

Chapter 2

Measuring Purpose

Given the multiple dimensions and subjective nature of the purpose in life construct, measuring it presents a challenge (Melton and Schulenberg 2008). Perhaps because of that, a range of methodological approaches has been used to study purpose. Surveys, interviews, rankings, diary studies, and historical document reviews have been utilized to assess purpose and related constructs. Additionally, measures have been created for use with adolescent, emerging adult, and adult samples.

In line with the history of psychological research, early measures of purpose focused on assessing areas of deficit (Melton and Schulenberg 2008). Tools were developed to study purposelessness among individuals who were depressed, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or otherwise psychologically unfit (e.g. Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Reker 1977). However, in conjunction with the growth of positive psychological research, more recent assessments of purpose tend to be growth-oriented (e.g. Bronk 2008, 2011, 2012; Bronk et al. 2009, 2010; Damon 2008). Rather than emphasizing the lack of purpose, these studies focus on the positive correlates of leading a life of purpose.

Following is an overview of the tools most commonly used to measure purpose from both deficit and growth-oriented perspectives. The following discussion features measurement tools that have been used with some regularity in empirical studies and that were designed to assess a conception of purpose similar to one put forth in this book.

Surveys Aligned with Frankl's Conception of Purpose

Surveys are the most common assessment tool for the study of purpose, and Viktor Frankl (1959) developed the first psychological survey of purpose in life. Called the Frankl Questionnaire, this self-report measure consists of a relatively informal set of 13 questions. It was created to both assess Frankl's Will to Meaning assumption and to evaluate the degree of purpose present among his patients. He believed that when individuals were unable to find a purpose for their lives they suffered varying degrees of existential frustration, typically manifest as boredom, apathy, or

depression. According to Frankl approximately 20% of patients seeking psychological counseling suffer from a severe lack of purpose in life (noogenic neurosis) and 55% of the general public suffers from at least some degree of purposelessness (existential vacuum) (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Crumbaugh 1968). Frankl's evaluation of the presence of purpose depended largely on an individual's response to one questionnaire item, "Do you feel your life is without purpose?" (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964). Participant responses are coded from "1: no or very low level of purpose or meaning" to "3: high purpose in life present" and are added to scores on the other 12 questions to determine the individual's purpose level.

Frankl used his measure for clinical rather than research purposes. However, two individuals used the measure to conduct empirical studies. Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) administered the Frankl Questionnaire to a population of psychiatric and more typical adults and found more typical individuals consistently scored higher on purpose than psychiatric patients did, supporting Frankl's theory about the relationship between purpose and mental health. However, given that the measure's reliability and validity have not been assessed, researchers (Reker 1977) have called into question the adequacy of the Frankl Questionnaire as an independent measure of purpose.

Crumbaugh and Maholick agreed that the Frankl Questionnaire was limited as a research tool, so they created a new survey of purpose designed to apply "the principles of existential philosophy to clinical practice" (1964, p. 200). The idea that mental illness could result from existential factors, such as a lack of purpose, went against conventional wisdom at the time (Damon et al. 2003; Kotchen 1960). Behaviorism and psychoanalytical theories prevailed, but Crumbaugh and Maholick, were eager to further test Frankl's controversial thesis.

In consultation with Frankl, Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) developed the most widely used measure of purpose to date (Pinquart 2002). Their Purpose in Life Test (PIL) improves upon the Frankl Questionnaire, and as such it relies on Frankl's conception of purpose, or "the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual" (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964, p. 201), and tests Frankl's Will to Meaning assumption (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964, 1981). In particular, the survey assesses the degree to which individuals strive to make meaning of their conscious experiences and the degree to which that meaning leaves individuals feeling as though their lives are worthwhile and significant (Crumbaugh and Henrion 2001). However, it does not assess an individual's commitment to issues beyond-the-self (Damon et al. 2003).

The PIL consists of three parts: parts A, B, and C. Since only part A is objectively scored, it is the only part that is regularly used in empirical studies of purpose. Part B asks participants to complete 13 sentences about purpose and Part C asks them to compose a paragraph about their personal aspirations. Part A originally consisted of 25-items, but following pilot tests about half of the items were discarded or revised and new questions were added. A 22-item measure resulted (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964). For simplicity sake, two-reverse scored items are typically omitted in empirical studies using the PIL, leaving a 20-item measure (Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1981). This 20-item version of the PIL is a self-report

measure of attitudes and beliefs that includes statements such as, "I am usually," with response options that range from "1: completely bored" to "7: exuberant, enthusiastic," and "In life I have, 1: no goals or aims at all—7: very clear goals and aims." The total scale score is obtained by summing item scores. Raw scores of 113 and above are typically interpreted as high purpose, scores of 92–112 reflect moderate levels of purpose, and scores of 92 and below suggest a lack of life purpose (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964). As expected, the PIL and the Frankl Questionnaire are positively correlated ($r=.68$; $p<.05$) (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1967).

The PIL has been administered to a wide range of individuals including women in Junior League (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964), college students (Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964), hospitalized individuals (Crumbaugh 1968), people suffering from alcoholism (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Crumbaugh 1968), psychiatric patients (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964), business professionals (Bonebright et al. 2000; Crumbaugh 1968), members of religious groups (Crumbaugh 1968), and inmates (Reker 1977). Modified versions of the PIL have also been administered to geriatric (Hutzell 1995), adult (Reker and Peacock 1981), and adolescent populations (Hutzell and Finck 1994; Jeffries 1995). The measure has been translated into a variety of languages, including Chinese (C-PIL; Shek 1993; Shek et al. 1987), Japanese (J-PIL; Okado 1998) and Swedish (Jonsen et al. 2010).

PIL scores correlate with many measures of psychological health. For example, several studies have shown significant negative correlations between the PIL and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Depression scale ($r=-.30$ to $-.65$, $p<.01$; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1981), and significant positive correlations have been reported between the PIL and the self-acceptance ($r=.40$, $p<.01$), sense of well-being ($r=.52$, $p<.01$), achievement via conformance ($r=.63$, $p<.01$), and psychological mindedness ($r=.47$, $p<.01$) subscales of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Bonebright et al. 2000). The PIL is also negatively correlated with the Srole Anomie Scale ($r=-.48$ for males and $r=-.32$ for females, $p<.05$; Srole 1956), suggesting that the concept of the existential vacuum and anomie, or a lack of social norms, may overlap (Crumbaugh 1968).

