

CHAPTER 5



Personality and Positive Emotion

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Are some people happier, prouder, or more content than others, and if so, why? How do a person's goals and the ways they pursue them affect their emotional lives? How are people's emotional lives affected by the ways they select, interpret, and respond to situations and manage their emotions? To answer such questions, personality psychology has increasingly focused on understanding the critical role that emotions play in people's lives. Much like other areas of psychology, in recent years, there has been a particular uptick of interest in understanding positive emotions.

Personality psychology is concerned with the organization of attributes and processes that characterize the whole person. Researchers working within this diverse and vibrant field take a variety of approaches that vary in their emphases, methods, and assumptions. Our goal in this chapter is to review selectively and highlight some of the approaches that have investigated positive emotions and personality. We have organized this chapter around three major approaches to studying emotion from a personality perspective. First, we examine individual differences in the tendency to experience and express positive emotions by examining links between personality traits and positive emotion.

Second, we examine how motivational processes produce and affect positive emotional experiences. Third, we focus on regulatory and coping processes by which people generate, modulate, and alter positive emotions.

Trait Approaches

Although the term "trait" does not have a single, universal definition in personality psychology, trait approaches generally focus on identifying characteristic patterns of behavior, thought, or feeling that are stable over substantial time intervals and that differ between individuals. Within the domain of individual differences in experience and behavior, there are several ways to use trait approaches to understand positive emotions. First, we can examine how positive emotions fit into a larger model of personality structure. In this chapter, we focus on the role of positive emotions within the Big Five model of personality traits. Second, because emotions have experiential, cognitive, and behavioral components, it is also possible to examine positive emotions themselves from a trait perspective. Researchers using this approach examine individual differences in the tendency to experience positive

emotional states, as well as in cognitive and behavioral aspects of emotional processes.

How Are Positive Emotions Related to the Big Five Personality Traits?

Over the last 30 years or so, many researchers have consolidated their efforts around a unifying structural model of traits, the Big Five (also known as the five-factor model). The Big Five first emerged from analyses of the trait words represented in the English lexicon; factor analyses of ratings of these traits revealed five replicable factors. Later work has replicated this structure in a number of other languages, and although questions remain about its universality across different cultures, it has proven to be a useful framework for many research purposes (Saucier & Srivastava, in press). The Big Five organizes personality traits into five broad domains: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness. Rather than providing a complete model of personality traits, these five domains represent one level of a hierarchy, with finer-grained distinctions possible within each of these domains, and perhaps higher-order groupings possible among them (Digman, 1997; John, Hampson, & Goldberg, 1991).

Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Emotion

Of the Big Five trait domains, Extraversion and Neuroticism have been most closely linked to individual differences in emotional experience and behavior. Extraversion (vs. introversion) is a continuum of individual differences defined by adjectives such as *talkative*, *assertive*, *active*, *energetic*, and *outgoing* at the high end, and *quiet*, *reserved*, *shy*, and *silent* at the low end (John & Srivastava, 1999). Although these adjectives do not explicitly refer to emotions, Extraversion has been consistently associated with measures of positive affect, as well as with the frequency of positive affective states in daily life (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Lucas & Fujita, 2000; Watson & Clark, 1997).

Neuroticism (vs. emotional stability) is a continuum of individual differences defined by the tendency to feel anxious, nervous, sad, and tense at the high end and calm, even-tempered, and emotionally stable at the low end (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Neuroticism has consistently been linked to the experience of negative affect (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Lucas & Fujita, 2000; Watson & Clark, 1997). At a descriptive level, there is fairly robust evidence showing that highly extraverted people tend to experience more positive affect than less extraverted people, and highly neurotic people tend to experience more negative affect than less neurotic people (see also DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Research has supported the hypothesis that extraversion (but not neuroticism) is a significant predictor of positive mood susceptibility, whereas neuroticism (but not extraversion) is a significant predictor of negative mood susceptibility (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991).

In addition to broadly measured positive affect, extraversion is related to measures of a variety of discrete positive emotions. In one study, extraversion was related to self-reports of all seven positive emotions that were measured: joy, contentment, pride, love, compassion, amusement, and awe (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006), supporting the relationship between extraversion and positive emotions in general. Relationships between neuroticism and positive affect and emotion have been less robust, although neuroticism has been linked to the experience of less self-reported joy, contentment, pride, and love (Shiota et al., 2006).

Temperamental Explanations. Several theories offer explanations for the mechanisms linking extraversion and neuroticism to emotional experience. Temperamental accounts point to biologically based individual differences in positive and negative reactivity and in self-regulation that emerge early in development (Evans & Rothbart, 2007). Research using parent reports, behavioral observation, and laboratory assessment has identified extraversion/surgency and negative affectivity as dimensions of individual differences early in life (Rothbart, 2007; Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000). Research in adults has shown that these dimensions of temperament are related to extraversion and neuroticism, respectively (Rothbart et al., 2000).

