

Preface

We conceived the idea behind this book several years ago in the midst of growing interest in positive psychology. As researchers trained in clinical psychology, we were both excited by this movement; we believed that a balanced focus on both strengths and weaknesses represented a more constructive stance than the historically predominant view, which focused on pathology and illness. Yet, we noticed two key shortcomings. First, we noticed that much of the early positive psychology movement involved little appreciation for situating people's behaviors in the context of their sociocultural environment. That is, much of the work was spoken by, and for, mainstream whites. Perhaps it was because both of the current co-editors of the present work are of varying Korean backgrounds (and one of us raising a son whose other parent is African American), that this struck us as an obvious limitation if this movement was to be truly inclusive. Second, we did not feel that positive psychology took a complete view of being human across the full lifespan. Indeed, it again seemed too narrowly focused on addressing questions about how adults may seek and live a more purposeful life, with little attention at the time to children and older adults. It was from these concerns that we began discussing a need to offer a high-quality work that would address these shortcomings. Our aim was to offer readers an opportunity to appreciate the diverse richness and challenges of human behavior across the full lifespan, from childhood to late adulthood, across diverse racial/ethnic groups. The consequence of our discussions was a unique opportunity to join with a remarkable group of collaborators in putting together the present work. It is out of their collective passion and purposeful effort to expand and enrich our understanding of human potential that we hope readers of the present volume will be inspired, as we are, to take a more complex and nuanced view of themselves and others.

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