

Moving Positive Psychology Beyond the Positive

Fan Yang

When I think of positive psychology, the image in my mind is *sunshine*. But when I think of life, I see both *rain and shine*. This disparity is the reason why I often feel that positive psychology is inadequate to guide my life, at least on rainy days. But thanks to Dr. Paul Wong's perspectives and research—efforts to positive psychology beyond the positive—my image of positive psychology is being reshaped. I feel it is a much-needed change not only for the field but also for individuals seeking guidance for all kinds of weathers in life.

Suffering. This heavy word describes an inescapable aspect of our existence. Many thinkers throughout history have recognized suffering as a fundamental challenge (e.g., Benatar, 2008; Frankl, 1946/1992; Schopenhauer, 1850/2020). However, Dr. Wong offers a unique alternative perspective, viewing suffering as an opportunity for growth, meaning, and transformation (Wong et al., 2021, 2022; Wong, 2023). He proposed that suffering is not to be avoided or eliminated, but rather to be embraced as an essential component of human flourishing. This expands my views on both suffering and human flourishing.

From this viewpoint, what makes positive psychology truly positive is not merely the pursuit of happiness or success but also the resilience and strength in the face of adversity. By embracing the full range of human experiences, including suffering, Dr. Wong's approach offers individuals a more empowering path towards a good life. It not only provides a new perspective on suffering, but it also represents a paradigm shift in positive psychology.

In his exploration of the question of suffering, Dr. Wong proposed self-transcendent answers, including hope, faith, and love (Wong, 2023). While the idea of self-transcendence has been long recognized as a means fostering meaning in the face of suffering (Frankl, 1992), Dr.

Wong's framework provides a more specific understanding of self-transcendence. And he serves as an excellent example of his own theory, exhibiting remarkable strength and self-transcendence in the face of his own pain and suffering. Both Dr. Wong and his work serve as a beacon, illuminating the path that we could take in life.

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Wong's perspective that self-transcendence is central to the questions of meaning and suffering. To contribute to the second-wave positive psychology movement (Wong et al., 2021; 2022), my lab has developed theoretical models outlining how self-transcendence may help people transcend suffering, from affective, cognitive, and motivational mechanisms (Ge & Yang, in press). Building on Dr. Wong's invaluable insights, we also examined and found that self-transcendence, rather than self-enhancement, gives rise to perceptions of meaning (Huang & Yang, 2022).

Drawing inspiration from Dr. Wong's enlightening perspective, I am dedicated to carrying on his torch to continue shaping the field. I believe that with collaborative research endeavors, positive psychology can transcend the realm of positivity—enabling us to comprehend and guide individuals through all life's circumstances, be it through stormy weather or sunshine.

References

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