

Edward C. Chang · Christina Downey ·  
Hongfei Yang · Ingo Zettler ·  
Mine Muyan-Yılık *Editors*

# The International Handbook of Positive Psychology

A Global Perspective on the Science  
of Positive Human Existence

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*I would like to thank the old gang from Akumal for the opportunity to exchange thoughts about what positive psychology could be many, many years ago. Who would have known how much the world needed it! Deepest thanks go to Tae-Myung and Suk-Choon for their enduring support. Finally, I would like to thank Helen Chang, I cannot imagine growing up well, without having her as a sister and a friend throughout my life.*

**—E. C. C.**

*To my mother, whose example inspires me to become more kind, more courageous, and more alive every day;  
To my husband, whose steadfast support sustains and comforts me;  
To my son, who reminds me that enjoying life is as precious as working hard;  
To the resisters of the world, for bringing truth, integrity, and justice to the darkened places.*

**—C. A. D.**

*To my husband, for dancing with me through every rise and fall of life and instilling hope every single day;*

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*To the people, who keep their inner positivity and light and spread them even in the darkest circumstances.*

**—M. M. Y.**

# Preface

After nearly two decades marking the establishment of positive psychology in the world, we felt that it was important to take collective stock of how positive psychology has impacted what researchers have been doing all around the world. In that regard, this volume is as much a review of major works contributed to this emerging science by leading positive psychologists from across different regions of the world as it is an important opportunity to celebrate their efforts in expanding the significance of positive psychology as a globally relevant science for all. Accordingly, we use this volume to share our appreciation to the embodied agents of change who took action to develop and materialize this emerging science and for the important ideas that they worked hard to share with us. This work is indebted to these and the many other “movers” of positive psychology, big and small, who have found the question of how to live the good life a fundamental concern in our efforts to understand what it means to achieve positive survival as human beings.

Ann Arbor, MI

Edward C. Chang

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# Chapter 1

## The Making of a Global Positive Science of Human Existence: From Appreciating Existential Foundations to Identifying WEIRD Research Trends



Edward C. Chang, Christina A. Downey, Hongfei Yang, Ingo Zettler,  
Mine Muyan-Yılık, Abigail G. Lucas, and Olivia D. Chang

### The Making of a Global Positive Science of Human Existence: From Appreciating Existential Foundations to Identifying WEIRD Research Trends

[F]or a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

– Henri Bergson

It has been more than two decades since Martin Seligman and his colleagues led a global charge for the establishment of a new field in psychological science, referred to as positive psychology (Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Emerging from this bold initiative, numerous scholars and researchers over the years have focused on identifying and distinguishing positive psychology from other areas of psychological science, especially clinical science and psychiatry. Indeed, unlike the focus of clinical science on identifying and treating mental illness among individuals, as codified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

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*Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013)* and the *International Classification of Disease, Eleventh Revision (ICD-11; World Health Organization, 2018)*, positive psychologists have been more interested in identifying and activating human strengths to facilitate an individual's ability to live a better life (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2002; Chang & Sanna, 2003; McCullough & Snyder, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). As some have noted, positive psychology has its roots deeply grounded in the earlier works of existentialism and humanistic psychology (Betthany & Russo-Netzer, 2014; Resnick et al., 2001; Taylor, 2001; Wong, 2010).

## **Positive Psychology is an Existential Human Science!: From Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* to Heidegger's Notion of *Sorge***

As Aristotle reflected long ago in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, one of the most profound questions pressing individuals is the enduring question: "how to live a good life?" (Kline, 1988; Peterson, 2012). Although the search to resolve this central problem has been the galvanizing plot shared in many classic works, from ancient philosophical treatises (e.g., Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* to Plato's *The Republic*) and great literary stories (e.g., Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*) to masterful and moving works of poetry and art (e.g., Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to Munch's *The Scream*), it was the unifying problem tackled by a collective existential movement that gained particular momentum in grappling with the dehumanizing events and horrors surrounding World War II (e.g., Camus, 1955; Frankl, 1959; Heidegger, 1962; Sartre, 1956).

Existentialism has often been discussed by scholars in the context of the intellectual growth of German phenomenology during the twentieth century (e.g., Husserl's *Ideas*; Cho 1984; Chung & Ashworth, 2006; Solomon, 1980; Spiegelberg, 1972). However, existential thinking can be easily found in the works of earlier writers and philosophers (e.g., Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, & Nietzsche; Barrett, 1958; Löwith, 1964). Importantly, unlike phenomenology, existentialism is grounded in our everyday experiences of the lived world (e.g., an embodied world that cannot be "bracketed" down to its essential components; Chang, 1990). That is, existentialism is defined by, and grounded in, a deep appreciation of the complex, often taxing everyday experiences faced by individuals as they try to navigate and achieve a life worth living (de Beauvoir, 1948; Yovel, 1986). In that regard, while existentialism is not predicated on modern positive psychology, positive psychology is strongly predicated on existential principles. In particular, two orienting axioms of existentialism borrowed by positive psychologists are the centrality of understanding the world from a human perspective and the importance of pursuing and living a good (human) life (Hanscomb, 2006).

