Article

Humanistic and Positive Psychologies: The Continuing Narrative After Two Decades

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Abstract

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi launched the "positive" psychology movement with a conspicuously *negative* strategy: the seemingly deliberate character assassination of humanistic psychology. Their critical remarks, not at all original, appeared designed to distance positive psychology from humanistic psychology and (ironically) to paint a portrait of positive psychology as being more original than it really was. Seligman has since apologized for disparaging humanistic psychology, and this article assesses both the content of that apology and its value in the ongoing discussion concerning the relationship between humanistic and positive psychologies. The apology was found to be superficial and laced with *more extensive* explicit and implicit negative assessments of humanistic psychology. These assessments were found to range from theoretically biased partial truths to completely unfounded claims, all unworthy of scientific discourse and in need of fact checking. The unabated dissemination of these arguably damning and unsubstantiated views is framed in terms of van Kaam's observations concerning the collectivist leanings of postindustrial psychological science, which fly in the face of the humanistic revolution.

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A decade ago, Schneider (2011) insightfully addressed the still-relevant question of why humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists do not always get along. Schneider shared some of the scientific, perspectival issues involved in this intradisciplinary tension, including important commentary on what has become a recurring theme within the humanistic literature: a certain lack of depth and nuance attributed to positive psychology with regard to its approach to humanistic psychology and human psychological life at large (e.g., see also DeRobertis & Bland, 2018, 2020b; Sundararajan, 2005; Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005). Historically speaking, this lack of depth and nuance is far from unprecedented. Suffice it to say that, for whatever reasons, the finer points of the humanistic revolution (see DeRobertis, 2021) have not been widely understood or appreciated since its inception. Within the mainstream of both psychological science and U.S. culture at large, humanistic psychology has been read and disseminated on a woefully superficial and often one-sided basis (e.g., Waterman, 2013; see also Henry, 2017), routinely failing to account for the role of paradox in humanistic theorizing (Arons, 2020; DeRobertis & Bland, 2018, 2020b; Rowan, 2001; Schneider, 1990; Wahl, 2003).

Perhaps these shortcomings are symptomatic of a culture hellbent on speed and efficiency, the quick fix, and the easy answer—recently brought into relief by Schneider (2020a) in his distinguishing between positive psychologists' "quick boil" (i.e., outcome-focused) versus humanistic psychologists' "slow simmer" (i.e., process-oriented) approaches to understanding awe (p. 101). But there is another obstacle worth noting. For lack of a better phrase, it is the seemingly deliberate *character assassination of humanistic psychology* in which, at times, positive psychology has arguably engaged. For the most salient example, consider Seligman's argument on introducing positive psychology that humanistic psychology "did not attract much of a cumulative empirical base" but rather "spawned myriad therapeutic self-help movements" and "encouraged a self-centeredness that played down concerns for collective well-being"—both of which resulted in "the 'psychology' section . . . of any large bookstore . . . [containing] at least 10 shelves on crystal healing, aromatherapy, and reaching the inner child for every shelf of books that tries to uphold some scholarly standard" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7). Seligman (2018, 2019) has recently apologized for this, and we

thank him. At the same time, the wider narrative within which this apology appears cries out for further analysis. Such is the aim of this article.

As the figurehead of positive psychology and as a role model to many a psychologist, it is disconcerting to see that in the same breath that Seligman (2019) has apologized for disparaging humanistic psychology, he runs the risk of enacting the same old seeming character assassination that drove a wedge between humanistic psychology and positive psychology in the first place. He continues to adopt a kind of habitual rankism that is unworthy of our esteemed colleague. To demonstrate, the full text in which his apology appears is presented below. (Note that Seligman's text begins with a prompt that he poses to himself concerning the relationship between positive psychology and humanistic psychology; this amounts to a sort of challenge to the originality of the former—see also Wong & Roy, 2018.) Thereafter, core ideas from both the prompt and its associated text are presented as headings and then fact checked, analyzed, and discussed one at a time. The Seligman text is as follows:

> Positive psychology is just old wine in new bottles. Abraham Maslow and the Humanistic Psychology movement said it all 40 years ago. Indeed, the humanistic psychologists have been furious at me and the Positive Psychology movement. They feel slighted and not properly acknowledged. They have laid into me mercilessly. I think their anger is more than partly justified. Abraham Maslow was the first person to use the term Positive Psychology, his thinking was iconoclastic, and it antedated some of our main ideas. In our inaugural article on Positive Psychology, Mike Csikszentmihalyi and I (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) foolishly lumped Humanistic Psychology with crystal healing and aromatherapy and, for my part, I apologize for this unwarranted slight. However, Abraham Maslow did come too early. Scientific psychology did not take him seriously. Maslow himself recognized that he wanted scientific respect above all, and his research assistant Bob Gable, in a revealing personal letter in 2001, wrote to me, "Abe would have been happier with something that never happened—a return phone call from Fred Skinner." Rather than carry out mainstream science on his ideas, his followers, calling themselves humanistic psychologists, developed their own qualitative and nonexperimental methods. Humanistic Psychology's then-radical ideas combined with its less-than-rigorous methods made it doubly difficult for science to digest, hence its present status as scientific backwater that is separate from Positive Psychology (Waterman 2013). Positive Psychology keeps some of the radical ideas, but it uses conventional, rigorous methods. In fact, I had not read much Maslow, and so his writings had only a negligible role in my own thinking. Had I invoked Maslow, however appropriately, it would have been window dressing. Positive Psychology arose directly from my take on the shortcomings of mainstream clinical and experimental science. (Seligman, 2019, pp. 18-19)

Humanistic Psychology Said It All 40 Years Ago

The notion that any humanistic psychologist would ever claim that humanistic psychology has "said it all" is nonsensical given the open, integrative nature of the humanistic orientation. From the beginning, humanistic psychologists intentionally adopted a nonexclusive approach in order "to keep things open and flexible" (Bühler, 1971, p. 378) with the deliberate purpose of continuous revision, elaboration, and renewal so that humanistic psychology can remain relevant to each new generation of psychologists (Criswell, 2003).

