



“The mystery
of human
existence lies
not just in
staying alive,
but in finding
something to
live for.”

Fyodor Dostoyevsky
The Brothers Karamazov

PURPOSE

Contact: Mary Ann Meyers, Ph.D., *Senior Fellow*

What is meaning? The premise with which we begin is that the question of meaning lies at the heart of who we are as persons—and that purpose is a key component of meaning. The meaning people pursue and experience can be broadly categorized as “everyday” or “ultimate,” that is, involving or resulting from, in the first case, attempts to structure relationships and environments so as to effectively engage in short-term, goal-directed actions or, in the second case, attempts to achieve broad goals across an extended temporal span in a universe where human action matters. The hypothesis underlying the symposium is that the human sense of meaningfulness integrates other fundamental aspects of life, including love, work, coping with misfortune, and facing mortality.

Understanding what meaning is would be a big step toward enabling people to get more of something they value. An emerging perspective among some social scientists is that meaning is a non-physical connection, that is, the symbolic relationship between one physical object and another. Another perspective is that meaning is the potential organization of physical matter. But if we allow ideas to be non-physical connections, then how do ideas cause behavior? Or don't they?

The purpose of this symposium is to probe the nature of meaning by examining, in the first place, how people develop a sense of meaning, in particular, the psychological mechanisms that contribute to it, as well as significant antecedents and environmental (especially familial), cognitive, and personality variables that bear on the experience of meaning across life spans. Participants will also consider how a sense of transcendent meaning may be used to help people explain the past and choose the future.

Questions to be addressed will include: What is the relationship between purpose and meaning? Are they the same? Is meaning discovered or invented? Do people have an innate drive to seek meaning in events and things? Are they hard-wired to look for meaning in life? How do people find meaning in life? What impedes people from finding it? What makes one purpose more meaningful than another? Characterizing some event as meaningful or meaningless may often be more an emotional than a cognitive response. Does that mean that meaningfulness is an emotion?

What makes one life more meaningful than another—in other words, precisely how does the life full of purpose and meaning differ from the life lacking purpose and meaning (e.g., in terms of beliefs, emotions, social bonds, faith, hope)? How do we measure meaningfulness? How do people regain meaning after a loss or failure? Does religion make a unique contribution to the psychological experience of meaning in an individual life?

The probe for answers brings together eleven researchers from psychology and philosophy in the seaside city of Barcelona. Located on the northeast coast of the Iberian Peninsula, Barcelona is the cosmopolitan capital of Spain's Catalonia region with fabled architectural treasures that span 2,000 years.

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"We shall not cease
from exploration
And the end of
all our exploring
Will be to have
arrived where
we started
And know the
place for
the first time."

T.S. Eliot
Little Gidding

APPROACH

The symposium is part of the John Templeton Foundation's Humble Approach Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to bring about the discovery of new spiritual information by furthering high-quality scientific research. The "humble approach" is inherently interdisciplinary, sensitive to nuance, and biased in favor of building linkages and connections. It assumes an openness to new ideas and a willingness to experiment. Placing high value upon patience and perseverance, it retains a sense of wondering expectation because it recognizes, in Loren Eiseley's haunting phrase, "a constant emergent novelty in nature that does not lie totally behind us, or we would not be where we are." A fundamental principle of the Foundation, in the words of its founder, is that "humility is a gateway to greater understanding and open[s] the doors to progress" in all endeavors. Sir John Templeton believed that in their quest to comprehend foundational realities, scientists, philosophers, and theologians have much to learn about and from one another. The humble approach is intended as a corrective to parochialism. It encourages discovery and seeks to accelerate its pace.

