

APPLIED POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

TIM LOMAS
KATE HEFFERON
ITAI IVTZAN

..... *integrated positive practice*



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

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OCCUPATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Work is love made visible...
And what is it to work with love?
It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy,
even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.
Kahlil Gibran

LEARNING OBJECTIVES – AT THE END OF THE CHAPTER YOU WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Differentiate positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship
- Conceptualise and approach occupations and organisations using the LIFE model
- Understand the impact of occupations, workplaces and organisations on wellbeing
- Appreciate the factors that contribute to work engagement
- Identify different PPIs to apply in the workplace and occupational situations

LIST OF TOPICS...

- The Job Demands-Resources (J D-R) model
- Engagement, and its psychological drivers
- Strengths (including the VIA and the Realise2 models)
- Coaching, career counselling and mentoring
- Psychological capital (PsyCap)
- Meaning and purpose at work
- Health and safety
- Job content and control
- Leadership and 'climate engineering'
- Organisational-level values/strengths
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Political and economic work-related factors

Although utopian visions of society have dreamed of an existence in which people are liberated from having to work (Guest, 2002), work remains central to human life. Simply from a quantitative perspective, work can consume a significant portion of our waking hours (Office for National Statistics, 2011a). More centrally, in an existential sense, our work can come to define us, structuring our days, generating the bulk of our interactions and providing us with crucial components of our identities (Ryan, 1995). In speaking of work, we do not only mean paid employment. As the title suggests, our focus here encompasses any of the ways people substantively and productively 'occupy' their time, from studying to raising children to volunteering. Similarly, 'organisations' refers not only to companies, but to any functional group of people, from families to political parties. Thus, although most of the concepts and activities in this chapter have traditionally been discussed in relation to paid work, readers are encouraged to freely apply these to their own circumstances (e.g., the section on leadership can easily be transposed to domains such as parenting). Given this centrality of work to our lives, it understandably has a considerable impact on our wellbeing. In academia, this impact has traditionally been explored by applied disciplines like occupational psychology (Lewis & Zibarras, 2013). More recently though, it has been examined by emergent PP paradigms, most notably positive organizational behaviour (POB) (Luthans, 2002) and positive organizational scholarship (POS) (Cameron et al., 2003).

There is considerable overlap between POB and POS. However, Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) suggest that POB is more 'organization-driven' (i.e., getting the best out of employees for the benefit of the organisation), while POS is more 'employee-driven' (getting the best out of the organisation for the benefit of employees). Luthans (2002, p. 59) defines POB as 'the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and managed for performance improvement in today's workplace'. Bakker and Schaufeli warn that this emphasis on performance risks a utilitarian concern with maximising employee output. Echoing this, Wright (2003) argues that employee wellbeing must be an end in itself. Reflecting this latter concern, POS is 'the study of that which is positive, flourishing, and life-giving in organizations', i.e., aspects of the organisation that help employees thrive (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 731). Being psychologists, we naturally lean more towards POS than POB, which in APP terms means trying to improve the wellbeing of workers (as opposed to prioritising business success). However, these two perspectives are not necessarily oppositional, but can be synergistic – as discussed in the final section – since companies that care for their employees are arguably more likely to prosper (Zwetsloot & Pot, 2004).

In terms of a theoretical model to help ground the chapter, perhaps the most well-researched relating to work and wellbeing is the Job Demands-Resources (J D-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Job demands are 'physical, social

or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological or psychological costs (e.g., exhaustion). Conversely, job resources are 'physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that may do one of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development'. Broadly speaking, wellbeing at work is a function of the trade-off between demands and resources (Bakker et al., 2005). If demands exceed resources, the result is work-related stress and, eventually, burnout; conversely, if resources surpass demands, one ideally attains the positive work-related state of *engagement* (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Thus, from an APP stance, we can endeavour to ameliorate job demands and/or enhance job resources. Moreover, we can seek to do so across all four domains of the LIFE model. Indeed, this multi-dimensional approach is reflected in the definition of the J D-R model above. There are clear parallels to the four domains in Demerouti et al.'s description of job resources being 'physical [i.e., objective body], psychological [i.e., subjective mind], social [i.e., intersubjective culture] or organisational [i.e., interobjective society] aspects of the job'. As such, this chapter is in four parts, focusing on each of the domains in turn: mind, body, culture and society.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS . . .

- Critically evaluate the differences between positive organizational behaviour and positive organizational scholarship.
- Outline the various occupational factors associated with employee wellbeing, and discuss their relative importance.

The mind

This first section focuses on psychological resources that facilitate engagement, and PPIs/activities to enhance these resources. The construct of engagement encompasses a range of outcomes relevant to PP. For Schaufeli et al. (2006), engagement comprises vigour, dedication and absorption. Somewhat differently, Fine et al. (2010) conceptualise it as an amalgamation of commitment, satisfaction and discretionary effort. Given this conceptual indeterminacy, we shall simply use engagement to refer to the whole spectrum of positive work-related outcomes, from absorption to satisfaction to meaning. The question is, what resources are the 'drivers' of engagement? Crabb (2011) distinguishes between drivers at an organisational level and an individual psychological level.

Organisational-level drivers (e.g., leadership) are discussed below in the sections on culture and society. In this first section we will examine the three psychological drivers identified by Crabb: focusing strengths, managing emotions and aligning purpose. However, before discussing these, let us contextualise our thinking by reflecting on our own work situation (or comparable activity, such as studying). Schaufeli et al. (2006) have devised a widely-used questionnaire. Try this out in the box below!

PSYCHOMETRIC SCALES . . .

