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2008

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Abstract

This article illustrates how developmental intervention science outreach research contributes to knowledge development on the promotion of positive identity development by describing results from the Miami Youth Development Project. The project is committed to the use of descriptive and explanatory knowledge about evidence-based individual and institutional intervention strategies for promoting developmental change in self and identity. Our efforts, described here, include a method for measuring theoretically and personally meaningful identity change, a procedure for integrating key aspects of qualitative and quantitative data through relational data analysis, and an evidence-based positive youth development intervention that fosters measurable and meaningful identity change.

As adult life course trajectories have increased in diversity and complexity, and as the period of adolescence has extended to include emerging adulthood (c.f., Arnett, 2000; Côté & Levine, 2002), adolescence has become a developmental period marked by significant transitions in the individual's life course. In Eriksonian terms, adolescence is the developmental period in which the formation of a sense of "who one is" and "what one means to others" takes on considerable developmental salience (Erikson, 1968).

As a developmental period, however, adolescence has yet to benefit from the existence of an extensive intervention literature that characterizes other stages such as childhood and adulthood, and its lack has recently and frequently been decried (D'Amico et al., 2005; Ferrer-Wreder, Montgomery, & Lorente, 2003; Holmbeck, 2002). Moreover, the adolescent intervention literature has focused primarily on prevention and treatment interventions designed to eliminate or reduce risky or problem behaviors rather than to promote positive development (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, Berman, Lorente, Briones, et al., in press; Lerner, 2005).

THE HISTORICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL MOMENT: LINKING IDENTITY AND LIFE COURSE THEORY

Identity—and identity development—is studied from a wide variety of scholarly viewpoints, and its conceptualization varies accordingly (Côté & Levine, 2002). Nevertheless, Eriksonian psychosocial developmental theory and research is one of the significant forces in the identity literature (Schwartz, 2001). In our work, we consider the conceptual richness of Erikson's description of the challenges that the individual faces in the development of an agentic sense of self in tandem with views of individuals as "producers" of, or contributors to, their own development (Brandtstädter & Lerner, 1999; Elder, 1998).

More specifically, life course theory posits that human agency mediates the relation between life transitions and contexts. A *life course* is the "path" of a person's life as he or she navigates his or her culture and time period's rituals and expectations (Elder, 1998). In life course theory, people encounter a transition experience and the choices made are agentic yet grounded in individual life histories and the circumstances of the transition (Elder, 1998; Giele & Elder, 1998). To this, the Eriksonian concept of identity as self-integration adds richness to the concept of human agency at the individual level that parallels the richness of the concept of human agency in the life course at a sociohistorical level.

This intentional pairing of central concepts from psychosocial developmental and life course theory (i.e., identity, human agency, life transition and context) yield a meaningful explanation for how individuals make agentic choices within the affordances in life transitions and turning points. In such a perspective, there is a close correspondence between human development, context, and agency with

identity as the self-system that acts as the "steering mechanism" for a person's life course.

Exemplifying this potential, in response to the question "Who Am I?" one of the adolescents in our research program said:

> Who Am I? … I am what I want to be and not what society or my parents or anybody but me wants me to be—because I see myself as an individual, not to be trying to change myself for the better of someone else. I should change myself for the better of me.

Life course theory does not privilege any particular process or determinant (social/historical, biological/maturational, etc.) as "the" regulator of movement through the life course; instead, as the adolescent above exemplifies, human agency is one influence (among many potential influences, e.g., social/historical, biological) that plays an important role in determining which life course is followed and how it is followed. Although human agency is one determinant among many, it is one that is critical for understanding how individuals work out their lives in particular contexts. As Elder (1998) observed, one of the basic principles of life course theory is that "individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances" (p. 961).

Changing Life Courses

Life course theory thus offers a vocabulary for talking about the process by which individuals change. Life course theory not only holds that life transitions involve qualitative state changes that are both social and psychological, but also that the qualitative state changes that occur during transitions are always elements of a larger trajectory (the individual's life course or life pathway).

To this, life course theory adds the view that a particular state change may also represent a "life course turning point"(Elder, 1998). As such, whether a particular turning point is a life course turning point cannot be determined prospectively. Whether a turning point is a life course turning point can only be evaluated retrospectively relative to specific individuals' lived life course. Moreover, because a life course is a pathway that the individual chooses from the array of available trajectories (e.g., institutional, developmental), the individual is in this sense the "producer" of the pathway of his or her life course. Agency in the selection of particular roles or situations represents a mechanism through which life advantages and disadvantages may accumulate according to the "law of effect," in which behavior is sustained or changed by its consequences (Elder).

