

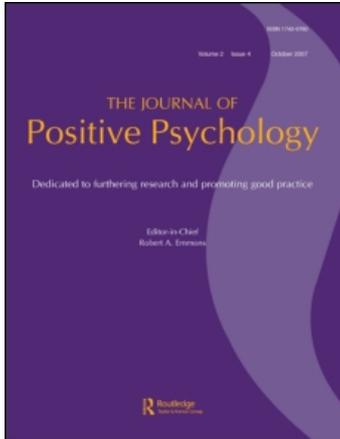
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The benefits of passion and absorption in activities: Engaged living in adolescents and its role in psychological well-being

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Across five studies and three samples of early and late adolescents from suburban areas ($N = 2198$), this research provides a theoretical and empirical examination of a new construct, engaged living, which consists of social integration and absorption. Engaged living, as we define it, is having a passion to help others and be completely immersed in activities. The development and psychometric properties of The Engaged Living in Youth Scale (ELYS) are described. Cross-sectional and longitudinal data, including self and other reports, then show that the ELYS is related to a variety of attributes, well-being, and academic achievement outcomes. Overall, the pattern of associations indicates that youth high in engaged living tend to be more grateful, hopeful, happier (via self, peer, and teacher reports), prosocial, and report elevated life satisfaction, positive affect, and self-esteem and higher grade point averages. Higher scorers also tend to be less depressed, envious, antisocial, and delinquent.

Keywords: scale; passion; engagement; psychological well-being; adolescents

Introduction

While measures of negative indicators for youth are prolific, outcomes of well-being are scarce (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009). This imbalance is partly explained by psychology's strong interest in pathology instead of flourishing. Through the lens of positive psychology, research has started to accumulate on what makes life most worth living and what are the methods to help people move in this positive direction (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). But positive psychology is in its infancy, and positive indicators for youth has taken a backseat to work on adult populations.

Assessing positive constructs is necessary, because being free of pathology is not synonymous with flourishing (Keyes, 2006). For example, children with complete mental health (i.e., high subjective well-being, low psychopathology) had better reading skills, school attendance, academic self-perceptions, academic related goals, social support from classmates and parents, self-perceived physical health, and fewer social problems compared with their vulnerable peers also low in psychopathology but with low subjective well-being (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). In addition, there is a growing need for today's adolescents to exhibit

initiative (Larson, 2000), a construct comprised of both intrinsic motivation and engagement. This need is partially due to the changing job market as technological advances continue to soar; it is crucial for individuals to possess a certain level of autonomy in order to be successful in the ever-changing job market. Exhibiting such initiative via structured voluntary youth activities has been linked with positive outcomes, such as minimized delinquency, academic achievement, and increased self control and efficacy (Larson, 2000). Thus, although there is still a need for negative indicators (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), positive indicators seem needed too. The intent of the present research is to identify interpersonal variations in engaged living, establish their relation to other relevant psychological constructs, and demonstrate their importance to psychological well-being.

The nature of engaged living

Theoretical framework

Passion may drive engagement in meaningful activity. It can be defined as, 'a strong inclination or desire toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important (high valuation), and in which

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one invests time and energy' (Philippe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009, p. 4). Harmonious passion, a distinct type of passion, reflects an activity that is internalized, free of contingencies, and pursued with intrinsic interest and congruency with other valued aspects of a person's life (Philippe et al., 2009). The desire to satisfy certain psychological needs is likely to drive such activities.

Self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests people have three innate psychological needs that drive self-motivation, personality integration, and successful self-regulation: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Similar to harmonious passion (Vallerand, 2008), autonomy is when a person's goals are freely chosen (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and self-concordant (i.e., the goals and activities 'fit' the person; Sheldon, 2002). Relatedness refers to 'the desire to feel connected to others – to love and care, and to be loved and cared for' (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231).

Conceptualization

Building on this literature, we defined engaged living as having a passion to help others and be completely immersed in activities. Considering McAdams and Pals' (2006) framework for personality, we conceptualized engaged living as a trait, because dispositional traits 'speak to the overall style of a person's adjustment to and engagement of the social world – how a person does things, how a person typically thinks, how he or she usually feels about things in general' (p. 207). Furthermore, we theorized that people high in engaged living would be zealous about altruism, and physical activity, and experience the associated actions as self-concordant. We think emphasizing the social domain is important, because social relationships are the critical ingredient for healthy functioning (Diener & Seligman, 2002). This is especially true for youth who remain reliant on others in developing their identity. Furthermore, adolescents with strong, positive social relationships tend to experience high self-esteem (Harter, 1999), academic success (Ghaith, 2002), resiliency (Dumont & Provost, 1999), and less depression (Eldeleklioglu, 2006).

We conceptualized two constructs to comprise engaged living: social integration and absorption. Although other important qualities for adolescents that would seem to be associated with 'engaged living' could have been studied (e.g., autonomous functioning, self-efficacy, and meaningful ways of relating with others), we decided to focus on social integration and absorption, given their strong association with well-being. We believed that social integration and absorption would be positively related, yet somewhat distinct (Figure 1). Indeed, we think it makes sense that an

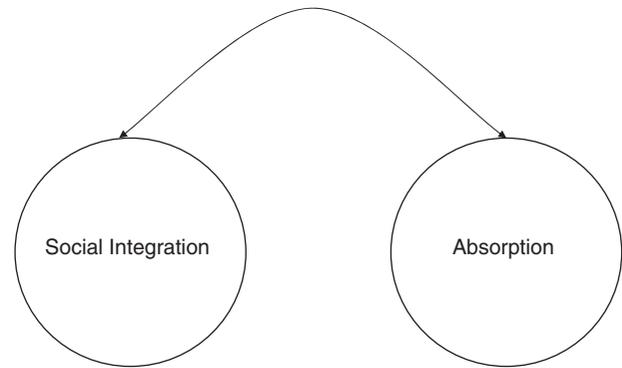


Figure 1. Conceptualization of engaged living.

adolescent with a passion for contributing to society would be engrossed in the related activities. Likewise, though to a lesser extent, an adolescent who is committed to being physically active might consider helping others as an appropriate outlet. According to Keyes (1998), social integration, 'the evaluation of the quality of one's relationship to society and community' (Keyes, 1998, p. 122), was related to more generativity, neighborhood trust and safety, well-being, and less dysphoria. Furthermore, with positive psychology being criticized for paying little attention to studying positive institutions and communities (Gable & Haidt, 2005), we thought it made sense to measure social integration at the macro level. Therefore, social integration, as we define it, is being passionate about helping and feeling connected to others at a macro level.

Similar but distinct constructs are social connectedness, altruism, and civic engagement. Social connectedness has been defined as 'the subjective awareness of being in close relationship with the social world' (Lee & Robbins, 1998). There are discrepancies regarding the definition of altruism due to its presence in many fields (e.g., economics, sociobiology) (Piliavin & Charng, 1990). Researchers, however, are in general agreement that altruism consists of the concern for others' welfare and acts which benefit them (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Civic engagement is the most similar to social integration; however, it refers to only the involvement in activities that reach beyond one's family and friends (A. Stepick, C.A. Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008), and does not imply that the individual is passionate about these activities (Table 1).

Finally, to our knowledge, no one has yet simultaneously examined harmonious passion and flow in youth, which seems important given the relation between these constructs and psychological well-being later in life (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Flow is a mental state of complete absorption when a person is engaged in an intrinsically rewarding activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Like harmonious passion (Vallerand, 2008), people engage in flow activities because they are pleasurable. Similar to autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Table 1. Implicit and explicit behaviors and operative processes and their respective emphases in social integration and absorption compared to related constructs.

Behaviors/Operative processes	Constructs						
	SI	Absorption	SC	Altruism	CE	Flow	Mindfulness
Passion for helping others	+++		+	+++	+++		
Desire to better society	+++		+	++	+++		
Has a sense of purpose	+++	+	+	+	+		
Feels connected to others	+++		+++	++	++		
Feels engrossed in activities	+	+++	+	+	+	+++	+++
Intense ability to remain focused		+++				+++	+++
Must be physically engaged	+	+++			+	++	+
Having hobbies is important		+++					

Notes: SI, social integration; SC, social connectedness; CE, civic engagement.

+ = Behavior/operative process is implicit in the construct. ++ = Behavior/operative process is explicit in the construct. +++ = Behavior/operative process is explicit in and emphasized as part of the construct. Interpret more plus signs (none to + to ++ to +++) as more emphasis in the construct.

and self-concordance (Sheldon, 2002), flow activities are enjoyable sometimes because they are self-chosen (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Because the motivation is intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the person is more likely to lose a sense of self-consciousness by not focusing on others, thus increasing their chances for engagement in the activity. Considering these two constructs – harmonious passion and flow – we therefore define absorption as being intensely and readily engrossed by passionate activities. Mindfulness, a similar yet distinct construct, is paying attention to what is occurring at the present moment with care and discernment (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). This is different from flow, as it does not include a loss of self-consciousness. Absorption differs from harmonious passion, flow, and mindfulness because it also includes the belief that having hobbies is important (Table 1).