The PIL has been subjected to more tests of psychometric soundness than any other measure of purpose. In sum, the measure appears to be a reliable measure of the degree of personal meaning present among both adult (Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1967; Guttman 1996; Meier and Edwards 1974; Reker 1977) and adolescent samples (Sink et al. 1998). For example, Sink et al. (1998) administered the 20-item PIL to samples of rural and urban adolescents and reported Cronbach's alpha values of .88 and .86, respectively. One-week retest reliability coefficients have been found to range from .68 to .83 ($p<.01$, Meier and Edwards 1974; Reker 1977). A 6-week retest coefficient of .79 ($p<.001$, Reker and Cousins 1979) and 8-week retest coefficients of .66 among rural and .78 among urban samples have also been reported (no p -values reported; Sink et al. 1998). Reliability estimates among adult samples are similar to those reported with adolescents (Guttman 1996). Spearman-Brown Corrected split-half reliability coefficients ranging

from .76 to .85 corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula to .87 and .92 have been obtained in four different studies with adults (Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Hutzell 1988; Reker 1977; Reker and Cousins 1979).

Among adult samples, the PIL also appears to be valid measure of Frankl's will to meaning concept (Chamberlain and Zika 1988; Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Henrion 1988; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1967; Hutzell 1988; Reker 1977). Construct validity has been supported by various comparisons of group means of different populations (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1981). Consistent with Frankl's theory, low PIL scores are significantly associated with suicide ideation (Harlowe et al. 1986; Kinnier et al. 1994), psychopathology (Kish and Moody 1989), depression and anxiety (Schulenberg 2004), and drug use (Harlowe et al. 1986; Kinnier et al. 1994; Padelford 1974), while high PIL scores predict positive self-concept, self-esteem, internal locus of control, life satisfaction, and planning (Reker 1977). In fact, because many of the PIL's questions probe happiness, some have argued that the PIL may actually be an indirect measure of life satisfaction (Damon et al. 2003) or an inverse measure of depression (Dyck 1987; Schulenberg 2004; Steger 2006; Yalom 1980). However, positive correlations between purpose and indicators of well-being and negative correlations between purpose and depression are never perfect, suggesting that the PIL is assessing a related but distinct construct.

Questions have also arisen with regards to the dimensionality of the life purpose construct measured by the PIL. Some researchers, using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, have concluded that the measure only assesses a single factor when certain items are excluded (Dale 2002; Marsh et al. 2003). Others have argued that it is clearly multidimensional. For instance, based on a qualitative review of the items, Yalom (1980) suggested that the survey assessed six different constructs, including purpose, life satisfaction, freedom, fear of death, suicidal thoughts, and how worthwhile one perceives one's life to be. Others have used factor analytic techniques to identify distinct dimensions. For instance, Shek (1988) concluded that the measure consists of five dimensions, including feelings regarding one's quality of life, goals, death, choices, and retirement. Still others have argued that it features only two dimensions, but they disagree on what those two dimensions are. Using exploratory factor analysis, one team of researchers concluded that the measure assessed an affective (sum of items 3, 4, 13, 17, 18, and 20) and a cognitive dimension, (sum of items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, and 19) (Dufton and Perlman 1986; Shek 1993; Shek et al. 1987), while other researchers concluded it assesses an exciting life (items 2, 5, 7, 10, 17–19) and a purposeful life (items 3, 8, 20; Morgan and Farsides 2009). As a result of these contradictory findings, simply creating a composite score, if they do not assess a single factor, is likely to compromise the reliability and validity of the results and consequently has been cautioned against (Marsh et al. 2003). Additional assessments of the measure with a wider range of participants are clearly needed.

In part as a means of addressing the dimensionality issues raised with the full-length PIL, a shortened version was recently proposed. The Purpose in Life—Short Form (PIL-SF; Schulenberg et al. 2011) includes four of the PIL items that, accor-

ding to confirmatory factor analytic techniques, fit well together. These four items focus primarily on goal attainment (questions 3, 4, 8, and 20). The internal consistency reliability coefficient alpha for the 20-item PIL was .86 and for the independently administered 4-item PIL-SF it was .84, suggesting that the short version is as reliable as the long one (Schulenberg et al. 2011). When administered separately, responses to the short form correlated with responses on the full PIL ($r=.75, p<.01$, 1-tailed), and similar to the PIL, scores on the PIL-SF also correlate positively with scores on measures of psychological well-being and negatively with scores on measures of psychological distress. The PIL-SF appears to represent a viable alternative to the full PIL, but it has rarely been used in empirical research.

The PIL, on the other hand, continues to be used regularly with adolescent (Sink et al. 1998) and adult samples (Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1967; Guttman 1996; Meier and Edwards 1974; Reker 1977), but it has not frequently been administered to younger individuals. This is likely because some items are inappropriate for early adolescents. For instance, items regarding the clarity of life goals may be too abstract for early adolescents, questions probing the reasons for existence may be beyond the lived experience of early adolescents, and items about death likely represent issues that most early adolescents do not regularly consider. Therefore, researchers interested in assessing purpose among early adolescents selected only the PIL items that were relevant to the lives of youth and created an Existence Subscale of Purpose in Life Test (EPIL; Law 2012). The 7-items of the EPIL focus on enthusiasm and excitement about life, a belief that daily activities are worthwhile, and a conviction that life has meaning. The creators of the measure conducted an assessment of the scale's psychometric properties with 2,842 early adolescents (Law 2012). They obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of .89. Exploratory factor analysis identified one factor that accounted for 60% of the variance, and the factor structure was stable across genders. To assess the measures criterion-related validity, it was successfully used to differentiate volunteers from non-volunteers, whereby early adolescent volunteers scored higher on the EPIL than early adolescent youth who were not involved in volunteer activity. Though these findings suggest that the EPIL could be a useful measure of purpose among early adolescents, it has rarely been used in empirical studies. Of course, that may be because the measure is still relatively new.

Similar to the EPIL, the Life Purpose Questionnaire (LPQ; Hablas and Hutzell 1982; Hutzell 1989) represents another variation on the PIL; however, this one has been more widely administered. Because the PIL uses different response anchors for each question, researchers have argued that it may be confusing for some participants (Harlow et al. 1986; Schulenberg 2004). Therefore, the LPQ was developed as an uncomplicated, easily administered, paper-and-pencil measure of life meaning and purpose. Like the PIL, this measure includes 20-items that assess aspects of purpose and meaning, but unlike the PIL it includes statements, rather than phrases, to which participants respond using a simple dichotomous-choice format (*agree—disagree*). The LPQ was designed for use with specialized populations of individuals who are likely to be confused by the PIL, including geriatric participants,

neuropsychiatric inpatients, alcoholics, and individuals with other special needs (Hablas and Hutzell 1982; Hutzell and Peterson 1986).

