

Positive Education and Teaching for Wisdom

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A good education should provide more than technical skills: it should also develop the personal maturity necessary to allow students to live a good and satisfying life that promotes well-being for themselves and for their communities. And, indeed, when asked to say in a word or two what they wanted most for their children, parents most often answered in terms of “happiness,” “contentment,” “good health,” or “kindness” – in essence, their children’s well-being (Seligman, 2011; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). And yet when asked, “What do schools teach?” parents answered things like “thinking skills,” “literacy,” and “mathematics.” But as has been understood since ancient times, we desire skills for the sake of happiness, but only happiness is desired for its own sake (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*). The field of positive education has emerged in response to this division. Positive education applies the findings of positive psychology to educational contexts, to promote the well-being (or happiness, used here synonymously) of students and school communities. Positive educators argue that academic skills, though important, form only part of the path to a good life; schools should “teach both the skills of well-being and the skills of [academic] achievement” (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 294). What is more, positive education is indirectly associated with improved academic skills by promoting broader attention (Rowe, Hirsh, Anderson, & Smith, 2007), more creative thinking (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987), and more holistic thinking (Kuhl, 2000). For this reason, there is increasing interest in incorporating positive education into traditional classrooms.

Since antiquity, wisdom has been considered essential to achieving and sustaining well-being (Alster, 2005), and so we propose that any effort at positive education should incorporate efforts to teach for wisdom. Positive psychologists and contemporary wisdom researchers interested in “the science of wisdom” have used empirical methods to investigate wisdom. Surprisingly, their findings are rarely discussed together. However, both traditions provide new understandings of wisdom

and its importance to education. In this chapter we will integrate findings from both traditions.¹

We begin by reviewing five theories of wisdom in psychology. This review serves three main purposes. First, we wish to distinguish between the treatment of wisdom in positive psychology and in the science of wisdom. Although the two stances are related, they place different emphasis on the role of wisdom in achieving well-being. Second, the various wisdom theories are interrelated conceptually, so we compare and contrast them as we move through the review. Third, some theories of wisdom have been directly applied to wisdom teaching, while others provide useful background to contextualize and assess educational programs. As we move into a discussion of wisdom in positive education, the theoretical overview will allow us to situate wisdom teaching within the various frameworks suggested by positive psychology and by the science of wisdom.

With this groundwork in place, we devote the second half of the chapter to discussing programs that claim to teach for wisdom. We briefly address the general grounding and purpose of positive education as related to wisdom, before moving into specialized wisdom learning. We look at one representative example for each of three current approaches to teaching for wisdom: (i) direct instruction in Project Wisdom/WiseSkills; (ii) thinking-skills training in Sternberg's (1998) balanced curriculum; and (iii) interpretative simulation and self-exploration using the Ontario secondary school English curriculum. We propose that these models are not competing alternatives, but emphasize different aspects of any possible wisdom curriculum. To conclude, we discuss the implications of these teaching programs for best practices in wisdom education and for further research.

Understanding Wisdom: A Variety of Approaches

Above, we alluded to the fact that wisdom has been explored from a diverse set of theoretical perspectives. Here, we will explore these theories in more detail. First, we present the view of positive psychology, where wisdom is one of six major traits that build good character. Cultivating this trait (or "virtue") presents one possible path of many to good character, and to a good life. We will situate this view within positive psychology's broader framework for understanding optimal well-being or happiness (the *Character Strengths and Values* framework, or CSV; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This framework will provide a reference point as we move through other conceptions of wisdom. We follow by contrasting the positive psychology/CSV stance with the more comprehensive views of wisdom expressed by researchers working in the science of wisdom. For these theorists, achieving and sustaining well-being *requires* wisdom as a "master virtue" (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006); that is, as a virtue that coordinates the optimal deployment of all the other virtues. First, we discuss wisdom as an ideal personality type with cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions (Ardelt, 2003). Next, we consider wisdom-as-activity, reflecting either a general expertise (Baltes & Smith, 2008) or a specific

kind of thinking and judgment (Sternberg, 1998). Finally, we present a narrative theory of wisdom that considers wisdom to emerge as personally significant events are plotted into narratives, especially autobiographical narratives (Ferrari, Weststrate, & Petro, 2013; Ricoeur, 1992).

