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The relationship between the content of goals and well-being depends both on whether goals are congruent with inner psychological needs (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996a) and whether goals are supported in one's environment. The current study examines how the pursuit of 6 different goals relates to the psychological well-being of maximum security prisoners. The relative centrality of goals supported in prison, such as physical health, was generally positively related to well-being, whereas the pursuit of goals not supported in prison, such as self-acceptance and affiliation, was negatively related to well-being. Discussion focuses on the importance of considering goals in the context of people's environment.

Research on the relations between goals and psychological health has flourished in the last decade. Investigators using a variety of constructs have consistently found that feeling self-efficacious (Bandura, 1989) and optimistic (Scheier & Carver, 1985) about attaining goals, valuing one's personal strivings (Emmons, 1986), and having the means to attain goals (Locke, 1994) are associated with enhanced productivity, subjective well-being, and physical health. Other research has found that the relations between goals and well-being also depend on the content of the goal being pursued (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996a). That is, some goals facilitate psychological health due to their congruence with intrinsic psychological needs, whereas other goals focused on extrinsic rewards are negatively associated with well-being when people over-emphasize them in their personalities. Kasser and Ryan (1993) demonstrated in three samples of late adolescents that when financial success aspirations were more central than self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling aspirations, lower well-being and higher distress were in evidence on self-report and interviewer-rated measures. Further, extrinsic aspirations for an attractive appearance and social recognition have also been related to lower trait and daily well-being in both adult and college samples (Kasser & Ryan, 1996a).

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This literature thus suggests that when a person's most central goals (Rokeach, 1973) are congruent with inner psychological needs, positive well-being occurs, but when goals concerned with external praise and rewards are especially focused on, distress is likely to happen. Yet the relationship between goals and well-being also depends on the extent to which environments afford opportunities for people to meet their psychological needs (Ryan, 1993) and to reach their personal goals (Read & Miller, 1989). More specifically, some environments are not conducive to following one's own inner propensities and needs, and thus pursuing goals related to such desires may not be facilitative of well-being due to frequent experiences of frustration. Conversely, the same situation may provide opportunities for other types of goals to be attained so that pursuit of these goals may be adaptive and healthful.

To test this idea, the current study explored the goals and well-being of people incarcerated in a maximum security prison. A number of studies have investigated the effects of imprisonment on individuals' psychological and physical health, yet Bonta and Gendreau (1990) recently concluded that the evidence is thus far inconclusive as to whether the effects are consistently negative. Rather, it appears that a prisoner's well-being depends on how long s/he has been imprisoned (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993) and on the prisoner's personal coping strategies (Zamble & Porporino, 1988). Perhaps one means of coping with imprisonment is to orient away from nonsupported goals and to concentrate instead on goals which are supported by the environment.

Two goals that seem unlikely to be supported in a prison are self-acceptance and affiliation. For example, many of prisoners' choices are removed upon confinement, and the opportunities for them to express their true selves are often minimal. As Keve (1974) wrote:

Any prisoner who reaches with persistence for those same values of freedom, creativity, and personal fulfillment which America is all about will find himself in direct collision with the prison regimen which cannot tolerate these virtues, for they jeopardize the measures of control that are necessary to the secure confinement of one or two thousand men in a tight complex. (p. 5)

Research has also suggested that high-quality interpersonal relationships are difficult for prisoners to attain (Hairston, 1991) and are often seen by prisoners as not helpful in coping (Flanagan, 1980). These examples thus suggest that pursuing goals for affiliation and self-acceptance may be negatively related to well-being in a prison environment.

A prison does offer chances for other types of needs to be met, however. For example, many prisoners spend a great deal of time exercising and toning

their bodies in prison recreational programs (Clear & Cole, 1994). Further, some prisons provide rehabilitation programs involving spiritual enhancement and helping others (Clear & Cole, 1994). These opportunities to pursue aspirations for physical fitness, spiritual understanding, and community feeling may help prisoners to attain some measure of well-being, if they consider the goals to be worthwhile.

I therefore predicted that the relative centrality of prisoners' values for physical health, community feeling, and spiritual understanding would relate positively to well-being and negatively to distress. Conversely, values for self-acceptance and affiliation were predicted to be either unrelated or negatively related to well-being. Parallel predictions were made concerning subjects' expectations for attaining these goals. Although a general optimism about attaining goals was predicted to relate positively to well-being, results for specific goals were predicted to follow the pattern outlined above for values.