More specifically, other theorists have proposed that extraversion and neuroticism reflect individual differences in biologically based systems of response to reward and

punishment. J. A. Gray (1970) proposed two systems: a behavioral activation system (BAS) that is sensitive to signals of reward, motivates approach behavior, and is characterized by positive emotion; and a behavioral inhibition system (BIS) that is sensitive to signals of punishment, motivates avoidance behavior, and is characterized by negative emotion. Eysenck conceptually linked BAS with Extraversion and BIS with Neuroticism (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). A later factor analysis linked together the traits of reward sensitivity, BAS, Extraversion, and positive affect on the one hand, and the traits of punishment sensitivity, BIS, Neuroticism, and negative affect on the other. The authors found that the first factor predicted daily positive affect, and the latter predicted daily negative affect (Zelinski & Larsen, 1999).

Transactional Explanations. Whereas temperamental accounts propose a biologically based direct link between traits and emotion, transactional accounts propose that extraverts engage differently with the social world than do introverts; that is, extraverts differ from introverts in their proactive or reactive person–environment transactions. Proactive transactions occur when people consciously or unconsciously select their situations or modify the situations in which they find themselves. For example, the sociability of extraverts offers one explanation for their greater positive emotion: Social relationships are a frequent and important source of positive emotions (e.g., Clark & Watson, 1988; Diener & Seligman, 2002), and it is possible that extraverts experience more positive emotion because they engage in more social activity (the *social participation hypothesis*; Srivastava, Angelo, & Vallereux, 2008). Reactive transactions occur when different people experience the same situation in different ways. For example, it is possible that extraverts derive greater enjoyment from socializing with others, leaving them with greater net positive affect than introverts (the *social reactivity hypothesis*; Srivastava et al., 2008).

Independent, replicated empirical tests have supported the social participation hypothesis but not the social reactivity hypothesis. Specifically, people at the high and low ends of the extraversion continuum respond with similar degrees of positive

emotion to social situations, but extraverts spend more time with others (Lucas, Le, & Dyrenforth, 2008; Srivastava et al., 2008). Even after social participation is statistically controlled for, however, a majority of the association between extraversion and positive affect remains unexplained, suggesting that social participation is only part of the story.

Motivational Explanations. Recent research suggests that extraversion is related to which emotional states people want to have and value. Although people have a general preference for positive over negative affect (Kämpfe & Mitte, 2009; Västfjäll, Gärling, & Kleiner, 2001), individuals also differ in the value they place on various emotional states. Consistent with the transactional approach, part of why extraverts experience greater positive emotions may be because they *want to* and actively seek out opportunities to experience positive emotions. For example, when participants rate typical affective experience and desired affective experience, those who score higher on extraversion report desiring greater pleasant affect than do more introverted people, a pattern that matches what they report feeling on average (Augustine, Hemenover, Larsen, & Shulman, 2010; Kämpfe & Mitte, 2009; Rusting & Larsen, 1995). In a longitudinal study over the course of a semester, extraversion was related to greater desire for both low- and high-activation positive affect (Augustine et al., 2010). In another study, extraverts preferred to experience happiness in effortful situations (e.g., taking a test), compared to introverts (Tamir, 2009a).

The *type* of positive emotion a person wants to feel also varies across people. “Ideal affect” refers to the types of emotions that individuals would like to experience in general. For example, some people value high-arousal positive emotions such as enthusiasm and excitement, whereas other people might value low-arousal positive affect, such as calm and relaxation. Ideal affect varies across cultures, as well as within cultures as a function of individual differences, including Extraversion (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006).

In addition to desiring and valuing positive affect, extraverts are also more likely to try to create, maintain, and increase their

experience of positive emotion using a variety of emotion regulation strategies (Livingstone & Srivastava, 2012). In particular, they are more likely to spend time with friends and seek out positive people in order to satisfy their goal of experiencing positive emotions, and more likely to savor the positive experiences when they do arise (Livingstone & Srivastava, 2012; see also Bryant, 2003). These conscious actions may explain why higher extraversion has been linked with a smaller discrepancy between desired and actual affect (e.g., Kämpfe & Mitte, 2009). We return to this research in more detail later in this chapter, when we discuss positive emotion regulation.

Other Big Five Traits and Positive Emotions

Although most research on positive emotions and the Big Five has focused on Extraversion, the other three traits of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience are also related to positive emotion, if more indirectly. Agreeableness is defined by characteristics such as *trustworthy, cooperative, modest, and altruistic* (John & Srivastava, 1999). Like Extraversion, it is related to interpersonal style, but it focuses on the intimacy of social connection and on maintaining warm, close relationships (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Tobin, Graziano, Vanman, & Tassinary, 2000). In a meta-analysis of the relationship between personality traits and well-being, the correlation between agreeableness-related traits and the experience of positive emotion was not significantly different than the correlation between extraversion-related traits and positive emotion (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Agreeableness also distinguishes very happy people from moderately happy people (Diener & Seligman, 2002).

Agreeableness has been linked with positive emotions related to interpersonal relationships, such as intimacy and cooperation: Those who score higher on agreeableness report experiencing more love and compassion, and their peers rate them as experiencing more love, supporting the link between agreeableness and positive interpersonal emotions (Shiota et al., 2006; see also Mitte & Kämpfe, 2008). Tobin and colleagues (2000) found that people who scored higher on agreeableness reported devoting more

effort to regulating their emotions, which is consistent with their greater sensitivity to the feelings of others.