Wisdom Theory in Positive Psychology and the CSV

Wisdom as intellectual virtue

Much of positive psychology has revolved around the classification and study of strength and virtue (see Chapter 4). Peterson and Seligman (2004) propose that using strengths is one important way to achieve high levels of subjective well-being (SWB). The authors identify three conceptual levels to this endeavor:

- 1 *Virtues* are core character traits valued by religious leaders and philosophers at the highest level of abstraction. The CSV framework proposes six such virtues: (i) *courage* (emotional strengths to use one's will to accomplish goals despite internal or external opposition); (ii) *temperance* (emotional strengths that protect one from excess); (iii) *humanity* (interpersonal strengths that tend toward concern for others); (iv) *justice* (civic strengths that support and sustain communal life); (v) *transcendence* (cognitive strengths that meaningfully connect one to the larger universe); and (vi) *wisdom* (cognitive strengths that allow one to acquire and use knowledge).
- 2 *Character strengths* are the specific processes through which universal virtues are expressed. Peterson and Seligman (2004) identify 24 separate character strengths, although the link to their six-factor virtue structure has been challenged (Shryack, Steger, Krueger, & Kallie, 2010; Singh & Choubisa, 2010). Even so, most of the cognitive strengths associated with wisdom (i.e., curiosity, love of learning, perspective, and creativity) consistently load onto a unique factor, supporting the notion that wisdom is a unique strength with distinct characteristics (Singh & Choubisa, 2010).
- 3 *Situational themes* are situation-specific habits of mind that lead people to manifest particular character strengths in particular situations. Situational themes differ across contexts (e.g., work situations vs. family situations). A parent might find that when she is in the family context, she manifests kindness towards her child. While in a work context, however, she manifests bravery. Within situations, people manifest strengths through various themes (interior schemata, or external scaffolds) that may be unique to that context or situation. So, for example, an individual who is not habitually creative may be creative in an art class, where the theme of creativity is specifically cultivated and supported; while a highly creative person may find outlets for creativity in other situations such as coaching or cooking.

Across contexts, themes vary most, strengths vary slightly, and virtues are universal and unchanging. Peterson and Seligman (2004) propose that the empirical focus of positive psychology is on assessing and developing character strengths as these are relatively stable across contexts but responsive to intervention. The CSV treats wisdom as a core intellectual virtue that contributes to well-being, but it does not prioritize the role of wisdom among numerous means of achieving well-being.

Wisdom Theories in the Science of Wisdom

Wisdom as personality

Monika Ardel (2003) considers wisdom to be a latent personality variable with three dimensions:

- 1 *Cognitive*: understanding of life and a desire to know the truth.
- 2 *Reflective*: looking at phenomena and events from different perspectives, even if unpleasant.
- 3 *Affective*: having positive emotions towards others (e.g., sympathy and compassionate love).

Like positive psychologists, Ardel aims to identify individual differences in character that improve experienced well-being. But, like Schwartz and Sharpe (2006), Ardel considers wisdom a master virtue that integrates the six character virtues identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004), although it is difficult to imagine a direct mapping to her three dimensions of wisdom (i.e., cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions of personality).

Ardel's model of wisdom is one of the most influential in the field. She defines wisdom as an "ideal type" of personality that integrates cognition (knowledge and love of learning), reflection (perspective-taking), and affect (compassion). Wiser individuals more fully integrate these three dimensions. Ardel has conducted numerous studies to test this model and demonstrate that wisdom is associated with increased well-being and functioning. People clearly distinguish wisdom from knowledge along the lines suggested by her theory; that is, wisdom includes knowledge, but has an emotional dimension that makes that knowledge personally vital (Ardel, Achenbaum, & Oh, 2013; Ardel & Ferrari, in press).

Empirical work has established the utility of the Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (3D-WS), a self-report measure that assesses each of the three dimensions, as well as confirming the measure's psychometric validity (Ardel, 2003).² Early work demonstrated that the three dimensions of wisdom are important to successful aging (Ardel, 1997, 1998). Ardel studied 81 women and 39 men (aged 58–82) and found wisdom to be strongly associated with life satisfaction ($r = .77$, $p < .001$). In fact, wisdom was more predictive of well-being than objective life

conditions such as age, socioeconomic status, financial situation, health, physical environment, or social involvement. Ardel found that high scorers cope with stresses in life more successfully than do low scorers, have greater life satisfaction, and experience greater happiness (see Ardel et al., 2013 for a review). Ardel's research on wisdom-as-personality establishes wisdom's importance to living well; in doing so, it provides a possible rationale for attending to wisdom in education.

