Rekindling individualism, consuming emotions: Constructing "psytizens" in the age of happiness

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Abstract

Happiness has become a new moral regime in neoliberal societies that defines what is right and wrong and stresses the insource of responsibility. More importantly, happiness stands out as a new model of selfhood that aligns with the neoliberal ideology of individualism and consumerism at the same time that legitimizes and rekindles this same ideology in seemingly nonideological terms through the discourse of science. The paper claims that this model of selfhood turns citizens into *psytizens*, that is, into psychological clients whose full functionality as individuals is largely tied to the pursuing, consuming, and development of their own happiness. The paper analyzes this notion of *psytizen* and its three main features, comments upon the happiness industry that simultaneously presupposes and targets this model of selfhood, and examines the role that happiness studies, in general, and positive psychology, in particular, play in shaping this emerging notion of citizenship.

Keywords

Happiness, citizenship, neoliberalism, individualism, commodification

Introduction

In the course of the last decade, neoliberal societies have witnessed a drastic "happiness turn" (Ahmed, 2010), in which happiness has become ubiquitous, permeating every layer of the social realm: from media to academia, and including the entertainment industry, schools systems, health institutions, corporations, public and private organizations, and popular literature—indeed, happiness has become

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so widespread that it is no longer considered "WEIRD" (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), but a psychological state that applies to all human beings equally, regardless of their cultural background, economic status, social strata, profession, gender, or educational level. More importantly, happiness has been established as a discourse that defines the norm of what is good, desirable, prosperous, and healthy in neoliberal societies, something to what happiness researchers, with positive psychologists and happiness economists at the forefront, have vastly contributed. For instance, the happiness economist Richard Layard claims that happiness must be considered "the ultimate goal that enables us to judge other goals by how they contribute to it," a "self-evident" good for all human beings, so a better society would be any society where the majority of individuals are either happy or pursue the achievement of happiness (Layard, 2005, p. 111). Correspondingly, positive psychologists state that human happiness underlies the successful achievement of many desirable outcomes in life—superior mental and physical health, greater longevity and less medication use and substance abuse, high-quality social relationships and greater prosocial behavior, fulfilling marriages and more stable romantic relationships, better coping with the ever-changing circumstances of daily life, creative and efficient decision-making, work performance and career success, and higher income in the future, and so on (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Fredrickson, 2009, 2013; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Seligman, 2011). Thus, as many have pointed out, the failure to conform to happiness becomes a sort of stigma (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Ehrenreich, 2009; Lipovetsky, 2007; Zupančič, 2008), a sign of social malfunctioning and individual maladjustment.

One of the main reasons accounting for this "happiness turn" stems from the fact that the discourse of happiness defines a model of selfhood that does not only align with the neoliberal ideology of individualism (Baudrillard, 1998; Binkley, 2011; Davies, 2015; Honneth, 2004), but that also legitimizes and rekindles this ideology in seemingly nonideological terms through the discourse of science. For instance, according to positive psychologists, the scientific study of happiness reveals that 90% of human happiness depends upon individual psychological variables, so the role played by political, economic, and social aspects is, at most, secondary, either because they contribute very little, or because trying to influence or change those circumstances seems not to be worthwhile in terms of the individual's cost–benefit analysis of their personal well-being (e.g. Seligman, 2011). Positive psychologists also claim that individualism is the feature most consistently related to subjective well-being, even ahead of other aspects such as income, or human rights, thus accounting for why individualistic cultures (e.g. the United States and Australia), in contrast with nonindividualist or collectivist ones (e.g. Bangladesh and Cameroon), tend to produce individuals with higher levels of happiness and satisfaction with life. The explanation is that in individualistic cultures individuals have "more freedom to choose his or her own life course," they are "more likely to attribute success to themselves," and they have more chances "to pursue their individual goals" (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 2009, p. 67). Yet, positive

psychologists emphasize that "the scientific study of happiness and human flourishing" is not an historically, culturally, or ideologically bounded endeavor, but a universal enterprise yielding results which can be expanded "to other times and places, and perhaps even to all times and places" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001, p. 90). This universalist claim, though, has attracted significant critique from many authors who have pointed out that positive psychology uncritically assumes a positivist and individualistic bias that fails to take into account its own historical and cultural context (Becker & Marecek, 2008; Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Christopher, Richardson, & Slife, 2008; Lazarus, 2003; Miller, 2008; Pérez-Álvarez, 2012, 2013).

