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Identity and Positive Youth Development: Advances in Developmental Intervention Science

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides an overview of advances in developmental intervention science that have contributed to an emerging literature on identity-focused positive youth development interventions. Rooted in the tradition of applied developmental science, developmental intervention science aims to advance the evolution of sustainable developmental intervention strategies targeting positive developmental outcomes. These developmental intervention strategies are intended to complement the wide array of well-established treatment and prevention intervention strategies targeting risky and problem behaviors. Within this framework, positive identity interventions seek to create empowering intervention contexts that promote the development of an increasingly integrated—and therefore an increasingly complex, coherent, and cohesive—self-constructed self-structure. By linking applied developmental science with treatment and prevention intervention science, developmental intervention science appears to have significant potential for facilitating the evolution of evidence-based positive development strategies for promoting positive life course change.

Keywords: Positive youth development, positive identity, developmental intervention science, identity interventions

How do we support young people in the task of identity development? How do we empower them to enhance and expand those aspects of their lives that are meaningful to them? One answer to these questions is provided by applied developmental scientists who focus on promoting *positive youth development* (PYD) as a key outcome of developmental intervention efforts. This chapter reviews advances in developmental intervention science specifically as they apply to promoting positive identity development.

Positive identity refers to the sense of coherence, integration, and direction that individuals construct through their life choices. The challenge of forming a positive identity first confronts young people when the biological, cognitive, and social changes of adolescence create the possibility of systematically and seriously addressing the question “Who am I?” (Erikson, 1968). Young people take on the difficult challenge and responsibility of forming a positive identity by choosing the goals, roles, and beliefs about the world that give life direction and purpose, as well as coherence and integration (Montgomery et al., 2008b). The self-structure that emerges as a young person begins to make life choices is the person’s sense of identity. *Positive identity development* therefore refers to the consolidation of an integrated self-structure that becomes increasingly complex, coherent, and cohesive as the person creates a path through life. This self-structure begins to emerge during adolescence, continues to develop into adulthood, and functions as an individual’s “steering mechanism” throughout the life course (Elder & Shanahan, 2006; Kurtines et al., 2008d).

Erikson (1963) described adolescence as the time when individuals are most focused on questions about who they are and what they want out of life. More recently, Arnett (2000) has suggested that sociohistorical changes over the past four decades have, for many young people, extended the time available for forming an identity and deciding on a life path. Although the first tentative steps toward forming a sense of identity still occur during adolescence, the most intensive identity exploration now takes place during emerging adulthood, the transitional period between adolescence and adulthood that occurs during the third decade of life (Arnett, 2007; see also

Arnett, this volume). During emerging adulthood, young people move beyond the childhood structure imposed by family and school. These life changes bring greater freedom and a sense of the world as being “wide open” to new possibilities, especially in the domains of love, work, and worldviews (Arnett, 2004). The possibility of new life directions presents emerging adults with the challenge of making identity choices that will shape their life course. During this time, positive and negative life trajectories begin to separate from one another, and identity often plays a critical role in determining which path a person will follow (Arnett, 2000).

Opportunities to support young people’s positive identity development present themselves throughout the transition to adulthood, from adolescence through emerging adulthood. As discussed herein, a developmental intervention science approach to promoting positive identity draws on the strengths of applied developmental science, prevention intervention science, and treatment intervention science to target the developmental period from adolescence through emerging adulthood. This approach appears to have significant potential for facilitating the evolution of sustainable evidence-based positive development intervention strategies for promoting positive life course change.

An Applied Developmental Science Perspective

Applied developmental science fuses developmental science research with policies and programs to promote positive human development across the lifespan (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). The emergence of applied developmental science coupled with a rapidly growing research literature on promoting PYD has opened up new directions for extending the range and scope of the contributions of developmental science to intervention science. Among the most important contributions that applied developmental science has made to intervention science has been to shift the field from a deficit view of youth toward the view of youth as resources to be developed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), with direct practice, service, and public health implications (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Kurtines et al., 2008a; Lerner, 2005; McCall & Groark, 2000). Positive youth development views youth, including those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, as able and eager to “explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world” (Damon, 2004, p. 15). This shift has fostered the development of PYD programs that engage young people in growth-promoting productive activities rather than treat them for maladaptive tendencies (Damon, 2004).

The emergence of applied developmental science and PYD has been framed by a relational developmental systems theoretical model that depicts human development as a property of systematic change in the multiple and integrated levels of organization that comprise human life and its ecology, rather than a property of the individual or of the environment (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Lerner, Wertleib, & Jacobs, 2005; Overton, 2010). Relational developmental systems theory rejects false dichotomies (e.g., nature vs. nurture, qualitative vs. quantitative, etc.), including the dichotomy of person versus context. Instead, it conceptualizes the unit of development as the embodied *person-in-context* and the unit of analysis as the bidirectional relation between person and context (person ↔ context). This perspective shifts the focus from the attributes of the individual to the attributes of the dynamic developmental system. For example, a relational developmental systems perspective on resilience does not consider resilience to be an attribute of the individual. It instead considers resilience to be an attribute of the developmental system that describes the fit between individual characteristics and features of the ecology in the face of changing environmental challenges (Lerner et al., 2013).

Relational developmental systems theory provides a framework for PYD. From this perspective, PYD is the development of mutually adaptive relations between individuals and the settings in which they live (Lerner, 2005; Lerner & Overton, 2008; Spencer, 2006). Positive youth development programs (e.g., 4-H Clubs, Boy/Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Outward Bound, etc.) promote health-supportive alignments between youth and their contexts in order to foster contextually and culturally meaningful positive change (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006). Positive youth development research asks, “What contextual resources, for what youth, at what points in their adolescence, result in what features of PYD?” (Lerner & Overton, 2008, p. 248). However, formal theory construction and model testing of specific, direct PYD strategies has only recently emerged in the literature.