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale – 9 is a series of statements about how you feel at work. If you have never had this feeling, write ‘0’ (zero) next to the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it by writing down the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel this way. 0 = *never*, 1 = *almost never (a few times a year or less)*, 2 = *rarely (once a month or less)*, 3 = *sometimes (a few times a month)*, 4 = *often (once a week)*, 5 = *very often (a few times a week)*, 6 = *always (every day)*.

	Answer
1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	_____
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	_____
3. I am enthusiastic about my job.	_____
4. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	_____
5. My job inspires me.	_____
6. I feel happy when I am working intensely.	_____
7. I am proud of the work that I do.	_____
8. I am immersed in my work.	_____
9. I get carried away when I am working.	_____
Total =	_____

Add the numbers you wrote for each item: the higher your score, the greater your work engagement!

Focusing strengths

The first psychological driver of engagement is using one’s strengths at work. A focus on strengths was an initial defining feature of the PP movement. A drive was initiated to generate a taxonomy of strengths, mirroring the American Psychiatric Association’s (1994) classification of psychological disorders (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Researchers studied classic texts

of the world's great religious and philosophical traditions, looking for universal virtues valued across all cultures throughout history (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). This search generated 24 distinct strengths, aggregated into six larger virtues, set out in the box below. This schema, known as the 'Values in Action' (VIA) framework (Peterson, 2006b), is assessed using the 'VIA inventory of strengths' (VIA-IS), a 240-item self-report questionnaire. Although there are other taxonomies and classification tools, such as Realise2 (Linley et al., 2009), the VIA is arguably the most widely used (Linley et al., 2010). A key message of the strengths paradigm is that people benefit more from cultivating their strengths than working on weaknesses, with the use of self-perceived strengths over time linked to longitudinal increases in wellbeing (Wood et al., 2011).

REFLECTION . . . WHAT ARE YOUR 'TOP 5' STRENGTHS?

Wisdom and knowledge

- Creativity
- Judgement
- Perspective
- Curiosity
- Love of learning

Courage

- Bravery
- Perseverance
- Honesty
- Zest

Humanity

- Love
- Kindness
- Social intelligence

Justice

- Teamwork
- Fairness
- Leadership

Temperance

- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Prudence
- Self-regulation

Transcendence

- Appreciation of beauty and excellence
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Humour
- Spirituality

The notion of strengths has been embraced within business, particularly in the field of coaching. As discussed in Chapter 1, we can arguably conceptualise coaching as a subset of APP, one involving the cultivation of a 'professional relationship' between a coach and client, and which generally operates 'in the context of working toward specific goals' relating to work (Biswas-Diener, 2009, p. 544). The benefit of a coaching relationship is that it can facilitate *skilful* cultivation of strengths. The strengths concept has been critiqued for often being

deployed in an *essentialist* way. (Essentialism is the idea that people possess relatively fixed sets of characteristics, and is the conceptual basis of psychometric classification, such as trait theories of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992).) However, embracing a more dynamic social constructionist perspective, Biswas-Diener et al. (2011a) argue that strengths are ‘potentials for excellence’ that people can strive to cultivate. Framing the construct in this way affects strength development: asking people to *identify* their strengths increases their belief that strengths are fixed (i.e., engenders a fixed mindset), decreasing motivation to work on these; conversely, exhorting people to *develop* their strengths fosters belief in the possibility of improvement (i.e., facilitates a growth mindset) (Louis, 2011). This is where the value of coaching asserts itself. Tools like the VIA should ideally not be used in a crude prescriptive way (‘Here’s your strengths – go and use them!’). Rather, as explained by Lucy Ryan (2013), a successful executive coach (www.mindspring.uk.com), identifying strengths in coaching is just the means to a ‘deeper, broader coaching conversation’ about how the client can develop in their work role and as a person. Similarly, Roche and Hefferon (2013) emphasise the importance of people being debriefed following a strengths assessment to enable them to understand and utilise this assessment more effectively.

ART LINKS . . .

An imaginative and novel approach to exploring strengths is offered in Wedding and Niemiec’s (2008) book *Positive Psychology at the Movies*. This uses films to illustrate and enrich our understanding of strengths, as well as other PP concepts, such as resilience and flourishing. With over 1,500 films included and reviewed, readers are invited to watch these and identify when strengths (and other PP concepts) are being practised and applied. Do you have a favourite film in which the protagonist(s) is using their strengths in a particularly memorable, enlightening or inspiring way?

Thus, in a work setting, the strengths construct means helping people make better use of their talents and develop their potential. This need not only occur in the context of coaching; it can be adopted more generally as a management strategy (e.g., managers could utilise the construct in appraising their employees and delegate tasks accordingly) (Clifton & Harter, 2003). As a management strategy, perhaps a more nuanced tool than the VIA is Realise2 (Linley et al., 2009). This identifies three areas: strengths, learned behaviours (skills we may be good at, but which are not fulfilling) and weaknesses. Moreover, these areas can be broken down further: strengths can be either realised (identified and used regularly) or unrealised (dormant potentials); learned behaviours may be regular

(habitually used) or infrequent; and weaknesses can be exposed (in the open) or unexposed (the current situation is concealing flaws that would be exposed if circumstances changed). With the Realise2, rather than the arguably unrealistic aim of eradicating people's weaknesses, a more manageable goal is rendering such weaknesses *irrelevant*. From an APP perspective, strategies for implementing the Realise2 model in practice include: role-shaping (tailoring a role so it plays to people's strengths); complementary partnering (working with someone whose strengths compensate for your weaknesses, and vice versa); and strengths-based teamwork (the complementary partnership principle applied to a whole group); and, if it is not possible to render weaknesses irrelevant, general skill training for such weaknesses.

