Chapter 6
Region of Northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, & Sweden)

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Cultural, Political, Societal, and Geographic Backgrounds for Positive Psychology in Northern Europe (the Nordic Countries)

The Nordic countries described herein encompass Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the associated countries/territories the Åland Islands (part of Finland), Greenland (part of Denmark), and the Faroe Islands (part of Denmark). Three of the countries—Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—are also known as Scandinavia. Whereas all the Nordic countries share cultural and societal similarities, the Scandinavian countries also share similar languages. People from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway can somewhat easily communicate with each other via using their respective mother tongues.

The Nordic countries cooperate politically—and then, in turn, culturally, financially, and societally—through the organization Nordic Council which was formed in 1952. Further, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden are members of the European Union (EU), and Denmark, Iceland, and Norway are members of the *North* Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Altogether, the population in the Nordic countries is about 25 million people, with Sweden having around ten million, Denmark, Finland, and Norway each around five million, and Iceland around 330,000 citizens. Protestant Christianity is the dominating religion in this region, though the degree of secularization is high (Zuckerman, 2009). The countries are politically stable and known as strong welfare states, a form of government in which the state plays a significant role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. In the following, the several characteristics of the Nordic countries are sketched, which are part of explaining the populations' relatively

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Table 6.1 Demographic overview of the Nordic countries with respect to size of area, number of inhabitants, name of capital city, main official language, and form of government

Country	Area [in km^2]	Inhabitants [in 2015]	Capital	Form of government
Denmark	43,094	5,745,526	Copenhagen	*Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy*
Finland	338,145	5,488,543	Helsingfors	Unitary parliamentary republic
Iceland	103,000	332,529	Reykjavik	Unitary parliamentary republic
Norway	385,199	5,252,166	Oslo	*Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy*
Sweden	449,964	10,004,076	Stockholm	Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Note. Information is taken from the countries national webpages and statistics offices

high levels of happiness and subjective well-being in corresponding investigations. The presentation in this chapter has been based on the structure of Chap. 7 (Western Europe).

The Nordic countries share a climate with dark and cold winters and bright summers. Whereas Iceland, Norway, and partly Sweden are dominated by mountains, Finland and especially Denmark consist of flat landscapes. The climate can be harsh in some regions with long, dark, and cold winters, and bad weather conditions. At the same time, at least in the recent decades, the Nordic countries have not suffered from severe natural disasters. Table 6.1 provides an overview on the Nordic countries demographic characteristics.

All countries are representative democracies. Whereas Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have active royal monarchs, Finland and Iceland have presidents. All of the Nordic countries follow the rules of market economy and have relatively high gross national products (GNP) and low unemployment rates (see Table 6.2 for details). The countries have mixed industries of all kinds including farming and fishing industries, but also low and high tech industries. Norway has currently a very strong economy due to a high production of oil and gas in the North Sea over the last decades. By contrast, Iceland was significantly affected by the global financial crisis in 2008–2011, though it has recovered quickly since then.

All of the Nordic countries are known as active members of the United Nations (UN), and are proactive in working for the implementation of human rights worldwide (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), United Nations (1948)). The Nordic countries are also active in peace keeping activities and international diplomacy.

The countries are also—in relative terms—proactive and successful in working against economic inequality, which should be illustrated with examples from Sweden: Despite an increase in income inequality between the earners since the 1990s, Sweden is one of the OECD countries being most equal. In 2012, the difference in income between the top and the bottom 10% income earners was 6.3 times. Relatedly, the redistributive effect of Sweden's tax and benefit system (people earning more money pay relatively more tax than people having and/or earning

Table 6.2 Overview of the Nordic countries with respect to Unemployment Rate, GDP per capita, Corruption perception, Educational attainment, Human Development Index, PISA Science score, Life expectancy, and Average happiness score