Promoting Identity in Positive Youth Development Programs

A wide range of PYD programs have targeted positive identity development during adolescence (Benson, Mannes,

Pittman, & Ferber, 2004; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1999; 2004; Lerner, 2005; Montgomery et al., 2008b). These programs have drawn largely on Erikson's (1963; 1968) description of the identity crisis as the central developmental challenge of adolescence. Adolescents must integrate the roles, skills, and identifications learned in childhood with the expectations of the adult world into an inner sense of continuity and self-sameness matched by a sense of social continuity and self-sameness. The tension between identity synthesis and identity confusion represents a time of increased vulnerability and potential for developmental change (Erikson, 1968; 1985).

Erikson (1963; 1968) suggested that a sense of identity provides individuals with a foundation for what would now be described as PYD: feeling satisfaction with oneself (self-esteem), meaning and direction (purpose in life), and agency (internal locus of control). Today, identity synthesis is widely seen as a desirable outcome of PYD programs. In a major review of the empirical literature on PYD programs, Catalano and colleagues (Catalano et al., 1999) determined that eleven of twenty-five well-evaluated (i.e., using either experimental or quasi-experimental designs) PYD programs targeted positive change in concepts and constructs broadly related to identity formation (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, autonomy, empowerment, etc.). The programs used a variety of strategies (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, skills training, classroom psychoeducation, volunteer work, etc.) and measured identity-related concepts and constructs from a diverse array of theoretical orientations. Catalano and colleagues found that despite their differing theoretical orientations, these programs "sought to develop healthy identity formation and achievement in youth, including positive identification with a social or cultural sub-group that supports their healthy development of sense of self" (Catalano et al., 1999, p. 17).

The idea of intervening to promote identity development has also been an important theme in the identity literature. As Ferrer-Wreder and colleagues (Ferrer-Wreder, Montgomery, & Lorente, 2003) point out, Erikson and Erikson (1957) described the importance of intervening with troubled adolescents to promote productive styles of living and to prevent a young person's commitment to, and society's confirmation of, a socially marginalized identity. Over the past twenty-five years, the identity literature has provided extensive examination of the theoretical rationale and practical utility of identity interventions for youth (Archer, 1989; 1994; 2008; Kerpelman, Pittman, & Adler-Baeder, 2008; Kurtines et al., 2008d; Marcia, 1989; Montgomery, Hernandez, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2008a; Waterman, 1989). This literature suggests that assessing identity processes (identity exploration), orientations (identity style), and outcomes (identity distress, identity cohesion, turning points) in intervention contexts would advance knowledge about for whom interventions work and why they work, thereby facilitating the evolution of more effective and potent youth interventions (Montgomery et al., 2008a).

Despite twenty-five years of research highlighting the potential for identity interventions, it is only recently that a literature on identity interventions has emerged to systematically incorporate identity theory into models of intervention outcome. In a recent review of the literature on identity interventions, Ferrer-Wreder and colleagues (Ferrer-Wreder, Montgomery, Lorente, & Habibi, in press) found that researchers have begun to examine identity development both as a targeted intervention outcome and, in the effort to explain why interventions work and for whom they work, as a theory-based mediator or moderator of intervention change. Some programs have targeted ethnic identity as a focal intervention outcome for minority youth. For instance, Sisters of Nia (Belgrave et al., 2004) targeted ethnic identity by focusing on African-American girls' knowledge of Afrocentric culture, customs, and values. The program also sought to increase girls' self-concept, androgynous gender role orientation, and positive peer relations. Similarly, YES! (Thomas, Davidson, & McAdoo, 2008) targeted ethnic identity exploration by focusing on adolescent African-American girls' knowledge and awareness of cultural values, history, and racism. Other programs included an ethnic identity component in a larger culturally grounded intervention program. For example, the Seventh Generation Program (Moran & Bussey, 2007) used American Indian cultural values (harmony, respect, generosity, courage, wisdom, humility, and honesty) as an organizing framework while also targeting cognitive and social skills.

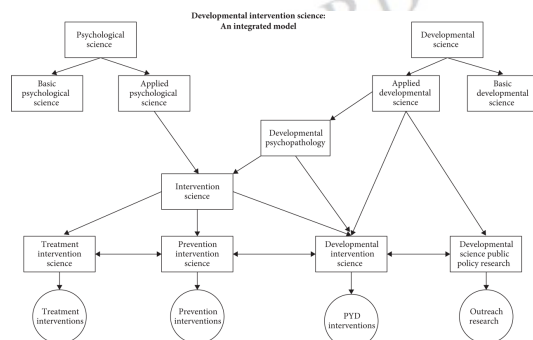
Other identity-focused interventions have conceptualized identity processes (e.g., self-construction and self-discovery processes, discussed later) as mediators of intervention effects on problem outcomes (e.g., Eichas et al., 2010) or moderators of intervention effects on relationship outcomes (e.g., Kerpelman et al., 2008). Kerpelman and colleagues found that, in the context of a school-based curricular intervention, the cognitive processing style adolescents use to make identity-related decisions (i.e., identity style) moderated change in perceived ability to handle conflict and perceived ability to stand up for oneself in a troubled relationship. Eichas and colleagues (Eichas et al., 2010) found that the use of an information-seeking identity style and the degree to which an

adolescent's goal pursuit resonates with his or her sense of self and identity (i.e., generates feelings of personal expressiveness) mediated changes in internalizing and externalizing problems (see the later section on the Changing Lives Program).

When taken together, the emergence of positive identity as a core concept in the PYD literature and the model-building process described in the identity intervention literature suggests significant convergence between the two literatures. This convergence also points to the potential for a systematic integration of PYD and intervention science.

