Chapter 6

Social Well-Being: Research and Policy Recommendations

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Executive Summary

"What is the recipe for well-being, sometimes popularly referred to as "happiness"? The last few decades have seen dramatic increases in research attention to this topic, and the results point to some clear conclusions. Although there are many factors that influence emotional and psychological well-being, high quality social relationships emerge time and again as particularly important. The people highest in well-being are those who enjoy the benefits of robust social connections such as trust and social support. Conversely, those who are lonely, or are otherwise estranged in their relationships, report lower levels of well-being.

Social connectedness is known to benefit health in a major way that surpasses the benefits of other known public health factors such as exercise, avoiding obesity, and not smoking. Conversely, negative social relationships are the source of major societal ills. Because policy makers have a specific interest in creating socially cohesive communities, we explain why well-being in general—and social well-being specifically—should be a primary concern of policy makers and leaders. Although policy makers often think of personal relationships as strictly personal affairs that fall outside the policy domain, in fact government programs and policies can have a large impact on this sphere of life. In this paper, we address a number of policy relevant areas that can potentially enhance collective well-being. These include 1) urban design and zoning that can promote social inclusion and happy neighborhoods; 2) policies aimed at reducing public and private corruption and improving transparency; and 3) supporting healthy family relationships, for example through the prevention and treatment of family-related violence.

We conclude by making a number of policy recommendations that span the range of national, regional, and municipal governments. We stress the importance of using well-being measurement to serve as a guide for locally appropriate policy making and as a metric of success.

Introduction

Social Relations as a Key Driver of Well-Being

Over the last four decades, research on well-being has grown exponentially. There are now tens of thousands of published academic papers reporting the results of investigations of employment, income, and other factors that potentially influence well-being. It is natural to be curious about these findings because they hint at an answer to one of life's most tantalizing questions: What is the secret to "happiness"?

Although there are many factors that influence well-being, one factor emerges again and again as a particularly strong influence. The "secret" to "happiness"—such that there is one—may be high quality social relationships. Humans are fundamentally social animals. We live together in romantic relationships, family groups, neighborhoods, and communities. Our relationships can be a source of support, a source of identity, and a source of fun.

The research case for the importance of quality relationships is strong. For example, Diener and Seligman (2002) examined the qualities that differentiate the happiest and less happy people. They discovered that it was not gender, or socio-economic status, but close friends that distinguished these two groups. Similarly, in a study of social support in Iran, Jordan, and the United States, Brannan and colleagues (2013) found that social support from friends and family members was linked to satisfaction and positive moods. Baumeister and Leary (1995) review the extensive evidence showing that humans have an innate and deep-seated need to form strong social bonds with others, and the absence of such bonds has deleterious consequences for health and well-being. Thus, it is not surprising that Helliwell, Huang, and Wang (2017) report that the influence of societal social strengths exceeds the influence of the combined effects of societal life expectancy and moving in income from the lowest to average GDP per capita!

It is not just *receiving* support but also *giving* support that can boost well-being. In a study using a sample of a quarter million people from 136 countries, Aknin and Dunn (2013) found that spending money on others paid back dividends. Of note, spending on others was associated with greater levels of well-being than comparable purchases spent on oneself.

Holt-Lunstad and colleagues (2017), as well as Tay, Tan, Diener, and Gonzalez (2013), review the evidence that indicates that having strong social connections is a positive influence on health. Conversely, the absence of such interpersonal connections—as occurs in loneliness and isolation—is associated with poorer health and increased risk of mortality. Importantly, Holt-Lunstad and her colleagues report that social isolation presents a greater risk of mortality than do other known risk factors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, and lack of physical activity. Similarly, Kowachi and colleagues (2011) found that both group membership and social trust were associated with lower total mortality (for example from coronary artery disease). In another study, loneliness was a significant predictor of poorer health in Finland, Poland, and Spain, even after controlling for age and depression (Rico-Uribe, et al, 2016). Let us underscore these findings: Social connections are more important to health than are other public health factors that receive clinical attention. Social isolation is a substantial threat to health and, at the same time, is very common. Therefore, increasing the strength of social connections is likely one of the major ways that health can be improved in modern societies!

Taken together, these studies point to a conclusion that social connectedness should be a major concern to policy makers. Whether working at the national, regional, or municipal government levels, policy makers have a specific interest in the quality of social connection among the people whom they serve. The ideal society—regardless of cultural norms—is one in which people can empathize with the less fortunate, trust one another, offer support in times of need, participate together in enjoyable leisure, cooperate on complex projects, and work effectively through conflict. Policies that support trust, cooperation, reconciliation, and other positive ways to relate to one another are a pillar of good governance and flourishing societies.

Unfortunately, in modern times, there are many common impediments to social connectedness. Rates of social isolation and feelings of loneliness are on the rise (Putnam, 1995; Cacioppo, Hughes, Waite, Hawkley & Thisted, 2006). In a sample from the United Kingdom 6% of respondents said they feel lonely all of the time and 21% reported feeling lonely at times (Victor & Yang, 2012). This is ironic in an age where digital technologies potentially allow for greater and more convenient connections. In fact, researchers have identified patterns of technology use that appear to be associated with social withdrawal and loneliness (Nowland, Necka & Cacioppo, 2017). Time-use data in the USA indicates that over half of people's meals are eaten alone, that people spend very little time at social events, and they spend less time socializing each day than watching television or grooming.

In the United States, a study by the Association for Retired People (Edmondson, 2010) reveals that 41% of adults in their fifties report being chronically lonely. Further, a meta-analysis by Holt-Lundstad and colleagues (2015) calculated a 26% increase in the likelihood of mortality for people who suffer loneliness. Holt-Lundstad and her colleagues (2017) suggest that modern societies are plagued with a set of problems in the social realm, and this is especially true in Western nations in which people are more likely to live alone. For example, they report that in the USA 40% of marriages end in divorce, one-third of current marriages are severely distressed, over one-quarter of people live alone, and a substantial number of elderly people report feeling lonely.

It might be tempting to treat loneliness solely as an individual phenomenon. After all, it appears to happen within a person, like depression or anger. If loneliness is an individual problem, then it is reasonable to look for individual solutions such as counseling. However, we must widen our understanding of loneliness to appreciate the social and situational factors involved (Rook, 1984). Loneliness can emerge, for example, from physical isolation. This expanded understanding opens the door to a wide range of policies, including programs that allow for citizens to meet, interact, and contribute.

Clearly, it is not only feelings of social isolation that interfere with citizen well-being. Other common social ills that can erode well-being are shown in Table 1. In addition to loneliness, lack of trust and lack of security can be particularly toxic to well-being. Policies often focus first on the economy, and then on removing problems such as crime. However, we suggest that because people are inherently social, and need social contact and support as much as material goods,

Table 1. Social Aids and Obstacles to High Well-Being

Social Theme	Example of Aids	Examples of Obstacles
1. Connection	Social and economic empowerment, civic clubs, hobby groups, sports, volunteerism, strong families, religious involvement	Loneliness, prejudice, disenfranchisement, spousal abuse, child abuse, unhappy marriages
2. Trust	Institutional transparency, public involvement in decisions, volunteerism	Corruption, nepotism, cronyism, cheating
3. Safety	Disaster services, community policing, effective emergency services, safe driving laws and enforcement, neighborhood watch groups	Crime, violence, failing infrastructure

social policies take on an importance matching the economic agenda.

We do not mean to suggest that the world is in dire psychological shape. Indeed, a wide range of research suggests that people—even people in economically developing nations—enjoy moderate levels of well-being (Diener & Diener, 1996; Biswas-Diener, Diener & Lyubchik, 2015). It should also be noted that studies of widespread well-being are based on statistical averages, and their findings mask the fact that even happy societies include many who are suffering and need help. Mild life satisfaction—even if it is widespread—should not equal complacency on the behalf of policy makers There is always the opportunity for people to improve the quality of their lives, and especially to help people experience more fulfillment.

Policies That Promote Social Connections

Our review of some of the key influences and obstacles of social well-being suggests a two-part solution to addressing well-being at the societal level. First, it makes sense to invest in policies and programs that promote greater well-being and satisfaction. These range from deliberate interventions to build well-being to the development of green spaces, to opportunities for neighbors and communities to interact and contribute. On the other hand, it is equally important to address well-being by intervening in the forces that erode trust, connection, and safety. These policies include those aimed at domestic violence, corruption, and injustice. In this paper, we will discuss both approaches. We will review research and present policy case studies to illustrate major ways to strengthen social bonds:

1) Social Support by Neighborhood Building and Urban Development

2) Public Trust and Anti-Corruption

3) Strengthening Close Relationships

It is important to note that both strong ties, such as those with family members in the same household, and weak ties, such as interactions with strangers, can enhance well-being. Research shows that interactions with strangers and mere acquaintances can enhance people's well-being (Epley & Schroeder, 2014; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014). On the other hand, strong ties such as having people to count on in an emergency are a major influence on differences in well-being among nations (World Happiness Report, 2017). Thus, our policy proposals are aimed at improving both strong and weak social ties.

With regards to urban development, we take a broad view that housing policy, as well as zoning and neighborhood programs are instrumental in creating positive social connections. Our discussion of public trust focuses on promoting institutional trust by reducing nepotism and corruption and by promoting greater transparency. Finally, we discuss healthy families with special attention to effective parenting and the prevention of domestic violence. We do not review one very important

source of social relationships, and that is in the workplace, as this area is covered in another chapter in this volume.