From a humanistic stance (Sartre, 1948), existentialists have emphasized the importance of the human perspective in understanding the world around us. Indeed, as some existentialists have contended, there is “no non-human situation” (Sartre, 1956). In that regard, and following in the tradition of earlier psychologists who have contended that psychological science must always be framed from a human perspective (Giorgi, 1970; Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1961), positive psychologists have tried to apply the tools of science to build a holistic understanding of what it means to be a human being that seeks meaning and purpose in life. In coming to grips with the internal tensions and quandaries raised by Goethe’s *Faust*, positive psychologists have been particularly interested in studying the embodied and able person as they try to positively develop across the lifespan (Chang & Downey, 2012). Thus, aligned with Nietzsche’s provocative exaltation for a brave new “joyful science”, positive psychology is first and foremost a positive science of being human.

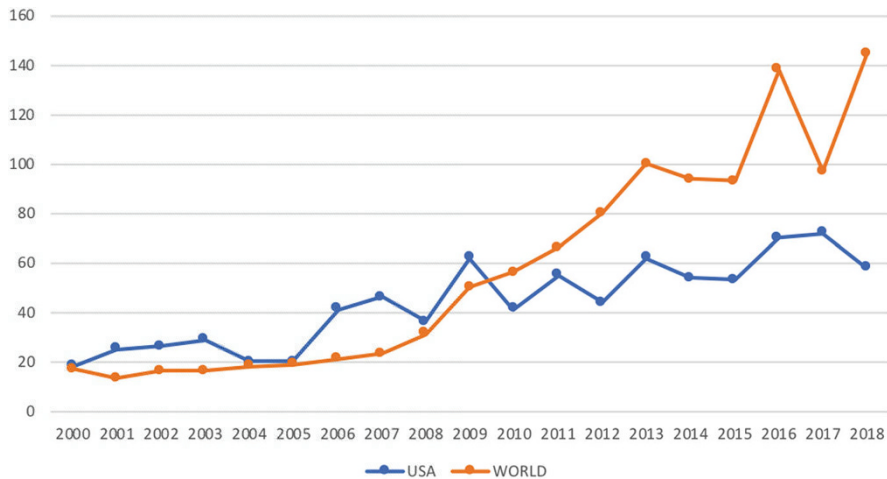
Although existentialism has often been considered to represent a philosophical position that emphasizes the isolated individual self, such an appraisal would be incorrect. For Heidegger (1962), the fundamental definition of being human was represented in his notion of *dasein* or being. But, as he contended, *dasein* cannot be understood in a social vacuum. *Dasein* exists across space and time along a social dimension. For some existentialists, this posed a problem of living authentically for the individual (e.g., “hell is other people”; Sartre, 1956). In contrast, it is for this reason that Heidegger argued that *dasein* should be best understood as “being-with-others” (*Mitdasein*). In turn, the actions of social beings are not driven or motivated by socially isolated, indifferent, and selfish individuals, but rather they are motivated by a primordial desire to care (*sorge*) for self, others, and the world (Heidegger, 1962). In that regard, positive psychologists have been interested in how we are able to achieve a life worth living, while living with others. Thus, underscoring Heidegger’s notion of care (see also, Buber, 1937), positive psychology extends this understanding to the study of how the “self” and “others” work together to define what it means to be human and happy, with a fundamental understanding that “other people matter” (Peterson, 2012). Accordingly, although modern positive psychology might have only emerged about two decades ago, it is a science that is founded on universal tenets of what it means to be a human being. That said, however, whether or not this emerging science has grown during this time period from an inclusive approach to the study of human beings has not been examined.

## **Has the Growth of Positive Psychology Over the Past 20 Years Become Truly Global in Scope?: Or, Is Positive Psychology Just Another WEIRD Science?**

Over the past several decades, a number of concerns have been raised regarding *who* the foundations of psychological research and theory have been predicated on. For example, following Sears' (1986) argument that psychological research and theory have been heavily based on studies of young adults, namely, college students, Graham (1992) extended this critique to show that the foundation of psychological knowledge has not only been heavily predicated on college students, but students of a specific ethnoracial background and socioeconomic status, namely, White and middle-class. Findings from other studies have continued to support the conclusion that much of the research in psychological science continues to lack a diverse and inclusive foundation that reflects the greater population in society (e.g., Bailey et al., 2002; Hall & Maramba, 2001; Hartmann et al., 2013; Loo et al., 1988; Sue, 1999). Moreover, as Rao and Donaldson (2015; see also, Downey & Chang, 2014) recently noted, this range of focus remains narrow and limited (e.g., primarily focused on the study of Whites) even when examining studies on "positive psychology". These concerns and their implications have been well represented in Henrich et al.'s (2010) contention that social scientists have sometimes been making incorrect universal claims about human behavior that are based on a small and distinct group of individuals that are Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic or WEIRD. What is not clear is whether or not positive psychology is just another WEIRD science. To partly address this concern, we decided to review publication trends of some leading positive psychology journals in terms of their global representation (e.g., research is being produced from different countries around the world) over nearly the past two decades.

### **A Quick Look at Publication Trends in Positive Psychology Journals from 2000 to 2018: WEIRD Then and Still WEIRD Now?**