Treatment, Prevention, and Developmental Interventions: The Need for Integrated Intervention Models

Interest in building positive identity interventions illustrates a growing recognition of the need to integrate the PYD approach with treatment and prevention intervention approaches (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Haegerich & Tolan, 2008; Lerner et al., 2000). In contrast to PYD programs that seek to promote positive functioning in core developmental domains, treatment interventions seek to ameliorate dysfunction once it occurs, and prevention interventions seek to reduce the likelihood that a dysfunction will occur in the future. Despite targeting different outcomes, PYD and prevention approaches have a shared emphasis on developmental regulation and the interplay between individuals and the contexts in which they function (e.g., relationships with family, peers, and schools). This shared emphasis provides a conceptual foundation for developing integrated intervention models (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Kurtines et al., 2008a; Masten, 2006; Schwartz, Pantin, Coatsworth, & Szapocznik, 2007). A similar trend toward integration has emerged in the treatment intervention literature. Weisz and colleagues (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005), for example, proposed an integrated model for promoting and protecting youth mental health through evidence-based prevention and treatment interventions.



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Figure 1. Developmental intervention science: An integrated model.

This chapter seeks to extend the integrative process just described by reviewing the literature on the emergence of developmental intervention science (Kurtines et al., 2008a) and the critical role that the concept of positive identity has played in its emergence. As Figure 1 illustrates, the developmental intervention science literature draws directly on the tradition of applied developmental science and relational developmental systems theory. Figure 1 further illustrates that developmental intervention science also draws on and extends models from treatment and prevention intervention science. By developing links between advances in applied developmental science and advances in treatment and prevention science, developmental intervention science has begun to generate theory-informed, empirically supported developmental intervention strategies specifically targeting positive developmental outcomes.

Positive identity has emerged as a key developmental intervention outcome that, rooted in the PYD and identity literatures, rejects the dichotomy of person versus context. Because a person's sense of identity develops at the interface between self and society (Kurtines, Berman, Ittel, & Williamson, 1995), identity development is relational change that cannot be coherently divided into self and social components (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Josselson, 1994). Instead of splitting person from context, a person's sense of identity reflects the embodied person-in-context and provides a psychosocially integrated target for developmental interventions.

A Developmental Intervention Science Approach to Positive Identity Development

Drawing on relational developmental systems theory (Lerner, 2002; Lerner & Overton, 2008; Overton, 2010), developmental intervention science conceptualizes positive development as progressive change. Developmental change in the most general sense has two basic characteristics—it is systematic and successive. That is, it is systematic change rather than random, chaotic, disorganized, or dispersive change. In addition, it may also be characterized as successive change when change that occurs at a later point in time is influenced by change that occurs earlier in time. The concept of development thus implies systematic and successive change in the hierarchy, structure, or organization of the ordered systems that make up a specific developmental system. Progressive change occurs when systematic, successive change in the structural organization of a developmental system serves an adaptive function (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Nisbet, 1980). Werner and Kaplan (1956) proposed that progressive change only occurs in a particular sequence, when a system changes from being organized in a very general and global way (with few, if any, differentiated parts) to having differentiated parts that are organized into an integrated hierarchy (developmental change as differentiated change; Lerner, 2002).

Progressive change in the structural organization of the developmental system emerges as the result of the dynamic process of individuals acting on their contexts and contexts acting on individuals, in a process called *developmental regulation* (Brandstädter, 2006). The individual contributes to developmental regulation through *self-regulation* (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008). Self-regulation has been used in diverse theoretical models to describe the organism's ability to adapt to its environment. Self-regulation is "the ability to flexibly activate, monitor, inhibit, persevere and/or adapt one's behavior, attention, emotions and cognitive strategies in response to direction from internal cues, environmental stimuli and feedback from others, in an attempt to attain personally-relevant goals" (Moilanen, 2007, p. 835). Although some self-regulations are primarily physiological, other intentional self-regulations are goal-directed actions that can be actively selected and controlled by the person to transform situations in accordance with desired future states (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). For example, an adolescent who adopts a different style of dress in order to fit in because it is not possible to change what his or her peer group thinks is socially acceptable has used intentional self-regulation (Lerner, Freund, De Stefanis, & Habermas, 2001). Thus, intentional self-regulations are "contextualized actions that are actively aimed toward harmonizing demand and resources in the context with personal goals to attain better functioning and to enhance self-development" (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008, p. 204).

A Focus on Developmental ↔ Intervention Processes

A basic premise of developmental intervention science is that interventions can promote progressive change in the structural organization of a human developmental system because contextual contributions to developmental regulation of the person ↔ context relationship may also be intentionally directed. From a developmental intervention science perspective, an intervention process is a specific type of person ↔ context (structural-interactive) exchange intended to have an effect on a specific outcome process. In an identity-focused developmental intervention, the contextual contribution to this person ↔ context exchange is directed toward promoting a specific type of progressive change: the consolidation of a self-constructed self-structure. Identity-focused developmental interventions have, for example, supported adolescents in discovering their unique potentials, talents, skills, and capabilities and encouraged them to use what they have discovered to construct long-term life goals, thereby helping them incorporate self-knowledge into a plan for the future.

Although progressive structural organizational change could be operationalized as a contextual "effect" on a specified individual- (person-) level "outcome" process, this change does not follow explicit instructions from the environment. Instead, an intervention is a contextual individual- (person-) level *resource* for structural organizational change as it emerges through the developmental system's active exchange of matter, energy, and information with the environment (the reciprocal co-action of an open system and its environment; Overton, 2010). For instance, if an adolescent participant in an identity-focused developmental intervention begins to incorporate knowledge of his or her unique potentials, talents, skills, and capabilities into his or her life goals, it is not because the intervention *caused* this change. Instead, the intervention provided resources that the adolescent used to envision a new direction in life.