As van Kaam (1961) put it 60 years ago, "A truly humanistic psychology is an integration of the historical and contemporary data and theories of psychology. This integration is based on an open phenomenology and ontology of man" (p. 100). The aim was to pursue a "hierarchical-integrative way of thinking" (Maslow, 1961, p. 2) with the power to synthesize the insights of divergent currents of thought within the field while offering a broadened and deepened scientific narrative for the future of the discipline—both in terms of its subject matter and its philosophy of science. The founders of the humanistic movement never denied the contributions of experimentalism/behaviorism (*first force* in psychology) and psychoanalysis (*second force*). Quite the contrary, they saw their work and contributions as having the potential to enact a corrective complement to conventional psychology. Having both trained (in Maslow's case, with Edward Thorndike, Clark Hull, and Harry Harlow) and earned respectable reputations in the prevailing schools of their day, the founders of the humanistic movement acknowledged and subsumed the insights of those schools within a broader ontological orientation that *also* emphasizes the validity of human experience and meaning—which positivist empirical philosophy and methods in psychology do not adequately capture. In addition, they (Dubos, 1965; Giorgi, 1970; Maslow, 1966; Matson, 1964; May, 1983; Polanyi, 1962; Rogers, 1965; Shoben, 1965) argued that the attitude of a detached, objectivistic science that intentionally excludes subjectivity involves a precarious ethic of science (see also Williams, 2018). Specifically, their tendency to treat phenomena as disconnected and compartmentalized lends itself to the capacity for destructiveness given its inclination toward controlling and conquering—instead of understanding and cooperating with—nature. Furthermore, they argued that, lacking the requisite reflexivity, the pretension of "value-free" science benefits specific groups or institutions at the expense of others and without "contributing to the understanding or solution to the real human concerns of society" (Williams, 2018, p. 21).

For those reasons, humanistic psychologists originally referred to themselves as the *third force*—a third option—in psychology that served *to bridge the most relevant aspects of the prevailing schools' theorizing* while also

supplementing those with insights from additional traditions both within and outside of psychology (Arons, 2020; Bland & DeRobertis, 2019; Bugental, 1964; DeCarvalho, 1991; Wertz, 1998). The founding humanistic psychologists' intent was never to simply *abandon* empirical psychological science (Friedman, 2008) but rather to extend its scope in the interest of living up to the promise of formative psychologists like James (Taylor, 2001) and Dilthey (Wertz, 1998, 2015) under the premise that it is "not unscientific but *truly* scientific to explicitly formulate all the philosophical presuppositions of a psychological theory" (Madsen, 1971, p. 4, italics added; see also Lamiell, 2018). Doing so is not less but "*more* empirical—that is, more respectful of actual human phenomena" (May, 1983, p. 127, italics added) insofar as "psychology free of scientism becomes objective in the most important sense, that is, capable of achieving knowledge of its proper subject, the irreducible reality of mental life" (Wertz, 2018, p. 111). During the last half-century, humanistic psychology evolved as it interfaced with existential, transpersonal, and constructivist programs of research, and more recently, has further integrated those contributions (L. Hoffman et al., 2015; Polkinghorne, 2015) *in dialogue with innovations in mainstream psychology*—including positive psychology—many of which were influenced by the humanistic movement (Bland & DeRobertis, 2019; DeRobertis, 2013, 2016a).

Thus, the very idea of humanistic psychology having said it all runs counter to both its basic conceptual premises and its factual historical development. It should thus come as no surprise that no humanistic psychologist has ever made such a claim. Rather, the only author who appears to have made this totalizing assertion is, in fact, Martin Seligman. Thus, with this prompt, what he has presented to the reader is the rough equivalent of what journalists would refer to as throwing himself a softball. He has given himself an easy claim to refute in order to elevate the originality of positive psychology. In effect, the prompt is quietly disingenuous. But that is not all. The reference to humanistic psychology is phrased completely in the *past* tense. And while this may seem innocent on the surface, it implies with an almost undetectable subtlety that humanistic psychology is part of the history of the discipline rather than its present or future. In contrast, note that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the man Seligman has called "the brains behind positive psychology" ("Thinker," n.d., para. 3), has been generally more sympathetic to humanistic psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). He (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003) had quite a different take on this issue:

Is Positive Psychology "New"? Of Course Not. Perhaps the last attempt at developing something akin to positive psychology was 50 or so years ago, when Maslow, Rogers, and their colleagues called for a new *humanistic*

psychology. That valiant effort is still very much alive, especially in clinical and counseling settings. (p. 115)

And, as discussed further below, the reach of the contemporary humanistic movement is *not* confined to the arena of helping professions.

Humanistic Psychologists Feel Slighted and Not Properly Acknowledged

Regrettably, the implication that humanistic psychologists merely feel slighted and not properly acknowledged by Seligman is an indication that he has not adequately examined the humanistic response to his earlier comments and *to the total scientific project of positive psychology* over the years (Resnick et al., 2001; Rich, 2001, 2018; Robbins & Friedman, 2008; Taylor, 2001). In a nutshell, positive psychologists' popularization of the polarizing "idea that virtually every social and individual achievement or problem can be traced back to a surplus or lack of happiness, respectively" (Cabanas, 2018, p. 6) is predicated on *scientism*—that is, "extreme confidence in 'science' to produce the requisite knowledge for solving all problems and answering all meaningful questions" (Williams & Gantt, 2018, p. 8). Worse, Seligman's oversight minimizes the less-antagonistic attitude of a second generation of positive psychologists who have been "much more open to genuine dialogue with humanistic psychology" (Churchill & Mruk, 2014, p. 90; see also Wong & Roy, 2018). These include, in alphabetical order, Roger Bretherton (see Bretherton, 2015), Kirk Warren Brown (see K. W. Brown & Cordon, 2009), Stephen Joseph (see Joseph & Murphy, 2013), Laura King (see King, 2001), Carol Ryff (see Ryff, 2014), Richard Ryan (see Deci & Ryan, 1980), Kennon Sheldon and Tim Kasser (see Sheldon & Kasser, 2001), and Paul Wong (see Wong, 2017; Wong & Roy, 2018), to name only a few.