Wisdom as pragmatic expertise

Paul Baltes and colleagues (Baltes & Smith, 2008; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) developed the first and most elaborate scientific theory of wisdom, the "Berlin model." Baltes and his colleagues propose that "at the core of this concept [of wisdom] is the notion of the perfect, quasi-utopian integration of knowledge and character, of mind and virtue" (Baltes & Kunzmann, 2003, p. 131), an integration that requires an expertise in the fundamental pragmatics of life. Rather than developing a taxonomy or proposing an ideal type, the Berlin model explains how wisdom operates. In other words, within the wisdom-as-pragmatic-expertise approach, wisdom is expressed through correct action, not just the intellectual virtue of optimally acquiring and using knowledge. Furthermore, it is not enough to only have virtues (whether Ardel's three dimensions or the CSV's six virtues), as action requires the expert orchestration of virtues.

More specifically, according to the Berlin model wisdom requires expert *factual* and *strategic* knowledge about the fundamental pragmatics of life (i.e., knowledge of human nature, critical life events, and how to conduct oneself in life; Baltes & Kunzmann, 2003; Baltes & Smith, 2008; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Life-expertise as wisdom must also meet three additional "meta-criteria": *life-span contextualism* (i.e., knowing what contexts and events matter to particular people); *relativism of values and life-priorities* (i.e., acknowledging different values and priorities, while still holding certain values to be universal); and *managing uncertainty* (i.e., accepting the limits of human knowledge) (Baltes & Smith, 2008).³ Baltes' wisdom criteria overlap with the CSV understanding of wisdom and the other virtues. For example, meta-criteria like "relativism of values and life-priorities" and "lifespan contextualism" draw on the strength of "perspective," under the virtue "wisdom" – or perhaps on "social intelligence," under the virtue "humanity." However, while the CSV understanding of wisdom is also knowledge-based, such knowledge is not necessarily about the fundamental pragmatics of life, nor need it be expert knowledge.

Baltes and his colleagues have collected a wide range of empirical data supporting their view of wisdom (see Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005; and Baltes and Smith, 2008 for a review). We note a few of the findings that are pertinent to the current discussion. First, although rare, wisdom is not exclusive to the aged, and in fact, young adults are equally likely to be as wise as older adults. This suggests that interventions that aim to develop wisdom could be appropriate for school-aged

youth. However, each phase of life fosters its own specific wisdom-related knowledge, so wisdom learning should be developmentally appropriate. Also, reflective activities such as internal dialogues seem to enhance wisdom-related performance, suggesting a role for this type of activity in teaching for wisdom.

Wisdom as balanced decision-making

In related work, Sternberg (1990, 1998, 2013) considers the essence of wisdom to be the act of making a balanced judgment. Although Sternberg does not make an explicit connection to the Berlin model, this presumably requires an expertise in the fundamental pragmatics of life. For Sternberg, wisdom is more specifically defined as the application of tacit as well as explicit knowledge, as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good. This is achieved by balancing intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests over the short term and long term to adapt, shape, and select environments. To be wise, one must balance understanding and action among competing *interests*, immediate and lasting *consequences* of those interests, and the *environment* in which they occur. All of this is in the service of attaining a common good, understood within a system of values, the most important of which perhaps is equity – aligning with the CSV strength of “perspective” (under the virtue of “wisdom”) and also with “fairness” (under the virtue of “justice”). It may be helpful here to draw a parallel with casuistry – a case-based approach to applied ethics which operates on the basis that there are no universally-accepted answers to moral dilemmas (Jonson & Toulmin, 1990). For both Baltes and Sternberg, the wisest decisions are contextual, and people must always negotiate unique values and circumstances. This approach acknowledges that there are different conceptions of what constitutes the common good, a finding paralleled in social psychologist Shalom Schwartz’s value theory (Schwartz, 1992).

Importantly for positive education, Sternberg is the only psychological researcher to have implemented his theory of wisdom in a public school setting. We will return to this project later in our discussion of teaching for wisdom.

Wisdom as narrative understanding and self-insight

This fourth approach provides a different view of wisdom, considering wisdom to be expressed within detailed fictional or historical cases, or one’s own autobiographical narrative (Ferrari, Weststrate, & Petro, 2013). This treatment of wisdom is based in a narrative conception of the self. Theories of “narrative identity” suggest that our stories of self (our autobiographical narratives) are the primary means by which we construct self-identity (McAdams & Pals, 2006; Randall & Kenyon, 2001; Ricoeur, 1992). Reflecting on our own life stories allows us to reassess and learn from our actions – in essence, to become wiser through “narrative understanding” (Brockmeier, 2013; Randall & Kenyon, 2001; Shen, 2001). We can also engage with the richly contextualized narratives of historical or fictional

