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Although this book is not intended to be a festschrift, the opening chapter does highlight the contributions of one person. We show how the field of subjective well-being has been shaped and influenced by the efforts of Ed Diener. His impact has resulted not just from his own extensive body of empirical work, but also from his thoughtful and integrative review papers, his edited volumes, his wide-ranging collaborations with a large number of scientists around the world, his work with the popular press, and his success in training a substantial number of well-equipped PhD and postdoctoral students who have gone on to make their own contributions to the field of subjective well-being.

In tracing Ed Diener's contributions, we begin by noting that he had a successful research career before he turned to subjective well-being. In fact, prior to his work on positive characteristics, Ed Diener focused on some of the darker aspects of human nature. Before the 1980s he worked primarily on the topic of deindividuation (e.g., Diener, Fraser, Beaman, & Kelem, 1976), the notion that people in a group would sometimes behave in ways that were against the values and morals of the individuals in the group, such as is often the case with lynching, pillaging, gang rape, genocide and other atrocities committed by groups. The title of his dissertation, completed in 1975, was: "Prior destructive behavior, anonymity, and group presence as antecedents of deindividuation and aggression."