

# HAPPIER?

*The History of a Cultural Movement That  
Aspired to Transform America*

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## CHAPTER 7

### The Future Is Here

*Positive Psychology Comes of Age*

By the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century, positive psychology had come of age. Scholarly practitioners had built key elements of a powerful, extensive infrastructure and, along with lay popularizers, had reached expansive audiences. A consensus vision of the field had developed, one that was capacious, bold, and integrated. Writers elaborated on long-familiar themes and suggested the dimensions of new ones. Relying on fresh research, scholars turned to four topics, discussed somewhat before 1998, that now came to the fore: character, religion and spirituality, science, and international comparisons.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the field's often implicit political ideologies—neoliberalism especially, but not exclusively—became increasingly apparent.<sup>2</sup> Finally, as a sign of positive psychology's prominence, sustained criticisms now emerged, too recently to describe how they might change the field over time.

#### CHARACTER

Character, as a key to a meaningful life, was prominent among the issues present as a relatively minor note before and that now came to the fore among positive psychologists. Soon after Martin Seligman's 1998 presidential APA address, he collaborated with Christopher Peterson in providing the intellectual and strategic leadership that led to their massive 2004 *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. If the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) was the scientific guide to

psychological disorders, their Values in Action (VIA) inventory was the counterpart for positive psychological strengths. Using the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire would enable people to figure out their strengths and then learn how to build on them. Peterson and Seligman listed six major strengths—wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence—each with several subcategories. If temperance meant self-control and prudence, the emphasis on justice required that citizens commit themselves to civic action that went beyond self-interest and could involve social protests or support of social causes. Transcendence, operating through spirituality or religiousness (“whether they be called universal, ideal, sacred, or divine”), involved a different dimension of moving beyond self-involvement.<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis on character strengths, historically linked with masculinity, developed as part of a larger vision of American society in historical perspective. Seligman and Peterson made clear their opposition to a “personless” or “radical environmentalism” that undermined self-determination by shifting responsibility for problems from the individual to external circumstances. Seligman’s justification for the return to an emphasis on character as a counter to postmodernism and relativism was only part of the story. “After a detour through the hedonism of the 1960s, the narcissism of the 1970s, the materialism of the 1980s, and the apathy of the 1990s,” Peterson and Seligman wrote, relying on oversimplified generalizations, “most everyone today seems to believe that character is important after all and that the United States is facing a character crisis on many fronts, from the playroom to the classroom to the sports arena to the Hollywood screen to business corporations to politics.” The turn to character involved grappling with Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia “which holds,” they underscored, that “well-being is not a consequence of virtuous action but rather an inherent aspect of such action.”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, central to the emphasis on character strengths was a recognition of the necessity to work through the consequences of the Easterlin Paradox. Since World War II the GDP of Western nations, including the United States, had increased considerably, but their citizens reported no greater happiness. Millions of people in developed nations struggled to move beyond materialism to meaning, to shift, as some positive psychologists had, from hedonic to eudaimonic. What made such a change difficult was how people were overwhelmed by excessive choices. They often found that what market economies delivered undermined happiness, cut people off from meaningful social relationships, increased inequalities in wealth and income, and bedeviled citizens with upward social comparisons. Rather than indulge in a culture of complaint in which grievances loomed large, people, advocates of character asserted, should see ways of transcending

the self. As one observer put it in 2003, follow the findings of positive psychologists in realizing that being “forgiving, grateful, and optimistic . . . are actually essential to personal well-being.”<sup>5</sup>

## GRATITUDE AND ALTRUISM

Among the many character traits, several held a significant place in the practice of positive psychology, gratitude and altruism prominently among them. Emphasis on these values provides added evidence of how scholars in the field used language that in potentially powerful ways connected individualism and social obligations. Pre-1998 studies of the “Helper’s High” and reciprocal altruism had established a connection between giving and happiness.<sup>6</sup> Now, however, this topic was the subject of more vigorous experiments and more prominent applications. “Gratitude,” remarked Barbara Fredrickson, “opens your heart and carries the urge to give back—to do something good in return, either for the person who helped you or for someone else.”<sup>7</sup> Several experimental exercises were especially notable. Researchers had long ago shown that there was a correlation between helping and happiness, but now positive psychologists claimed they relied on scientific experiments that moved beyond correlation to causation. For example, Sonja Lyubomirsky carried out an experiment in which, once a week, subjects recorded in a journal what they were grateful for. Compared with a control group, the journal keepers reported significantly greater satisfaction with their lives. Similarly, she noted, people could enhance their happiness by acts of kindness such as writing a letter to a loved one, doing a favor for a neighbor, or visiting a nursing home. “Doing five kind acts a week, especially all in a single day,” a *Time* magazine reporter noted in 2005, “gave a measurable boost” to those she studied.<sup>8</sup>

Seligman carried out extensive gratitude experiments—in his classes, in controlled settings, and on the Internet. “The single most effective way to turbocharge your joy,” a reporter for *Time* paraphrased him as saying in a 2005 article, “is to make a ‘gratitude visit.’ That means writing a testimonial thanking a teacher, pastor or grandparent—anyone to whom you owe a debt of gratitude—and then visiting that person to read him or her the letter of appreciation. ‘The remarkable thing,’ says Seligman, ‘is that people who do this just once are measurably happier and less depressed a month later. But it’s gone by three months.’ Less powerful but more lasting, he says, is an exercise he calls three blessings—taking time each day to write down a trio of things that went well and why,” in a way that underscored how psychological rituals tended to replace organized religion with highly personal spirituality. “People are less depressed and happier three months

later and six months later,” Seligman remarked. “Gratitude exercises can do more than lift one’s mood,” the writer for *Time* reported in 2005, going on to mention the work of psychologist Robert Emmons, the most influential student of gratitude who “found they improve physical health, raise energy levels and, for patients with neuromuscular disease, relieve pain and fatigue.”<sup>9</sup>

Other studies revealed the links between giving, happiness, and health. Especially important was the work of the medical ethicist Stephen Post, who with funds from the Templeton Foundation had founded the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love in 2001. In a series of books and articles written in the early twenty-first century, he combined reports on scientific studies (which he helped launch at more than a score of universities), inspirational stories, how-to instructions, and wisdom that mixed spirituality and religion. He showed how unselfish giving not only made people feel happier but also produced remarkable health benefits, including living longer and mitigation of chronic illnesses. Invoking a passage from Proverbs (“A generous man will prosper, he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed”), he insisted that while “genuine altruism is an action done without assuming reciprocal or reputational gains for the agent,” nonetheless “by its very inward dynamic” it “enhances well-being and often contributes to health.” Along similar lines, working at the HeartMath Institute, Rollin McCraty published “The Appreciative Heart: The Psychophysiology of Positive Emotions and Optimal Functioning,” which claimed to rely on empirical scientific research to demonstrate the connection between positive emotions generated by giving to both improved performance and better health outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

The fullest exploration of the relationships between science, religion, and altruism—a key issue in the study of character—came together in an edited 2015 book, *Caring Economics: Conversations on Altruism and Compassion Between Scientists, Economists, and the Dalai Lama*, based on a 2010 conference planned in response to the 2008 Great Recession.<sup>11</sup> The economist Ernst Fehr carried out experiments that, going against the grain of colleagues who assumed people focused on their self-interest narrowly defined, revealed that people did take into account notions of fairness to others and that altruism undergirded the commitment to providing for the public good; indeed, altruistic people lived happier and healthier lives. The neuroscientist Tania Singer reported on studies of the brain that, relying on the research using fMRI imaging, revealed how the mapping of neural networks in the interoceptive cortex of the brain helped us understand socially positive behavior and human interconnectedness. In addition, experiments showed that training people in loving-kindness meditation helped novices express compassion that experts in mediation had long

experienced. Similarly, giving people specific hormones or neuropeptides, such as oxytocin, decreased their fearfulness and enhanced their capacity to trust others. Using fMRI, the economist William Harbaugh examined the “warm-glow kind of altruism” that helped people make charitable gifts.<sup>12</sup>

Especially important in the conference discussions was the work of the psychologist Richard J. Davidson, who, relying on studies of children, long-time practitioners of compassionate meditation, and those who received training in compassion, presented evidence of a correlation between the amount of activation in the insula and amygdala and how predisposed people were to compassion. Subjects who in a laboratory setting redistributed money in a game reported “greater feelings of warmth and compassion and concern for the suffering of others” than did their experimental peers who did not redistribute funds. Moreover, evidence of the brain’s plasticity was associated with altruism. More generally, contributors to the volume of essays worked to reconcile Western and Buddhist outlooks on caring. And no one was in a better position to do so than Matthieu Ricard, a Frenchman who, after earning his doctorate in molecular biology in 1972, devoted the rest of his life to the study and practice of Buddhism. It was possible, he insisted, to teach people to be compassionate, including toward their enemies.<sup>13</sup>

Elsewhere, learning to express gratitude took on some key characteristics of a social or cultural movement. The 2000 movie *Pay It Forward*, based on a novel of the same name, told the story of a seventh-grade student whose social studies teacher taught him to pay it forward by responding to a favor received by doing ones for three others, each of whom would do so for three more people, thus creating a rapidly multiplying network of gratitude. This in turn led to the Pay It Forward Movement and Foundation, established by the novel’s author Catherine Ryan Hyde, which over time had circulated over a million Pay It Forward bracelets in over 100 nations. “The philosophy of Pay It Forward,” its web site announced, “is that through acts of kindness among strangers, we all foster a more caring society.” Then in 2007 came the Pay It Forward Day, which received global media coverage. Eventually its hope was to “inspire over 10 million acts of kindness around the world” such as buying a stranger a cup of coffee or helping out someone in need. “Imagine the difference that would make!” the web site announced. Four years later came the Newton Project, which by providing wristbands whose circulation could be followed, made it possible for a web site visitor to track acts of kindness. The project aimed “to empower individuals to make a difference one person at a time. Our goal,” the web site announced, “is to create an ever-growing community of connected individuals who value and promote giving, compassion and love across the world.”<sup>14</sup>

## RESILIENCE

Resilience was another character strength that received considerable attention in the new century. Going back at least to writings of Viktor Frankl, psychologists have long been interested in how people responded positively when confronted with adversity. Now, however, researchers more explicitly explored the connections between character and what was known early on as posttraumatic growth. A key book on this topic is *The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles*, by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté, the former a co-author with Seligman on *The Optimistic Child* and co-director of the Penn Resiliency Project. Drawing on cognitive behavioral therapy, the authors' seven keys included challenging beliefs, putting thoughts into perspective, and understanding how patterns of response undermined positivity. Published in 2002, the book, like some by other positive psychologists, used responses to 9/11 to illustrate the benefits of positive psychology. That tragic day, they wrote, had threatened people's sense of safety and justice. Yet "just like we as a nation have done," they noted at the book's end, "in little ways, every day" the people whose lives they had described in the book "reconstructed their world by changing the way they think." Connecting the national and the personal, they insisted "they did it and so can you." In their final sentence they insisted "by changing the way you think, you can change your life for good." Interested before 9/11 in character strengths as a counter to victimology and unearned self-esteem, after that horrific event Seligman and his colleagues now redoubled their efforts to counter narcissistic happiness.<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of two decades, the Penn Resiliency Program supported its findings on character in experimental and real-world settings. Carrying out studies on over 3,000 children and adolescents, the experiments of Seligman, Reivich, and their colleagues revealed that it was possible to teach optimism, assertiveness, coping, and realistic problem solving. Relying on a \$2.8 million grant from the United States Department of Education, they introduced positive psychology into a high school that, Seligman reported, "builds character strengths, relationships, and meaning, as well as raises positive emotion and reduces negative" ones—and in the process enhanced "the traditional goals of classroom learning."<sup>16</sup>

In 2008, Seligman began to collaborate with the Pentagon on the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program for returning vets stressed by years of rotating in and out of service in Afghanistan and Iraq (see Chapter 8), an effort subjected to sharp criticism for what many saw as compromises with professional standards in a misguided patriotic effort but that Seligman insisted was itself patriotic. Working together with Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum, Seligman and his colleagues developed a test to measure

psychological fitness, courses that focused on self-improvement, and a pilot program for resilience training. The efforts were so successful that the Army eventually established twenty training centers that, according to the program's web site, taught soldiers and their families "things such as problem solving, how to think optimistically, and how to cope with adversity." The Army granted Seligman's center at Penn a \$31 million no-bid contract to train American service members to be resilient and overcome tragic events.<sup>17</sup>

*The Road to Character* (2015), by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, revealed the conservative implications of an emphasis on character that Seligman had alluded to briefly. "By successfully confronting sin and weakness," Brooks remarked as he both drew on positive psychology and made it even more accessible, "we have the chance to play our role in a great moral drama. We can shoot for something higher than happiness" by taking "advantage of every occasion to build virtue in ourselves and be of service to the world." Countering what he labeled the culture of the "Big Me," he called on people to develop character strengths that humbly recognized the importance of our connection to and caring for others. His advice on how to restore moral realism was capacious. Live for holiness, not happiness; purpose, not pleasure, he recommended. Understanding that we are "flawed creatures" will militate against "selfishness and overconfidence." Through acts of kindness, an embrace of humility, and a struggle against sinful pride, he wrote in ways that reflected his commitment to a Protestant tradition embodied in self-help literature, people would give up earthly success and instead choose inner, moral growth. His advice was to avoid short-term, banal, and material pleasures and commit oneself "to tasks that cannot be completed in a single lifetime." Whether from a loved one, a stranger, or God, one should work to achieve grace, a condition in which "gratitude fills the soul, and with it the desire to serve and give back." Whether working as a hedge fund manager or dedicating your life to helping the poor, mature people developed a sense of purpose that enabled them to move "from fragmentation to centeredness, . . . a state in which the restlessness is over, the confusion about meaning and purpose of life is calmed."<sup>18</sup>

Writing in the *New York Times* in 2015, literary critic and *New York Times* editor Parul Sehgal explored the immense popularity of resilience and critiqued its assumptions. She charted how resilience had "sprung into new life as a catchword in international development and Silicon Valley and among parenting pundits and TED-heads." Publishers had issued hundreds of books on the subject, telling eager audiences how to toughen their investment portfolios or their children. Organizations—from the United Nations to the Department of Homeland Security—added resilience to their mission statements. In response to terrorist attacks, to student

protests on campuses, and even to Justin Bieber's fall and rise, people counseled resilience, something that was "so conveniently vacant that it manages to be profound and profoundly hollow." Yet, she noted, resilience was "indistinguishable from classic American bootstrap logic when it is applied to individuals, placing all the burden of success and failure on a person's character." As Alfie Kohn perceptively noted in a *Washington Post* op-ed, "the more we focus on levels of grit (or self-discipline more generally), the less likely we'll be to question larger policies and institutions."<sup>19</sup>

## SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

In developing the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, the Pentagon and Seligman recruited Ken Pargament to work on how to enhance resilience through spirituality. We have already met Pargament as the author of the 1997 *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, and Practice*. His work marked a major turning point in the discussions of the connection between religion and happiness, a marker of the increasing acknowledgment of the importance of religion in American public life. Robert Emmons had reported in 1999 that despite their claims that they studied the whole person, psychologists failed to pay significant attention to the roles of religion and spirituality in people's lives, a trend Pargament's work now reversed, with support of the Templeton Foundation playing a key role.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, Sir John Templeton wrote the foreword to the 2002 *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. He predicted that in the future those who contributed to this volume "will be recognized as visionary leaders, whose research helped to identify, elevate, and celebrate the creative potential of the human spirit." He looked forward to when "a group of scientists will publish findings that will advance humankind's understanding of a spiritual principle that had been at the core of my own life's purpose: *agape love*," since with unconditional love, unlike with money, the more "we give away, the more we have left."<sup>21</sup>

Often without being very specific about which faith traditions mattered, researchers increasingly showed that religion and spirituality improved the quality of life and extended longevity.<sup>22</sup> Of the Mount Rushmore five, Sonja Lyubomirsky offered the fullest and most nuanced discussions of the relationships between happiness and religion and/or spirituality. Although it was impossible to investigate God in the lab or quantify sacredness, she noted in a way that reflected what William James might have said, researchers could explore "the *consequences* of having religious beliefs." Studies demonstrated that religious people lived happier and healthier lives

and were better able to recover from traumas. She considered but in the end rejected a commonly held assumption that the benefits of religion had "nothing to do with the substance of their religious and spiritual beliefs" but more with the social support that religious affiliations provided. She insisted on the importance of "the one 'ultimate' supportive relationship for many religious individuals, one that doesn't require any formal participation in religious services or programs, and that is their relationship to God"—one that provided comfort and enhanced self-esteem. In addition, "your sense that God has a purpose in everything helps you find meaning in ordinary life events as well as traumatic ones." Although she distinguished between religion and spirituality, she concluded that the benefits from the two approaches were basically the same. She raised the possibility that some religious traditions (such as those that envisioned a punishing God or fostered prejudice) were harmful but concluded that the results of specific studies were "not very generalizable to today's diversity of views, indicating that the vast majority of religious and spiritual individuals are more likely to be inclusive, compassionate, and open-minded than the reverse."<sup>23</sup>

The relationship between Buddhism and happiness deserves special note. After 1998, there was little new under the sun that earlier shone on Buddhism and meditation, except for two important changes. The scientific evidence for the positive health benefits of meditation, first reported in Herbert Benson's 1975 *Relaxation Response*, now accumulated dramatically. Second, and not unrelated, the relationships between Buddhism, mindfulness, and happiness garnered immense popular attention, at least equal to if not more so than any connection to Protestantism or Roman Catholicism.<sup>24</sup>

Ironically, given how prominent a role Jews have played in positive psychology, scholars in that field have written remarkably little on Jews and happiness. There are scores of books on happiness by Protestant ministers, some of whom doubled as psychologists, few if any by Roman Catholic priests, and few by rabbis. That may be changing. Recently, rabbis and other Jews have indeed focused on this topic, pointing out that although often problematic stereotypes allege that Jews are known for kvetching and anxiety, positive psychology shares and perhaps draws on much that is central to Judaism, including Tzedakah (the religious obligation to be righteously charitable), Tikkun Olam (to heal the world), the importance of social connections that a community provides, resilience in the face of adversity, or the joyful rituals such as Simchat Torah (the celebration of the conclusion of a cycle of Torah readings).<sup>25</sup> With further research, we may come to understand the conflict in visions of well-being between Judaism's communitarian commitments and Protestantism's individualistic ones.<sup>26</sup> Yet the connections between Jews, Judaism, and happiness has remained understudied.<sup>27</sup> At least two factors may be at work involving how Jews drew on

religious traditions other than Judaism. A significant number of Jewish Buddhists (aka Jewbus or Jubus) have been major figures in both American Buddhism and happiness studies—Jon Kabat-Zinn, Jeffrey R. Rubin, Rodger Kamenetz, Jack Kornfield, Sylvia Boorstein, Herbert Benson, Richard J. Davidson, Alan Gettis, and Daniel Goleman come immediately to mind. However, Jewish writers learned to write and speak in Christian terms. For example, the words of David Brooks in *The Road to Character* of sin and redemption more likely echo the Protestantism of the Episcopal Grace Church School that he attended as a child and the findings of positive psychology he has explored than expressions of the Jewish faith of his ancestors.<sup>28</sup>

Overall, positive psychologists fudged or avoided all sorts of issues concerning religion and spirituality. Just as they and others watered down Buddhism to make it acceptable to mainstream Americans, so too and more generally they homogenized American religion. Terms like religiousness, religion, and spirituality seemed interchangeable. Most writers remained skeptical of any connection with a specific theology or view of God. They papered over or significantly avoided discussion of traditional struggles within American religious traditions, Protestantism especially—whether God was vengeful or kindly, whether or how humans could be damned or saved, whether or not a sinful life confined people to Hell. They did not vigorously follow up on suggestions of the differences between healthy and unhealthy religious experiences or connections. Notably, positive psychology came of age when a major restructuring of American religious traditions was well under way, when once central ones (for example, Presbyterianism, Irish Roman Catholicism, and Conservative Judaism) were challenged by once peripheral ones (Mormonism, Pentecostalism, Latino Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Judaism, and Buddhism). Yet reading what positive psychologists have written offers few insights into and little specificity about such changes.<sup>29</sup>

Several ironies marked the explorations of the connections between religion/spirituality and happiness after 1998, when experimenters and writers intensified their interest in the positive impact of religion on people's sense of well-being. First, such considerations began not with mainstream American faith traditions but with Buddhism.<sup>30</sup> Remember that in 1984 Diener concluded that the evidence of the impact of religion on subjective well-being was far from clear. Yet by then Herbert Benson had written *The Relaxation Response* and Jon Kabat-Zinn had already established the Stress Reduction Clinic at University of Massachusetts Medical School, both of which combined Buddhism and science. Thus focus on how Western religions enhanced happiness came late to the table. Second, despite the presence of so many Jews among positive psychologists—Martin Seligman, Tal

Ben-Shahar, Daniel Gilbert, Daniel Kahneman, Richard J. Davidson, Sonja Lyubomirsky, and Jonathan Haidt, to name a few—most of the research has focused on liberal American Protestantism; indeed, it may be that Jewish writers, often known for their angst, have marked their assimilation into American culture by embracing a certain Protestant vision of the world. Third, just as the incorporation of Buddhism into happiness studies involved a watering down of practice and beliefs, so too went the inclusion of Western religions. Positive psychologists talked of vague religious commitments or an even vaguer spirituality. Finally, it remained unclear whether religious practices and beliefs, as opposed to sociability and organizational life, were responsible for enhanced satisfaction with life. Thus a *Time* reporter noted in 2005 that “religious faith seems to genuinely lift the spirit, though it’s tough to tell whether it’s the God part or the community aspect that does the heavy lifting.”<sup>31</sup>

#### SCIENCE AND HAPPINESS

Debates over whether traits and characteristics are biologically or socially constructed commanded considerable attention among scientists in the second half of the twentieth century. “If there has been a general trend in the human sciences over the past two or three decades,” the historian Joel Isaac wrote in 2012, in a way that helps us understand changes in positive psychology, “it has centered on the increasing influence of biological forms of explanation—most notably the alliance of evolutionary accounts of human psychology with experimental work in the neurosciences.”<sup>32</sup> As we have already seen in the work of Richard J. Davidson, Carol D. Ryff, and others from before 1998, that year was no magic marking point in the application of science to the study of happiness. Nonetheless, several things are notable for the very late twentieth century and the first decade and a half of the twenty-first. As scientific advances relevant to the study of subjective well-being intensified, writers more fully integrated scientific discoveries into their more general treatments. And popularizers offered research findings to a wide audience, even as researchers warned that their work had only begun and it was too early to draw certain conclusions or confidently make applications. At moments, researchers involved in positive psychology, nervous about scientific explanations of how the mind operates and sensitive to suspicion among other scientists that positive psychology was not scientific enough, had more serious reservations about how rigorous were the bases of conclusions. As one noted in 2009 in response to books by Matthieu Ricard and Eckhart Tolle, “they should not be treated with any credibility. They advocate an image of the human

condition and well-being that is not based on a good and scientific understanding of human nature.”<sup>33</sup>

If by and large before 1998 summaries of the field had not fully integrated scientific findings, this changed considerably soon after.<sup>34</sup> An examination of writings by the Mount Rushmore five and other synthesizers reveals a consensus on the connections among science, health, and well-being. Fredrickson, like many researchers into emotions, relied on an emphasis on nature rather than nurture, as she invoked evolutionary biology to support her broaden-and-build theory. Over time our ancestors’ “sparkle of good feelings” worked through natural selection to strengthen their positivity, making them “better prepared to survive future threats to life and limb.”<sup>35</sup> If the Darwinian theory of natural selection was difficult to explore in a laboratory, the same was not true of other key elements of the scientific connection between well-being and health. The use of EEG revealed that for happy people there was a connection between positive emotions and the brain’s left prefrontal cortex.<sup>36</sup> The use of the fMRI provided evidence that was even more central to the neuroscience of happiness, despite how new and controversial it was.<sup>37</sup> Available by the mid-1990s, in the early twenty-first century this kind of neuroimaging became the gold standard for exploring the connections between positive well-being and the brain. Indeed, a grant of almost \$6 million from the Templeton Foundation enabled Seligman to establish a Positive Neuroscience Project at Penn’s Positive Psychology Center.

Initially researchers returned to the work that Robert Heath and James Olds had done in the 1950s using electrodes on the brain to enhance pleasure, only to discover that the neuroscience of pleasure, though still promising, was more elusive and complicated than earlier assumed.<sup>38</sup> Over time, if there was one focal point that commanded ample attention, it was the nexus between happiness and neuroscience, explored by positron emission tomography (PET) scans, EEG, and fMRI, and practiced by mindful meditation. In a 2007 booklet on fMRI, the American Psychological Association reported that Davidson’s studies revealed that “meditation can help the brain learn to flex its happiness muscles.” Studying Buddhist monks from Tibet and using a problematic analogy, what the APA called “the Olympic athletes of meditation,” he and his colleagues revealed that meditation promoted “increased activity in a region of the brain associated with joy. But you don’t have to spend decades in meditation to see effects. Even the control group—total beginners—saw changes in their brain activation. In short, you can improve your ability to be happy just like you can improve your tennis backhand or your golf swing.”<sup>39</sup>

In the early twentieth-first century, Davidson, whose work on the relationship between the brain and happiness had begun in the 1970s, emerged

as the key figure in the neuroscience of happiness. In 2005, *Time* magazine exuberantly reported on his work under the title “Health: The Biology of Joy.” “Known by his colleagues as the king of happiness research,” the *Time* reporter remarked, in 2000 Davidson had noticed a Buddhist monk in his lab “sink deep into serene meditation” and, with electrodes attached to his skull, produce “electrical activity in the left prefrontal lobe” of his brain “shooting up at a tremendous rate.” What Davidson witnessed made clear “that happiness isn’t just a vague, ineffable feeling; it’s a physical state of the brain—one that you can induce deliberately.”<sup>40</sup>

Although much remained to be determined, such as what happiness meant scientifically and how the neuroscience of happiness operated, much was becoming more extensively explored. Studies using fMRI and EEGs helped locate the principal locus of happiness in the left prefrontal cortex. Researchers emphasized the importance of genetic predispositions to levels of happiness, the significance of a balance between negativity and positivity, and the likely role of neurotransmitters (especially dopamine and serotonin). “People with a sensitive version of the receptor that accepts dopamine,” *Time* reported, “tend to have better moods, and researchers are actively studying the relationship of dopamine levels to feelings of euphoria and depression.” Yet Davidson and others explored whether neuroplasticity meant that the happiness set point was not fixed, that mental activity could actually increase happiness long term.<sup>41</sup>

Davidson’s career recapitulates the history of the relationships between happiness studies, science, and Eastern religions. He entered Harvard graduate school in psychology in 1972 when behaviorism was prominent; indeed, he had an awkward conversation with B. F. Skinner in, of all possibly significant places, an elevator in William James Hall. Determined to study the neurological basis of emotions, among what inspired him was the model David McClelland provided of “one foot very successfully planted in the world of academic psychology and one in the world of spiritual transcendence.” In graduate school he carried out a key experiment that made clear that the left and right prefrontal cortices were connected to positive and negative emotions, respectively. In the same years, he encountered key figures who would serve as models of how to connect science and spirituality: not only Ram Das and Jon Kabat-Zinn, but also Daniel Goleman, with whom in graduate school Davidson began research on meditation. Learning how to meditate in 1974, during decades of professional achievement he nonetheless kept the academic and meditative aspects of his life separate because senior colleagues warned him that focusing his research on meditation would call his professionalism into question.<sup>42</sup>

That began to change when in 1992 he met the Dalai Lama, who facilitated introductions to long-term, expert meditators in Dharamsala.



Figure 7.1 Wearing a 128-channel geodesic sensor net, Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard sits in a soundproof room and talks with Richard J. Davidson (right) before participating in an electroencephalography (EEG) test at the EEG facility in the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on June 5, 2008. Ricard is a long-time participant in an ongoing research study led by Davidson that monitors a subject's brain waves during various forms of meditation including compassion meditation. Matthieu Ricard's arrival at the lab of Richard J. Davidson illustrates the joining of science and spirituality. Davidson is director of the Waisman Lab for Brain Imaging and Behavior (WLBIB) and the William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry. (From Jeff Miller/University of Wisconsin-Madison, © UW-Madison University Communications.)