Life course theory thus offers a view of life transitions such as adolescence as periods of increased likelihood of a radical break or departure from a previous life

course pathway that represents a qualitative turning point in the individual's life course. During adolescence, young people begin to be able to identify changes in themselves or their life course that they see as constituting qualitative change, life course turning points, or both. One adolescent in the Changing Lives Program(CLP; the intervention that is the main subject of this article), for example, responded to the question "Are you presently undergoing a life turning point?" by describing a negative turning point in his ongoing relationship with his mother that was changing his life:

> Yeah, yep, my step daddy left my momma and she felt like it was my fault. So, now it's like changing on me and stuff. I think she hates me now. Aw, I don't know, cause now it's all changing, she feels like it's my fault he's gone and he don't wanna come back to her … now she gets at anything to argue with me. It's a negative change, I feel like she wanna throw me out and put him back in.

In response to the same life turning point question, another adolescent reported that she was undergoing a positive life transformational change in her sense of self and identity:

> I'm becoming more mature and I can feel it. I understand things better now.

Interventions designed for adolescents and emerging adults thus have the potential not only to reduce risky or problem behaviors that compromise healthy development, but they may also increase the likelihood of the individual's prospects for positive long-term life course change. The concepts of a life course pathway, agency, and life course turning points, when coupled with the concept of identity as a self-constructed, coherent, and dynamic organization of the self, provide a useful perspective on improving interventions for young people.

Identity Development as a Positive Intervention Outcome

The concept of a positive identity (i.e., a self-constructed, coherent, and dynamic organization of the self) as an intervention outcome has thus come to play a central role in our efforts to design positive youth development programs as well as in other literatures (c.f., Archer, this issue). The need for youth interventions that specifically target identity has been raised in the ego identity literature (Archer, 1994; Ferrer-Wreder, Montgomery, & Lorente, 2003). In addition, life course theory's view of life transitions such as adolescence as periods of potentially significant opportunities to radically alter the individual's life course are in line with Eriksonian views of the preventive role of positive identity development (c.f., Erikson & Erikson, 1957/1995). Finally, although the period of adolescence has yet to benefit from an intervention research literature as extensive as the child or adult litera-

tures, the pattern of significant findings across well-documented intervention outcome studies (using diverse indices of positive adjustment and optimal functioning) provides evidence of the impact that positive youth development programs have on positive identity concepts and constructs (Lerner, 2005).

PROMOTING POSITIVE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: A DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTION SCIENCE OUTREACH APPROACH

A large literature on promoting positive youth development (PYD) has begun to converge on the importance of integrating developmental and intervention science, notions of what constitutes "positive," and the types of interventions that are effective in "promoting" positive development (Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2005). The result has been a recognition that intervention science needs to do more than "treat" problem behaviors (i.e., symptoms) or "prevent" negative developmental outcomes and that developmental science needs to do more than generate complex descriptive models of developmental systems. Moreover, this new consensus recognizes that both models need to be translated into programs that can be implemented in "usual care" practice in community settings (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, Berman, Lorente, et al., in press).

The fusion of "developmental" science models of what changes and how it changes (Lerner, 2005) and "intervention" science models of what to change and how to change it (Holmbeck, 2002) has resulted in the emergence of a developmental intervention science (DIS) perspective as an extension of applied developmental science (ADS). Drawing on the conceptual base provided by ADS and informed by social policy research (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000), a DIS perspective is one specifically committed to the use of descriptive and explanatory knowledge about changes within human systems that occur across the life span in the development, implementation, and evaluation of empirically based, multidisciplinary, life span intervention strategies (Kurtines & Montgomery, 2008).

OUTREACH RESEARCH

The research discussed here draws on a developmental intervention science perspective to translate advances that have taken place in both intervention and developmental science into a program implemented in a usual care community setting. Fusing advances made in both literatures in a community-based program allowed us to take full advantage of one of the most important characteristics of outreach research; namely, its commitment to advancing knowledge through a long-term commitment to meeting community needs. In doing so, our efforts in-

cluded refining a research design in which randomized clinical trials (RCTs) and longitudinal comparison trials (LCTs) are employed sequentially and complementarily. In this fusion, RCTs are employed in Stage II[1] comparative evaluations of the intervention's efficacy regarding short-term outcome; LCTs are employed in Stage III comparative evaluations of the intervention's effectiveness regarding long-term outcome. As discussed below, the use of this multistage research design is essential in evaluating the long-term change that is the critical index of intervention efficacy and effectiveness for programs that aim to promote long-term (positive) developmental change. Consequently, adequate evaluation of programs that aim to promote long-term developmental change is facilitated by their evaluation in community-based outreach research programs committed to remain in the community long enough to realize their community-valued developmental goals for youth (Kurtines & Montgomery, 2008).

