IDENTITY AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Theory and Practice to Empower Marginalized Youth

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• How do we help marginalized young people change their lives for the better?

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• We can view youth as either
  • Problems to be managed treat and prevent problems
  • Resources to be developed PROMOTE positive youth development

3

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  • Problems to be managed treat and prevent problems
  • Resources to be developed PROMOTE positive youth development

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1. Foundations of Positive Youth Development (PYD)

2. A Self-Transformative PYD

3. Is promoting PYD an alternative to treating and preventing problems?

1. Positive Youth Development: Foundations

- **Developmental systems**
  - Human development is a product of dynamic or fused relations among levels of organization
  - Person and context cannot be separated
  - Focus: the dynamic relations between person and context

- **Plasticity** = the potential for systematic change
  - Exists across the life span
  - *Relative plasticity* because there is potential for both constancy and change
  - Coaction across multiple levels of the system can act to promote or constrain change

Lerner, Noh, & Wilson, 1998

Lerner, 2004
• The potential relative plasticity of ontogenetic change is a fundamental strength of all humans

Lerner, 2004

1. Positive Youth Development: Foundations

• Potential plasticity includes contexts in which individuals develop:
  • Families
  • Neighborhoods
  • Cultures
  • The levels of resources that these contexts possess can be changed

Lerner, 2004

1. Positive Youth Development: Foundations

• Positive youth development (PYD) =

  • the development of mutually adaptive and beneficial relations between youth and the contexts in which they grow up

Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008; Lerner, Lerner, Bower, & Geldhof, 2015

1. Positive Youth Development: Foundations

Person acts on environment

Developmental Regulation

Context

Self-Regulation
(Organismic or Intentional)

Environment acts on person

Promoting PYD

Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008
PYD Outcomes: Lerner’s 5 Cs Model

1. Competence
   The ability to act effectively in school, in social situations, and at work

2. Confidence
   An internal sense of overall self-worth and efficacy

3. Connection
   Positive bonds with people and social institutions

4. Character
   Respect for society and cultural rules, an inner moral compass

5. Caring
   A sense of sympathy and empathy for others and a commitment to social justice

6. Contribution
   The capacity to participate effectively by caring for themselves and by giving of themselves at home, in the community, and in civic life.

Lerner, 2007

Example of PYD Program: 4-H Clubs

- 6 million youth; 611,800 volunteers
- Provides experiences that develop critical life skills
- Focus areas: science, leadership, healthy living
- Caring adult volunteers support youth to
  - work collaboratively
  - take the lead on their own projects
  - set their own goals

Examples of PYD Programs

- 4-H Clubs
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Boys and Girls Club
- Outward Bound

What 4-H Project Do You Want to Grow With?
2015-2016 Texas 4-H Club Project List

- Leadership
  - Leadership: Public Speaking, Workforce Preparation/Careers, Youth Entrepreneurship
- Personal Safety
  - Bicycle, Safety
- Plant Science
  - Horticulture, Junior Master Gardener, Soil & Crop Science
- Technology & Engineering
  - Photography/Video, Robotics, Rocketry/Aerospace, Science, Engineering, & Technology
- Animal Science
  - Beef Cattle, Small & Companion Animals, Dairy Cattle, Dog Care & Training, Goats (Dairy, Meat, or Hair), Horse, Poultry (Chickens & Turkeys), Rabbits, Sheep, Swine, Veterinary Science
- Biological Science
  - Aquatic Science, Biological Sciences, Entomology, Meat Science
- Civic Education
  - Citizen, Global Education & Awareness
- Communication & Arts
  - Theater & Performance Arts
- Consumer & Family Science
  - Clothing & Textiles, Consumer Education, Family Life Education, Housing & Home Environment
- Environmental Education
- Food & Nutrition
  - Foods & Nutrition
- Health
  - Healthy Lifestyles (Health)
How to Promote PYD: Lerner’s Big Three

Give youth opportunities to:

1. Have sustained, positive interactions with adults
2. Participate in structured activities that enable them to develop valued life skills
3. Become leaders of valued community activities.

Problem: Many youth in the United States begin life disconnected from mainstream social institutions and prosocial sources of support, grow up exposed to pervasive violence, and come of age in a context of striking inequality.

How do we promote PYD in these disempowering community contexts?

2. A Self-Transformative PYD Intervention

Eichas, Meca, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2014

During adolescence, intentional self-regulation is transformed by the challenge of forming a sense of identity.
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definition of Positive Identity

Positive Identity = a dynamic and integrated self-system that gives life direction and purpose.