characters in much the same way, becoming wiser through considering the actions of others (Brockmeier, 2013; Ricoeur, 1992). Actors and events (including our own self, and our own life events) are “emplotted” in larger story arcs, as we place events in their wider temporal and thematic contexts. Emplotment is the action through which narrative understanding emerges, and thus it is a primary mechanism for the development of wisdom as deep insight into self and character. The situated, contextual nature of narrative understanding means that exemplars (or “expected cases”) provide emotional, subjective standards of wise action (Bruner, 1990, 2002; Oatley, 2011, 2012). We could say that in a narrative theory, the existence of exemplars (like Gandhi, or your grandmother) eliminates the need for an abstracted pattern, rubric, or a rule set to define wisdom. In its use of exemplars, narrative understanding is deeply relational: it allows us to acquire and express wisdom about our links to others and the world; even about the depths of human nature (Shen, 2001).

Although interpretive actions such as emplotment are usually associated with the analysis of fictional narratives, Keith Oatley (2011, 2012; see also Brockmeier, 2013) has argued that these techniques have a greater psychological purpose. He argues that literary fiction could be used to generate truths in psychology in much the same way that thought experiments generate truths in science (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Both thought experiments and fictional narratives involve imaginative simulations, and the plausibility or psychological realism of these simulations allows them to provide new information about the world. Two further examples reinforce the idea that narrative understanding of character is not necessarily tied to fiction or simulation. A movement in journalism known as “new journalism” is adopting literary techniques in order to render true stories more vivid and meaningful (Wolfe, 1975). Also, it has been argued that narrative is critical to the understanding of legal decisions that govern our lives (Amsterdam & Bruner, 2000).

While the relationship between narrative insight and wisdom seems plausible, it is only now being empirically tested. For example, a pilot study by Weststrate (2011) has shown that those who engage in more elaborate autobiographical reasoning about wisdom narratives score higher on the Ardeli 3D-WS wisdom scale – a finding we hope to replicate in a large international study of personal wisdom currently underway.

Wisdom as narrative understanding is a theory that supports wisdom learning in educational settings, as we will describe later in our discussion of teaching for wisdom in secondary school English classrooms.

Summary of theories of wisdom

We opened this discussion by describing positive psychology’s CSV framework and its treatment of wisdom as an *intellectual virtue*: one possible route to good character, among many. We then examined four theories that grant primacy to wisdom as the path to a good life. Ardeli’s theory treats wisdom as a *personality* variable

with cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions. The *expertise* and *decision-making* theories are similar to one another, emphasizing intellectual knowledge, and seeing wisdom as demonstrated through expert knowledge (Baltes) or skilled judgment in dealing with life problems (Sternberg). The theory of wisdom as *narrative understanding* suggests that it is through our emplotment of events into a story that wisdom can emerge.

Positive Education

As mentioned earlier, positive education applies the research findings of positive psychology to promote well-being or happiness in students and school communities. Despite the obvious allure of positive education, skeptics rightly ask, “can well-being or happiness really be taught?” And, if so, can they be taught in a way that is evidence-based, while still endorsing values parents wish to instill in their children (Spence & Shortt, 2007)? Seligman and others say “yes” and argue that educational programs that promote well-being have other associated benefits. They propose that teaching well-being in schools can lead to reduced rates of depression, increased life satisfaction, and improved learning (Seligman, 2011; Seligman et al., 2009). Seligman’s program for teaching well-being is based on the idea, detailed in the CSV, that individuals have a set of signature virtues and that engaging those virtues promotes a good life.

Since the CSV attributes five strengths to the core virtue of wisdom (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective), teaching for wisdom from a positive psychology perspective would involve cultivating these five strengths. However, positive education programs target strengths broadly, and few efforts specifically target strengths associated with wisdom⁴ (Seligman et al., 2009). However, one interesting example of a strengths-based program that targets the virtue of wisdom is a participatory photography project with refugee youth from Thailand and Colombia (Kia-Keating, 2009). The AjA project aims for both individual and community impact, providing social support and a sense of belonging by connecting students with peers and adult mentors. Among its objectives is the promotion of *perspective-building* or what Ardel (2003) calls reflection (a core attribute of wisdom). Photography serves as a model for framing and highlighting viewpoints, since project tasks are situated in their larger temporal, social, and geographical contexts. Youth also benefit from serving in an advisory capacity, helping to determine project goals and directions.

Teaching for Wisdom

Whereas “positive education” typically aims to promote a wide range of character strengths, in this section we focus on programs intended specifically to cultivate

wisdom. We will address several examples drawing from different practical and theoretical traditions.