Seligman's characterization of the humanistic community in this apologetic portion of the text does not even begin to scratch the surface of the real issues involved and addresses nothing that is scientifically relevant. In fact, it draws attention *away* from the possibility of there being any sort of substance to the disappointments that humanistic psychologists have shown with respect to significant aspects of positive psychology. For a few examples, see humanistic psychologists' critiques of positive psychologists' conceptualizations of happiness (DeRobertis, 2016b; DeRobertis & Bland, 2018), authenticity (Medlock, 2012), self-esteem (Mruk, 2008), resilience (Friedman & Robbins, 2012), and optimal functioning (Rathunde, 2001), as well as

positive psychologists' one-sided emphasis on positivity and optimism (see Waterman, 2013) at the expense of the constructive role of the negative (trial, despair, shadow, tragedy) in the striving for psychological growth and health (Ehrenreich, 2009, 2010; Friedman & Robbins, 2012; Held, 2004, 2018; Schneider, 2014, 2015; Wong & Roy, 2018). If anything, the shortcuts offered by positive psychologists' "painless and easy activities to achieve happiness and success" have been linked to problematic outcomes (Wong & Roy, 2018, p. 155; see also Berlant, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2009; Hedges, 2009). These conceptual and practical points have only recently been taken up and better accounted for by "second-wave" positive psychologists (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016; Wong, 2017; Wong & Roy, 2018).

Of course, slights are nothing new to the humanistic psychologist, and yes, some positive psychologists have ventured into humanistic territories and tended to forgo the process of doing a humanistic literature review that would be "required of any graduate student" (Taylor, 2001, p. 14; see also Wong & Roy, 2018). This much is true. But the genuine discontent emanating from the humanistic literature has to do with the methods, content, and style of positive psychology. Broadly stated, positive psychologists typically employ first force means (i.e., *I-it*, researcher-dominated methodology that objectifies, technologizes, and commodifies individuals and their experiences in an effort to manipulate, predict, and control behavior; see Bühler, 1971; Lamiell, 2019; Maslow, 1966; Wertz, 2015, 2018; Williams, 2018; Williams & Gantt, 2018; Wong, 2017; Wong & Roy, 2018) to attain third force ends (i.e., *I-Thou* human science that accounts for meaning-making, values, and lived experience in psychology and that values the voice of research participants in the interest of promoting integrity of findings; see Arons, 2020; Wertz, 2015; Wong, 2017). By intentionally neglecting intimate experiential contact with one's subject matter in the interest of eliminating bias, conventional psychological science—and positive psychology, in particular (Cabanas, 2018; Wong & Roy, 2018)—paradoxically runs the risk of *introducing* both bias and the possibility of error (Lamiell, 2019; Wong, 2017) due to an inadequate understanding of the subject at hand (Hall, 1968; Maslow, 1966; Wertz, 2018; Wong & Roy, 2018). "Consequently, the outcome may only be remotely related to the phenomenon under investigation or the actual experience of research participants" (Wong, 2017, p. 208). Indeed, positive psychology constructs, assessment measures, and intervention strategies have been criticized for their poor validity and applicability outside controlled laboratory settings and for their tendency to "sound contrived and unrealistic, characteristic of items generated by armchair academics" (Wong & Roy, 2018, p. 149).

All in all, this apology thus once again belittles humanistic psychology by making a straw man out of its response to the scientific endeavor that is

"positive psychology." Seligman paints a picture of a community of psychologists with nothing more than sour grapes, and this glosses over the scientific seriousness of the humanistic critique—not the least of which being positive psychologists' violations in the form of reductionistic determinism in their manner of relating subject to object and uncritically and unreflexively "injecting a value judgment into an allegedly value-free system" (Taylor, 2001, p. 25). Alas, lacking a sounder basis for criticism, it seems that Seligman's caricaturish carping at humanistic psychology's alleged failure to constitute a scientific enterprise may principally serve the purpose of protecting his privileged advantage in order to eliminate competition (Held, 2004). In that sense, Seligman's stance seems to reflect Schneider's (2013) *polarized mind*—that is, a fear-based "elevation of one point of view to the utter exclusion of competing points of view" (p. 1; see also Williams, 2018). Like Waterman (2013), whom Seligman cited in the text above, after paying lip service to a few areas of consistency, he then proceeded to proclaim that the two movements are mutually incompatible and therefore incommensurate, thereby shutting down the possibility of dialogue before there was ample opportunity to get one started (Churchill & Mruk, 2014; Friedman, 2014).

Scientific Psychology Did Not Take Maslow Seriously

We find this statement of Seligman's perplexing because, on the contrary, it was to Maslow's surprise that he was nominated and elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1967 whereas he believed his efforts to expand psychological science might warrant his expulsion from the organization (E. Hoffman, 1988). Moreover, during that period of his career, on a daily basis, Maslow received invitations to deliver lectures, to accept honorary degrees, and to collaborate on research projects. Meantime, Maslow's theorizing has been influential in the motivational, developmental, clinical/counseling, cultural, educational, industrial–organizational, and personality subfields of psychology, and in the introduction of creativity, consciousness, and spirituality as formal areas of study in the discipline at large (Arons, 1999; Bland & DeRobertis, 2019, 2020; Bland & Swords, in press; DeRobertis, 2016a). While it is accurate that over the years humanistic psychology has become problematically conflated with the worst of the hippie counterculture and human potentials movements (Bland & DeRobertis, 2018, 2019, 2020; DeCarvalho, 1991), it is important to remember that when he was alive, Maslow himself "leveled criticisms at his students about the

directions some of this revolution was taking, including expressions of narcissism, anti-intellectualism, and anti-science" (Arons, 1999, p. 340).