Country	Unemployment rate (percent)	GDP per capita (EUR)	Corruption perception (international rank)	Educational attainment (percent with above primary and lower secondary level)	Human Development Index (HDI) (score/ international rank)	PISA Science (score/ international rank (OECD))	Life expectancy (men/women years)	Happiness World Database (score/ international rank)
Denmark	4.5	53,638	1	67.4	0.923/4	502/21	78.6/82.5	8.4/2
Finland	9.4	38,223	3	No data	0.883/24	531/5	78.5/84.1	7.9/8
Iceland	4.0	51,051	14	65.9	0.899/16	473/39	81.0/83.6	8.1/4
Norway	4.4	75,600	6	70.9	0.944/1	498/24	80.4/84.0	8.0/7
Sweden	7.4	50,331	4	79.3	0.907/14	493/28	80.3/84.0	7.8/11

Note. Information is taken from Focus-Economics.com, Transparency International (2016), Norden.statbank.dk, OECD (2016a), United Nations Development Programme (2015), and Veenhoven (2016)

less money) is also above the OECD average (OECD, 2016b). Next to aiming to limit economic inequality, gender equality is another area in which the Nordic countries tend to be forerunners through active politics and legislation. Easy and cheap access to nurseries and kindergartens, for instance, overall helps both parents of a child to stay at the labor marked. And, indeed, across the countries, between 92 and 98 per cent of all children aged 3–5 years are in daycare institutions—with the exception of Finland where the figure is 74 per cent (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015).

As part of the welfare state model of governance, the Nordic countries strongly emphasize equal and free access to education. In general, no tuition fees have to be paid and cheap loan or even state stipends are offered to all students (in case of Denmark, for instance, see Uddannelses- og Forskningsminiateriet, 2017). Correspondingly, the level of educational attainment is higher as compared to the EU norm: Between 66 and 79 per cent of the citizens have attained an education at least at secondary level (Norden Statbank, 2015). The quality of the educational system is in general found to be fair to good. For instance, in the 2015 survey among 15 year old students in science by The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Finland (mean score 531, rank 5), Denmark (mean score 502, rank 21), Norway (mean score 498, rank 24), Sweden (mean score 493, rank 28), and Iceland (mean score 473, rank 39) performed minimum at the OECD average of 493 (OECD, 2016a; see also Table 6.2).

With regard to safety and criminal rates, the Nordic countries again show relatively fair to good indices as compared to most other countries (e.g., von Hofer et al., 2012). In particular, experienced risk by the citizens is low: Citizens in the Scandinavian countries have reported low levels of feeling at risk for being burgled as well as high levels of safety in the street after dark (van Dijk et al., 2007). Further, compared to other countries in Europe, people in the Nordic countries have relatively high trust in the police and believe that the police is doing a good job (European Social Survey, ESS, 2010). Conceptually related, high public trust is also reflected in a generally high level of trust to state institutions/administration and a low level of perceived corruption. On the Corruption Perception Index 2016 (Transparency International, 2016), Denmark was ranked 1 (out of 176 countries), Finland 3, Sweden 4, Norway 6, and Iceland 14.

Also part of the welfare state model of governance is free and equal access to health care for all citizens. Life expectancy is between 82 and 85 years of age for women and between 78 and 81 years of age for men in all of the Nordic countries (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015). Further, the Human Development Index (The United Nations Development Programme, 2015) aggregates information on (1) life expectancy at birth, (2) expected years of schooling, (3) mean years of schooling, and (4) gross national income (GNI) per capita to a composite index. Among all countries in the world, Norway has ranked the highest score (rank 1, index of 0.944), followed—from the Nordic countries—by Denmark (rank 4, index .923), Sweden (rank 14, index .0907), Iceland (rank 16, index .899), and Finland (rank 24, index 0.883). Thus, all of the Nordic countries are among the top half of countries with "very high human development" (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Finally, and of special relevance for positive psychology, the Nordic countries all have a high score on the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven, 2016). In this index, citizens in the different countries have to respond to the question "Taking all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life-as-a-whole these days?" on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. Among the Nordic countries, Denmark had the highest score with 8.4 (rank 2 out of 159 countries), followed by Iceland 8.1 (rank 4), Norway 8.0 (rank 7), Finland 7.9 (rank 8), and Sweden 7.8 (rank 11; see also Table 6.2). Several of the characteristics mentioned above have in research studies shown to be associated with the high levels of happiness. For instance, good access and high levels of education, equality, low levels of corruption, quality of governance, and political freedom have found to be positively associated with happiness (Veenhoven, 2015).