Among adults, the LPQ appears to be a psychometrically sound measure of purpose (Hablas and Hutzell 1982). Correlations between the LPQ and the PIL have been found to range from .60 to .80 (Hutzell 1989; Kish and Moody 1989), and, similar to the PIL, scores on the LPQ correlate positively with life satisfaction and negatively with depression (Hutzell 1989). However, psychometric properties of the LPQ have not been as thoroughly investigated as psychometric properties of the PIL, and additional assessments have been called for (Kish and Moody 1989). In spite of this, the measure does appear to be a useful for assessing purpose among special populations that struggle to understand the more confusing PIL response options (Hutzell 1989). In fact, respondents report that they prefer taking the LPQ to the PIL (Schulenberg 2004).

The Life Purpose Questionnaire has also been adapted for use with adolescents (Hutzell and Finck 1994). The measure omits two items that are not relevant to younger participants (Item seven: "Retirement means a time for me to do some of the exciting things I have always wanted to do." Item 15: "I am not prepared for death.") The remaining 18 items in the Life Purpose Questionnaire—Adolescent version (LPQ-A; Hutzell and Finck 1994) include questions such as the following, "I am often bored," "I have definite ideas of the things I want to do," and "My life is meaningful." Respondents agree or disagree with each of the statements. The measure has been used to assess life purpose among young people undergoing alcohol and drug treatment.

The LPQ-A measure has not been used much in empirical research. As such, its psychometric properties have rarely been investigated beyond the limited assessments conducted by its authors (Hutzell and Finck 1994). As a means of assessing the measure, Hutzell and Finck administered it to two groups of adolescents: one group consisted of youth in a support group for drug and alcohol use ($n=100$) and the other group included more typical youth ($n=100$). Each of the 18-items in the measure was correlated with the total score of the remaining items, and correlations ranged from .21 to .55 for the support group, averaging .37, and from .23 to .62 for the more typical group, averaging .48. Since this measure is based on Frankl's theory regarding the centrality of purpose to human well-being, the authors expected to find that the typical group would score higher than the support group. Results confirmed this hypothesis. The support group mean score was 10.6 ($SD=4.1$) while the typical group mean score was 12.5 ($SD=4.5$), and this difference was statistically significant ($t(198)=3.13$; p two-tailed $<.01$).

The Purpose In Life Scale (PILS; Robbins and Francis 2000) represents yet another measure of purpose based largely on the PIL. This unidimensional measure consists of 12-items, including the following, "My life seems most worthwhile," "I feel my life has a sense of purpose," and "My life has clear goals and aims." Participants respond via a 5-point Likert scale ("1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree.") Psychometric properties of the PILS were assessed among a sample of 517 undergraduate students. A Cronbach's alpha value of .90 was obtained, and high scores on the measure were found to be associated with church attendance

($r=.11$, $p<.001$), stable extraversion ($r=.23$, $p<.001$), and low levels of neuroticism ($r=-.35$, $p<.001$) (Robbins and Francis 2000).

In addition to helping develop the PIL, Crumbaugh later developed the Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (SONG) as a complement to the PIL. Just as the PIL assesses the degree to which individuals have *found* a purpose for their lives, the SONG assesses the degree to which individuals are actively *searching* for a purpose for their lives (Crumbaugh 1977).

The SONG represents the earliest measure of record to assess the search for purpose. The motivation to find purpose is referred to by Frankl as *noetic*, or the spiritual, inspirational, aspirational, or non-material aspects of life. Frankl believed people should be motivated to search for a larger meaning for their lives. However, in spite of Frankl's focus on issues beyond-the-self, items in the SONG do not directly assess these kinds of concerns. Instead, items include the following: "I think about the ultimate meaning in life," "I am restless," and "I feel that some element which I cannot quite define is missing from my life." Responses are scaled on a seven point Likert scale (from "1: never" to "7: constantly").

Several researchers have assessed the psychometric properties of the SONG (e.g. Crumbaugh 1977; Melton and Schulenberg 2008; Reker and Cousins 1979). Reported Cronbach alpha coefficients range from .81 to .84, and 6 and 8-week retest reliabilities range from .66 to .78 (no p -values reported in either study; Reker and Cousins 1979; Sink et al. 1998). The SONG appears to distinguish between patient and non-patient groups whereby, as would be expected based on Frankl's will to meaning assumption, psychiatric patients are less motivated to search for purpose than non-patient adults (Crumbaugh 1977).

According to Crumbaugh (1977), scores on the PIL and SONG questionnaires should be inversely related since people with a purpose in their lives should not be motivated to search for one. As Crumbaugh (1977) predicted, SONG scores are significantly negatively correlated with PIL scores ($r=-.33$, $p<.001$; Reker and Cousins 1979). Further, using ten dimensions of life satisfaction, researchers (Reker and Cousins 1979) determined that items loaded on six factors in the PIL and on four factors in the SONG, suggesting again that the PIL and SONG function, as intended, as complementary measures. However, Crumbaugh (1977) proposed that the search for purpose and the presence of purpose were *always* inversely related, and this does not appear to be the case. Assessments using different measures of purpose have concluded that the search for purpose and the presence of purpose appear to be inversely related among adults, but not among adolescents (Bronk et al. 2009; Steger and Kashdan 2007). To date the PIL and SONG have not been administered together to adolescent samples. The relationship between the identification of purpose and the search for purpose is elaborated upon more fully in Chap. 7 (The Experience of Purpose among Diverse Groups).

The Life Attitude Profile-Revised (LAP-R; Reker 1992) is yet another survey measure based on Frankl's (1978) Will to Meaning assumption. It is a multidimensional measure designed to assess both current levels of purpose and the motivation to find purpose. The original LAP (Reker and Peacock 1981; Reker et al. 1987) included 56 items, but revisions resulted in a 48-item measure that is conceptually

tighter and composed of an equal number of items per dimension (Reker 1992). The LAP-R consists of six dimensions including, purpose, coherence, choice/responsibility, death acceptance, existential vacuum, and goal seeking. Two composite scales are derived from these dimensions: the personal meaning index (purpose+coherence) and existential transcendence (purpose+coherence+choice/responsibility+death acceptance minus existential vacuum+goal setting). The six LAP-R dimensions have been shown to be internally consistent, stable over time, and valid measures of their respective constructs (Reker 1992). Questions in the LAP-R include, "My past achievements have given my life meaning and purpose" and "I feel that some element which I can't quite define is missing from my life." Participants respond to these questions via a 7-point Likert scale ("1: strongly disagree" to "7: strongly agree"), and scores correlate significantly with PIL scores, Life Regard Index-Revised Framework scores, and ratings of meaningfulness (Reker 1992).