A second focus of this study was to examine whether prisoners' goals differ depending on the length of their sentence. Emotional and physiological health has been demonstrated to increase with length of confinement, suggesting that many prisoners find ways to cope with their confinement (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993). Thus, it may be that over time prisoners ignore goals unsupported in the environment and instead concentrate on goals that are supported. Indeed, Zamble and Porporino (1988) reported that social withdrawal increases with length of confinement, suggesting that prisoners orient away from affiliation goals. I therefore predicted that the longer prisoners have been or expect to be confined, the less they would orient to self-acceptance and affiliation goals, and the more they would concentrate on physical health, spiritual understanding, and community feeling.

Method

Participants

Participants included 66 males in a college program at a maximum security correctional facility in upstate New York. Thirty-six of the participants were African American, 20 were Caucasian, 9 were Hispanic, and 1 was Native American. Ages ranged from 21 to 53 ($M = 33.0$, $SD = 7.6$).

Procedure

Prisoners in the college program were asked to complete a packet of questionnaires. Neither extra credit nor money was offered to decrease potential feelings of coercion. Interested individuals were given the packet and an

Table 1

Aspiration Domains, Descriptions, Number of Items, and Alphas

1. Self-acceptance—competence, autonomy, and psychological growth (4 items; importance $\alpha = .62$; likelihood $\alpha = .69$)
2. Affiliation—satisfying intimate relationships (5 items; importance $\alpha = .64$; likelihood $\alpha = .75$)
3. Community feeling—helping others to better their lives (5 items; importance $\alpha = .79$; likelihood $\alpha = .76$)
4. Financial success—attain wealth and material goods (4 items; importance $\alpha = .75$; likelihood $\alpha = .63$)
5. Physical fitness—feeling healthy and free of illness (4 items; importance $\alpha = .65$; likelihood $\alpha = .79$)
6. Spiritual understanding—finding spiritual/religious beliefs with which one can make meaning out of life (5 items; importance $\alpha = .90$; likelihood $\alpha = .90$)

information sheet explaining their rights as participants. After completing the packet at their own leisure, they returned it to the college office in the prison.

Measures

Aspiration Index. All participants responded to 27 items concerning personal aspirations (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996a) by rating each item on two dimensions: (a) the personal importance that the aspiration will happen in the future, and (b) the likelihood that it will happen in the future. Both ratings were on 5-point scales. Items were written to tap one of the six domains presented in Table 1. Table 1 also presents alpha coefficients supporting the internal reliability of the subscales. Factor analyses of earlier versions of the Aspiration Index support the scale construction of the first four domains (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) and the physical fitness domain (Kasser & Ryan, 1996a), but this was the first use of the spiritual understanding subscale. Twelve subscale scores were computed to represent each domain and dimension (e.g., importance of self-acceptance, likelihood of community feeling), and overall importance and likelihood scores were computed by finding average scores across all six domains.

Length of incarceration. Participants were asked how long they had been in prison and how much longer they expected to be in prison during the current sentence. The number of years participants had been in prison ranged from 1 to 30 ($M = 7.6$, $SD = 6.1$). The number of years participants expected to remain in prison ranged from less than 1 to 25 ($M = 7.3$, $SD = 6.9$).

Self-actualization. Participants responded to the 15 items of the self-actualization questionnaire (Jones & Crandall, 1986) using a 9-point scale. Items tap aspects of Maslow's (1954) description of self-actualized individuals, including acceptance of one's emotions, quality of interpersonal relationships, and feelings of responsibility in life.

Vitality. The seven items of the vitality scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1996) measure subjective feelings of physical and mental vigor and aliveness. A 9-point scale was utilized.

Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL). Participants responded to the 58 items of this measure of psychopathology (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974) using a 9-point scale. Four of the HSCL subscales were used: depression, anxiety, obsessiveness, and somatization.