Overall, the Nordic countries perform well on many economical, health, political and societal characteristics, which have been suggest to affect people's levels of happiness (Veenhoven, 2015) and other important positive psychological outcomes. Correspondingly, many positive psychology researchers in the Nordic countries are interested in investigating how specific aspects of the Nordic countries' welfare state model of governance are associated with individual subjective well-being. Another example is research in promoting subjective well-being among students in the primary and secondary school—a focus strongly emphasized in the aims of the new Danish school reform (Ministry of Education, 2014). Next, we introduce main positive psychologists in the Nordic countries.

Methods

Participants

In order to provide an overview of the state of Positive Psychology in Northern Europe, we prepared a survey targeted at positive psychologists in this region. To identify positive psychologists, we searched among various research groups associated with universities in the Northern countries and, from the title and/or self-description presented on the internet, potentially working in the field of Positive Psychology. Additionally, we searched among authors who have published in leading Positive Psychology journals (e.g., *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *Journal of Positive Psychology*). Finally, at the end of the survey, we presented a list of the positive psychologist identified by us, and asked the participants if they know other researchers associated with the field of Positive Psychology in Northern Europe that have not been identified by us. On the base of our search, we sent an invitation to 32 positive psychologists (or research groups), out of which 12 participated in the survey (including two reminders). The following presentation is mainly based upon this survey. Importantly, though, please note that the list of the introduced researchers below is not exhaustive at all, and that our search allows us to provide a tentative overview of the field only.

Measures and Procedure

We set up an online survey using the open-source survey platform formr (www.formr.org; Arslan et al., 2018). First, participants were provided with general information about the book chapter, and they were asked to provide consent to participate in the survey. Following that, they were asked if they consider themselves to do research in Positive Psychology. All of the participants replied 'yes' to this question. Afterwards, we asked participants about their country of origin, the university in which they obtained their PhD, and the field of their PhD. Next, participants were asked to indicate their research interests and publications in the field of Positive Psychology, and to sketch the state, development, and current challenges of Positive Psychology in their country. Following that, we asked participants to list: associations related to Positive Psychology that they belong to (for a list of associations; see Table 6.3), journals related to Positive Psychology that they are/were editors of, courses related to Positive Psychology that they teach, and any other information relevant for the book chapter. Then, participants could describe their point of view concerning the state and challenges of Positive Psychology in Europe—we have integrated these comments in our discussion about the field at the end of this chapter. Finally, participants were provided with the list of positive psychologists we identified for the book chapter, and asked if they would like to recommend any other researcher to be invited to participate in the survey.

Results

In the following, we describe researchers in the field of Positive Psychology from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Each section includes information about researchers who provided answers in our survey, and more general information about other identified positive psychologists. As noted above, it is not an exhaustive list, and other researchers associated with the field can be found, e.g., among the co-authors of the cited references or on the websites listed in the 'Resources' section at the end of this chapter. Below, we present *Hans Henrik Knoop*, *Poul Nissen*, *Frans Ørsted Andersen*, and the *Happiness Research Institut* (Denmark); *Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir* and *Dóra Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir* (Iceland); *Jari Hakanen*, *Anne Makikangas*, and *Frank Martela* (Finland); *Rolv Mikkel Blakar*, *Erik Carlquist*, *Jarle Eid*, *Sigurd William Hystad*, *Hilde Eileen Nafstad*, *Ragnhild Bang Nes*, *Espel Røysamb*, *Joar Vittersø*, and *Bente Wold* (Norway); and *Bengt*

Table 6.3 Overview of existing positive psychological associations

Name	Website
European Flow Research Network (EFRN)	https://efrn.webs.com/
European Network for Positive Psychology (ENPP)	http://enpp.eu/
International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA)	http://www.ippanetwork.org/

Brülde, *Krister Bykvist*, *Daiva Daukantaitė*, *Danilo Garcia*, *Laszlo Harmat*, *and Carolina Lundqvist* (Sweden; for an overview, see Table 6.4). We aimed to update the information as good as possible, but would like to note that it is likely that in the time span of the publication process some of the researchers took on other responsibilities, got promoted, changed the university, conducted research with a different focus (in and outside Positive Psychology) etc.