Measures such as the LAP-R were designed for use with more typical respondents, but similar measures have also been created for use with more specialized groups of individuals. Frankl believed that challenges and even suffering presented opportunities to discover a purpose in life, and based on this premise, Patricia Starck (1983) created the Meaning in Suffering Test (MIST; Starck 1983, 1985) which assesses levels of meaning in life specifically related to unavoidable suffering. The MIST has two parts. The second part is primarily used for gathering potentially useful information for therapy (Starck 1985), but it is difficult to quantify (Schulenberg 2004) and as such is not frequently used in research. The first part, however, is composed of 20-items including, "I believe suffering causes a person to find new and more worthwhile life goals," and "I believe everyone has a purpose in life; a reason for being on Earth." Responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ("1: never" to "7: constantly"). The measure consists of three subscales: subjective characteristics of suffering, personal response to suffering items, and meaning in suffering (Starck 1985). MIST scores among nursing students and hospitalized patients correlate significantly with scores of other measures of purpose and related constructs (Guttman 1996; Schulenberg 2004; Starck 1985).

The MIST has not been used extensively in empirical studies, but a fairly recent investigation reveals that while total MIST scores demonstrate acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$), two of the measure's three subscales demonstrate low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .52$ for the 6-item subjective experience of suffering subscale and Cronbach's $\alpha = .53$ for the 8-item personal responses to suffering subscale; Schulenberg 2004). As such, when using the MIST in research it is advisable to use the total score rather than the subscale scores (Schulenberg et al. 2006).

Finally, the last measure of purpose based on Frankl's conception of the construct is the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al. 2006). While measures exist that assess both identified purpose and the search for purpose, and measures exist to assess purpose among both adult and adolescent populations, this is the first measure that assesses both identified purpose and the search for purpose among adolescents. In addition to drawing from the PIL, items in this measure are also adapted from other existing measures of purpose (Ryff's Scales of Psychological

Well-being; Ryff and Keyes 1995) and meaning (Meaning in Life Questionnaire; Steger et al. 2006). The multidimensional scale was designed to probe the search for purpose, the presence of purpose, active engagement in working toward purpose, and the centrality or significance of purpose. However, repeated use of the survey reveals that these four components can be collapsed into two subscales: an Identified Purpose subscale (15 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$) and a Searching for Purpose subscale (5 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$; Bronk et al. 2009; Burrow et al. 2010). Participants rate the survey items on a seven-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating greater Identification and more Searching. "I have discovered a satisfying life purpose," is an Identified subscale item and "I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life" is a Searching subscale item.

As previously discussed, scores on the Searching and Identified subscales are positively correlated among adolescents and emerging adults, but not among mid-life adults. In other words, adolescents who report having a purpose in life also tend to report searching for one, but consistent with the PIL and SONG relationship, midlife adults who have a purpose in life do not report searching for one (Bronk et al. 2009). Unfortunately, the PIL and SONG have not been administered to adolescent and young adult samples, but the emerging pattern of results suggests that the relationship between searching for and having identified a life purpose may be developmental in nature. This possibility is elaborated upon in greater detail in Chap. 4 (Purpose across the Lifespan). The Revised Youth Purpose survey is a relatively new measure, and as a result, it should be subjected to additional tests of psychometric soundness.

Ryff's Purpose in Life Sub-Scale

Behind Crumbaugh and Maholick's PIL test, Ryff's Purpose in Life subscale is the second most widely administered measure of purpose (Pinquart 2002). Ryff was an early advocate for empirical research on positive human health. She conceptualizes psychological well-being as consisting of six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and life purpose (Ryff and Singer 1998). Called the Scales of Psychological Well-being, her self-report inventory is designed to assess an individual's welfare at a particular moment in time in each of these six areas. Subscales can be administered all together or on their own. The purpose in life subscale includes 20-, 14-, 9-, and 3-item versions. Individuals are asked to respond to questions such as, "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future (reverse scored)," and "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them." Responses are scaled from 1–6 on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating the presence of more goals, greater direction in life, and a stronger purpose. Repeated assessments of the 20-item version reveal Cronbach alpha values ranging from .88 to .90 and a 6-week retest reliability score of .82 (Ryff 1989; Ryff et al. 1994, 2003). The 3-item scale was developed for use with telephone surveys, but it is not been found to be internally consistent (Ryff and Keyes 1995).

Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence Survey

Antonovsky's widely administered Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC; 1983) measures a construct similar to purpose. Commonly used in medical research, the SOC was developed to assess "salutogenesis," or the origins of health. More specifically, the SOC gauges the degree to which individuals believe their lives are comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Taken together, these beliefs support useful coping mechanisms, and individuals who hold these beliefs are likely to effectively manage stressful situations and stay well. Questions in the SOC include, "How often do you have the feeling that there is little meaning in the things you do in your daily life?"; "Do you have very mixed-up feelings and ideas?"; and "Do you have the feeling that you are in an unfamiliar situation and don't know what to do?" There are at least 15 versions of the SOC (Eriksson and Lindstrom 2005), but the most common versions are the original 29-item version (in which participants respond on a 7-point Likert scale) and a 13-item version (which uses the same response scale and includes a subset of the questions from the longer survey; Jakobsson 2011). While it might be tempting to use the meaning component of the SOC on its own, Antonovsky (1987) warned against this, saying it was intended for use as a measure of dispositional coping comprising all three subscales and its psychometric properties only apply to the full scale.

In 2005, researchers (Eriksson and Lindstrom) conducted a rigorous review of nearly 500 scientific publications featuring the SOC. They determined that in 124 studies using the measure, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.70 to 0.95 and that retest correlations ranged from 0.69 to 0.78 over 1 year, from 0.59 to 0.67 over 5 years, and 0.54 over 10 years. They also concluded that SOC scores typically increase with age. Psychometric problems have arisen with shortened versions of the SOC (e.g. in a study of 1,753 participants, the 13-item version failed to show acceptable construct validity; Jakobsson 2011).

Like Antonovsky's "salutogenic" approach (1987), the Life Regard Index (LRI; Battista and Almond 1973) similarly assesses the degree to which life is viewed as meaningful and comprehensible. In particular, it measures the extent to which individuals demonstrate a positive regard for life, which Battista and Almond (1973) define as "an individual's belief that he is fulfilling his life as it is understood in terms of his highly valued life-framework of life-goals" (p. 413). The LRI is a self-report questionnaire composed of two subscales. The Framework subscale (LRI-FR) assesses the degree to which individuals can envision their lives within a meaningful perspective or have derived a set of life-goals, and the Fulfillment subscale (LRI-FU) measures the degree to which individuals see themselves as having fulfilled or as being in the process of fulfilling their framework or life goals.