India, in order to see if such mental activity changed the brain. The Tibetan monks, skeptical of science and used to solitude, made carrying out the studies difficult, but Davidson and others persisted, aware that the Dalai Lama was open to science. Then in 2001 the French molecular geneticist turned master meditator Matthieu Ricard came to Davidson's lab. and with the Dalai Lama on hand, Davidson placed 256 sensors on Ricard's scalp to reveal "that engaging in specific forms of meditation," known as compassionate or loving-kindness meditation, "evokes dramatic changes in brain function that our tools could measure" (Figure 7.1). That was the moment, Davidson later wrote, when "the field of contemplative neuroscience had just been born." Over time Davidson proved that the Tibetan monks who had practiced meditation the longest and most intensely possessed the most favorable left-right ratio for the pre-frontal cortex, a ratio that increased the more they meditated. This made them, some claimed, among the happiest people on earth.<sup>43</sup>

In his 2012 *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live—and How You Can Change Them*, written with science journalist Sharon Begley, Davidson melded the

findings of hard science with key elements drawn from popular how-to books. His investigations led him to emphasize the concept of neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain "to change its structure and function in significant ways . . . in response to the experiences we have as well as the thoughts we think." Neuroplasticity was a tremendously important breakthrough in understanding the brain and its relationship to the mind. A science writer remarked that "the power of neuroplasticity to transform the emotional brain opens up new worlds of possibility," including how we have "the capacity to willfully direct which functions will flower . . . which moral capacities emerge . . . which emotions flourish." Davidson explored how mental training, achieved principally through meditation, could "alter patterns of activity in the brain to strengthen empathy, compassion, optimism, and a sense of well-being."<sup>44</sup>

Linking neuroscience and his long-standing experience with meditation, and providing questionnaires and exercises that would enable readers to benefit from practicing it, Davidson remarked that he hoped his book would help people transform their lives, as it had done his. "You can modify your Emotional Style," he told readers, "to improve your resilience, social intuition, sensitivity to your own internal emotional and psychological states, coping mechanisms, attention, and sense of well-being." The benefits of mindfulness were abundant. Not only did it help build compassion, focus, resilience, positivity, and social intuition, it also promoted healthful well-being, resulting in greater resistance to illnesses and longer lives. At the end of his book Davidson talked directly to his readers, telling them that he hoped what he wrote helped them see "that who you are today does not need to be who you are tomorrow, but that our Emotional Style is ours for the creating. Emotions," he insisted, "help us appreciate others and the world around us; they make life meaningful and fulfilling. May each and every one of you flourish in your well-being and help others to do the same."<sup>45</sup>

Davidson's book was part of an outpouring of work in the early twenty-first century on the relationships between neuroscience and well-being. The findings and recommendations appeared in varied genres—from cautious scholarly articles announcing new experimental findings, to books that summarized findings in sober and often technical terms, to books (like Davidson's) aimed at popular audiences, to how-to offerings that sometimes claimed more than evidence allowed.<sup>46</sup>

Davidson's work captured what had emerged by 2010 as a consensus among neuroscientists about the relationship between the brain and positive emotions, a consensus often shaped by the links between brain science and Buddhism. Writers worked to distinguish between hokum that could exaggerate the power of the mind over the body and scientific studies that



offered a more careful assessment. New technologies, especially PET and fMRI, made possible what two scholars have called the “neuromolecular gaze”—the ability to visualize not only the brain but also how it functioned in ways that enhanced our understanding of emotions. There was no one part of the brain linked to pleasure, researchers discovered; rather, the connection involves a complicated set of regions and processes. Research made available a wide range of interventions; with training, it is possible for individuals to use their mind and emotions to change their brains. As Daniel Goleman remarked in the preface to a book by a leading science journalist, scientific investigations suggested that there may well be “a two-way street of causality, with systematic mental activity resulting in changes in the very structure of the brain.” Research into how the brain works supposedly revealed that happiness goes along with social connections and a strengthened immune system. Every brain, scientists agreed, is different, in part because every person has a different genetic makeup. Still, all brains were capable of growth and change, making it possible to train the brain to make it, and ourselves, more open to positive thoughts and feelings. Neuroscience confirmed much of what positive psychologists had long emphasized: the importance getting off the status-driven hedonic treadmill and minimizing the power of social comparisons and of having commitments or interests larger than the self, especially through social connections, religion, or the experience of nature.<sup>47</sup>

For many writers, brain science revealed an inseparable connection between Eastern religions and meditation. Richard O’Connor, a therapist who acknowledged that he had suffered from clinical depression, insisted that “practicing mindfulness regularly is our best hope at resetting the happiness thermostat.” Many positive psychologists preferred meditation to drugs, both because the evidence for meditation’s beneficial effects was so strong and because drugs based on new findings by neuroscientists were not fully developed, were illegal, or had problematic side effects, including addiction.<sup>48</sup>

Researchers also explored the connection between positive psychology and favorable health outcomes. Sheldon Cohen and his colleagues carried out a key experiment (see Chapter 6). Based on this and other studies, the 2005 *Time* article reported that “people who rate in the upper reaches of happiness on psychological tests develop about 50% more antibodies than average in response to flu vaccines” and “that happiness or related mental states like hopefulness, optimism and contentment appear to reduce the risk or limit the severity of cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, colds and upper-respiratory infections as well.” Similarly, a Dutch study whose certain conclusions seemed exaggerated revealed that “unbeat mental states reduced an individual’s risk of death 50% over the

study’s nine-year duration,” while other investigations revealed the people with greater subjective well-being became ill less frequently, recovered more quickly, and often had longer lives.<sup>49</sup>

The dust jacket of a learned book aimed at a popular audience in 2007 summarized what neuroscientists had concluded. “Cutting-edge science and the ancient wisdom of Buddhism have come together to show how we all have the power to literally change our brains by changing our minds,” remarked the publicist for Sharon Begley’s *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves*. Yet careful scientific researchers worried that, as the British behavioral scientist Daniel Nettle put it, the promise of increased happiness, by promoting “a plethora of therapies, alternative therapies, herbal products, alternative herbal products, spiritual systems, alternative systems,” involved excessive “quackery and charlatanism.” Too many self-help books and “self-administered therapies,” he cautioned, seemed “to suggest that we can all become supermen and women, with no problems, perfect happiness, and limitless wealth and energy.” In contrast, he had to admit that through therapy (especially cognitive behavioral therapy and pleasant activities training) or meditation, “happiness can be deliberately manipulated, with measurable if modest effects.”<sup>50</sup>

The serious, scientifically based study of the brain and happiness at times opened the gates to popular renditions that promised transformative changes. O’Connor wrote that “if you will seriously work on happiness for three months, you’ll have a different brain, be a different person.” John Medina, a developmental molecular biologist, insisted that “aerobic exercise just twice a week halves your risk of general dementia” and reduces “your risk of Alzheimer’s by 60 percent.” Two scientists offered a book that showed how to activate brain states, which would “give you the ability to gradually rewire your own brain—from the inside out—for greater well-being, fulfillment in your relationships, and inner peace.” Others touted the social benefits of what brain science revealed. In *Social Intelligence* (2006), Daniel Goleman claimed that “neuroscience has discovered that our brain’s very design makes it *sociable*, inexorably drawn into an intimate brain-to-brain linkup whenever we engage with another person. That neural bridge lets us affect the brain—and so the body—of everyone we interact with, just as they do us.” In *Your Money and Your Brain: How the New Science of Neuroeconomics Can Help Make You Rich* (2007), *Money* magazine writer Jason Zweig reported on one implication of Davidson’s work. Having more activity in the left prefrontal cortex, he remarked, meant “it’s almost as if this area is a source of internal sunshine for the mind,” which meant, among other things, that people who had such capacity were better investors. Understanding what neuroscience revealed about how we make

investment decisions, he claimed, would provide investors with “financial peace of mind”—and greater wealth. This was one example—common among popularizers but not infrequent among scholars—who wrote about neuroscience—of how conclusions and applications could outpace scientific findings.<sup>51</sup>

#### HAPPINESS INTERNATIONALLY

Positive psychologists responded to globalization of the economy and of intellectual life in several different and often conflicting ways. Where they faltered was in grappling with the ways cultural differences across national boundaries influenced the understanding of happiness. Part of the reason was their failure to incorporate insights and methods from anthropology. From early on positive psychologists had talked of integrating the social sciences with the behavioral ones. Economics had joined the fray, with consideration from public policy specialists coming along later. Yet by and large sociology and anthropology had remained on the sidelines.<sup>52</sup> The result, especially true with the absence of anthropology, was that on issues such as defining and measuring happiness, distinctive cultural perspectives often remained unexplored and by and large Western values—or, as someone inventively remarked, the perspectives of the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic)—reigned. There was at least one important issue on which cultural differences received significant attention. Researchers explored how the distinction between the individualism of Western societies and the collectivism of Eastern ones shaped notions of self-esteem, identity, motivation, and subjective well-being.<sup>53</sup>

After 1998 other international dimensions of positive psychology received markedly greater attention. New efforts built on earlier ones. In the United States surveys had appeared in the 1950s. Early on the scene was the World Data Base of Happiness, developed by Rutt Veenhoven decades before Seligman’s 1998 presidential address. Then came the European Commission’s Eurobarometer, launched in 1973; the European Values Study and the World Values Survey, both originating in 1981; and the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, which emerged shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Beginning in the late 1990s, data collection spread, moving beyond developed nations to developing and even stagnant or deeply troubled ones. The Latinobarometro Survey appeared in 1996 and the Afrobarometer Survey in 1999. A handful of scholars collected data where one might normally expect to find little happiness, such as in war-torn Afghanistan, among the homeless in America, and on the streets of Calcutta. Initiated in 2005, the Gallup World Poll now covers 160 nations

and 98 percent of the world’s adults. These databases made possible the study of a host of issues, among which happiness was only one and even then sometimes indirectly.<sup>54</sup>

The connection between public policy and happiness across national borders was a related issue that received increasing attention in the early twenty-first century. Decades before, in 1972, the Kingdom of Bhutan had relied on a Buddhist outlook to replace the Gross Domestic Product with Gross National Happiness as a measure of a country’s well-being. In the early twenty-first century international organizations, national governments in the developed and developing world, and even some cities proposed or developed happiness or well-being indices as a way of informing public policy.<sup>55</sup> The political and ideological implications of a shift from GDP to some measure of happiness or well-being varied, with no one perspective dominating. For many, the change emerged from consideration of the Easterlin Paradox—that after the achievement of a certain level of wealth, additional income or economic growth yielded few or diminishing increments of pleasure. Many who embraced well-being as a measure supported commitments to improve the environment; reduce inequalities of wealth, education, and income; and look at an economy less from on high than from a household level. As the authors of the United Nations report remarked, “rising incomes—beyond ensuring the fulfillment of essential needs—do not necessarily increase well-being much further.” Rather, they commented, “surveys have indicated that an overall sense of security, including job security, strong family and friendship networks, as well as freedom of expression and other factors, strongly impact people’s well-being.”<sup>56</sup>

In some cases, social scientists from the left provided the key arguments, such as was true with the French report commissioned by President Nicolas Sarkozy and authored by Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi. Formed in 2008 and its report issued a year later, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress remarked that standard economic data “did not alert us that the seemingly bright growth performance of the world economy between 2004 and 2007 may have been achieved at the expense of future growth.” The report urged governments to focus on issues, many of which were irrelevant to a concentration on GDP but central to the anti-materialist strain among positive psychologists and others: environmental sustainability, inequalities of wealth and income, and well-being experienced at the household level.<sup>57</sup>

Yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that in some cases sponsors and consumers of government policy based on happiness had in mind more conservative purposes. For authoritarian leaders like the King of Bhutan,

a focus on happiness took attention away from a lack of democracy and civil liberties. For nations struggling to develop economically in ways that reflected Western experiences, concentrating on well-being could undermine pleasures, such as traditional patterns of kinship or religion, that modernization might threaten. And for those on the right in developed nations, like Prime Minister David Cameron, an emphasis on happiness kept attention away from the failures of markets to provide economic justice and environmental protections. For example, Cameron used a concentration on happiness to argue against state control of the economy and for locally focused volunteerism, a Big Society rather than a Big Government. "A bigger, stronger more active society," Cameron remarked in 2011, "involves something of a revolt against the top-down, statist approach." Or as an op-ed writer in the *New York Times* commented in 2014, "if we may all be equally happy, irrespective of our circumstances, then that would equip" conservative politicians "with a convenient excuse to stop looking at structural issues like class, social and economic inequality or poverty."<sup>58</sup>

Correlating GNP with happiness or satisfaction with life leads to suggestive but not always indisputable conclusions.<sup>59</sup> A chart exploring levels of reported well-being with national wealth per person offers one telling perspective. Most of the nations where citizens report the highest degrees of satisfaction are in Northern Europe. The United States, with the highest GDP per capita, is not the happiest nation. Some relatively wealthy nations, such as France or Japan, do not report levels of personal satisfaction commensurate with their affluence. In contrast, others, such as the Philippines or Nigeria, display a sense of well-being one might not simplistically expect given their relatively lack of prosperity.<sup>60</sup>

The 2013 United Nations–sponsored World Happiness Report revealed similar dimensions of international comparisons, ones whose ironies and complications remind us not to put too much faith in the conclusions drawn from the data (Figure 7.2).<sup>61</sup> As usual, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and the Netherlands ranked highest, with sub-Saharan nations such as Benin and Togo at the bottom. Out of 156 nations surveyed, the United States ranked 17th, just behind Mexico. Overall, some indicators were more important than per capita GDP: the extensiveness of social connections, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. Researchers offered vitally important observations when they emphasized the strength of the safety net, social welfare policies, social trust, and relatively equal income distribution as factors, often more important than affluence—which help account for why some European nations outranked America.<sup>62</sup> Or as one science writer put it, "a civic sense, social equality, and control over our own lives constitute the magic triangle of well-being in society."<sup>63</sup> To many astute but perhaps unnecessarily optimistic observers, the policy implications of

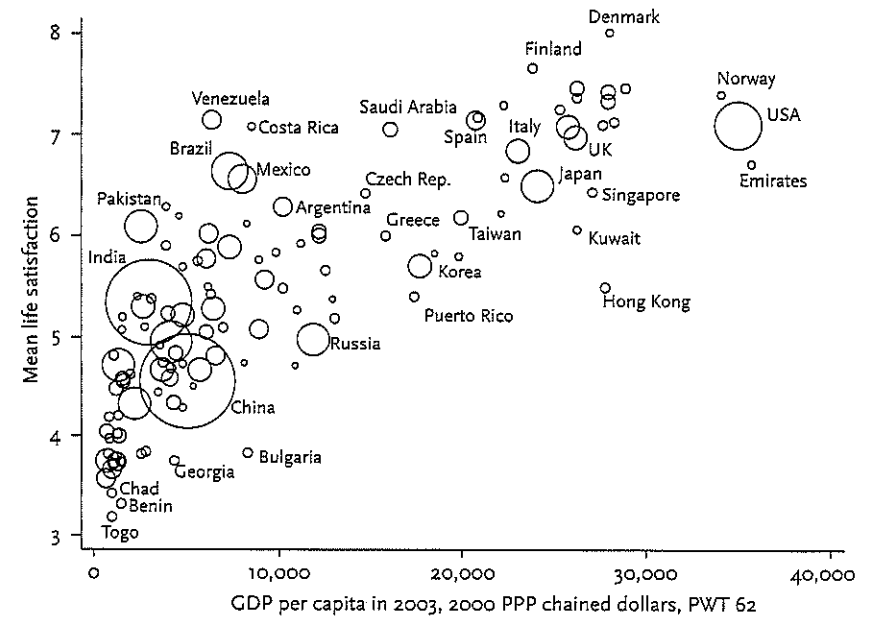


Figure 7.2 By the early twenty-first century, researchers explored the international relationship between Mean life satisfaction (vertical line) and GDP per capita (horizontal line). (From Angus Deaton, "Worldwide, Residents of Richer Nations More Satisfied," <http://www.gallup.com/poll/104608/worldwide-residents-richer-nations-more-satisfied.aspx>. Copyright © 2008, Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. The content is used with permission; however, Gallup retains all rights of republication.)