Conscientiousness is defined by characteristics such as *organized, thorough, reliable, and persevering*, and represents a tendency to engage in self-regulation and to strive toward goals (John & Srivastava, 1999). Although one meta-analysis found that goal- and control-related traits did not predict greater positive affect in general (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), some research supports an indirect link between Conscientiousness and positive emotion (McCrae & Costa, 1991). Goal pursuit has been linked to the experience of positive emotion—particularly progress toward goals and an increase in the perceived rate of progress toward those goals (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000). Indeed, some research has shown that people who score higher in conscientiousness report feeling greater agency-focused emotions, specifically joy, contentment, and pride (Shiota et al., 2006), although other research has found that conscientiousness is related to slightly lower joy (Mitte & Kämpfe, 2008).

Openness to Experience is defined by characteristics such as *original, curious, and imaginative*, and involves preferences for novelty and aesthetic stimulation (John & Srivastava, 1999). It has been linked to self-ratings of joy, love, compassion, amusement, and awe, as well as to peer ratings of awe (Shiota et al., 2006). In other research, those scoring higher on Openness reported more interest, and slightly more contentment and love, compared to those scoring lower on Openness (Mitte & Kämpfe, 2008). Like Conscientiousness, it is likely that relationships between Openness and general positive affect are indirect (McCrae & Costa, 1991), via new and interesting experiences.

In summary, Extraversion has been linked broadly overall positive emotion, whereas Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience have been linked with discrete positive emotions that are more directly relevant to their domains. Though a relatively large amount of research links Extraversion to positive emotion, much more research is needed to explore the mechanisms linking specific positive emotions to the remaining Big Five traits. In addition, future research should investigate how sub-

domains of the Big Five factors, as well as possible higher-order traits, are related both to positive emotions in general and to specific positive emotions such as contentment, love, interest, and awe.

The Trait Approach to Positive Emotions

A second way to investigate positive emotions from a trait perspective involves identifying and examining characteristic patterns of feeling, thought, and behavior that are linked to positive emotions. Because emotions have experiential, cognitive, and behavioral components, individual differences in these components can be examined from a trait perspective. Researchers using this approach have investigated individual differences in the tendencies to feel general positive affect and specific positive emotions, in appraisal patterns that give rise to positive emotions, and in expressive behavior associated with the experience of positive emotions.

Subjective Experience

When positive emotion is measured as a state of subjective experience, it is possible to identify reliable individual differences in a tendency to experience happiness and other positive emotions. For example, in a 3-week daily diary study, the amount of variance in positive emotion between people was similar to the amount of variance within people (Nezlek & Kuppens, 2008). Studies that have taken a more short-term approach to measuring positive emotion over time have also found significant between-person variability (e.g., Srivastava et al., 2008). Thus, although almost every person experiences fluctuations in his or her own levels of happiness from moment to moment or day to day, there are reliable individual differences in average or typical levels of happiness.

Global measures of positive emotion also have trait-like properties, supporting the idea that some people are generally happier than others. The heritability of trait subjective well-being has been estimated to be around 50% (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996), and the heritability of trait positive affect has been estimated at around 30–40%, with the remaining variance largely reflect-

ing nonshared environment (Eid, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2003; Tellegen et al., 1988). These percentages are similar to heritability estimates for Big Five personality traits. Longitudinal studies of rank-order stability suggest that individual differences in positive affect are reasonably stable in adulthood. For example, in a sample of young adults in their 20s, positive affect had retest correlations of around .4 over a 6- to 7-year interval (Watson & Walker, 1996). By comparison, in a sample of older adults (ages 70–103), the 4-year stability of positive affect was about .7 (Kunzmann, Little, & Smith, 2000). This increase in stability with age is consistent with a broader finding in the personality change literature that rank-order stability of traits increases with age (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Thus, there is substantial consistency over the course of the lifespan in terms of the experience of positive emotion.

Theorists have proposed individual differences in the “set point” of happiness: People differ in how happy they are in general, and life events cause only temporary fluctuations away from a person’s baseline (Headey & Wearing, 1989). Research has shown that the set point model is probably overly simplistic: Major life events such as changes in employment and marital status produce relatively large changes in happiness in the short term, after which people partially (but not fully) return toward their preevent levels of happiness (Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006; Lucas, 2007). Thus, similar to contemporary views of Big Five personality traits, happiness seems to have a substantial but not complete core of stability, with room for life experiences and other factors to produce meaningful changes.

Beyond happiness or general positive affect, researchers have begun to examine specific positive emotions from a trait perspective as well. For example, research by Tracy and Robins (2007) has shown that individual differences in pride come in two varieties. Authentic pride, grounded in prosocial achievements, is positively associated with adjustment and with traits such as extraversion and agreeableness. In contrast, hubristic pride, grounded in self-aggrandizement, is associated with traits such as narcissism and shame-proneness.