Results

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to consider the relationships between the relative centrality of the six different aspirations and prisoners' well-being. Following Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996a), each well-being variable was hierarchically regressed onto the aspiration variables by first entering the average score for a dimension (overall importance or likelihood) at Step 1 of the equation, and then independently entering scores for individual domains and dimensions at Step 2. For example, self-actualization was regressed onto the overall importance of aspirations at Step 1, and then the standardized regression coefficient for the importance of physical fitness aspirations was tested at Step 2 after controlling for this overall score.

As can be seen in Table 2, the overall importance of aspirations was unrelated to these measures of well-being. After controlling for this score, the relative importance of physical fitness was associated with significantly more vitality and with marginally less anxiety. On the other hand, the relative importance of self-acceptance was significantly associated with more depression, and the relative importance of affiliation was significantly associated with less self-actualization and more obsessional features. Several other regression coefficients were in the predicted direction, although nonsignificant.

Likelihood ratings provided an analogous pattern of results. The overall likelihood of attaining aspirations was significantly associated with more

Table 2

Standardized Regression Coefficients (Beta's) Resulting from Two-Step Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Well-Being Variables on Aspirations

	Self-actualization		Depression		Obsession		Somatization	
	Vitality	Importance	Vitality	Anxiety	Somati-	zation		
Overall	.12	.18	.05	-.02	-.15	-.10		
Supported								
Physical fitness	.08	.27*	-.09	-.26†	-.08	-.19		
Spiritual understanding	.23	-.03	-.25	.01	-.27	-.12		
Community feeling	.23	.04	-.15	-.20	.12	-.03		
Unsupported								
Self-acceptance	.00	-.17	.37*	.16	.07	.20		
Affiliation	-.52**	-.15	.14	.07	.40*	.15		
Financial success	-.21	-.03	.17	.17	.07	-.12		
Overall	.40**	.33**	-.29*	-.32**	-.36**	-.31*		
Supported								
Physical fitness	.24	.41*	-.38*	-.52**	-.31†	-.56**		
Spiritual understanding	.18	-.17	.04	.20	-.06	.04		
Community feeling	-.02	.10	-.15	.01	.37*	.26		
Unsupported								
Self-acceptance	.05	.25	.10	-.16	-.14	-.07		
Affiliation	-.31†	-.34†	.17	.15	.01	.05		
Financial success	-.20	-.06	.16	.10	.13	.18		

Note. Hierarchical regressions are conducted so that the overall score is entered at Step 1 and the individual domain at Step 2, yielding standardized regression coefficients. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

self-actualization and vitality, and with less depression, anxiety, obsessions, and somatization. As predicted, the perceived likelihood of attaining physical fitness aspirations was associated with significantly more vitality, significantly less depression, anxiety, and somatization, and marginally fewer obsessions. Contrary to predictions, the likelihood of community feeling aspirations was associated with more obsessional features. Only two marginal results were found for "unsupported" aspirations: high likelihoods of affiliation were associated with less self-actualization and vitality.

Next, similar hierarchical regressions were conducted with the two length of incarceration variables as the dependent variables. No significant associations were found between the number of years subjects had been in prison and either their importance or likelihood ratings of aspirations. However, the number of years subjects still expected to be in prison was significantly negatively related to the overall importance they placed on aspirations ($\beta = -.26, p < .05$). Further, the number of years subjects expected to remain in prison was also significantly positively related to their relative likelihood ratings of community feeling aspirations ($\beta = .57, p < .01$) and marginally negatively related to their relative likelihood ratings of financial success aspirations ($\beta = -.32, p < .10$).

Finally, interactions between aspirational centrality and length of incarceration in the prediction of well-being were examined with hierarchical regressions conducted following Cohen and Cohen (1983). No significant results were obtained.

Discussion

Results of this study provided some support for the proposed relations between prisoners' aspirations and well-being. The most consistent predictor of well-being was a sense of optimism or efficacy about attaining goals. This finding provides further support for the importance of feelings of competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989), and optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) in behavior.

As predicted, though, regression analyses showed a differential pattern of results in which relations with well-being depended on the content of the goals people pursued. For example, aspirations likely to be unsupported in a prison environment were negatively related to some measures of well-being. Specifically, affiliation aspirations were associated with less self-actualization and vitality, and the importance of self-acceptance aspirations was related to more depression. These results are particularly interesting given that self-acceptance and affiliation aspirations have been previously related to greater well-being in adolescent and adult samples (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996a).