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CHAIRS

One of the world's most influential psychologists, Roy F. Baumeister is the Eppes Eminent Scholar and a professor of psychology at Florida State University. He is internationally known for his research in social psychology that spans topics ranging from the human need to belong and the effects of rejection to how people seek to make their lives meaningful, the interpersonal consequences of forgiveness, and the physiology of willpower. Ongoing studies also include work related to the psychology of choosing, particularly the role of conscious processes in decision-making, and investigations of self-destructive behavior that shows the limits of human rationality. A summa cum laude graduate of Princeton University, Dr. Baumeister studied at the University of Heidelberg, took an M.A. in psychology at Duke University, and received his Ph.D. in experimental social psychology from Princeton in 1978. After holding a National Institute of Mental Health postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied personality and social structure, he joined the psychology faculty at Case Western Reserve University as an assistant professor in 1979. He was named a full professor a decade later and awarded the E. Smith Professorship in the Liberal Arts in 1992, a post he held until accepting his present chair at Florida State in 2003. Dr. Baumeister has been a visiting associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin, a visiting professor at the Max Planck Institute in Munich, the University of Virginia, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and VU University Amsterdam, a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, and a residential fellow at the Russell Sage Foundation. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Psychological Society, and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), he received the highest award given by the Association for Psychological Science, the William James Fellow Award, in 2013 in recognition of his lifetime achievements. Dr. Baumeister is also a co-recipient of a Mensa Award for Excellence in Research, the winner of the SPSP's Distinguished Service Award and its Jack Block Award for Distinguished Contributions to Personality Psychology, the International Network for Personal Meaning's Lifetime Achievement Award, a Distinguished Lifetime Career Contribution Award from the International Society for Self and Identity, Germany's Alexander von Humboldt Research Award, and the Scientific Impact Award of the Society for Experimental Social Psychology. The author of more than 550 articles published in major academic journals or in volumes of collected works, he is the co-editor (with Kathleen D. Vohs) of SAGE's 2007 Encyclopedia of Social Psychology, and the editor of twelve books, including, most recently, (with Alfred R. Mele and Kathleen D. Vohs) *Free Will and Consciousness: How Might They Work?* (2010), (with E. J. Finkel) *Advanced Social Psychology* (2010), and (with Kathleen D. Vohs) two multiple-volume sets in the SAGE Library in Social Science series, *New Directions in Social Psychology* (2012) and *The Self and Identity* (2012). Dr. Baumeister is also the author of fifteen other books, including: *Meanings of Life* (1991), the oft-cited study in which he explores what empirical studies from diverse fields tell us about how people attempt to make sense of

their lives; *The Cultural Animal: Human Nature, Meaning, and Social Life* (2005) in which he argues that culture shaped human evolution and that nature selected individual human beings to be part of society; a textbook (with B. J. Bushman) that is going into its fourth edition, *Social Psychology and Human Nature* (2008, 2011, 2014, and forthcoming in 2016); and *Is There Anything Good about Men?* (2010). His newest book, with science journalist John Tierney, is the best-selling *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*, an accessible, empirically-grounded guide to self-control published in 2011 by Penguin Press, which draws on his research showing that willpower is lot like a muscle in that it can be fatigued with overuse and toned up by exercise— and that, with intelligence, it is the best predictor of a successful and satisfying life.

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Adam Kent Fetterman is a lecturer in psychology at the University of Essex whose research bridges the fields of social, personality, and cognitive psychology. His focus is emotion, both how people conceptualize their emotions and how emotions impact decision-making and behavior. He has worked particularly on the scope and consequences of metaphoric thinking with an emphasis on how metaphors shape and reflect thoughts, feelings, and actions. A summa cum laude graduate of St. Cloud State University, Dr. Fetterman earned a Ph.D. in social, personality, and health psychology in 2013 at North Dakota State University, where he was awarded a doctoral dissertation fellowship. He spent the next two years as a postdoctoral researcher in the Social Processes Laboratory at the Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien (Knowledge Media Research Center) in Tuübingen, Germany. He was appointed to his present university position last fall. The associate editor of In Mind Magazine and a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Research in Personality, Dr. Fetterman is the author of more than thirty papers published in scientific journals.

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Kathleen D. Vohs, Land O'Lakes Chair in Marketing at the Carlson School of Management of the University of Minnesota, has an extensive background in psychology. She applies her understanding of psychological science to business issues in order to advance new areas of marketing research. Her research specialties include self-regulation, self-esteem, the psychology of money, meaningfulness in life, and heterosexual sexual relations as predicted by economic principles. A summa cum laude graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, she earned her Ph.D. in psychological and brain sciences at Dartmouth College in 2000. After post-doctoral fellowships at Case Western Reserve University and the University of Utah, she joined the faculty of the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia in 2003 as an assistant professor of marketing and the holder of the Canada Research Chair in Marketing Science and Consumer Psychology. She moved on to Minnesota as an assistant professor of marketing in 2005 and was subsequently named McKnight Land-Grant Professor, McKnight Presidential Fellow, and Land O'Lakes Professor of Excellence in Marketing before being appointed to her present position. Dr. Vohs has been a summer scholar at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University and a residential fellow at the Russell Sage Foundation. She is currently honorary chair in experimental consumer research on the Faculty of Economics and Business at Groningen University in The Netherlands. A fellow of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology and the Association for Psychological Science, she is a recipient of Dartmouth's Hannah T. Croasdale Graduate Study Award, the Mensa Award for Excellence in Research, the SAGE Young Scholars Award in the field of social and personality psychology, the International Society for Self and Identity Outstanding Early Career Award, the Free Will Essay Prize given by the John Templeton Foundation, the Anneliese Maier Research Award of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the Carlson School of Management's Top Researcher Award. Dr. Vohs was named one of the Best Business School Professors under 40 in 2014 by the Poets & Quants news website, and in 2015 she was named a Highly Cited Researcher by Thompson Reuters, an honor bestowed on the top 1% of scholars in terms of citations. She currently serves on the editorial boards of *Compass*, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Neuroscience*, *Psychology*, and *Economics*, *Psychological Science*, and the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology: General*. The author of more than 160 articles published in scholarly journals or chapters in volumes of collected works, she has written invited articles for *Scientific American*, *The New York Times*, and *Science*. She is the editor (with Roy F. Baumeister) of SAGE's 2007 *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology* and of six other books, including (with Roy F. Baumeister) *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (2004, 2011, and 2016), (with Roy F. Baumeister and Alfred R. Mele) *Free Will and Consciousness: How Might They Work?* (2010), and, most recently, (with Roy F. Baumeister) the two multiple-volume sets in the SAGE Library in Social Science series, *New Directions in Social Psychology* (2012) and *The*