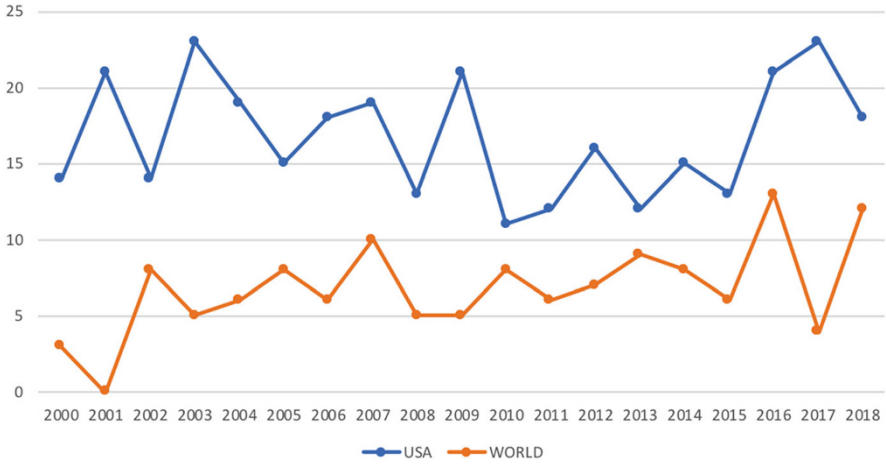
To provide some indication of publication trends in terms of their global representation across time, we selected three highly regarded positive psychology outlets and assessed works for the country where the study was conducted (e.g., what countries participants were solicited) or where the paper was written (if no data was collected; e.g., review paper). Given that some of the underpinnings of positive psychology can be traced to, and overlaps with, works in humanistic and existential psychology (e.g., Rathunde, 2001; Waterman, 2013), we selected the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* or *JHP* (founded in 1961, published by Sage, US) as one of our journals. The other two journals selected were the *Journal of Happiness Studies* or *JHS* (founded



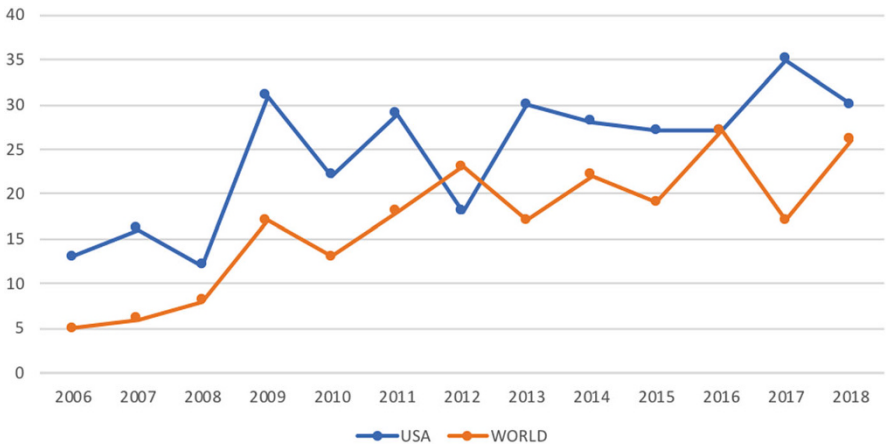
**Fig. 1.1** Publication trends across the three top positive psychology journals (*JHP*, *JPP*, & *JHS*) from 2000 to 2018

in 2000, published by Springer, Germany) and *The Journal of Positive Psychology* or *JPP* (founded in 2006, published by Taylor & Francis, UK). Compared to *JHP*, *JHS* and *JPP* are relatively new journals that launched shortly after Seligman’s (1999) call for developing positive psychology around the world. That said, we should note that although other journals focusing on positive psychology may exist, we focused on those that were international in scope and were published in a common language, namely, English. Therefore, our review should be considered with these limitations in mind.

In our initial analysis, we coded for representation of origin of work and origin of author as “USA” if the work or author was affiliated with the USA, and as “international” if the work or author was not affiliated with the USA. Our justification for doing this was two-fold. First, we believe that one can credibly make the case that the epicenter of modern positive psychology originated in the USA (Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Second, given that many top journals in psychological science continue to be produced by publishers in the USA (e.g., American Psychological Association; Graham, 1992), coupled by a long-standing culture of isolationism within American psychology (Sexton & Misiak, 1984), works typically produced outside of the USA have often been viewed by researchers as “international” in nature (Brandt, 1970). These said, we plotted the number of works originating from the USA versus international countries that were published annually across the three target journals over a 19-year period, from 2000 (the “start” of positive psychology) to 2018. As shown in Fig. 1.1, we can see what appears to be a growing trend towards works originating from other countries than the USA. However, a closer look at the specific trend for each journal shows that this upward movement towards greater global representation of positive psychology works (i.e., not just “American” works) is not ubiquitous. As shown in Fig. 1.2, the pattern of



**Fig. 1.2** Publication trends in the journal of humanistic psychology from 2000 to 2018



**Fig. 1.3** Publication trends in the journal of positive psychology from 2006 to 2018

works published in the *JHP* appears to show a consistent dominance of works originating from the USA compared to other countries from 2000 to 2018. Similarly, as shown in Fig. 1.3, the pattern of works published in *JPP* appears to show a sustained dominance of works originating from the USA compared to other countries from 2006 to 2018. In stark contrast, as shown in Fig. 1.4, the pattern of works published in the *JHS* appears to show a strong and growing focus on works originating from countries other than the USA from 2000 to 2018. Thus, our earlier observation of a growing trend towards more globalization across the three journals appears to be strongly predicated on the annual patterns behind just one journal, namely, *JHS*. Overall, these patterns indicate that although there appears to be a noticeable rise in publications originating from countries outside the USA, compared