international happiness comparisons were clear. Since constantly increasing growth in GDP does not produce significantly greater happiness in developed nations, the goal of public policy should shift to the promotion, as two writers advocated, of "the good things of life" such as friendship, health, respect, and leisure.<sup>64</sup>

#### POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychologists hold varied, albeit patterned political positions. Although there are both exceptions and some signs of change, the most common stance, consonant with the personalism of psychology, emphasizes that change comes from individual transformations and that enhancing the individual's sense of well-being will help improve society.<sup>65</sup> Such promises have several major characteristics. When they offer examples, scholars most often focus on the impact that happiness has on a series of decreasingly important concentric circles, beginning with one's friends and family. They can be vague when it comes to the connection between

the personal and broader social worlds. Thus in a widely used textbook in the field, the authors defined "collectivism" in a way no good socialist or communitarian might, as occurring "when the average person in a society is disposed to group interdependence."<sup>66</sup> Assuming as they do that social change comes from an individual or small group, there is among many positive psychologists remarkably little emphasis on collective action, social movements, or government interventions for social welfare.<sup>67</sup> Seligman spelled out one dimension of this when he remarked that changing external circumstances, such as poverty, "is usually impractical and expensive." If external circumstances such as affluence accounted for only 10 percent of subjective well-being, then happiness enhancement came not from social change but from individual transformation.<sup>68</sup>

This had come home to me when, at the beginning of the course I audited on "The Science of Happiness," I encountered a popular online questionnaire designed to indicate how satisfied I was with my life. Similar limitations emerged in an examination of the other major survey method—one developed by Martin Seligman and examined in Norbert Schwarz and Fritz Strack's 2003 "Reports of Subjective Well-Being: Judgmental Processes and Their Methodological Implications." Here the search was for what the survey called "Authentic Happiness." Once more, a respondent self-reports using an online survey, and the result is an assessment that comes from "The VIA Survey of Character Strengths." These strengths range widely and include hope, spirituality, caution, perseverance, capacity to love and be loved, and open-mindedness. At least six of the twenty-four strengths might conceivably touch on a person's social and political commitments—"fairness, equity, and justice," "kindness and generosity," "curiosity and interest in the world," "social intelligence," "leadership" and "citizenship, teamwork, and loyalty." Yet when I looked at the questions and categories, I found an emphasis on small-scale interaction rather than political or social engagement with a wider world. Kindness and generosity covered one's ability to do good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well. Curiosity about the world captures how extensive your interest is, without giving any sense of what that "world" comprises. "Social intelligence," we learn, contains your awareness "of the motives and feelings of other people. You know what to do to fit in to different social situations, and you know what to do to put others at ease." "Fairness, equity, and justice" means "treating all people fairly," not letting "your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people," and giving "everyone a chance." The 240 questions reinforce this individualistic and small-group focus. For example, the questionnaire asks whether you ever deliberately hurt anyone or whether you have a "broad outlook on what is going on." Similarly, the survey asks

whether "it is important to me that I live in a world of beauty," but not how important it is to live in a peaceful, more egalitarian, or more environmentally safe world.<sup>69</sup>

In the writings of leading positive psychologists, we can also see the vague promises of social change stemming from increases in individual happiness. From the outset, leading figures in the field promised to focus on institutions that fostered positivity, and over time a tremendous amount of research and consulting did indeed go into such efforts, at corporations and schools especially. Yet characteristically in their writings, major figures in the field were vague when it came to offering a capacious and specific social vision. For example, in a typical passage Fredrickson wrote of how positivity involved more than enhancing personal happiness. "Beyond feeling good," she insisted, people were "also *doing* good—adding value to the world" by being "highly engaged with their families, work, and communities." Positivity, she insisted, required "transcending self-interest enough to share and celebrate goodness in others and in the natural world." Yet her book offered no suggestions about the implications of such transcendence for political or social change. Moreover, like others who wrote in a way that discouraged working for comprehensive social transformations, she cautioned that flourishing "need not imply grand or grandiose actions." Similarly, Seligman talked of how "the Meaningful Life consists in belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self, and humanity creates all the positive institutions to allow this: religion, political party, being green, the Boy Scouts, or the family." Yet he offered readers little or no guidance of how to connect individual and social flourishing.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, there is evidence that mainstream positive psychology resonates with cultural conservatism, especially among those who emphasize tough character traits more than emphatic or compassionate ones, adopting as they do the harsher aspects of the Protestant work ethic. Here there was some resemblance between people in the field and neoconservatives who, beginning in the late 1960s, decried what they saw as excessive self-expression and stood in an antagonistic relationship to emerging social movements of women and African Americans. Seligman's emphasis on how the choice of character over personality as a counter to relativism and postmodernism dovetails with cultural conservatism. In the section on character in *Flourish*, he remarked that while "I do not remotely advocate giving up on reform" that would undo "malignant circumstances," research in positive psychology made clear that interventions that involved "identifying and then shaping character" were centrally important. To him, self-control and grit were more important and effective than political engagement.<sup>71</sup>

Near the end of *Flourish* Seligman differentiated between the criticisms of life in the West in the early twenty-first century and what he called "New Prosperity." He wrote that "history, in the hands of postmodernists, is taught as 'one damn thing after another.'" In contrast, he underscored that North America, Western Europe, Japan, and Australia were "at a Florentine moment: rich, at peace, enough food, health, and harmony." For him, history was "the account of human progress," uneven to be sure but "nevertheless upward." The postwar world had seen the vanquishing of fascism and communism, the feeding of billions of people, the securing of "universal education and universal medical care," a five-fold increase in purchasing power, an extension of life expectancy, and "huge inroads into racial, sexual, and ethnic injustice. The age of the tyrant," he concluded, "is coming to an end, and the age of democracy has taken firm root." Of course, it is not hard to construct an opposing picture of recent developments, one that would emphasize the failure of the Arab Spring, growing hostility to outsiders, the prevalence of homelessness or drug addiction, the rise of ISIS, the refugee crisis, the persistence of poverty in America, the anger of white working-class men, mass incarceration, and the growing gap between the very rich and the rest of us.<sup>72</sup>

Consequently, the historical vision of positive psychologists, one that was often implicit, was optimistic. For example, Seligman believes that positive psychology developed when it did because by the early twenty-first century suffering in the world had diminished significantly while affluence had increased. It is possible to counter or qualify such a perspective with several arguments. As Seligman himself predicted in his 1998 address, "the warfare the world faces in the next century will be ethnic in its roots and hatreds" with "the destruction of whole communities and the ongoing problems of refugees and human rights abuse" amplifying these problems. Although there are signs of hope, the failure of the Arab Spring, the continuing and violent turmoil in the Middle East, to say nothing of gun violence, personal depression, and the threat of a nuclear war or a super-virus, reminds us that suffering persists in much of the world. Moreover, the argument about the predominance of affluence correctly points to the hundreds of millions of people who have entered the middle class in recent years; yet in the West and especially in the United States, prosperity was prevalent during much of the postwar world, well before positive psychology emerged. Instead we might look elsewhere for a historical explanation of the emergence and spread of positive psychology. It is possible that positive psychology emerged when it did not because the world was getting better but because there was a disjuncture between people's optimistic expectations and more complicated, often depressing individual and social

## POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND NEOLIBERALISM

In important ways psychology reflected aspects of neoliberalism, which, like positive psychology's scholarship, came to increasing prominence in the 1980s and 1990s. We are familiar with the role neoliberalism has played in economics and public policy, but we can also see how many positive psychologists also reflect its importance. The emergence of positive psychology is a specific moment in a longer story of how Americans (and others) responded to affluence and consumer culture, often by realizing that there was something more to life than a seemingly unending pursuit of happiness through materialism. However, the more specific seedbed is the rise of neoliberalism amidst a period of economic transformations and turmoil. Unfortunately, we do not have systematic studies of the social location of proponents and consumers of positive psychology to make firm judgments, though my best guess is that both groups occupy positions of relative social privilege defined by race, income, and education.<sup>74</sup>

Neoliberalism involves self-government by the individual rather than the exercise of government power at the same time that it fosters government of the self by corporate capitalism's old and new cultural agencies. In the face of political deadlock and disenchantment with politics, it promises spheres of action where individuals operate effectively. Neoliberalism celebrates markets, competition, entrepreneurship, and freedom as opposed to centralized controls and forms of collective action; weakens the welfare state's social safety net; embraces the benefits of technological transformations and globalized free trade; and emphasizes voluntary organizations. Among many neoliberals, the business corporation, and not labor unions or the government, is the nation's central institution.<sup>75</sup> The sociologist Sam Binkley captured one consequence of these tendencies when he noted that "taking the market as a model for social conduct in all realms of life," neoliberalism "sets out to reinvent all social relations as market relations, and to remake individuals as market actors—profit-maximizing, calculating, self-interested individuals for whom every relation is conceived as an enterprise." Characteristically, there is remarkably little to no research on whether participating in a labor union or organized social movement affects a person's happiness.<sup>76</sup>

One link between positive psychology and neoliberalism came in the emphasis on psychological wealth as a way of measuring happiness, one example of the use of an economic term to describe something not usually seen as primarily economic. Lyubomirsky underscored another aspect of the connection between external conditions and the field's development when she speculated that happiness had emerged as a "hot topic . . . a symptom, perchance, of the Western twenty-first century individualistic zeitgeist"

Diener and Biswas-Diener, who spoke of “Psychological Wealth: The Balanced Portfolio,” captured other implications of this relationship when they reported on studies that showed how in some circumstances money could buy happiness. “It might not seem fair,” they wrote in 2008, “that some folks have not only big bucks but more happiness as well; but rather than begrudging folks for their good fortune,” they continued in a way that went against what some others had identified as the risks of upward social comparison, “consider how money can boost happiness.” Therefore, “the research linking money to happiness need not be an emotional death sentence for less affluent people,” because, they noted, some homeless people “were actually faring well in terms of happiness.” Similarly, Emmons had written of “emotional prosperity.” Yet even among those closely involved with the development of positive psychology, there were those who critiqued key aspects of neoliberalism. From what I can gather, among prominent positive psychologists, Csikszentmihalyi is the one who has offered a critique of neoliberalism. In his *Good Business*, he remarked that “the most important functions of the society, which used to be relatively independent of the market, have now become servants of Wall Street,” questioned the assumption that “happiness would be provided by the market,” and called for a more direct confrontation with “the consequences of a purely market-driven view of the world.” Another case in point is Barry Schwartz, who was present near the creation of the field and has worked closely with Seligman on a number of projects. He has criticized the excesses of free markets and consumer culture for undermining the pursuit of happiness—and hailed consumer education, government regulation, and religious commitments as ways of countering market excess.<sup>77</sup>

At a time when vast sectors of the broad middle range of Americans experienced tough times, the hope that they could avoid a consequential “death sentence” might serve as reassurance. The rise and growth of positive psychology occurred at a time when in the United States labor unions weakened, incomes for the vast majority of people stagnated, social welfare programs were cut, life-long marriages and jobs became rarer, and a very small percentage of wealthy people benefited disproportionately from increases in income and assets. For tens of millions of Americans, downsizing, outsourcing, the shift of retirement policies from defined benefit to defined contribution, and the spread of contingent labor arrangements powerfully undermined security. The focus on the question of whether money could buy happiness often meant that other economic issues, especially economic insecurities, got short shrift. In such contexts some observers could interpret the findings of positive psychologists in a reassuring manner. Since incomes in excess of \$70,000 supposedly brought little or small increases in happiness, there was nothing to gain from being envious of the wealthy.

albeit plenty to lament about the plight of the poor. An emphasis on accepting one’s external lot in life (which after all accounted for only 10 percent of one’s sense of well-being) and working to enhance one’s individual happiness within the context of the givenness of externalities offered the best chance for a better, happier lot.

Yet it would be wrong to insist on a connection between positive psychology and any single set of political commitments. After all, empirical studies pointed in multiple directions. If the recognition that an income above a certain level suggested the futility of envy, it also pointed in the direction of increasing Gross Domestic Happiness by shifting economic policy from economic growth to taxation of the wealthy and to accepting more inflation in exchange for less unemployment.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, international comparisons could be construed as offering support to social democracy rather than neoliberal capitalism: after all, nations like Sweden and the Netherlands—with strong social programs, relatively equitable distribution of wealth and income, and heavy taxation—provided greater levels of happiness than obtained in the United States, with its relatively weak social safety net, lack of social trust, more inequitable distribution of wealth and income, and lower levels of taxation. Moreover, a relatively wealthy France and a relatively poor Mexico had roughly the same levels of happiness. As the subtitle of a 2010 book explained, there was a “Paradox of Happy Peasants and Miserable Millionaires.” In the end, despite the dramatic growth of economists’ interest in happiness, major issues—concerning definitions, research methods, and policy implications—remain unresolved.<sup>79</sup>

Critics point to evidence that liberals and leftists dominate the field of social psychology, but within positive psychology the situation is more complicated.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, it is possible to identify a spectrum of political positions within the field, something explored here but, as far as I know, nowhere else. At one end stands the British social democrat and economist Richard Layard, now a life peer who sits in the British House of Lords, but whose children cannot.<sup>81</sup> In his 2005 *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, which he dedicated to Kahneman, Layard followed authors of other summary books but broadened the scope of his social vision. Psychology, he noted, lacked “the comprehensive framework for policy analysis that economics” provided, especially economics not fundamentally indebted to the worship of free markets and rational citizen/consumers. Therefore incorporating economics into contemporary psychology would advance scholarship and reveal ways of enhancing happiness that reached beyond individualistic solutions. Like other positive psychologists, Layard stressed the importance of social connections, but he emphasized how in Britain and the United States they had eroded significantly, undermining people’s sense of trust and security, with unemployment being “one of the greatest threats to

can happen to anyone." Acknowledging the power of social comparisons and the hedonic treadmill, he cast serious doubt as to whether economic growth could increase levels of happiness in developed nations. Given that above a certain level added income produced relatively slight gains in happiness, there was considerable wastefulness in developed economies.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, since people abhorred losses more than they valued gains and since well-to-do people garnered less happiness from more money than their poorer counterparts, egalitarian redistribution meant that "a country will have a higher level of average happiness the more equally its income is distributed." To bolster this assertion he pointed to Scandinavian nations that recorded high rates of happiness along with high taxes, a strong educational system, and "a culture of mutual respect." Layard also emphasized that research made clear that "it is more important to reduce suffering than to generate extreme happiness." The policy recommendations that followed from his analysis were clear: develop family-friendly social policies, "subsidize activities that promote community life," dramatically reduce unemployment, provide major funding to counter the emotional and economic costs of mental illness, use social policy "to fight the constant escalation of wants," and foster education that emphasized "the sense of an overall purpose wider than oneself."<sup>83</sup>

If Layard represents the social democratic left among happiness scholars, the cultural left appears most prominently in the work of University of California Berkeley psychology professor Dacher Keltner and the Greater Good Science Center of the University of California, of which he was the founding director. Keltner weaves together strands of the familiar tapestry comprised of Eastern religions, neuroscience, and Darwinism, though in his case it was the kindest and not the fittest who survived. The Center, like Keltner's research and writing, as well as Berkeley's Social Interaction Lab, relies heavily on an individualistic focus. Yet even here they differ from mainline positive psychology. Although both Seligman and Keltner emphasized altruism, when talking of character the former stressed grit and resilience; the latter, love and compassion. Moreover, if most positive psychologists were vague about how to move from the personalistic to the social and political, Keltner and his colleagues more fully explored such connections. Among the topics they focused on, but most positive psychologists avoided, were the dynamics of racism, social class, moral behavior on a large scale, environmental degradation, peaceful reconciliation, and the exercise of power.<sup>84</sup>

Another approach to policy, libertarian paternalism, has emerged in the work of behavioral economists and others interested in enhancing happiness. The key text is Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein's *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (2008).