Self and Identity (2012).

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An associate professor of psychology at the University of Kansas, Mark J. Landau studies the influence of metaphor on social thought and behavior, including political attitudes and perceptions of meaning in life. He also investigates how people manage existential questions of mortality, control, and attachment, and the impact of those processes on ideology and social perceptions. A graduate of Skidmore College, Dr. Landau earned his Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Arizona in 2007. He then joined the Kansas faculty as an assistant professor and was promoted to his present position in 2013. The recipient of a New Faculty Research Fund Award and a Leading Light Award from Kansas, he also is the winner of a Theoretical Innovation Prize given by the Society for Personal and Social Psychology, a SAGE Young Scholars Award, and an Outstanding Early Career Award given by the International Society for Self and Identity. He serves as a consulting editor for the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes* and as a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* and of *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*. Dr. Landau has published nearly ninety papers in academic journals or in volumes of collected works. He is the editor (with Michael D. Robinson and Brian P. Meier) of *The Power of Metaphor: Examining Its Influence on Social Life* (2014) and the author (with Jeff Greenberg, Toni Schmader, and Jamie Arndt) of *Social Psychology: The Science of Everyday Life*, a textbook published in 2015 by W. H. Freeman & Company. He is presently completing a new book that explores the role that metaphoric thinking plays in social life.

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The Meaning of MEANING

An Exploration of the Psychology of Purpose
Hotel Casa Camper • Barcelona, Spain • 16, 17, and 18 April 2016

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Cristine H. Legare is an associate professor of psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. Her research examines the interplay of the universal human mind and the variations of human culture to address fundamental questions about cognitive evolution and cultural learning. She takes an interdisciplinary approach to examining cognitive development in diverse cultural contexts. Director of UT Austin's Cognition, Culture, and Development Lab, Dr. Legare is also a faculty affiliate of both the Centre for the Study of Human Evolution, Cognition, and Culture and the Cultural Evolution of Religion Research Consortium at the University of British Columbia, as well as a faculty associate of the Centre for Anthropology and Mind (CAM) at Oxford University. She studies how humans flexibly respond and adapt in differing ontogenetic contexts and cultural ecologies by integrating theory and methodology from cognitive and evolutionary anthropology and developmental, educational, and evolutionary psychology. Ongoing work includes studying how children use imitation and innovation as dual engines of cultural learning. She has conducted extensive field work in southern Africa and is currently doing research in Brazil, China, and Vanuatu (a Melanesian archipelago), using both experimental and ethnographic methods. A graduate of the University of California, San Diego, Dr. Legare earned a Ph.D. in developmental psychology at the University of Michigan in 2008. She joined the faculty of UT Austin that same year and was appointed to her present position in 2014. Her research has been widely published in developmental, cognitive, and general psychology journals and has been covered by a range of media, including National Public Radio, Nature, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and Scientific American. She was recognized by the American Psychological Association's 2015 Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformative Early Career Contributions and its 2016 Boyd McCandless Award for her research on the evolution and ontogeny of cognition and culture.

