 weeks. The data from the interviews will be analysed using Thematic Analysis to explore the relationship between strengths and mindfulness practice in playing tennis as well as to examine the effectiveness of the MBSP program in a sports-based environment.