Engaged living and well-being

Being passionate toward activities may promote positive emotions and healthy adaptation (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passion is related to sustained, energizing attentiveness (i.e., flow) (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Indeed, people with harmonious passions tend to experience flow and positive emotions while engaged in activities (Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 1) with elevated levels of general positive affect and lowered levels of negative affect (Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 2), and less relational conflicts (Séguin-Lévesque, Laliberté, Pelletier, Blanchard, & Vallerand, 2003). People with harmonious passions therefore seem to possess greater emotional well-being, experience positive emotions while absorbed in activities, and have positive social relationships.

The research on harmonious passion and well-being is consistent with SDT. Indeed, autonomy,

competence, and relatedness seem crucial for well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Being extrinsically motivated – performing an activity not out of pleasure, but to attain something outside the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000) – and valuing extrinsic aspirations (e.g., wealth, fame, and image) is related negatively with self-actualization and vitality (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, Study 1) and positively with depression and anxiety (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, Study 2); however, being intrinsically motivated – doing an activity for its own sake (Ryan & Deci, 2000) – and valuing intrinsic aspirations (e.g., affiliation, growth, and community) is related positively with self-actualization and vitality (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, Study 1) and negatively with depression and anxiety (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, Study 2). People who pursue intrinsic goals, therefore, are more likely to experience positive outcomes.

When intrinsically motivated toward an activity, people may be more likely to satisfy the needs for autonomy and competence because they are: (1) focused more on the internal rewards of an activity (Kasser, 2002); (2) directing attention to targets other than the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); and (3) avoiding behaviors (e.g., watching television) that rarely produce flow (Kasser, 2002). Thus, people feel energized after completing such activities because intrinsic pursuits are more likely to fulfill people's psychological needs.

Like harmonious passion, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, flow has been related to positive outcomes. Several studies linked flow to academic achievement and commitment during high school (Nakamura, 1988). For example, longitudinal data showed that late adolescents were more likely to remain committed to their personal interests or talents, if they experienced more flow and less anxiety while engaged in the activity compared with disengaged peers (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, Whalen, & Wong, 1993). Furthermore, in a longitudinal study of students

talented in mathematics, controlling for initial abilities and grade point average (GPA), students who experienced flow in the first part of the course performed better in the second part of the course (Heine, 1996). Finally, people who are absorbed in their activities tend to experience more positive emotions and are more likely to have a sense of meaning in their lives (Seligman, 2002).

Being engaged with life may help youth cultivate healthy social emotional development and a sense of purpose. If so, this would be a significant impact considering evidence that many youths lack a realistic plan for succeeding in life, have no commitment beyond disconnected interests, or are in need of serious guidance in an increasingly complicated society. Indeed, being high in engaged living may help youth cultivate purpose. This is critical considering the fact that 80% of American youths are ‘rudderless’, unlikely to achieve their potential without guidance, lacking a coherent purpose, or dreamers without realistic plans (Damon, 2008).

Current investigation

Adolescence is a period of significant physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes. Given the tumultuous nature of this developmental period, adolescence is oftentimes associated with an increase in familial distancing, relational disruption, and depression (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1990) (though see Arnett (2000) for literature that suggests otherwise). Moreover, because adolescents experience rapid shifts in mood and extreme positive and negative affective valence, often coupled with feelings of disconnect (Myers, 1992), they may have difficulty sustaining even levels of positive functioning. Helping adolescents become more passionate about helping others and absorbed in their activities might be one way to help them offset their emotional instability and lay the bedrock for growth and positive experiences.

The central purpose of this research program therefore was to examine empirical links between engaged living and well-being. Few scales exist measuring positive constructs in youth. Furthermore, we are unaware of published scales that measure a passion for helping others and propensity to be absorbed in activities. Therefore, we created The Engaged Living in Youth Scale (ELYS) to allow for empirical examinations of psychological, social, emotional, and achievement related outcomes linked to passion and absorption in activities in adolescents.

Study 1 describes the development and internal consistency of the ELYS. Study 2 describes the verification of the ELYS in two independent samples using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as well as the test-retest reliability over 6 months. Study 3 examines

construct specificity from related psychological constructs and uses cross-sectional data from three samples to test relations between engaged living and well-being. Study 4 examines incremental validity of the ELYS. Finally, Study 5 uses a longitudinal investigation with follow-up assessments at 2 weeks, 3, and 6 months. Extending the use of peer-ratings in Study 3, self-report instruments of well-being were supplemented with teacher ratings of student happiness.

Study 1: ELYS construction, exploratory factor analyses, and internal consistency

Preliminary item selection procedures

Items were intended to capture two broad constructs that are potentially relevant for character development. First, we developed items reflecting positive states (e.g., social connectedness, spirituality) and behaviors (e.g., altruism) at the local community and societal levels. Second, we developed items reflecting engagement in activities that are interesting and valued at the personal level. These items captured the engaged living in activities potentially operating in positive youth development.

We began with a pool of 88 items, with 48 items for social integration and 40 items for absorption. Our clinical experience and knowledge of positive youth development, and published writings on social connectedness, civic engagement, purpose, flow, and well-being in adolescents guided item construction. Items were introduced by the following: ‘Please read each statement and CIRCLE the number (from 1 to 6) that is most like you. ONLY circle ONE NUMBER below each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Please do your best, tell the truth, and answer all statements. Most important, have fun, and thank you!’ Higher numbers on the accompanying 6-point scale indicated greater endorsement of the item. The response options were made extreme with the anchors representing all-or-nothing endorsements (i.e., ‘Definitely Not Like Me’ and ‘Exactly Like Me’) and to allow for high ceilings.

Item reduction was done in an iterative fashion across two stages. In both stages, several exclusion criteria were used. Specifically, items that were ambiguous or redundant, lacked distinctiveness with items from the other construct, or were unable to produce variable responses were excluded.

In the first stage of item reduction, we applied these exclusion criteria to remove items through dialogue. We then reviewed a shorter version with several adolescent focus groups to ensure understanding and accuracy. One focus group consisted of 12 students aged 11–13, and the other focus group consisted of 18 students aged 14–18. All students from the focus

Table 2. Sample characteristics (scale construction and all studies).

Characteristic	Sample					
	A		B		C	
Location	PS ^a	PS ^{bT1}	PS ^{bT2}	PS ^{bT3}	PS ^{bT4}	PS ^c
ELYS: Social integration (α)	0.84	0.84	0.87	0.89	0.89	0.83
ELYS: Absorption (α)	0.82	0.80	0.85	0.87	0.89	0.82
<i>N</i>	463	700	700	700	700	1035
Age range (years)	12–18	10–14	*	*	*	14–19
Age mean (years)	14.28	11.74	*	*	*	15.67
6th grade (%)	0	36.6	*	*	*	0
7th grade (%)	23.8	28.6	*	*	*	0
8th grade (%)	30.5	25.4	*	*	*	0
9th grade (%)	9.5	0	*	*	*	27.6
10th grade (%)	14.9	0	*	*	*	24.9
11th grade (%)	12.7	0	*	*	*	25.6
12th grade (%)	8.0	0	*	*	*	21.4
Girl (%)	47.9	46.7	*	*	*	49.2
Boy (%)	51.6	43.4	*	*	*	50.3
Caucasian (%)	66.1	64.1	*	*	*	62.8
African American (%)	9.7	9.0	*	*	*	10.4
Asian (%)	5.8	8.7	*	*	*	9.6
Hispanic (%)	5.0	1.6	*	*	*	5.2
Other ethnicity (%)	7.1	7.0	*	*	*	9.1
Receiving special education services (%)	12.5	14.4	*	*	*	11.6

Notes: PS, public school. ^aPS, Spring 2006. ^{bT1}PS and ^{bT2}PS, Fall 2006. ^{bT3}PS, ^{bT4}PS, and ^cPS, Spring 2007. T1 = Baseline; T2 = 2-week follow-up; T3 = 3-month follow-up; T4 = 6-month follow-up. ELYS, The Engaged Living in Youth Scale. Demographics for Sample B were only collected at T1. The sum of the percentages for age, grade, sex, and ethnicity are less than 100%, because some participants failed to report these data. The percentage for receipt of special education services was calculated with only obtained data; we do not report the valid percent, which is calculated after considering missing data.

*Data not collected.

groups were excluded from the quantitative studies. Twenty-eight items remained for further analysis.

Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with oblique rotation was used to identify the scale's factor structure in a sample of 463 early and late adolescents (Sample A, Table 2). To determine the number of factors to retain, we considered the eigenvalue > 1 rule, the scree test, and the interpretability of the rotated factor loading matrix. Five factors had eigenvalues greater than 1. The scree test suggested a 2-factor solution. Whereas the rotated factor loading matrix based on the 2-factor model is interpretable, the rotated factor loading matrix based on the 5-factor model is difficult to interpret. Furthermore, prior simulation studies have consistently showed that the eigenvalue > 1 rule, when applied to sample correlation matrix, tends to over-extract factors (e.g., Zwick & Velicer, 1986). Therefore, we concluded that the 2-factor model is the optimal model. In the 2-factor model, the two common factors explained 44.5% of total variance, and all items had loadings ≥ 0.38 on their respective factors, and loadings ≤ 0.18 on the opposite factor. Some idea of the latent variables underlying the two factors can be gleaned

from the items that load on each. The items on the first factor are about seeking social connections, a desire to help others, and purpose. We labeled this 'social integration.' The items on the second factor are about a desire to be active and when doing so being absorbed. We labeled this 'absorption.'

We then aimed to condense the scale to less than 20 items to reduce response burden, while also being mindful of retaining high reliability. First, we decreased item redundancy by examining items high in semantic similarity and using factor loadings to help guide our decisions about which items to retain or drop. Ten items were dropped, leaving 18. Second, we reviewed item content and dropped, 'I look for challenges,' and 'When I like something, I always give it 100%,' because they assess constructs tangential to our interests, leaving 16 items. Finally, though, 'I love helping people,' and, 'I do charity work,' had factor loadings above 0.73, we only retained the former because we wanted items that measured a passion for engaging in altruistic behaviors (not merely engagement). Items with high loadings on the 'social integration' factor had an estimated α of 0.84, while items with high loadings on the 'absorption' factor had an estimated α of 0.82. The final scale contained 15 items, and together our scale's two factors comprise the ELYS (see Table 3 for the 15-item ELYS used in subsequent studies).

Table 3. Factor loadings, means, SDs, and item-total correlations for the ELYS (Study 1, Sample A).

Item	Factor loading		Communality	<i>M</i>	SD	I-T
	1	2				
13. I love to volunteer	0.78	-0.07	0.58	3.62	1.43	0.56
10. I love helping people	0.77	-0.11	0.55	4.25	1.27	0.50
2. I would like to make the world a better place	0.68	-0.07	0.44	4.40	1.31	0.48
8. I use what I am good at to help others	0.66	0.09	0.48	4.21	1.24	0.58
3. I feel everyone is put here for a reason	0.57	0.01	0.33	4.60	1.43	0.49
5. I feel blessed	0.50	0.02	0.26	4.38	1.48	0.46
9. I have a purpose in life	0.49	0.08	0.28	4.99	1.19	0.50
7. I am a spiritual person	0.49	0.05	0.25	3.12	1.63	0.46
1. I feel like a part of my community/neighborhood	0.46	0.02	0.22	3.23	1.43	0.39
14. While doing my hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.), I am very into it	-0.11	0.84	0.65	4.78	1.18	0.42
15. When I am doing something I like, I am only thinking about that	0.00	0.74	0.55	4.17	1.23	0.47
4. While doing my hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.), I feel 'in the zone'	-0.02	0.72	0.51	4.62	1.18	0.43
6. My hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.) mean the world to me	-0.07	0.72	0.48	4.37	1.30	0.37
12. I get so involved in what I am doing that I get 'lost' in it	0.13	0.57	0.40	4.00	1.30	0.47
11. I must be doing something active rather than doing nothing	0.10	0.32	0.13	4.39	1.40	0.29

Notes: Factor 1 is 'social integration.' Factor 2 is 'absorption.' I-T = item-total correlations.

Study 2: CFA in early and late adolescent samples and test-retest reliability

We could have capitalized on chance because the factor structure of the ELYS was obtained by EFAs conducted on the same dataset (MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). To address this issue, we conducted two CFAs to verify the previously identified factor structure in an independent sample of 700 early adolescents (Sample B, Table 2). The first CFA was based on these adolescents' responses to the ELYS at T1, whereas the second CFA was based on their responses to the ELYS at T4. We conducted these CFAs using LISREL 8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). We used the following goodness-of-fit indices to evaluate model fit: non-normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). According to several methodologists (e.g., Bollen, 1989; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996; Tanaka, 1993), NNFI and CFI values above 0.90, and SRMR value less than 0.08 are considered acceptable.

Results and discussion

Early adolescent sample

The model fit indices for the first CFA were: $\chi^2(df=89)=469.02$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA=0.08$, $NNFI=0.94$, $CFI=0.95$, and $SRMR=0.06$. The

model fit indices for the second CFA were: $\chi^2(df=89)=637.06$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA=0.09$, $NNFI=0.95$, $CFI=0.96$, and $SRMR=0.06$. Although RMSEA suggested borderline fit, all other fit indices indicated good fit at both time points. Furthermore, all freely estimated factor loadings were not only significant, but also substantial in magnitude. For the social integration factor, the completely standardized loadings ranged from 0.44 to 0.83, with a mean of 0.62 in T1, and from 0.54 to 0.76, with a mean of 0.67 in T4. For the absorption factor, the completely standardized loadings ranged from 0.54 to 0.76, with a mean of 0.63 in T1, and from 0.61 to 0.83, with a mean of 0.76 in T4. As such, we conclude that the factor structure of the ELYS identified earlier was successfully verified in this early adolescent sample. At T1, the correlation between the two latent factors of social integration and absorption was moderately positive, $r=0.53$, $p < 0.01$. At T2, the correlation was also moderately positive, $r=0.46$, $p < 0.01$.

Late adolescent sample

Next, we tested whether the factor structure of the ELYS would hold among or generalize to a late adolescent sample of 1035 high school students (Sample C, Table 2). A CFA was conducted using LISREL 8.54. The CFA yielded the following model fit indices: $\chi^2(df=89)=821.08$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA=0.09$, $NNFI=0.93$, $CFI=0.94$, and

standardized RMR = 0.06. These fit indices, although slightly worse than those based on the above early adolescent sample, clearly suggested acceptable fit. All freely estimated factor loadings were significant. For the social integration factor, the completely standardized loadings ranged from 0.43 to 0.74, with a mean of 0.60, whereas for the absorption factor, the completely standardized loadings ranged from 0.46 to 0.83, with a mean of 0.67. These loadings were comparable to those based on the above early adolescent sample. Together, the original factor structure of the ELYS seems to hold in this late adolescent sample. The correlation between the two latent factors of social integration and absorption was moderately positive, $r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$, similar to what we found in our early adolescent sample.

Test-retest reliability

The temporal stability of the scale was examined in a sample of 700 early adolescents (Sample B, Table 2) over a 6-month period. To assess test-retest reliability for social integration and absorption, we examined Pearson r correlations between baseline (T1) and the 2-week (T2), 3-month (T3), and 6-month (T4) follow-ups for the respective constructs. (These assessment intervals were largely based on logistics and the school's calendar.) For social integration, the correlation between T1 and the follow-ups was the following: 2 weeks, $r = 0.84$, 3 months, $r = 0.72$, and 6 months, $r = 0.70$, (p 's < 0.001). For absorption, the correlation between T1 and the follow-ups was the following: 2 weeks, $r = 0.80$, 3 months, $r = 0.71$, and 6 months, $r = 0.72$, (p 's < 0.001).

Together, these data suggest that the factor structure of the ELYS is strong in both early and late adolescents. Furthermore, to the degree that strong temporal stability over 6 months supports the existence of a trait, we have initial evidence to suggest that engaged living is a trait. We now move on to examine the relation between engaged living and a host of well-being measures to establish its construct validity.

Study 3: Correlations with other measures

An individual differences measure is worthy of being added to the literature if it is similar enough to other constructs to be recognizable, but different enough to be worth studying (Mayer, 2000). Study 3's primary purpose was to establish construct validity of the ELYS.

Conceptually-related variables

We focused on variables of theoretical similarity to the ELYS. One of these variables is shown to strengthen relationships (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008) and

communities (Simmel, 1950): gratitude. We expected social integration to be positively correlated with gratitude, because it is related to positive social relationships. Because gratitude could be considered an intrinsic aspiration (Bono & Froh, 2009), as is helping others and the community (i.e., social integration) (Kasser, 2002), we predicted the relation to gratitude would be stronger for social integration compared with absorption, although we expected a significant relation between absorption and gratitude (Froh, Ubertini, Wajsbilat, & Yurkewicz, 2008). Given hope's positive relation to goal directed behavior, the ability to attend to appropriate environmental cues and remain focused, and negative relation to anxiety and frustration (see Snyder, 2002 for a review), we predicted strong relations between absorption and hope and moderate relations between hope and social integration. This is because social integration is concerned with positive social relationships, whereas hope is not (Snyder, 2002). Finally, with people often finding meaning from altruism, civic engagement (Damon, 2008), spirituality (Emmons, 1999), and engaging activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) we expected positive relations between meaning and social integration and absorption. Finally, we tested the relation between social integration and absorption with social desirability. We expected social integration and absorption to be unrelated to social desirability.