Not surprisingly the turn to happiness makes its appearance right after the consolidation of what authors such as Gilles Lipovetsky (1983) identified as "the second individualistic revolution," a pervasive cultural process of individualization and psychologization which has progressively and deeply transformed the political and social orders of accountability within neoliberal societies (see also Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), rendering the structural deficits, contradictions, and paradoxes of society in terms of psychological features and individual responsibilities. The outcome has been a widespread collapse of the social in favor of the psychological (Crespo & Freire, 2014), with politics (with a capital P) being gradually replaced by therapeutic politics (with a small p) (McLaughlin, 2010), and with the discourse of personal happiness progressively substituting the discourse of individualism in the definition of the neoliberal model of citizenship (Cabanas, 2013; Cabanas & Huertas, 2014; Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2012).

To this regard, the neoliberal discourse of happiness should not be viewed as a general and abstract idea of wellness and satisfaction. Instead, it should be regarded as a particular set of "ought to's" that defines and prescribes a particular "structure of feelings" (Williams, 1977), that is, a specific way of being, acting, and understanding the world, which is highly individualistic and emotionally saturated. Happiness does not only stand out as an emerging and pervasive ideology that stresses the insource of responsibility, delineates a new moral regime that defines what is right and wrong, promises rewards for those who engage in psychic self-development, and punishes those who fail to conform to it (Cederström & Spicer, 2015). Happiness also stands out as a new and pervasive model of selfhood which defines individuals of neoliberal societies as what we might call *psytizens*, that is, as self-governed individuals whose identity is only constrained by and linked to their psychological self-development, a goal which is achieved through self-reflexive acts of choice and consumption.

By coining the term *psytizen*, the paper stresses the psychologicist bias and individualistic kind of subjectivity that underlie the neoliberal discourse of happiness. This is especially apparent when the notion of citizenship is explicitly addressed—e.g. when defining those "positive individual traits" and "[universal] virtues" that seem to "move individuals towards better citizenship" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5), or when claiming that promoting education in these psychological traits "will lead to higher productivity, a more entrepreneurial

society and greater active citizenship'' (Marks & Shah, 2004, p. 13). The term psytizen also emphasizes the consumerist rationale that lies beneath this discourse, which turns the achievement and development of happiness into something essentially dependent upon the consumption of positive ''psy'' commodities offered by the growing ''happiness industry.'' It is therefore argued that the notion of psytizen best portrays the notion of citizenship that is explicitly and implicitly derived from the neoliberal discourse of happiness.

Psytizens or consumers of happiness in neoliberal societies

I define the notion of psytizen as a neoliberal and consumerist kind of subjectivity that renders citizens as clients whose full functionality as individuals is largely tied to the pursuing, development, and consumption of happiness, with happiness understood as the universal *leitmotif* of human action. The condition of the psytizen is, hence, highly psychological and paradoxical at the same time, since it combines the absolute belief in the natural autonomy of individuals to freely choose and self-determine on the basis of their inner authenticity, with the absolute dependence of individuals on psychological commodities and techniques which help them along the path of making responsible, authentic, and self-fulfilling choices to achieve their own happiness. Although it goes beyond the purpose and length limits of this paper, it is also worth noting that the condition of the psytizen is utterly ahistorical, since it fails to acknowledge those same genealogical conditions that make its emergence possible, as Castro (2014a, 2014b) extensively argues.

In what follows, I will address how the neoliberal discourse of happiness, especially the one emerging from positive psychology, aims at shaping the three main features of the psytizen, i.e. ''emotional rationality'', that is, individuals' ability to master their own feelings, thoughts, and motivations in order to take full responsibility for coping with their problems, to hierarchize their priorities, and to pursue their goals efficiently; ''authenticity'', that is, individuals' ability to make self-fulfilling, reflexive, and strategic choices among a highly plural and heterogeneous corpus of market options on the basis of conforming to their inner self-image (personality, tastes, preferences, etc.); and ''flourishing,'' that is, individuals' capacity to continuously exercise and work on their positive emotions and thoughts in order to grow personally and constantly engage in looking for new ways to increase their levels of well-being.