Managing emotions

The second driver of engagement is 'managing emotions'. This is essentially a catch-all term for all one's psychological resources, including many of the psychological skills outlined in Chapter 2. Many studies attest to the value of such skills in the workplace, and the utility of workplace PPIs to cultivate these. Take mindfulness, for instance. Trait mindfulness is associated with employee wellbeing and job performance, with one explanation being that mindfulness enhances engagement by enabling people to become more absorbed in their work (Reid, 2009). Moreover, meditation-based PPIs help promote mental health in occupational settings, with successful interventions delivered to workers ranging from school teachers (Gold et al., 2010) to therapists (Shapiro et al., 2007) to call centre staff (Walach et al., 2007). Likewise, Fredrickson et al.'s (2008) LKM intervention (introduced in Chapter 2) corroborated Fredrickson's (2005) 'broaden-and-build' theory in the context of a software company. In terms of managing emotions, Mayer and Salovey's (1997) EI construct is particularly relevant, associated with positive outcomes in work settings, such as coping with challenging occupations, e.g., nurses engaging in end-of-life care (Bailey et al., 2011). Moreover, from an APP stance, work-based EI training can enhance wellbeing, as seen cross-culturally in interventions with workers in diverse sectors, from intensive care nurses in Iran (Sharif et al., 2013) to business managers in India (Ganpat & Nagendra, 2011).

Another prominent psychological resource in POS and POB is 'PsyCap', i.e., psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007). PsyCap comprises four qualities: self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977); optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2003); hope (Snyder, 2000); and resilience (Masten, 2001). PsyCap links these in an interesting way, being defined as 'an individual positive state of development that is characterised by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering towards goals and, when necessary,

redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) even when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success' (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3). PsyCap is linked to employee wellbeing (Avey et al., 2010a) and, from an organisational perspective, desirable employee attitudes, behaviours and performance (Avey et al., 2010b). Moreover, various PsyCap interventions are being developed. Luthans et al.'s (2010) two-hour training programme involves exercises to engender all four qualities. Hope (i.e., positive expectations for the future) is cultivated by generating personally-meaningful work-related goals. Self-efficacy is promoted by identifying concrete plans to help achieve these goals. Optimism is facilitated by conceiving of multiple pathways towards the goals, and by 'obstacle planning' (i.e., working out how to overcome challenges). Finally, resilience is inculcated by reflecting on 'personal assets' that will help in the pursuit of these goals, such as one's strengths.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CASE STUDIES . . .

A wonderful case of PsyCap in action is demonstrated by the astronaut Chris Hadfield, who found a global audience with an incredible series of videos recorded aboard the International Space Station, including a rendition of David Bowie's 'Space Oddity'. In his account of his experiences (Hadfield, 2013), while he does not use the term 'PsyCap', he demonstrates its qualities in abundance. Optimism (belief in future success) and hope (persevering towards goals) were both necessary in the extremely selective and challenging career path towards being an astronaut. While such qualities were arguably inherent features of Hadfield's character, a useful lesson for us here is the striking way in which his astronaut training programme instilled resilience and self-efficacy, namely, the 'power of negative thinking'! (Hadfield, 2013, p. 51). The trainers helped the astronauts overcome fear by devising elaborate simulations of 'bad-news scenarios', covering every possible mishap or malfunction (which in space could easily be fatal). In an extreme example of 'obstacle planning', the astronauts would act out these scenarios again and again so that, if the worst did occur, they had the resilience and self-efficacy to handle it. Hadfield writes: 'Being forced to confront the problem of failure head-on – to study it, dissect it, tease apart all its components and consequences – really works. After a few years of doing that pretty much daily you've forged the strongest possible armor to defend against fear: hard-won competence' (p. 54). This case highlights the complexities of emotions, and the difficulty of associating PP just with 'the positive' (discussed in Chapter 1), as here 'positive' outcomes arose from focusing on the 'negative'.

There are also work-based interventions to develop individual PsyCap components, such as Reivich et al.'s (2011) Master Resilience Training (MRT) programme, an adaptation of the Penn Resilience Program (outlined

in Chapter 5). MRT is based on the ABC model of explanatory styles (Ellis, 1987): the potential for a negative *Activating event* to have adverse emotional *Consequences* depends on the intervening factor of a person's *Beliefs* about that event. Disorders like depression can be the result of a dysfunctional attribution style (Abramson et al., 1978), which cognitive behaviour therapy thus aims to alter, as discussed in Chapter 2. One method of changing an explanatory/attribution style was proposed by Seligman (1990), who augmented ABC with *Disputation* and *Energisation*. Clients are helped to dispute dysfunctional beliefs – perhaps challenging the idea that one is a failure by recalling previous successes, for example – and are ideally energised as a result. MRT has been used in the US army to help personnel identify maladaptive beliefs that are hindering their work performance. These beliefs are referred to as 'icebergs', reflecting the way surface-level thoughts are connected to vast unacknowledged belief structures. Once icebergs are identified, participants are taught to ask: (a) is it still meaningful?, (b) is it accurate?, (c) is it overly rigid?, and (d) is it useful? A particularly salient iceberg in an army context might be the belief that 'Asking for help shows weakness', which could undermine work performance and even harm wellbeing (e.g., one might not seek support for health issues). Once acknowledged, people can be helped to develop more adaptive beliefs. For example, 'Asking for help' could be re-interpreted as a sign of responsibility and courage.