We have kept our discussion and conclusions relatively broad. We appreciate that readers will represent governance and policy makers at all levels—national, district, municipal, and neighborhood—and we hope our recommendations find application across multiple contexts. We also appreciate the challenges in making recommendation for policies that will be enacted in a variety of societal and economic conditions, with local culture influences. Our recommendations need to be carefully considered—and varied—based on local norms and needs.

Readers are referred to other sources of information on evidence about policies for social well-being:

Report of the Task Force on Urban Psychology

***Scoping Review: Social Relations* by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing**

J-F Kelly, *Social Cities*, supported by the Grattan Institute

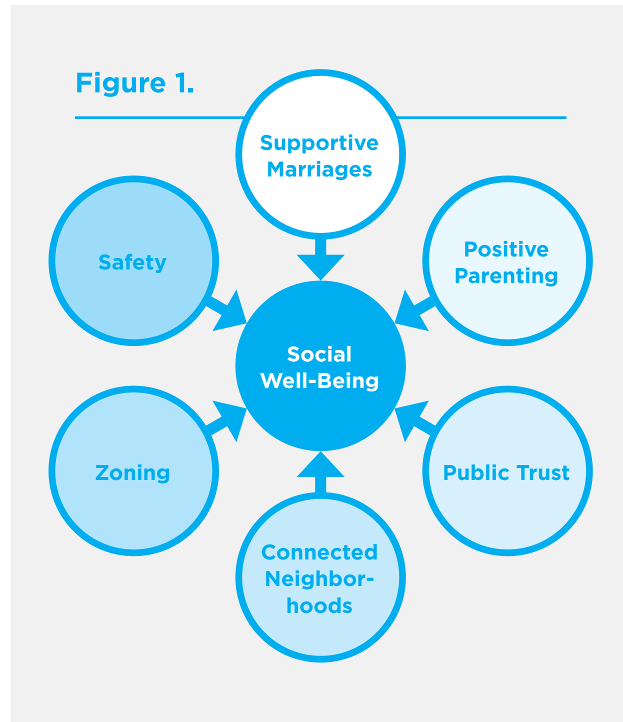
Hothi et al., *Neighbourliness + Empowerment = Wellbeing: Is there a formula for happy communities?*

Buettner, Nelson, & Veenhoven. *Ways to greater happiness: A Delphi study.*

Building a Positive Agenda

Often policies focus on preventing or decreasing undesirable behavior, such as imprisoning criminals so that they cannot commit further offenses. Such policies are sometimes necessary. We would, however, like to the point to the importance and effectiveness of a positive agenda in which positive programs may mean that the problem behaviors do not occur in the first place. For example, when people have deep social connections and are trying to help one another, they are less likely to commit crimes against one another. When those in power are fully committed to helping citizens, they are less likely to use their positions to unfairly profit themselves. In Figure 1 below, we illustrate the factors that can promote social relationships and reduce or prevent social pathologies in societies. Note that many of the factors are positive ones—strong families, connected communities, and trust. Each of these positive social factors produces rewarding relationships, but simultaneously helps reduce the frequency of negative ones.

Figure 1.



Part Two: Cities and Neighborhoods That Promote Social Connections

Community connections are a strong determinant of well-being, and can help societies prosper economically and environmentally (Conway, Boniwell, & Metz, 2017). One approach to building strong communities is urban planning, which has a long and rich history. The physical layout of the world's great metropolises points to historic shifts in technology, values, and priorities. Religious and government buildings, for example, are often the tallest or largest structures. Similarly, city centers are typically the most developed and densely populated. Newer cities have been designed with automobile travel in mind. In modern times, local authorities around the globe have had to wrestle with zoning. In theory, the goal of zoning ordinances is to improve quality of life by ensuring that industry, waste disposal,

and similar facilities are kept separate from residential districts. At its best, land-use and building zoning regulations can promote healthy communities.

It is widely understood that the social capital and social cohesion in a community can have a substantial impact on life satisfaction (Cramm, van Dijk, & Nieboer, 2012; Maass, Kloeckner, Lindstrøm, & Lillefjell, 2016). In this section, we will review aspects of the urban environment as they relate to well-being. Although an exhaustive discussion of every facet of city life is beyond the scope of this paper, we have chosen topics that A) are directly relevant to the lives of most or all people living in communities, and B) have been the subject of research scrutiny. These topics include:

- Zoning, commuting, and connected neighborhoods
- Socially connected neighborhoods through activities
- Parks and green spaces
- Housing

In this section, we also include case studies that illustrate the diversity and efficacy of a variety of community well-being programs. These case studies represent a wide range of community "interventions" and are geographically diverse. We use them as an opportunity to discuss policy recommendations in the applied context.

Some of discussion overlaps with those presented in the chapter, *Smart Technology for Happy Cities* (Bin Bashir et al, this volume). Indeed, both chapters are broadly concerned with "livability" and both address the importance of urban planning in general, and the role of green spaces specifically. Interested readers are referred to that chapter for additional coverage of economic and social policy as they relate to the creation of happy cities.

Zoning, Commuting, and Connected Neighborhoods

Most people commute to work, and many must also drive to get to markets and entertainment. Thus, cities around the world are filled with people spending a huge amount of time in transportation, often alone. Not only has this led to traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as wasted time, but it means that people do not obtain the walking exercise that characterized earlier times. As metropolitan areas have grown and as suburban living has become more popular, these commutes have lengthened. Unfortunately, commute time is deleterious to well-being. This is, in part, because longer commutes interfere with social connection. Putnam (1995) found that every ten additional minutes of daily commute time translates to 10 % fewer social connections. Alarmingly, a study in Australia found that a substantial percentage of working parents spend more time commuting than they do with their children (Flood & Barbato, 2005). Research by Stutzer and Frey (2008) make a more direct connection between commuting and well-being. They used survey data from Germany and discovered that those in the highest quartile for commute times reported the lowest overall life satisfaction. A review of the literature on the effects of commuting on well-being can be found in Diener, Lucas, Schimmack, and Helliwell (2009).

Commute times are not simply the product of trends in the job market. Zoning and land use policy can be used to plan cities in a way that promotes lower commute times. This can be seen, for example, in mixed-use zoning where residences are created near shops and workplaces. People can walk to work, to shops, and to dine out—and thereby not increase the air pollution that vehicles produce, but also get exercise. Importantly, this type of mixed-use community also increases social connectedness.

Single-use zoning—as opposed to mixed-use zoning—developed in modern cities to allow one type of structure in each geographical region. The goal was to improve residential quality of life by insuring that the places where people live were unsullied by commercial and manufacturing activities. Single-use zoning has become a distinguishing feature of modern urban growth in many nations. The establishment of residential-only districts in cities led to an increase in single family dwellings located far from the urban center, and in different areas from workplaces, which in turn were often separated from restaurants and shops. This, in turn, has led to increased commute times to work, shopping, and entertainment. Neighbors see less of one another and have fewer spontaneous opportunities to interact.

Zoning laws that allow residences, shops, and workplaces to be in walkable distance of each other promote social connections and at the same time help the environment and quality of life by reducing commuting in vehicles.

Mixed-use zoning can promote not only less commuting by vehicles and more commuting by walking, it also aids social connectedness. People simply interact more when they shop and work near where they live. In addition to increased physical exercise and social connectedness, mixed-use zoning provides larger potential for commercial and cultural opportunities (Jackson, 2003). We recommend that policy makers, where appropriate, attend to reversing the negative consequences that single-use zoning sometimes produces. This includes creating mixed-use districts that allow proximity of residences and business (especially those related to food, entertainment, and shopping). One impediment to multi-use zoning can be property and sales tax policies, which allow greater revenue to be had by municipalities if they adopt single-use planning. For instance, a city might adopt single use zoning to attract large stores or workplaces. When possible, such policies should be reduced or balanced by governments at higher levels, so that there are not undue incentives for single-use zoning.

In addition to mixed-use zoning, we believe a focus on neighborhood level policy is important to well-being. Like people, neighborhoods have unique identities. Also like people, neighborhoods differ in their levels of health. The most vibrant neighborhoods are those that are clean, safe, and in which the residents are engaged with one another and with projects that support the collective good. These neighborhoods often boast events such as community art days, community clean-up days, and community parties or shared meals. Of course, the "feel" of neighborhoods will be informed by myriad cultural and social factors.

One neighborhood might erect a screen for public viewing of World Cup football matches, while another neighborhood might be organized around a community garden. Urban design for neighborhoods seems especially likely to promote well-being if residents are able to participate in the choice and implementation of design ideas. At minimum, these would mean participation of citizens in decisions at multiple levels of government (neighborhood, municipal, and state). Note too that because many neighborhood activities are based on the voluntary participation of residents, the costs to government are often low or virtually nonexistent.

Micro-libraries: Book Exchange Boxes Where People Can Pass Along Books to Others.

An example of positive resident participation at the local level can be found in Neighborhood Watch programs, in which citizens agree to jointly patrol neighborhoods and watch for suspicious behavior to make the area uninviting for criminals. Bennett and colleagues (2006) reviewed multiple studies and found that these programs do, in fact, lower crime. However, we want to point out that joint activities such as these can also help citizens to feel good about their neighbors and make connections with them. There is also evidence that people in neighborhoods with more social cohesion, in which people are willing to help one another, feel less threat of crime (see also De Jesus, Puleo, Shelton, & Emmons, 2010; Ross & Jang, 2000).