I will also comment upon the ''happiness industry'' which emerges around the offer–demand of happiness commodities in the form of ''know-how'' scientific knowledge, positive psychological techniques, and happiness applications, all of them ''psy services'' sold and purchased under the promise of helping individuals to turn the symbolic value of their happiness into an emotional and economic asset. From this point of view, happiness should be regarded as a new kind of service characteristic of advanced capitalist societies in which psychologists and

individuals engage in an offer–demand relationship which allows the latter to simultaneously consume, produce, and efficiently capitalize their emotional life through the techniques and repertoires provided by the former.

Consuming "emotional rationality"

The neoliberal discourse of happiness combines the modern Romantic ideal of the emotional as the set of inner dynamics that drives human action with the rational and utilitarian demand for self-control as the ability to manage and channel these emotions with the goal of maximizing individual self-interest. On the one hand, under this notion passions and desires have ceased to be indeterminate and inapprehensible states, and have become emotions which can be rationalized, localized, and managed. On the other hand, rationality has ceased to be a matter of virtue, discipline, and commitment to certain axiological and ethical principles, instead becoming a psychological ability, rooted in natural mental mechanisms. This latter aspect accounts for one of the main differences between the classic liberal and the neoliberal ethics of self-government: while classic liberalism carefully distinguished between how individuals behave (naturally) from how individuals ought to behave (ethically), acknowledging a clash between the two spheres, neoliberalism claims instead to derive its ethics from human nature, justifying self-government under the assumption that individuals are inherently equipped with psychological mechanisms of self-control (Cabanas, 2013). Thus, the demand of self-government, characteristic of the liberal ideal of the "self-made man," can now be understood as a psychological problem, not an ethical, ideological, or political one.

In this regard, notions such as "emotional intelligence" are no longer considered oxymoronic, but rather a feature of a much wider social demand for emotional rationality, with emotions falling into the sphere of individual responsibility. Emotions are at the center of the self-care therapeutic *ethos* of neoliberal societies: they are considered one of the principal sources of happiness, health, and social adaptation, but also the source of suffering, maladjustment, and disorders, so individuals must strive for their correct regulation and management. Accordingly, the claim for emotional self-regulation stands out as a top social demand, as well as one of the key elements motivating consumption. Eva Illouz (2007, 2008), for instance, has coined the term "emotional capitalism" to show the intimate relationship between the demand for emotional self-control and the logic of consumption in advanced capitalist societies.

In this context, a whole "happiness industry" (Davies, 2015) emerges around the demand for psychological techniques which allow consumers to increase their self-regulation skills. Positive psychologists, as well as self-help writers, counselors, motivational speakers, and coaches, play a prominent role within this industry of happiness by providing a multitude of happiness-based techniques for emotional and cognitive self-regulation. These techniques—ranging from those consisting in changing emotional styles, to those focused on making frequent positive self-affirmations, training hope, practicing gratitude and forgiveness, developing

resilience, cultivating optimism, or mastering mindfulness (e.g. Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011; Reivich, Gillham, Chaplin, & Seligman, 2005)—all promise individuals that they will succeed in expanding their self-governing abilities in order to increase performance, build positive and profitable relationships, reduce stress and anxiety, develop healthy habits, cope with risk and uncertainty, improve communicative abilities, rationalize everyday failures in a positive and productive manner, and so on.

In general terms, happiness-based techniques do not aim to deeply or structurally change the psyche; on the contrary, they are offered as a service focused on those practical and positive aspects which can be easily understood, controlled, managed, and changed by individuals themselves, as well as to produce short-term and calculable benefits. Indeed, on the one hand, happiness-based techniques provide individuals with a nontechnical and more colloquial language about the "psyche" (optimism, hope, gratitude, etc.), facilitating their use and understanding by individuals themselves, something that is especially relevant when individuals are depicted as a kind of "self-therapists." On the other hand, happiness-based techniques do not turn self-control into a struggle or into something self-critical or judgmental; on the contrary, emotional and cognitive self-regulation is depicted as a gentle process in which individuals must focus on their achievements, strengths, positive feelings, prospectives, etc. and avoid any negative emotion, memory, or self-valuation. Thus, instead of entailing thorough psychological analyses, these techniques focus on providing quick diagnoses and easy guidelines to help individuals reinforce their sense of autonomy and their ability to turn everyday drawbacks into productive stimuli to action. In this sense, happiness-based techniques detach from more time-consuming therapeutic approaches and embrace a more eclectic, gentle, and self-reassuring approach to problem-solving, turning them into something more accessible to every individual at the same time that they make them more easily marketable by being commodified as scientific techniques that produce practical, quick, and measurable results.