Maslow Would Have Been Happier Had He Received a Return Call From B. F. Skinner

In stark contrast with Seligman's portrayal of Maslow begging in vain for contact with Skinner to validate his contributions, evidence abounds that the two were in frequent correspondence. According to Maslow's biographer, "for many decades" (E. Hoffman, 1996, p. 197), they "had long been friendly . . . despite their differing emphases," and Maslow "valued [Skinner's] criticism as well as [his] praise" (E. Hoffman, 1988, pp. 296-297). If anything, it was Skinner who expressed concern that it was Maslow who did not take *him* seriously, as evidenced by this excerpt from a March 1965 letter from Skinner to Maslow:

> I have had many peak experiences and they have not decreased as I have become more rational or materialistic or mechanistic. I do not feel that I am more at home with the cognitive than with the emotional, impulsive, and volitional as you imply. You ought to get to know a behaviorist better! (E. Hoffman, 1988, pp. 296-297)

The following month, Maslow responded,

> If values and the life of values are your professional concern, poetry, art, and so on, you must make a better theoretical place in your structure . . . and this must be done in a *systematic* way (as part of the theory of science). . . . There is no need to exclude experience as datum for science and then to hope to objectify it eventually. . . . I am so interested in what you say of your *peak-experiences* and of your interest in the impulsive, emotional, and so on. May I suggest that you expand on this in your autobiography? It will correct the erroneous picture people have. I accept the correction and am glad to hear about it. . . . Yes, please send me your writings on these matters when you finish them. (E. Hoffman, 1996, pp. 197-198, italics in original)

In effect, the portion of Seligman's text pertaining to Skinner comes dangerously close to making Maslow out to be a scientist "wannabe." It ignores the fact that Maslow (Frick, 1971; Hall, 1968; Maslow, 1971/1993, 1979, 1999, 2019) frequently emphasized the need for empirical support of his theorizing and that he tended to respond to those who sought him out by "assigning them library research or suggesting a pilot study" (E. Hoffman, 1988, p. 297).

Seligman's statement also betrays the deeper truth (previously noted) that Maslow endeavored to be a scientific *unifier*, fully cognizant of the culture of power in psychology during his time. Maslow once commented, "We shouldn't have to say 'humanistic psychology.' The adjective should be unnecessary. Don't think of me as being anti-behavioristic. I'm anti-doctrinaire. . . . I'm against anything that closes doors and cuts off possibilities" (Hall, 1968, p. 57). Also, it is crucial to note that Maslow's theorizing was built as the *outcome* of his empirical research (e.g., see Hoffman, 1988; Maslow 1973), and *not* the other way around as has been endlessly parroted by his critics over the years (Bland & DeRobertis, 2020). Both of these facts appear lost on Seligman. Furthermore, Seligman's entire approach to the issue of scientific psychology in this discussion is conspicuously superficial. Skinner is referenced as the quintessential example of science, but Seligman ought to be reminded that Skinner was *also* a maverick whose style did not square with the ideal of scientific method that Seligman exalts. Skinner, in fact, proudly asserted that he never tested hypotheses and tended to work in a case-based fashion rather than comparing data across groups of participants (Tesch, 1990).

Maslow's Followers Did Not Engage in Mainstream Science

Again, with this proclamation, we find ourselves confused. Although humanistic psychologists have long advocated for ontological, epistemological, and methodological pluralism, they never one-sidedly eschewed experimentation or quantification. Rather, they have encouraged the development of competence in multiple methods of scientific inquiry (Bland & DeRobertis, 2019; DeRobertis, 2016a; Fischer, 2003; Friedman, 2014; Friedman & Robbins, 2012; Shoben, 1965; Wong, 2017). Both qualitative and quantitative methods are considered necessary but insufficient on their own, and research *questions* should drive the method—not the other way around (Elkins, 2009; Schneider, 1998). Experimental research is regarded as scientifically efficacious when there are relatively clear categorical boundaries between phenomena and their context and when standardization is necessary, while qualitative research is better suited to subtler and more complex phenomena and contexts that require description (Criswell, 2003; Fischer, 2003; Schneider, 1998). The two methods can also complement each other in mixed-methods designs (Criswell, 2003; Friedman, 2008; Wong, 2017)—which Maslow (1942) employed in his seminal (Hall, 1968) study of women's sexuality and sexual behavior. Thus, "in essence, humanistic psychology's argument with mainstream psychology is not qualitative versus quantitative

research; rather, it is whether participants rather than researchers should fashion the outcome" (Wong, 2017, p. 209).

Indeed, both forms of research have been published in *The Humanistic Psychologist* during the 21st century (Churchill & Mruk, 2014) and in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (which was cofounded by Maslow) throughout its 60 years. Contrary to Seligman's (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) argument that humanistic psychology lacks an empirical base, included in these peer-reviewed publications are experimental studies that tested and affirmed the validity of Maslow's theorizing (e.g., Graham & Balloun, 1973; Mathes & Edwards, 1978; Winston et al., 2017).

That said, Maslow (1979, 2019; Hall, 1968) as well as other founding humanistic psychologists like Rogers (1961/1995) and Bugental (1965) felt quite strongly about the importance of rigor in conducting science, including mainstream forms of psychological science (see also DeCarvalho, 1991; Friedman, 2008). They identified research questions (Maslow, 1987) and posed testable hypotheses (Maslow, 1971/1993; Rogers, 1969) based on their theorizing. Also, Maslow himself conducted experimental research that would be of interest to positive psychologists—including studies on the impact of aesthetic conditions on perception of others' well-being in their facial expressions (Maslow & Mintz, 1956), on perception of others' warmth versus coldness (Bossom & Maslow, 1957), and on the effect of repeated exposure on aesthetic preferences and enjoyment of activities (Maslow, 1937). Furthermore, Rogers (1961/1995) was among the first researchers to employ statistical modeling methods to demonstrate the effectiveness of humanistic psychotherapy for promoting sustainable change.

Only, Maslow and other founding humanistic psychologists *also* saw and challenged the limitations of conventional empirical psychology's tendency to myopically deal in abstractions and artificiality and to overlook concrete lived experience—which, in the case of Maslow, had come to light via his experience of being humbled as a psychological researcher by the experience of becoming a parent (Hall, 1968; Zweig & Bennis, 1968). Accordingly, to adequately investigate the aforementioned hypotheses in the decades that followed, humanistic psychologists found it necessary to delve into description because (a) inadequate conceptual knowledge was available—as demonstrated in Maslow's discussion of the results of his experimental study on the relationship between breastfeeding and relational security (Maslow & Szilagyi-Kessler, 1946) decades before the advent of attachment theory/research and (b) some topics simply were not easily or optimally conducive to experimentation in founding a program of research (see also Wertz, 2018).

Moreover, in some cases, the development and employment of qualitative methods has served both to enhance the philosophy and methodology of

psychological science while concurrently contributing to its knowledge base in order to make it possible for more conventional empirical investigation later on (Barrell et al., 1987; Wong & Roy, 2018)—which positive psychologists have made their forte in the 21st century. It is worth noting that the recently published *Transcend* (Kaufman, 2020)—for which Seligman provided an endorsement on the back cover—summarized empirical support for Maslow's propositions, much of which were the fruits of the labor of positive psychologists *including* Seligman.