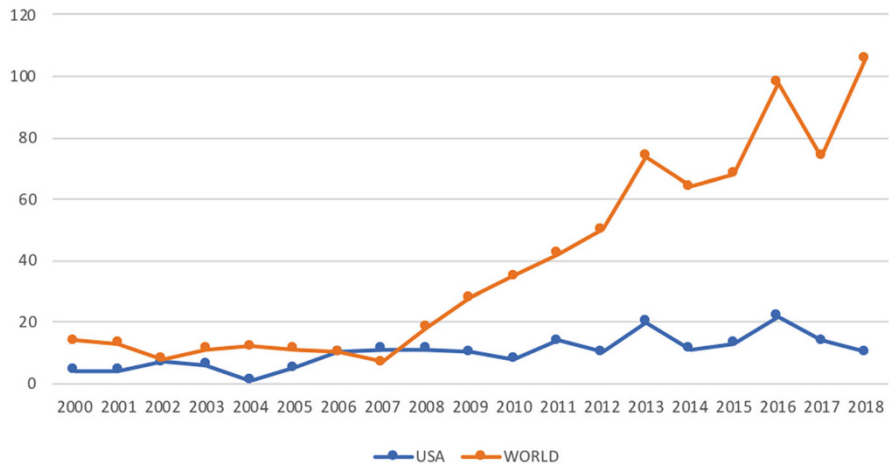


Fig. 1.4 Publication trends in the journal of happiness from 2000 to 2018

Table 1.1 Top 10 originating countries of research or theoretical works published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* from 2000 to 2018

Country of origin	Works published	Percentage of works
1. United States of America	189	19.2%
2. China	75	7.6%
3. Spain	46	4.7%
4. Australia	45	4.6%
5. Canada	44	4.5%
6. Germany	44	4.5%
7. Netherlands	38	3.9%
8. United Kingdom	33	3.4%
9. Italy	25	2.5%
10. Israel	21	2.1%
10. Sweden	21	2.1%

to publications from the USA, this rise was only evident in just one of the three journals examined.

Although these simple findings indicate that the growth of positive psychology should not be communicated as the development of a science that is exclusively constituted by, and used by, Americans, they do not clarify the extent to which publications in these premier journals continue to be predicated on the study of WEIRD people or are conducted by WEIRD people (Henrich et al., 2010). Accordingly, we were curious to identify the origin of works from specific countries (beyond the USA). Given the prevalence of international research in *JHS* (compared to in *JHP* & *JPP*), we focused our analysis on the 985 works published in this journal from 2000 to 2018. As Table 1.1 shows, the most frequent works (“top 10”) in *JHS* during this period originated from the USA, China, Spain, Australia, Canada,



**Table 1.2** Top 10 originating countries for lead authors of published works in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* from 2000 to 2018

Country of author	Works published	Percentage of works
1. United States of America	233	23.7%
2. United Kingdom	67	6.8%
3. Spain	63	6.4%
4. Canada	60	6.1%
4. Netherlands	60	6.1%
5. China	53	5.4%
6. Australia	52	5.3%
7. Germany	48	4.9%
8. Italy	31	3.1%
9. Sweden	25	2.5%
10. Israel	22	2.2%

Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Italy, Israel, and Sweden. Following this analysis, we looked at the country affiliation of the lead author of these publications. Not surprisingly, as Table 1.2 shows, the country of origin of the lead author of works published during this period mirrored the same countries in which the work was done, although the order differed somewhat here. Interestingly, as findings from both of these tables show, going against the trend of WEIRD works and works by WEIRD researchers, Chinese works and Chinese researchers appear to be “well” represented in *JHS*. That said, the conspicuous absence of works based in India and by Indian researchers, for example, are a bit surprising given that India represents the second most populous country in the world after China.

Taken together, these patterns and findings provide some reason for tempered optimism about the global growth of positive psychology. Specifically, these findings indicate that although publications in the three top positive psychology journals have been able to provide and support studies on positive psychology as an international science across nearly two decades since Seligman’s (1999) public call to action, these studies have remained largely focused on the study of WEIRD people (e.g., populations from the USA, Spain, Australia, Canada, & Germany) and, not surprisingly, they have been largely conducted or conceptualized by researchers who themselves are WEIRD (Meadon & Spurrett, 2010).

## Overview of the Present Volume

The present volume is broken down into chapters covering major themes linked to different regions of the world and highlighting the major researchers, and their important contributions that have fostered varying degrees of positive psychology’s growth in their respective region. It is our hope that by celebrating some of the major researchers from around the world in the chapters that follow, readers of this volume

will gain a greater appreciation of the contributions made by a global community of scholars and scientists in sustaining the expansive movement of this positive science of existence around the world.

Beginning with Chap. 2, Wong and Tweed focus on the region of North America, specifically, the USA and Canada. In particular, they discuss the slow progression from “Positive Psychology 1.0” to the development of a more mature perspective, one that incorporates an understanding of the complexity and fragility of human existence, as reflected in “Positive Psychology 2.0”. These authors also discuss some of the growing trends in positive psychology in North America, ranging from a greater focus on eudaimonic happiness and the cultural construction of positive psychology, to an appreciation of positive psychology in the everyday world and the development of a dialectic approach for understanding how both positive and negative experiences might work together to foster positive well-being.

In Chap. 3, Tarragona focuses on the region of Mexico, including Central America. Beginning with a brief discussion of the impact of Spanish colonialism in these regions and of the challenges of unification among the different countries in these regions, the author moves on to identify the major researchers who have helped to quickly make positive psychology an important framework of their research, ranging from topics involving positive education, positive relationships, quality of life, to those that focus on resilience, the paradox of high subjective well-being in the context of high poverty, and interventions that foster positive character strengths among children in these regions. This chapter ends with some discussion of the growing emphasis on applying positive psychology to promote good living among those residing in these regions.