Cognition and Appraisal

From a cognitive perspective, individual differences in emotional experience can arise from differences in the tendency to appraise events in certain ways, for example, “agency thinking,” or the tendency to believe that goals can be obtained (Tong, Fredrickson, Chang, & Lim, 2010). Differences in appraisals are likely to stem from a combination of affective traits, such as extraversion (the tendency to appraise events as potentially rewarding or positive) and neuroticism (the tendency to appraise events as potentially threatening or negative) on the one hand, and cognitive traits such as optimism (the tendency to expect positive outcomes), locus of control (the tendency to attribute events to oneself or external sources), and self-efficacy (belief in one’s coping ability; Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003).

Happy people also have patterns of cognition that reinforce their experience of positive affect (Abbe, Tkach, & Lyubomirsky, 2003; Lyubomirsky, 2001): They remember past events more positively, and react more positively to hypothetical scenarios and standardized situations than less-happy people (Lyubomirsky & Tucker, 1998). Thus, even when the events that the experiences are controlled, happy people seem to perceive, interpret, and remember events that they encountered more positively than unhappy people.

Behavior and Expression

Research also shows that people vary in their tendencies to express positive emotions, and that these differences have implications for the experience of positive emotion and well-being in general. Using self-report data, Gross and John (1997) found that trait-level positive expressivity was related to experienced positive affect, ego resilience, and lower depressive symptoms, whereas masking—hiding inner experience, or experiencing a discrepancy between inner experience and outer display—was associated with greater levels of experienced negative affect and depression.

Expanding on this idea, Mauss, Shallcross, and colleagues (2011) suggest that accurately expressing positive emotions is

crucial to social connection and enhances well-being. Dissociation between participants’ self-reported online ratings of positive affect and independent coders’ ratings of positive expression was associated with greater depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction, measured 6 months later. This relationship emerged even when researchers controlled for actual and experienced and expressed positive emotion, suggesting that the discrepancy, rather than raw levels, contributes to well-being. Furthermore, this relationship was mediated by lower social connectedness (lower perceived social support and greater loneliness) experienced by those with greater experience–behavior dissociation (Mauss, Shallcross, et al., 2011).

In summary, personality psychologists have examined individual differences in positive emotion both by use of existing trait frameworks (e.g., the Big Five) and investigation of patterns of feeling, thought, and behavior in positive affect and discrete positive emotions. Although traits are a key concept within personality psychology, the scope of personality psychology goes beyond broad, stable dispositions to include within-person processes that are more sensitive to context than are traits (McAdams, 2010). Next, we examine two areas of personality research that have explored individual differences in such contextualized processes: motivation and the self-regulation of emotions.

Motivational Approaches

The motivational perspective within personality psychology emphasizes individual differences in what people want and need, and processes by which they go about trying to achieve those aims. Whereas trait approaches characterize broad patterns of feeling, cognition, and behavior, motivational approaches often focus on contextualized processes that may change over time or across situations. The two approaches are often complementary. For example, at the level of broad traits, we can say that extraverted people typically desire to feel positive emotions; from a motivational approach, we might study how a person’s BAS influences behavior in situations that offer opportuni-

ties for rewards, and from an integrated perspective, we might examine how BAS functioning covaries with individual differences in extraversion.

Although there is no central theory of motivation that is comparable to the Big Five in the trait approach, many motivational approaches share some common characteristics. First, most models propose that discrepancies between one's current state and a particular end state motivate *approach* behaviors toward desired end states and *avoidance* behaviors away from undesired end states (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Carver & White, 1994; Elliot, 1999; Higgins, 1996; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Second, many personality models of motivation are hierarchical, with abstract, long-term concerns and values influencing time- and context-dependent goals that influence concrete behaviors (Elliot & Church, 1997; Emmons, 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Positive Emotions as Motivation

One important distinction within motivation literature is between approach and avoidance. Whereas negative emotions are typically associated with the motivation to avoid undesirable outcomes, positive emotions are generally associated with the motivation to approach desired outcomes (e.g., Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Approach motivation is thought to arise from the BAS, which is sensitive to cues of reward and motivates appetitive behavior (J. A. Gray, 1990). At the individual difference level, people vary in three facets of BAS activity: fun seeking, a desire for excitement and the tendency to seek out potentially fun situations; drive, a willingness to persevere to attain a desired outcome; and reward responsiveness, a tendency to experience strong positive affective reactions to rewarding events (Carver & White, 1994). All three BAS facets correlate moderately with Extraversion, positive affect, and with each other (Carver & White, 1994).