Traits

Traits, as classically defined, are often assumed to be temporally consistent characteristics. Because youth with high self-esteem tend to have quality relationships (Hirsch & DuBois, 1991; Savin-Williams & Berdt, 1990; Yeh & Lempers, 2004), we predicted that self-esteem would be positively related to social integration. Self-esteem has also been linked to academic engagement (Finn & Rock, 1997), thus we predicted a positive relation with absorption. Materialism is considered an extrinsic aspiration focused on attaining financial success, possessions, good image, and high status (Kasser, Ryan, Couchman, & Sheldon, 2004). Materialistic youth are unlikely to report being intensely engrossed in meaningful activities (Kasser, 2002), and therefore we predicted a negative correlation between absorption and materialism. Materialism has been associated with less concern for the welfare of others (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), less relatedness (Kashdan & Breen, 2007), and less satisfaction with family life (Richins & Dawson, 1992). In addition, youth who are high in materialism experience less family togetherness (Flouri, 2004). We therefore predicted that materialism would also be negatively related to social integration. Because envy has been associated with intergroup conflicts (Beck, 1999;

Glick, 2002), as well as a host of aggressive and hostile events (Smith & Kim, 2007), we predicted a negative relation between envy and social integration. By definition, envy is primarily focused on others (Smith & Kim, 2007). Because of this extrinsic focus, like materialism, we expected a negative correlation between envy and absorption. High delinquency has been associated with low levels of participation in organized youth activities (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). We therefore expected a negative relation between delinquency and social integration. Additionally, because delinquent youth are less likely to be involved in such meaningful activities (Mahoney et al., 2005), we also predicted a negative relation with absorption.

Well-being and academic achievement

Because we think engaged living is a distinct construct, something absent from the youth literature and not just another measure of well-being, we examine correlations with measures of life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, happiness, depression, and academic achievement. Well-being, as we are defining it, is positive characteristics manifested either emotionally or cognitively. Strong social relationships have been associated with greater happiness (Demir & Weitekamp, 2006), quality of life (Myers, 1999), life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 1988), and less depression (Myers, 1999). High life satisfaction in youth has also been related to prosocial activities (Huebner, 2004). Because of these strong relationships, we predicted that social integration would be positively related to positive affect, life satisfaction, and happiness, and negatively related to negative affect and depression. Research has indicated that students who are intrinsically motivated in their school work are academically successful (Lepper, Corpus, & Henderlong, 2005). Because of the similarity between intrinsic motivation and absorption, we predicted a positive relationship between GPA and absorption. In addition, academic achievement has also been correlated with participation in after-school activities (Mahoney et al., 2005). Thus, we also predicted a positive relation between GPA and social integration.

This study includes three samples, totaling 2198 early and late adolescents. Instead of presenting these samples in separate studies, we summarize our findings in two parts. First, we present findings describing the similarity and uniqueness of the ELYS with other conceptually related measures of psychological well-being. Second, we present correlations of the ELYS with additional alternative measures of well-being and attributes. Given the homogeneity of the students, one could argue that it would be simpler to collapse the data into a single data set and report a single

coefficient for each hypothesis test (as opposed to a separate coefficient for each sample). But we test our hypotheses with each sample separately hoping to show correlations of a similar magnitude across samples, however similar the samples may be, aiming to demonstrate that the findings are generalizable.

Method

Participants and procedure

Samples A–C are described in Table 2. Participants in Samples A–C were early and late adolescents from one affluent school district (district median household income = \$94,339; state median household income = \$43,393) in Long Island, New York.

Students enrolled in curriculum that all students receive (e.g., English) were sought for participation to increase the odds of obtaining a representative sample of the school. The students were recruited by the first author, while working as a school psychologist in the same district. He contacted the principal of the school where data were collected, and asked for permission to distribute parental consent forms and collect data after receiving passive parental consent and active student assent. For Sample A, of the 485 students in the school, 17 were absent on the day of data collection, and five parents/guardians returned the consent forms requesting that their child not participate in the study. For Sample B, of the 728 students in the school, 25 were absent on the day of data collection, and three parents/guardians returned the consent forms requesting that their child not participate in the study. For Sample C, of the 1072 students in the school, 34 were absent on the day of data collection, and three parents/guardians returned the consent forms requesting that their child not participate in the study. One week prior to data collection, the first author reviewed all the measures and instructions with the vice principal, who then reviewed them with the teachers. Teachers were given a script for introducing the study to students to ensure uniformity and control for potential demand characteristics. Teachers administered questionnaires in classrooms. Measures were counterbalanced via a Latin square to control for order effects.

Measures

Table 4 gives a summary of when the samples completed the measures and includes the internal consistencies. None of the measures were modified in any way.

Construct validity scales

Gratitude questionnaire-6. The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough, Emmons,

Table 4. Summary of the administration of scales (scale construction and all studies) and internal consistencies.

Scale	Sample					
	A		B		C	
Location	PS ^a	PS ^{bT1}	PS ^{bT2}	PS ^{bT3}	PS ^{bT4}	PS ^c
ELYS						
Gratitude Questionnaire-6		0.62			0.72	0.76
GRAT-short form						0.82
Gratitude adjective checklist	0.85	0.83			0.91	0.86
Children's Hope Scale		0.83				
CSBQ: prosocial				0.80	0.72	
CSBQ: antisocial				0.87	0.88	
Meaning in Life Questionnaire		0.79				
SDS		0.51				
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale		0.79				
Material Values Scale						0.81
Dispositional Envy Scale						0.87
Sent to AP's office				S	S	
Brought alcohol/drugs to school				S	S	
Suspended from school				S	S	
Expelled from school				S	S	
Positive affect	0.87	0.87				0.87
Negative affect	0.88	0.84				0.90
Satisfaction with Life Scale					0.81	
MDSSLS				0.89		
Family				0.87		
Friends				0.75		
School				0.77		
Living environment				0.74		
Self				0.78		
BMSLSS		0.80			0.82	0.72
Overall life satisfaction	S					
Subjective Happiness Scale		0.70				
CES-DC		0.84		0.85	0.87	0.89
Peer-rated happiness		S				
Teacher-rated happiness				S		
GPA	S	S		S		S

Notes: Numbers represent internal consistency. An 'S' represents single-item measures (e.g., GPA). Alphas are not provided for the ELYS, because they are provided in Table 1, but we include the ELYS in this table for completeness. PS, public school. ^aPS, Spring 2006. ^{bT1}PS and ^{bT2}PS, Fall 2006. ^{bT3}PS, ^{bT4}PS, and ^cPS, Spring 2007. T1 = Baseline; T2 = 2-week follow-up; T3 = 3-month follow-up; T4 = 6-month follow-up. GRAT-short form, Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test-short form; CSBQ, Child Social Behavior Questionnaire; SDS, Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale; AP, Assistant Principal; MDSSLS, Multidimensional Students' Satisfaction with Life Scale; BMSLSS, Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale; CES-DC, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children.

& Tsang, 2002) is a 6-item measure of gratitude using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It has demonstrated good internal consistency in adult samples ($\alpha = 0.82$) (McCullough et al., 2002). Discriminant validity was tested for gratitude's relation to satisfaction with life ($r = 0.53$), hope ($r = 0.67$), vitality ($r = 0.46$), subjective happiness ($r = 0.50$), and optimism ($r = 0.51$). The authors conclude that gratitude is related, but not equivalent to these constructs. A sample item is, 'If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.'

Gratitude, resentment, and appreciation test-short form. The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation

Test-short form (GRAT-short form; Thomas & Watkins, 2003) is a 16-item measure of gratitude using a Likert scale from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 9 (I strongly agree with the statement). Internal consistency is excellent in adult samples ($\alpha = 0.92$), as is convergent and discriminant validity (Thomas & Watkins, 2003). A sample item is, 'I couldn't have gotten where I am today without the help of many people.'

Gratitude adjective checklist. The Gratitude Adjective Checklist (GAC; McCullough et al., 2002) is the sum of three adjectives: grateful, thankful, and appreciative. A Likert scale from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) followed each item. It has demonstrated

good internal consistency in adult samples ($\alpha = 0.87$) (McCullough et al., 2002), and convergent and discriminant validity has been established in adolescent samples (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). Students were asked to rate the amount they experienced each feeling 'during the past few weeks.'

We employed three measures of gratitude because no known measure exists to assess gratitude in youth. As such, research supporting the psychometric properties of adult gratitude scales in youth has only recently begun to accumulate (Froh, Miller, & Snyder, 2007).

Children's Hope Scale. The Children's Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, & Rapoff, 1997) is a 6-item measure using a Likert scale from 1 (none of the time) to 6 (all of the time). In samples of 7–17 year olds, internal consistency for the CHS ranged from 0.76 to 0.82 (Snyder et al., 1997). Additional tests indicated that the CHS is stable over retesting ($r = 0.71$), and exhibits convergent, discriminant, and incremental validities. A sample item is, 'When I have a problem, I can come up with a lot of ways to solve it.'