The LRI includes 28 items. Half of the statements are phrased positively ("I have a clear idea of what I'd like to do with my life") and half are phrased negatively ("I don't really value what I'm doing"). In its original form the survey asked participants to respond on a five-point Likert scale, but Debats (LRI-R; 1998) suggested a

new three-point Likert scale to avoid extreme responses ("1: I disagree," "2: I have no opinion," or "3: I agree").

The LRI has been subjected to a number of tests of psychometric soundness (e.g. Battista and Almond 1973; Chamberlain and Zika 1988; Debats et al. 1993, 1995). Cronbach's alpha values for the full LRI range from .87 to .91 depending on the sample (e.g. Cronbach's alpha = .87 among typical students; Cronbach's alpha = .91 among distressed students; Cronbach's alpha = .91 among general population sample). Reported internal consistency scores were similar for the two subscales (Cronbach's alpha LRI-FR = .84 among general population sample and Cronbach's alpha LRI-FU = .87; Debats et al. 1993). Five-week retest reliabilities for were calculated using Spearman's *rho* and yielded a coefficient of 0.80 (LRI), 0.73 (LRI-FR), and 0.79 (LRI-FU). Scores do not differ significantly either for the measure as a whole or for the subscales based on educational level or sex. However, married individuals do report significantly higher LRI scores than never married ($t=3.43$, (130), $p<.001$) and divorced individuals ($t=3.56$, (156), $p<.001$). To establish the construct validity of the LRI, the measure was correlated with a measure of happiness ($r=.73$, $p<.001$), depression ($r=-.59$, $p<.001$), anxiety ($r=-.40$, $p<.001$), and general psychological distress ($r=-.52$, $p<.001$). Lastly, similar to other PIL measures, the LRI differentiates between typical and distressed samples, whereby typical individuals report higher life regard scores than do distressed individuals ($t=10.8$ (269), $p<.001$, $d=1.36$; Debats et al. 1993).

In a mixed-methods assessment of the LRI, researchers had participants complete the survey and respond to open-ended questions regarding specific experiences of meaning and meaninglessness. Results suggest that individuals who score high on positive life regard (as measured by the LRI) are more likely to describe experiences of meaningfulness with a variety of people including family, friends, and strangers, in which positive interactions, such as helping, and caring correspond with enjoying life fully and experiencing a sense of well-being (Debats et al. 1995). The authors conclude that meaningfulness, as assessed by the LRI, manifests as a state of positive engagement with others. Given this, and given lack the of goal orientation and beyond-the-self commitment, this measure appears to assess a construct more akin to meaning than purpose.

However, a multidimensional measure of purpose based in part on the LRI was recently proposed. Called the Meaningful Life Measure (MLM; Morgan and Farsides 2009), this survey actually assesses a construct more similar to purpose than meaning since it is composed of select items from the LRI, PIL, and Ryff's Psychological Well-being purpose subscale. This 23-item measure includes goal-oriented probes such as the following: "I have a clear idea of what my future goals and aims are," and "I tend to wander aimlessly through life, without much sense of purpose or direction" (reverse scored). Participants respond via a 7-point Likert scale ("1: strongly disagree" to "7: strongly agree"). Exploratory factor analysis reveals that the measure yields five factors, including, the exciting life, the accomplished life, the principled life, the purposeful life, and the valued life. Two of these factors, the purposeful life and the

valued life, most closely assess life purpose as it has been conceived of in this book. The principled life measures understanding, the accomplished life gauges responsibility, and the exciting life captures enjoyment.

Preliminary assessments, with a sample composed primarily of college females, suggest that the measure is psychometrically sound. Alpha coefficients for the five subscales range from .85 to .88, and 6-month retest coefficients range from .64 to .70 (Morgan and Farsides 2009). However, additional studies are needed to confirm that the measure is reliable with a wider range of participants. Additional tests are also needed to assess the measure's convergent and discriminant validity.

Survey Measures of Meaning and Constructs Related to Purpose

Another cluster of measures assesses constructs closely related to purpose. For example, the Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP; Reker and Wong 1988) measures the source and degree of personal meaning in one's life at different ages. The SOMP includes 16-items, and participants are asked to indicate on a seven-point Likert scale how important each potential source of meaning is to them. Potential sources of meaning include participating in leisure activities, leaving a legacy for the following generation, and serving others. The 16-item measure has yielded Cronbach alpha values of .77 and .78 (Reker 1988; Prager 1996) and a 3-month retest reliability coefficient of .70 (Reker 1988; Prager 1996).

In contrast to the SOMP, which assesses psychologists' theoretical ideas regarding what *should* represent individuals' sources of life meaning, the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP; Wong 1998) assesses laypeople's implicit theories of what *actually does* make their lives meaningful. Originally, this self-report measure consisted of 59-items, but following a revision it was cut down to 57-items that assess seven sources of life meaning, including achievement/striving (16 items), relationships (9 items), religion (9 items), transcendence (8 items), self-acceptance (6 items), intimacy (5 items) and fair treatment (4 items). These factors represent individuals' implicit theories of what makes life meaningful in practice as well as under ideal circumstances. The measure assesses the magnitude or intensity of life meaning (the greater the overall score, the more successful a person is in approximating the ideally meaningful life), the breadth of meaning (individuals who seek meaning from a variety of sources have a broader basis than individuals who derive meaning from only one or two sources), and balance (participants who score roughly equivalent across dimensions of meaning demonstrate a more balanced approach to life meaning). Research finds that self-ratings correlate with prototypical ratings and with criterion scores, suggesting that individuals who score higher on the PMP are closer to approximating an ideally meaningful life. Questions in the PMP include the following, "I have found someone I love deeply," and "I attempt to leave behind a good and lasting legacy." Participants respond to these questions via a seven-point Likert scale ("1: not at all" to "7: a great deal"). While the PMP's conception of meaning

shares with purpose a focus on personal significance, it differs in that it lacks both future directedness and a commitment to the broader world.

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire represents another regularly administered measure of meaning (MLQ; Steger et al. 2006). This ten-item survey tool includes two five-item subscales: a searching for meaning subscale and a presence of meaning subscale. All items are scored on a seven-point Likert scale from “1: absolutely untrue” to “7: absolutely true.” A sample Searching item includes, “I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant,” and a sample Presence item includes, “I understand my life’s meaning.” Recent use of this measure yielded a Cronbach alpha value of .80 (Yeagar and Bundick 2009). The measure is valid to the extent that it positively relates to a variety of measures of well-being, including life satisfaction and positive affect, and negatively relates to depression (Steger et al. 2006; Steger and Kashdan 2007).