Aligning purpose

Finally, there is the importance of one's work being meaningful. From a theoretical perspective, there are overlapping models concerning meaning in work (Rosso et al., 2010). We can touch upon three here: value, orientation and identity. With value, Persson et al. (2001) differentiate between: concrete value (tangible positive outcomes); self-reward value (work being intrinsically fulfilling); and symbolic value (the significance a person and/or their culture attributes to an occupation). A similar schema differentiates between three types of 'work orientation' (Bellah et al., 1996): a job (a means to an end, i.e., earning money); a career (a route to achievement); or a calling (an intrinsically fulfilling vocation). Whereas in Persson et al.'s model the different types of value offered by work can all be conducive to meaning, in this orientation schema there is a definite hierarchy, with a calling being the most meaningful. Finally, we can differentiate between different positive work identities (Dutton et al., 2010): the virtue perspective (when work identities are suffused with virtuous qualities, e.g., wisdom); the evaluative perspective (feelings of self-regard linked to one's work identity); the developmental perspective (psychological growth over time linked to one's work); and the structural perspective (a harmonious relationship between one's work identity and other identities in life).

REFLECTION . . .

As children, many of us daydream about ideal jobs that seem especially meaningful or exciting. For some people, this dream later becomes a more tangible sense of calling towards a particular career. Do you have a sense of calling for anything? Even if you do not dream about a particular occupation, perhaps you nevertheless have hopes of using certain qualities and strengths in your work (e.g., being creative). Reflect on your current work situation or career path. To what extent are you engaged in work that is meaningful? How might you improve your work situation to make it more fulfilling?

In an ideal world, everyone would feel a sense of calling, and would moreover have the talents and opportunities to pursue their vocation. However, in the real world, many people are not so fortunate, ending up in jobs by necessity or chance. That said, the diverse models highlighted above mean there are many different ways people can be *helped to construe* their work as meaningful (Wrzesniewski, 2003). This could begin even before people have entered work. For instance, Dik et al. (2011) developed a school-based ‘career education intervention’ that was found to be successful in giving students a ‘clearer sense of career direction; a greater understanding of their interests, strengths, and weaknesses; and a greater sense of preparedness for the future’ (p. 59). If people are already in work, there are numerous strategies to help work become more meaningful, including encouraging people to engage in active ‘job crafting’, involving physical and/or cognitive changes in the way they approach their job (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Job crafting may be further facilitated by career counselling (Dik et al., 2009), involving quasi-therapeutic activities and conversations to help people construe their work as more meaningful. This may involve perspective-shifting (Wrzesniewski, 2003), such as connecting one’s work activities to larger narratives of meaning (e.g., ‘providing for one’s family’, or serving a particular ideal).

So, the three main psychological resources of engagement are using one’s strengths, managing one’s emotions, and finding one’s work meaningful. The crucial question now is how can we structure work so that people have the *opportunity* to develop these resources? We will address this question over the remaining sections, beginning with ‘the body’, i.e., the physical conditions of work.

The body

Wellbeing at work isn’t simply a question of having the right psychological resources; the physical conditions of work matter too. In terms of the LIFE model, here we are concerned with the domain of the body, i.e., the material demands made on one’s body, and the physical environment it is in. In the J

D-R model, engagement is the result of a favourable balance of resources and demands, whereas if demands exceed resources, the outcome is work-related stress. The three psychological drivers detailed above constitute resources. Now we consider the other side of the equation, i.e., demands/stressors. From an APP perspective, while in the first section our prerogative was enhancing resources, here our concern is with ameliorating demands. Sauter et al. (1990) outline six categories of stressors: (1) workload and work pace; (2) role stressors (e.g., task-conflict); (3) career concerns; (4) scheduling; (5) interpersonal relationships; and (6) job content and control. Three of these pertain to the body, namely (1), (4) and (6). Additionally, there is the issue of health and safety, which a meta-analysis found to be the most consistent job-demand across different industries (Nahrgang et al., 2011). So, we will look in turn at health and safety, workload and scheduling, and job content and control.

Health and safety

Health and safety provision is a crucial factor in work wellbeing (Kelloway & Day, 2005), and a core component of the American Psychological Association's (APA) (1999) definition of a psychologically healthy workplace (see box below). Workplace hazards are a major concern, being a risk-factor for psychological issues such as burnout (Nahrgang et al., 2011) and physical problems up to and including mortality (approximately 2 million work-related deaths occurred worldwide in 2000 alone; World Health Organisation, 2008). Health and safety issues can be addressed at both an individual level (helping people to work safely) and an organisational level (establishing protocols to ensure safety). For example, among the most prevalent work-related issues is musculoskeletal disorders (Kennedy et al., 2010). Individual-level interventions addressing this include exercise programmes (e.g., stretching; da Costa & Vieira, 2008) and education interventions (e.g., safe handling of objects; Daltroy et al., 1997). Sedentary jobs carry health and safety risks too, addressed by initiatives around the ergonomic design of work stations, e.g., adaptive chair/keyboard postures (Brewer et al., 2006). At a more organisational level, health and safety is addressed through measures like the systematic regulation and inspection of work premises (Tompa et al., 2007).

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CASE STUDIES . . .