Using what they call choice architecture to move people to make wise decisions is its central recommendation. For example, when employers established procedures that automatically enrolled employees in pension plans but gave them the choice of opting out, they did not significantly interfere with their freedom but held the prospect of improving their long-term well-being. President Barack Obama invited Sunstein to direct the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, which made seemingly small but highly significant changes in government rules and procedures that in turn relied on the findings of behavioral economists and on how scholars such as Kahneman had carefully analyzed decision-making.<sup>85</sup>

In contrast to this libertarian paternalism, David G. Myers of Hope College has offered a centrist perspective on happiness that rested on an embrace of traditional values. In his 2000 *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty*, he advocated policies that many on the left also called for, such as a progressive tax on consumption and the strengthening of the progressive income tax. Yet as the title of his book made clear, he placed his analysis within a religiously inspired emphasis on how Americans lived in a world that combined spiritual longing and material abundance. A tax on consumption, by curbing excessively wanton materialism, would help restore spiritual commitments. Moreover, family values were central to his policy recommendations that involved "government and corporate policies that actually value families." Opposed to rampant individualism and to the ways divorce adversely affected children, he called for counteracting the excesses of the sexual revolution, strengthening marriage and the family, linking reproduction with responsibility, and reducing Sunday work requirements to "support the familial and religious roots of virtue."<sup>86</sup>

A free market, conservative perspective appeared in Arthur C. Brooks's *Gross National Happiness: Why Happiness Matters for America—and How We Can Get More of It*. The book appeared in 2008, the same year that its author became president of the American Enterprise Institute and a few years before he joined the advisory board of Charles Koch's Well-Being Initiative. Brooks argued that the data revealed that in general conservatives were happier than liberals because of the quality of their marriages, the seriousness of their religious commitments, and the strength of their individualism. When he turned to the implications of such findings, he made clear he supported family-friendly social policies—not by government mandates but by using the law and the tax code to strengthen traditional marriages. The evidence also showed, he argued, that a combination of religious, political, and economic freedom enhanced people's happiness. When it came to moral freedoms, such as control over whom we could marry or the conditions that made obtaining an abortion easy or difficult, it was not the government but "individual families and communities" that

should establish “our own private standards of behavior” even if they were “very strict.”<sup>87</sup>

The American tradition, he insisted, demanded a high ratio of freedom to security, with the government constantly attempting to lower the ratio, for example, by requiring us to wear seat belts, protecting us from second-hand smoke, or enforcing strict safety measures for airplane passengers. Brooks objected strenuously to how the “nanny state” eroded freedom and thus happiness, for instance, by having the government care for people who were capable of taking care of themselves. He asserted it undermined the ambition of poor people and depressed their spirits to tell them that because America was no longer a nation where equality of opportunity was possible, they should follow the Democratic Party in fighting for redistributive policies. Instead, it was charitable giving that improved individual and national happiness. Answering those who said nations could enhance their collective happiness by significantly taxing superfluous consumption, Brooks asserted that “although consumerism does not buy happiness, government spending does not, either,” since “private prosperity brings us up, but government spending bring us back down.” Above all, success under capitalism was the most important provider of happiness, he remarked in a way that reflected his unabashed and simplistic conservatism. It was not venal greed that motivated people but a natural desire “to succeed and create value.”<sup>88</sup>

#### POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND PUBLIC POLICY

From early on some social scientists had been central to the field of happiness studies, but positive psychologists had remained more insulated from fields that might have made their vision less individualistic and enabled them to engage more fully in public policy debates.<sup>89</sup> At first glance that seemed to change in the twenty-first century when social scientists, economists especially, entered the territory positive psychologists had traditionally occupied.

We have already seen the importance of early adopters such as Richard Easterlin, Tibor Scitovsky, Robert Frank, and Richard Layard. Until early in the twenty-first century they were rare among social scientists who focused on the relationships between policy and happiness. However, increasingly after that, national governments, international commissions, and scholars from a variety of disciplines turned their attention to the question of how to deploy public policy to increase individual and collective happiness. Given decades of research as to what made people happy, there was widespread

agreement about what factors enhanced well-being—curbing the excesses of markets and individualism, reducing the damage unemployment or insecure employment causes, stemming the tide of environmental degradation, enhancing physical and mental health, and increasing people’s sense of security and trust. Given how high are the stakes, recent the attention, and freighted the ideological issues, disagreements persist, especially about the nature of the connection between democracy and happiness and to what extent or whether there was a relationship between greater economic equality and happiness.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the interventions of economists into debates over public policy, to a considerable extent positive psychologists remained inattentive to many political issues. Indeed, over time Seligman actually moved away from a broad-scale public policy. In his 1998 APA presidential address he had announced major public policy initiatives. One involved the application of positive psychology to threats to human rights in ethno-political conflicts, in Northern Ireland and South Africa especially; another, support for social activism to alleviate inner city poverty. Similarly, if in his 1975 *Helplessness* he had talked of “effective protest” that would help residents of inner cities overcome helplessness and of how poverty could be solved by the “self-esteem-enhancing nature of social action,” in the twenty-first century he turned away from a commitment to organized efforts to achieve social justice. The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program was a one major exception to the rule of public caution about focusing on policy issues in a major way, but it came at the initiative of the Army. Moreover, relying on an emphasis on character, it trained soldiers to overcome what they experienced in war rather than work for peaceful resolution of conflicts.<sup>91</sup>

#### CRITICISMS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychologists have acknowledged the validity of some of the criticisms of their field, although at some key moments they seem prone to avoid grappling with what critics say.<sup>92</sup> “What strikes me is how defensive people seem to be when anyone challenges the merits/values of positive psychology,” remarked a New Zealand psychologist in early 2016. Nonetheless, at key moments insiders offered critiques of the field.<sup>93</sup>

One of the main issues involved the dangers of popularization. Thus, in 2013, Christopher Peterson insisted on distinguishing between what practitioners wrote in scholarly journals and in trade books. Popular books, he cautioned his peers, “should not be written as happiness cookbooks, replete with strong guarantees about the five easy steps toward lasting bliss.” He had to admit that versions of the field that appeared in blogs and other



apps made it “difficult for the general public to sort through what is actually known versus what is simply hoped. Exaggerations do occur, and they tarnish all of positive psychology.” Yet, he insisted, “criticizing all of positive psychology for occasional excesses in some quarters is akin to criticizing all of music based solely on what one hears in an elevator.”<sup>94</sup> An even sharper critique from inside came in 2012 from positive psychologist Ilona Boniwell. The danger, she wrote, of jumping on a slogan-dominated ideological bandwagon included “a narrow mindset, resentment of any criticism, hero worship, self-perpetuating beliefs, arrogance and getting stuck in self-imposed positivity, leading to a lack of depth, lack of realism and simplifications.”<sup>95</sup>

A June 2015 session at the International Positive Psychology Association meetings, titled “Critiques of Positive Psychology,” covered many of the key points of criticism. Kim S. Cameron, co-founder of the University of Michigan’s Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship, led off with a full and frank presentation of key elements of commonly offered criticisms. Some of what he mentioned could be true of many emerging fields claiming scientific validity to what they discovered, including that findings were often invalid, overstated, or misleading. Yet some of what he highlighted involved problems specific to those who studied subjective well-being. Positive psychology, he remarked, failed to live up to its promise to draw on and make alliances with other academic fields. Skeptics asserted that positive psychology relied on an ethnocentric vision that reinforced Western values (individualism especially, in ways that echoed criticism of the Me Generation) and institutions (capitalism, in particular). Closer to home, the field ran into trouble by reflecting the biases of the white middle class and in the process ignored the way poverty and repression adversely affected the plight of the poor and non-whites. When practitioners moved from the classroom and laboratory, their interventions, critics alleged, created conformity rather than freedom.<sup>96</sup>

One critic from outside the field has noted that, relying on recycled clichés of Norman Vincent Peale and allowing the pendulum to swing too far away from negativity, positive psychology underemphasized the negative and offered what someone else called nothing more “than naïve, crass happiness.”<sup>97</sup> This last criticism, that positive psychologists underestimated the deleterious effects of excessive positivity and the importance of negative ones, has been prominently and extensively explored, leading some to develop Second Wave Positive Psychology, or PP2.0, and others to launch an even more fundamental challenge to the ways the field often embraces happiness.<sup>98</sup>

After Cameron’s talk, several leading figures in the field responded. Especially notable was Seligman’s reaction. Noting that he had spent his

entire life as a critic, he went on to emphasize the difference between destructive and constructive varieties of criticism, the latter appearing especially on web blogs. This meant that most criticism was not peer reviewed, and he emphasized the need for what he called “malice detectors.” Science, he insisted as he focused on the importance of academic standards, was the antidote to “junk skepticism.”<sup>99</sup>

Yet as reassuring as were the comments by Cameron and his colleagues, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that many positive psychologists were unwilling to engage with the most trenchant critiques of this field. There is, for example, little in their reactions to reassure a skeptic that they had grappled with the kinds of issues Jackson Lears raised in a 2013 essay. The outpouring of courses and how-to books in positive psychology, he argued, was a small “part of a broad, obsessive and flourishing effort to pursue happiness more directly and systematically than ever before.” For Lears, it did not “take a social scientist to see that a blizzard of how-to books on ‘positivity’ suggests its lack in everyday life,” for “behind the facade of smiley-faced optimism, American culture seems awash in a pervasive sadness, or at least a restless longing for a sense of fulfillment that remains just out of reach.” He castigated positive psychologists for offering clichéd, conventional bromides, ones based not on science but on scientism, especially “a strikingly vacuous worldview, one devoid of history, culture or political economy” that relied on hardly convincing “pop evolutionary psychology” and “pop neuroscience.” Especially vexing to him was the individualism of happiness studies that avoided “being in the world, including the public world.”<sup>100</sup>

Barbara Ehrenreich’s 2009 *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* is among the most pointed, even angry critiques of positive psychology and certainly the best known. Several years later Peterson cited her book as evidence of “a recent backlash” that reprised “the centuries-old suspicion of optimism as indicative of stupidity or denial.”<sup>101</sup>

Ehrenreich brought considerable strengths to the task of critiquing positive psychology—a doctorate in cell biology from Rockefeller University, a passionate feminist consciousness, and formidable talents as a writer whose previous books had commanded significant readership.<sup>102</sup> *Bright-Sided* was an intensely personal book, which Ehrenreich began with how she felt when people encouraged her to face a diagnosis of breast cancer by seeing the bright side but ended up as an impassioned attack on positive thinking, including that offered by psychologists. Calling “positive thinking” a “mass delusion” in general, she zeroed in on the “ultrafeminine theme of the breast cancer marketplace” characterized by “the cornucopia of pink-ribbon-themed breast cancer products” that evoked the advice of those who saw breast cancer as a gift, not a life-threatening or life-altering danger. As a trained scientist and skilled polemicist, she questioned those

who offered scientific evidence that the right attitude would help you resist or recover.<sup>103</sup>

Within this larger context, Ehrenreich began her treatment of positive psychology with a discussion of Seligman as an academic entrepreneur who used a range of strategies—whether “scientific breakthrough or flamboyant bid for funding and attention”—to advance his career, his profession, and his ideas. She reported how in 2007 she went to see Seligman with some trepidation, having recently published an article in *Harper's* that was critical of positive psychology, including its pop incarnations. When he saw her, she remembered, he was “practically scowling” and he engaged in strategies to avoid talking with her by creating a series of what she called “barriers to a normal interview.” The situation continued to deteriorate: when Ehrenreich raised questions about some of what Seligman had written, he reportedly responded testily, telling her to go home and Google what she apparently did not understand. When she did, she reported, she discovered that although in *Flourish* Seligman had used equations to make his “book look weightier and full of mathematical rigor,” in fact it made him “look like the Wizard of Oz.” Ehrenreich concluded her discussion of Seligman and positive psychology by reporting on what she saw as the problematic nature of the studies on which the field rested, especially those that established correlation but not causation, that engaged in media-driven positive spinning, and that defended the status quo by emphasizing that it was the individual’s responsibility to change adverse situations.<sup>104</sup>

Two years later, writing in *Flourish*, Seligman responded to what Ehrenreich had written. Under the heading “Barbara (‘I Hate Hope’) Ehrenreich,” he remarked that he found her book “uncongenial” and her analysis “wrongheaded and evidence-ignoring,” going on to say that she did not see that “the evidence is robust, significance levels are high, and the findings replicate over and over.” By confusing optimism with “sugar coating,” when she faced a cancer diagnosis, he remarked, she appeared “to be after a world in which human well-being follows only from externalities such as class, war, and money. Such a crumbling, Marxist worldview,” he continued, “must ignore the enormous number of reflexive realities in which what a person thinks and feels goes on to influence the future,” reflexive realities which were precisely what “the science of positive psychology” was about.<sup>105</sup>

Others on the left, whether Marxist, Foucauldian, or postmodern, offered critiques of positive psychology more profound and more fully articulated than Ehrenreich’s. From what I can tell, people in the field know of Ehrenreich’s criticism but few if any are aware of what those on the left—Marxists and Foucauldians—have written. Well into the twenty-first century came an analysis that emphasized how positive psychologists were

involved in managing the consent of workers, citizens, and consumers—and in the process distracting attention from more urgent issues. “There are surely ample political and material problems to deal with right now,” wrote the British sociologist William Davies in his *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*, “before we divert quite so much attention towards the mental and neural conditions through which we individually experience them.”<sup>106</sup> Although not focusing specifically on positive psychology, the cultural critic Lauren Berlant talked of late twentieth-century “cruel optimism,” how in Western societies the promise of lives marked by security, social mobility, and equality persisted when neoliberalism made realization of such a dream increasingly unlikely. Others articulated how “happiness becomes a disciplinary technique,” with positive psychologists promoting highly moral dimensions of subjective well-being that conventional bourgeois people pursued as part of emotionally laden performances infused with values shaped by the capitalist marketplace.<sup>107</sup>