Child Social Behavior Questionnaire. The Child Social Behavior Questionnaire (CSBQ; Warden, Cheyne, Christie, Fitzpatrick, & Reid, 2003) yields scores using 12 behavioral dimensions for four factors: two antisocial factors, a prosocial factor, and a victim factor. After reading the sentence stem, 'How often have you...' participants respond to questions such as, 'Helped another child in your class with their work?' or, 'Picked on another child in your class?' using the response options, 'Never,' 'Sometimes,' or 'Often.' It has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency in youth samples ($\alpha = 0.68$ for prosocial measures and $\alpha = 0.63$ for antisocial measures). Peer and teacher reports yielded higher coefficients, $\alpha = 0.93$ (antisocial), $\alpha = 0.90$ (prosocial), and $\alpha = 0.89$ (antisocial and prosocial), respectively.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) is a 10-item measure of the presence of and the search for meaning in life. It uses a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (absolutely untrue) to 7 (absolutely true) and has demonstrated good internal consistency in adult samples, with α ranging from 0.81 to 0.92, and from 0.86 to 0.88 for the two subscale measures (Steger et al., 2006). Authors also note the presence of discriminate and convergent validity. A sample item is, 'My life has a clear sense of purpose.'

Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale. The Social Desirability Scale (SDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) is a

33-item scale in true–false format used to assess and control for response bias in self-reported data. For the purposes of this study, a modified 10-item version was used. The internal consistency for the original scale was 0.88 and the test–retest reliability was 0.89 (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). A sample item is, 'I have never intensely disliked anyone.'

Traits

Material Values Scale. The Material Values Scale (MVS; Richins, 2004) is a 15-item measure of materialism using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In adult samples, (including undergraduate students), internal reliability is 0.87 (Richins, 2004). A sample item is, 'I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.'

Dispositional Envy Scale. The Dispositional Envy Scale (DES; Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle, & Kim, 1999) is an 8-item measure of envy using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In college samples, internal consistency (Sample 1 = 0.86, and Sample 2 = 0.83) is good (0.80). The DES also exhibits high temporal stability ($r = 0.80$) (Smith et al., 1999). A sample is, 'I feel envy every day.'

Well-being scales

We also used several measures reflecting different aspects of well-being.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure of self esteem using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Test–retest reliability was reported to be 0.85 (Rosenberg, 1965). It has shown to be internally reliable in samples of 11–16 year old students, ($\alpha = 0.71–0.80$) (Ang, Neubronner, Oh, & Leong, 2006; Bhy, 2006). A sample item is, 'I am able to do things as well as most other people.'

Positive affect and negative affect. We used two measures to assess the emotional component of subjective well-being. For Samples A and B, the following 27 affect adjectives were used: interested, distressed, excited, alert, irritable, sad, stressed, ashamed, happy, tired, upset, strong, nervous, guilty, joyful, determined, calm, attentive, forgiving, hostile, energetic, hopeful, enthusiastic, active, afraid, proud, and angry. A Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely) followed each item. Students were asked to rate the amount they experienced each feeling 'in general.' These adjectives have been found to be reliable in early adolescent samples (Froh, Ubertini et al., 2008).

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C; Laurent et al., 1999) was used with Sample C. The PANAS-C consists of 15 positive (e.g., happy, cheerful) and 15 negative (e.g., sad, frightened) affect adjectives. Internal consistency is strong for both the PA scale (0.90 for the scale development sample and 0.89 for the replication sample) and NA scale (0.94 for the scale development sample and 0.92 for the replication sample). Both scales also have good convergent and discriminant validity with existing measures of childhood anxiety and depression (Laurent et al., 1999). A Likert scale from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) followed each item. Students were asked to rate the amount they experienced each feeling 'during the past few weeks.'

For simplicity, these two positive and negative affect scales will not be distinguished. Instead, we only refer to the constructs they measure: positive affect and negative affect.

Life satisfaction. We used several measures to assess the cognitive component of subjective well-being. At T4 in Sample B, students completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS is a 5-item measure of life satisfaction using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In undergraduate samples, it demonstrated alpha coefficients exceeding 0.80 across numerous studies (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Furthermore, it is temporally consistent ($r = 0.82$), and discriminant and convergent validities are also exhibited (Diener et al., 1985). A sample item is, 'In most ways my life is close to ideal.'

At T3 in Sample B, students completed the Multidimensional Students' Satisfaction with Life Scale (MSSLS; Huebner, 1994). It is a 40-item measure using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The MSSLS contains five subscales: family, self, school, friends, and living environment. Across several studies (Huebner, 1994; Huebner, Laughlin, Gilman, & Ash, 1998), internal consistency for the MSSLS ranges between the 0.70 to low 0.90 s. The original sample consisted of students in grades 3–8, with $\alpha = 0.92$ for the overall scale, and ranging from 0.82 to 0.85 for the subscales. A sample item is, 'I like spending time with my parents.'

At T1 and T4 in Sample B and in Sample C, students completed the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS; Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). The BMSLSS is a 5-item measure using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) that assesses satisfaction with family life, friendships, school experience, self, and living environment. Internal consistency has been reported to be acceptable with middle school students ($\alpha = 0.75$)

and good with high school students ($\alpha = 0.81$). In addition, strong relations were noted between the BMSLSS and the MDSSLS ($r = 0.66$), as well as other measures of youth life satisfaction and related well-being measures (Seligson et al., 2003). A sample item is, 'I would describe my satisfaction with my friends as _____.'

In Sample A, students were asked to answer the following question to provide a rough estimate of their overall life satisfaction: 'I would describe my satisfaction with my overall life as _____.' A Likert scale from 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) followed the item.

Subjective Happiness Scale. The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) is a 4-item measure of global happiness. Across 14 samples (including 36 high school students), internal consistency for the SHS ranged from adequate (0.79) to excellent (0.94) with the majority falling between the mid to high 0.80 s. Test–retest correlations suggest good to excellent reliability (ranging from 0.55 to 0.90), and construct validation studies of convergent and discriminant validity are also good (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). A sample is, 'In general, I consider myself _____' (response options range from 1 [not a very happy person] to 7 [a very happy person]).

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC; Weissman, Orvaschel, & Padian, 1980) is a 20-item measure of depression using a Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (a lot). It has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$) in a sample of 156 youths ranging in age from 8 to 17 years (Brage, Meredith, & Woodward, 1993) and test–retest reliability has been established (Faulstich, Carey, Ruggiero, Enyart, & Gresham, 1986). A sample item is, 'I felt down and unhappy.'

Delinquency. Four items using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often/five times or more) measured general school problem behavior. In a sample of middle school students, internal reliability was 0.71 (Roeser, Strobel, & Quihuis, 2002). One item is, 'Brought alcohol or drugs to school?' We analyzed all four items separately because alpha for the composite in Sample B was 0.17 at T3 and 0.13 at T4.

Other report of student happiness. For Sample B, students at T1 were asked to name the three happiest students in their school. Also for Sample B, teachers at T3 were given the following directions and asked to write their response on a class roster:

Table 5. Correlations of the engaged living in youth scale with other scales: construct validity (Study 3).

Scale	Samples(s)		Correlation(s)	
	Social integration	Absorption	Social integration	Absorption
Gratitude Questionnaire-6	B, C	B, C	0.45**, 0.53**	0.27**, 0.22**
GRAT-short form	C	C	0.55**	0.26**
Gratitude adjective checklist	A, B, C	A, B, C	0.49**, 0.49**, 0.47**	0.14*, 0.32**, 0.20**
Children's Hope Scale	B	B	0.46**	0.42**
Meaning in Life Questionnaire	B	B	0.35**	0.28**
SDS	B	B	0.28**	0.12*

Notes: *N*'s for the samples are the following: A (463), B (T1 = 700, T2 = 700, T3 = 700, T4 = 700), C (1035). GRAT-short form, Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test-short form; SDS, Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale.

* $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Happy people as conceptualized by Seligman (2002) are defined as, “those individuals who regularly experience positive emotions, are fully engaged and absorbed during activities they enjoy doing, and have a sense of meaning and purpose in life.” Based on *this definition* please indicate how HAPPY each student is IN GENERAL by writing a number from 1–10 (with higher numbers associated with greater happiness) next to EACH student's name.

Academic achievement

Students were asked to report their current GPA. The response options were: 95 and above, 90–94.9, 85–89.9, 80–84.9, 75–79.9, 70–74.9, 65–69.9, and 64.9 and below. (All of the school districts in the current study use a 0–100 scale for GPA.)