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The Henry Wade Rogers Professor of Psychology and a professor of human development and social policy at Northwestern University, Dan P. McAdams is a leader in the recent emergence within the social sciences of narrative approaches to studying human lives. His work in the areas of personality and life-span developmental psychology led him to formulate the influential life-story theory of human identity, which argues that modern adults provide their lives with a sense of unity and purpose by constructing and internalizing self-defining life stories or “personal myths.” Since 1997, he has served as founding director of Northwestern’s Foley Center for the Study of Lives, an interdisciplinary research endeavor focusing on psychological and social development in the adult years. A graduate of Valparaiso University, where he received his degree with highest distinction, Dr. McAdams earned a Ph.D. in psychology and social relations at Harvard University in 1979. He taught at St. Olaf’s College, the University of Minnesota, and Loyola University in Chicago before joining the Northwestern faculty as a professor of education and social policy in 1989. He held the Charles Deering McCormick Professorship of Teaching Excellence at Northwestern for three years and was named to his present chair in 2012. Currently president of the Association for Research Personality, he delivered the G. Stanley Hall Lectures at the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2004 and the APA’s Master Lecture last year. Dr. McAdams is the recipient of honorary degrees from Valparaiso University and the University of Basel. A fellow of the APA, the Association for Psychological Science, and the Society for Personality Assessment, he is a recipient of the Jack Block Award as well as the Henry A. Murray Award from the Society of Personality and Social Psychology and the APA’s Theodore Sarbin Award. He currently serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, the European Journal of Personality, Theory and Psychology, and Psychological Inquiry. He is the author of more than 200 papers published in scientific journals and in volumes of collected works. The editor of ten books, including (with Amia Lieblich and Ruthellen Josselson) the eleven-book series entitled The Narrative Study of Lives for the APA Press, his most recent edited volume, (with Joseph Carroll and E. O. Wilson) Darwin’s Bridge: Uniting the Humanities and Sciences, is a study forthcoming from Oxford University Press that explores the meaning of consilience and considers the trajectory of

human evolution in essays that reveal just how far we have come toward unifying knowledge about the human species. Dr. McAdams is also the author of six other books, including: a leading college text in personality psychology, *The Person: An Introduction to the Science of Personality Psychology* (2000), which is now in its fifth edition; *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (2006 and 2013), winner of the APA's Division 1 William James Award for the best general-interest book in psychology; *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait* (2011); and *The Art and Science of Personality Development*, a comprehensive theory of how people come to be who they are over the life course, which was published by Guilford Press last year.

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Ian McGregor is a professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo. His research focuses on core motivational processes that humans share with other vertebrates. He investigates how dispositional and circumstantial factors interact to affect enigmatic phenomena like meaning of life, moral conviction, and even religious extremism. A focus in much of his work relates to the surprising power of abstract ideals and values to mobilize human motivation and resilience. Most recently, he has found converging behavioral, neural, and self-report evidence that focusing on moral values can downregulate anxious distress, improve vigor, and foster forgiveness. A graduate of the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, Dr. McGregor took an honors B.A. and an M.A. at Carleton University and earned a Ph.D. in psychology at Waterloo in 1998. He did postdoctoral research at Northwestern University and joined the psychology faculty of York University as an assistant professor in 1999. Appointed a full professor at York in 2012, he accepted his present position last year. Dr. McGregor serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, the European Journal of Social Psychology, and Social Psychological and Personality Science. He is the author some fifty papers published in scientific journals and in volumes of collected works.

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A professor of philosophy at the University of Arizona, Shaun Nichols is the co-director of Arizona's Experimental Philosophy Lab where research is focused on intuitive judgments that figure in philosophical inquiry. His early work was concerned primarily with questions of theory of mind. For the past twelve years, he has directed his efforts to trying to discover the psychological and cultural sources of philosophically important intuitions. He has looked particularly at those involving free will and responsibility, moral judgments, imagination, and consciousness. A graduate of Stanford University, Dr. Nichols earned his Ph.D. in philosophy at Rutgers University in 1992. He then joined the philosophy faculty at the College of Charleston as an assistant professor, was promoted to associate professor in 1998, and two years later was named to the Harry Lightsey Chair in the Humanities. He moved on to the University of Utah as a professor of philosophy in 2004 and accepted his present position in 2006. Dr. Nichols serves as president-elect of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, and is the winner of its Stanton Award, as well as a Distinguished Teaching Award from the College of Charleston and a National Institute of the Humanities' National Research Service Award. He is an associate editor of WIREs (Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews) Cognitive Science and a member of the editorial boards of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Philosophy Compass, and Cognition. The author of some seventy papers published in academic journals and volumes of collected works, Dr. Nichols is the editor of three books: *The Architecture of the Imagination: New Essays on Pretense, Possibility, and Fiction* (2006), (with Joshua Knobe) *Experimental Philosophy* (2008), and (with Thomas Nadelhoffer and Eddy Nahmias) *Moral Psychology: Historical and Contemporary Readings* (2010). He is the author (with Stephen Stich) of *Mindreading: An Integrated Account of Pretense, Self-Awareness, and Understanding Other Minds* (2003) and *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment* (2004). His most recent book, *Bound: Essays on Free Will and Responsibility*, a systematic account of the origins and status of intuitions at play in debates about free will in which he also considers the moral and psychological bases of attitudes associated with morally responsible behavior, was published last year by Oxford University Press.