Denmark

Hans Henrik Knoop is an Associate Professor at Aarhus University. He obtained his PhD in Psychology at the Danish University of Education. His research work focuses on flourishing and well-being in education (e.g. Knoop, 2011, 2013, 2016), the work life (e.g. Knoop, 2014), and the society (e.g. Knoop & Delle Fave, 2013). He is a member of the Council of Advisors of the *International Positive Psychology Association* and an Executive Board Member of the *European Network for Positive Psychology*. From 2010 to 2014, he was the President of the *European Network for Positive Psychology*. Furthermore, he is a member of the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology.* Additionally, he is one of the coordinators of the master program in Positive Psychology at the Aarhus University, and he supervised two PhD theses on resilience and character strengths, respectively. He has also given numerous talks in and outside Denmark, invited by both public and private institutions.

Poul Nissen is an Associate Professor at Aarhus University. He obtained his PhD at the University of Lund in Sweden. His research interests involve psychological assessment and intervention (e.g., Nissen, 2011a; Nissen et al., 2014) with an emphasis on tools assessing talent development (e.g., Nissen, 2011b; Nissen & Lemire, 2017). Furthermore, he teaches at the master program in Positive Psychology at the Aarhus University (specifically "*Individual Strengths and Well-being*" and "*Learning Environments in the Perspectives of Positive Psychology*").

Frans Ørsted Andersen is an Associate Professor at Aarhus University where he also obtained his PhD in Educational Psychology. His research interests include Nordic comparative educational research (e.g., Andersen, 2010), development of new methods in Positive Psychology (e.g., Nissen et al., 2014), and flow research (e.g., Andersen, 2016; Harmat et al., 2016). He is also a member of the European Positive Psychology Network, the European Flow Research Network, and Positiv Psykologi i Virkeligheden (a Danish Alumni Network related to Positive Psychology). Furthermore, he is a teacher at the master program in Positive Psychology and Educational Psychology at the Aarhus University.

Additionally, we would like to mention the *Happiness Research Institute*, an independent think tank in Copenhagen. Their main research field includes happiness, subjective well-being, and quality of life (Andreasson & Birkjær, 2018; LEO Innovation Lab & Happiness Research Center, 2017).

Table 6.4 Overview of selected positive psychologists presented in the chapter at hand

Name	Email	Website(s)	Location
Anne Makikangas	anne.makikangas@tuni.fi	https://www.tuni.fi/en/anne-makikangas	Finland
Bengt Brülde	flov@flov.gu.se	https://www.gu.se/english/about_the_university/staff/?languageId=100001&userId=xbrube	Sweden
Bente Wold	bente.wold@uib.no	https://www.uib.no/personer/Bente.Wold	Sweden
Carolina Lundqvist	carolina.lundqvist@liu.se	https://liu.se/en/employee/carlu42	Sweden
Daiva Daukantaitė	daiva.daukantaite@psy.lu.se	https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/lucat/user/662aa2933b6cc9858411746fc94bda9e	Sweden
Danilo Garcia	danilo.garcia@icloud.com	https://celam.gu.se/svenska/om-oss/personal/danilo-garcia	Sweden
Dóra Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir	dora@publichealth.is	https://www.landlaeknir.is/um-embaettid/starfsfolk/nanar/item107/	Iceland
Erik Carlquist	erik.carlquist@psykologi.uio.no	https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/english/people/aca/erikc/	Norway
Espel Røysamb	espen.roysamb@psykologi.uio.no	https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/personer/vit/espenro/	Norway
Frank Martela	frank.martela@gmail.com	https://frankmartela.com/	Finland
Frans Ørsted Andersen	frans@edu.au.dk	http://pure.au.dk/portal/da/fran@dpu.dk	Denmark
Hans Henrik Knoop	knoop@edu.au.dk	https://pure.au.dk/portal/da/persons/hans-henrik-knoop(309c5cfb-5430-4 dc1-aa41-5c80651b924b).html	Denmark
the Happiness Research Institute	info@happinessresearchinstitute.com	https://www.happinessresearchinstitute.com/	Denmark
Hilde Eileen Nafstad	h.e.nafstad@psykologi.uio.no	https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/english/people/aca/hnafstad/index.html?vrtx=tags	Norway
Jari Hakanen	jari.hakanen@ttl.fi	https://www.ttl.fi/en/henkilot/jari-hakanen/	Finland
Jarle Eid	jarle.eid@uib.no	https://www.uib.no/personer/B.Eid	Norway
Joar Vittersø	joar.vitterso@uit.no	https://uit.no/om/enhet/ansatte/person?p_document_id=42316&p_dimension_id=88120	Norway
Krister Bykvist	krister.bykvist@iffs.se	https://www.iffs.se/en/research/researchers/krister-bykvist/	Sweden
Laszlo Harmat	laszlo.harmat@lnu.se	https://lnu.se/en/staff/laszlo.harmat/	Sweden