There are various initiatives to recognise good work practices, like the APA's (1999) Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program (PHWP). The PHWP identifies good work practices according to five categories: work–life balance; health and safety; employee

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involvement (e.g., in decision making); employee development; and employee recognition. The first two of these pertain to this section on the body. Regarding work–life balance, good practice includes flexible work arrangements (e.g., flexi-time and telecommuting) and assistance with childcare and eldercare. In terms of health and safety, good practice includes health and safety training, initiatives to help employees lead healthy lifestyles (e.g., stress management, weight loss and smoking cessation programmes) and access to fitness facilities. Since 1999, the PHWP has been running an award programme to highlight ‘exemplary organizations.’ In the four winning organisations for 2013, 84% of employees were satisfied with their jobs (vs. 67% across the USA generally), and less than 19% experienced chronic work stress (vs. 35% nationally). If you work for an organisation, how would it fare on these metrics, and how might it be improved?

Health and safety also encompasses the quality of the work environment. The physical conditions in which we work affect not only wellbeing (Salonen et al., 2013), but also performance, with 15% of employees reporting that building-related issues impede their productivity (Bergs, 2002). One factor is light: regular exposure to daylight enhances mental and physical health; if artificial light is used it must be sufficient, and adjustable by employees (Ulrich et al., 2008). A second issue is temperature: extremes can impair physical and mental health; the aim should be to set levels within a ‘thermal comfort’ range (sufficient to protect health) of 18–24°C (Ormandy & Ezratty, 2012). A third concern is noise: excessive levels – i.e., above 85 decibels (equivalent to a hairdryer) – impede wellbeing, with around 22 million workers in the USA exposed to hazardous levels at work (Basner et al., 2014). Another factor is air quality: while breathing problems usually only occur above 20,000 ppm (parts per million), deterioration in cognitive performance can happen from 600 ppm (Satish et al., 2012). It is thus recommended that levels ideally be kept below 1,000 ppm via effective ventilation (Steskens & Loomans, 2010). Finally, while not strictly a health and safety issue, the aesthetics of the environment also contributes to wellbeing. This is nicely conveyed by Dalke et al. (2006), who outline the impact of the thoughtful use of colour in hospitals, which affects both the occupational wellbeing of staff and the clinical wellbeing of patients. In designing workplaces from an APP perspective, all these factors would ideally be taken into account.

Workload and scheduling

A second key stressor, which could also be deemed a health and safety issue, is workload (Sauter et al., 1990). Excessive working hours are a problem across

different industries, from haulage to higher education (e.g., 80% of lecturers report being overworked!; Sparks et al., 2013). Sparks et al.'s meta-analysis found that excessive working hours were linked to multiple physical and mental health issues, including heart disease, exhaustion and anxiety. Excessive hours also have a detrimental social and relational impact. For example, 75% of UK politicians report that their work causes/exacerbates family problems (Weinberg et al., 2013). From an APP perspective, regulations that limit excessive hours are desirable. In the UK, in 1998 the Health and Safety Executive implemented the European Working Time Directive into law, imposing a maximum weekly working time of not more than 48 hours over seven days, with extra precautions for night work, e.g., conducting health assessments on workers. (That said, the current UK government is seeking to remove this protection, which shows the impact of societal factors like political legislation on work environments, as discussed further below.) A related issue is work scheduling (the fourth of Sauter et al.'s six stressors). Circadian rhythms are disrupted by shift rotation of night work, impeding mental and physical health (Ettner & Grzywacz, 2001). Recommendations for minimising these effects include having eight-hour shifts with later changeovers (7am rather than 6am), and not rotating the shift pattern too rapidly, thus allowing people to acclimatise to shifts changes (Tucker et al., 1998).

TRY ME! . . .

What is your own workload like? Whether you are working, studying or occupied in other ways (e.g., volunteering), how much of your time is taken up with these activities? In Chapter 4, we encouraged you to keep a record for one week of the number of hours spent on various activities. Focus here on the number of hours you recorded for work activities (however you choose to define this), including time spent commuting. Do you exceed the European Working Time Directive of 48 hours per week? If so, are there ways you could possibly reduce your workload? Try to come up with five practical ideas for how you might do so. Over the next five weeks, try out each of these ideas for one week at a time.

Job content and control

A third key stressor is job content and control. Repetitive content with little control over one's activity is a major barrier to two of the psychological drivers of engagement, i.e., using strengths and aligning purpose. As Sauter et al. (1990, p. 1153) put it, 'narrow, fragmented, invariant and shortcycle tasks . . . provide little stimulation, allow little use of skills or expression of creativity

and have little intrinsic meaning for workers'. Such work is detrimental to wellbeing and even physical health (Steptoe et al., 1997). Conversely, engagement is promoted by giving people opportunities to use and develop their skills, and autonomy to shape their job content. It is under such conditions that people are more likely to experience flow in their work activities (Bakker, 2005). Such conditions also allow people to invest their work with care and even love, as expressed beautifully in Robert Pirsig's (1974) philosophical autobiography (in which he describes finding value and meaning in technical activities such as fixing motorcycles). Unfortunately, many employees do not enjoy such freedom. Particular occupations are especially liable to job content and control issues, such as call centre work, which employs 3.5% of the UK workforce (Hudson, 2011). Call centres can often have dehumanising features, such as repetitive, de-personalised actions (e.g., pre-determined scripts), and intrusive monitoring (e.g., of toilet breaks). Unsurprisingly, such work is emotionally exhausting, since from a J D-R perspective, demands greatly outweigh resources (Lewig & Dollard, 2003). As such, we can see that the material conditions of work are to an extent dependent on the cultural and structural nature of the work environment, as the next two sections explore.