Another example—similar to neighborhood watch groups—that can promote well-being at the neighborhood level is "walking groups." Evidence on the benefits of walking groups shows that people enjoy them and are therefore more likely to stick with the exercise regimen, as well as experience better health (Hanson & Jones, 2015). They found that people engaged in walking groups experienced decreased blood pressure, body fat, and total cholesterol. There were also increases in lung power and fitness. The social nature of the exercise led to much greater adherence (three quarters of the participants) to the exercise than is often the case. Another government activity that can spur walking is described in the Happy Cities in a Smart World chapter (Bin-Bishr, 2018, see the chapter in this volume), where cities design policies to reduce traffic flow and spur more walking. One small concrete step is to produce walking maps that show routes and distances between various points.

Governments can enact a number of programs and policies to promote social connections in neighborhoods. They can make information widely available to municipal managers about community-building programs. They can provide funding for website creation for community networks. Governments can promote neighborhood activities through public service campaigns in the media and with small funding opportunities to support community activities. For instance, a public service campaign can be used to encourage walking groups for exercise and socializing (Buettner, 2008). Local governments can also provide meeting spaces for children's groups, family activities, and community meeting points (Conway et al., 2017). In order to increase citizens' use of public spaces governments can streamline the process of getting permits for events (see the Happy Cities in a Smart World Chapter). Obtaining permits often serves as impediment to neighborhood activities in parks and closed streets, and these impediments can be greatly reduced for block parties and similar neighborhood and community activities.

Ultimately, policy makers should consider a variety of measures related to aesthetics, safety/trust, and community engagement. See the Box 1. for a list of urban planning considerations and community activities that are linked to higher well-being through greater social connectedness. For example, Mehta (2007) found that public seating, wide sidewalks, and other features add to the social interactions in a neighborhood.

Box 1.

Urban Design

Reduce traffic flow and driving speed in neighborhoods

Create public parks and green spaces

Mixed-use zoning, where appropriate

Create bike lanes and footpaths

Neighborhood Resources And Activities

Library branches, micro-libraries, and book sharing

Hobby and shared interest groups

Picnics, block parties, and public celebrations

Street fairs

Neighborhood watch programs

Community garden plots

Community newsletters and on-line resources

Volunteer days (e.g., neighborhood clean-up)

Walking groups

Neighborhood clean-up and beautification days

Neighborhood websites & newsletters

Street lights, outdoor seating spaces, wide sidewalks, traffic barriers, shaded areas, and other attractive neighborhood features

Case Study: Omaha (USA)

Walking is, arguably, the most "natural" form of transportation. Although it is slower than travel by automobile, the physical activity of walking is related to improved health, environmental appreciation, and social interactions. Studies reveal, for example:

- Walking is associated with better heart health and blood pressure (Hanson & Jones, 2015)
- Walking in urban environments is related to higher well-being, and this is especially true of active, social environments (Ettema & Smajic, 2013)

- So-called “active commuting” (walking and cycling) is associated with higher rates of well-being. People who commute by car are 13% more likely to report being under “constant strain.” (Martin, Goryakin, & Suhrcke, 2014).

It was with these potential benefits in mind that policy makers in Omaha, Nebraska (USA) undertook a program to make their city more walkable. Omaha is the 58th largest city in the United States, with an urban population of approximately half a million people and a metropolitan area population of about three quarters of a million people.

In 2010, the local city council voted to prioritize development that allowed for alternatives to automobiles. Stakeholders interested in making the city more walkable convened conferences, a long-term plan, and emphasized the economic, health, social, and aesthetic benefits of the proposed changes. The county health department conducted a review of the scientific literature and subsequently disseminated a report arguing that the focus on walkability is supported by research. In 2012, the city council voted to create mixed-use zones with walking paths and other pedestrian friendly features. They adopted the “20-minute city” framework used in Portland, Melbourne, and other cities. This concept refers to the ideal of creating urban environments in which work, parks, shopping, and entertainment are located within a 20-minute walk of residences. In 2014, the city executed a re-development of one neighborhood. The central aim of this plan was to change a longtime one-way street to allow for two-way traffic flow. It is interesting to note that this funding was only partially provided by the government, with the remainder contributed by private donors and local business organizations. The chief consultant on the project was also invested in narrowing the width of existing streets in the area. Narrow streets are associated with lower speed limits and fewer accidents, allowing for greater pedestrian traffic. Currently, *Walk Score*—a private organization that provides data-based ratings of transit and walkability—ranks Omaha 41st among US cities for bicycle and walking friendliness. It’s walkability score is 45 (out of 100, indicating car-dependency). By contrast, the redesigned Blackstone neighborhood, the target of the development effort, has a Walk Score of 77, indicating that it is very walkable, and that most errands can be accomplished by foot.

By conducting preliminary studies and by rolling out a vision for desirable community development the City of Omaha has created a test case that can inform future development. To this end, we recommend that other municipalities considering similar development also include before and after measures of well-being. These may be as simple as multi-item satisfaction measures, not unlike those commonly used in customer and government surveys. The addition of these measures can help policy makers measure the social and psychological impact of their efforts.

Parks and Green Spaces

The development of public parks and other green spaces is an important policy opportunity. These spaces act as environmental zones and wildlife habitats, serve as community recreation spaces, and add a desirable aesthetic to cities. Public parks are also associated with well-being. In an analysis of 44 cities in the United States, for instance, Larson and colleagues (2016) discovered that the percent of city land covered by parks is positively associated with physical well-being, community well-being, and even financial well-being. However, green spaces go beyond parks, and include greenery along avenues, plants within buildings, and rooftop gardens and so forth. Attractive architecture can serve much the same function.

A growing research literature suggests that exposure to natural environments can be physically and psychologically beneficial. These include studies that show:

- Percent greenspace in an area is a significant predictor of reported health (Maas, Verheij, Groenewegen, De Vries, & Spreeuwenberg, 2006).
- Views of a natural setting are associated with faster recovery times from surgery (Ulrich, 1984)
- Scenic areas promote social interactions (Huang, 2006)
- People living in greener urban areas show, controlling for other factors such as crime, income, housing type and employment, less mental distress and higher life satisfaction.
- Residents of apartments with a natural view are more likely to interact with neighbors (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001 a and b)

- Prisoners with a view of rolling farmland made fewer medical visits than did those without a natural view (Moore, 1981)
- Dental patients report less anxiety and have lower blood pressure when they are exposed to a mural of a natural scene in the waiting room (Heerwagen, 1990)
- Proximity to green space predicts health, even after controlling for age and SES (Maas, Verheij, Groenewegen, De Vries & Spreeuwenberg, 2006)
- Proximity to green space can boost property values (Daams, Sijtsma, & van der Vlist, 2016)
- Natural landscapes are associated with better health (Menatti & Rocha, 2016)

Given the diversity of research methods and locations, the consistent finding that green and other public spaces promote well-being is compelling. Although the development of parks and similar public spaces needs to be considered in the context of budget, safety, and land use policy, it would be a mistake to overlook the associated health, social and individual wellbeing benefits. Furthermore, zoning laws that require greenery along avenues and other small parks that can be used for relaxing and meeting are also improvements to consider.

Case Study: Manchester Northern Quarter (United Kingdom)

With a metropolitan population of nearly two million, Manchester is the third largest city in England. The city is well known as the birthplace of a number of popular bands and as the home of two famous football clubs (Manchester United and Manchester City). In 2008-2010, Manchester was affected by the economic recession. Although the city has since rebounded economically, research indicates that only 19% of the population of the United Kingdom are "flourishing," and several studies indicated that Manchester's well-being may be lower than that of the United Kingdom as a whole (Public Health England, 2013).

In an ambitious urban design intervention carried out in 2011 and 2012, researchers used a quasi-experimental design to determine the well-being impact of neighborhood development (Anderson, Ruggeri, Steemers, & Huppert, 2017). To begin, they identified the Northern Quarter of Manchester as the location for their intervention. According to the researchers, the Northern Quarter is "one of the most vibrant and historically rich areas of Manchester. Today, the Northern Quarter is known for independent stores, creative industries, entertainment venues, cafes, and bars" (p. 692).

The development project was initiated with the idea that there would be a mechanism for obtaining community input. Local residents attended a workshop in which they were able to give input about possible design options for the improvement of a public space adjacent to a multi-story parking structure. The options were chosen with attention to cost, urgency, and practicality (i.e., the likelihood that they would be approved by the Local Authority). The selected improvements included the addition of public seating (tables and benches), as well as a variety of new plantings. An artist was hired to create small murals at the base of each planter. In addition, Wi-Fi access was added to the area and it was cleaned. Finally, a small display of endangered native invertebrates was created along with relevant signs. The total cost of the improvements—at that time—was approximately $20,000 US dollars.

The researchers focused on three separate facets of well-being as their primary outcome measures. These included 1) connection with other people (including strangers), 2) engaging in physical activity (e.g., ball games), and 3) taking notice (being aware of and appreciating one's natural surroundings as in the case of noticing a bird). They collected two types of data—behavioral observation and self-reports—at two distinct times (before and after the re-design of the public space). To add to the sophistication of their design, the researchers also mirrored their data collection in a nearby public space that was, in many ways, comparable to the initial area where the intervention took place. Both were small public areas adjacent to roads in the shadow of a multi-story building to the North and lined with mature trees.