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Crystal L. Park is a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Connecticut (UConn) whose research is focused on stress, coping, and adaptation, particularly on how people's beliefs, goals, and values affect their ways of perceiving and dealing with events that cause anxiety and worry. She has developed a comprehensive model of meaning making and is applying this model to a variety of health-related problems and traumas. A summa cum laude graduate of Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Park earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of Delaware in 1993. She then held a National Institute of Mental Health post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco, and was appointed an assistant professor of clinical psychology at Miami University in Ohio in 1995. She joined the clinical psychology faculty at UConn four years later and was named to her present position in 2010. Dr. Park is a fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the recipient of its Margaret Gorman Early Career Award, Virginia Sexton Mentoring Award, and William James Award. She is an associate editor of the *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, *Psychology and Health*, *The International Journal of the Psychology of Religion*, and the *Journal of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, as well as a member of the editorial boards of *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, and the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*. The author of more than 200 papers published in scientific journals and volumes of collected works, she is the editor of several special issues of journals and five books, including (with Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun) *Post-traumatic Growth: Positive Change in the Aftermath of Crisis* (1998), (with Raymond Paloutzian) *Handbook of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (2005 and 2013), (with Carolyn Aldwin and Avron Spiro III) *Handbook of Health Psychology and Aging* (2007), (with Suzanne Lechner, Michael Antonio, and Annette Stanton) *Positive Life Change in the Context of Medical Illness: Can Crisis Lead to Personal Transformation?* (2009), and (with Jane Slattery) *Empathic Counseling: Meaning, Context, Ethics, and Skill* (2011).

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David A. Pizarro, an associate professor of psychology at Cornell University, writes about moral judgment, particularly moral intuitions, as well as about the impact of emotional states on thinking and decision-making. He was born in Argentina and graduated cum laude from Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. Going on to study social psychology at Yale University, where he held a University Fellowship, he earned a Ph.D. in 2002. Dr. Pizarro was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Irvine, before joining the Cornell psychology faculty as an assistant professor in 2006. He was promoted to his present position in 2012. The recipient of a traveling fellowship awarded by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology and a summer fellowship from the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, he was the Nannerl Keohane Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and at Duke University in 2014. Dr. Pizarro is the author of some sixty papers published in academic journals and in volumes of collected works. His most recent paper (with J.A.C. Everett and Molly J. Crockett), "Inference of Trustworthiness from Intuitive Moral Judgments," was posted this spring on Social Science Research Network.

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An associate professor of counseling psychology and applied social psychology at Colorado State University (CSU), Michael F. Steger has spent more than a decade investigating how people find meaning in their lives and the benefits of living a meaningful life. He directs CSU's Laboratory for the Study of Meaning and Quality of Life, a research program dedicated to deepening knowledge about the conditions that support meaningful and purposeful living, including understanding how humans are able to function well under stressful conditions. Dr. Steger graduated from Macalester College, took an M.S. in counseling at the University of Oregon, and earned a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and personality psychology in 2005 at the University of Minnesota, where he then taught for a year as a visiting assistant professor. Moving on to the University of Louisville as an assistant professor of educational and counseling psychology in 2006, he accepted his present position two years later. He serves as an extraordinary professor in the School of Behavioural Sciences at North-West University in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, and he served as director of training for CSU's graduate program in counseling psychology for two years. Editor-in-chief of *Psychology of Well-Being*, he is a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, and *Counseling and Values*. Dr. Steger has published some eighty papers in scientific journals and is the editor of three books, (with Kennon Sheldon and Todd Kashdan) *Designing Positive Psychology: Taking Stock and Moving Forward* (2011) and (with Bryan Dik and Zinta Byrne) *Purpose and Meaning in the Workplace*, a collection of theoretically-grounded essays that investigate how meaningful work can be fostered and sustained in a wide range of employment venues, which was published by the American Psychological Association in 2013. A forthcoming volume (with Lindsay Oades, Antonella Delle Fave, and Jonathon Passmore), the *Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Positivity and Strengths-Based Approaches at Work*, brings together a global array of scholars presenting critical literature reviews of the most important areas of research on excellence at work.

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