Results

Construct validity correlations

Table 5 presents correlations of the ELYS with other measures assessed. We found strong positive correlations between social integration and dispositional gratitude measures. Absorption, however, demonstrated small to moderate positive relations with dispositional gratitude. Using Sample C, we tested the difference between correlation coefficients for dependent samples to determine if social integration demonstrated a stronger relation with gratitude than did absorption. Using either the GQ-6, $Z = 10.15$, $p < 0.001$, GRAT-short form, $Z = 9.67$, $p < 0.001$, or GAC, $Z = 8.58$, $p < 0.001$, social integration was more strongly related to gratitude than absorption. Together, these correlations demonstrate a distinction between social integration and absorption as social integration seems to be more related to positive social relationships (Algoe et al., 2008). Although both the social integration and absorption subscales were positively related to hope, relations were slightly stronger for social integration compared with absorption. Social integration and absorption were positively correlated

with meaning at a moderate level. Turning finally to social desirability, in Sample B, the Marlowe–Crowne showed positive relations with social integration, $r = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$, and, to a lesser extent, absorption, $r = 0.12$, $p < 0.001$.

Attribute, well-being, and academic achievement correlations

Table 6 presents correlations between social integration and absorption and traits, well-being, and academic achievement. Social integration and absorption were positively correlated with positive affect, life satisfaction, a global measure of happiness, self-esteem, and GPA. They were also negatively correlated with envy, negative affect, and depression. The majority of the aforementioned relations were moderate to strong. Furthermore, social integration, but not absorption, demonstrated small to moderate negative correlations with materialism. Finally, social integration was positively correlated with peer-ratings of student happiness.

Discussion

The pattern of correlations described in this section provides evidence for the construct validity of the ELYS. Engaged living converges with several measures of well-being and traits, and the relations are generally moderate to strong with the majority of the strong correlations being around 0.50. Overall, the pattern of associations indicates that higher scorers in engaged living tend to be more grateful, hopeful, happier (per self and peer reports), and report elevated levels of life satisfaction, positive affect, and self-esteem and higher GPAs. Moreover, higher scorers also tend to be less depressed, envious, and report lower levels of negative emotions such as scared, ashamed, lonely, and disgusted. Social integration and absorption were modestly correlated, though absorption to a lesser extent, with a measure of social desirability.

Table 6. Correlations of the ELYS with Dispositional Scales measuring psychological well-being and academic achievement (Study 3).

Scale	Sample(s)		Correlation(s)	
			Traits	
	Social integration	Absorption	Social integration	Absorption
Material Values Scale	C		−0.20***	
Dispositional Env Scale	C	C	−0.11**	−0.07***
			Well-being: self-report	
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	B	B	0.24***	0.21***
Positive affect	A, B, C	A, B, C	0.46***, 0.52***, 0.34***	0.33***, 0.44***, 0.35***
Negative affect	A, B, C	A, B, C	−0.13**, −0.22***, 0.00	−0.06, −0.14***, −0.10**
BMSLSS life satisfaction	B, C	B, C	0.43***, 0.29***	0.29***, 0.21***
Overall life satisfaction	A	A	0.33***	0.14**
Subjective Happiness Scale	B	B	0.42***	0.28***
CES-DC depression	B, C	B, C	−0.08**, −0.08**	−0.07, −0.16***
			Well-being: other report	
Peer-rated happiness	B	B	0.19***	0.07
			Academic achievement	
GPA	A, B, C	A, B, C	0.10*, 0.12**, 0.16***	0.06, 0.12**, 0.06

Notes: *N*'s for the samples are the following: A (463), B (T1 = 700, T2 = 700, T3 = 700, T4 = 700), C (1035). BMSLSS, Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale; CES-DC, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ and *** $p < 0.001$.

A final important set of findings from this study showed some distinction between social integration and absorption. First, the correlation between social integration and absorption ranged from 0.28 ($p < 0.001$) to 0.47 ($p < 0.001$) across samples and time points. Second, across samples, social integration was more robustly related to gratitude compared with absorption. This makes theoretical sense given gratitude's essential role in social relationships (Algoe et al., 2008). Third, social integration demonstrated a modest negative relation with materialism and absorption was unrelated to materialism. This, too, makes theoretical sense. To the extent that social integration is an intrinsic value, one concerned with affiliation and community (Kasser, 2002), it seems likely that adolescents who scored high on social integration would likely report weak levels of materialism because it is an extrinsic value, one concerned with status, image, and prestige (Kasser, 2002).

Study 4: Incremental validity

The primary purpose of Study 4 was to examine the incremental validity by controlling for variables shown to be related to the ELYS and our outcomes of interest. We aimed to strengthen our argument that the ELYS can be used to predict positive outcomes beyond other already established scales. We expected the correlations to remain statistically significant.

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants in Study 4 were from Sample B. The procedure was discussed in Study 3 above.

Results and discussion

We examined whether the correlations found between engaged living with several attribute and well-being variables would remain significant after controlling for the effects of numerous constructs that were shown to be related to engaged living (see Study 3 in the current program) and that themselves have been shown to be related to various trait and well-being indicators. For instance, in adolescents, gratitude has been found to be positively related to self-esteem (Froh, Wajsbilat, & Ubertini, 2008), positive affect, life satisfaction (Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009), and GPA (Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono, & Wilson, in press). It has also been found to have a negative relation with negative affect (Froh, Sefick et al., 2008) and depression (Froh et al., in press). Purpose has been positively associated with self esteem, positive emotions, life satisfaction, and academic achievement and negatively associated with negative emotions (Damon, 2008). Finally, it is important to control for the effects of social desirability given its relation to engaged living and its positive relation to subjective well-being

Table 7. Hierarchical regression models of engaged living predicting well-being and academic achievement controlling for gratitude, meaning, and social desirability (Study 4, Sample B, T1).

Criterion	Step		ΔR^2	ΔF
Self-esteem	1	Covariates	0.28	67.30**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.01	5.14*
Positive affect	1	Covariates	0.49	165.70**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.05	34.25**
Negative affect	1	Covariates	0.19	39.36**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.01	2.06
Life satisfaction	1	Covariates	0.34	86.99**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.02	10.04**
Happiness (self-report)	1	Covariates	0.29	68.37**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.02	10.08**
Happiness (peer-report)	1	Covariates	0.04	6.64**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.02	6.89*
Grade point average	1	Covariates	0.05	8.85**
	2	Social integration and absorption	0.01	1.86

Note: * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$.

(Diener, Sandvik, Pavot, & Gallagher, 1991), self-esteem (Mesmer-Magnus, Viswesvaran, Deshpande, & Joseph, 2006), and academic achievement (Eyo, 1984).

Incremental validity was assessed using T1 data from Sample B. Table 7 presents the hierarchical regression models where we first entered several related variables (i.e., GQ-6, GAC, MLQ, and SDS) and then entered social integration and absorption. The criterion variables were well-being variables that are often used as dependent variables in social, personality, and health research.

Table 7 shows that with a few exceptions social integration and absorption contributed a significant amount of variance in predicting the other measures of well-being above and beyond the covariates. Specifically, after controlling for gratitude, meaning, and social desirability, social integration and absorption predicted self-esteem, positive affect, life satisfaction, happiness (peer and self-report), and GPA.

Study 5: Predictive validity in early adolescents

Although the initial validation data in Studies 3 and 4 are promising, important methodological weaknesses limit our ability to understand the value of engaged living. Thus far, we only collected data from the students themselves and their peers. In addition, all data have been cross-sectional. Finally, we only addressed a small portion of the universe of well-being outcomes. Therefore, we conducted a fifth study with 700 adolescents and focused on determining how engaged living predicts outcomes across time (i.e., 6 months). We went beyond self and peer-report data and assessed teacher-rated happiness. Study 5 also examines self-reported well-being in terms of

satisfaction with family life, friendships, school experience, self, and living environment, prosocial and antisocial behavior, and delinquency. The hypotheses for Study 5 will resemble those of Studies 3 and 4: engaged living will be positively related to well-being and negatively related to ill-being. We further predict that engaged living will be negatively related to delinquency and positively related to GPA. Considering the findings from Studies 3 and 4, we expect the longitudinal relationships between engaged living and gratitude and engaged living and life satisfaction to be the strongest.

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants in Study 5 were from Sample B. The procedure was discussed in Study 3.

Results

Zero-order correlations were conducted separately for social integration and absorption at T1 with the outcome variables at T3 and T4. We did this hoping to replicate our findings from T3 at T4. At T3, social integration demonstrated moderate to strong positive relations with overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with oneself and one's family, and prosocial behavior. It also demonstrated a modest positive correlation with school satisfaction, modest negative correlation with antisocial behavior, and small to moderate positive correlations with friend and living environment satisfaction. Finally, social integration demonstrated small positive relations with teacher-rated happiness and GPA and a small negative relation with being sent to

the assistant principal's office; no other relations were found with delinquency outcomes. At T3, absorption demonstrated small to moderate positive relations with overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with one's family, friends, school, living environment, and self, and prosocial behavior. Small to moderate negative relations were also found between absorption and antisocial behavior and depression.