During the 42 days of data collection, the researchers collected 212 surveys and made nearly 23 thousand behavioral observations (approximately five thousand in both the experimental and control location before and after the re-design). Of all possible people who

Table 2. Percent Change in Well-Being in Two Public Spaces

	Control Space 2011-2012	Treatment Space 2011-2012
Percent change in connection	-48%	+230%
Percent change in activity	-50%	+23%
Percent change in taking notice	-47%	+648%

passed through these spaces, the researchers were particularly interested in those who were "engaged users"—that is, those who stayed longer than 3 minutes. First, the researchers found that the re-design on this public space led to a threefold increase in engaged users. Moreover, the findings of the study showed a dramatic increase in well-being compared to the control group (see the Table 2.). Not only did people linger in this area, but they were more active, took more notice of their surroundings, and felt more connected.

This case study is an interesting example of developing public spaces with community well-being in mind, and with input from the local community. The developers emphasized a number of considerations in their plan, including public art, sanitation, telecommunications, seating, and greenery. This intervention is an example of the relatively low cost involved in promoting the psychological benefits to a community while simultaneously considerig the competing needs of public safety, sanitation, and beautification. It is important to collect data across time to determine the potential long-term benefits of these types of projects. It could be, for example, that the benefits last only as long as the area remains clean, safe, and appealing. Even so, this case study illustrates the way that community involvement can be harnessed for relatively low-cost developments that result in well-being.

Housing

Idioms such as "to feel at home" and to "strike close to home" are suggestive that housing is more than shelter; it is deeply connected to a person's identity, psychology, and—ultimately—well-being. Around the world, policy makers are faced with housing issues such as inadequate access to utilities, safety, overcrowding, and homelessness. To visualize how housing-related issues are associated with well-being, consider the relative levels of life satisfaction among various groups, presented in Table 3. Being without a home is clearly associated with very low levels of well-being.

Beyond the physical structure, social aspects of housing are important. In a large sample from Spain, Vera-Toscano and Ateca-Amestoy (2007) found that daily and weekly contact with neighbors was a significant predictor of housing satisfaction. Unfortunately, in many places, demographic and economic trends have served as an obstacle to social engagement. For instance, in Australia, a quarter of households consist of people living alone, and this is the fastest growing household type. People living alone are more likely to suffer loneliness, although

Table 3.

Group	Life Satisfaction (1-7)
Forbes Richest Americans	5.8
Inuit in Greenland	5.1
American University Students	4.7
NEUTRAL POINT	4.0
Homeless in Kolkata, India	3.2
Homeless in Fresno, USA	2.8

Source: Modified from Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2005

many do live alone and are not lonely. Certain groups, such as the elderly and single parents, can be at risk for social isolation. The costs of loneliness and other social pathologies can be high, whereas the costs associated with urban planning for social connectedness can be modest.

The architectural and social aspects of housing are intertwined. For example, Baum and Davis (1980) suggest that one method for reducing the stresses associated with high-density living is better housing design. In apartment buildings, where density is likely to be a factor, architects can create shorter corridors to be shared by fewer people. Similarly, architectural and public space features such as benches, garden trellises, and interactive art lead to higher evaluations of neighborhoods (Semenza & March, 2009). Similarly, designers who attend to noise reduction as part of their housing development plan may confer well-being benefits to residents (Guite, Clark, & Ackrill, 2006).

Since the problem of loneliness is widespread and many people in modern societies now live alone, alternative models of housing are being developed by groups and governments with creative new housing solutions. "Co-housing" is one possible solution. Co-housing exists in many forms ranging from students clustered together in dormitories to joint family homes in India to co-housing communities in Scandinavia, in which unrelated families share resources such as kitchens and gardening tools. Not only do these living arrangements reduce housing costs for the individual, but they also can also foster social support if they are designed carefully. In these situations it is important to balance privacy and safety for the individual with collective contribution and contact with others.

Case Study: TECHO (Chile)

An endemic problem throughout Latin America is sub-standard living conditions. This problem can most easily be observed in slum areas that grow in and around capitals and other large cities. Slums differ from one another in many ways, but are defined by their shared qualities: overcrowding, sub-standard sanitation, and inadequate access to basic services such as water and electricity. These areas can also be hotspots for many social ills, such as widespread unemployment, street gangs, and drug-related crime. These settlements are often seen as a problem, despite their contribution to local economies and interactive communities. In fact, they can host socially vibrant communities, despite their lack of material sufficiency (Okyere, Diko, Hiraoka, & Kita 2017). Further, for rural migrants, these communities can serve as informal employment networks.

TECHO (which means "roof" in Spanish) is a non-governmental organization that provides pre-fabricated housing to residents of poverty-stricken slums. Although these improved dwellings do not have sewer hookups or similar modern conveniences, their construction is sturdy and represents an improvement over existing slum housing. In the 17 years since its founding in Chile, TECHO has expanded to 19 nations in Central and South America, and has provided nearly 100,000 homes to some of the world's poorest citizens.

The homes, themselves, are constructed from wood or aluminum with sheet metal (tin) roofs to provide improved protection from heavy rains. The joints are fitted so that there is better protection from insects, and the homes are slightly elevated to protect from flooding or animal/insect infestations. These structures cost approximately $1,000 US Dollars each and are constructed by organized groups of TECHO volunteers. Those receiving the dwelling contribute ten percent of the price of the home. TECHO houses are designed to be mobile in the event residents are relocated because of natural disaster, economic, or public safety concerns.

In 2017, Sebastian Galiani and his colleagues conducted an experimental study of the psychological impact of receiving TECHO homes. They collected before and after measures from more than 2,000 participants living in 23 distinct settlements in El Salvador, 39 in Mexico, and a dozen in Uruguay. Due to the lottery system involved with assigning TECHO homes, the researchers were able to compare those on a waiting list with those who received the improved housing. They discovered that people who received TECHO homes (relative to their counterparts who did not):

- Experienced a 20 to 200% increase in life satisfaction, depending on which country they lived in

- Were more satisfied with their housing quality, including floors, roofs, and protection against rain
- Were, in El Salvador, more likely to see their homes as secure, and to leave the house unattended or children unattended in the home (27% increase in feeling safe inside the home)

The TECHO case study is interesting precisely because of the rudimentary nature of the homes provided. The evidence reveals that even very basic improvements in home quality such as durable construction and waterproofing can directly translate into large gains in psychological well-being. It is also worth noting the social aspect involved with constructing these homes. The construction requires family investment and volunteer labor. Although these elements were not directly tested in the study reported above, it is possible that these houses also improve trust, social connection, feelings of mastery in the residents, and other dimensions of well-being. Again, we advocate the use of measurement to better understand the specific benefits of new policies and development programs. The TECHO project underscores the possibility that even small investments in improving housing quality can yield psychological rewards.

Meeting Groups

People can come together voluntarily and form groups that offer each other support and perform useful services. In the past, these groups might have been fraternal organizations, religious congregations, and volunteer agencies. For example, women's guilds have historically contributed to a wide range of community benefits such as supporting local children's hospitals. A modern example of this type of voluntary social organization in the United Kingdom is called *Action for Happiness* (Layard, 2016). Members of this group learn about well-being by engaging in a curriculum called "What Really Matters." Thereafter, they meet to discuss not only happiness, but also to share friendship and activities. The program is built on broad inclusiveness rather demographic similarity, and borrows from findings in the behavioral sciences as well as from Eastern and Western wisdom traditions. Early findings indicate that the program can increase people's life satisfaction by 20% (Action for Happiness, 2016).

Government policies can assist in the creation and support of voluntary groups. For example, by making space available for meetings or offering relevant and appropriate tax exemptions. Importantly, government policies should not make such groups more difficult, as in the case of requiring a difficult and time-consuming approval process.

Part Three: Trust and Corruption

High quality social connections are integral to high well-being. Global comparisons of the happiest with the least happy people reveal that those with the highest well-being spend 1.5 times as many hours with their families, and are twice as likely to report being treated with respect or being able to count on others for help (Diener, Seligman, Choi & Oishi, in press). Because of this, trust is a key ingredient in the ability of people to share resources, give and receive support, and to take interpersonal risks. Interestingly, trust is a concept that can be applied to governments and institutions, as well as to individuals. In fact, Dolan and colleagues (2008) argue that trust in government boosts well-being. Similarly, Tyler (2006) argues that trust in the equal application of procedural justice (i.e., trust in law) is fundamental to citizens obeying the law and positively engaging with society.

Social scientists have used large surveys to measure trust. One method, used in the demographically representative Gallup World Poll (140+ nations), poses the scenario: "Supposing that you lost your wallet with $200 (or local equivalent) in it, what is the likelihood of it being returned intact if found by…." The survey respondents can express their opinion of a wallet being returned by neighbors, strangers, and police officers. Helliwell, Huang, and Wang (2017) found that the higher a person's trust is both generally, and in the police, the higher their level of well-being. In fact, a Toronto newspaper removed the hypothetical nature of this survey question by placing cash-full wallets around the city and waited to see if they were returned (Helliwell, Huang, and Wang, 2016). This real-world experiment allowed a comparison to be made between survey responses of trust in the Gallup World Poll and the actual actions of strangers. As can be seen in the Table 4, strangers were far more trustworthy than people commonly believed.

Table 4. Perceived and Actual Trust

One common obstacle to societal trust is corruption. Corruption is defined as fraudulent or dishonest conduct by those holding power. Corruption can come in many forms, but it is most often associated with bribery. Corruption can also include cronyism, nepotism, and dishonesty in both public and private institutions. It is often associated with backroom dealings and a lack of public transparency, which is one of the reasons it can erode trust. Not only does corruption lower the trust on which strong societies are built, but it can lead to faulty services and goods (e.g., shoddily constructed buildings) that can endanger people's lives.