In Chap. 4, Garassini, Solano, Daset, Ibanez, Ortega, Vinaccia, and Graziano cover the region of South America, specifically, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay. These authors tackle a comprehensive review of the diverse socio-historical, political, cultural, and economic conditions that have differentially impacted the diverse regions that make up this region. As these authors note, although the “beginnings” of positive psychology in these regions are difficult to identify, there has been a longstanding focus on resilience in the context of the various struggles and challenges faced by those living in South American countries. These authors go on to discuss the specific nuances and commonalities, and the major contributors, that have been associated with the development of positive psychology in this region. In looking at the future of positive psychology in these countries, these authors end their chapter with a discussion of the growing need to focus on making positive psychology a meaningful mechanism for promoting social welfare among those living in South America.

In Chap. 5, Boniwell and Grenville-Cleave cover the region of the United Kingdom, including England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and Ireland. These authors provide an important overview of some of the similarities and differences in the socioeconomic, historical, and political conditions that have defined this region, and the growth of positive psychology in this region. They next continue to provide a thoughtful appraisal of some of the key figures and their contributions that have helped to foster the growth of positive psychology in this

region over the past decade and a half, with a focus on figures who have helped to identify programs, projects, and movements that seek to increase happiness and resilience among individuals young and old in this region, to figures who have taken on broader economic frameworks to improve happiness in the workplace, as well as those who have focused on developing a useful measure of well-being for all individuals.

In Chap. 6, Ścigala, Dammeyer, Schild, and Zettler cover the region of Northern Europe, specifically, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. They discuss the context and conditions of these diverse and “happy” Nordic countries, and then focus their attention to the growth of positive psychology based on the works of leading researchers from this region. That said, the authors note that given the history of researchers in this region to typically focus on positive welfare and well-being, it may be difficult to distinguish unique aspects of positive psychology that has emerged, given that many Nordic researchers have always been focused on positive processes and outcomes. These authors end their chapter discussing some of the challenges of considering the growth of psychology in this region and offer additional resources for readers to gain a deeper understanding of how the context and conditions of this region inform and intersect with positive psychology around the world.

In Chap. 7, Harzer and Weber cover the region of Western Europe, specifically, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. They discuss the development of positive psychology in the context of these six very distinct countries, noting that although these countries represent generally “happy places”, important differences exist among them. That said, the authors note the tremendous efforts made by those studying positive psychology to establish both country-specific as well as cross-country societies and organizations to allow greater communication among researchers in this region and beyond. Among the major contributors from the different countries covered, the authors note a rich and wide diversity of topics examined, from positive leadership, positive/existential psychotherapy, mindfulness and flow, humor and play, to the classification of character strengths in different Western European countries. These authors end their chapter discussing some of the challenges that would need to be overcome to help unify and support the growth of positive psychology across this region.

In Chap. 8, Ruini covers the region of Southern Europe, specifically, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The author begins with an appreciation that one can trace the underpinnings of modern positive psychology to early scholarly works produced by those (e.g., ancient Greeks) from this region of the world. In reviewing the major contributors to positive psychology from the countries of this region, the author discusses research that has spanned a range of topics, including the role of positive emotions, the clinical application of positive psychology, the function of positive communities, lay definitions of happiness, to positivity biases in information processing. The author concludes with some important discussions on the growing need for researchers in this region to consider how positive psychology can be used to foster well-being in both the young and in the elderly.

In Chap. 9, Brdar and Rijavec cover the region of Central and Eastern Europe, specifically, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Turkey. The authors begin with a broad overview of the changing histories associated with countries from this region shortly following World War II. In looking at the development of positive psychology in this region, these authors note some early works (prior to 1999) that had already begun to focus on the importance of a modern positive psychology. In reviewing the major contributors coming from the reviewed countries of this region, the authors highlight a focus made across a range of important topics, from distinguishing between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, quality of life, academic flow in teachers, optimal health, mental and physical resilience, goal pursuits, to theories of immunity and positive thinking. These authors end by raising a call to use the science of positive psychology to build greater strengths for individuals and communities of this region, and discuss the need to destigmatize the use of mental health interventions to foster such changes among those living in this region.

In Chap. 10, Leontiev, Osin, and Lebedeva cover Russia. The authors begin with a review of the major historical changes that have occurred in Russia over the past several decades, and situate their discussion to the Russian notions of happiness, as represented by some of Russia's greatest writers and emerging works on the happiness of Russians. They move on to review some more recent works by Russian researchers who have focused on topics ranging from goal setting and well-being, the self-reflection model of personality, needs satisfaction, to freedom and responsibility, and the assessment of economic well-being. The authors end by noting some of the deep challenges to doing positive psychology in Russia, including getting support from the greater academic community to overcoming the longstanding attitude of holding life with low value within Russian society.

In Chap. 11, Wilson and Wissing cover the countries that make up the region of Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Tanzania. The authors begin with a discussion of the rich, but complicated histories associated with countries that make up this region. They then focus on the major contributors of positive psychology from this region who have worked on important topics, including psychofortology, measurements of well-being, resilience-focused interventions for children, adults, and teachers, positive kinship and relations with others, flourishing and job-fit among workers, spirituality and religion, and well-being in the context of trauma. The authors conclude with a very thoughtful discussion of why positive psychology appears to be "late" to arrive in Sub-Saharan Africa and the need for a more contextual approach to building positive psychology in this region of the world.