THE MIAMI YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Miami Youth Development Project (Miami YDP) had its beginnings more than a decade ago as a grassroots response to the needs of troubled (multiproblem) young people. Miami, an international city at the intersection of North and South America, was undergoing (and still is undergoing) an extended period of substantial multicultural growth. The community and its youth were experiencing negative (as well as positive) impacts from this change. Hence, the evolution of the Miami YDP exemplifies the practical value of conducting research based on university-community collaboration and research-related principles consistent with the outreach research model (i.e., a model that focuses on generating innovative knowledge of effective intervention strategies that are feasible, sustainable, and affordable in real-world settings (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, Berman, Lorente, et al., in press).

THEORETICAL CHALLENGES

Developmental Theory

The developmental theoretical framework (i.e., theory of what changes and how it changes) for our DIS positive youth development program, which we call a "psychosocial developmental life course approach," draws from both psychosocial

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[1]A three-stage model is used in behavioral treatment research at the National Institutes of Health (National Institute on Drug Abuse Clinical Trials Network, n.d.). Stage I involves the development and pilot testing of interventions based on or translated from basic behavioral, cognitive, or clinical science and theory. A Stage II clinical trial uses a control group to permit stronger conclusions about the impact of the intervention. A Stage III trial tests the intervention with larger samples and longer follow-up.

developmental theory (Erikson, 1968) and life course theory (Elder, 1998) for its theory of how positive identity development intersects with how individuals construct their life course through the choices they make within the constraints and opportunities of historical and social circumstances.

Intervention Theory

Our intervention theoretical framework (i.e., theory of what to change and how to change it), which we call a "participatory transformative approach," draws from Freire's (1970/1983) transformative pedagogy and multicultural counseling theory (Sue & Zane, 2006) for its strategies to enhance critical consciousness in marginalized people about their exclusion from the mainstream. Freire termed this approach *transformative pedagogy* because it is a pedagogy of dialogue rather than instruction. Freire developed it for his work with poor rural Brazilians, and we have found it to work well with the culturally diverse multiproblem urban youth who are the focus of our intervention.

CO-PARTICIPATORY LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIVITIES

The intervention that stems from our youth development program is the CLP. Our primary intervention goal is to empower troubled adolescents to change their lives in positive directions. To this end, CLP group work involves three phases: (1) engagement, (2) co-participatory learning, and (3) transformative activities (Montgomery et al., in press). The engagement phase (1) and the co-participatory learning experiences (2) provide the foundation for the participant-directed transformative activities, our key change-producing "intervention strategy" (3). While engaged in student-directed transformative activities involving proactive problem posing and solving, student are expected to learn to be the "experts." Engaging in transformative activities creates change that often solves students' short-term presenting problems, an important outcome. However, although important, this is not our primary therapeutic goal. Rather, we consider the opportunities for the "mastery experiences" these activities create to be the primary "therapeutic ingredient" of our programs.

The aim is to create contexts in which troubled young people can transform their sense of control and responsibility and change their negative life pathways into positive ones. Our intervention program thus aims at changing lives, and we use intervention strategies that are both participatory and transformative to achieve this goal. Using Freire's (1970/1983) work as a springboard, our participatory transformative approach draws on multicultural counseling theory (Sue & Zane, 2006a), Erikson's (1968) and the ego identity literature's emphasis on exploration

toward an achieved identity (Schwartz, 2001), and the literature on creating intervention contexts for empowering people (Brandtstädter & Lerner, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995). An empowering context is created when program participants take an active role in the intervention process and the interventionist (facilitator, teacher, etc.) works with them as a participant in their efforts to construct alternatives to negative life pathways. In Miami YDP programs, participants not only talk about their problems; they do something about them. Through this process, they become empowered as they experience the possibility of creating (rather than enduring) the circumstances of their lives, and forming (rather than neglecting) their identity.

MASTERY EXPERIENCES: CLP'S CORE MEDIATOR OF LIFE COURSE CHANGE

CLP uses youth-directed transformative activities as its key behavioral intervention strategy for facilitating empowerment (Montgomery, Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., in press). However, we extend and refine the concept of mastery experiences by articulating a psychosocial developmental life course conceptualization of positive mastery experiences as a mediating mechanism of life course change (see Montgomery, Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., in press).