Project Wisdom and WiseSkills

While character education programs tend to focus on civic responsibility and moral rectitude (Bercowitz, 2002), some of their goals are shared with positive psychology programs. In fact, both Project Wisdom and WiseSkills promote many of the strengths advocated by Peterson and Seligman (2004). We will discuss these two examples of character education that have emphasized the notion of wisdom.

Project Wisdom, founded by Leslie Matula in 1992, is a widely used character education program in the United States that specifically claims to teach for wisdom through proverbs and maxims. Every school day a short message (“words of wisdom”) is read over the school’s PA system, or in-house TV, to reach every student and staff member in the school (Project Wisdom, 2012). Their collection of proverbs and maxims is drawn from a range of sources worldwide (e.g., “The music that can deepest reach and cure all ills is cordial speech,” from Ralph Waldo Emerson).

The program also provides educators with online access to additional program material such as weekly messages and lesson plans designed to integrate wisdom education into every grade level and course in the curriculum. Classroom tools such as mini-posters are also available, as well as parent resources. Students are encouraged to apply the “words of wisdom” to their own lives. They can also be given a weekly journal that explores a different theme each week: for example, *personal choice*. These journals can be tailored to fit different courses or school settings. According to their website, Project Wisdom is in over 17,000 schools across the US, reaching over 4 million students each day. Entire schools are sometimes involved in related projects. For example, a school in Palm Springs created a wall of over 1,500 ceramic tiles, each with a message inspired by the “words of wisdom” (Mahr, 2005).

The intention to integrate wisdom learning within all courses, at all levels, makes this a promising program. However, rather than emerging from a theory of wisdom, the program came from the founder’s experiences as an educator. We have little information about what theory of wisdom the programs are based on, or why these particular messages and activities constitute wisdom. Without an explicit theory-based conception of the role of wisdom this program focuses on character education more than wisdom. This does not mean that the program is without benefit, as a program evaluation found that it had a positive effect on school climate. Specifically, it improved teacher morale, encouraged student conversations about character, and “increase[d] students’ self awareness, social awareness, and self management,” while decreasing student teasing, bullying, and referrals to the office (Project Wisdom & Manke, 2004, p. 1).

Similar, less widespread programs are being used in other schools. For example, the WiseSkills program revolves around monthly “character themes” such as

conflict resolution, media awareness, and “world of wisdom,” provided to three key constituents: school, family, and community (Wise Skills Resources, 2012). The *school component* includes teacher resources to teach character throughout the year. For example, the middle school program includes quotations, classroom activities, interdisciplinary projects, and a parent newsletter drawn from the sayings, life stories and life choices of 42 “great people.” Teachers are given a classroom package that includes a curriculum notebook, wisdom and character posters, character cards, and “WiseStudent certificates.” The *family component* encourages parents to reflect on their own personalities and behavior and includes many family activities. The *community component* suggests practical ways to connect the community to the classroom, for example, by inviting career speakers and engaging in community service projects.

These programs share the strength of engaging the entire school, including both students and staff, and can be extended outwards to families and the school community. We note that these programs modernize the ancient method of fostering wisdom through didactic instruction, proverbs, and examples of wise actions (Alster, 2005; Crenshaw, 2010). A criticism of this approach by Seneca (with contemporary examples) still resonates today:

“This is what [Oprah] said.” But what do you say? “This is [Emerson’s] view.” What is yours? How long will you march under another’s orders? Take command and say something memorable of your own ... It is one thing to remember, another to know. To remember is to safeguard something entrusted to memory. But to know is to make each thing one’s own, not to depend on the text and always look back to the teacher ... Let there be a space between you and the text. (Seneca, 1917; from letter 33, composed in the year 64 CE)

We can provide examples of wise actions, and encourage students to learn them, but will this help students to act wisely when faced with their own unique dilemmas? Seneca argues that to be wise goes far beyond parroting back the words of past exemplars – one must take that knowledge and put it to work in one’s own life, for example, by making good decisions.

Sternberg’s “balanced” curriculum

A more reflective approach to cultivating wisdom requires people to think for themselves and generate their own decisions and actions. Sternberg has developed a curriculum that aims to cultivate balanced judgment, which is the central expression of wisdom in his balance theory (Sternberg, 2001; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Grigorenko, 2009). According to Sternberg’s theory, a wise person is intelligent and oriented towards the common good. When making decisions, this individual must be able to balance various relational interests across the short and long term, and maintain sensitivity to the broader context (Sternberg, 2008, 2013). Sternberg’s curriculum is the most explicitly theory-based contemporary effort to

teach for wisdom in schools, making it unique among the programs we discuss here. Sternberg and colleagues have developed an infused curriculum, incorporating critical and wise thinking into eighth grade History (while still meeting Connecticut curriculum objectives). The 10- to 12-week program has two units (*The Birth of the Nation* and *Slavery in America*) comprising nine topics. Students behave like expert historians, considering original historical sources in an age-appropriate way to develop their own interpretive strategies to make sense of history.