Regrettably, positive psychologists' tendency to overtly privilege the quantitative methods of mainstream psychology (Friedman & Robbins, 2012)—with controlled experiments ranked at the top of a hierarchy of research methods (see also Gantt, 2018) and with qualitative methods relegated to "at best, useful sources of hypotheses" that drive experimentation (Wertz, 2015, p. 232)—amounts to scientific monism (Arons, 2020; Gantt, 2018; Williams & Gantt, 2018; Wong & Roy, 2018) that constitutes "the central crisis of psychology itself" (Wertz, 1998, p. 48). That is, "only reductive naturalistic (i.e., material, mechanical, and deterministic) explanations of human behavior are held to possess any real epistemological merit" (Gantt, 2018, p. 56), while (a) rationality and intuition are falsely bifurcated and the role of mystery in which "the very possibility of science is grounded" is denied (Osbeck, 2018, p. 49) and (b) analytic intelligence and reasoning based on direct sensory observation are valued at the expense of other, equally valid ways of knowing (Hedges, 2009; Osbeck, 2018; Wertz, 2018; Williams & Gantt, 2018). Thus, "in its effort to be scientific, psychology has 'lost its phenomena' and, due to its inadequate conception of science, has become pseudoscientific" (Wertz, 2018, p. 107).

Applied to positive psychology, despite their claims to objectivity and generalizability, because founding positive psychologists relied on blind quantification derived from samples consisting of individuals from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic societies without consulting the humanistic–existential literature (Wong & Roy, 2018), their sometimes "decontextualized and exaggerated claims" reflect a conspicuously "subjectivist way of understanding of autonomy and freedom" (Cabanas, 2018, pp. 5, 10) and of well-being that is based on maintaining the status quo (Ahmed, 2010). Consequently, with its internalization of individualistic values justified on the grounds of positivist science and empirical research as well as its universalist aspirations and emphasis on personal responsibility (in which "suffering tends to be seen as a sign of personal failure and lack of effort"), the inherent ethnocentric scientism in positive psychology "sits well with the technocratic and utilitarian soul of neoliberal politics" (Cabanas, 2018, pp. 12, 7).

Certainly, this privileging of positivistic empiricism is understandable if it is the case that "the senior proponents of positive psychology, all products of the behavioristic era of graduate training in psychology, . . . [had] generally no training in epistemology other than the behavioristic" (Taylor, 2001, p. 16). However, it is clear that by now they engage in "a voluntary wearing of intellectual blinders" (Shoben, 1965, p. 217) when they deliberately ignore (a) "diverse criticisms of psychology that have a common root—the discipline's unquestioned adoption of the natural science approach" (Wertz, 2015, p. 240; see also Arons, 2020; Gantt, 2018; Giorgi, 1970; Lamiell, 2018, 2019; Taylor, 2001; Wertz, 2018) and (b) other ontological, epistemological, and methodological possibilities that have been proposed for several decades as alternatives (e.g., see DeRobertis, in press). For just one example, consider Robbins' (2021) demonstration of (a) the limitations of language to adequately convey the nuances of joy (a topic of central interest to positive psychologists) in an operational definition and (b) the value of and need for an approach that incorporates art and metaphor in the interest of maintaining fidelity to the subject matter (see also Williams, 2018; Wong & Roy, 2018). Thus, this myopia on the part of mainstream psychologists is precarious because, the more the message of methodological superiority is passed to future generations, the more likely it is that other options will become forgotten, resulting in a vicious cycle that fuels stagnation in the field via reinventing the wheel (Goldfried, 2019).

Thus, Seligman's implication that to be science (or *good* science), one must remain exclusively or "purely" *mainstream*—marginalizes the revolutionary, holistic–integrative nature of the humanistic vision (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Indeed, even Bob Gable, the behaviorist who served as Maslow's teaching assistant whom Seligman cited in the text above, has acknowledged "the rich interstices of behavioral and humanistic traditions" and provided citations for "an articulated compatible relationship between radical behaviorism and existentialism" as published in mainstream psychology journals (Gable, 1993, pp. 42, 50).

It should also be noted that Seligman's claim implies that qualitative and nonexperimental methods cannot support a good, genuinely scientific program of research. Would Piaget and Kohlberg, who built their theories largely on the findings of qualitative observations (Giorgi, 2009; Wertz et al., 2011), feel the same way? Would Skinner, who did not adhere to "the scientific method" as taught in psychology textbooks, as discussed above? Would Csikszentmihalyi, whose landmark work in the area of flow or optimal experience was based on phenomenological data? Would the architects of self-determination theory, whose work has long relied on the phenomenology of agency (Ryan & Connell, 1989)? In all cases, the answer is *no*. The appeal of

experimentation is understandable insofar as it offers the promise of causality based on its strong internal validity (Eagly & Riger, 2014). However, "lacking a descriptive framework," experimentation alone "never surmounts [its] characteristic incompleteness" (Wertz, 1998, p. 51)—that is, it is incapable of handling complexity in psychological issues (Hall, 1968; Williams & Gantt, 2018)—and therefore it "falls short of the meaningful structure of human life" (Wertz, 1998, p. 54; see also Maslow, 1987; Wong, 2017). The scientific automaton-like mimicking of methodological operations to the neglect of deep contact with the object of study (Maslow, 1966) results in "the colligation of facts" more so "than . . . the clarification of concepts" and therefore to the likelihood of error, the "systematic purveyance of [which] is just bad science" (Lamiell, 2019, pp. 14-15, 125; see also Lamiell, 2018). Accordingly, experimentation's propensity for *context stripping* detracts from its ecological validity—that is, its relevance in and generalizability to natural settings (Eagly & Riger, 2014), as Maslow also cautioned (Hall, 1968).