Helliwell and Huang (2008) report that a trustworthy government is linked to citizen well-being. This is especially true for lower income nations and those with inferior governance. A list of the social trust scores for the highest (blue) and lowest (orange) trust nations in each global region is shown in the Table 5. This table illustrates not only that trust varies across regions of the world, but also that there is enormous variation in trust within regions (the difference between the blue and orange bars in each region). What this pattern indicates is that some nations have been able to achieve high levels of trust, and these societies should be models for others.

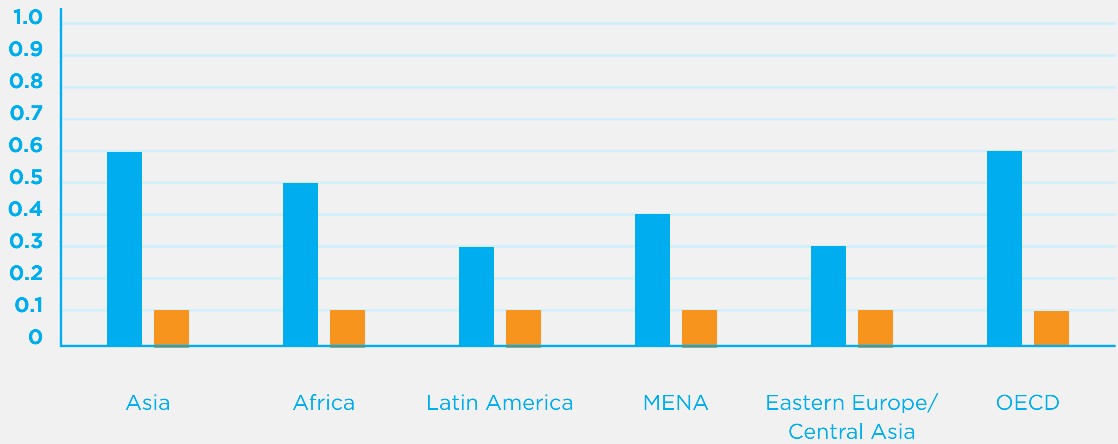
Unfortunately, corruption is widespread. It exists at all levels of government and in all nations. According to a World Bank report, approximately 1.5 trillion US dollars are paid in bribes worldwide each year; a figure accounting for about 2% of global GDP (World Bank, 2017). In 2016, the World Bank launched investigations into 64 cases covering 60 projects in 34 nations, and these nations were spread across regions of the world.

Corruption disproportionately affects the poor. For example, in Paraguay the poor pay about twice as much in bribes as high-income households. Similarly, unemployed people have been found to have lower levels of trust in the police and institutions of law, and it may be that this attitude is a factor in their potentially greater rates of involvement in black market and shadow economies (Hudson, 2006). It should be noted that some behaviors of more affluent members of society, such as avoiding taxes by moving fortunes off-shore, can erode trust but are not illegal, per se. Thus, corruption is a broad concept that includes many behaviors and exists both in the public and private sectors.

There is mounting research evidence that corruption erodes well-being. Tay, Herian, and Diener (2014) investigated the relation between corruption and individual well-being in a sample of more than 800,000 people from 150 nations. They found that individual perceptions of corruption were associated with lower rates of life satisfaction. In addition, they found that living in corrupt societies lowers life satisfaction even above personal perceptions of corruption. People reported higher well-being in cases where they experienced trust in institutions. It is also important to note that corruption interferes with the quality of goods and services—for example, by allowing cheaper construction that does not follow building codes and therefore is unsafe (e.g., in earthquakes). The conclusion that corruption adversely affects well-being dovetails with the results of many other studies:

- Data from 20 African nations points to the conclusion that corruption broadly, and low levels of trust in institutions specifically, are associated with lower well-being (Sulemana, 2015)

Table 5. Differences in Trust Around the World: Trust Scores for the Highest and Lowest Trust Nations in Each Region



- In the World Happiness Report, perceptions of corruption are associated with lower overall life evaluations and a higher incidence of negative emotions (Helliwell, Huang, & Wang, 2017). Further, this trend has been constant across recent years.
- Citizens in 68 nations report higher well-being when their governments are relatively free of corruption (Tavits, 2008)
- Among citizens of the 24 OECD nations, rates of suicide are lower in nations with lower levels of corruption (Yamamura, Andres & Katsaiti, 2011)
- Quality of government is strongly associated with longevity and other health related variables (Holmberg & Rothstein, 2010)

Corruption lowers well-being, threatens public safety, and erodes social trust.

Building Norms and Values for Helping Society and Others

One way to counter corruption is for people to feel responsible for others and society, even for strangers. Values centered on helping others, giving to charity, and providing hospitality exist in every culture and religious tradition. Even so, corruption remains a large problem. This is suggestive of structural problems related to the economic and social systems of corrupt societies. In part, we believe these can be redressed by emphasizing local norms promoting prosocial, rather than self-serving behaviors. Programs and campaigns that encourage volunteering, helping neighbors in need, giving other drivers a break in traffic, and so forth can encourage prosocial behaviors in general, and at the same time reduce attitudes that lead to corruption. Norms and values need to be developed for helping not just one's own in-group, but other groups as well. Norms for helping others need to be universal in society, and not seeing out-group members as targets of exploitation.

Norms and values of this type are not built overnight, but are taught, both at home and in public institutions such as schools (e.g., Hughes, Bellamy, & Black, 2000). The psychological research literature is replete with studies on cooperation, empathy, behaviors, and other thoughts and attitudes that can be trained and reinforced. For example, school curricula designed to foster social and emotional intelligence among school children appear to yield better academic performance, more cooperative learning, and enhanced in-class social support (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elberson, & Salovey, 2012). Volunteering

to serve one's community can be taught in the schools, especially by requiring hours of volunteering for older children and adolescents (UKPIU, 2002).

Some studies that have examined exposure to out-group members have found an increase in positive attitudes toward those groups and a greater willingness to help them (Batson et al, 2002). That said, we acknowledge that the data in this area are mixed, and that negative interactions between members of different communities can sour relations between them. It is for this reason that we recommend that policy makers attend to urban design and social programs that will promote positive, rather than negative contact between diverse groups.

One way for a society to build social capital and thereby increase trust is to encourage volunteer work (Salamon, Sokolowski, & Haddock, 2011). Indeed, in a recent Delphi study, experts on well-being voted this as one of the most efficient and yet effective ways to raise well-being (Buettner, Nelson, & Veenhoven, 2017). Local governments can set up websites to match volunteers to volunteer opportunities, for example. Incentives such as tax breaks might also be used to encourage volunteering. Volunteer activity not only tends to increase well-being, but also helps the targets of the intervention, and at the same time builds trust and respect.

General well-being programs that specifically develop values exploration, self- awareness and healthy relationships within self, family, and the community have been proven to build wellbeing at the individual and organizational level. In South Australia, there are initial indications that short courses offering a suite of psycho-skills have not only improved well-being in those receiving training, but also delivered a positive cultural shift across the organization, including those not yet trained.

Anti-Corruption Policies

The Trace International Matrix is an evaluation of business bribery practices in 199 nations. The scores are a composite of four distinct factors related to corruption and compliance with anti-corruption policy. These are 1) interactions with government, 2) anti-bribery laws and enforcement, 3) government/civil service transparency, and 4) capacity for civil society oversight. As expected, corruption is lower in societies with stable economies, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. It should be noted that the conclusions reported in the Trace Matrix are similar to those of other measures of corruption such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2017). What the data reveal is that in some nations corruption is reasonably low. These nations may have a culture that tends to encourage trust and social connection, but they also have policies in place to prevent corruption. We learn important lessons about building national trust by examining the corruption policies and laws of the least corrupt nations and—by extension—the lack of these in the most corrupt nations. Examples of such policies are listed below:

Anti-corruption
- Pass laws criminalizing corruption in public and private sectors
- Enforce these laws
- Create independent government commissions to investigate corruption
- Value training that promotes ethical behavior and codes that articulate conflicts of interest

Transparency
- Report public expenditures
- Provide easy access to information
- Make government meetings open to the public

Democracy
- Ensure higher degree of freedom of the press
- Create mechanisms for citizen input

Where anti-corruption policies are enacted, and government anti-corruption agencies formed, however, they can be ineffective in poor and badly governed nations, and even counterproductive (Meagher, 2005). Where governance is strong and most people are not poor, such programs have a chance of success. Mungui-Pippidi (2016) argues that government programs to end corruption will not be successful unless there also norms of universalism, that proscribe favoritism to specific persons and groups. She argues that norms for universality of treatment of all citizens and a strong norm of public integrity are necessary to counter corruption, and in their absence anti-corruption penalties may likely be ineffective. Mungui-Pippidi suggests that a strong civil society with rules and resources equitably distributed to all groups, an educated professional class, an independent media,

and computer literacy may all help to support universalism and fight corruption.

Case Study: Anti-corruption practices in Estonia

Among the most radical transformations in government in the modern era was the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent formation of independent nation states in the Baltic and Caucasus regions. Interestingly, the differences between these two regions provide us with an opportunity to draw comparisons between newly independent nations. With regards to corruption, nations in the Caucasus typically have higher rates of corruption than do those in the Baltics. Of the Baltic states, Estonia is often touted as a relative success story. Estonia is a nation of 1.3 million people and a GDP per capita of just over 17,000 US dollars.