In contrast to the effects of pursuing unsupported aspirations, goals which are supported in a prison environment were positively related to well-being in this sample. This was particularly the case for physical fitness aspirations. The fact that physical fitness was the goal especially associated with well-being is consistent with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. That is, in an environment in which many "higher needs" are not likely to be satisfied, Maslow would predict that people would concentrate on "lower needs" concerning physiological maintenance and sustenance. Consistent with this, Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995) found that in less-developed countries, a strong predictor of subjective well-being was the extent to which the country satisfied basic physical needs. Thus, the present study, combined with these other sources, suggests that in situations with few opportunities to express higher needs, well-being is enhanced if people focus on their physical health.

Relatively weak support was gained for hypotheses concerning the relations between length of incarceration and the centrality of different aspirations. No associations were found between how long participants had been in prison and their aspirations. This may be because the adjustment to prison occurs primarily in the first few months of incarceration (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993), while most of the participants in the current study were some years into their sentence. Results may have been different if the goals of individuals very early in their sentence were compared to those later in their sentence. A couple of significant findings between aspirations and how long prisoners expected to still be in prison were found, however. First, expecting to be in prison for a long time made people generally value all goals less. This finding is consistent with research showing that future time perspective shortens when one's autonomy is lost upon being institutionalized (Bouffard, Bastin, & Lapierre, 1994; Landau, 1975; Morris & Zingle, 1977), but is inconsistent with one previous finding that longer periods of incarceration are associated with greater future orientation (Morris & Zingle, 1977). The second finding was one that had been predicted: Expecting to be in prison for a long time was associated with valuing the goal of helping others, a goal supported in a prison setting. This finding may be spurious, however, given the number of correlations tested.

It was surprising that no relations between spiritual understanding and well-being were detected. Perhaps this is because spiritual goals are beneficial for health only if they are pursued for autonomous and choiceful as opposed to controlled and introjected reasons (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). In the future, the reasons people pursue their goals need to be assessed.

A major weakness of this study is that the actual attainment of aspirations was ignored. It would have been useful to know not just how much prisoners valued and expected to attain the goals assessed, but also how much they felt

they currently had attained them. This raises a question somewhat peripheral to the current study but central to the general program of research on intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations: Are extrinsic goals negatively related to well-being because they are more difficult to attain? Two recent studies examining the attainment of extrinsic goals speak to this issue. First, Sheldon and Kasser (1996) found that while students who made progress at goals which were more intrinsic than extrinsic showed enhanced well-being over a 2-month period, students who made progress in goals that were more extrinsic than intrinsic achieved no well-being benefits from their "progress." Second, Kasser and Ryan (1996b) found that when the relative attainment of extrinsic goals was relatively high in comparison to a number of other goals, lower well-being was reported. Thus, it appears that although frustration from being unable to attain the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance and affiliation may have led to decreased well-being in this prison sample, the lack of attainment of extrinsic goals cannot completely explain why people in the general population who orient to such goals exhibit lower well-being.

There are several other limitations to this study. First, the sample is certainly not representative of most prisoners, given that it was composed solely of males taking college courses at a maximum security facility. Second, results may have been stronger if aspirations for learning or for power had been assessed, as these goals may be particularly salient for these participants. Third, because length of confinement is associated with the crime committed, it is possible that any results concerning this variable are more influenced by personal variables associated with the crime committed than by actual prison experience. Fourth, all data are correlational and cross-sectional, so no statements regarding causality can be made. That is, the data do not demonstrate that the prison environment led to the relationships between goals and well-being found herein. Instead, there may be something about prisoners' personalities or the nonnutritive environments they have experienced in the past which caused the findings.

Despite these limitations, the fact that some relationships were discovered in this small, unique sample does support the importance of considering the content of people's goals in relationship to their well-being. In environments where many options are available, it appears that goals congruent with inherent psychological needs are positively associated with well-being, while goals focused on the opinions of others are associated with more distress (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996a). In situations which provide few opportunities and force one to stifle goals that reflect typically healthy needs, pursuit of such goals apparently leads to distress rather than health. However, as seen in this group of prisoners, people can pursue other goals supported by the environment which may provide them with a sense of well-being.

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