Although we consider positive mastery experiences to have the potential to transform all types of life course experiences, we consider mastery experiences that result in change in a participant's experiences of self and identity to be a particularly important type of life course change experience. Specifically, from the perspective of our psychosocial developmental life course approach, the most empowering type of transformational change to promote in a troubled youth on a negative life course pathway is positive transformational change in the youth's experiences of self and identity. We consider it among the most empowering because such change alters the youth's sense of self and identity that provides the steering mechanism for directing the course of his or her life over the long haul.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The Miami YDP involved not only exploring new directions in developmental theory (i.e., theory of what changes and how it changes) as well as intervention strategies (i.e., theory of what to change and how to change it), but also methodological theory (i.e., what to measure and how to measure it). It was in this arena that we found it most useful to draw on (and extend) emerging relational methodological metatheory (Overton, 1998, 2003). Moreover, because of the nature of our population and problem, we sought to articulate a practical, ready-at-hand framework that

could be used to address the complex and difficult task of documenting developmental change in real-life "applied" settings as well as in clinic and laboratory settings, particularly with respect to capturing and evaluating the leading edge of qualitative change in participants' sense of self and identity.

The result was the evolution of a data analytic framework that we call relational data analysis (RDA). RDA is a multidimensional, multiphasic framework for unifying data analytic strategies across dimensions (quantitative/qualitative, causal/structural, etc.) and phases of analyses (conceptual, theoretical, and research analyses). RDA was developed within a relational metatheoretical methodological framework (Overton, 1998, 2003) for overcoming the splits that have historically characterized methodological metatheory (see Kurtines, Montgomery, Lewis Arango, et al., in press, for a more detailed description). RDA draws on grounded theory data analytic strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) for the qualitative methods as modified for use during each of RDA's three analytic phases.

The Measurement and Evaluation of Qualitative Change

Our efforts have thus far included the development of qualitative measures and methods for collecting narrative expressions of subjective meaning and significance of self and identity. To date, this has involved the development and enhancement of a number of measures, including two qualitative performance measures of self-development briefly outlined here.

The Relational Data Analysis Life Course Interview (RDA-LCI; Lewis Arango, Kurtines, Montgomery, & Ritchie, in press) draws on the pioneering work of Clausen (1998), and is an individually administered open-ended unstructured "full" response qualitative performance measure of identity development. In adopting the LCI for use with RDA, we extended it for use in conducting comprehensive qualitative analysis (with relatively small samples) focusing on the meaning and significance of participants' experiences of self and identity across the life course. The Possible Selves Questionnaire–Qualitative Extension (PSQ-QE; Kortsch, Kurtines, & Montgomery, in press), draws on the pioneering work of Oyserman and is an RDA qualitative extension of her Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ; Oyserman, 1987). We extended the PSQ for use as a group (or individually) administered open-ended "brief" response qualitative performance measure of self-development, intended for conducting qualitative analyses (with large samples) that focus on the meaning and significance of participants' possible future selves.

In this context, we have sought to advance the field by refining measures and methods for assessing qualitative life course change in self and identity in youth. We have reported in detail elsewhere (Kortsch et al., in press; Kurtines, Montgomery, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., in press; Lewis Arango et al., in press) the results of a series of multistage longitudinal comparison (MLC) Stage II program evaluations

conducted as a planned efficacy evaluation of the CLP. CLP is one of the DIS outreach research programs currently being developed as part of the Miami YDP. The published results of this preliminary Stage II MLC evaluation of CLP briefly summarized here illustrate what we have learned so far and are suggestive of future directions for research.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The published research cited here was conducted within a DIS framework as a Stage II MLC program evaluation. The research studies involved conducting planned preliminary evaluations of the CLP intervention program to provide preliminary checks on the reliability, validity, and utility of the measures (psychometric evaluations, short-term controlled outcome studies, etc.; see Kurtines, Montgomery, Ferrer-Wreder, et al. in press). The data collected, the measures and methods used, and the reported results build on several years of extensive bootstrapping efforts in community program development and background efforts in selecting, developing, and refining measures and methodological procedures consistent with a university-community collaboration based on the research-related principles of the outreach research model (Jensen, Hoagwood, & Trickett, 1999; Lerner et al., 2000).

RESULTS

Both of the qualitative measures used in the RDA analyses (the RDA-LCI and the PSQ-QE) captured, at the individual level, a broad spectrum of theoretically meaningful and subjectively significant experiences of personal identity, life course turning points, and future possible selves in the young people in our program. Moreover, the narrative expressions of subjective experiences collected using these qualitative methods could be coded and classified at a level of reliability and validity that parallels that of quantitative measures and were used in research analyses fused with data analysis methods and procedures that draw on the analytic capacity and power of statistical methods developed for use with quantitative data.

