

Title: Professionalising Positive Psychology: Is there a need to develop guidelines for training and regulation?

Abstract:

Although positive psychology was initially conceived as more a shift in perspective (towards the “positive”) than a new field per se, in pragmatic terms, it is arguably beginning to function as a distinct discipline, with people self-identifying as “positive psychologists.” Thus, this conversation hour explores whether it is time for the field to start developing a system of professional (e.g., ethical) guidelines to inform the practice of positive psychology. This means asking questions around who has the ‘right’ to practice positive psychology, and how best practice can be supported and upheld.

In the first half of the hour, the discussion will be focused around one set of proposals in which the field might be professionalised and regulated. Specifically, the panel will consider a paper by Tim Lomas and Itai Ivtzan that, at the time of writing this, is forthcoming in the *International Journal of Wellbeing* [Lomas, T., & Ivtzan, I. (2016). Professionalising positive psychology: Developing guidelines for training and regulation. *International Journal of Wellbeing*]. This paper outlines one possible system of professionalization (e.g., the development of ethical protocols), drawing on guidelines in counselling and psychotherapy. Moreover, it advocates the creation of two tiers of professional identity within positive psychology. Firstly, people with a master’s qualification in positive psychology might label themselves “positive psychology practitioners.” Secondly, the paper raises the possibility of creating a professional doctorate in PP which would enable graduates to assume the title of “positive psychologist.”

This paper will be used as a starting point for a discussion, in which the various panel members – which together have a range of perspectives on the issues in question – can debate these timely and important issues. Then, in the second half of the hour, the discussion shall be opened up (i.e., away from the paper specifically), allowing for questions, and interaction with the audience. As such, we hope that the discussion hour as a whole will contribute towards a dialogue within the field around issues such as ethics, regulation, and accreditation, thus helping positive psychology to develop further over the years ahead.