Not only do students study historical events, they are asked to think about them wisely. According to the *Teacher's Manual* for Unit 1, "Wisdom primarily involves the capacity to judge, along with the constraint that this judgment be right, sound, or just. Wisdom is measured both by the means involved in reaching the judgment and also by its end. Wisdom represents an avenue to creating a better, more harmonious world" (Sternberg, 2003, p. 6). So how does Sternberg propose to teach students to think wisely? The balanced curriculum involves activities that foster:

- 1 *Critical, creative, and practical thinking* (as mediated by attitudes and assumptions) that considers the common good (this maps onto the CSV strength of "social intelligence" under the virtue of humanity).
- 2 *Dialogical thinking*, that is, an ability to consider a situation from the point of view of different people within a dialogue (e.g., those on both sides of a conflict) (a new strength under the virtue of "self-transcendence", or it might map onto "open-mindedness" under "wisdom").
- 3 *Dialectical thinking*, that is, thinking that resolves competing points of view from a more integrative perspective (the proverbial Hegelian synthesis of opposites) (a new strength under the virtue of "self-transcendence").
- 4 *Critical discussion* of actions, as to whether they are wise or foolish (both historically, and from students' own lives) (perhaps associated with the strength "prudence" under the virtue "temperance").
- 5 *Role modeling* of wise judgment and action on the part of students and teachers (a method that relies on social modeling as a prerequisite to "love of learning" and "perspective" under the virtue "wisdom").
- 6 *Reflection on values* using maxims (such as those of Project Wisdom or WiseSkills – the content of a body of expert declarative knowledge, as proposed by Baltes).

Teachers are given curriculum materials that include presentation materials, student materials (such as worksheets), and objectives for historical content and wise thinking. Students work with primary sources (for those with reading difficulties, vocabulary lists and simplified versions of the source material are provided). Group work is encouraged because it allows opportunities for wise thinking in dialogue with others.

Sternberg's conception is that wisdom is simply a comprehensive ability (or constellation of abilities) at which students can be more or less expert (this echoes

Baltes' treatment of wisdom as expertise). In later work, Sternberg (2003, 2011) has proposed a "WICS" model of education, in which education should involve *Wisdom*; analytic, creative, and practical *Intelligence*; and *Creativity*, "Synthesized." Recently, he has turned towards the development of WICS-based assessment tools to extend and refine current approaches to standardized testing (Sternberg, 2010; Sternberg, Bonney, Gabora, Karelitz, & Coffin, 2010). For example, the Kaleidoscope Project at Tufts University gave prospective students the option to complete a WICS-based admission test in addition to the SAT/ACT (Sternberg, 2012). One wisdom measure asked applicants to write about how to transform one of their high school passions into a project that would benefit society. The Kaleidoscope test was found to predict students' academic performance in their first year of university above SAT/ACT alone, and also predicted engagement in student life. Oklahoma State University is now adopting a similar admissions initiative. There is potential for wider application of these WICS initiatives. For example, WICS-based assessments could provide a new way to chart student progress in positive education programs.

English Teacher Wisdom Project

Critics of Sternberg's balanced curriculum note that his skills-based approach is limited in the case of "blind spots" (when our own motivations are invisible to us), and "action slips" (when we do not do what we know is right; Perkins, 2001; Stanovich, 2001). In our own lives, we may not be able to act as we would in a simulated exercise. Another critique is provided by Ricoeur (1992), who claims that self-insight (and so, wisdom) must draw from both history and literary fiction, suggesting that incorporating wisdom teaching into the History curriculum alone cannot be sufficient to develop wisdom. We emphasize the importance of literature in our own efforts to investigate teaching for wisdom in secondary school English classrooms (Ferrari et al., 2011). Most importantly, we also consider the wisdom of teachers, since it is teachers who must implement any curriculum, whether proverb-based or reflective.

In our pilot study, we interviewed 15 expert and 15 novice teachers about what wisdom means for them and whether the standard Ontario English curriculum can help students learn about life or, more specifically, learn to be wise. Expert teachers had at least 10 years' experience and were nominated by their principals as being exemplary teachers. Novice teachers had not yet formally begun to teach but were nominated by their Curriculum and Instruction teachers as having been exemplary in their practicum. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss three commonly used senior high school English texts (a scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Bertrand Russell's "What I have lived for" (the prologue to his autobiography), and the Earle Birney poem, "Bushed"). We also asked participants to answer a self-report measure of wisdom, the 3D-WS.