Citing how the language of the marketplace (happiness as “a type of emotional currency that can be spent, like money, on outcomes in life you truly value” or as a liquid that operated in “the same way that monetary instruments such as stocks” did), the American sociologist Sam Binkley used a Foucauldian perspective to explore happiness as an instrument of government in a post-Keynesian world.<sup>108</sup> For him, “the new discourse on happiness” involved “a life resource whose potential resides at the disposal of a sovereign, enterprising, self-interested actor” who operated in a neoliberal world that promised “dynamic possibilities, risks and open horizons.” In the process, the enterprising, responsible self, liberated from constraining negativity and dependence once fostered by the social welfare state, could pursue a world that seemed to be full of self-realized individualistic possibilities but was actually governed by imperatives and institutions beyond the individual’s control.<sup>109</sup>

In her work on self-help and makeover cultures, Micki McGee explores how globalization and deindustrialization have undermined traditional values and institutions, replacing them with therapeutic makeover and self-help cultures. Old and new media, from bestselling books to life coaching and webinars, have emerged as “central to the compliance industries required for neoliberal governmentality” as they chase after the “liberal ideal of the pursuit of happiness.” Crucial to these efforts are inspirational imperatives that in turn rely on religious and spiritual traditions, including the Protestantism in the Norman Vincent Peale tradition but also the Buddhism represented by the Dalai Lama and Jon Kabat-Zinn. For McGee and others, it was no coincidence that an abundance of calls on people to invest in, manage, and improve themselves occurred at the same time that

economic insecurity affected tens of millions of Americans. Into the breach came self-help culture, including positive psychology, that promised to keep people afloat when faced with unprecedented challenges.<sup>110</sup>

McGee's particular contribution is to emphasize how the promise of a reborn self could lead people "into a new sort of enslavement: into a cycle where the self is not improved but endlessly belabored." For her the prominence of the belabored self, which she sees in American culture including the flourishing of positive psychology, is an essential component of how neoliberalism helps maintain the political and social status quo in part by emphasizing individualistic efforts rather than communitarian or political ones. Self-reinvention, and not political activism, promised to solve the problems of economic insecurity even though a new, fulfilled, and adequate self was impossible to achieve. Gender and religion play key roles in her analysis. She explores the gender dimensions of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century self-help efforts, which in turn help us understand key impulses in positive psychology. Earlier, male-oriented traditions focused on gaining money, possessions, or status. Yet as women entered the paid workforce and became increasingly important in the marketplace for books, how-to literature increasingly focused on the intangible, highly subjective and elusive goals of self-fulfillment and happiness. One result was the increased importance of mindfulness, self-realization, and seeing one's life as a work of art—all of which required unending rounds of effort without necessarily guaranteeing arrival at the promised goal. Finally, she reminds us of how contemporary renderings of the successful, happy self rely on a reshaping of Protestant religious traditions. Applied to an understanding of positive psychology, her emphasis on the importance of a calling by work achievable through flow, along with the achievement of grace and rebirth by the self-actualized self, suggests a key component to realizing the promise of subjective well-being that is simultaneously religious and psychological.<sup>111</sup>

There is much merit in these critiques of positive psychology, although many critics missed that positivity as a world view encompassed a variety of political orientations. The dovetailing of the development of this field with a neoliberalism reinforced the individualism inherent in much of psychology and thus the difficulty many positive psychologists had in moving beyond vague promises of engaging social issues. As one observer perceptively noted of the emphasis on character, which could be applied more widely to the field's findings, maybe a better approach to character training would involve a greater willingness "to cast a critical eye on the peculiarly American cult of individual ascendancy and instill grit while challenging social inequality, rather than inadvertently reproducing it."<sup>112</sup> Multiple social changes provided the seedbed of positive psychology, among them

the opposing forces of neoliberalism's confidence in market forces in an age of economic travails and the way millions of people realized that affluence had limited potential to make lives happier. One important difference is that in the twenty-first century, scholars in happiness studies discussed income inequality and environmental degradation while those in positive psychology generally avoided these issues and focused instead on how terrorism enhanced character strengths. The future will reveal in what directions the fields of happiness studies and positive psychology will go, but if the past is any guide they will be multiple and often contradictory.

NOTES

1. It is impossible to cover the full range of new topics explored, but among others that deserve attention are the relationship between happiness and nature (Daniel M. Haybron, "Central Park: Nature, Context, and Human Wellbeing," *International Journal of Wellbeing* 1 [July, 2011]: 235–54) and the use the new social networks technologies (Lorenzo Coviello et al., "Detecting Emotional Contagion in Massive Social Networks," *PLoS ONE* 9 [March 2014]). Another recent trend is the exploration of the eudaimonic turn, the connection between the humanities and positive psychology: for a summary, see James O. Pawelski, "Bringing Together the Humanities and the Science of Well-Being to Advance Human Flourishing," in *Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education's Greater Purpose*, ed. Don Harward (Washington, DC: Bringing Theory into Practice, 2016).
2. Although some observers, including historians, see neoliberalism as a problematic description of late twentieth-century political economy, the evidence in positive psychology had led me to accept it as a useful analytical tool. For one take on this controversy, see Philip Mirowski, "The Political Movement That Dared Not Speak Its Own Name: The Neoliberal Thought Collective," <https://inetconomics.org/uploads/papers/WP23-Mirowski.pdf>.
3. Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 370, 519. For a criticism of their work as relying too heavily on values of Western society, including individualism, see Konrad Banicki, "Positive Psychology on Character Strengths and Virtues: A Disquieting Suggestion," *New Ideas in Psychology* 33 (April 2014): 21–34. The Center for Positive Organization's faculty at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business developed a similar approach, the Reflected Best Self™ Exercise: <http://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/cpo-tools/reflected-best-self-exercise-2nd-edition>. On the history of this concept, see Judy Hilkey, *Character Is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
4. Peterson and Seligman, *Character*, 5, 11, 18.
5. Gregg Easterbrook, *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse* (New York: Random House, 2004), xix.
6. For some recent research, see Peggy N. Thoits and Lyndi N. Hewitt, "Volunteer Work and Well-Being," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42 (June 2001): 115–31; Sara B. Algoe and Jonathan Haidt, "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other-Praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration," *JPP* 4 (March 2009): 105–27; Elizabeth W. Dunn, Lara B. Aknin, and Michael I. Norton, "Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness,"

- Science 319 (March 21, 2008): 1687–88; Simone Schnall, Jean Roper, and Daniel M. T. Fessler, "Elevation Leads to Altruistic Behavior," *PS* 21 (March 2010): 315–20; Helen Y. Weng et. al., "Compassion Training Alters Altruism and Neural Responses to Suffering," *PS* 24 (July, 2013): 1171–80.
7. Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3-to-1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life* (New York: MJF Books, 2009), 41. For other explorations of character strengths, see Todd Kashdan, *Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life* (New York: William Morrow, 2009); Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierney, *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength* (New York: Penguin, 2011); Lisa G. Aspinwall and Ursula M. Staudinger, *A Psychology of Human Strengths: Fundamental Questions and Future Directions for a Positive Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003); Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016).
  8. Claudia Wallis, "The New Science of Happiness," *Time*, Jan. 9, 2005.
  9. Wallis, "New Science of Happiness." Kathryn Lofton, *Oprah: the Gospel of an Icon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) explores the connections between keeping a journal and expressing happiness. See also Robert A. Emmons, *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007); Robert A. Emmons, *Gratitude Works! A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013); Robert Emmons, "Spirituality: Recent Progress," in *A Life Worth Living: Contributions to Positive Psychology*, ed. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega Csikszentmihalyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62–81. For a critique of the emphasis on gratitude, see Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Selfish Side of Gratitude," *NYT*, Jan. 3, 2016.
  10. Stephen G. Post, "General Introduction," in *Altruism and Health: Perspectives from Empirical Research*, ed. Stephen G. Post (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6; <http://store.heartmath.org/s.nl/it.A/id.615/f>. See also these works by Stephen G. Post: *Unlimited Love: Altruism, Compassion, and Service* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2003); with Jill Neimark, *Why Good Things Happen to Good People The Exciting New Research That Proves the Link Between Doing Good, and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life* (New York: Broadway, 2007); *The Hidden Gifts of Helping: How the Power of Giving, Compassion, and Hope Can Get Us Through Hard Times* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).
  11. Tania Singer and Matthieu Ricard, eds., *Caring Economics: Conversations on Altruism and Compassion Between Scientists, Economists, and the Dalai Lama* (New York: Picador, 2015). For an exploration of the connections between religion, spirituality, neuroscience, and positivity, see George E. Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution: A Scientific Defense of Faith* (New York: Broadway, 2008).
  12. Ernst Fehr, "The Social Dilemma Experiment," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 77–84; Ernst Fehr, "Altruistic Punishment and the Creation of Public Goods," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 125–34; Tania Singer, "Empathy and the Interoceptive Cortex," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 27–43; William Harbaugh, "Why People Give to Charity," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 124. For the controversial and highly consequential debates over what investigations that rely on fMRI reveal about moral judgments, see Joshua D. Greene et al., "An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment," *Science*, Sept. 14, 2001, 2105–8; Selim Berker, "The Normative Insignificance of Neuroscience," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 37 (Fall 2009): 293–329.
  13. Richard J. Davidson, "The Neural Basis of Compassion," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 52; Matthieu Ricard, "A Buddhist Perspective on Altruism," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring*, 57–62.
  14. See <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/>; <http://payitforwardday.com/>; TheNewtonProject.com.
  15. Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté, *The Resilience Factor; 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles* (New York: Crown, 2002), 321. On the importance of positivity and resilience in responding to 9/11, see also Fredrickson, *Positivity*, 99–103; Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Free Press, 2002), xiii–xiv. For another book on resilience, see Judith Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things Go Wrong* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).
  16. Martin E. P. Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 83, 85.
  17. See [http://www.acsim.army.mil/readymil/ra\\_csf.htm](http://www.acsim.army.mil/readymil/ra_csf.htm). On this program, see Seligman, *Flourish*, 126–51. For criticisms of the program, see <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/03/24/the-dark-side-of-comprehensive-soldier-fitness/>; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/army-program-works-to-make-soldiers-fit-in-body-and-mind/2011/05/13/gHQAVsCqxH\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/army-program-works-to-make-soldiers-fit-in-body-and-mind/2011/05/13/gHQAVsCqxH_story.html); the special issue of *American Psychologist* 66 on the program, Jan. 2011, as well as the ensuing discussion, along with Seligman's response, in *American Psychologist* 66 (Oct. 2011): 641–47. For a critique, see Jeffrey R. Rubin, "The Unhappy Truth About Positive Psychology," *Truthout*, July 18, 2012. On the crucial role wars more generally have played in the development of American psychology, see Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) tells the larger story of how the American military, beginning in the 1980s, worked to instill conservative values.
  18. David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015), xiv–xv, 6, 261–67. On his religious view, see <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/01/interview-david-brooks-on-sin-augustine-and-the-state-of-his-soul/>.
  19. Parul Sehgal, "Brace Yourself" [online as "The Profound Emptiness of 'Resilience'"], *NYTM*, Dec. 6, 2015; Alfie Kohn, "The Downside of 'Grit,'" *Washington Post*, April 6, 2014.
  20. Robert A. Emmons, "Religion in the Psychology of Personality: An Introduction," *Journal of Personality* 67 (Dec. 1999): 873–88. On spirituality, as distinguished from religion, as a source of happiness, see Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
  21. Sir John Templeton, "Foreword," in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii.
  22. Tracy Balboni et al., "Religiousness and Spiritual Support Among Advanced Cancer Patients and Associations with End-of-Life Treatment Preferences and Quality of Life," *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 25 (Feb. 2007): 555–60; Kenneth Pargament, "Cultivating the Spiritual Dimension in Life: A Vital Aspect of Positive Psychology," talk at Fourth World Conference on Positive Psychology, June 25, 2015; Britt-Mari Sykes, *Questioning Psychological Health and Well-Being: Historical and Contemporary Dialogues Between Theologians and Psychologists* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010). For the work of a sociologist who has extensively studied the positive impact of religion on American life, see Rodney Stark, *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2012).
  23. Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 228, 230, 232, 235. For a more cautious view of the impact of religion on happiness, see Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 112–26.
  24. The literature here is immense, and includes Dean Sluyter, *The Zen Commandments: Ten Suggestions for a Life of Inner Freedom* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2001); Robert