In Chap. 12, Tiliouine and Bougaci cover the 22 countries, from Bahain to Tunisia, as a general region, that make up the Arab world. These authors begin with a historical review of the major world civilizations that have occupied those areas that now make up the Arab region, and continue with a broad discussion of some of the historical scholars that have pointed to the importance of well-being and happiness long ago. These researchers then review some of the major contributors of this region who have added to the building of positive psychology in the Arab world by focusing on topics ranging from positivity and optimism, concepts of happiness

and personal well-being, to resilience in the context of terrorism. These authors end by identifying several important recommendations for expanding the value and use of positive psychology to those in the Arab context.

In Chap. 13, Shoshani and Mikulincer cover Israel. Noting the high conflict and tension that has long existed between Israel and other countries of the Middle East, these authors point to how Israel has, not surprisingly, become quite interested in what positive psychology might confer to those living in this country. Some of the themes promoted by major contributors to the development of positive psychology in Israel include a focus on positive education, building protective factors, positive organizational behavior, and cultivating resilience to war-related trauma. The authors conclude with some important discussion of how positive psychology might grow in this region, while at the same time remain reflecting the nuances of the culture and context of this region.

In Chap. 14, Misra and Misra cover the countries that make up the region of South Asia, specifically, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, and Afghanistan. These authors begin with a review of the sociocultural and historical conditions that have shaped life in these regions, and in turn, influenced the development of psychology in general, and the rise of positive psychology more specifically. As they discuss, major contributors from countries of this region have focused on various topics, including indigenous positive psychology, positive training, collective and social capital, and the roles of religion and personality in happiness. However, these authors also note the slow development of psychology in some of these countries, which has in part limited the growth of positive psychology as a consequence.

In Chap. 15, Ng and Ortega cover the 11 countries that make up the region of Southeast Asia, from Brunei to Vietnam. These authors begin by situating important commonalities and differences among the various countries of this region, with particular attention to differences in economic conditions. Then, these authors review some of the major topics that have been focused on by contributors from countries of this region, including positive character, resilience in the context of disasters, personality and well-being, the positive psychology of Buddhists, positive relationships, emotions and the good life, and subjective well-being. These authors end with a discussion about the dominance of the Western approach to positive psychology and call for greater attention to considering positive psychology that is predicated on an Eastern approach.

In Chap. 16, Yang and Chang cover part of the region of Far East Asia made up of Mainland China, including Hong Kong and Macau, and Taiwan. These reviewers identify the rapid growth of positive psychology in this region, with contributors focusing on topics ranging from dialectical culture and well-being, family happiness, hope-based interventions, dynamic psychological balance, indigenous measures of happiness and well-being, expansion of quality of life measures, to positive aging. These authors conclude with discussions on how the growth of positive psychology can make a meaningful impact in the lives of those from this region, while at the same time taking into account centuries of the rich and dynamic culture that has been the foundation for living life well among those from this region of the world.

In Chap. 17, Sink, McMahan, Karasawa, Hashimoto, and Jung cover part of the region of Far East Asia made up of South Korea and Japan. These authors discuss some of the major historical, cultural, and economic conditions that have helped support a rise in positive psychology in the two countries examined in this region. A review of the major contributors of these countries highlight a focus on topics that span from positive educational reform, cultural influence on happiness and subjective well-being, resiliency and character strengths, relational or interdependent happiness, Japanese optimism, positive health psychology, to indigenous measures of happiness. These researchers end by discussing some of the ways that positive psychology might add to supporting existing strengths present among those living in the two countries of this region, including some thoughts on the value of a more coordinated approach to promoting positive psychology and on the importance of applying the science of positive psychology in a manner that is meaningful, culturally informed, and responsive to some of the dramatic changes that have been occurring in these countries over the past several decades.

In Chap. 18, Woldgabreal covers the region of the Pacific Rim, specifically, Australia and New Zealand. The author begins with a discussion of the common and different histories, social contexts, and peoples associated with the two countries making up this region. This author reviews key themes examined by some of the major contributors to positive psychology from this region, including positive education, recovery-oriented mental health approaches, positive coaching, well-being assessments at work and at school, and meaning of work. The author ends with a discussion of how the strong growth of positive psychology is leading to efforts to integrate positive psychology in making positive public policies in this region, as well as a growing appreciation by positive psychologists to value a balanced approach for understanding the intricate balance that holds between positive and negative aspects of life that make it meaningful.

Lastly, in Chap. 19, Downey, Chang, Yang, Zettler, and Muyan-Yılık conclude with a general discussion of some of the complex issues that remain to be addressed in establishing a global science of positive human existence, from overcoming the challenges of exporting regional theories and frameworks to other parts of the world to concerns about a general lack of work focusing on mezzo (group) and macro (societal) levels of analysis, compared to micro (personal) levels of analysis, in promoting the value of positive psychology within and across the different regions covered in the present work.

## **Final Thoughts**

In putting the present work together, we wanted to celebrate the tremendous efforts made by specific individuals who shouldered the weight of pushing forward a science of positive human existence in their countries and regions. Importantly, these individuals come from both WEIRD and non-WEIRD parts of the world. Without their interest and perseverance to make the study of positive psychology a

priority, the existence of a global science of positive human existence simply would not be. In that regard, we thank all of the contributors for helping to identify and acknowledge the diverse community of scholars and scientists that have helped to discover both common and distinct themes associated with our human desire to live a life worth living. In ending, we hope that this volume provides an important initiative to communicate and bolster the slow, but palpable movements that have been occurring across the different positive psychologies of the world to help inform a science of positive human existence for all.