In our preliminary analysis, we compared four narratives: those of the highest and lowest wisdom scorers in both expert and novice teacher groups. Attitudes,

strategies, and pedagogical content differed across these four exemplars. In general, we found that although both expert teachers had more knowledge of how to teach English as compared to the novices, only the wiser expert considered it part of his job to provide space for exploring the life themes that could cultivate wisdom. The wisest expert was also the only teacher who specified the desired outcome of his students' life/wisdom learning. Both novices expressed some interest in teaching for wisdom, but struggled with the details.

The least wise expert had a lot of pedagogical content knowledge about how to teach English, but did not consider teaching for wisdom part of her job description, except perhaps indirectly through teaching critical reasoning skills. For example, this teacher discussed exercises and objectives in detail: when discussing "Bushed", she described moving from class discussion of vocabulary to a series of structured lessons on literary analysis, culminating with a "jigsaw" group activity in which students form analyses in teams and then break into teaching groups to share their findings with one another. For this teacher, the ultimate goal is to develop an understanding of "form," "style," and "analy[sis]." But when asked about teaching for wisdom, she responded, "I don't think that's what we do" For this individual, teaching wisdom is the job of a "poet" or a "religious leader," while teachers need to focus on literacy and other skills.

The least wise novice teacher was more supportive, on the surface, about being able to teach for wisdom. He stated: "I think ... in every case, hmm, people at the heart of these three texts have learned or are learning things ... and they're making, they've made mistakes and if wisdom is the product of experience which I think it is ... these are people who have experienced a lot and have learned something from it" But when we consider how he proposed to do so, using Bertrand Russell's essay as his example, he seemed overwhelmed by some of the details of the passage. At first, he was enthusiastic about Russell's message of "passion" for life. But Russell's essay also comments on suffering in the world, and here this novice teacher became fixated:

[Russell] is looking at the world and saying "I feel so bad for the world and for the people of the world for what they've had to suffer and live through but I'm part of that world too, right like I can't help it I can't fix it as much as I'd like to, I've lived my whole life trying and [...] it's kind of a lie [...] there's a natural order to things and there is the future that I have no control over"

In the end, this teacher drew a pessimistic message of fatalism that draws attention away from Russell's message about the good life.

By contrast, the wisest novice teacher saw an inspiring message in the texts that can be conveyed to students: "I think that wisdom would be a really great way to connect all these texts and if I had that as my objective to be teaching all these [texts] you know I would begin with that and then design my lesson from there" Although this novice teacher noted that she would ask students to consider the question "what is wisdom?" she did not detail the nuances of how

she would structure these discussions. In Shulman's (2004) terms, she lacked the pedagogical content knowledge about how to teach both English in general and wisdom in particular, which are essential aspects of a "wisdom of practice."

Only the wisest expert teacher had both the rich pedagogical content knowledge about how to teach English, and the factual and strategic (pragmatic) knowledge to engage students deeply with texts that provides opportunities to teach for wisdom. Although this teacher did not think you can teach wisdom directly, he described the importance of taking on difficult life situations as a part of classroom teaching: "You can't teach it [wisdom] but I think it's important, I do, to put kids in a situation where they have to deal with problems, issues that will develop insights, that eventually will culminate in maybe what we call wisdom." When describing teaching Russell's essay, this teacher took a very different stance on Russell's comments on suffering, one much more constructive than that of the novice teacher above:

What do we do with this "pity for suffering mankind" thing? Students are – there's two times in life when you commit suicide at the greatest rate demographically: teenage years and old age. We understand the old age, you're not well, your friends are gone, all that kind of thing doesn't seem like much to look forward to. Teenagers are so idealistic and haven't had the opportunity to realize that there is life after this terrible thing that's just happened: my girlfriend dumped me, or my parents are upset with what I wanna do with my life or – so there's that, but also how do you deal with the terrible things that happen in the world? [...] So, how do we balance the awful things that happen out there?

This teacher could explain, in the context of his students' lives, why Russell's essay is important and why he hoped students might gain wisdom from studying it. We suggest that this illustrates an expertise about the fundamental pragmatics of life that Baltes considers the essence of wisdom, while also highlighting the theme of balance so central to Sternberg's conception of wisdom.