- A. F. Thurman, *Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness* (New York: Riverhead, 1998); David Baird, *A Thousand Paths to Happiness* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebook, 2000); David P. Barash, *Buddhist Biology: Ancient Eastern Wisdom Meets Modern Western Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). On the growing popularity of meditation, see David Hochman, "Mindfulness: Getting Its Share of Attention," *NYT*, Nov. 1, 2013; Joel Stein, "Just Say Om," cover story of *Time*, Aug 4, 2003. For a critique of some scholars for overemphasizing the positive impact of mindfulness on mental health, see Anna Nowogrodzki, "Power of Positive Thinking Skews Mindfulness Studies," *Nature*, April 21, 2016.
25. To sample such discussions, see Rabbi Michael Knopf, "Where Positive Psychology and Judaism Overlap," *Haaretz*, June 3, 2013; R. Elchanan Popkoff, "Born to Bentch: Judaism and Positive Psychology," *Torah Musings*, Feb. 20, 2014; Eliezer Schnall, Mark Schiffman, and Aaron Cherniak, "Virtues That Transcend: Positive Psychology in Jewish Texts and Tradition," in *Religion and Spirituality Across Cultures*, ed. Chu Kim-Prieto (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2014), 21–45; Martha Mendelsohn, "The Jewish Happiness Project," *Jewish Week*, Oct. 3, 2011. Tal Ben-Shahar has been involved in teaching courses on Judaism and happiness: Rabbi Benjy Brackman, "Exciting Class on Jewish Positive Psychology in North Metro Denver," *Boulder Jewish News*, Oct. 20, 2014.
  26. On the contrasting views, see Adam B. Cohen and Peter C. Hill, "Religion as Culture: Religious Individualism and Collectivism among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants," *Journal of Personality* 75 (Aug. 2007): 709–42.
  27. The only article from a database of scholarly articles using "Judaism" and "positive psychology" in searches is Katherine Darlsgaard, Christopher Peterson, and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths Across Culture and History," *Review of General Psychology* 9 (Sept. 2005): 203–13. As the title indicates, the authors, who included Judaism in their sample, were interested in common rather than distinctive outlooks of a wide range of religious traditions. For other articles on Jews and happiness, see Jeff Levin, "Religious Behavior, Health, and Well-Being Among Israeli Jews: Findings from the European Social Survey," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 5 (Nov. 2013): 272–82; Adam B. Cohen, "The Importance of Spirituality for Well-Being for Jews and Christians," *JHS* 3 (Sept. 2002): 287–310. In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman did report on the work by an undergraduate who revealed that fundamentalists, including Orthodox Jews, were significantly more optimistic than their counterparts, including Reform Jews: Seligman, *Authentic*, 60; elsewhere (*Authentic*, 258), as others have commonly done, he collapsed Judaism into part of "the Judeo-Christian tradition." On the role Jews played in American psychology, see Andrew R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the 20th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
  28. Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) introduced the word *Jubu* to a broad audience.
  29. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
  30. After 1998, happiness books in genres available earlier continued to appear: among those that that combined the perspectives of Buddhism and psychology are Jack Kornfield, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000); Alan Gettis, *The Happiness Solution: Finding Joy and Meaning in an Upside Down World* (Norwood, NJ: Goodman Beck, 2008); Alan Gettis, *Seven Times Down, Eight Times Up: Landing on Your Feet in an Upside Down World*, 2nd ed. (Norwood, NJ: Goodman, Beck, 2009); Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, trans. Jesse Browner (2003; London: Atlantic Books, 2007). For inspirational homilies by a Protestant minister, see Tom Owen-Towle, *Being Happy in an Unhappy World* (San Diego: Barking Rocks Press, 2001).
  31. Wallis, "New Science of Happiness."
  32. Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 11. For a critique of neuroscience, with a focus on books that "show that brain science promises much and delivers little," see Adam Gopnik, "Mindless: The New Neuro-Skeptics," *New Yorker*, Sept. 9, 2013, 86. For another critique, in this instance for linking neuroscience and an emphasis on morality, see Tamsin Shaw, "The Psychologists Take Power," *NYRB*, Feb. 25, 2016. Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, *Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) is a nuanced consideration of advances in neuroscience. See also the blog neurobabble.co.uk; William T. Uttal, *Mind and Brain: A Critical Appraisal of Cognitive Neuroscience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Suparna Choudhury and Jan Slaby, eds., *Critical Neuroscience: A Handbook of the Social and Cultural Contexts of Neuroscience* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Joseph Dumit, *Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Natasha Dow Schüll and Caitlin Zaloom, "The Shortsighted Brain: Neuroeconomics and the Governance of Choice in Time," *Social Studies of Science* 41 (Aug. 2011): 515–38; Fernando Vidal, "Brainhood: Anthropological Figure of Modernity," *History of Human Sciences* 22 (Feb. 2009): 5–36.
  33. M. Joseph Sirgy, "Can QOL of Life Researchers Learn Anything 'Scientifically' Meaningful from Popular Cultural Icons Who Speak on Happiness and Well-Being?" *JHS* 10 (Nov. 2009), 769–71. See also, for example, the caution expressed by Richard J. Davidson, "The Human Brain: Deconstructing Mindfulness," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oynfjv7-NU>, at the Davos World Economic Forum in early 2015. Critics also caution against inferring psychological states from physiological evidence: John T. Cacioppo and Louis G. Tassinary, "Inferring Psychological Significance from Physiological Signals," *AP* 45 (Jan. 1990): 16–28; Gregory A. Miller, "How We Think About Cognition, Emotion, and Biology in Psychopathology," *Psychophysiology* 33 (Nov. 1996): 615–28.
  34. There were, however, limits to the incorporation of neuroscience into summary books: Seligman, *Flourish*, though it had a chapter titled "Positive Physical Health: The Biology of Optimism," contained no reference to Davidson, neuroscience, or fMRI in the index. Todd B. Kashdan and Michael F. Steger, "Challenges, Pitfalls, and Aspirations for Positive Psychology," in *Designing Positive Psychology: Taking Stock and Moving Forward*, ed. Kennon M. Sheldon, Todd B. Kashdan, and Michael F. Steger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16–17, note that positive psychologists often incorporate biological considerations in a perfunctory way.
  35. Fredrickson, *Positivity*, 24. For a full statement of the role of evolution, see David M. Buss, "The Evolution of Happiness," *AP* 55 (Jan. 2000): 15–23. The impact of evolutionary theory on the field is hard to underestimate. For example, in 2011 two leading researchers spoke of "pleasure as an adaptive evolutionary feature" and suggested that "hedonic reactions have been too important to survival to be exclusively subjective": Kent C. Berridge and Morten L. Kringelbach, "Building a Neuroscience of Pleasure and Well-Being," *Psychological Well-Being: Theory, Research and Practice* 1 (Oct. 2011); 1–26.
  36. Lyubomirsky, *How*, 60, relying on studies that Richard J. Davidson did well before 1998.
  37. See, for example, Fredrickson, *Positivity*, 107–10. On the controversies surrounding the use of fMRI to explore emotions, see Edward Vul et al., "Puzzlingly High Correlations in fMRI Studies of Emotion, Personality, and Social Cognition," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4 (May, 2009): 274–90.
  38. Morten Kringelbach and Kent C. Berridge, "The Joyful Mind," *Scientific American* 307 (Aug. 2012): 40–45. On scientific experiments with Deep Brain Stimulation as a way of increasing a sense of well-being, see Maartje Schermer, "Health, Happiness and Human

- Enhancement—Dealing with Unexpected Effects of Deep Brain Stimulation,” *Neuroethics* 6 (Dec. 2013): 435–45.
39. *Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging: A New Research Tool* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007), 1–5. For examples of the work of Davidson’s lab, see Richard J. Davidson and Antoine Lutz, “Buddha’s Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation,” *IEEE Signal Processing Magazine* 25 (Sept. 2007): 172–76; Antoine Lutz et al., “Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise,” *PLoS ONE*, March 26, 2008.
  40. Michael D. Lemonick, “Health: The Biology of Joy,” *Time*, Jan. 9, 2005. On the historical background for such studies, see John Tresch, “The Brain Multiple in the Laboratories of Post-Buddhism,” paper at a conference, “Sorting Brains Out: Tasks, Tests, and Trials in the Neuro- and Mind Sciences, 1890–1915,” University of Pennsylvania, Sept. 9, 2015.
  41. Lemonick, “Health”; work of Richard J. Davidson, reported in Sharon Begley, *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain. How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves* (New York: Ballantine, 2007), 228–33. For a cautious attempt to connect brain research with both hedonia and eudaimonia, see Berridge and Kringelbach, “Building,” 1–26. On the role of genetics, see Ragnbild Bang Nes, “Happiness in Behaviour Genetics: Findings and Implications,” *JHS* 11 (June 2010): 369–81. On the relationships between the genome and emotional states, see Aysu Okbay, “Genetic Variants Associated with Subjective Well-Being, Depressive Symptoms, and Neuroticism Identified Through Genome-Wide Analyses,” *Nature Genetics*, 48 (April 18, 2016): 624–33.
  42. Richard J. Davidson, with Sharon Begley, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live—and How You Can Change Them* (New York: Hudson Street Press, 2012), 179.
  43. Davidson, *Emotional*, 194–96. For the study, see Antoine Lutz et al., “Long-Term Meditators Self-Induce High Amplitude Gamma Synchrony During Mental Practice,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 101 (Nov. 16, 2004): 16369–73. On Benson, the Dalai Lama, and Davidson, see Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 230–42.
  44. Davidson, *Emotional*, xix, 9; Norman Doidge, *The Brain’s Way of Healing: Remarkable Discoveries and Recoveries from the Frontiers of Neuroplasticity* (New York: Viking, 2015), xv; Begley, *Train Your Mind*, 240–41. Davidson had chosen to name his position the William James Professorship; after all, James in 1890 talked of the brain’s plasticity. For an example of how scholars in the field of positive psychology draw on James, see James O. Pawelski, *The Dynamic Individualism of William James* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
  45. Davidson, *Emotional*, 10, 252.
  46. The literature here is considerable. Jo Marchant, *Cure: A Journey into the Science of Mind Over Body* (New York: Crown, 2016), by a science writer who earned a PhD in genetics and medical microbiology, is a good place to begin. Among other books aimed at wide audiences are Rick Hanson, with Richard Mendius, *Buddha’s Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2009); John Medina, *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School* (Seattle: Pear Press, 2008); Jason Zweig, *Your Money and Your Brain: How the New Science of Neuroscience Can Help Make You Rich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008); Lisa F. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The New Science of the Mind and Brain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); Jon Kabat-Zinn and Richard J. Davidson, eds., *The Mind’s Own Physician: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama on the Healing Power of Meditation* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2011). For an informed but somewhat skeptical assessment, see Miguel Farias and Catherine Wikholm, *The Buddha Pill: Can Meditation Actually Change You?* (London: Watkins, 2015). For an example of magazine coverage aimed at a wide audience, see Sharon Begley, “The Brain: How the Brain Rewires Itself,” *Time*, Jan. 19, 2007.
- Among the many more scholarly books, some aimed at broad audiences are Davidson, with Sharon Begley, *Emotional*; Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006); Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age* (New York: Riverhead, 2005); Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*; Morten L. Kringelbach, *The Pleasure Center: Trust Your Animal Instincts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph From the Frontiers of Brain Science* (New York: Viking, 2007).
  47. Joelle M. Abi-Rached and Nikolas Rose, “The Birth of the Neuromolecular Gaze,” *History of the Human Sciences* 23 (Feb. 2010): 11–36; Daniel Goleman, “Preface,” in Begley, *Train Your Mind*, xii.
  48. Richard O’Connor, *Happy at Last: a Thinking Person’s Guide to Finding Joy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 97–98. For recent developments in Third Wave therapies, which combine cognitive behavioral with other approaches, see <http://www.3rdwavetherapy.com/what-is-third-wave-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.
  49. Lemonick, “Health.” Diener and Biswas-Diener, *Happiness*, 29–46 summarizes the evidence. Among the key studies are Carol D. Ryff and Burton Singer, “From Social Structure to Biology: Integrative Science in Pursuit of Human Health and Well-Being,” in Snyder and Lopez, *Handbook*, 541–55; Deborah D. Danner, David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen, “Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study,” *JSPS* 80 (May 2001): 804–13; Corey L. M. Keyes, “Promoting and Protecting Mental Health as Flourishing: A Complementary Strategy for Improving National Mental Health,” *AP* 62 (Feb.–March 2007): 95–108. For a summary of studies that demonstrated a connection between positivity, neuropsychology, and pro-social behavior, see Alice M. Isen, “A Role for Neuropsychology In Understanding the Facilitating Influence of Positive Affect on Social Behavior and Cognitive Professes,” in Snyder and Lopez, *Handbook*, 528–40. For an important government study on the implications of scientific advances for happiness, see President’s Council on Bioethics, *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003).
  50. Dust jacket for Begley, *Train Your Mind*; Daniel Nettle, *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 142–44.
  51. O’Connor, *Happy*, 260; Medina, *Brain Rules*, 28; Hanson and Mendius, *Buddha’s*, 2; Goleman, *Social Intelligence*, 4; Zweig, *Money*, 7, 240. Rose and Abi-Rachel, in *Neuro*, talk of exaggerated and premature promises in neuroscience.
  52. Robb Willer is one exception in sociology; Gordon Matthews and Carolina Izquierdo in anthropology. The Winter 2015 issue of the *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* focused on happiness; in the introductory essay, “Values of Happiness,” *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (Winter 2015): 1–23, Harry Walker and Iza Kavedžija make clear how late anthropologists were in coming to terms with the surge in happiness studies and how they could make distinctive contributions. Critical of how many economists and psychologists claim to measure subjective well-being, the contributors to the volume both accept and complicate the distinction between the hedonic and eudaimonic, make clear that not all cultures consider happiness a major goal, and offer varied and complex renderings of the relationships between social responsibility, values, and goals.
  53. Ed Diener and Eunkook M. Suh, eds., *Culture and Subjective Well-Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) contains essays (especially by Eunkook Suh and Shigehiro Oishi) that grapple with cultural differences, but the volume, though focused on culture, contains no contribution by an anthropologist and many if not all by psychologists. Diener and Biswas-Diener, *Happiness*, 127–44 discuss how different cultures evaluate and experience

- happiness. For an anthropologist's linking of his field and positive psychology, see Ted Fischer, "A Positive Anthropology," in "Anthropological Observations . . . On Economics, Politics, and Daily Life," July 16, 2010, at <http://www.anthropologicalobservations.blogspot.com>. On the distortions that result from how psychologists focus on WEIRD, see Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People in the World?" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33 (June 2010): 61–136; James Coyne, "Positive Psychology Is Mainly For Rich White People," *PLOS Blogs*, Aug. 21, 2013.
54. A useful summary of the field is Carol Graham, *Happiness Around the World: The Paradox of Happy Peasants and Miserable Millionaires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Springer has a book series, "Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology," which includes Alejandro Castro Solano, *Positive Psychology in Latin America* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2014) and Marié P. Wissing, *Well-Being Research in South Africa* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2013).
  55. Among the early twentieth-century ones were the International Institute of Management's Gross National Happiness 2.0 or Gross National Well-Being; the Genuine Progress Indicator; Thailand's Green and Happiness Index; the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index; the UN World Happiness Report (following the General Assembly's resolution "Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development"); the Canadian Index of Wellbeing; Goa's Gross National Happiness; Seattle's index for measuring happiness; Prime Minister David Cameron's call for making happiness the new GDP; France's President Nicolas Sarkozy's advocacy of a Happiness Index; South Korea's Happiness Index; a report from the United States Office of Management and Budget and National Research Council of the National Academies titled "Subjective Well-Being"; Dubai Happiness Index; and EHERO, the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization in the Netherlands.
  56. United Nations, Happiness Resolution, "Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development," draft note, Nov. 6, 2012, 15.
  57. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Paris: INSEE, 2015), 9.
  58. David Cameron, quoted in "Prime Minister Defends Big Society Policy," *BBC News*, Feb. 13, 2011; Carl Cederstrom, "The Dangers of Happiness," *NYT*, July 18, 2015.
  59. One example of conflicting conclusions: citizens of nations in Northern Europe with strong social welfare programs report very high levels of happiness, yet although Canada and Spain have more extensive programs than the United States and Mexico, their citizens are not notably happier.
  60. For a summary of the field, see Paul Allin and David J. Hand, *The Wellbeing of Nations: Meaning, Motive and Measurement* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2014).
  61. Caitlin Dewey, "A Fascinating Map of the World's Happiest and Least Happy Countries," *Washington Post*, Sept. 10, 2013. The 2016 World Happiness Report broke new ground when it paid significant attention to the impact of unequal distribution of well-being: Jena McGregor, "The U.S. Doesn't Crack the Top 10 Happiest Countries in the World," *Washington Post*, March 16, 2016.
  62. For other works on this topic, see Ed Diener, Daniel Kahneman, and Norbert Schwarz, eds., *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* (New York: Russell Sage, 1999); Ed Diener, John F. Helliwell, and Daniel Kahneman, eds., *International Differences in Well-Being* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Amartya Sen, "The Economics of Happiness and Capability," in *Capabilities and Happiness*, ed. Luigino Bruni, Flavio Comim, and Maurizio Pugno (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 16–27; Eric Weiner, *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World* (New York: Hachette, 2008); John Helliwell, "Well-Being, Social Capital, and Public Policy: What's New?" *Economic Journal* 116 (March, 2006): C 34–45.
  63. Stefan Klein, *The Science of Happiness: How Our Brains Make Us Happy—and What We Can Do to Get Happier*, trans. Stephen Lehmann (New York: Marlowe, 2002), 252.
  64. Robert Skidelsky and Edward Skidelsky, *How Much Is Enough: Money and the Good Life* (New York: Other Press, 2012), 123. For a summary of the work on the intersection between economics, public policy, and subjective well-being, see John F. Helliwell, "How Can Subjective Well-being Be Improved?" in *New Directions for Intelligent Government in Canada*, ed. Fred Gorbet, Andrew Sharpe, and Ian Stewart (Ottawa: Centre for Study of Living Standards, 2011), 283–308.
  65. Some of the essays in Robert Biswas-Diener, ed., *Positive Psychology as Social Change* (New York: Springer, 2011) both critique the individualistic focus of discussions of social change among positive psychologists and begin the move toward alternatives. See, for example, Robert Biswas-Diener, "Editor's Foreword," v–xi; Robert Biswas-Diener and Lindsey Patterson, "Positive Psychology and Poverty," 137–38; Nicky Garcea and P. Alex Linley, "Creating Positive Social Change Through Building Positive Organizations: Four Levels of Intervention," 159, 173; Lara B. Aknin et al., "Investing in Others: Prosocial Spending for (Pro)Social Change," 231; Scott Sherman "Changing the World: The Science of Transformative Action," 336, 340; Barbara Frederickson, "Editor's Afterword," 349. However, the shift is only partial, focusing as the essays often do on a limited number of issues (especially poverty and environmentalism), avoiding discussions of power relationships, and concentrating more on analysis of problems than programs for change that involve social movements, other forms of mobilization, or government policies.
  66. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 462. Tim Lomas, Kate Hefferon, and Itai Itzvan, *Applied Positive Psychology: Integrated Positive Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), by three psychologists at the University of East London, is a textbook that more fully integrates science, culture, and society than many of its counterparts.
  67. Robert Biswas-Diener et al., "Positive Psychology as a Force for Social Change," in Sheldon, Kashdan, and Singer, *Designing*, 410–18, reveals both the strengths (a focus on the environment, educational and business organizations, and poverty) and limitations (an emphasis on a relatively narrow range of interventions, many of them personal) of the focus on the relationships between positive psychology and social change.
  68. Seligman, *Authentic*, 50.
  69. Norbert Schwarz and Fritz Strack, "Reports of Subjective Well-Being: Judgmental Processes and Their Methodological Implications," in Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz, *Well Being*, 61–84; <http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter.aspx>.
  70. Fredrickson, *Positivity*, 17; Seligman, *Flourish*, 12.
  71. Seligman, *Flourish*, 105.
  72. Seligman, *Flourish*, 237–38. For a criticism from an unnamed letter writer of Seligman for revealing that more money did not significantly enhance the happiness of those in poverty, see Seligman, *Authentic*, 280.
  73. Martin E. P. Seligman, "The President's Address," 1998, *AP* 54 (Aug. 1999): 559–62. For his historical analysis, see Martin Seligman, conversation with author, May 19, 2016; in offering his assessment, Seligman may have been relying on, among other sources, Stephen Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).
  74. On neoliberalism, see Sam Binkley, *Happiness as Enterprise: An Essay on Neoliberal Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Noam Chomsky, *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's*

- Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Books, 1999). In *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), Eva Illouz offers a critique of self-help culture and psychology for undermining communitarian engagement and instead embracing an atomistic individualism.
75. On the corporation's centrality, see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning* (New York: Viking, 2003), 12.
  76. Binkley, *Enterprise*, 152.
  77. Lyubomirsky, *How, 2*; Diener and Biswas-Diener, *Happiness*, 3, 110–11; Csikszentmihalyi, *Good Business*, 189, 190, 194; Barry Schwartz: *The Costs of Living: How Market Freedom Erodes the Best Things in Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994) and *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004). For a summary of the implications of happiness studies for public policy, see Elizabeth Kolbert, "Everybody Have Fun: What Can Policymakers Learn from Happiness Research?" *New Yorker*, March 22, 2010.
  78. On the 2009 proposal by Nicolas Sarkozy to shift the yardstick from Gross Domestic Product to measuring a nation's well-being by focusing on happiness, see Henry Samuel, "Nicolas Sarkozy Wants to Measure Economic Success in 'Happiness,'" *The Telegraph*, Sept. 14, 2009. In "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (Spring 2008), 1–102, Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers conclude that the policy implication of the Easterlin Paradox lead in this direction.
  79. Graham, *Happiness*, subtitle. Carol L. Graham, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011) explores the promises and challenges economists face when they turn their attention to the study of happiness.
  80. Jonathan Haidt, "New Study Indicates Existence of Eight Conservative Social Psychologists," *Heterodox Academy*, Jan. 7, 2016. Haidt, a social psychologist active in positive psychology from early on, has explored political divisions in America: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).
  81. Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (New York: Penguin, 2005). See also Richard Layard, "Happiness: Has Social Science a Clue?" Lionel Robbins Memorial Lectures, delivered at London School of Economics, March 3–5, 2003; Richard Layard, "The Economics of Happiness," in Singer and Ricard, *Caring Economics*, 97–114; Richard Layard and David M. Clark, *Thrive: How Better Mental Health Care Transforms Lives and Saves Money* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
  82. Layard, *Happiness*, 128, 155, 172.
  83. Layard, *Happiness*, 52–53, 122, 233–34. Ferguson, "Happiness," discusses and critiques Layard's impact on British social policy, especially his advocacy of cognitive behavioral therapy as a treatment for depression.
  84. This summary relies of Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Jason Marsh, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, and Jeremy Adam Smith, eds., *Are We Born Racist? New Insights from Neuroscience and Positive Psychology* (Boston: Beacon, 2010); Dacher Keltner, Jason Marsh, and Jeremy Adam Smith, eds., *The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); Dacher Keltner, *The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence* (New York: Penguin, 2016); and the web sites <http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu> and <http://www.socrates.berkeley.edu/~keltner/research.htm>.
  85. Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). See also Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 408–18.
  86. David G. Myers, *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 147, 156.
  87. Arthur C. Brooks, *Gross National Happiness: Why Happiness Matters for America—and How We Can Get More of It* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 100. On the Well-Being Initiative, see Chris Young, "Why Are the Kochs Investing in Happiness?" *Slate*, June 25, 2014.
  88. Brooks, *Gross*, 128–29, 131.
  89. To sample recent writings on the intersection of happiness and public policy, begin with Amitava K. Dutt and Benjamin Radcliff, eds., *Happiness, Economics, and Politics: Toward a Multi-Disciplinary Approach* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2009); Bruno Frey, *Happiness: A Revolution in Economics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Derek Bok, *The Politics of Happiness: What Government Can Learn from the New Research on Well-Being* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). See also Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Robert E. Lane, *Loss of Happiness in Market Economies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Alexander Pacek and Benjamin Radcliff, "Assessing the Welfare State: The Politics of Happiness," *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (June 2008): 266–77; Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Bent Greve, *Happiness* (London: Routledge, 2012); and a series of articles by Rutt Veenhoven in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, including "Greater Happiness for a Greater Number: Is That Possible or Desirable?" 11 (Oct. 2010): 605–29. For earlier writings, see Robert A. Easterlin, ed., *Happiness in Economics* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2002).
  90. On the key issue of equality and happiness, national differences may be important. That greater equality seems to enhance happiness in Western Europe but not in the United States, notes one scholar, "can be attributed to Americans' belief (probably an illusion) that there is a greater amount of upward social mobility in their society": Frey, *Happiness*, 2.
  91. Martin E. P. Seligman, *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1975), 164.
  92. For example, on Jan. 3, 2016, I received two notices about articles from the *New York Times* from Friends of Positive Psychology, but no mention of an essay by Barbara Ehrenreich that also appeared in the same newspaper that day, an essay critical of the field: Ehrenreich, "Selfish Side."
  93. Kristen Hamling, posting on Friends of Positive Psychology list serve, Feb. 14, 2016.
  94. Christopher Peterson, *Pursuing the Good Life: 100 Reflections on Positive Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33–34. For a warning that positive psychology needs to rethink its commitment to liberal individualism, see Barry Schwartz, "Pitfalls on the Road to a Positive Psychology of Happiness," in *The Science of Optimism and Hope: Research Essays in Honor of Martin E. P. Seligman*, ed. Jane Gillham (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000), 399–412.
  95. Ilona Boniwell, *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness*, 3rd ed. (Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 2012), 164.
  96. Kim S. Cameron, opening comments on panel on "Critiques of Positive Psychology," Fourth World Conference on Positive Psychology, June 27, 2015; on the session and reactions to it, see <http://positivepsychologyprogram.com/critiques-criticisms-positive-psychology>. Sheldon, Kashdan, and Steger, *Designing* is a collection of essays that offer a balanced assessment of the field in the ten years since its inception. For critiques of the study or goal of happiness, see Richard S. Lazarus, "Does the Positive Psychology Movement Have Legs?" *Psychology Inquiry* 14 (April 2003): 93–109; Jennifer Hecht,



- The Happiness Myth: Why What We Think Is Right Is Wrong* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); Daniel M. Haybron, *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kristján Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology: A Philosophical Critique* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Oliver Burkeman, *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2012); Simon Burnett, *The Happiness Agenda: A Modern Obsession* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Michael Bennett and Sarah Bennett, *F\*uck Feelings: One Shrink's Practical Advice for Managing All Life's Impossible Problems* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015); John F. Schumaker, *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007). For a satire on self-help roads to happiness, see the novel by Will Ferguson, *Happiness*™ (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002). Although not dealing directly with positive psychology, several books critically explore the broader traditions of which it is a part: among them are Lauren G. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Stephen Briers, *Psychobabble: Exploding the Myths of the Self-Help Generation* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2012); Mitch Horowitz, *One Simple Idea: How Positive Thinking Reshaped Modern Life* (New York: Crown, 2014); Dana Becker, *The Myth of Empowerment: Women and the Therapeutic Culture in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
97. Kristjánsson, *Virtues*, 3. One essay that marked the shift to more complicated and balanced views of subjective well-being is Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being," *Annual Review of Psychology* (Feb. 2001): 141–66. Emily Esfahani Smith, "There's More to Life Than Being Happy," *Atlantic*, Jan. 9, 2013, brought this discussion to public attention.
  98. Among the works critical of positive psychology that criticize the excessive emphasis on positivity and emphasize the importance of negative feelings are Itai Ivtzan, Tim Lomas, Kate Hefferon, and Piers Worth, *Second Wave Positive Psychology: Embracing the Dark Side of Life* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Eric G. Wilson, *Against Happiness; In Praise of Melancholy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Julie K. Norem, *The Positive Power of Negative Thinking: Using Defensive Pessimism to Manage Anxiety and Perform at Your Peak* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Barbara Held, *Stop Smiling, Start Kvetching: A 5-Step Guide to Creative Complaining* (Brunswick, ME: Audenreed, 1999); Barbara Held, "The Negative Side of Positive Psychology," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 44 (Jan. 2004): 9–46; Jane Gruber, "Four Ways Happiness Can Hurt You," *Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, May 3, 2012; Ruth Whippman, *America the Anxious: How Our Pursuit of Happiness Is Creating a Nation of Nervous Wrecks* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016).
  99. Martin E. P. Seligman, comments at "Critiques of Positive Psychology" panel. To sample some of the criticisms that have appeared in newspapers, blogs, and magazines, see Beth Azar, "Positive Psychology Advances, with Growing Pains," *Monitor on Psychology*, 42 (April 2011); Daniel M. Haybron, "Happiness and Its Discontents," *NYT*, April 13, 2014; Andrew Anthony, "The British Amateur Who Debunked The Mathematics of Happiness" *The Guardian*, Jan. 18, 2014; Cederstrom, "Dangers of Happiness"; Alistair Miller, "A Critique of Positive Psychology—or 'The New Science of Happiness,'" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42 (Aug./Nov. 2008): 591–608; essays in *Theory and Psychology* 18 (Oct. 2008), in *Psychological Inquiry*, 14 (2003), in *Review of General Psychology* 9 (June 2005), and in *Psychologist*, 16 (March 2003); Emory L. Cowen and Ryan P. Kilmer, "Positive Psychology: Some Plusses and Some Open Issues," *Journal of Community Psychology* 30 (July 2002): 449–60; Gary Greenberg, "War on Unhappiness," *Harper's*, Sept. 2010, 27–35; Rubin, "Unhappy Truth." For a defense against criticisms, see [author unknown], "Positive Psychology Criticism: All That's Cracked Up To Be?" *Positive Psychology Articles*, Oct. 14, 2015.
  100. Jackson Lears, "Get Happy!!: For Margaret Thatcher as for Today's Happiness Industry, There Is No Such Thing as Society," *Nation*, Nov. 6, 2013.
  101. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009); Peterson, *Pursuing*, 88.
  102. For a critique of Ehrenreich's books, see David Van Nuys, "Popping the Happiness Bubble: The Backlash Against Positive Psychology," *Psychology Today*, Nov. 3 and 16, 2010.
  103. Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided*, 13, 22–23.
  104. Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided*, 149, 151–52, 158–72.
  105. Seligman, *Flourish*, 201–2, 236.
  106. William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London: Verso, 2015), 6; see also William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014). For Davies's critique of Layard, whom Prime Minister Tony Blair appointed as the nation's happiness tsar, for relying on cognitive behavioral therapy to enhance the efficiency of workers, see William Davies, "The Political Economy of Unhappiness," *New Left Review* 71 (Sept.–Oct. 2011): 65–80. For a sharp critique from the left of positive psychology, including its application by people like Layard to policy, see Iain Ferguson, "Neoliberalism, Happiness and Wellbeing," *International Socialism: A Quarterly Review of Socialist Theory* 117 (Dec. 2007).
  107. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 8. Sara Ahmed, "The Happiness Turn," is the essay in a collection of essays on happiness: *New Formations*, 63 (Winter 2007/08): 7–14. Among other useful sources on neoliberalism are Bethany Moreton, "S'More Inequality: The Neoliberal Marshmallow and the Corporate Reform of Education," *Social Text*, 32 (Fall 2014): 29–48; Andrew Lakoff, "Adaptive Will: The Evolution of Attention Deficit Disorder," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36 (Spring 2000): 149–69.
  108. Robert Biswas-Diener, *Practicing Positive Psychology Coaching: Assessment, Activities, and Strategies for Success* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 40. Rose, *Governing the Soul* is a classic study of how psychology seeks exercise political power by governing people.
  109. Binkley, *Enterprise*, 1. In important ways Binkley's observations echo what Daniel T. Rodgers wrote in *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
  110. Micki McGee, "From Makeover Media to Remaking Culture: Four Directions for the Critical Study of Self-Help Culture," *Sociology Compass* 6 (Sept. 2012): 686.
  111. Micki McGee, *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12, 19, 42–43, 49–110.
  112. Judith Shulevitz, review of Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, *NYTBR*, May 8 2016, 14.