The use of RDA facilitated our fusion of methods from both traditions (see Lewis Arango et al., in press, for details). We refined and implemented specific modifications to the methods and procedures for coding and classifying open-ended response data to this end. Moreover, intentionally manipulating the level of theoretical saturation of the coders at each sequential phase of the data analysis (theory neutral, theory saturated, theory neutral), the type of coding used (conceptual open coding [COC], theoretical open coding [TOC], and theoretical

classification coding [TCC], respectively), and the use of psychometric analysis in evaluating the category coding provide considerable support for the utility of this type of practical, ready-at-hand relational methodological framework.

In our program of research, for example, the use of an experimental manipulation of three sets of coders (theory neutral, theory laden, theory neutral), each using a distinctly different variant of the method of constant comparison (COC, TOC, TCC), provided multiple independent perspectives on the participants' response data and proved particularly useful when fused with a systematic application of the grounded theory method of constant comparison. Moreover, this systematic variation in the use of the method of constant comparison (conceptual coding vs. theoretical coding, open coding vs. classification coding), across two measures and three sets of response data, yielded consistently high levels of both reliability (interrater and retest) and validity (discriminant and concurrent). The average category classification agreement (between independent coders blind to time and condition) was in the high 80s across all variables and a subset sample of the Personal Identity responses yielded high retest reliability (88%) across the four theoretical categories over a 2- to 4-week retest interval, providing strong preliminary evidence for the reliability of the identified theoretical categories.

The correlation between the theoretical coders' category classification (i.e., the theory laden, TOC condition) and the independent third set of coders (the theory neutral, TCC condition) was high for the RDA-LCI personal identity categories and high for the turning point categories ($r = .75$ and .92 respectively) and also high for the PSQ-QE future possible selves categories ($r = .86$) providing strong preliminary evidence for high concurrent (external) validity for the identified theoretical categories (Kortsch et al., in press; Lewis Arango et al., in press).

Finally, not only were we able to capture a broad spectrum of theoretically meaningful categories of subjectively significant and meaningful experiences of personal identity, life course turning points, and future possible selves in the young people in our program, but the pattern of qualitative change for participants provided evidence for the short-term efficacy of the CLP. That is, the pattern of differential intervention response tended to be positive, significant, and in the hypothesized direction relative to the comparison group for the qualitative indicators of personal identity, life course turning points, and future possible selves (Kortsch et al., in press; Lewis Arango et al., in press).

CONCLUSION

To summarize, the Miami YDP is committed to the use of descriptive and explanatory knowledge about evidence-based individual and institutional intervention strategies for promoting long-term developmental change in self and identity. Our efforts, the outcomes of which support the advancement of DIS, have resulted in

methods for measuring theoretically and personally meaningful identity change, procedures for integrating qualitative and quantitative data through RDA, and an evidence-based positive youth development intervention that fosters measurable and meaningful identity change.

Where do we go from here? As discussed in Kurtines, Montgomery, Lewis Arango, et al. (in press), our assumption is that the field has advanced to the point where the types of metatheoretical methodological frameworks needed for integrating research theoretical traditions are now available (e.g., Overton, 1998, 2003), and that the next step is to develop practical methodological frameworks for integrating the traditions at the theoretical and factual level in concrete and specific domains of research. For example, identity status as a domain of scientific study began with highly original and innovative narrative analysis (e.g., Marcia, 1994) but, consistent with the influence of split metatheory, the field moved in the direction of quantitative methodology. The reemergence of a recognition of the contribution of qualitative methodology, however, has resulted in a trend toward an acknowledgment of the complimentarity of two methodological approaches and the value of their fusion, particularly as it relates to advancing our understanding of positive identity change processes and how to promote them.

Intervention Science: The Reunification of Treatment, Prevention, and Positive Development

A similar trend toward reunification has begun to emerge in the intervention science literature. In this case, the trend has been toward convergence around treatment, prevention, and positive development intervention goals. Specifically, the fusion of developmental science models of what changes and how it changes, and intervention science models specifying what to change and how to change it, has resulted in the emergence of a DIS perspective (Kurtines & Montgomery, 2008).

Drawing on the conceptual base provided by the ADS perspective and informed by social policy research (Lerner et al., 2000), a DIS perspective prioritizes descriptive and explanatory knowledge about changes within human systems that occur across the life span for the development of evidence-based institutional and individual longitudinal change intervention strategies. Within the DIS framework, research aiming to promote positive identity development should both inform and be informed by our established theories, the youth who come of age in an ever-changing context, and emerging methodologies that preserve the richness of meaning that individuals give their lives.

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