Culture

We now turn to the intersubjective aspects of work. Essentially, here we are focusing on the value of good work relationships. From a J D-R perspective, relationships are a key work resource (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), conducive to mental (Simon et al., 2010) and physical health (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). Conversely poor relationships, one of Sauter et al.'s (1990) six stressors, hinder wellbeing. While we are interested in good relationships, in a broader sense, we can appreciate that interactions are embedded within a wider organisational *culture* of norms and values, which Parker et al. (2003) call the 'psychological climate'. Kets de Vries (2001) describes workplaces with a positive climate as *authentizotic* organisations (combining the Greek words *authentekos* and *zoteekos*, meaning authentic and vital to life, respectively). Rego and Pinae Cunha (2008) argue that such organisations are characterised by six factors: a spirit of camaraderie; trust in/of the leader; open communication; opportunities for personal development; fairness (a sense of justice); and the facilitation of a good work-life balance. These factors represent 'meta-values' that allow employees to experience the psychological drivers of engagement discussed above, from using one's strengths to finding meaning/purpose in work.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CASE STUDIES . . .

There are initiatives to recognise companies that foster a positive work climate. These have parallels with the APA's (1999) PHWP, except the emphasis is on the *relational culture* of an organisation. For example, Levering's (1988) *A Great Place to Work* initiative assesses workplaces on five key qualities (which overlap with Rego and Cunha's (2008) criteria for authentic organisations): camaraderie, respect, credibility, fairness and pride. Since 1997, Levering's institute has produced a list of the '100 best companies to work for', surveying over 10 million employees across 45 countries, published annually by the business magazine *Fortune* (Moskowitz et al., 2013). The top company in 2013 was Google, whose stated philosophy is 'to create the happiest, most productive workplace in the world' (Stewart, 2013). Bulygo (2013) suggests that Google's 'unique culture' is the result of detailed data analysis by its 'People Analytics' (HR) team, with continual 'testing to find ways to optimize their people, both in terms of happiness and performance'. An illustration of Google's attention to detail is in its approach to food! Not only are employees treated to free, healthy meals, the eating environment is deliberately structured to foster positive interactions. For example, queuing time is maintained at an optimal three to four minutes: minimal enough to ensure employees do not get frustrated at wasting time, yet sufficient to create opportunities for interaction. How do you feel about interaction being calibrated in this way?

From an APP perspective, the crucial question is how to *create* good organisational climates. We can briefly consider three ways: promoting positive *relationships*; effective *leadership*; and *values*-driven enquiry. First, we can engender good *relationships* in various ways. We could approach this issue from a structural perspective (i.e., in interobjective terms) by creating systems and processes that facilitate interaction. An illustration of this is Google's catering, outlined above; another might be the creation of mentoring programmes, where systematic attention is paid to the creation of nurturing relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Similarly, from a remedial perspective, if relationships are failing, a good climate can be restored through supportive mediation services (Ridley-Duff & Bennett, 2011). More generally, social capital can be promoted structurally through enhancing the quality of 'network ties' between employees, with systems in place to encourage interconnection, collaboration and effective communication, rather than people being isolated in silos (Bolino et al., 2002). Other interventions can be more intersubjective, such as activities to engender the desired type of positive and supportive interactions. People might be coached or otherwise encouraged to use good communication strategies, like active-constructive

responding with colleagues (Avolio et al., 1999), as introduced in Chapter 4. PPIs like LKM also serve to improve workplace relationships (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

In the creation of a work culture, a crucial role is played by the **leadership**, who Linley et al. (2009) call ‘climate engineers’. Around two-thirds of the variance in work fulfilment is attributable to the quality of leadership (van Marrewijk, 2004). Beyond just managing people (e.g., delegating work), leadership involves ‘mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations’ (Kouzes & Pozner, 1987, p. 30). High-quality leadership is captured in overlapping constructs, including transformational (Bass, 1991), charismatic (House, 1977) and spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). So, what makes a high-quality leader? Arnold et al. (2007) outline four dimensions: idealised influence (exemplary conduct that engenders respect/trust), inspirational motivation (encouraging people to exceed their own expectations), intellectual stimulation (enabling autonomy of thought and action), and individualised consideration (humanistic regard/care for employees). Moreover, in a top-down way, leaders’ values can percolate through an organisation, creating a climate in which employees are encouraged to also adopt such values (Peterson & Park, 2006). Given the importance of leaders, good leadership selection processes are vital. It is also important to have systems in place so that leaders themselves can be managed and supported, with checks/balances that can prevent coercive power hierarchies from developing (Vanderslice, 1988), as destructive leadership can occur if unchecked power degenerates into a cult of personality, with adverse outcomes for those out of favour with the leadership (Padilla et al., 2007). Leaders can also turn to executive coaches to improve their leadership skills (Grant et al., 2009).

REFLECTION . . .

Have you ever been guided by a leader who you felt was particularly impressive? This does not have to be in a work context – leadership matters in all areas of life, from the lofty heights of a politician leading a country, to the micro-case of a person making decisions in any given social situation. What particular qualities did the leader possess that made that person stand out for you? Now reflect on whether there are any situations in your life in which you yourself have, or could have, a leadership role? How could you bring Arnold et al.’s (2007) qualities to bear on this situation, providing idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration?