Individual differences in BAS activity have indirect implications for a person's typical experience of positive affect, via a person's dynamic interaction with the situation (Carver & White, 1994; Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000). Rather than implying high-baseline positive emotion, high BAS activ-

ity is associated with greater *sensitivity* to reward in the environment. In a laboratory study, trait extraversion predicted a person's starting happiness, whereas trait measures of drive and reward responsiveness predicted greater sensitivity to cues of reward (Carver & White, 1994). Other research suggests that higher BAS activity is associated with greater *exposure* to positive events: In a series of diary studies (Gable et al., 2000), participants who scored higher on BAS not only experienced more daily positive affect (Studies 2 and 3) but also experienced more daily positive events, which mediated the relationship between BAS and positive affect (Study 3). Focusing on the appetitive nature of the BAS, the authors suggested that the BAS might motivate people to seek out possibly rewarding experiences rather than influence their reactions to positive events. Research has also shown that BAS is associated with greater sensitivity to conditioned incentives, even when the stimulus might have been unpleasant prior to conditioning (Berkman, Lieberman, & Gable, 2009). This has important implications for understanding goal pursuit because many goals require doing an unpleasant task to achieve a desired outcome.

Several specific positive emotions also motivate approach-related behaviors. For example, although the emotion of pride is often thought of as an outcome of a successfully achieved goal (e.g., Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2006), there is some indication that pride may also serve to motivate further perseverance in goal-directed behavior (Williams & DeSteno, 2008). Recent research on individual differences in specific emotions has highlighted their role in motivational processes.

A second important distinction in motivational processes involves the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated activities are pursued because they are enjoyable or interesting, whereas extrinsically motivated activities are pursued in order to attain a desired outcome such as a reward or long-term goal, but are not intrinsically enjoyable (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to self-determination theory, activities that satisfy the fundamental human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are intrinsically rewarding and produce positive emotion throughout

engagement. In contrast, activities that are extrinsically motivated produce positive emotions only when the end goal is attained; the process itself, though it may be important, is not in itself enjoyable (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

One positive experience associated with intrinsic motivation is "flow," which occurs when a person is engaged in an intrinsically interesting activity that provides a good balance between the task's challenge and the person's skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In a state of flow, the person becomes absorbed in the task and loses awareness of the self and of the passage of time. Flow is associated with momentary feelings of interest, challenge, and competence, and is theorized to be associated with greater long-term positive affect. People who are prone to experience flow are described as "autotelic" (e.g., Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Autotelic individuals tend to experience greater psychological well-being in a number of domains (see Asakawa, 2010), but the relationship between the autotelic personality and the experience of specific positive emotions has yet to be investigated.

Related to flow are the positive emotions of interest (Izard, 1977) and curiosity (Kashdan, Rose, & Fincham, 2004). Interest, which occurs in novel or complex situations, motivates a desire to explore the environment and gather information, which may serve to promote personal growth, creativity, and intelligence (Fredrickson, 1998; Izard, 1977). Similarly, curiosity, a pleasurable emotional state that motivates approach behavior in the presence of novelty and challenge, includes two facets: exploration (the tendency to seek out novel and complex information) and absorption (the tendency to become fully engaged in intrinsically interesting experiences), an experience closely related to flow (Kashdan et al., 2004). Trait differences in curiosity have been linked both to greater subjective experience of positive affect, positive expectations for the future, and overall well-being, and to greater commitment, effort, and progress in goal pursuit (Kashdan et al., 2004).

Positive Emotion as Feedback

In addition to serving as motivation, emotion provides feedback about goal-related behav-

ior and our status in achieving or avoiding certain end states (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Higgins, 1987). One common view is that emotions arise from evaluations regarding the distance between one's current state and the goal. For example, Higgins (1987, 1996) proposed that people have internal representations of the person that they are (actual self), as well as the people they want to be in the future (ideal selves) and the people that society and others expect them to be (ought selves). In this model, positive emotions derive from perceived congruence between one's perceived self on the one hand, and ought and ideal selves on the other. That is, the closer one's perceived self is to one's desired self, the more happiness, contentment, and pride one should feel.

Carver and Scheier (1990) proposed an alternative model in which emotions arise not from evaluations about the distance between one's current state and one's goal, but from evaluations regarding the rate of progress made toward or away from such a goal. Specifically, positive emotions serve to signal sufficient progress: Elation or excitement occurs when a person perceives that he or she is reducing the distance between the current state and a desired goal at a rate faster than necessary, and relief, serenity, or contentment occur when the person perceives that he or she is increasing the distance between the current state and an aversive goal at a rate faster than necessary (Carver, 2003; Carver et al., 2000). In this case, positive emotion may serve to signal that a person can ease up on efforts related to that particular goal and focus attention elsewhere (Carver, 2003). Others have suggested that positive emotions such as pride may further motivate perseverance in future endeavors (Williams & DeSteno, 2008).

The Content and Organization of Goals

Whether motivating approach behavior or indicating sufficient progress toward an outcome, emotions arise in response to events that are relevant to a person's well-being and goals (Frijda, 1988). In other words, people vary in terms of which emotions are likely to arise in a given situation because they differ in terms of what matters to them: in the values they consider important (Schwartz, 1992), the personal strivings they are typically trying

to achieve (Emmons, 1986), and in the types of goals they are trying to pursue (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Thrash, 2002).