According to the 2017 Trace International Matrix, Estonia ranks 9th out of 200 nations in corruption, placing it ahead of far older and wealthier nations such as Switzerland, Canada, Singapore and the United States. Estonia has remained consistently high on this matrix, ranking 3rd in 2016 and 22nd in 2014. More specifically, the 2017 Trace International Matrix awards Estonia a "low risk" label. Using a scoring system ranging from 1-100, where higher numbers represent increasing risk of corruption, Estonia receives a 2 for anti-corruption practices such as the creation and enforcement of anti-bribery laws (only Norway has a better score). Using the "Perceptions of Corruption" Index created by Transparency International, Estonia has been improving since 2012 and currently ranks just below Japan and Uruguay and above France. Estonia appears to be the least corrupt nation in the Baltics. More long-term trends should be examined before we definitely conclude that Estonia has been truly successful in lowering corruption, but the encouraging short-term trends over a few years suggest that we should examine what Estonia has done.

There are a variety of policies that can be credited with Estonia's relative success in battling corruption. Among these are the sweeping laws contained within Estonia anti-corruption program. Early surveys suggested that 11% of Estonians had been asked for a bribe and that these bribes existed across many sectors of society: 5% reported being asked for bribes associated with schooling, 8% by police, and 9% by physicians (Sööt, 2013). It is exactly these behaviors that policy makers were hoping to curtail by an Anti-Corruption Strategy. The strategy included a focus on collecting legal and survey data to improve awareness of corruption, increasing transparency and participation, and developing the capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption.

Another interesting influence on corruption in Estonia is its e-government practices. E-government simply refers to the use of websites to increase transparency, provide information, and as a portal through which citizens can access government services. E-government is associated with lower rates of corruption because it "removes the middle man" (Krishnan, Teo & Lim, 2013). Imagine, for example, that a citizen in a more corrupt nation pays a government employee a small bribe to advance her position in a queue for services. E-government eliminates this possibility. In the early 2000s, future-minded government leaders in Estonia invested heavily in digital infrastructure. This included partnering with companies to promote the use of the Internet, training citizens in computer skills, supporting the creation of a wi-fi service, and rolling out e-government services. There was an early move to e-voting; an initiative that has increased voter turnout and engaged younger citizens.

Does Estonia's relative success in battling corruption lead directly to higher well-being? It is, unfortunately, impossible to draw a clear link. That said, Estonia appears to be faring well with regards to citizen well-being, and it is entirely plausible that high public trust is part of this equation. For example, Huppert and So (2011) investigated the flourishing of citizens of 22 nations. They discovered that many of the nations with the lowest well-being were in Eastern Europe, and were former communist nations (e.g., Poland, Russia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia). By contrast, Estonians reported relatively high emotional stability (ranked 8th of 22), optimism (11th of 22), and vitality (8th of 22). Undoubtedly, Estonia—as all other nations—has continued work to do in stamping out both corruption and the cultural and societal forces that make corruption tempting. Even so, their

rapid success in the last decade serves as a model for others wishing to create a more cohesive society.

Part Four: Close Relationships

If relationships are the cornerstone of well-being, it follows that close relationships and flourishing families are an important part of the happiness equation. Indeed, results from research suggest that well-being is linked to and predicted by close relationships and families. For instance, people who are married report, on average, relatively higher rates of well-being (DeMaris, 2017). Clark et al. (2018) found that—along with mental health—social relationships are the key drivers of well-being. For example, having a partner was a significant predictor of both life satisfaction and lower misery. This finding holds especially for middle aged and older adults and appears to be true across the globe. This also holds true for those who are divorced and re-married (compared to those divorced who do not remarry). Similarly, social support received from family members (as opposed to friends) was the strongest predictor of life satisfaction across cultures in a study of people from Iran, Jordan, and the United States (Brannan et al, 2013).

Gohm and her colleagues (1998) found that adult children who had parents with happier marriages were themselves happier. Waters and Sun (2017) found that positive parenting—parents invested in cultivating their children's strengths—experienced greater confidence in their own parenting and enhanced positive emotions when thinking about their children. Taken together, these studies suggest that when family relationships are positive, they can significantly improve happiness.

Moving beyond families, there is strong research evidence that social support and close relationships are important for well-being. Gable and Bromberg (2018), for instance, review the evidence showing that supportive relationships are not only essential to mental and physical health, but are necessary for survival. In fact, different types of support tend to be associated with different types of subjective well-being (Siedlecki, Salthouse, Oishi, & Jaswani, 2014). Using a sample of more than 1,000 people aged 18-95, the researchers found that perceiving support was associated with higher life satisfaction, while family embeddedness was associated with greater positive emotion. Programs that help the social relationships of children, such as anti-bullying and social skills building, are not covered here because Adler and Seligman's chapter in this volume provide coverage of school educational programs for well-being. Of course we can recognize that close relationships can be a source of stress and unhappiness, as well as of well-being, and so we must focus on the types of relationships that have more rewards than costs.

Supportive Families and Relationships

Government policies and programs can help or hinder families in a number of important ways:

Parental leave policies in the workplace. The birth of a child places a strong time burden on the new parents. This often leads one parent to quit her or his job or to make sacrifices in terms of parenting quality. Policies that allow one or both parents some leave time after children are born can help alleviate the burden and thereby insure that the marriage is not under undue stress. Although parental leave is becoming more common, O'Brien (2009) suggests that nations can be differentiated by whether they support parental-leave policies or not.

Life course developmental activities. It is important to understand that social relationships must be understood in a way that considers them across the lifespan. This view is particularly helpful in understanding older people's social interaction with children, especially their grand-children. A body of research indicates that parents who receive help in parenting from the grandparents have children who benefit in a number of ways (e.g., Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2016). The involvement of grandparents helps both the child and the older adult. These interactions can be increased through a number of policies. For instance, opportunities can be created for grandparents to do volunteer work in their grandchildren's schools. Another helpful policy is that grandparents can be allowed to make medical and other decisions for the children in the parents' absence. Yet another helpful policy is to provide financial support if grandparents become the primary caretakers of a child, much as foster parents often receive such support. Multi-generational living units and activities can also be fostered. Schools can have grandparent

groups or encourage both parents and grandparents to be part of the Parent-Teacher associations. Greater social interaction between the generations gives the child opportunities for support and learning, and gives grandparents companionship, as well as meaningful and useful activities during retirement. Because children benefit from contact with grandparents, societies can encourage such interactions with a number of diverse policies.

Flexible hours, on-site daycare, and other family-friendly workplace programs. Similar to leave for new parents, additional workplace policies can benefit families. For example, we found that a major predictor of women's satisfaction with their work is having work hours that are to some degree flexible (Geerling, Diener, & Schkade, 2018). For example, if parents can arrive at work an hour late, they can give their children breakfast and bring them to school before going to work. Similarly, some businesses provide on-site daycare, which can be quite helpful in reducing the burdens of simultaneously working and parenting. Another family-friendly workplace policy is to allow some work to be done from home, for example, on the internet. Yet another example is providing women a place for breastfeeding and pumping milk, as the lack of privacy typical in workplaces can be a major impediment to women returning to work. Each of these programs can reduce parenting and family stress, and thereby lessen the conflict between work and family life.

Co-parenting classes for couples seeking divorce. When couples separate and divorce, a burden can be placed on their children. Optional, or even mandatory, parent training for co-parenting couples can be helpful (Sigal et al., 2011). The separating adults can learn how to manage their relationship and children after the separation to lessen the stress or harm to children that sometimes arises from conflictual co-parenting situations.

Marriage education. Many societies consider the family to be the core social unit. At the heart of healthy families is a positive relationship among the adult partners. Such positive relationships are characterized by an ability to communicate effectively, navigate conflict in healthy ways, control emotions, and support one another. Marriage programs provide training aimed at enhancing these skills among couples. One such program found in a meta-analysis of the literature that couples involved in a marital communication education program profited in terms of communication skills, marital satisfaction, and other relationship qualities (Butler & Wampler, 1999). Another such program has been evaluated and found to lead to lower rates of conflict and aggression, and lower rates of divorce and breakup up to five years after the training (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988, Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993). In Germany, this same training program was applied before marriage and was found to result in a 13% lower divorce rate across 4 to 5 years relative to a control condition. It should be cautioned, however, that marriage education programs may not always produce the intended effects, for example because financial problems cause strains in the couple that are not addressed by the parenting interventions (Lavner, Karney, & Bradbury, 2015).

Avoid economic penalties for families. Some government policies discourage strong families by penalizing two-parent families through taxation rates and welfare rules. If a two-adult family is placed in a higher tax bracket, for instance, compared to two single adults, it discourages two-parent families by taxing them at a higher rate. Alm and Whittington (1999) found that taxation policies had a small but significant effect on the probability of marrying for women in the U.S., for example. Similarly, some welfare policies also discriminate against two-parent families. Because a large amount of evidence points to superior outcomes for children raised in two- parent families, the state has a vested interest in supporting, not discouraging, them. Many "marriage penalties" (which can apply to partners living together who are not married) are small in amount and therefore might not influence the behavior of a significant number of couples, but governments need to assure that there are no significant marriage penalties.