To be sure, Seligman's valorization of mainstream science in psychology is problematic for numerous other reasons, as well. First, it assumes rigor and superiority merely on the basis of being mainstream, which is far from certain. Not only are mainstream theses, dissertations, and articles frequently carried out to completion with major theoretical and methodological flaws (a criticism leveled at Seligman's own research, see Brock et al., 1996; Cabanas, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2010; Wong & Roy, 2018), but many more are done simply for the sake of demonstrating technical, operationalist competency or for promotion and have precious little to contribute to psychology's data base (Chambers, 2017; Spooner, 2015). Indeed, scientism thrives in an environment in which self-advancement is valued over critical self-reflection (Gantt, 2018; Hedges, 2009). "Elite universities disdain honest intellectual inquiry" because it upsets the status quo; instead, it is supplanted by hyperspecialization that "thwarts universal understanding" and "destroys the search for the common good" (Hedges, 2009, pp. 89-90).

Second, one might ask whether positive psychology's data base has in fact been predominantly generated from controlled laboratory experiments, or if it is as steeped in surveys and correlations as many other areas of the field? If positive psychology textbooks (e.g., Lopez et al., 2019) are any representation of their work, the answer is the latter (see also Ahmed, 2010; Cabanas, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2010). Furthermore, the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, for which Seligman serves as Distinguished Senior Advisor, has not only published several qualitative research studies (e.g., Chauhan et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2019; Hernandez et al., 2016; Krause et al., 2012; Mouton & Montijo, 2017; Reynolds & Lim, 2007) but also devoted a special issue to "the call for 'qual' in exploring human flourishing and well-being" (Hefferon

et al., 2017, p. 211). And Csikszentmihalyi (1975; Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979) published findings from his own qualitative inquiries in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

Third, the claim of mainstream superiority ignores the replicability problem outright. For just one example, one need only mention the recent controversy surrounding Fredrickson and Losada's (2005) *critical positivity ratio* (Friedman & Brown, 2018), which has been able to gain substantial traction on the basis of its status within mainstream science in spite of having been shown to be little more than *romantic scientism* (N. J. L. Brown et al., 2014; see also Wong & Roy, 2018). From *our* point of view, narrowband or positivistic positive psychology is all-too-often wanting in terms of *theoretical* rigor and vision (see also Mruk, 2008; Schneider, 2011; Wong & Roy, 2018), as evidenced by the examples provided above. On that front, it is worth noting that Seligman has acknowledged that he is more interested in statistical abstraction and predictive value than in accurate conceptual understanding of the values his movement espouses (Ehrenreich, 2010).

Not only is Seligman's accusation that humanistic psychologists have disengaged from mainstream science inaccurate, but the unsubstantiated claim against the anonymous collective dubbed "Maslow's followers" commits the democratic fallacy, and thus lacks the requisite rigor of a serious scientific critique. Finally, it is also worth noting that Seligman once again speaks in the past tense with this criticism, as if none of Maslow's "followers" exist any longer.

Humanistic Psychology Is Scientific Backwater (Waterman, 2013)

Since its inception, many humanistic ideas, constructs, and principles have become integrated within the mainstream or have been repackaged and presented as new in spite of the so-called backwater status that Seligman claims—and many of its ideas are *still* radical. Far from being backwater of any kind, humanistic psychology has consistently proven to be ahead of its time, even with respect to positive psychology (see DeRobertis, 2010, 2013, 2016a; DeRobertis & Bland, 2018). For just a few examples (and note that this is far from an exhaustive list), humanistic psychology's emphasis on holistic, dialectical, and systemic thinking paved the way for (a) developmental psychology's transcendence of the nature/nurture debate and for principles that are now standard fare in life span development (e.g., attachment, parenting styles, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, Kohlberg's and Gilligan's moral development models) as well as (b) the replacement of the

categorical/taxonomic emphasis of 20th-century psychology with descriptively based dimensional perspectives in personality, clinical/counseling, and assessment (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2019, 2020). In addition, consider functional behavior assessment, motivational interviewing, and third-wave cognitive–behavior therapy (with its focus on acceptance, commitment, and values; see Bland & DeRobertis, 2019); empirical research in creativity, wisdom, resilience, spirituality, mindfulness, and meaning-making (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2019, 2020); heroism science (see Bland, 2019); terror management theory and self-determination theory (see DeRobertis & Bland, 2018); leadership (see Bland & Swords, in press); altruism (see Valsala & Menon, 2019); and so on.

Maslow was fond of the adage that if one has only a hammer, one approaches every problem as if it were a nail (Mike Arons, personal communication, 2002). If one's only method is experimentation, it can be all too easy to overlook the contributions of humanistic psychologists post-Maslow to not only academic psychology but also to areas of action-based psychological inquiry as well as outreach that experimentation alone is incapable of addressing (Hall, 1968). To give just one example that is particularly relevant to the current social climate, consider the Experiential Democracy Dialogues (Schneider, 2020b) and other research in cross-cultural encounters (DeRobertis & Bland, 2020a) that have built on a legacy carried out by generations of humanistic psychologists (Ryback, 2011) who heeded Maslow's calling for developing "a psychology for the peace table" in the interest of "understanding [tribalism in order to make] progress" (Hall, 1968, p. 54). Humanistic psychotherapists also have developed methods for providing appropriate healing for those who have been affected by tribalism that go well beyond the confines of conventional psychotherapy (Serlin et al., 2019). In addition, responding to Maslow's interest in using psychology to promote social justice (Hall, 1968; E. Hoffman, 1988), generations of humanistic psychologists have explored not only the healthy personality but also the ecological conditions that promote versus inhibit it (Bland & DeRobertis, 2020). These points greatly contrast with Seligman's (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) portrayal of humanistic psychologists as omphaloskeptics—a criticism that, indeed, has been leveled at positive psychologists (Cabanas, 2018)—and, again, demonstrate the problems that arise when humanistic psychology is conflated with the human potentials movement.

While Seligman is correct in noting that Waterman (2013) emphasized the differences between humanistic and positive psychologies and asserted his preference for the latter, Waterman never so much as implied anything like the derogatory notion of "backwater" anywhere in his 2013 publication. Unlike Seligman—who wrote off any potential inclusion of humanistic

psychology's presence in positive psychology as "window dressing" (see the text above)—Waterman acknowledged both the relevance and the meaningfulness of humanistic psychology for the field at large, identifying the work of founding humanistic psychologists like Maslow and Rogers as well as antecedents of the humanistic movement such as Goldstein and Erikson as "most notable efforts at theory development regarding psychological health" (Waterman, 2013, p. 125).