Whereas the Meaning in Life Questionnaire assesses relatively stable feelings of meaning, a nearly identical measure, the Daily Meaning Scale (DMS; Steger et al. 2008; Stillman et al. 2009) assesses how participants feel “right now.” Like the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Daily Meaning Scale includes both a Presence subscale (e.g. “Right now, how meaningful does your life feel?” 5-item, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$) and a Searching subscale (e.g. “How much are you searching for meaning in your life?” 5-item, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$), both of which are scored on a 7-point Likert scale, “1: not at all” to “7: absolutely.”

Less Commonly Used Survey Measures of Purpose

Another cluster of research tools conflates purpose with other constructs. For example, the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA) is a self-report survey that assesses a range of potential personal strengths. Designed to help individuals identify their particular combination of character strengths, this survey includes two versions, one for adults 18 years of age and older (VIA—IS; Peterson and Seligman 2004) and one for youth between 10 and 17 years of age (VIA—Youth; Dahlsgaard 2005). Using exploratory factor analysis, the 24 strengths can be collapsed into four groups, including strengths of temperance, wisdom, interpersonal functioning, and transcendence. Transcendent strengths include purpose. However, because purpose is lumped in with other transcendent strengths, including spirituality and gratitude, its scores are not typically reported alone.

The Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes (IPPA; Kass et al. 1991) represents another positive psychology scale that includes a purpose in life dimension. This 30-item questionnaire taps two domains, purpose/life satisfaction and self-confidence in potentially stressful situations. The inventory scales were developed using factor analysis and Kass et al. (1991) report Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from .88 to .94 for the total IPPA scale. Positive correlations between the IPPA scale and affect balance ($r = .66, p < .0001$) and between the IPPA scale and self-esteem ($r = .79, p < .0001$) and negative correlations between the IPPA scale and

loneliness ($r = -.63$, $p < .0001$) have also been obtained. An empirical study using the measure suggests that positive changes in scores on this test correlate with positive changes in the health status of individuals who suffer from chronic pain (Kass et al. 1991). Both of these measures, the VIA and the IPPA, combine purpose with other constructs, and therefore are not useful measures of purpose alone. However, their existence underscores the central role of purpose in assessing physical and psychological well-being.

Other measures of purpose have been administered in professional, rather than research, contexts. For example, the Developing Purposes Inventory (Barratt 1978) is based on Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors of Student Development. Created in 1969 (Chickering 1969) and updated in 1993 (Chickering and Reisser 1993), this model of college student growth was designed to assess emerging adults' growth in seven key areas, including: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing integrity, and developing purpose (Chickering and Reisser 1993). The "developing purpose" vector assesses students' reasons for attending college and for choosing particular careers. It also measures students' personal aspirations, their commitments to family and other aspects of their lives, and their ability to balance these commitments (Chickering and Reisser 1993).

Barratt (1978) created the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) to assess the degree to which students were committed to pursuing a life purpose. His measure consists of three 15-item sub-scales (45 items total) designed to measure each of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) three sub-vectors of developing purpose, including avocational or recreational purpose, vocational or professional purpose, and lifestyle or interpersonal purpose. Sample questions include the following: "I attend special lectures and programs that are about my recreational interests" (avocational purpose); "I read the items that have been suggested or recommended by an instructor for a class but are not required" (professional or career purpose); and "I think about how my personal values relate to my career plans" (lifestyle purpose). Students use a five-point Likert scale ("1: never true" to "5: always true") to indicate how true each statement is for them.

Another tool designed to assess aspects of Chickering's theory of psychosocial development is the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA; Winston 1990; Winston et al. 1999). Similar to the Developing Purposes Inventory, this measure has rarely been used in research, but has more often been used by student affairs professionals to help students understand and reflect upon their growth, to assist them in setting goals and planning for the future, and to guide interventions (Winston 1990). As such, this measure is designed for use with college students between roughly 17 and 24 years of age. It is composed of 140 true-false questions, drawn from six general categories including the following: developing mature interpersonal relations, academic autonomy, salubrious lifestyle, intimacy, establishing and clarifying purpose, and response bias.

The *establishing and clarifying purpose* dimension is of greatest interest here. Of the 140 total questions, 68 assess this developmental task. Establishing and cla-

rifying purpose consists of five subtasks. The first is Educational Involvement (EI; 16 items), which measures the extent to which students have thoroughly explored and identified well-defined goals for their educational experience and the extent to which they show signs of being self-directed, active learners. The second dimension, Career Planning (CP; 19 items), measures the degree to which students have devised a professional plan that takes into consideration their strengths and weaknesses and their educational background. It also reflects the degree to which students have emotionally committed to a career plan. The third dimension, Life-style Planning (LP; 11 items), assesses the extent to which students have identified a personal direction for their lives that takes into account their religious and moral beliefs along with their family and vocational plans. Fourth, this instrument assesses students' Life Management (LM; 16 items) skills, or the degree to which students organize their lives to satisfy their daily needs and to meet their personal and financial responsibilities. Finally, this tool measures students Cultural Participation (CIP; 6 items), or their range of cultural interests and level of participation in cultural activities.

Assessments of the *establishing and clarifying purpose* measure have been conducted in conjunction with the development of the measurement. Cronbach's alpha values for this 68-item subscale range from .45 to .90. Two-week retest scores range from .80 to .87, 4-week retest scores from .76 to .85, and 20-week retest scores from .53 to .73 (Winston and Miller 1987; Winston 1988). Investigations into validity reveal that items in the same sub-scale correlate more strongly with each other than with items in any of the other sub-scales; however, items in the academic autonomy sub-scale correlate relatively highly with items in the purpose sub-scale. The purpose sub-scale was also found to correlate positively with measures of study skills, career planning, and career exploration (Winston 1988).

Finally, the last less commonly used measure of purpose is a one-item survey. This measure asks participants, typically adolescents, to complete the following question, "I feel my life has a sense of purpose," using a 5-point Likert scale ("1: strongly agree" to "5: strongly disagree"; Francis 2000; Francis and Burton 1994; Francis and Evans 1996; Robbins and Francis 2000). This measure has not been administered frequently, given the limitations inherent in a single-item tool.

Taken together, studies utilizing the preceding survey measures of purpose have yielded considerable insight into our growing understanding of the construct both from research and practice perspectives. However, there is one significant problem with existing survey measures. None assesses the "other-oriented" dimension of the construct. None is able to discern whether individuals are motivated to pursue a purpose in life for reasons other than solely self-oriented ones, and this means that none of the existing survey measures is able to assess the full purpose construct. Designing a survey to achieve this task has proven challenging. To assess the illusive but essential beyond-the-self component of purpose, a survey would need to first establish what an individual found purposeful in his or her life and then probe why this aim was particularly meaningful. This multi-step task is more easily accomplished using other research tools. In particular, interviews, diary studies, and document

reviews have proven to be useful ways of assessing the beyond-the-self dimension of the purpose construct.