Goal *content* theories suggest that the type of goal or motive itself influences the experience of emotion. According to self-determination theory, people who pursue (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) and attain (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) intrinsically motivated goals, such as developing fulfilling social relationships and personal growth, experience greater positive emotion and well-being than those who pursue extrinsically motivated goals, such as obtaining wealth or social status. People also differ in their tendencies to adopt approach or avoidance goals. In one model, emotions arise from cognitive constructions of what people might become—either desired or feared possible selves—that vary among people and have implications for emotional experience (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Similarly, ideal and ought selves can be either promotion-focused (i.e., approach) or prevention-focused (i.e., avoidance) (Higgins, 1996). Elliot and Thrash (2002) linked approach goals to extraversion, positive temperament, and BAS, and avoidance goals to neuroticism, negative temperament, and BIS.

Self-efficacy also matters in determining which type of goal a person will adopt: When people perceive their competence within a domain to be high, they are more likely to form approach-oriented mastery goals (e.g., to learn as much as possible) or approach-oriented performance goals (e.g., to get a good grade) that orient them toward positive outcomes and emotions, whereas when people perceive their competence to be low, they are more likely to form avoidance-oriented performance goals (e.g., to avoid getting a bad grade) that orient them toward negative outcomes and emotions (Elliot & Church, 1997). Having a mastery goal is associated with the experience of greater positive affect in the face of a challenge, as well as with the experience of enjoyment, hope, and pride (Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2006). In contrast, having a performance goal is only associated with pride, and only when the goal is approach- (e.g., “pass this exam”), rather than avoidance-oriented (e.g., “don’t fail”; Pekrun et al., 2006).

Goal *organization* theories suggest that emotions are influenced by whether short-

term goals and behaviors are consistent within a person’s system of higher-order motives and values (Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1993). As previously noted, many theories propose a hierarchical structure of motivation within a person, and hypothesize that motivation is easier and more successful when the hierarchy is aligned. According to this perspective, people experience positive emotions and well-being when their goals are in line with their values, and when their actions support those goals. Indeed, positive emotions are more likely to arise when one’s behavior is consistent with deeply held values (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). For example, Cantor (1991) found that in a sample of college women, participants reported more positive emotions when they were engaged in situations that were relevant to important life tasks—that is, when behavior and values aligned.

In summary, positive emotions play important roles in the patterns of motivation that drive a person’s behavior. As motivators of approach behavior, individual differences in positive emotions have implications for people’s tendencies to seek out and obtain rewards. As feedback for successful goal progress or achievement, positive emotions reinforce successful behavior and maintain motivation. In addition, individual differences in the content and organization of goals, as well as differences in progress toward and achievement of goals, influence people’s experience of positive emotion.

Emotions are dynamic processes and play multiple roles in personality systems. Specifically, emotions can be both regulating, in that they drive and motivate behavior, and regulated, in that people can interact with those emotions in a way that influences how they unfold (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004). Motivational accounts of positive emotion illustrate emotions as regulating. Next, we turn to emotions as regulated, where people proactively or reactively change how they feel.

Coping and Emotion Regulation Approaches

Over the course of development, people learn to understand and manage their emotions, and to increase their emotional

competence—a process that involves learning over time (Buck, 1994). Personality psychologists who investigate these issues examine individual differences in the ways that people react to and cope with stressful situations, and the ways they regulate their positive and negative emotions—both reactively and proactively.

Positive Emotions in Negative Emotion Regulation and Coping

Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which a person attempts to change the emotions he or she feels, and how and when they are expressed (Gross, 1998). Most research has focused on strategies people use to decrease their feelings of negative emotions; some of these strategies have implications for the experience of positive emotion as well. For example, in correlational studies, trait-level use of *cognitive reappraisal*—changing the way you think in order to change your emotions—as a regulation strategy is associated with greater trait-level positive emotion, as well as less trait-level negative emotion (Gross & John, 2003). This may be in part because people who rely on reappraisal can transform negative experiences into neutral or positive ones. In contrast, trait use of *expressive suppression*, an emotion regulation strategy in which a person hides his or her display of emotion from others, has been associated with greater experience of negative emotion and less experience of positive emotion (Gross & John, 2003), though this is not necessarily the case for all cultures (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007).

People can also use mood repair strategies that draw upon positive emotions to get out of a negative mood: Relaxation-focused strategies (e.g., meditating, lying in the sun) can help people come out of a negative mood by drawing upon emotions such as contentment; pleasure-focused strategies (e.g., fantasize about pleasant things, comfort eating) can draw upon enjoyment and physical pleasure; and mastery-focused strategies (e.g., plan things to do, tidy up) can draw upon feelings of competence and pride (Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999). According to the absorption hypothesis of mood repair, these strategies help repair negative moods by redirecting working memory resources from

negative thoughts and feelings to thoughts and activities that are not compatible with negative mood (e.g., enjoyment; Erber, 1996). Thus, people can draw upon positive emotions in order to down-regulate negative emotions, and those who rely on strategies that do so are likely to experience more positive emotion.