Because all behavioral changes, positive and problematic, emerge out of the activity of the developmental system (Overton, 2010), progressive structural organizational change that emerges out of a developmental ↔ intervention

process may manifest as multidirectional positive change across domains of development, including the problem domains targeted by treatment and prevention interventions (Eichas et al., 2010). For instance, an adolescent who commits to pursuing a particular life goal has probably experienced a change in self-structure—that is, a change in how his or her drives, abilities, beliefs, and personal history, as well as plans for the future, are organized. The adolescent is likely to also exhibit behavioral change in multiple domains. The adolescent might study more to get better grades (a positive domain), drink less alcohol (a problem domain), and report increased psychological well-being (a positive domain). The emergence of a more integrated self-structure (a structural organizational change in the developmental system) may in this way produce variational changes (increases/decreases) across domains of development (e.g., academic achievement, drinking, and well-being).

Developmental Intervention Timing: Developmental Transitions

Interventions are most likely to contribute to progressive structural organizational change when intervention strategies target the transformations that occur during normative developmental transitions (Granic & Patterson, 2006). Adolescence, for example, is characterized by complex biological, cognitive, and social transformations. Emerging adulthood is also characterized by complex psychosocial transformations. Developmental transitions such as these are periods of flux, when an open (i.e., nonisolated) system becomes unstable through exchange of matter, energy, and information with the environment (Overton, 2010). Lewis (2000) suggests that emotion-laden events during periods of flux such as adolescence and early adulthood can trigger a structural reorganization of personality and identity.

During developmental transitions, fluctuation in a lower level of the system may spread to the macroscopic level through positive and negative feedback mechanisms in a process called amplification (Overton, 2010). In the context of an identity-focused developmental intervention, for example, an adolescent might try a novel behavior such as taking on a leadership role in a counseling group. By exploring this new role, the adolescent might discover that he or she is capable of and enjoys being a leader. The mastery experience (Bandura, 1997) associated with using this newly discovered ability might then amplify to a higher level of the system by becoming part of an emerging sense of identity. Amplification of local fluctuations to the macroscopic level may result in a transformation: the emergence of a more complex structural organization with novel properties (Overton, 2010). In this case, when an adolescent incorporates a newly discovered ability into his or her sense of identity, the result may be the emergence of a *self-transformation*: a new, more complex structural organization of the self.

Developmental Intervention Targets: Self-Transformative Processes

During adolescence, newly emergent cognitive and communicative competencies transform the individual's intentional self-regulation, in part because their emergence also brings the challenge and responsibility of forming a coherent sense of identity (Kurtines et al., 1995; 2008d). As Gestsdóttir and colleagues (Gestsdóttir, Lewin-Bizan, von Eye, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009) point out, a child's self-regulations are primarily observed in terms of attention and inhibition, whereas an adolescent's self-regulations involve increased intentions to promote his or her own development in a manner consistent with his or her identity. During adolescence, newly emergent cognitive and communicative competencies create the potential for a self-constructed self-structure that will provide direction for individuals' intentional self-regulations as they become active producers of, or contributors to, their own development (Brandtstädter & Lerner, 1999). Two processes of self-transformation are *self-construction* and *self-discovery*.

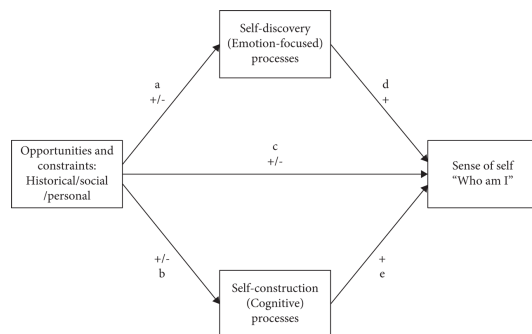
Self-Construction

Identity alternatives afforded by the individual's context provide opportunities for the individual to proactively construct the self through identity-related choices made from among these alternatives (Berzonsky, 1986; Schwartz, 2002). Because the self-construction process involves the individual's evaluation of presently available alternatives, it requires the use of a complex set of cognitive and communicative competencies acquired during the developmental process, including the capacity for critical thinking and critical discussion (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001; Kurtines et al., 1995). As individuals form and test hypotheses about identity-related choices, they create a self-theory about "who they think they are and what they think they want" (Berzonsky, 2011, p. 57), a conceptual structure that helps them make sense of their experience (Berzonsky, 1993). A

proactive information-seeking approach to self-construction is associated with indices of positive adjustment, such as openness to ideas and experience, problem-focused coping, and decreased problem behaviors (Adams et al., 2001; Berzonsky, 1992; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992).

Self-Discovery

Identity alternatives afforded by the individual's context also provide opportunities for the individual to discover and actualize his or her set of unique potentials, talents, skills, and capabilities (Waterman, 1984). Because the self-discovery process involves an individual's feeling or intuition that an activity or choice resonates with his or her true self, it is primarily emotion-focused. Self-discovery theories have described the importance of self-actualization (Maslow, 1968), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and feelings of personal expressiveness (Waterman, 1990). The most integrated level of emotion-focused processing is self-actualization, which refers to fulfilling one's potentials and living up to one's ideals on a consistent basis (Maslow, 1968). Flow, the least integrated level of emotion-focused processing, is an affective state characterized by a balance between the challenge at hand and the skills one brings to it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Feelings of personal expressiveness are similar to, but less integrated than, self-actualization because they specifically describe the subjective experience of identity-related activities (Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2005; Waterman, 1990). By pursuing personally expressive activities, individuals integrate their unique potentials, talents, skills, and capabilities into their sense of self and identity. Engaging in personally expressive activities predicts higher levels of intrinsic motivation to accomplish life tasks, perceived competence, self-determination, optimism, and subjective well-being (Coatsworth, Palen, Sharp, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2006; Waterman, 2005; Waterman et al., 2003).