Poul Nissen	pn@mbg.au.dk	https://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/poul-nissen(f7a1f833-0117-497e-b031-37354c4a1fb2).html	Denmark
Ragnhild Bang Nes	r.b.nes@psykologi.uio.no	https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/personer/vit/rbnes/index.html	Norway
Rolv Mikkel Blakar	r.m.blakar@psykologi.uio.no	https://www.sum.uio.no/english/research/networks/norlarnet/research/researchers/rolv-mikkel-blakar/	Norway
Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir	sa@hi.is	http://uni.hi.is/sa/en/	Iceland
Sigurd William Hystad	sigurd.hystad@uib.no	https://www.uib.no/personer/Sigurd.William.Hystad	Norway

Finland

Jari Hakanen is a Research Professor at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. He obtained his PhD in Social Psychology at the University of Helsinki. His interests resolve around positive and work psychology. He is especially focused on job crafting (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2017), burnout (e.g., Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012; Hakanen et al., 2008), and positive gain spirals at work (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2008, 2011). He is actively involved in teaching—giving around 30 lectures and workshops annually in various organizations and universities around Europe.

Anne Mäkikanga is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Tempere. She completed her PhD in Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä. Her research interests include positive personality traits and dispositions (e.g., Mäkikangas et al., 2013), job crafting (e.g., Mäkikangas, 2018; Mäkikangas et al., 2016, 2017), and employee well-being (with emphasis on work engagement and flow at work, e.g., Mäkikangas et al., 2010). She is involved in teaching on job crafting and on a positive psychology view on personality in Personality Psychology as well as in Work and Organizational Psychology courses.

Frank Martela is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. He obtained his PhD in Applied Philosophy and Organizational Research at the Aalto University in Finland. His research interests involve, among others, meaning of life and work (Martela et al., 2018; Martela & Steger, 2016), prosocial behavior (Martela & Ryan, 2016), and self-determination theory and basic psychological needs (Martela & Riekki, 2018). He is involved in teaching courses related to positive psychology at the Aalto University—specifically, "*Human potential*" and "*Designing life: Finding motivation, direction, and meaning to life and work*".

Iceland

Concerning Iceland, we would like to name *Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir* who is a Professor at the University in Iceland interested in, among other things, teachers' professional development and the social and civic development of children (e.g., Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010; Aðalbjarnardóttir & Selman, 1997). Additionally, we would like to name *Dóra Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir*, affiliated with the Directorate of Health in Iceland, who works on topics such as relation between happiness and economic crisis (Gudmundsdottir, 2013) and between positive psychology and public health (Guðmundsdóttir, 2011).

Norway

Rolv Mikkel Blakar is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Oslo where he also completed his PhD in Social Psychology. His area of interest involves societal psychology with a focus on how ideological development is reflected in changes in the language of public discourse (newspaper language; e.g., Carlquist et al., 2017; Nafstad et al., 2013), and everyday understanding of well-being related concepts (e.g., Carlquist et al., 2017, 2018).