These preliminary results indicate that it is not enough to have a curriculum designed to promote psychological well-being. Teachers differ in their own wisdom (as captured by the 3D-WS) and in their attitudes toward teaching for wisdom. With that in mind, we need to consider whether teacher training, school settings, and ongoing professional development can support the development of wisdom and a sense of well-being in teachers. Only under such conditions will more teachers be able to model the search for wisdom and well-being, or even its successful outcome in a "good life." Teachers must also be given the opportunity to develop necessary pedagogical content knowledge, and must have the mandate and the appropriate institutional support to incorporate these themes into their classroom practices. Moving forward, it would be important to examine student learning as well as teacher skills and attitudes in order to draw a more complete picture of teaching for wisdom in English classrooms.

Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter began with a review of major psychological conceptions of wisdom. We presented the view of positive psychology; namely that wisdom is one path to expressing good character and achieving a good life, but merely one path of many (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). We contrasted this with theories emerging from the more comprehensive perspective of “the science of wisdom,” where wisdom is seen as the foundational path to a good life. Here, we first considered the theory of wisdom as an expression of personality (Ardelt, 2003). Next, we considered theories in which wisdom is a form of activity, expressing either a general expertise (Baltes & Smith, 2008) or a balanced approach to thinking and judgment (Sternberg, 1998). Finally, we considered narrative theories in which wisdom emerges from considering character and action as emplotted in stories, especially autobiographical stories (Ferrari et al., 2013; Ricoeur, 1992). The theories of wisdom as balanced decision-making and as narrative understanding support specific efforts to teach for wisdom, while the other theories provide a rationale for wisdom teaching by empirically establishing the importance of wisdom across the lifespan. From the Berlin project’s expertise approach, we can hypothesize that developmental appropriateness and opportunities for reflection are important to wisdom learning. From these various research traditions, we find a growing interest exists in exploring the potential for public schooling to increase students’ well-being.

We described the place of wisdom in positive education, and then presented three examples of teaching for wisdom: Project Wisdom/WiseSkills’ didactic, proverb-centric approach, Sternberg’s balanced History curriculum for wise thinking, and narrative understanding through the Ontario English curriculum. We propose that these models are not competing alternatives, but are variations that emphasize different aspects of a wisdom curriculum. As with ancient wisdom traditions, we can roughly divide these programs into didactic and reflective efforts to teach for wisdom. Project Wisdom and WiseSkills follow a proverbial approach, emphasizing a specific content to be mastered in order to promote psychosocial well-being. Students are asked to articulate the connection between wisdom content and their own lives. However, these programs lack an articulated theory and could integrate content more carefully into the existing curriculum in History or English to maximize the opportunities for reflection and application. Sternberg addresses these concerns in his balanced curriculum, which embeds theoretically grounded wisdom learning within History classes. Students benefit from the challenge of evaluating decisions embedded in historical contexts. Also, Sternberg places the focus not on learning content but on developing the skill of balanced judgment. Although embedding wisdom teaching in the curriculum (rather than adding it on) seems beneficial, we propose that some existing curricular material could be used as-is, if used wisely by teachers. We provided the example of an English class, which takes the idea of teaching for wisdom beyond where the “balanced curriculum” left off. The aim is not specific maxims to be learned, or a

single skill (i.e., balanced judgment) to be nurtured. Here, the focus is on the contextualized analysis of character and action through literature. Through narrative understanding, this kind of learning makes meaningful connections to students' lives, and increases self-understanding. This approach highlights the importance of teachers' own skills and attitudes in the successful implementation of a wisdom curriculum. A comprehensive future study seeking to explore teaching for wisdom should include all three of the described approaches. This would allow for assessment of the relative merits of didactic instruction, reflective activities, and teacher education in promoting students' ability to discern what matters in life and how to live a worthwhile life. Wisdom's place in classroom education is still being established, and the research and programs covered provide important foundations for this ongoing work.

Notes

- 1 Related efforts to improve well-being are not covered here, such as the mindfulness approach of "contemplative education" (see Roeser & Zelazo, 2012, for an overview).
- 2 Besides the 3D-WS there is also the work of Jason and colleagues (Jason et al., 2001), Brown and Greene (2006), Webster (2007), and Levenson and colleagues (Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005), who have developed their own self-report measures to assess wisdom, which involve a different subset of character strengths that include, for example, awe, humor, and spirituality (virtues specifically identified in the CSV under the virtue "transcendence").
- 3 Staudinger (1999, 2013) has recently adapted this model to distinguish "general wisdom" (exemplified by advice to others) from "personal wisdom" (exemplified by self-insight).
- 4 Evidence-based positive education typically aims to develop students' *own* greatest strengths, and to remediate their weaknesses (see Chapter 4).

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