In comparison to emotion regulation, *coping* refers to the thoughts and behaviors that people use to deal with situations that they appraise as stressful. Whereas emotion and mood regulation are typically responses to temporary states, coping includes attempts to manage one's emotions in the context of both short- and long-term stressors, such as a chronic illness (Gross, 1998). Coping can refer to an action taken in response to a stressful situation, or to an action taken in response to one's emotions within the situation (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Despite definitional focus on negative situations and experiences, studies of coping in daily life reveal that positive emotions occur frequently even within stressful situations (e.g., Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Positive emotions can provide temporary relief from constant negative affect during a stressful experience, provide cognitive and physical energy to cope with the problem at hand, and preserve social relationships during the stressful experience (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Certain coping strategies utilize positive emotions in coping with stressful events. For example, positive reappraisal involves cognitively framing a situation in a positive way (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; see also Gross, 1998), and problem-focused coping can increase a sense of control over the situation, and therefore feelings of competence and mastery. Individual differences in the use of positive emotions during stressful encounters should have implications for efficacy of the coping process itself and for long-term well-being. Both strategies have been associated with greater positive emotion, even in times of intense distress, such as caring for someone with AIDS (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

Additional research demonstrates that positive emotions play a role in *resilience*—the ability to adapt to and cope with negative situations and to recover quickly from such experiences. In one study, participants who scored higher on trait resilience

appraised a stressful task as less threatening and experienced a shorter period of cardiovascular arousal, an effect mediated by the experience of greater positive emotion during the task (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Even when the appraisal of threat was experimentally manipulated, people who scored higher on trait resilience experienced greater positive emotion during the stressor, which mediated cardiovascular recovery. In another study, people who scored higher on trait resilience before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks experienced greater positive emotions in combination with negative emotions, which in turn predicted psychological growth in the form of subjective well-being, tranquility, and optimism, in the wake of the attacks (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). Thus, it appears that in times of stress, resilient individuals utilize positive emotions that contribute to quicker physical and psychological recovery.

Up-Regulation of Positive Emotions

More recently, researchers have focused their attention on the up-regulation of positive emotions—the ways that people create, maintain, or enhance experiences of positive emotion for their own sake. Research suggests that people view the regulation of positive emotions as distinct from the regulation of negative emotions: People have separable beliefs about their abilities to cope with negative emotions and to up-regulate their positive emotions (Bryant, 1989). Bryant (2003) distinguishes among three forms of positive emotion up-regulation: savoring the present moment, reminiscing about the past, and anticipating positive experiences in the future. Self-reported individual differences in each of these processes are associated with the greater experience of positive emotion (Bryant, 2003).

Larsen and Prizmic (2004) include *savoring*—ruminating on the present—in their list of strategies people can use to up-regulate their positive emotions, along with helping others and using humor. Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) investigated the ways college students increase happiness (broadly defined) by asking them what they typically do to increase their happiness. A factor analysis revealed eight general strategies: social

affiliation, partying and clubbing, mental control, instrumental goal pursuit, passive leisure, active leisure, religion, and direct attempts. Some of these strategies (e.g., social affiliation, active leisure) were associated greater trait-level happiness, whereas others were unrelated to (e.g., passive leisure) or negatively associated with (e.g., mental control of negative thoughts) trait-level happiness.

In a series of studies, we systematically investigated the ways in which people up-regulate their positive emotions in everyday life, by consulting the research literature on coping, emotion regulation, and well-being, as well as participant-nominated strategies (Livingstone & Srivastava, 2012). In a preliminary study, we asked a sample of young adults to list the activities in which they engage when they want to create, maintain, or increase positive emotions. Supplementing this list with strategies suggested by the literature, we factor-analyzed 75 different activities and found three general strategy domains. In a second study, we examined self-reported individual differences in use of the three strategy domains and their relationships to trait positive emotion and well-being. In a third study, we examined the relationship between emotion regulation and positive emotion at a state level, using the day reconstruction method (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004).

Engagement strategies focus on interacting in a positive way with others and with the present moment, through savoring and social interaction. *Betterment* strategies focus on self-improvement goals and spiritual fulfillment. *Indulgence* strategies focus on the pursuit of momentary pleasure and include seeking immediate reward (by eating, shopping, or relaxing) and escapism (fantasizing). We examined correlations between these three strategy domains and positive emotion, both at the trait and state levels. Engagement strategies had a robust relationship with a variety of positive emotions at both trait and state levels. Betterment strategies were related to greater trait positive emotion, but lower state positive emotion, indicating a tradeoff between lower temporary pleasure but higher long-term satisfaction. Indulgence strategies were related to greater state positive emotion, but

lower trait positive emotion, indicating a tradeoff between momentary pleasure and long-term dissatisfaction.

Different positive emotion regulation strategies have implications for specific positive emotions. Presented below are correlations between the three strategy domains and specific emotions measured using either several items (composite measures) or a single item. Table 5.1 presents zero-order and partial correlations (controlling for the other two strategies) between strategy domains and specific positive emotions.