Hilde Eileen Nafstad is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Oslo where she also completed her PhD in Social-Developmental Psychology. Her research field include historical and philosophical perspectives that have contributed to the development of Positive Psychology (e.g., Nafstad, 2015), ideologies (Nafstad et al., 2013), well-being (Bahl et al., 2017), and analysis of public discourse (Carlquist et al., 2017; Türken et al., 2016). Additionally, she is a member of the *International Positive Psychology Association* (IPPA) and of the *European Network for Positive Psychology* (ENPP), and a board member of the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

Espel Røysamb is a Professor at the University of Oslo where he also completed his PhD in Psychology. His research field includes various aspects of subjective well-being with a particular focus on genetic and environmental predictors of well-being (Røysamb & Nes, 2018; Røysamb et al., 2003), and also linking relationship quality (Dyrdal et al., 2011; Gustavson et al., 2014) and personality to well-being (Røysamb et al., 2018).

Joar Vittersø is a Professor at the Arctic University of Norway who obtained his PhD in Psychology at the University of Oslo. His work focuses on the concept of wellbeing and the meaning of a good life, including links between personality traits and subjective well-being and happiness (Vittersø, 2001; Vittersø & Nilsen, 2002). Furthermore, his work also focuses on the cultural variation in subjective well-being (Biswas-Diener et al., 2005; Huppert et al., 2009).

Bente Wold is a Professor and a Dean at the University of Bergen where she also obtained her PhD. Her research work focuses on health promotion and health promotion evaluation (Wold & Mittelmark, 2018), and on positive youth development and health behaviors (Løvoll et al., 2016; Wold et al., 2013, 2016).

Furthermore, we would like to mention *Erik Carlquist* who is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oslo focusing on, among other topics, the meaning of well-being and related constructs (Carlquist et al., 2017, 2017, 2018). Also, we would like to name *Ragnhild Bang Nes* who is an Associate Professor at the University of Oslo whose work includes well-being (Nes et al., 2014) and genetic aspects of happiness (Nes, 2010; Nes & Røysamb, 2017). *Sigurd William Hystad* is an Associate Professor at the University of Bergen interested in psychological hardiness and resilience (Hystad, 2012; Hystad & Bye, 2013; Hystad et al., 2015). *Jarle Eid* is a Professor at the University of Bergen who is also interested in hardiness and resilience (Eid et al., 2004; Eid & Morgan, 2006).

Sweden

Bengt Brülde is a Professor at the University of Gothenburg interested in, among other topics, theories of happiness and a good life (Brülde, 2007a, 2007b, 2010). *Krister Bykvist* is a Professor at the Stockholm University whose work involves theories of happiness (Brülde & Bykvist, 2010; Bykvist, 2010) and well-being (Bykvist, 2002). *Daiva Daukantaitė* is a Senior Lecturer at Lund University. Her research includes subjective well-being (e.g. Daukantaitė & Zukauskiene, 2012) with a focus on women's subjective well-being (e.g., Daukantaite & Bergman, 2005; Daukantaite & Zukauskiene, 2006). *Danilo Garcia* is an Associate Professor at the University of Gothenburg and a director of the Blekinge Center of Competence in Blekinge, Sweden. His research focuses on the relation between personality traits and individuals' well-being and happiness (e.g., Garcia, 2011; Garcia & Erlandsson, 2011). *Laszlo Harmat* is an Associate Senior Lecturer at the Linnaeus University whose research includes flow experience (e.g., Harmat et al., 2016) and music psychology (e.g., Eriksson et al., 2017). *Carolina Lundqvist* is an Associate Professor at the Stockholm University. Her work focuses on well-being and quality of life among elite athletes (e.g., Lundqvist, 2011; Lundqvist & Kenttä, 2010; Lundqvist & Raglin, 2015; Lundqvist & Sandin, 2014).