Consuming "authentic selves"

Positive psychologists define authenticity as "presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way," and "taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 29), claiming that individuals who act authentically achieve great and positive outcomes "as a result of their focus on what they do best" (Hodges and Clifton, 2004, p. 258). Although the notion of authenticity is not a new idea—it was already present in the cultural and political movement of Romanticism in the second half of the 19th century; in some positive liberal approaches to liberty and individualism at the end of it; in many religious and new age movements during the 20th century, especially in the United States; and it was one of the hallmarks of humanist psychology in the second half of the 20th century—positive psychology currently plays an essential role in the legitimization and naturalization of the notion of authenticity by framing it within an

evolutionist perspective. The most influential approach in this regard is Peterson and Seligman's "hierarchical classification of positive traits," a counter-positive version of the DSM-IV-R (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This classification puts forward that individuals are naturally equipped with a certain set of inner psychological traits—"virtues" and "strengths"—which are claimed to be universal and grounded in biology through evolutionary processes, to possess a high degree of generality across situations and stability across time, and to entail "a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energizing to the user" (Linley & Burns, 2010, p. 4).

Positive psychologists state that authenticity strongly relates to high levels of well-being, social adaptation, health, and personal satisfaction in multiple realms of life. In the personal realm, an authentic life is synonymous with a healthy life. Authenticity does not only provide individuals with high levels of self-acceptance, since authentic individuals do not act against their true nature, but also provide them with a sort of buffer against vulnerabilities which help them to cope with eventual psychological problems. Authenticity is also synonymous with adaptation and competence, with fully functioning citizens who measure up to their tasks and circumstances because they willingly display "the best version of themselves." In the social realm, authenticity is synonymous with autonomy and independence, with individuals who are not afraid to express their true identities and lifestyles. Authentic individuals are those who shape their selves according to their tastes, their preferences, and their values, and who act on their own choices. They are also depicted as more reliable, since authentic individuals are presumably more congruent and spontaneous as they do not hide themselves behind a "façade." In the organizational realm, authenticity is synonymous of high performance and work success, since authentic individuals presumably tend to choose the tasks to which they are naturally suited and prepared—a sort of renewed and psychologized version of the notion of "vocation." In the economic realm, authenticity is synonymous of utility: that is, authenticity becomes a fundamental criterion for making self-fulfilling, reflexive, and strategic choices among a highly plural and heterogeneous corpus of market options on the basis of conforming to self-image, since every choice made by individuals at any moment is not only liable to shape them, but it is also liable to appreciate or depreciate their value as persons.

As authenticity stands out as a first-order social demand, it is also an essential commodity for the emerging "happiness industry." From the academy, positive psychologists offer a wide range of methodologies enabling individuals to spot their inner and authentic skills and capabilities and to guide them through the path of putting those skills and capabilities into practice. In this regard, clients have at their disposal a whole variety of tools, such as the ISA (Individual Strengths Assessment) or the Values in Action questionnaire (e.g. Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). These tools are all good examples of therapeutic services in which therapists and clients engage in a mutual exchange relationship through which authenticity, instead of being "discovered," is negotiated and coproduced. For instance, Linley and Burns (2010) describe the ISA as a set of questions which help people "to look

for strengths within themselves,'' giving enough liberty to therapists to ''tailor'' the sessions in a way that ''the client understands, values, and engages with the strengths'' and the final outcome ''fits the needs and expectations of the client'' (10). As was the case with self-control, happiness-based techniques and methodologies aiming to spot the authentic selves of individuals do not address deep psychological problems, traumas, or negative aspects; rather, they offer clients a kind, painless, and quick process of self-discovery.