Parenting Education

Parents play a critical role in cultures by socializing the next generation. Parents can be sources of support, moral instruction and guidance, and teaching for their children. However, some parents abuse or neglect their children and offer little in the way of true support or guidance. The

ACE study in Wales, United Kingdom—Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (Felitti et al., 1998) found that children brought up in households where they were abused, where there was domestic violence, or where there was alcohol or drug abuse were substantially more likely as adults to commit violent offenses and abuse drugs and alcohol. One approach to improved parenting is to expose new parents and expectant parents to education about desirable childrearing practices. For instance, there are negative outcomes associated with spanking (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016), and parents can learn other more effective methods for teaching discipline and self-control. Gershoff, Sattler, and Ansari (2017) found that children who are frequently spanked later show more, not fewer, behavior problems, controlling for many other possible confounding factors.

There are many parental training programs available for teaching effective parenting, and the evidence suggests that some of them are more effective than others. Research in this field is extensive, but suggests that parents can learn to use less abusive forms of discipline, and teach children and mold their behavior in positive ways without resort to corporal punishment. Some of the programs also emphasize spending quality time with children, and reading to them. Examples of research outcomes of parenting programs include:

- A parent-training program in Hong Kong led to lower incidence of harsh parenting (Li, Chan, Mak, & Lam, 2013)
- Parent-training programs that involve both fathers and mothers have found long-term benefits, including higher marriage satisfaction, better child adaptation to school, increased father involvement, less harsh parenting tactics, and lower rates of conflict in the home (Cowan, Powell, & Cowan, 1997).
- A review of 16 parenting programs found that four were rated as "top programs." These programs contained 14-20 hours of instruction and focused on developing skills ranging from handling conflict to developing a future orientation (Collins & Fetsch, 2012).

Case study: The Better Parenting Program (Jordan)

The Kingdom of Jordan has a youthful population, with half of all Jordanians under age 18 and one in five younger than eight years old. This means that parenting is a common experience among Jordanian adults. In fact, there are more than 5 children, on average, per household. As a result, policy makers have prioritized children's issues such as education and safety (Al-Hassan, 2009). A survey conducted in the late 1990s revealed that parents had worrisome gaps in their knowledge regarding effective parenting practices (Stewart-Brown, 2000). This finding led to the creation of the Better Parenting Program (BPP) aimed at improving the family context to support the development of children.

The BPP is delivered by social workers, teachers, and health workers who undergo standardized training. The BPP requires 16 hours of lessons but allows for local control of how these are delivered. For example, in some regions, facilitators offer an intensive, multi-day program while in other areas short lessons are offered once or twice a week over the course of months. The training is standardized and focuses on parental knowledge of healthy and unhealthy behaviors and parenting practices. It is aimed at primary caregivers who, in Jordan, are overwhelmingly female.

To evaluate the effectiveness of this program, researchers sampled 337 parent participants representing diverse regions within Jordan, a range of adult ages, and a range of educational backgrounds (Al-Hassan & Lansford, 2014). The researchers surveyed the participants about a number of themes, including approaches to discipline, understanding what constitutes child abuse and neglect, and time spent with children, and compare these responses with those from a control group not involved with the BPP. Before the program began, the knowledge and behavior of these two groups did not differ from one another. In a relatively short-term follow-up, the researchers found that the parents receiving the parenting lessons played and read to their children more, explained reasons to children more frequently, and better understood that certain activities are dangerous for children, compared to the untreated control group.

The BPP produces positive changed in parenting, and at the same time the expense of the program is relatively low. Researchers at UNICEF conducted a cost analysis of the program and assessed the average annual cost at $78 thousand US dollars, or only $13 US dollars per caregiver, or $3.27 US dollars per child (Stewart-Brown, 2000).

Reducing Family Violence

The novel *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy famously begins with a proclamation about flourishing families: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." (Tolstoy, 2004).There is an element of truth to this. Happy families, by and large, exhibit many of the same qualities as high-quality relationships in general. That is, they reflect a degree of interpersonal trust, effective communication, mutual support, and shared interests. Social scientists have discovered that programs aimed at strengthening family bonds, engaging fathers in the lives of their children, and teaching social and emotional skills can be effective (Pruett et al., 2009). Unfortunately, a number of obstacles commonly interfere with the psychological health of families. Chief among these is violence.

Just as Tolstoy suggested that unhappy families are unhappy in a variety of ways, family violence can take many forms. For example, so-called dowry deaths occur when young wives are killed in an effort to extort greater dowries or create an opportunity for re-marriage and a new dowry. Sharma and colleagues (2002) examined forensic data collected in India between 1994 and 2001. Out of 2,055 unnatural deaths, 17% were due to burns and three quarters of these victims were married females. The disproportionate demographic make-up of these deaths—often presented to authorities as "accidental kitchen fires"—led the researchers to conclude that they represented dowry deaths. In fact, crime statistic data reveal that there were more than 18 thousand dowry deaths reported in India in 2012 (National Crime Records Bureau, 2012). A similar phenomenon can be found in the case of honor killings. These typically occur when a woman is suspected of infidelity.

One vulnerable population is the elderly. Wong and Waite (2017) analyzed data from more than two-thousand older adults and found that those who were mistreated were more likely to suffer from anxiety and to have lower levels of physical health. Finally, the data on corporal punishment of children indicate that "spanking" children is associated with negative behavioral adjustment in young children (Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007), lower self-esteem among children in Hong Kong (Chan et al, 2011), and is much more likely in nations where it is legal (Keyes, et al., 2015). Physical punishment is illegal in scores of nations around the world, for example in the majority of European Union countries.

Among the most widespread forms of family violence is domestic abuse directed at women, usually by their romantic partner. Many scholars argue that partner abuse is anchored in long-held attitudes about the inferiority of women, and that these attitudes persist in a diverse range of cultures (Antonopoulou, 1999; Horne, 1999; Kozu, 1999). Such abuse is commonly associated with the onset of clinically significant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Saunders, 1994). Family violence, in all its forms, is a matter of pressing social urgency and a worthwhile target for legal and social policy as well as educational programs.

One factor that contributes to wife abuse is that women often have fewer financial and legal resources than men, and therefore cannot change their situation. If a woman reports her husband for child abuse and he can divorce her or eject her from the house, she might be homeless. If a man can divorce the woman, but not vice-versa, this imbalance in power can also contribute to the conditions for spousal abuse. However, programs that increase women's financial status in some cases do decrease spouse abuse, but in some circumstances may increase it (Bolis & Hughs, 2015), and therefore policy makers need to be aware of the cultural context of their interventions. In addition, strict laws against spousal abuse, and enforcement of than are needed in addition to greater equality.

We are encouraged by the proliferation of intervention programs aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence and its very deleterious consequences, providing psychological treatment for trauma, and doing so within culturally appropriate contexts. For example, one program in South America requires male perpetrators to be treated in groups that meet in public spaces (Corsi, 1999). Another program, Helping to

Policies to Reduce Domestic Violence

- Domestic Abuse Hotlines
- Training for Law Enforcement
- Special Partner Abuse Intervention Teams
- HUB model of social services (see the Happy Cities chapter)
- Consistent Penalties for Spousal Abuse
- Educational Programs in Schools about Desirable Social Skills
- Violence Against Women Acts
- Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs
- Public Service Campaigns Aimed at Nonviolent Solutions and Abuse
- Financial Equality for Women
- Fair financial distribution in cases of divorce
- Treatment Programs for Offenders
- Mandatory Arrest of Abusers

Overcome PTSD (HOPE; Johnson & Zlotnick, 2009), provides short-term cognitive behavioral treatment for women residing temporarily in domestic violence shelters and offers additional resources for their children. Yet another policy that can help reduce spouse abuse it to allow not just men to file divorce proceedings, but allow women to initiate them as well.

Another aspect of safety for spouses, and women in particular, is public programs to reduce sexual harassment. These may take the form of educational public service campaigns that target both abusive behavior and also victim's speaking up and reporting the abuse. Another program described in the Happy Cities chapter is a mobile platform where victims can immediately report abuse that occurs in public.

The World Health Organization (2009) describes the very destructive effects of spouse abuse, including the deaths of a substantial number of mothers, and suggests several strategies to combat it. The report suggests that school and media educational interventions, and community programs that empower women can help prevent abuse and violence. Spousal abuse of men also occurs, and sometimes is not considered serious, but a large number of serious husband abuse cases do occur (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Educational and media programs, and other activities to decrease abuse of course must also address this form of abuse.

Policy Suggestion: Mandatory Arrest of Abusers

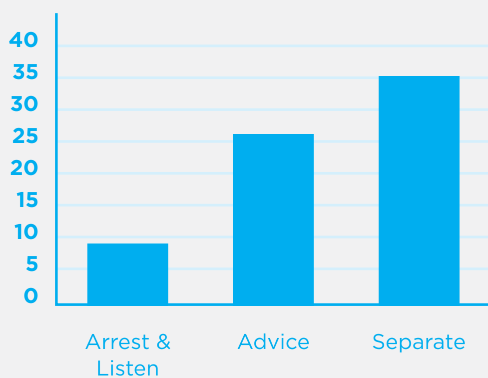
Domestic violence is a problem that affects both sexes, as well as people of all ages, educational, and economic backgrounds. It is also an issue—at least, in Western nations—where law enforcement has attempted to act as de facto social workers. Whereas police take forceful action in cases involving armed robbery, domestic abuse is an example of a violent crime where officers have been encouraged to avoid arrest. In part, this might be due to the fact that domestic abuse most often occurs in the privacy of the home, with few or no witnesses. Another impediment is that women may be reluctant to press charges. One solution to this issue is that it should be the police or prosecutor who presses charges, and not the victim. In fact, in the United States before the 1980s, police had to personally witness abuse before they could execute an arrest. There has also been a historical reluctance to intervene via arrest on the assumption that minor assaults are a "relationship issue" rather than a violent crime likely to be punished in the courts.