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Figure 2 . Promoting positive identity: A self-transformative model.

Identity-focused developmental interventions create opportunities for self-discovery and self-construction. Figure 2 depicts a self-transformative model proposed by Albrecht (2007) for conceptualizing pathways of change in a developmental intervention. As shown in Figure 2, the individual's historical, social, and personal context provides opportunities for and constraints on self-discovery (path a) and self-construction (path b). Self-discovery and self-construction, in turn, promote positive development of an individual's sense of self (paths d and e, respectively). Historical, social, and personal contexts are likely to also influence the development of an individual's sense of self via other pathways (path c). According to this model, a developmental intervention is a person-level contextual resource for self-transformation because it provides opportunities for self-construction and self-discovery.

Developmental Intervention Strategy: Providing Resources for Self-Transformation

Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2005) were among the first to design and evaluate developmental intervention strategies for promoting self-construction and self-discovery. Working with a university-based sample of emerging adults, the researchers used a group-based empowerment approach to implement these strategies. An intervention team drew on Freire's (1970/1983) transformative pedagogy to help the participants identify life challenges and co-construct solutions to these challenges. Rather than transferring expert knowledge to the students through a structured, content-oriented didactic approach, the intervention team participated as co-learners in dialogue with the students. This empowerment approach assumed an equality of basic competence between teachers and learners (Freire, 1970/1983). Specific self-construction and self-discovery strategies used by the intervention team are described next.

Self-Construction Strategy

Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2005) used cognitive intervention strategies to target self-construction processes. Group work in a self-construction intervention condition consisted of self-transformative activities to identify and evaluate solutions to life dilemmas. Specifically, each participant shared an identity-related life choice or dilemma that he or she faced. The group then collaborated to identify sources of information useful in addressing the dilemma, possible alternative solutions, and pros and cons for each alternative, as well as a critical evaluation of the different alternatives.

Schwartz (2000) described two examples of dilemmas presented by participants. One participant faced the choice of getting married or delaying marriage and starting graduate school. Another participant had no idea what to do with his life and wanted a serious romantic relationship but did not know how to achieve it. The group helped the participants identify new alternatives, and each participant found a solution that worked. Schwartz reported that, in the first case, the participant decided to delay marriage for a year and start preparing for graduate school. In the second case, the participant decided to pursue internship experience in his field of study.

Self-Discovery Strategy

Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2005) used emotion-focused intervention strategies to target self-discovery processes. Group work in a self-discovery intervention condition consisted of self-transformative activities to identify relations between flow-producing activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and short-term life goals. Specifically, each participant shared three short-term life goals. The group collaborated to break each goal down into component activities, and the participant identified his or her feelings associated with each activity. Then, the participant identified activities associated with feelings of flow, and the group worked together to construct goals based on these flow-producing activities and integrate them into the participant's existing short-term goals.

Schwartz (2000) described two examples of short-term life goals presented by participants. One participant wanted to please her boyfriend, maintain a harmonious relationship with him, and improve their communication. Another participant wanted to identify a career path for herself and have a more fulfilling relationship with her parents. The group helped the participants explore and uncover feelings associated with their goals, and each participant made progress toward accomplishing her goals. Schwartz (2000) reported that, in the first case, the participant afterward felt more able to talk with her boyfriend about their relationship. In the second case, the participant committed to a specific plan for graduate school.

Both quantitative outcome findings and narrative accounts provided by the participants indicated that cognitive intervention strategies were associated with increases in self-construction processes, whereas emotion-focused intervention strategies were associated with increases in self-discovery processes (see Schwartz et al., 2005). Schwartz and colleagues thus provided an initial examination of developmental intervention strategies for promoting self-construction and self-discovery. Similar co-participatory and transformative intervention approaches have been used in positive development programs for troubled adolescents and college-going emerging adults and adults. These programs are discussed in the next section.

Positive Development Programs

This section describes three positive development programs that target positive identity development. Each program illustrates developmental intervention science: each targets self-transformative processes during a developmental transition with the goal of promoting long-term positive development. The three programs are also closely related because the first program, the Miami Youth Development Project, developed many of the strategies used in the other two programs. However, the programs were designed for different samples and settings, including troubled adolescents in alternative high schools and emerging adults and adults in college.

Positive Youth Development with an Identity Focus

The Miami Youth Development Project

The Miami Youth Development Project (Kurtines et al., 2008b) provides community-supported PYD services for

troubled youth growing up in disempowering urban contexts. For nearly two decades, the Youth Development Project implemented the Changing Lives Program as a selected/indicated PYD intervention for the culturally diverse multiproblem youth attending the alternative high schools of the Miami Dade County Public Schools (Kurtines et al., 2008b). These students came from neighborhood contexts characterized by pervasive violence, crime, abuse, and limited access to resources. They came to the alternative schools on negative life course pathways and at risk for multiple negative developmental outcomes and/or engaged in multiple problem behaviors. Many of them displayed histories of attendance, behavior, or motivational problems in the regular high schools.

Intervention strategy. The Changing Lives Program's primary intervention goal was to create intervention contexts that empowered troubled youth to change their lives in positive directions and, in the process, form rather than neglect their sense of self and identity (Montgomery et al., 2008b). Like the university-based intervention piloted by Schwartz et al. (2005), the Changing Lives Program used a participatory transformative group counseling approach informed by Freire's (1970/1983) transformative pedagogy and multicultural counseling theory (Sue & Sue, 2003). However, because the intervention was located in a community setting, program implementation was designed to be flexible and adaptable to diverse populations and problems, goals, and school settings. Program implementation involved three phases designed to be flexible and adaptable: (1) engagement, (2) participatory co-learning, and (3) transformative activities. Group members co-participated in identifying the life challenges they wanted to work on, and they co-constructed solutions to these challenges. They worked at changing their lives for the better by engaging in transformative activities to address their life challenges, and they obtained support from group members while doing so.