Through the use and application of these psychotherapeutic services, individuals purchase a scientific method to discover their ''authentic selves'' at the same time that they learn how to turn the symbolic value of their authenticity into a powerful emotional and economic asset. One outstanding example of this comes from professional and popular fields such as coaching, self-help literature, or counseling, where authenticity is commodified under the notion of ''personal branding.'' Defined as ''the art of investing in oneself in order to improve one's chances of success, satisfaction and employability,'' ''personal branding'' depicts individuals as brands who must define what makes them different and authentic, what personal values they inspire in others—self-improvement, ambition, resiliency, creativity, etc.—and what strategies individuals can undertake in order to trade themselves and improve their chances of work and business success. By merging the concepts of product development and promotion with the idea of authenticity, ''personal branding'' is a good example of self-commodification, individualization, and responsibilization of individuals for their successes and failures.

Consuming "personal flourishing"

Positive psychologists state that happiness causes life success, not the reverse. While they acknowledge that past research demonstrated a strong relationship between happiness and life success, they claim that this research failed to grasp the ''correct'' causality between the variables, since individuals' success ''is in large part a consequence of their happiness'' (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, p. 804, see also Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008; Diener, 2012), not the other way around. Presumably, happy people achieve a wider number of early successes in life than unhappy people, thus resulting in a cumulative advantage which increases the probability of achieving subsequent successes. In other words, it is stated that happiness triggers a sort of ''Matthew Effect'' in that higher happiness levels lead to a series of short-term achievements which set the tone for long-run ones, thus explaining why some people end up better off than others in life (Judge & Hurst, 2008).

One of the most popular models accounting for this effect is Barbara Fredrickson's ''broaden-and-build theory'' (Fredrickson, 2009, 2013) according to which positive emotions, unlike negative ones, increase awareness and cognitive processes in a way that widens individuals' outlooks on the world. Positive emotions also enable individuals to ''produce'' durable and effective ''personal resources'' (e.g. environmental mastery, optimism, resilience, self-acceptance),

"upon which people draw to navigate life's journey with greater success" (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 3). From this perspective, people who exploit these "broaden-and-build effects" are considered people who "flourish," that is, "completely mentally healthy" individuals who "live within an optimal range of human functioning" (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005, p. 678), and who "do good by feeling good" (Fredrickson, 2013).

Moreover, this relationship between happiness and life success would mainly hold when happiness is not a temporary, fleeting, or a passing state. Presumably, happiness is much more a matter of frequency than of intensity, so low-grade but frequent positive emotions and feelings define happiness better than intense but low-frequency ones (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008). For instance, a higher proportion of positive to negative emotional statements—3:1 is established as the benchmark for flourishers—predict a greater likelihood of performing efficiently, achieving better financial security, having superior mental health, and enjoying more successful marriages, to name just a few (Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005)—e.g. it is stated that a ratio near 1:1 "is unlikely to characterize mental health" (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 6), or that "a habit of 1:3 in a couple is an unmitigated catastrophe" (Seligman, 2011, p. 67). Although these studies have come under severe criticism concerning conceptual and methodological shortfalls (e.g. Brown, Sokal, & Friedman, 2013), positive psychologists draw upon them to argue that higher and frequent positive emotional ratios are characteristic of "chronically happy people," that is, of individuals in a permanent process of flourishing and self-improvement.

To this regard, we might say that underlying the neoliberal discourse of happiness is the idea that individuals are "self-made men," albeit "self-made men" whose "selves" are never completely or fully "made," because it is presupposed that it can always become fuller and better (Cabanas & Illouz, 2015). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have also pointed out that the "fundamental incompleteness of the 'self'" lies at the core of the second phase of modernity in which neoliberal capitalism arose, as it is undoubtedly useful for a market that links the ideal of limitless self-improvement to the principles of insatiable consumption and productivity. The "happy self" is always incomplete by definition, demanding the continuous and frequent exercise of positive emotions, affects, and cognitions in order to attain success in any objective which the individual may pursue. Achieving the highest possible levels of happiness through the constant investment of time and effort in oneself becomes a necessity (Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2016), especially when powerful and authoritative actors such as positive psychologists claim to have scientifically proven that happiness underlies every significant and successful outcome which individuals achieve in life.