It is further problematic to dismiss humanistic psychology as backwater with little more than the support of an article that is so fundamentally flawed. Waterman's (2013) characterization of humanistic psychology was not only superficial, as aforementioned, but also inaccurate. For example, in addressing the differences between humanistic and positive psychology's philosophical underpinnings and influences, he confined humanistic psychology to existential and phenomenological philosophies—and an erroneous understanding of them at that, particularly with regard to the latter's ability to provide generalizable research findings (Morley, 2014)—without adequately accounting for its numerous other antecedents and influences (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2019). Then, he proceeded to incorrectly state that humanistic psychology does not also draw from works of Hellenic and medieval Christian philosophers (for evidence to the contrary, see Arons, 2020; DeRobertis, 2011; Moss, 2015). Furthermore, despite Waterman's insistence that positive psychology is built on eudaimonic assumptions, his depiction of its principles sound conspicuously hedonic (see also Ahmed, 2010; Cabanas, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2010; Hedges, 2009). Indeed, as noted in the "Humanistic Psychologists Feel Slighted and Not Properly Acknowledged" section above, it has been only in the past 5 years that second-wave positive psychologists have more accurately and adequately embraced the role of eudaimonic and chaironic processes (see Robbins, 2021) in human flourishing. As an alternative to "arrogant scientism" that promotes one-sided *pursuit* of happiness and self-fulfillment, this upgrade of positive psychology embraces a "pluralistic humble science perspective" that promotes the role of dialectics, responsible action, confronting and transforming suffering and the dark side of human existence, and appreciating happiness as a *byproduct* of meaning-making and self-transcendence (Wong & Roy, 2018, p. 144, 154).

Next, like Maslow (1999), Waterman acknowledged *both* a common humanity and an individual nature. However, whereas humanistic psychologists have endeavored to offer *both* generalizability via exploration of humanity's universal, eternal qualities (Arons, 2020) *and* a complementary ideographic (Bühler & Allen, 1972; Maslow, 1966) as well as cultural (see Bland, 2020; Bland & DeRobertis, 2019; DeRobertis, 2021; DeRobertis & Bland, 2020b) focus, Waterman went on to diminish the value of the latter

and to profess a one-sided preference for the former. We find this particularly problematic in light of recent critiques of the tendency in psychological science to mistake *nomothetic* for "results of analyses of *differences between* outcome *means* defined for treatment groups" and to make decisions that have implications for people's lives and opportunities for human flourishing based on aggregate data that does not resemble the actual data representing any one of the people included in a sample (Lamiell, 2019, p. 8, italics in original; see also Lamiell, 2018; Rose, 2016).

Finally, Waterman (2013) maintained his fondness for "short-term and exercise oriented" techniques (p. 129) while discounting the value of therapeutic relationships. Indeed, positive psychology's "markedly self-centered" (Cabanas, 2018, p. 12) prescriptive interventions have been criticized (a) as promoting magical thinking (Hedges, 2009) and conformity to happiness as a trait that is falsely dichotomized from neuroticism (Ahmed, 2010) as well as (b) for their replication problems and inadequate statistical power (Wong & Roy, 2018). In contrast, decades of research conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively by humanistic psychologists (Angus et al., 2015; Cain et al., 2016; Cozolino, 2010; Elkins, 2009, 2016; Rogers, 1961/1995) have consistently demonstrated that *relationships*—and not brief interventions which "seek a fast-food-like consumption of spiritual transformation that results in bypassing the depths of our being" (Sollars, 2016, p. 1)—are the vehicle for sustainable transformative change. Ironically, even Seligman (1995) himself arrived at a comparable conclusion. Attempting to take shortcuts that promise quick measurable outcomes at the expense of the *process* out of which human flourishing arises not only is bad science (Muller, 2018; see also Lamiell, 2018; Resnick et al., 2001) but also it has troublesome implications for the entire enterprise of positive psychology in that it ignores decades of theorizing and research in humanistic psychology suggesting that openness to experience is *both* the condition and the outcome of psychological growth and health (Kaufman, 2020; Maslow, 1987, 1999; Rogers, 1961/1995; see also Wong & Roy, 2018).

Conclusion

It seems inevitable to conclude with what is, from the perspective of the humanistic psychologist, the great unanswered question from within the ranks of positive psychology's leadership: Is the continued seemingly unreflective, unsubstantiated character assassination of a kindred school of thought "positive psychology" in action? We would hope not. But, Seligman's apology, though encouraging on its surface, is as disappointing as it is discouraging. Thinking more broadly, what does it say about the culture of

psychology itself that it could so easily persist in glossing over the Maslowian humanistic heritage of a psychology of the peace table while admiringly highlighting the promise of Seligman's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program (see Seligman, 2019) that is executed in "missionary fashion" (Hedges, 2009, p. 121; see also Ahmed, 2010)? Why would psychology textbook authors so frequently demean or ignore the ongoing effort within humanistic psychology to carefully and empathically debate the origins of human evil (Bohart et al., 2013; Fromm, 1973; Maslow, 1943, 1987; May, 1972) in order to cast it as naively optimistic (e.g., Myers, 2010; see also Henry, 2017), but remain uncritical of a "positive" psychology of human strengths that glibly asserts, "There are . . . *idiots*, people egregiously devoid of [a] strength" (Seligman, 2019, p. 10, italics added) without providing a contextual explanation for problematic, destructive, and/or ineffective behavior, cognition, and/or experiencing à la Maslow's (1943, 1987, 1999) focus on inadequately fulfilled basic needs?