Finally, we can examine **values**, which are not only the property of individuals, but can be embodied in organisations, both intersubjectively (e.g., held conjointly

by its members) and interobjectively (e.g., enshrined in governance charters). For example, from a strengths perspective, we can identify ‘organisational-level virtues’ (Peterson & Park, 2006, p. 1152). One approach to the *development* of organisational values is Spiral Dynamics (Beck & Cowan, 1996), introduced in the last chapter. In Spiral Dynamics, the developmental stages apply not only to people, but to cultures, which can also be encouraged to progress up the spiral. Van Marrewijk (2004) suggests that many companies operate at the intersection of ‘blue’ (order) and ‘orange’ (success) values; the result is a ‘shareholder approach’, where the overriding concern is with short-term financial profits (*orange*), achieved through employee obedience and organisational discipline (*blue*). However, organisations can be encouraged to evolve to a more progressive ‘stakeholder approach’, involving greater consideration of their wider social responsibilities (*green* values), and long-term strategising about how to foster the healthy, sustainable development of the organisation itself (*yellow* values). This evolution can be promoted by teaching the Spiral Dynamics model to leaders, helping them understand how value systems affect employee wellbeing and the success of the company, and how as climate engineers they themselves can play a key role in fostering organisational development (Robinson & Harvey, 2008). Spiral Dynamics does not only apply to business contexts, but can promote cultural change more generally, and as such has been deployed as a conflict resolution strategy in the Middle East (Volckmann & Maalouf, 2013) and the former Yugoslavia (Stambolovic, 2002).

TRY ME! . . .

A popular value-driven approach to organisational change is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI originated in the work of Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), who explored ways to help organisations fulfil their potential. AI is a strengths-based approach: it involves recognising aspects of an organisation that are *already* good, and then cultivating these. Whitney and Cooperrider (2000) developed an AI protocol involving four stages (the 4D model): *Discovery* (reflecting on the organisation’s signature strengths); *Dream* (identifying aspirations and imagining the organisation at its best); *Design* (developing concrete plans for achieving desired goals); and *Delivery/destiny* (putting these plans into action). One strength of the AI model is that it is non-prescriptive and flexible, and practitioners have latitude in how they apply it in practice (Bushe, 2011). AI interventions can range from a brief one-hour session with a few leaders, to a comprehensive exercise lasting months, involving the entirety of a workforce. Perhaps you could try conducting an AI session with an organisation that you are part of. What might you achieve?

This section has discussed how the cultural values of an organisation impact upon the wellbeing of its members. However, these values are not only manifested in the nebulous form of a psychological climate, but can be instantiated in the actual structure and operation of organisations, as we explore next.

Society

Finally, we turn to the structural aspects of organisations: the overarching systems and processes that govern their operation. From a critical perspective, workplaces are not simply aggregations of people, but are hierarchical institutions, structured by power relations (Becker & Marecek, 2008). Thus, as Foucault (1973) recognised, we must be sensitive to issues around coercive power, like compulsory conformity. To understand these issues, we need to appreciate the inherent *insecurity* of modern work. For a start, there are not enough jobs to go round. In the UK in 2013, for example, 7.8% of the labour force was unemployed, with 2.5 million people looking for but unable to find work. Moreover, those *in* work are often insecure. This is partly due to the perilous economic climate since the 2008 financial crash. It is also due to dominant values in the corporate world, particularly the influence of a doctrine of ‘shareholder primacy’, which sees the main duty of a corporation as being to maximise shareholder returns, with the wellbeing of employees or stakeholders a secondary consideration (Jacobson, 2012). This doctrine has led to the ‘financialization’ of the labour market (Phillips, 1993), in which corporate downsizing and declining wages for workers are considered expedient ways to raise corporate profits (Winpenny, 1999). Financialization is aided by political actions, including labour market deregulation, which erode workers’ rights (Benería, 2001). Indeed, the current UK government aims to make its workforce the ‘most flexible in Europe’ (HM Treasury, 2011, p. 5) – flexibility being a euphemism for deregulation – achieved through ‘the lowest burdens from employment regulation in the EU’ (p. 6).

These structural factors (i.e., the insecure nature of modern work) adversely affect the wellbeing factors above, such as Sauter et al.’s (1990) work stressors. For instance, deregulation proposed by the UK’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013) includes ‘relaxing’ rules around health and safety, such as opting out of the working time directive (a regulation which alleviates workload issues). The threat of redundancy, a major stressor, has increased sharply in recent years: in the UK in 2011, 40% of the UK workforce reported feeling insecure in their jobs, up from 33% in 2004 (van Wanrooy et al., 2013). Issues around job content and lack of job control are also common in many occupations, with call centres being a paradigm case, as discussed above (Lewig & Dollard, 2003). From a J-D-R perspective, such stressors can hinder the psychological drivers of engagement. For instance, job insecurity undermines PsyCap

qualities such as optimism and hope. Alternatively, these structural stressors can skew the psychological drivers in pernicious ways. For instance, in light of issues around coercive power, a troubling aspect of ‘aligning values’ – one of Crabb’s (2011) three psychological drivers – is the compulsion workers may feel to align *their* values to fit in with a corporate ethos (rather than choosing work that is consonant with their values), or else risk unemployment (Ehrenreich, 2009). For example, some workers in the financial sector are reported as being pressured to engage in practices they would not voluntarily assent to, like (mis)selling financial products (Chakraborty, 2013). Aside from the wider social harm caused by such practices, coercion into behaviours contrary to one’s values can be detrimental to the wellbeing of the workers themselves (Giacalone & Promislo, 2010). Thus, in many ways, structural aspects of work, including political/economic macrosystems, affect work conditions and employee wellbeing.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CASE STUDIES . . .

