

Handbook of Positive Psychology Assessment

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(Editors)

Psychological Assessment –
Science and Practice

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Handbook of Positive Psychology Assessment

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

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and Fabian Gander⁴**

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Since the advent of positive psychology around the turn of the millennium, research and practice in this area have flourished. Not only has research into existing positive concepts increased but numerous new concepts have also been introduced and new assessment instruments and methods have been developed. For many topics, this has led to a plethora of – often competing – approaches to measurement. Today, researchers and practitioners alike are often faced with the challenging task of finding their way through a maze of alternative approaches when aiming to assess a particular concept. In addition, relatively little research explicitly addresses diagnostic issues, compares instruments, or even offers specific guidelines and recommendations about which measure is particularly suitable for which situation.

This handbook aims to relieve that predicament by providing a state-of-the-art overview of current theories, approaches, issues, and assessment instruments in the field of positive psychology. It is aimed at researchers, instructors, students, and practitioners and serves to guide both researchers and practitioners in selecting appropriate instruments by providing specific recommendations. Thus, the book's overarching goal is to contribute to both theory *and* practice of positive psychological assessment and stimulate further advances in the field by illuminating current gaps in the literature and discussing general issues in the assessment of positive psychological concepts.

Of course, given the breadth of the field and the numerous existing concepts and measurement approaches, this handbook cannot provide an exhaustive overview of the field but rather must be selective. In our selection of topics, we aimed to both cover rather traditional positive psychological concepts and include comparatively new and emerging ones as well. We believe this approach provides readers with the foundational positive psychological concepts while also introducing more novel perspectives.

The chapters are authored by renowned experts in their field. The authors were asked to describe their own work as well as other important contributions to the respective topic. Also, they were invited to not just give a purely neutral and descriptive view of their field

but to include their expert evaluations and opinions on the topic to provide some guidance for the interested reader.

Each chapter begins with an introduction to the theoretical background, which elaborates on the relevance of the topic at hand, followed by an overview of the most relevant assessment instruments in the field, including a discussion of their psychometric properties and a selection of key research findings. Finally, each chapter discusses specific assessment-related challenges regarding the respective topic and provides recommendations for selecting assessment instruments.

The book is divided into four main sections. The first section focuses on well-being. Given the large number of competing theories, models, and assessment instruments on well-being and related concepts (e.g., happiness, flourishing, thriving, positive affect, quality of life), we deemed a current overview of existing approaches to be urgently needed.

The second section of the book covers traits, states, and behaviors. In this section, we had to be the most selective and decided to focus on certain specific topics and cover them in considerable detail: character, humor, playfulness, meaning and purpose, flow, self-efficacy, appreciation of beauty, posttraumatic growth, passion, and work engagement.

The third section of the book focuses on assessment in specific contexts, namely, in school settings, romantic relationships, health and clinical settings, leisure, and positive psychology interventions.

The fourth and final section covers topics that have recently been introduced or have yet to be considered from a positive psychology perspective: primal world beliefs, imagination, self-transcendent experiences, and nostalgia.

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We thank everyone who contributed to the creation of this book. Foremost, of course, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the authors of the individual chapters, who invested their effort and expertise in creating comprehensive overviews of the role of psychological assessment in their respective field. Furthermore, we are very grateful for the contributions of numerous anonymous reviewers who provided critical feedback on the manuscripts and thereby helped to improve the quality of the individual chapters.