The Happiness Data That Wrecks a Freudian Theory

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Does success make us miserable?

Sigmund Freud was one of the first to propose this peculiar form of distress in an essay he published more than a century ago. It was a theory built around a few case studies: a patient who fell into depression after earning a promotion at work, another patient who fell apart when she married her longtime partner—and Lady Macbeth, who was not his patient. They were, as Freud famously put it, “wrecked by success.”

There are so many examples of this paradox these days that it’s easy for anyone to delude themselves into believing the most successful are the least happy.

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