



Compensating for Psychological Deficits and Declines: Managing Losses and Promoting Gains

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The concept of compensation in psychology refers to processes through which a gap or mismatch between current accessible skills and environmental demands is reduced or closed. These gaps can be principally the result of losses, such as those associated with aging or interpersonal role changes; injuries, such as those that may occur to the neurological or sensory systems; organic or functional diseases, such as the dementias or schizophrenia; and congenital deficits, such as those apparent in autism or some learning disabilities.

Whether the demand-skill gaps can be bridged completely, reduced only moderately, or are impossible to close, depends on a variety of factors. In every case, however, the guiding notions of compensation are that:

- * some such deficits may be amendable,
- * the continuation of the effects of the gap may be avoidable, and
- * some functioning may be recoverable.


In this sense, compensation is related to adaptation; it is about overcoming deficits, managing the effects of losses, and promoting improvement in psychological functioning.


Compensation is a concept that has a long and rich history in numerous domains of psychological research and practice. To date, however, few of the relevant research domains have benefitted explicitly or optimally from considering alternative perspectives on the concept of compensation. Although researchers and practitioners in several areas of psychology have actively pursued programs with compensation as a central concept, communication across disciplinary divides has been lacking. Comparing and contrasting the uses and implications of the concept across neighboring (and even not-so-adjacent) areas of psychology can promote advances in both theoretical and practical pursuits.

The goal of this book is to carry inchoate integrative efforts to a new level of clarity. To this end, the editors have recruited major authors from selected principal areas of research and practice in psychological compensation. The authors review the current state of compensation scholarship in their domains of specialization. State-of-the-art reviews of this rapidly expanding area of scholarship are, therefore, collected under one cover for the first time. In this way, a wide variety of readers who might otherwise rarely cross professional paths with one another, can quickly learn about alternative preferences, agendas and methods, as well as novel research results, interpretations, and practical applications.

Designed to contain broad, deep, and current perspectives on compensation, this volume continues the processes of:

- * explicating the concept of compensation;
- * linking and distinguishing compensation from neighboring concepts;
- * describing the variety of compensatory mechanisms operating in a wide range of phenomena; and
- * illustrating how compensatory mechanisms can be harnessed or trained to manage losses or deficits and to promote gains or at least maintenance of functioning.

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