The Changing Lives Program developed the Life Course Journal to provide a focal point for the participatory transformative group process. Consistent with a narrative conception of identity as an evolving story that individuals begin to work on during adolescence (McAdams, 2011; McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, this volume), the Life Course Journal facilitated participants' construction of a narrative story line about "who I am" and "what I want to do with my life." The journal included exercises that were interwoven into the implementation phases. During the engagement phase, two exercises oriented the participants toward the concept of life change while also addressing the issues of counseling change goals and life history experiences. In the first exercise, participants identified their most important life course events and turning points. They began to co-construct their life stories by taking turns sharing with the group where they came from, where they were now, and where they were going in their lives. The second exercise built on the emerging narrative frame by focusing on the relation between participants' most important life goals and their personal strengths. Participants collaborated with the group to identify their most important life goal, to break the life goal into activities essential for achieving the goal, and to explore their emotional reactions to engaging in the activities. This exercise targeted self-discovery processes (Figure 2, path a).

During the participatory co-learning phase, two additional journal exercises encouraged participants to identify a challenge that they wanted to work on and to create a life *change* goal. Life change goals reflect the parts of their lives youth want to change most in order to achieve their life goals. In the third exercise, group members conceptualized their life change goals and shared them with the group so they could envision how the group would be different if members accomplished their life change goals. The fourth exercise targeted self-construction processes (Figure 2, path b). Group members created a path toward their life change goals by co-constructing with the group potential alternatives for accomplishing the life change goal. With help from the group, they critically evaluated these alternatives. Selected solutions that emerged from this process represented potential transformative activities.

The engagement and participatory co-learning phases provided the foundation for self-directed transformative activities, hypothesized to be a key change-producing behavioral intervention strategy for facilitating empowerment and positive identity development (Kurtines et al., 2008d). Because these transformative activities are self-directed and aimed at solving self-selected problems, they help youth learn "to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, gain greater access to and control over resources and gain mastery over their lives" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 583). That is, whereas transformative activities may create change that solves participants' current problems, they also create opportunities for mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences that provide resources for self-construction and self-discovery help youth transform the way they understand and feel about themselves and their current life course (Kurtines et al., 2008d).

Outcome results. Results from evaluation of the Changing Lives Program have shown intervention-related benefits on indicators of self-construction and self-discovery in samples of primarily Hispanic and African American adolescents (fourteen to eighteen years old). In a study of change from pre- to posttest (measured immediately following the program), Ferrer-Wreder and colleagues (2002) found that intervention participants increased in self-construction processing, including increased problem-solving competence and sense of control and responsibility for life choices, relative to participants in a comparison group. Participants with low initial levels of engagement in the identity process also increased in information-seeking behavior. In a second study of change from pre- to posttest (measured immediately following the program), Eichas and colleagues (2010) found that intervention participation was associated with changes in both self-construction and self-discovery processing. Specifically, participants increased more in information-seeking behavior and decreased less in feelings of personal expressiveness than did participants in a comparison group. The pattern of results suggested that targeting self-construction and self-discovery promotes change that “spills over” to impact problem behavior outcomes not specifically targeted by the intervention. Intervention participation was directly or indirectly related to decreases in both externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors, findings that are consistent with the premise that promoting positive identity fosters multidirectional positive change across domains of development (Eichas et al., 2010).

Positive Emerging Adult Development with an Identity Focus

The Miami Adult Development Project

The Youth Development Project developed the Changing Lives Program for community-based work with marginalized adolescents (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002; Montgomery et al., 2008b). The program’s participatory transformative intervention approach to promoting positive identity has been adapted and extended by the Miami Adult Development Project for university-based work with emerging adults. As noted, the challenge of forming a sense of identity often intensifies during emerging adulthood as young people experience greater freedom as a result of moving beyond the childhood structure imposed by family and school (Arnett, 2007). However, many emerging adults in university settings have life course pathways that are already positive, at least relative to the troubled youth whose negative life course pathways bring them to the alternative high schools. Therefore, the Adult Development Project works with emerging adults to refine current life pathways (rather than to change negative life pathways into positive ones) by providing opportunities for participants to optimize their unique potentials through in-depth exploration of their current sense of self, identity commitments, and long-term life goals.

Intervention strategy. The Adult Development Project draws on the Changing Lives Program’s participatory transformative intervention framework to promote self-guided, self-directed, and self-facilitated change, but its intervention strategy differs in ways that reflect the developmental level of the participants (i.e., nineteen- to twenty-nine-year-old emerging adults rather than adolescents). First, the intervention is implemented at an urban university as part of a psychology course on emerging adulthood. The course instructor uses traditional classroom techniques (i.e., lecture, weekly readings, class discussion, etc.) to teach students about identity theory and research, with a focus on issues central to emerging adulthood and research methodology. During the last six weeks of the semester, formal instruction is replaced for one class per week by the Adult Development Project intervention group sessions.

Second, Adult Development Project intervention group sessions are guided not by faculty or staff but by peer facilitators. At the beginning of the semester, the course instructor selects volunteers to receive training on group work and peer facilitation. Prior to each group session, volunteers meet with the instructor or a teaching assistant for supervision and general discussion about the group process. Group work involves the same phases as in the Changing Lives Program (i.e., engagement, participatory co-learning, and transformative activities), as well as the same core set of group exercises. Thus, students participate in a series of self-transformative activities designed to engage them in critical problem solving and cognitive exploration of solutions to self-selected life-change goals (Figure 2, path b) while also exploring the fit between their current long-term life goals and their sense of self and identity (Figure 2, path a).