The recognition that structural aspects of work impact upon wellbeing is not new. Indeed, the struggle for better working conditions has been ongoing for centuries, most notably in the form of the trade union movement (Laybourn, 1997). Historically, the movement has faced considerable opposition. In 1799–1800, fearful of a civil uprising, the UK government criminalised trade unionism: anyone who ‘combined with another to gain an increase in wages or a decrease in hours’ faced three months in prison. However, public unrest saw the laws repealed in 1824, and the trade union movement began to develop rapidly. However, with political power still much in the hands of a wealthy aristocracy, it faced considerable opposition. For example, in 1834, six agricultural workers from the village of Tolpuddle, the so-called Tolpuddle Martyrs, were arrested for joining a union and were deported to Australia. Since then, the movement has had its successes and its defeats. In 1900 the Labour Party was created in the UK – known initially as the Labour Representation Committee – to represent the interests of workers in parliament, and in 1924 took power for the first time, with six periods in office since. The movement endured a difficult time during Margaret Thatcher’s premierships as her Conservative government sought to reduce union power, with the miners’ strike from 1983 to 1984 being a particularly bitter and protracted confrontation (McLaughlin, 2005). Today, around 6.5 million people belong to a trade union in the UK, and although this is a decline from 13.5 million in 1979, it shows the continuing relevance of trade unions to many workers (Musafer, 2012).

Given these macro-level structural factors (e.g., the insecurity of the labour market), what role can PP play in this context? The distinction above between POS and POB appears to suggest two alternatives. From a POB perspective, PP is

mainly about helping people deal with the realities of modern work, e.g., fostering resilience towards job insecurity. However, with this approach, there is a danger of PP being used to uphold and even justify structural aspects of work that are detrimental to wellbeing. For instance, rather than challenging a culture of downsizing, one could imagine PP being used to help companies downsize more efficiently. Indeed, Chris Peterson, one of the founders of PP, is reported as saying that 'hard-headed corporate culture' is 'leading the way' in using PP to 'get more out of fewer workers' (cited in Ehrenreich, 2009, p. 170). Such remarks give ammunition to critical theorists like Ehrenreich, who argue that PP pays insufficient attention to social context, and, more perniciously, is even used to justify the status quo, e.g., encouraging people to be resilient to their social situation, rather than helping them to *change* this situation. However, Ehrenreich (2009) suggests that we could imagine a 'more liberal' version of PP being 'a movement to alter social arrangements in the direction of greater happiness', such as 'advocating more democratically organized workplaces' (p. 170). This 'more liberal' version is reflected in the employee-driven POS, which is concerned with helping organisations promote the wellbeing of its employees, not as a means to greater productivity, but as a valuable end in itself (Cameron & Caza, 2004).

Employee wellbeing and organisational productivity are not necessarily oppositional, however, but can be synergistic. As such, perhaps the most persuasive message PP can offer organisations is that the organisation itself will do better if it takes care of its employees. It is no accident that Google, the No. 1 'Great Place to Work' in 2013, is also one of the world's most successful companies. A positive work culture is a key factor in attracting and retaining the best applicants (Smith, 2013). Indeed, this culture can matter even more to people than remuneration: cost-benefit analyses reveal that workers make a trade-off between trust and wages – an increase in social capital of one-third is 'equivalent' to a one-third increase in wages (Helliwell & Huang, 2010). Moreover, engaged employees are more productive, which of course impacts upon business outcomes (Harter et al., 2003). Furthermore, ethical behaviour by organisations – including but not limited to treatment of employees – can be rewarded via ethical consumer decision making: the ethical market in the UK is worth £47.2 billion (up from £13.5 billion in 1999), with 50% of consumers avoiding products based on a company's responsible reputation (up from 44% in 2000) (The Cooperative, 2012). Of course we would argue that employee wellbeing is an important and worthy goal in its own right. However, we are realistic in recognising that the chances of organisations taking an interest in APP depends on PP helping to promote the success of the *organisation*. In that sense, even if only for their own success, we urge all organisations to take a close interest in the wellbeing of their members.

SUMMARY – THIS CHAPTER HAS...

- Differentiated positive organizational behaviour and positive organizational scholarship
- Introduced the Job Demands-Resources (J D-R) model
- Discussed the psychological drivers of engagement: focusing strengths, managing emotions and aligning purpose
- Identified work stressors, including health and safety, workload and scheduling, and job content and control
- Introduced the notion of authentic organizations and psychological climate
- Articulated the importance of leadership in creating organisational-level values
- Contextualised the discussion around work in terms of broader political and economic factors

QUIZ...

- 1 What are the three components of Schaufeli et al.'s (2006) engagement construct?
- 2 How many distinct strengths are identified in the VIA taxonomy?
- 3 What four qualities comprise the PsyCap construct?
- 4 Which song did Chris Hadfield sing aboard the International Space Station?
- 5 What does the acronym ABCDE stand for?
- 6 What is the maximum number of working hours per week permitted by The European Working Time Directive?
- 7 In 2013, which organisation was judged by the Great Place to Work institute as the best company to work for?
- 8 What are the four stages of Whitney and Cooperrider's (2000) 4D AI model?
- 9 In 2011, what percentage of the UK workforce reported feeling insecure in their jobs?
- 10 How many people currently belong to a trade union in the UK?

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS...

- Regarding strengths, for the VIA approach visit www.viacharacter.org, and for the Realise2 model visit www.capeu.com/realise2.aspx.
- For information on health and safety at work in the UK, including regulations and rights, see the Health and Safety Executive website (www.hse.gov.uk). For the US equivalent, see the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (www.cdc.gov/niosh).

- In terms of recognising good workplace practices, the APA's Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program can be found at www.apaexcellence.org, and the Great Place to Work initiative at www.greatplacetowork.com.
- If you are interested in the trade union movement, and even in joining one, in the UK most trade unions are affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (see www.tuc.org.uk for details). For readers outside the UK, see the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-csi.org).