Interview Protocols

Interviews are typically used to provide qualitative, “thick descriptions” of an experience (Geertz 1983). They can be used to flesh out quantitative findings and to develop hypotheses that can later be tested in survey research. In the case of purpose, they are particularly useful in shedding light on the motivations behind one’s purposeful aims. Unlike surveys, they can be used to better understand individuals’ reasons for pursuing personally meaningful aspirations.

In spite of the usefulness of interviews in assessing all the key dimensions of purpose, they are infrequently used. In fact, after a thorough review of the purpose literature, I was only able to identify one interview protocol designed to assess purpose and one designed to assess generativity, a concept related to purpose. The scarcity of interview protocols is likely the result of the time intensive and expensive nature of carrying out interview research.

The Revised Youth Purpose Interview (Andrews et al. 2006) is a semi-structured interview protocol derived from studies of self-understanding and identity development (see, for example, Colby and Damon 1993; Damon and Hart 1988; Hart and Fegley 1995). The protocol consists of two parts. The first part features a line of questioning designed to determine what is particularly important to the individual. Questions in this section include more general, open-ended probes, such as, “What are some of the things you really care about?” and “What matters to you most?” To encourage participants to think about concerns beyond themselves, questions also ask about issues that matter to participants in the broader world. A question along this line includes the following: “Imagine you’ve been given a magic wand and you can change anything you want in the world, what would you want to be different?” Once interviewees have identified the aim or aims that matter most to them, the interviewer begins the second half of the interview, which focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the role this potential driver plays in the interviewee’s life. So, for example, if the interviewee has said one of the most important aspirations in his or her life is to have a family or help others through a particular career, then the remainder of the interview would focus on understanding just how central this particular aim is, why it is as central as it is, and what steps the interviewee has taken or plans to take in order to make progress toward this aim.

The interview takes about an hour to administer and has typically been used with adolescent and emerging adult samples (Bronk 2005, 2008, 2011, 2012; Bronk et al. 2010; Damon 2008; Moran 2009; Yeagar and Bundick 2009). Findings from studies administering this protocol have revealed much about the prevalence of purpose among different samples of young people (Bronk et al. 2010; Damon 2008; Moran 2009), the role of purpose in healthy identity development (Bronk 2011), and role of meaning in school work and professional plans (Yeagar and Bundick

2009). This protocol has also been used to build a theory of the way purposes develop and change over time (Bronk 2012) and to highlight characteristics of youth with purpose (Bronk 2008). Finally, because the interview protocol is, at present anyway, one of the few reliable ways of determining the motivations behind one's purposeful pursuits, it has also been used to examine the impact of pursuing personal aspirations for self-serving and beyond-the-self reasons. In one such study, characteristics and indicators of youth thriving with self-oriented and other-oriented long-term aims were compared (Bronk and Finch 2010). Results revealed that youth with beyond the-self long term aims reported higher levels of life satisfaction than youth with self-serving aims.

The other relevant interview protocol, the Life Story Interview (McAdams 2008), was designed to gather information about, among other things, generativity among older adults. Generativity represents Erikson's seventh stage of psychosocial development, and it describes adults' level of concern with leaving behind a positive legacy and with making contributions to the broader world that will outlive themselves. For example, parenting or volunteering can be generative acts. In this way, generativity shares with purpose an important focus on beyond-the-self motivations.

The Life Story Interview takes approximately two hours to administer and is broken into eight sections. The first section focuses on the different chapters in the interviewees' life. The second section asks participants to discuss a variety of key scenes, including high points and low points, in their life story. Third, participants are asked to focus on the future and to discuss their hopes, dreams, and plans. In this section, participants are encouraged to discuss a life project, or "something that you have been working on and plan to work on in the future chapters of your life story. The project might involve your family or your work life, or it might be a hobby, avocation, or pastime" (McAdams 2008). Based on this description, a life project could represent a life purpose. Next, participants are encouraged to reflect on the challenges they have encountered in their lives. The sixth and seventh sections ask participants to reflect on their personal ideology, including their religious, moral, and political beliefs, and their life themes, respectively. Finally, the last section asks participants to reflect on the experience of being interviewed. Themes relevant to purpose and generativity are likely to surface in the life project interview section, but also throughout the interview.

Following is a table that includes a summary of the most commonly used survey and interview measures of purpose and closely related constructs.

Other Measures of Life Purpose

In addition to survey and interview measures, researchers have also utilized other means of assessing the purpose construct. Early in the study of purpose, Inhelder and Piaget (1958) reviewed the private diaries of a sample of twentieth-century

Instrument name	Description	Sample question
<i>Survey measures of the presence of purpose and related constructs</i>		
Existence of Purpose in Life subscale (EPIL; Law 2012) for early adolescence	7 items selected from the PIL based on their relevance to the lives of early adolescents	"My life is—(1) empty (7) running over with good things"
Life Profile Questionnaire (LPQ; Hablas and Hutzell 1982)	20 items very similar to PIL; agree/disagree format to aid comprehension in geriatric, neuro-psychiatric patient, and other special populations	"I am usually able to think of a usefulness to my life," —agree, disagree
Life Purpose Questionnaire—Adolescent Version (LPQ-A; Hutzell and Finck 1994)	18 items; agree/disagree format to aid comprehension among adolescent participants	"I have discovered many reasons why I was born," —agree, disagree
Meaning in Suffering Test (MIST; Starck 1983)	20 items, 7-point Likert response format; yields a total score and three subscale scores	"I believe my suffering experience has given me a chance to complete my mission in life," —(1) never (7) constantly
Purpose in Life Scale (PILS; Robbins and Francis 2000)	12 items with a 5-point Likert response option	"My personal experience is full of direction," —(1) disagree strongly (5) agree strongly
Purpose in Life Test (PIL; Crumbaugh 1968; Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964)	20 items, 7-point Likert response format; different anchoring points for each item, with 4 being neutral	"Life to me seems" —(1) completely routine—(7) always exciting
Purpose in Life Test—Short Form (PIL-SF; Schulenberg et al. 2011)	4-items drawn from the PIL, 7-point Likert response format; different anchoring points for each item, with 4 being neutral	"In life I have" —(1) no clear goals—(7) clear goals and aims
Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being Purpose Subscale (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Keyes 1995)	20, 14, 9, and 3 item versions with a 6-point Likert response option; unidimensional measure of purpose represents one of six dimensions of psychological well-being	"Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them" —(1) strongly disagree—(6) strongly agree
Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC; Antonovsky 1983, 1987)	29 and 13 item versions administered most commonly; 7-point Likert response format	"Until now your life has had" —(1) no clear goals—(7) very clear goals and purpose