Outcome results. The Adult Development Project is a recent extension of the Changing Lives Program, and outcome evaluation is currently ongoing. However, initial outcome findings (Meca et al., under review) indicate that intervention participants had significantly greater reductions in identity-related distress than did participants in a comparison group. Initial results further suggest that reductions in identity distress were associated with indices of

identity development and psychosocial adjustment. Specifically, intervention-related decreases in identity distress predicted increases in identity consolidation (as indicated by measures of identity commitment and identity synthesis). Identity consolidation, in turn, predicted increases in subjective well-being. This pattern of results is consistent with the premise that promoting positive identity fosters multidirectional positive change across domains of development (Eichas et al., 2010).

Positive Adult Development with an Identity Focus

The Daytona Adult Identity Development Program

The Changing Lives Program's participatory transformative intervention approach has also been adapted and extended by the Daytona Adult Identity Development Program for university-based work with adult students (Berman, Kennerly, & Kennerly, 2008). Berman et al. (2008) point out that identity work is not limited to adolescence or even to emerging adulthood (see also Kroger, this volume; Lilgendahl, this volume). Rather, adults continue to construct and reconstruct their identities throughout their lives. Renewed identity work may be prompted by life course transitions such as entering college, becoming a parent, or retiring, as well as by sociohistorical factors such as an economic downturn that leads to financial pressure or job loss (Berman et al., 2008). For its work with adults, the Adult Identity Development Program uses participatory and transformative strategies to expand self-understanding and insight through identity exploration, teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and foster a disposition for taking control and accepting responsibility for life decisions (Berman et al., 2008).

Intervention strategy. The Adult Identity Development Program is implemented as part of an elective personal growth psychology course for juniors and seniors at a public university. Participants include individuals from across the adult lifespan (Berman et al., 2008). Students enrolled in the course are assigned to small groups of seven to ten members. Group facilitators are interns in a clinical psychology masters' program at the university, supervised by faculty. The students complete weekly readings on identity issues (e.g., careers, relationships, gender, sexuality, values) and homework tasks promoting self-examination, such as self-tests and journaling. After group rapport is established, the facilitators introduce transformative activities in which group members assist each other in focusing on a specific identity-related issue. Critical thinking about life choices is explicitly targeted by the group facilitators (Figure 2, path b), who assist group members in framing issues in terms of personal control and responsibility (Berman et al., 2008).

Outcome results. Findings suggest that the Adult Identity Development Program has a positive impact (unmoderated by age) on positive identity markers. Results from an outcome study of the intervention (Berman et al., 2008) indicated that participants experienced a significant increase in identity exploration and significant decrease in identity distress. The study also evaluated outcomes using Marcia's (1994) identity status classification system. According to Marcia's formulation, individuals who have explored possible life directions and made a commitment to a particular life path are classified as identity achieved, whereas those who have not explored or committed are classified as identity diffused. Individuals who have explored but have not yet committed to a particular path are in a moratorium, whereas those who have committed without exploring have a foreclosed status. Outcome results indicated that the number of participants classified as having a foreclosed identity status decreased, whereas the number of participants classified as having an achieved identity status increased (Berman et al., 2008). If replicated, this pattern of results will support the use of participatory and transformative strategies for promoting positive identity development among adults.

The pattern of findings across the three programs just described suggests that it is possible to promote positive identity development throughout the transition from childhood to adulthood, and as well as during life course transitions that occur in adulthood. The pattern of findings also suggests that, consistent with Figure 2, engaging participants in self-construction and self-discovery promotes these processes. Taken as a whole, these findings provide support for identity-focused positive development.

Future Directions

Despite promising findings that provide support for positive development programs targeting positive identity, key questions remain and should be targeted by future work. Three of these questions are discussed here.

How do we capture the richness of subjective identity experiences? Erikson's (1963) description of the identity crisis and the challenge of forming a mature and coherent sense of identity provides a rich conceptualization of identity development. He described the process in terms of *qualitative* change in the structural organization of self and identity; that is, a process involving more than quantitative change in either positive or problem outcomes. Identity development involves the consolidation of an integrated self-structure that becomes increasingly complex, coherent, and cohesive as young people construct and reconstruct the meaning of identity-related life course experiences, a conceptualization that echoes much of the narrative identity literature (e.g., McLean, 2005). Thus, an important challenge for positive development programs that target identity development is to use methods capable of capturing the content, structure, and organization of self and identity and its subjective meaning and significance—that is, to richly reflect rather than reduce the life course experiences of the young people participating in these programs (Kurtines et al., 2008a).

An important part of the solution appears to be the integrated use of quantitative and qualitative methods (see Kurtines et al., 2008c; 2008d; Rinaldi et al., 2012). Within the Changing Lives Program, recent investigation of self-selected long-term life goals in a sample of 238 African-American and Latino adolescents illustrates how quantitative and qualitative methods can be integrated to detect properties that indicate theoretically meaningful differences in structural organizations of self and identity. From a developmental perspective, self-selected life goals are an expression of the future-oriented component of self and identity and the means by which youth begin to give direction to their lives as active producers of their own development (Brandtstädter & Lerner, 1999). Researchers elicited participants' descriptions of their most important life goals and their meaning and significance by adding a free response component to an established quantitative identity measure (Rinaldi et al., 2012). Examination of participants' life goal descriptions, as well as those of a comparison group suggested that, consistent with developmental expectations for youth at the earliest stages of the identity process, the majority (75 percent) of participants' life goals at pretest were self-satisfying and focused on personal gain. For example, one participant's life goal was to "Travel a lot. Explore the world. Having freedom. Free my mind and be like an eagle." The percentage of self-satisfying life goals did not vary significantly across age, gender, ethnicity, or intervention condition.