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## Chapter 2

# Region of Upper North America (United States and Canada)

Paul T. P. Wong and Roger G. Tweed

### Humanistic Psychology

The story of positive psychology (PP) in America begins long prior to the modern movement called PP. Humanist psychologists were the first psychologists who focused on the positive side of people—their innate goodness and natural tendency towards the self-actualization of their potentials. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow were the leading figures in this movement. Beginning as a reaction against the determinism of psychoanalysis and behaviorism in the 1950s and 60s, humanistic psychology advocated the need to study the whole person and the subjective perception and phenomenological experience of individuals. It is known as the third force in the history of psychology. From this holistic perspective, behavior cannot be fully understood simply by objective observation apart from the subjective meaning of individuals and their inter-subjective verification. Humanistic psychologists maintain that, ultimately, people are motivated by their beliefs and innate needs more than by their circumstances.

It is interesting that despite Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) disparaging remark about humanistic psychology, it remains an influential aspect of PP (Froh, 2004). In fact, more than half of the positive psychologists covered in this chapter have been influenced by humanistic psychology. It may be argued that a PP inspired and influenced by humanistic psychology has more depth and enduring influence than a PP without a rich humanistic heritage.

For humanistic psychologists (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961/1995), the responsible use of freedom is essential to become fully functional human beings. They argued that people can achieve their vision of the good life only when they can

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responsibly exercise their freedom to choose their own authentic path and achieve their life goals. Thus, their true happiness is a by-product of self-determination and self-actualization. Humanistic psychology began to decline in importance as a movement in the 80s, mostly because of its lack of experimental research that impacts mainstream psychology (Wong, 2011a).

## Positive Psychology 1.0 in the U.S.A

During his 1998 presidency of the American Psychological Association (APA), Martin Seligman launched his PP movement as a new science (Seligman, 1998, 1999a). After his presidency ended, he continued to promote PP through recruiting both established and elite young researchers and through the provision of research grants to scholars interested in the field. We refer to this brand of PP as PP1.0.

The initial topics that Seligman proposed for PP—positive states, positive traits, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)—are indeed worthy topics, and a number of American scholars were already working on these. Therefore, it is not so much Seligman’s original ideas as his ability to attract the cream of the crop in mainstream psychology that accounts for the success of PP 1.0. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe Seligman’s PP movement not as a new science, but instead as a new research community dedicated to advance Seligman’s vision of PP 1.0, which focuses on positivity and the positivist paradigm of science.

The field of PP has had its share of detractors, including Lazarus (2003), who attracted much attention with criticisms such as his assertion that positive psychologists “attack the psychology of the past to create the illusion that what they offer is new and different” (p. 107). James Coyne has also criticized PP and particularly the evidence base for some PP interventions not only in peer-reviewed work (Coyne et al., 2010), but also through his influential PLOS blog (e.g., Coyne, 2014a, 2014b). For a comprehensive critique of PP, see Wong and Roy (2018). On a more popular level, Barbara Ehrenreich (2010) argued that pressuring people to be happy can do more harm than good, and her claims are supported by recent research, such as Oettingen’s findings that some forms of positive thinking predict maladaptive consequences (for a review, see Oettingen, 2014).

In spite of the detractors, the field advanced in a number of ways and continued to gather adherents and institutional support. For example, a U.S. based organization called the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) was formed in 2007, and the organization’s first Congress occurred in 2009 in Philadelphia. There is now a Ph.D. program in PP (e.g., Claremont Graduate School) and many students also obtain a Ph.D. in PP topics in a typical graduate program in psychology (e.g., social, clinical). The Masters of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program at the University of Pennsylvania is a liberal arts program, and it does not require any specific undergraduate psychology courses as prerequisites. The curriculum does include one research methods course, but it does not require any coursework in other foundational areas of psychology. In spite of its lack of

psychology training, many MAPP graduates market themselves as experts in the science of happiness and well-being. This situation is even more concerning due to the proliferation of PP post-graduate certificate programs. These programs are typically offered by positive psychologists or MAPP graduates to train coaches and consultants and promise to provide a potentially lucrative career for certificate providers and graduates. Though these programs contribute in some ways to Miller's (1969) campaign to give psychology away so that the public can use it, they also produce some graduates with minimal scientific skills who may misapply or overstate the power of PP interventions, thus turning PP into a pseudoscience.

Along with this growth in PP, the field has become closely associated with business. Some business schools are beginning to integrate PP into their curricula. Claremont Graduate School even offers a Ph.D. in positive organizational psychology. For most PP associations, including the IPPA, both the membership and conference programs reflect a mixture of academics, business coaches, and consultants. This inclusion indicates that many people in the business community have bought into the vision of PP. One negative aspect of this development is that the scientific basis of PP is becoming diluted with premature applications and over-generalizations at the workplace (Wong et al., 2016).

In some ways, Seligman's message of positivity also resonates with the same crowd that was once attracted to humanistic psychology. It may be argued that there has always been a trait of optimism and positive thinking in the American psyche (Ehrenreich, 2010). In spite of the rich heritage of humanistic-existential psychology, Seligman decided to distance his PP movement (PP 1.0) from this heritage (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This decision has rippling effects that eventually required a course correction in the second wave of PP (PP 2.0; Wong, 2011b), which attempts to reclaim PP (Wong, 2011b) and integrate it with humanistic-existential psychology (Wong, 2009a, 2011b). What separates PP 2.0 from PP 1.0 is not just the recognition of positive potentials in negative emotions, but, more importantly, the emphasis on humanistic values, the dark side of human existence, and dialectical principles (Ivtzan et al., 2015; Wong, 2011b).