Instrument name	Description	Sample question
<i>Survey measures of the motivation to find purpose</i>		
Seeking of Noetic Goals (SONG; Crumbaugh 1977)	20 statements rated on a 7-point Likert response format; unidimensional scale of the motivation to find purpose	"I feel that some element which I cannot quite define is missing from my life"—(1) <i>never</i> —(7) <i>constantly</i>
<i>Survey measures of purpose and the motivation to find purpose</i>		
Daily Meaning Scale (DMS; Steger et al. 2008)	10 items, 7-point Likert response format; 2 subscales, Presence of meaning (5 items) and Searching for meaning (5 items)	"Right now, how meaningful does your life feel?"—(1) <i>not at all</i> —(7) <i>absolutely</i>
Life Attitude Profile—Revised (LAP-R; Reker and Peacock 1981; Reker 1992)	48 items, 7-point Likert response format; yields six dimension and two composite scores	"My past achievements have given my life meaning and purpose"—(1) <i>strongly disagree</i> —(7) <i>strongly agree</i>
Life Regard Index (LRI; Battista and Almond 1973; Debats et al. 1995)	28 items with two subscales; Framework subscale measures existence of life goals and Fulfillment subscale measures progress toward life goals	"I have a clear idea of what I'd like to do with my life"— <i>I disagree, I have no opinion, I agree</i>
Meaningful Life Measure (MLM; Morgan and Farsides 2009)	23 item measure composed of items from the LRI, PIL, and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Purpose subscale	"I have a clear idea of what my future goals and aims are"—(1) <i>strongly disagree</i> —(7) <i>strongly agree</i>
Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al. 2006)	10 items, 7-point Likert response format; 2 subscales, Presence of meaning (5 items) and Searching for meaning (5 items)	"I understand my life's meaning"—(1) <i>absolutely untrue</i> —(7) <i>absolutely true</i>
Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al. 2006)	20 items, 7-point Likert response format; 2 subscales, Identified purpose (15 items) and Searching purpose (5 items)	"My life has a clear sense of purpose" (identified), "I am always looking to find my life's purpose" (searching)—(1) <i>strongly disagree</i> to (7) <i>strongly agree</i>

Instrument name	Description	Sample question
Personal Meaning Profile (PMP; Wong 1998)	57 items, 7-point Likert response format; 7 dimensions including achievement, relationships, religion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment	"I am enthusiastic about what I do." "I make a significant contribution to society." (1) <i>not at all</i> —(7) <i>a great deal</i>
Sense of Meaning Profile (SOMP; Reker 1988; Prager 1996)	16 items, 7-point Likert response format; assesses source and degree of meaning	"Leaving a legacy for the next generation"—(1) <i>not at all important</i> —(7) <i>very important</i>
<i>Interview measures</i>		
Life Story Interview (McAdams 2008)	Semi-structured interview protocol that guides the participant through a telling of his or her life story, complete with chapters, characters, and themes. Includes a section on life projects	"A life project is something that you have been working on and plan to work on in the future chapters of your life story. The project might involve your family or your work life, or it might be a hobby, avocation, or pastime. Please describe any project that you are currently working on or plan to work on in the future. Tell me what the project is, how you got involved in the project or will get involved in the project, how the project might develop, and why you think this project is important for you and/or for other people."
Revised Youth Purpose Interview Protocol (Andrews et al. 2006)	Semi-structured interview protocol that probes the goals that matter most, the depth of commitment to these aims, the reasons behind these aims, and activity/plans for working toward them	"What are some of the things that really matter to you? Imagine you're 40 years of age, what will you be doing? What will be important to you? Why?"

adolescents in Switzerland. The essays, which were not written for public consumption, represent intimate documents. The researchers collected and reviewed them for other purposes, but they noted that the adolescents, without any prompting or encouragement, consistently discussed their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, and in so doing, frequently described various purposes. Despite the interesting and important findings regarding purpose and adolescent development more generally that resulted from this creative study, this approach has some limitations, including the great challenge presented in getting adolescents to share their personal and private musings with researchers. Beyond this, of course, this methodology precludes follow up questions, and does not allow for direct questioning of purpose. Bearing in mind these limitations, diary reviews clearly represent an interesting and potentially under-utilized approach to studying the purpose construct.

Another way purpose has been explored is through reviews of historical documents. Mariano and Valliant (2012) investigated adolescent and emerging adult purposes among the “greatest generation,” or individuals who came of age during World War II. They reviewed health documents and interviews conducted with young men who served in World War II with the goal of identifying spontaneous references to purpose and beyond-the-self aspirations. While this approach yielded interesting findings regarding the nature of purpose among this generation, it suffers some of the same limitations as the diary review approach. These robust data sets are rare, expensive to compile, and preclude follow-up and direct questions about purpose.

Finally, DeVogler and Ebersole endeavored to identify the range of inspiring types of purpose or sources of meaning, and they employed a creative means of doing so. First, in the Meaning Essay Document, they asked participants to describe and rank their three most important sources of meaning and to list a concrete experience associated with each one (DeVogler and Ebersole 1980). The investigators had adolescents (1983), college students (1980), and adults (1981) complete this task, and what emerged was a useful classification of sources of meaning. The categories of meaning that emerged are discussed more fully in Chap. 6 (“Inspiring Types of Purpose”).

Subsequent to developing the Meaning Essay Document, Ebersole and Sacco (1983) created the Meaning in Life Depth instrument (MILD). In contrast to their earlier line of inquiry, this measure aims not only to identify different sources of meaning in life, but also to assess the depth of commitment to each source of meaning, partially independent of respondent’s self-reports. To complete the MILD, participants rank from most to least personally significant eight commonly identified sources of meaning, derived from DeVogler and Ebersole’s earlier studies. Participants are also given the option of selecting “no meaning” for their lives. Next, respondents are asked to write a brief essay about how significant their most important source of meaning is. Judges are then recruited to read the essays and to assign a depth score, relative to the other essays. However, given that a third party ultimately assigns a meaning level, the approach has been criticized as biased (Ebersole and Kobayakawa 1989).

It is clear from this review, that a wide range of tools exists to assess the purpose construct. Of course, no single measure is perfect, but taken together surveys, interviews, and other more creative methodologies are yielding a rapidly emerging picture of purpose—what it is, how it functions, and why it is important. Among other things, empirical studies relying on these measures reveal that purpose plays a central role in optimal human functioning, and this topic is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

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