Discussion About Positive Psychology in the Northern Countries

Discussing the state and outlook of Positive Psychology in the Northern countries is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, there is, compared to other countries, a large focus on people's well-being in the Northern countries from a cultural, political, and societal perspective. Correspondingly, it is well accepted that there should be—and, in fact, it is expected that there *are*—political and organizational efforts to support people's well-being, in line with core themes within Positive Psychology. On the other hand, this general acceptance of Positive Psychology themes might make it also more difficult to shed light on the field of Positive Psychology. For instance, researchers across many psychological fields in the Northern countries conduct research around people's happiness, health, stress, and well-being (e.g., in Educational or Organizational Psychology, let alone Clinical Psychology), without considering themselves to represent or to be rooted in Positive Psychology. Thus, the state of Positive Psychology in the Nordic countries might be perceived as rather either positive—its core themes are well reflected in the media, public discussions, research in general etc.—or critical—not too many researchers and organizations identify themselves as Positive Psychologists.

That the Nordic countries successfully emphasize the role of people's well-being can be seen in the fact that all Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are ranked relatively high across different international happiness' (or similar

constructs') indexes, although the exact ranks might differ from survey to survey. The overall relatively high levels of happiness (and related outcomes) can, at least partially, be explained be different cultural, political, societal, and geographic characteristics of the Nordic countries. For instance, at least in the recent decades, the Nordic countries have suffered relatively seldom from severe natural disasters. Further, for years now, the countries have aimed to limit both economic and gender-related inequalities, and have been, compared to other countries, relatively successful in this. From a political-societal perspective, there is a huge acceptance to invest efforts aiming to facilitate people's well-being (e.g., increasing work-life balance), also in considerations of other potentially important aims that politics or organizations could target in particular. For instance, in a recently conducted school reform concerning the Danish primary school system, a very strong focus has been put on supporting children's well-being. Reflecting this societal perspective, many researchers in the Nordic countries work with themes related to Positive Psychology (e.g., work engagement), disseminate knowledge to society, and there are corresponding Master programs. So, what are the challenges of Positive Psychology in the Nordic countries?

In the following, we will describe three main, rather general, challenges—as well as ideas to overcome them—, derived from our search of Positive Psychology researchers in the Northern countries and the responses of the participants in our survey (see above). The first challenge is that the actual number of researchers being easily recognized as positive psychologists—e.g., via publications in corresponding journals or self-descriptions on their website—is relatively low, as compared to the number of researchers working obviously related to Positive Psychology. Thus, researchers who self-identify themselves as Positive Psychology researchers might aim to bridge the gap to researchers working on similar topics, but from a different angle. This might make Positive Psychology research conducted in the Northern countries more visible in corresponding journals or at corresponding conferences.

Second, and relatedly, the (self-identifying) Positive Psychology researchers within the Nordic countries are not always connected to each other that well, as indicated, for instance, by relatively few shared publications with researchers from different institutions (yet alone countries), symposia at international conferences, or the (relative) lack of joint organizations, websites, project proposals etc. Consequently, researchers might aim to strengthen collaborations, both with other Positive Psychologists as well as with researchers from (at first glance) other fields.

Finally, given the popularity of Positive Psychology themes in the Nordic countries in general, some people label themselves (or their work) within this theme and counsel politics or organizations, write (self-help) books to the public audience, or otherwise function as experts, without necessarily providing evidence-based knowledge. Thus, it seems crucial for Positive Psychologists in the Nordic countries to make clear which ideas and interventions have been found to work scientifically, to provide proper guidance to people and society at large. Clearly, this problem—communication of evidence-based knowledge, as compared to not (yet) evidence-based knowledge, so that people and organizations can differentiate this—applies to many scientific fields across the globe. However, it appears to (also) be a

particular challenge of Positive Psychology in the Northern countries, because topics from the field are so appealing to people and organizations that it is seldom asked for the scientific evidence if someone presents an idea on how to facilitate people's life.

Overall, this chapter aimed to provide an overview of Positive Psychology in the Nordic countries. Clearly, the provided information are not more than a first toe-hold and have not covered all researchers, research groups, and initiatives (in a sufficient detail). However, it might serve as a starting point for exploring which researchers—and at which universities—internationally visible, evidence-based Positive Psychology is being conducted. Crucially, the political and societal surrounding (including, e.g., impressive National registers comprising important real-life data of the citizens across most Nordic counties) have and can further strongly facilitate Positive Psychology-based research and practical interventions.

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