On the other hand, the study identified a small percentage (8 percent) of participants whose most important life goals indicated a more consolidated and complex structural organization of self and identity. Specifically, the life goals of these participants indicated a special fit between elements of the life goal and the youth's unique interests, talents, and potentials (i.e., feelings of personal expressiveness). For example, one participant's life goal was to be a nurse: "Being a Nurse means a lot to me because I always have liked helping others. I have always known I would be good at taking care of others." Another's life goal was to help people: "I grew up in a family where if someone gets hurt my father would take care of that. I want to help people, I inherited it and I am meant to do it." These participants appeared to have begun to integrate an emerging sense of identity into their most important life goals for their future.

How do we document significant "qualitative" intervention change in the meaning and significance of the subjective experience of the content, structure, and organization of self? A strictly quantitative approach cannot capture changes in the meaning and significance of critical experiential components of self and identity, not only because the changes are subjective in nature, but also because they are nonlinear, discontinuous, and not easily quantifiable (i.e., they constitute structural organizational change). One approach to documenting intervention change in structural organizations of self and identity and their meaning and significance is to build *quantitative* models of intervention outcome to evaluate the probability of the emergence of properties identified through *qualitative* analysis of adolescents' subjective experiences of self and identity as indicative of a more complex, coherent, and cohesive self-structure.

Results from the study described earlier indicated that participating in the Changing Lives Program was associated with positive qualitative change in youth's most important life goals and their meaning and significance. Specifically, among participants who described self-satisfying life goals at pretest, those participating in the intervention condition were significantly more likely than those participating in a comparison condition to describe a personally expressive life goal at posttest (measured immediately after intervention). This finding provided initial empirical support for positive intervention-related structural organizational change in participants' sense of self and identity within the Changing Lives Program.

The study further examined how positive qualitative change in life goals occurred and whether it spilled over to impact other outcomes by evaluating potential mediators, moderators, and effects of life goal change. A number of interesting findings emerged. Consistent with the program's focus on self-discovery processes, positive life goal change was predicted by intervention-related increases in the degree to which participants' life goal pursuit generated feelings of personal expressiveness. Positive life goal change was also predicted by intervention-related decreases in identity resolution, an indicator of engaging in the identity crisis. Positive life goal change from pre- to posttest had additional benefits for intervention participants at four-month follow-up. Specifically, positive life goal change predicted significant reductions in internalizing problem behaviors four months later, an outcome not specifically targeted by the intervention. Although tentative, these findings suggest that the integrated use of qualitative and quantitative methods may provide an important tool for modeling mediators, moderators, and the cascading effects of qualitative change in the content, structure, and organization of self and identity and its meaning and significance. Cascading effects may include reducing the incidence rate of risky and problem behaviors.

How do we tailor positive identity developmental intervention strategies to the developmental moment? Opportunities for supporting positive identity development present themselves throughout the transition to adulthood, from adolescence through emerging adulthood. However, the transformations that occur during adolescence and those that occur during emerging adulthood create different opportunities for promoting positive identity. Adolescence brings biological, cognitive, and social changes that create the possibility of systematically and seriously addressing for the first time the question "Who am I?" (Erikson, 1968). Emerging adulthood brings greater freedom and new possibilities for exploring answers to this question as young people move beyond the childhood structure imposed by family and school. Although adolescence and emerging adulthood together constitute the transition to adulthood, they represent qualitatively different developmental moments that likely require different types of support for identity development. Because adolescents are at the earliest stages of the identity process, a primary challenge for identity-focused intervention work with adolescents is to promote engagement in the identity process. Emerging adults, on the other hand, may already be more fully engaged in the identity process. Therefore, a primary challenge for identity-focused intervention work with emerging adults may be to support individuals as they refine and optimize their current positive life course pathways. For emerging adults on negative pathways, the challenge is to provide opportunities for directional change onto a more positive life course pathway. If emerging adulthood is indeed an "age of possibilities" (Arnett, 2004), then self-transformative activities may be especially beneficial during this time.

Identity-focused developmental interventions have primarily targeted the transition from childhood to adulthood. However, renewed identity work can occur later in adulthood (Anthis & LaVoie, 2006; Cramer, 2004; Strayer, 2002). This renewed identity work may be prompted by predictable life course transitions, such as becoming a parent or retiring (Berman et al., 2008). It may also occur when less predictable macrolevel events shape life course transitions, such as when an economic downturn leads to financial pressure or job loss and a return to formal education to pursue a different career (Clausen, 1998). Although university-based identity interventions have included individuals from across the adult lifespan (e.g., Berman et al., 2008), little is known about how to systematically target the life course transitions associated with adulthood. This may be a fruitful area for future developmental intervention research.

Conclusion

Advances in developmental intervention science are part of the broader movement within the fields of behavioral and mental health in the direction of a more fully integrated intervention science (Weisz et al., 2005). They represent a natural progression and extension of treatment and prevention science toward an intersection with the emergence of applied developmental science. At this intersection, developmental intervention science seeks to develop links among treatment, prevention, and developmental intervention models and approaches that will help build a more fully integrated intervention science. An integrated intervention science will include a complete set of intervention tools for treating dysfunction when it occurs, reducing risk for future dysfunction, and promoting positive development.

In this context, future advances in evaluating theoretical claims about intervention outcome will require the development of sustainable, theory-driven empirically informed positive development intervention strategies. The

emerging developmental intervention science literature has focused on refining intervention strategies for promoting positive identity development during the transition from childhood to adulthood. For troubled adolescents on a negative life course trajectory, developmental interventions have aimed at empowering youth to change their lives in positive directions. For emerging adults exploring the possibilities afforded by higher education, developmental interventions have aimed at helping young people optimize a current life course. Although initial outcome findings have been promising, the developmental intervention approach is still in its infancy. Future advances in developmental intervention science appear to have significant potential for facilitating the evolution of sustainable evidence-based positive development intervention strategies for promoting positive life course change.

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