At T4, social integration demonstrated strong positive relations with two measures of gratitude and two measures of overall life satisfaction. It also demonstrated a modest positive relation with prosocial behavior and small to modest negative relation with antisocial behavior. Finally, social integration demonstrated small, yet still significant, negative correlations with depression, being sent to the principal's office, and being suspended from school. At T4, absorption demonstrated a modest positive relation with a measure of gratitude and overall life satisfaction and small to modest positive relation with another measure of gratitude and life satisfaction. It also demonstrated a small to modest positive relation with prosocial behavior. Finally, absorption demonstrated small, yet significant, negative relations with depression and bringing alcohol or drugs to school (Table 8).

We then conducted a series of hierarchical regression models to evaluate the unique variance contributed by social integration and absorption, when entered simultaneously to predict changes in positive and negative outcomes. With the exception of teacher-rated happiness, which was only measured at T3, we controlled for all respective dependent variables at T1. When controlling for T1, engaged living predicted the following variables at T3: overall life satisfaction, family satisfaction, friend satisfaction, school satisfaction, self satisfaction, and living environment satisfaction. When not controlling for T1 because the data were unavailable, engaged living predicted teacher-rated happiness at T3. When controlling for T1, engaged living predicted the following variables at T4: gratitude, overall life satisfaction, family satisfaction, friend satisfaction, school satisfaction, self satisfaction, and living environment satisfaction. When controlling for T3, engaged living predicted prosocial behavior. Not supporting our hypotheses, engaged living did not predict depression at T3 or T4, antisocial behavior at T4, being sent to the assistant principal's office at T4, bringing alcohol or drugs to school at T3 or T4, being suspended from school at T3 or T4, being expelled from school at T3 or T4, or GPA at T3.

Upon examining social integration and absorption unique contributions to the regression models for T3, social integration was significant for the following outcomes: overall life satisfaction, family satisfaction, school satisfaction, self satisfaction, living environment satisfaction, prosocial behavior, antisocial behavior, teacher-rated happiness, and being sent to the assistant

Table 8. Correlations of engaged living with psychological well-being, delinquency, and academic achievement 3 and 6-months later (Study 5, Sample B).

Scale	Social integration	Absorption
3-months		
CES-DC depression	-0.03	-0.08*
MDSLSS life satisfaction Total	0.40***	0.22***
Family	0.39***	0.22***
Friends	0.16***	0.15***
School	0.33***	0.12**
Living environment	0.19***	0.08*
Self	0.44***	0.28***
CSBQ prosocial behavior	0.40***	0.21***
CSBQ antisocial behavior	-0.24***	-0.14***
Sent to assistant principal's office	-0.12**	0.01
Teacher-rated happiness	0.11**	0.04
Grade point average	0.09*	0.05
6-months		
GQ-6 gratitude	0.44***	0.17***
GAC gratitude	0.45***	0.25***
CES-DC depression	-0.10**	-0.10**
BMSLSS life satisfaction	0.41***	0.22***
SWLS life satisfaction	0.45***	0.30***
CSBQ prosocial behavior	0.37***	0.20***
CSBQ antisocial behavior	-0.16***	-0.07*
Sent to assistant principal's office	-0.09*	0.04
Brought alcohol or drugs to school	-0.04	-0.08*
Suspended from school	-0.07*	-0.03
Expelled from school	-0.07*	-0.01

Notes: CES-DC, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children; MDSSLSS, Multidimensional Students' Satisfaction with Life Scale; CSBQ, Child Social Behavior Questionnaire; GQ-6, Gratitude Questionnaire-6; GAC, gratitude adjective checklist; BMSLSS, Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale; SWLS, Satisfaction With Life Scale.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

principal's office. Absorption was significant for being sent to the assistant principal's office. Upon examining social integration and absorption unique contributions to the regression models for T4, social integration was significant for the following outcomes: gratitude, overall life satisfaction, family satisfaction, friends satisfaction, school satisfaction, self satisfaction, prosocial behavior, and being suspended from school. Absorption was not significant for any of the T4 predictions. Table 9 presents the results of the regression analyses.

Discussion

The results from Study 3 show that social integration and absorption, individually, correlate with well-being and related outcomes contemporaneously. The results

Table 9. Hierarchical regression models of engaged living predicting well-being and delinquency controlling for previous measurement (Study 5, Sample B).

Criterion	Step		<i>B</i>	SE _{<i>b</i>}	sr _{<i>i</i>} ²	<i>T</i>	Δ <i>R</i> ²	Δ <i>F</i>
3-months								
MDSSLS life satisfaction	1	T1 BMSLSS life satisfaction	0.49	0.17	0.24	14.88***	0.24	221.38***
	2	T1 social integration	0.23	0.12	0.04	5.89***	0.04	20.38***
Family satisfaction	1	T1 family satisfaction	0.46	0.21	0.20	11.66***	0.21	135.88***
	2	T1 social integration	0.27	0.03	0.05	6.07***	0.07	24.49***
Friends satisfaction	1	T1 friends satisfaction	0.16	0.27	0.03	3.78***	0.03	14.30***
	2	T1 social integration	0.09	0.04	0.01	1.78	0.01	3.35*
School satisfaction	1	T1 school satisfaction	0.29	0.23	0.09	7.00***	0.09	49.05***
	2	T1 social integration	0.29	0.05	0.06	5.95***	0.06	19.11***
Self satisfaction	1	T1 self satisfaction	0.39	0.16	0.16	9.69***	0.16	93.97***
	2	T1 social integration	0.35	0.02	0.09	7.98***	0.13	45.31***
Residency satisfaction	1	T1 residency satisfaction	0.24	0.32	0.06	5.69***	0.06	32.35***
	2	T1 social integration	0.13	0.05	0.01	2.63**	0.01	3.61*
Teacher rated happiness	1	T1 social integration	0.11	0.01	0.01	2.63**	0.01	3.97*
	2	T1 absorption	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.35	0.44	
CES-DC depression	1	T1 CES-DC depression	0.75	0.03	0.44	23.44***	0.00	552.96***
	2	T1 social integration	0.05	0.03	0.00	1.47		1.99
Brought alcohol or drugs to school	1	T1 social integration	-0.10	0.05	0.00	-1.88	0.00	
	2	T1 absorption	-7.88	0.00	0.00	-0.80		0.82
Suspended from school	1	T1 absorption	-8.15	0.00	0.00	-0.51	0.00	
	2	T1 social integration	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.60		1.10
Expelled from school	1	T1 absorption	-0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.92	0.00	
	2	T1 social integration	7.19	0.00	0.00	-1.24		1.27
Grade point average	1	T1 grade point average	-2.86	0.00	0.00	-0.30	0.00	
	2	T1 social integration	0.68	0.05	0.20	13.21***	0.21	180.35***
	1	T1 absorption	0.01	0.01	0.00	1.27	0.00	0.81
	2	T1 absorption	-0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.66		
6 months								
GQ-6 gratitude	1	T1 GQ-6 gratitude	0.44	0.04	0.19	12.81***	0.19	164.14***
	2	T1 social integration	0.33	0.02	0.07	8.28***	0.08	35.65***
GAC gratitude	1	T1 absorption	-0.07	0.04	0.00	-1.83		
	2	T1 GAC gratitude	0.49	0.03	0.24	14.78***	0.24	218.43***
SWLS life satisfaction	1	T1 social integration	0.28	0.01	0.05	7.11***	0.06	29.91***
	2	T1 absorption	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.14		
BMSLSS life satisfaction	1	T1BMSLSS	0.59	0.03	0.34	19.17***	0.35	367.47***
	2	T1 social integration	0.21	0.02	0.03	5.89***	0.05	28.15***
Family satisfaction	1	T1 absorption	0.07	0.03	0.00	1.92		
	2	T1 BMSLSS	0.64	0.03	0.41	22.12***	0.41	489.21***
Friends satisfaction	1	T1 social integration	0.18	0.02	0.02	5.22***	0.02	14.34***
	2	T1 absorption	-0.03	0.03	0.00	-1.00		
School satisfaction	1	T1 family satisfaction	0.43	0.05	0.19	9.17***	0.19	84.08***
	2	T1 social integration	0.21	0.01	0.03	3.83***	0.03	7.81***
Self satisfaction	1	T1 absorption	-0.05	0.01	0.00	-0.86		
	2	T1 friends satisfaction	0.38	0.05	0.14	7.74***	0.14	59.83***
School satisfaction	1	T1 social integration	0.20	0.01	0.03	3.66***	0.03	6.98**
	2	T1 absorption	-0.05	0.01	0.00	-0.92		
Self satisfaction	1	T1 school satisfaction	0.40	0.04	0.16	8.23***	0.16	67.81***
	2	T1 social integration	0.21	0.01	0.03	3.63***	0.04	7.70**
Self satisfaction	1	T1 absorption	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.39		
	2	T1 self satisfaction	0.38	0.06	0.14	7.60***	0.14	57.71***
	1	T1 social integration	0.19	0.01	0.03	3.43**	0.04	7.43**
	2	T1 absorption	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.06		