## Positive Psychology in Canada

By virtue of its proximity to the United States and a common heritage, Canada has always struggled to maintain its unique cultural identity as a mosaic society. This is also the case with respect to PP. In spite of the dominant influence of American PP, Canada is the home of existential PP (Wong, 2009a) and PP 2.0 (Wong, 2011b). Drawing upon European existential thoughts—especially Viktor Frankl's logotherapy—and Chinese dialectical philosophy (Wong, 2009b, 2016a), Wong developed PP 2.0 and promoted it through the Biennial International Meaning Conferences based in Canada ([www.meaning.ca/conference](http://www.meaning.ca/conference)).

PP 2.0 is inherently cross-cultural, existential, and much more complex than the initial tenets of positive emotion, positive traits, and positive institutions. The

starting point of PP 2.0 is embracing the dark side of human existence as the proper context for research and understanding human flourishing and well-being, just as the medical science starts by accepting the reality that we live in a world full of bacteria and viruses. The aim of PP 2.0 is to bring out the best in individuals and society in spite of inevitable human suffering and evil. Secondly, PP 2.0 favors the dialectical principle of yin and yang as a more realistic way to approach negative and positive human experiences than the binary or dichotomous way.

Consequently, PP 2.0 does not confine itself to neutral or positive territories; it covers the totality of human experiences and is relevant to under-privileged and suffering people. Finally, PP 2.0 emphasizes the importance of the internal and external validity of variables pertaining to the good life based on both the existential and cross-cultural literature. In sum, PP 2.0 reflects the mosaic culture of Canada, particularly with its European and Asian influences.

On the global stage of PP, two competing forces are often at work in various countries. Canada provides a good example of the clashing of two competing visions. On the one hand, there is the dominating force of PP from America, with all its big names, big money, influential publications, and evidence-based PP interventions, which may not always be culturally appropriate. An important element in this mix is the training of foreign students in America through the MAPP program previously described. Often, graduates from MAPP promote their coaching business with science as their calling card, and establish a local Positive Psychology Association as their guild; in other words, they serve as “colonizers” of American PP (for a critique, see Wong & Roy, 2018).

On the other hand, there are indigenous positive psychologists trained in their own country and shaped by their own culture. They struggle to establish their own indigenous identity by developing culturally sensitive research programs and interventions often with two handicaps—without the necessary funding and under the huge shadow of American PP.

The dominant force of American PP and the home-grown force of indigenous PP have not found a way to work together to advance PP and benefit their country. The difficulty of merging these two forces was clearly evident in the early days of the Canadian Positive Psychology Association (Wong, 2013a).

## **Abraham H. Maslow (1908–1970)**

Abraham Maslow is included in this chapter not only because he first coined the term “positive psychology” in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*, but also because of his profound impact on PP. He is most known for his theory of the hierarchy of needs, which has been influential in psychology, management, sociology, and psychiatry.

Maslow (1961) rejected European existentialism and advocated the need to “push toward the establishment of another branch of psychology, the psychology of the

fully evolved and authentic self and its ways of being” (p. 56). He coined the term the “Third Force” to identify this new branch of psychology.

Maslow is perhaps best known for his theory of the hierarchy of needs, which consists of five levels: (a) physiological needs, (b) safety and security needs, (c) the need for love and belonging, (d) esteem needs, and (e) the need for self-actualization. The first four needs are deficient needs or “D-motives” because people are motivated to fill the deficiency in these needs. Self-actualization motives represent growth-oriented needs at the “being” level; therefore, they are called the “B-values” or “B-motives.” Wong (2005) pointed out that the hierarchy model does not mean a rigid stage model, in which one needs to complete one level in order to move to the next level; in fact, these needs can be met simultaneously or in a reverse manner. For example, some people may value their calling as more important than their personal safety. The bottom line is that Maslow (1954) believed that the unifying motivational principle is to pursue higher needs.

In his old age, Maslow was puzzled by two questions: First, he recognized that some of his self-actualized friends were “prima donnas” who were self-centered and could not work together. Second, he wondered what motivated people who have already actualized. His solution to these problems was to add self-transcendence as the last or the highest stage of human development. Thus, in order to become fully functioning human beings, self-actualizers need to continue to be driven by meta-motivation and devote their lives to helping others actualize themselves. He also expanded the list of B-motives, which now includes the following: truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, completion, justice, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, and self-sufficiency. Maslow (1971) died before he could fully develop his revised needs hierarchy (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Maslow’s theory of human motivation emphasized the inner push towards self-actualization, self-transcendence, and the peak experience. Maslow (1954) described the peak experience as a “tremendous intensification of *any* of the experiences in which there is loss of self or transcendence of [self]” (p. 165; emphasis original); it includes a sense of rapture, wonder, and ecstasy, which can transform people’s view of themselves and the world around them. Maslow’s main contribution was his emphasis on the positive existential givens and the human potential for the transcendental, spiritual level of human existence. His theory remains one of the most complete and influential theories of PP, a theory that is based on his noble and optimistic view of human nature and human potentials.

With respect to research, Maslow was opposed to the atomistic, dichotomist thinking that is still prevalent in PP. Much like William James’s (1912) “radical empiricism,” Maslow (1970) believed that it was possible to integrate experiential subjectivity with experimental objectivity; he wanted to “integrate the healthily animal, material, and selfish with the naturalistically transcendent, spiritual, and axiological” (p. 5). Throughout his research career, Maslow attempted to humanize and trans-humanize the non-personal science so that it can account for the unique and holistic human experiences (Maslow, 1966/2002).