Engagement strategies were related to all specific positive emotions (with the exception of inspiration), even when we controlled for use of the other strategies. Betterment strategies, in contrast, were particularly related to agency-focused positive emotions such as interest, pride, and inspiration, as well as to future-oriented emotions such as hope and optimism. Indulgence strategies were unrelated to positive emotions, but when

we controlled for use of the other strategies, indulgence was related to lower levels of joy, happiness, contentment, and optimism. Thus, not all strategies for regulating positive emotions are equal in their relationships with the experience of positive emotion (see also Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

On the other hand, up-regulating emotions may not always be appropriate or functional. In some circumstances, overvaluing happiness was associated with lower well-being (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011). Specifically, for those with low life stress, individual differences in strongly valuing happiness (e.g., "I am concerned with my happiness even when I am happy") predicted lower well-being. When valuing happiness was experimentally manipulated, those who valued happiness experienced lower hedonic tone during a positive situation, but not a negative one. This suggests that placing too much emphasis on positive emotions can be counterproductive.

TABLE 5.1. Zero-Order and Partial Correlations between Trait-Level Positive Emotion Regulation Strategy Domains and Specific Positive Emotions

	Engagement		Betterment		Indulgence	
	<i>r</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>pr</i>
Composite measures						
Amusement	.30	.30	.07	-.12	.13	.01
Hope	.50	.46	.24	-.01	.12	-.12
Interest	.37	.26	.29	.15	.10	-.07
Joy	.51	.50	.21	-.07	.09	-.17
Love	.38	.36	.12	-.09	.14	-.02
Pride	.43	.31	.34	.18	.13	-.10
Single items						
Inspired	.30	.13	.41	.34	.09	-.10
Optimistic	.52	.52	.22	-.05	.07	-.18
Happy	.47	.49	.16	-.09	.06	-.19
Content	.42	.40	.22	.03	.02	-.20
Excited	.42	.40	.11	-.14	.18	.00
Enthusiastic	.40	.38	.15	-.07	.15	-.04
Pleased	.38	.28	.23	.04	.18	.04
Love	.35	.37	.08	-.11	.07	-.10
Affection	.29	.23	.12	-.04	.18	.07

Note. *N* = 270. Correlations greater than *r* = .20 are in **bold**.

Down-Regulation of Positive Emotions

Regulating positive emotions can also involve down-regulation, or dampening them (Gross, 1998). Down-regulation of positive emotions has received relatively less attention from researchers, but a few investigations have suggested that it is an important (if sometimes overlooked) domain of emotion regulation. Parrott (1993) suggested several motives for down-regulating a good mood, including social (e.g., to be considerate of others), nonsocial (e.g., to avoid distraction and improve concentration), and idiosyncratic (e.g., to prevent bad fortune) motives. Specifically, these motives for dampening positive emotions served to influence cognition and motivation in the service of some goal. Thus, the flexible down-regulation of positive emotions (and up-regulation of negative emotions) may serve to enhance psychological and social well-being.

In a similar vein, Tamir (2009b) proposed an instrumental theory of emotion regulation, in which people might (consciously or unconsciously) decrease positive emotions or increase negative ones if they expect the emotions to help them attain long-term goals. For example, in one study, people preferred to be in a neutral mood when meeting a stranger, and therefore dampened both positive and negative emotions (Erber, Wegner, & Theriault, 1996).

On the other hand, habitual and frequent down-regulation of positive emotions has been linked with negative well-being variables. For example, one series of studies found that, across a range of types of events, individuals with low self-esteem were more likely to dampen feelings of positive emotion and to have difficulty savoring positive emotion (Wood, Heimpel, & Michela, 2003).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have focused on trait, motivational, and self-regulatory approaches to studying positive emotions from a personality perspective. These approaches have provided a better understanding of individual differences in the experience and expres-

sion of emotion, and the processes that drive those individual differences. For example, we know that some people are happier, prouder, and more content than others, and we have some insight into why. We know that the goals people hold, and their progress toward them, shape their experiences of positive emotion, and vice versa. We know that people vary in the ways that they select, interpret, and respond to emotional situations, and that the ways in which people manage their emotions (both positive and negative) have implications for how they experience them.

Personality psychology is a diverse and vibrant field, and although we have focused on three major areas of research in this chapter, personality psychologists have taken a variety of other approaches to studying links between the person and positive emotion. For example, the narrative approach to personality examines personality as a life story, in which a person constructs a coherent account of his or her life, including characters, recurring themes, and identity-shaping events (e.g., McAdams, 1995). A person's narrative self-history has possible implications for the experience of positive emotion and well-being, for example, through a sequence of positive transformation after difficulty (Pals, 2006). The very act of writing or telling such a redemptive narrative may promote psychological and somatic health (Pasupathi, McLean, & Weeks, 2009; Pennebaker, 2000).

Another area of personality research we have not covered extensively in this chapter is neuroscience approaches. Researchers working in this area have studied a variety of topics relevant to positive emotions, including how individual differences in positive emotional responses are instantiated in the brain (e.g., Canli et al., 2001), and how individual differences in BAS correspond to neural processing efficiency during a task that requires cognitive control (J. R. Gray et al., 2005). In short, although there has been increasing interest in the links between personality and positive emotion in recent years, there is still much more to learn and substantial opportunity to apply the diverse theories, methods, and emphases within the field of personality psychology.

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