(continued)

Table 9. Continued

Criterion	Step		<i>B</i>	SE _b	sr _i ²	<i>T</i>	Δ <i>R</i> ²	Δ <i>F</i>
Residency satisfaction	1	T1 residency satisfaction	0.41	0.05	0.14	7.71***	0.17	69.42***
	2	T1 social integration	0.02	0.01	0.02	2.65**	0.02	4.99**
		T1 absorption	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.28		
CSBQ prosocial behavior	1	T3 CSBQ prosocial behavior	0.64	0.03	0.41	22.07***	0.41	487.14***
	2	T1 social integration	0.14	0.01	0.01	4.00***	0.02	10.02***
		T1 absorption	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.10		
CSBQ antisocial behavior	1	T3 CSBQ antisocial behavior	0.59	0.03	0.29	17.32***	0.32	325.52***
	2	T1 social integration	0.01	0.01	0.00	1.06	0.00	0.58
		T1 absorption	-0.01	0.02	0.00	-0.66		
Sent to AP's office	1	T3 sent to AP's office	0.69	0.02	0.59	32.02***	0.60	1052.40***
	2	T1 social integration	-0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.44	0.00	0.87
		T1 absorption	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.30		
Brought alcohol or drugs to school	1	T3 brought alcohol or drugs to school	0.01	0.00	0.00	1.60	0.00	2.79
	2	T1 social integration	1.71	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	1.91
		T1 absorption	-2.78	0.00	0.00	-1.73		
Suspended from school	1	T3 suspended from school	0.35	0.01	0.52	27.82***	0.53	776.11***
	2	T1 social integration	0.00	0.00	0.00	-1.98*	0.00	2.00
		T1 absorption	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.18		
Expelled from school	1	T3 expelled from school	1.77	0.76	0.01	2.34*	0.01	5.95*
	2	T1 social integration	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.01	1.88
		T1 absorption	0.00	0.00	0.00	-1.94		

Notes: T1 = Baseline; T3 = 3-month follow-up. MDSSLS, Multidimensional Students' Satisfaction with Life Scale; BMSLSS, Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale; CSBQ, Child Social Behavior Questionnaire; AP, assistant principal; GQ-6, Gratitude Questionnaire-6; GAC, gratitude adjective checklist; SWLS, Satisfaction with Life Scale.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

from the current study indicate that, individually *and* together, social integration and absorption predict psychological, social, and emotional outcomes 3 and 6 months later. The overall findings suggest that adolescents high in engaged living at baseline tend to be more satisfied with their lives overall and in numerous domains (i.e., family, school, self), more prosocial, and more grateful up to 6 months later. Their sense of well-being was even noticed by their teachers 3 months later.

Social integration consistently contributed more unique variance to the predictions, compared with absorption. This might be explained by the nature of social integration. Considering that the variables in this study have strong correlations with positive social relationships – life satisfaction (Martin, Huebner, & Valois, 2008), prosocial behavior (Wentzel, 1998), antisocial behavior (Vuchinich, Bank, & Patterson, 1992), and gratitude (Froh et al., 2009) – it makes sense that social integration would contribute unique variance to predicting the outcomes when controlling for absorption. Furthermore, the fact that absorption did not relate to well-being outcomes may be because we did not differentiate different forms of absorption. For example, we did not distinguish between Vallerand's (2008) harmonious and obsessive passions. Nevertheless, it is possible that absorption is not meaningful with respect to students' functioning, as it does not seem that

knowing a student's level of absorption is needed if their level of social integration is known.

A major limitation of the study design is that different measures were used at T3 and T4. Thus, there is an inability to see if the magnitude of relationships between T1 and T3 were similar to correlations obtained between T1 and T4. This severely hampers our ability to assess whether engaged living has trait-like properties.

Overall, the findings suggest that helping adolescents live an engaged life, both in the short-term and long-term, might be related to helping youth stop from making poor choices resulting in delinquent behaviors and may be an avenue to increase their resilience (Masten, 2001). With lower life satisfaction being related to weapon carrying, physical fighting (Valois, Paxton, Zullig, & Huebner, 2006), relational victimization, and a lack of prosocial experiences (Martin et al., 2008) it makes sense for psychologists to invest resources in identifying and trying to augment constructs that relate to higher levels of life satisfaction. Social integration and absorption do just that.

General discussion

We designed the current research program to examine engaged living and its relation to psychological

well-being in adolescents. Initial studies provided evidence for the psychometric adequacy and validity of the ELYS through EFA and CFA. The ELYS was shown to be a reliable and valid measure for use in both early and late adolescents. The ELYS was also shown to predict positive and negative outcomes 3 and 6 months later.

The strong positive relations between engaged living with life satisfaction and positive emotions and strong negative relations with negative emotions and negative traits gives hope to helping adolescents navigate all of their changes – physical, emotional, social, and psychological (Berk, 2007). But just as there are opportunities for negative outcomes (e.g., weapon possession; Furlong, Bates, & Smith, 2001), there are also opportunities for positive psychological growth (Cicchetti & Toth, 1996). What are some variables that may influence the direction of development? Traits such as neuroticism are likely to lead to more disruptions (Bolger & Schilling, 2006) and lower levels of life satisfaction (McKnight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002). But positive traits such as being socially integrated and absorbed might lessen mood disruptions and enhance life experiences (Langston, 1994).

Therefore, capitalizing on one's strengths and fostering positive traits – such as engaged living – may help youth experience fewer psychological maladies (Masten, 2001). To illustrate, life satisfaction moderates stressful life events and externalizing disorders (Suldo & Huebner, 2004). Furthermore, happy adolescents tend to report fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety (Gilman & Huebner, 2003) and less substance abuse (Zullig, Valois, & Huebner, 2001) and violent behaviors (e.g., physical fighting and weapon carrying; i.e., Valois, Zullig, & Huebner, 2001). Though adolescence can be described as turbulent and stressful on both the adolescents themselves and the family system as a whole (Berk, 2007), happiness and well-being may help youth and their families navigate this challenging developmental period. And given engaged living's robust relations with life satisfaction and its multiple domains (e.g., school), as well as other positive attributes (e.g., gratitude, hope, and self-esteem), this construct should be taken seriously if the goal is to help adolescents increase their psychological well-being, whether the goal is for a short-term boost or long-term gain.

The finding that adolescents high in engaged living reported greater satisfaction with their school experience up to 6 months later is notable. A significant amount of high school students report much dissatisfaction with their school experiences (Huebner, Drane, & Valois, 2000). Youth, who are satisfied with their school experience, will tend to look forward to going to school, enjoy school, find school interesting, feel good at school, and believe they are learning a lot. Moreover, school satisfaction is related to both

academic and social success (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Therefore, based on the present findings, helping students become passionate about helping others and absorbed in their activities today will likely have academic dividends tomorrow (e.g., high grades, school engagement).

We note several limitations. First, although we went beyond self-report data by gathering peer and teacher ratings of adolescents' happiness, future researchers could enhance our program by using other methods (e.g., behavioral data). Second, the discrimination between social integration and absorption was largely demonstrated by their relation with gratitude. Future study should include measures more uniquely related to both social integration and absorption to further examine a potential distinction between the two constructs. Third, our winnowing procedures for initial item reduction may be problematic because they were largely intuitive (e.g., focus groups). We might have produced a higher quality scale had we used psychometric, empirical procedures (e.g., the V statistic). (Interested readers can obtain the complete item pool by contacting the first author if they are interested in following through with the recommendation to use more sophisticated methods of eliminating items.) Fourth, to the extent that items such as 'I have a purpose in life' measure well-being, well-being is conflated in our definition of engaged living. Conflation with well-being is problematic when well-being is used as the primary criterion variable in the research program, as it is here. Given this possibility, the magnitude of the correlations between engaged living and other measures of well-being presented in this article should be interpreted with caution. Fifth, except for gratitude and hope, none of the studies included measures that some positive psychologists would argue form the basis of a positive psychology of personality: a taxonomy of human strengths and virtues. Therefore, future researchers should include measures of character strengths, such as religiosity and citizenship if engaged living is to be better placed within positive youth psychology. Finally, if absorption is going to be considered a serious contender for predicting positive outcomes in the future, more diverse outcomes (e.g., student engagement, mindfulness) from the universe of possibilities should be considered beyond those focused on positive attributes and emotions.

Conclusions

This program's intent was to demonstrate the role of engaged living in adolescent's psychological well-being. Interest in the development and enhancement of well-being has exploded over the past decade (Kashdan, 2009). We hope this research fosters this trend by

igniting more work within positive youth development (Larson, 2000) because it suggests that living an engaged life, one filled with a passion for helping others and propensity to be absorbed in activities, can promote psychological well-being both now and in the future.

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