Seligman's happiness formula (as cited in Cabanas, 2018) attributes half of happiness to genetics while minimizing the role of life circumstances and socioeconomic factors as constituting only 10%. Such an assumption ignores Maté's (2010) critique of the denial in behavioral genetic research of intergenerational transmission of attachment trauma and other systemic factors (including classism, racism, sexism, genderism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression) that can contribute to underfulfillment of Maslow's basic needs. It also insults Maslow's lifelong focus—as the son of working class Russian Jewish immigrants—on social justice (Anne Richards, personal communication, 2003; E. Hoffman, 1988). Indeed, happiness through the lens of traditional positive psychology "looks rather like the face of privilege" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 11). This is not surprising, given that mainstream academia—out of which positive psychology sprouted—tends to "preclude most of the poor and working classes" (Hedges, 2009, p. 101) and to uphold appetites associated with a culture-bound, elitist, late capitalist vision of the good life (Berlant, 2011). Seligman himself has articulated an assumption that today "goods and services are plentiful" and that anxiety and pessimism are unhelpful vestiges of an antiquated past (Ehrenreich, 2009, p. 200). In addition, evidence abounds of positive psychology's ties to big business (Ahmed, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010; Wong & Roy, 2018), which underlies criticisms of positive psychology as "[throwing] a smoke screen over corporate domination, abuse, and greed" (Hedges, 2009, p. 117). In the face of the realization that wealth (Ahmed, 2010) does not spur more happiness, and fueled by scientism's promise of orderliness via rationality as an antidote to the malaise of modernity—"ostensibly so that problematic behaviors can be eliminated and more appropriate ones established" (Williams & Gantt, 2018,

p. 8)—positive psychology has "[fed] off the unhappiness that comes from isolation and the loss of community" in recent decades (Hedges, 2009, p. 137). It has provided "effective coercive persuasion techniques" to enhance performance and efficiency by "banishing criticism and molding a group into a weak and malleable unit that will take orders," thereby "[strangling] creativity and moral autonomy" (Hedges, 2009, pp. 135, 129, 138; see also Purser, 2019).

Thus, how is it possible that the falsehood that Maslow created a theory and founded a movement by fiat, merely plucking his personal heroes from out of the thin air (e.g., Myers, 2010), continues to be passed along unexamined and unchallenged for so long (see also Henry, 2017)? Yet, no critical commentary emerges when Martin Seligman (2019) describes his work with Chris Peterson classifying strengths as follows:

> Our work was pretty one-sided. Chris read and read and thought and thought: early Christian theology, Karl Marx, Buddhist chants, Benjamin Franklin, Islamic virtues. Twice a week over lunch, he told me about strengths and virtues across time and space. He told me about the Lakota virtue of generosity. He told me about the Budo virtue *Rei* (courtesy and etiquette). He told me about Hufflepuffs and their loyalty and hard work. He told me about the Klingon virtue: to avenge insults against the family for seven generations. (p. 10)

We submit that these facts, and many more, are indicative of a dangerous collectivist current running through the culture of the United States and American psychology, which van Kaam (1961) pointed out in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* decades ago (see also DeRobertis, 2021). Returning to Seligman's work, allow us to illustrate. Seligman (2019) concluded his commentary on humanistic psychology by noting that positive psychology arose directly from his dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of mainstream clinical and experimental science. And yet, only a few lines earlier, he criticized Maslow and his so-called followers for breaking ranks with the mainstream on the basis of this same dissatisfaction. What is the meaning of this seeming duality? Seligman extols his own dissatisfaction with mainstream clinical and experimental science after having displayed a fundamental epistemological allegiance to it, weaponizing "mainstream science" as a blanket concept to cast humanistic psychology into the backwater of psychology's historical development. We find this especially curious given that many of Seligman's own followers have acknowledged their debt to humanistic psychology (e.g., Bretherton, 2015; Ryff, 2014) and attempted to build bridges with humanistic psychology (e.g., Joseph & Murphy, 2013; Sheldon & Kasser, 2001; Wong & Roy, 2018). Furthermore, reciprocally,

humanistic psychologists (e.g., Kaufman, 2020; Winston, 2016) have employed Seligman's conceptualization and research to enhance Maslow's humanistic theorizing. These efforts to better infuse positive psychology with humanistic–existential theorizing provide responses to callings for U.S. society (a) to approach happiness "as a possibility" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 220); (b) to develop "better ways of thinking about what a good life would be" that provide alternatives to it being confused for achievement and economic success that beget "people's best creative energy [being] sucked up trying not to drown" (Berlant, 2019, pp. 3, 8); and (c) to better "understand that the measure of a civilization is its compassion" (Hedges, 2009, p. 103).

It appears that Seligman's fundamental claim is that, at the end of the day, no degree of dissatisfaction with the state of psychological science warrants a true, thoroughgoing scientific revolution. One *must* remain blindly allegiant to one's epistemological and methodological underpinning in spite of warnings against such an attitude spanning back to the days of Francis Bacon. Perhaps Seligman (2019) said it best when he proclaimed that positive psychology "is not an exercise in changing values but in helping cultures and individuals better achieve what they *already* value" (p. 10, italics added; see also Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011). It is no wonder then that Seligman has little interest in, knowledge of, or appreciation for humanistic psychology's dedication to methodological pluralism and courageous forays into uncharted territories of research. These are not things that "mainstream" psychology *already* values (Wertz, 2018; Williams & Gantt, 2018).

For the record, let us point out that we, the similarly dissatisfied within the ranks of humanistic psychology, remain appreciative of mainstream psychological science, even as we perpetually seek to widen and deepen its reach into the vastness of human psychological life. In pursuit of an *integrated, inclusive* human science (Bland & DeRobertis, 2019; DeCarvalho, 1991; Madsen, 1971; Wertz, 1998), humanistic psychologists embody Sternberg's (2018) *consummate creativity*—which involves the concurrent defiance of (a) one's typical personal patterns of thinking, experiencing, and relating as well as the conventional assumptions and modus operandi of (b) one's field (i.e., psychology) and (c) one's zeitgeist (i.e., imbalances in life in U.S. society and its global implications; see Bland, 2020). In agreement with Seligman, Maslow *was* ahead of his time, but his work has indeed quite often been regarded as unscientific *because* it was new and challenged the status quo (Olson et al., 2020). Such is typical of genuinely creative work, of which any lasting work of science is a form (Arons, 2020).

Today, humanistic and positive psychology have "much to offer [each] other in terms of method, data, and theory," and "little is to be gained from

insularity" (Rich, 2001, p. 10). A case can be made that neither humanistic nor positive psychology can endure—let alone exist—without the other (Churchill & Mruk, 2014; Schneider, 2014; Wong, 2017), especially in the current polarized climate.

> When we adopt a pluralistic and multidisciplinary approach toward research, the old reductionist versus holistic debate . . . is no longer useful. This pluralistic approach is probably the most promising way to understand complex human phenomena such as meaning and well-being. (Wong, 2017, p. 211)

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