Law enforcement policy in the United States changed in 1994 with the introduction of the Violence Against Women Act. An analysis of partner violence revealed that simple assaults of females fell 70% after the act, and the rate of serious assault of females fell by 72% (Catalano, 2013). Among the changes following the introduction of the Violence Against Women Act was the implementation of mandatory arrest laws for perpetrators of domestic violence. This shifted the responsibility away from victims and to the police. More than 20 of the 50 United States have mandatory arrest laws (American Bar Association, 2011) and many others have "pro-arrest policies."

Skeptics worry that automatic arrest runs the risk of further victimizing women through vengeful acts of abusers who are subsequently released from jail. Two pieces of research suggest otherwise. The first study was conducted

in Minneapolis, the 16th largest metropolitan area in the United States, with a population of 3.5 million people. The researchers were interested in understanding the consequences of various police responses to domestic violence (Sherman & Berk, 1984). The researchers reviewed 300 incidents occurring over a one-year period. Police responded to these incidents in one of three ways: 1) arrest, 2) advice (speaking with the victim and offender in an attempt to mediate the conflict), and 3) separate the victim and offender (e.g., having the offender sleep elsewhere that night). Police interventions were randomized into one of these three responses. The researchers followed-up on the initial police contact through interviewing victims and reviewing arrest records of the offenders across the subsequent six months. They discovered that mandatory arrest—especially in cases where police also listen to the victims' stories— significantly reduced subsequent criminal behavior (see the Table 6). The results of this program, along with the experimental design of the study, led to widespread adoption of this policy among other police departments.

Table 6. Percentage Repeating Violence Within 6 Months



The second study replicated and extended the first. In the latter instance, however, data were collected from five geographically diverse metropolitan areas and a larger sample (nearly five thousand abusers; Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001). In this case, the researchers discovered the same trend, but a more modest effect. Specifically, they found that arrest appeared to lower aggression in those arrested for domestic violence by about 8% relative to those who were not arrested. Additionally, a longer period of time elapsed before a new incident of violence occurred. The risk of re-offending of someone who was arrested was about 10% lower than among those who were not arrested. Taken together, these studies provide initial evidence that arrest—regardless of other punishments or censures—are effective interventions to moderately lower rates of domestic violence.

Part Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

There are several major messages of this chapter. First, social well-being is a concern of policy makers at all levels of government. Social relationships of all types—friends, families, positive interactions with strangers, supportive colleagues—are one of the most important determinants of well-being, and yet it is all too common to assume that this aspect of life is an individual affair. What we are learning, however, is that government policies and programs can have a large impact on social well-being. Historically, social well-being has been addressed by policy in one of two ways: 1) the establishment of social policies aimed at reducing social ills such as inequality and crime, and 2) as a by-product of policies related to infrastructure and urban development. We argue here that a direct focus on social well-being is a justifiable priority for policy makers.

The second message of this chapter is that societies need to experiment with programs that can potentially improve social lives in their societies. Although a large body of research exists on positive social relationships, there is no universal road map for how to intervene, improve and support such connections. Because each society and culture is unique, it is desirable to test programs before fully implementing them, and assess the results in the context of local norms and values. In this respect, monitoring the subjective well-being of the nation (or cities, or neighborhoods) and of specific groups can be very helpful in assessing progress. Such measures can also be helpful in pinpointing where flourishing

versus floundering can be found in a society. The old adage that "people change what they measure" is widely accepted and certainly applies here. The measurement of well-being is foundational to the creation and execution of culturally sensitive policy.

The most general recommendation we can make is for policy makers to fully understand both that supportive social relationships are essential to human well-being and that their quality is not just dependent on individual circumstances, but is substantially influenced by their societies. Governments can influence the quality of social relationships both by programs that positively build people's capacity to strengthen their social connections and resilience, as well as reduce undesirable behavior. This is critical; just reducing the negative will not of itself build the positive. The challenges and culture in each society will differ somewhat, but the first steps are to determine where social issues arise in that culture, and then to begin proactively thinking about the ways that they can be addressed. Leaders and policy makers spend enormous amounts of time and energy focused on economic policies, but supportive social relationships are also very important and can be influenced by the programs and policies that leaders create.

Social connectedness is essential to quality of life. Well-being is raised not only by economic growth, but by policies and programs that create strong and supportive social relationships across whole societies!

Program and Policy Recommendations

Holt-Lunstad et al. (2017) report that the interventions that have been used to alleviate social isolation are programs such as marital treatments and loneliness interventions. A few larger societal-wide efforts have been made in the world to combat social isolation, such as campaigns to reduce loneliness. However, the effects of community-wide and societal-wide programs to combat social isolation have not been studied using rigorous methods in terms of their outcomes on social connections and health. Thus, the approaches we suggest in this article toward increasing social support and connectedness may have a large effect on the health of societies, but also, they present opportunities for cutting-edge research that tests the interventions with rigorous data collection methods.

We recommend a number of programs and policies for societies around the globe, which are designed to raise well-being. Combined with economic progress, employing these suggestions to improve citizens' social lives is bound to increase the quality of life, health, and emotional well-being in societies. Below are suggestions based on our review of the evidence:

1. Measurement. Societies need to measure the well-being of citizens to determine who is flourishing and who is suffering, and where and in what ways quality of life can be improved. The case for creating national accounts of well-being to parallel national economic accounts is made in detail by Diener, Lucas, Schimmack, and Helliwell (2009). One of the advantages to national accounts of well-being is that they "de-shrouding," making well-being more salient to citizens and leaders alike. Because people tend to ignore attributes of choices that are not salient, accounts of well-being can serve as a reminder to take well-being into account when making personal or government decisions.

2. Experimentation. When policies and programs are considered, a desirable approach is to implement them on a trial basis and collect outcome data so that their value can be determined in the particular context and culture. Behavioral scientists need to be involved in assessing policy programs in order that proper controls and other methodologically rigorous aspects of evaluation are included.

3. Ministry of Well-Being. It is desirable to have a post or office in the government devoted specifically to well-being—for example, a minister of "happiness" as in Dubai and Ecuador, the Future Generations commissioner in Wales, the What Works Network in the government of the United Kingdom, and the Premier's "State of Wellbeing" policy action agenda of the South Australian government. These offices examine evidence on interventions that work and make recommendations to governments both at the local and societal levels. Unlike other government

units, ministers of well-being aim specifically to advance the agenda for quality of life, based on evidence-based practices. Of course, well-being policy need not—and should not—be confined to these departments. Rather, the creation of such posts allows for a specific advocate for well-being to coordinate efforts of policy makers in all areas of government. In particular, an office devoted to well-being can continually remind other branches of government about the well-being implications of their policies and programs. Recently the United Arab Emirates issued a policy manual for the various branches of government describing how well-being should be considered and monitored to assess policies and programs. In the case of South Australia, the well-being agenda drives delivery of psychosocial interventions and research across the whole society. An office of well-being should, of course, never be a substitute for all areas of government being keenly aware of the well-being implications of their activities.

4. Urban Design. Urban design and mixed-use zoning that allows for walkability to shops, recreation, and even workplaces can reduce wasted time commuting, help the environment, reduce traffic congestion, and increase social connectedness. Urban design based on well-being evidence should be especially valued.

5. Greenery, Parks, and Attractive Public Spaces. Green spaces and attractive urban environments, especially where people can relax, meet, or engage in recreational or social activities, increase well-being and social connections.

6. Community Activities. Neighborhood cohesion is important to well-being, and can be encouraged with many different activities such as Neighborhood Watch programs, volunteerism, and community festivals.

7. Protective Housing. Inexpensive but decent housing ought to be available to all citizens, including effective shelter from the weather.

8. Eliminating Corruption. Corruption and nepotism, as well as deceptive advertising and other forms of dishonesty, erode the trust that is necessary for societies to function effectively and should be eliminated through transparency laws, stiff penalties for corruption and other unfair practices, and the building of strong norms and values for helping neighbors and society, including strangers.

9. Encouraging Prosocial Behavior. Often modern cities seem like a rat-race in which everyone is competing with everyone else. Through public service campaigns, media programming, and awards programs, societies can insure that people become more positive, cooperative, and helpful to one another. People can even be encouraged to be friendly to strangers, which can increase the feelings of well-being of both people (Epley & Schroeder, 2014).

10. Stronger Close Relationships. Strong families and close friends are necessary for human well-being, and governments can influence the strength of these bonds. Policies that eliminate family abuse are needed, such as mandatory arrest of abusers. Lawmakers must also be careful not to enact economic policies that penalize marriage and family life and discourage strong family ties. In addition, parental and marriage education programs can help people, especially those starting out and transitioning to new stages of life.

11. Public Health. All nations in the world are concerned with health, and it may be helpful to connect the well-being agenda to the public health framework. Strong social connections strongly influence health, even often surpassing the importance of exercise and avoiding obesity, smoking, and infectious diseases. Thus, fostering strong, supportive, and trusting relationships is a priority because it affects health, productivity, and citizenship. As has occurred in other areas such as skin cancer avoidance, dental hygiene, and physical fitness, emotional health can be fostered as a goal in itself, and as a means of bettering physical health. Well-being is a priority because it and strong social connections are beneficial to productivity, citizenship, and health! Thus, a focus on well-being can in the long-run decrease health costs and increase prosocial behavior, while making life more satisfying for all citizens.

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