To this end, the "happiness industry" provides consumers with a wide array of material and immaterial commodities supporting the continuous self-improvement of individuals. Based on the scientific findings of positive psychologists, happiness commodities are sold as products, techniques, and services which increase individuals' chances of achieving short-term and cumulative successes in different spheres

of their lives. Thus, products and advice on beauty, fashion, fitness, nutrition, sex, marriage, relationships, and business, as well as innumerable self-help books, academic literature, therapeutic advice, professional consultation, specialized seminars, magazines, and even smartphone applications, which aim at real-time monitoring the happiness and self-improvement of individuals, teaching users how to get rid of negative emotions and thoughts, and feeding back with an array of personal statistics, all of them promise leading ''happiness seekers'' in their path to self-improvement and incessant personal betterment.

Conclusion

The cultural advent and expansion of neoliberal ideology and advanced capitalism during the second half of the last century did not only bring about drastic structural economic, political, and institutional transformations, but also changes on the infrastructural level, to use Herbert Marcuse's expression. Neoliberalism brought a new ''structure of feelings'' which simultaneously presupposes and demands from individuals certain ways of being, thinking, and acting while precluding, banning, and even stigmatizing others. These ways of being, thinking, and acting correspond to a highly individualistic and psychologized notion of citizenship that takes happiness as a normative lifestyle which is specifically targeted, shaped, and achieved through the consumption of happiness commodities within a wider happiness industry.

The happiness industry emerges parallel to the increasing depiction of happiness as a natural, commensurable, and scientific criterion which determines the standard of what is a fully functioning individual, viz. a responsible, authentic, and flourishing citizen who lives a physically and emotionally healthy and productive life. The rapid commodification of happiness in multiple forms, from media and literature products, to positive psychotherapeutic services and techniques, professional counseling, coaching, management, and smartphone applications, leans on these neoliberal ideological assumptions and demands, which explain not only the emergence of the happiness industry, but also its effectiveness. At the same time, the success and expansion of the happiness industry becomes itself an explanation for why the power of happiness to shape the live of individuals has intensified and consolidated in the last few decades.

The rise of the happiness industry also explains the great extent to which individuals have internalized happiness as a modus vivendi. Happiness has come to play a central role in the economic practices of neoliberal societies, since the economic worth of commodities is no longer distinguishable from their emotional value; that is, from their power to simultaneously reflect and construct certain subjectivities. Nevertheless, I do not see happiness in this context as an emotion as much as a normative subjectivity which is mainly defined in emotional and psychological terms and practices, and characterized by the demand for emotional rationality, authenticity, and flourishing, or permanent self-improvement. This is what makes happiness commodities so effective and successful: that they do not

limit themselves to selling and producing fleeting and pleasurable states, but rather an ideologically aligned, socially desirable, and morally unproblematic lifestyle.

Happiness advocates claim that those who criticize happiness do so in the absence of an alternative to human suffering. This is simply not so, because happiness is not the alternative to suffering; on the contrary, happiness generates its own forms of suffering, discontent, and social segregation. On the one hand, the imperative of incessantly striving for higher levels of happiness and self-improvement brings the paradoxical effect of feeling overburdened by the need of becoming "the best part of themselves," which often leads to a recurring sense of never being able to catch up with this expectation, and to feelings of maladjustment, unfulfillment, and depression (e.g. Berlant, 2011). On the other hand, since happiness is a matter of individual's responsibility, society tends to blame those who suffer for their failure to be happier and more optimistic, just as it blames smokers and the physically unfit for their failure to live healthier lives, or the unemployed for their failure to develop their working projects (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2009; Illouz, 2008). The imperative of happiness makes individuals bear the responsibility for the inherent structural economic and political contradictions and paradoxes of society, so criticisms addressed to this dominant discourse of happiness, as well as to its increasing commodification, are in fact criticisms directed against these contradictions and paradoxes, which are, instead of the "psyche," the principal loci of human suffering in neoliberal societies.

In sum, through the notion of psytizen I have aimed at stressing the psychologicist bias, the consumerist rationale, and the individualistic kind of subjectivity that underlie the neoliberal discourse of happiness. I have also argued that in their definition of the "good life" and the "fully functional citizen," positive psychologists and happiness economists uncritically reproduce some of the problems and deficiencies of mainstream psychology, rekindle and legitimize individualistic values characteristic of neoliberal ideology, and tend to overlook the historical and cultural contexts in which their claims are embedded. Thus, whereas the notion of psytizen is work in progress, the paper aims at expanding the debate on many problematic issues regarding the discourse of happiness and its cultural and social consequences.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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