THE CHANGING LIVES PROGRAM:
Connecting Theory with Practice

• Positive identity development =
  • the development of a dynamic and integrated self-system that provides youth with a sense of direction and purpose

• Miami, Florida: Waves of immigration

• Miami-Dade County Public Schools


• Disempowering urban contexts
  • poverty
  • exposure to violence
  • lack of resources


• Troubled youth:
  • Skipping, fighting, failing

• System of alternative high schools
Disempowering Urban Contexts

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<th>Event</th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Witness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mugging</td>
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<td>86.5%</td>
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<td>Stabbing</td>
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<td>Dead Bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
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</table>

*Data from Academy for Community Education (ACE, N = 96), reported in: Berman, Kurtines, Silverman, & Serafini, 1996


- Need for counseling services
- Community partnership
- Miami Youth Development Project

The Changing Lives Program

- Psychosocial Developmental Life Course Framework
- Self-Transformative Intervention Model
- Participatory Transformative Intervention

Developmental Theory

Developmental Intervention Model

Intervention Strategy
Life Course = path through life

1. Constructed by the individual through choices and actions
2. Established pathways with socially sanctioned timetables for life transitions
3. Increased likelihood of a life course turning point

Identity = steering mechanism for the life course

1. Constructed by the individual through choices and actions
2. Established pathways with socially sanctioned timetables for life transitions
3. Increased likelihood of a life course turning point

Identity = steering mechanism for the life course

- Adolescence = key developmental moment for turning points
- Promote the positive development of the life course steering mechanism

The Changing Lives Program

Psychosocial Developmental Life Course Framework

Self-Transformative Intervention Model

Participatory Transformative Intervention

Developmental Theory

Developmental Intervention Model

Intervention Strategy
Self-Transformative Intervention Model

Self-Discovery (emotion-focused) Processes

Self-Construction (cognitive/critical) Processes

Contextual Opportunities and Constraints
(Personal, social, historical contexts)

Sense of Identity (direction and purpose)

Eichas, Meca, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2014

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Feelings of Personal Expressiveness

unusually intense involvement

special fit or meshing with the activity

intensely being alive

completeness or fulfillment

impression that this is what they are meant to do

a feeling that this is who they really are

Waterman, 2011

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Self-Discovery Processes (Path C)

The “true self” is discovered and actualized

Depends on insight into self

Flow = balanced tension between skill and challenge

Feelings of personal expressiveness

Self-actualization = reaching highest potential

Schwartz, Kurtines, & Montgomery, 2005; Waterman, 2011

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Self-Transformative Intervention Model

- Self-Discovery (emotion-focused) Processes
- Self-Construction (cognitive/critical) Processes
- Sense of Identity (direction and purpose)
- Contextual Opportunities and Constraints
  (Personal, social, historical contexts)

Eichas, Meca, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2014

Self-Construction Processes (Path D)

- The self is created through choices made from available alternatives
- Depends on the development of critical cognitive and communicative competencies
  - Information-seeking
  - Critical thinking and discussion
  - Control and responsibility

Berzonsky, 2011; Kurtines et al., 1995

The Changing Lives Program

Developmental Theory

- Psychosocial Developmental Life Course Framework
- Self-Transformative Intervention Model

Developmental Intervention Model

- Participatory Transformative Intervention

Intervention Strategy

Self-Transformative Intervention Model

- Participatory Transformative Opportunities
- Sense of Identity (direction and purpose)
- Self-Discovery (emotion-focused) Processes
- Self-Construction (cognitive/critical) Processes

Eichas, Meca, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2014
Participatory transformative intervention approach

- **Participatory co-learning**
  - Problem posing = identifying the right problem to solve
  - Critical problem solving = identifying the right solution

**CAS**

**ACE**

Kurtines et al., 2008b

Participatory transformative intervention approach

- **Transformative activities**
  - Implementing the solution (i.e., taking action)
  - Possibly solves the problem
  - Creates mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997)

**CAS**

**ACE**

Kurtines et al., 2008b

ICED strategy

- (Participatory Co-Learning)
  - **Identify the problem**: willingness to be open to what the issue is
  - **Create alternatives**: willingness to honestly consider all points of view on the problem as potentially valid
  - **Evaluate**: willingness to subject differing views to evaluation, including one’s own

Garcia, Montgomery, Kurtines, & Lewis-Arango, 2008

ICED strategy

- (Transformative Activities)
  - **Do something**: follow through by taking action

Garcia, Montgomery, Kurtines, & Lewis-Arango, 2008
ICED Case Example: “Didier”

- 17-year-old male, parents immigrated to Miami from Haiti when he was 8
- Concern he brought to the group: fighting with his younger sister
  - Neighbors had alerted the police

Identify the problem:

- Shared that he was resentful of special and lenient treatment parent gave to his sister
- While he had to take on extra responsibility of earning money for the family
- Felt blamed for sibling conflict, led to anger towards parents

Create alternatives:

- Told group he had considered running away
- Or moving in with an aunt in a nearby community

Evaluate:

- Group challenged Didier, suggesting that moving away would upset his parents
- Leave sister without protection in the neighborhood
- Challenged perspective of parents’ treatment of sister
- Challenged him to reframe relationship with sister from “competitor” to “mentor”
- Who else could help her navigate high school?—not parents
ICED Case Example: “Didier”

- **Do something:**
  - Didier was open to the group’s suggestions, promised to attempt reconciliation with sister and parents.
  - At end of semester, he reported progress in transforming his family relationships.
  - and was much happier at home.

The Changing Lives Program

The Changing Lives Program: Activities

- Life course narrative
- Most important life goals
- Transformative Goals
- Critical Problem Solving
- Action

The Changing Lives Program: Activities

- Life course narrative
- Most important life goals
- Transformative Goals
- Critical Problem Solving
- Participation Activities
- Action

Garcia, Montgomery, Kurtines, & Lewis-Arango, 2008
3. PYD as an alternative

- Three intervention approaches:
  - **Treatment** = reducing dysfunction when it occurs
  - **Prevention** = reducing the likelihood of dysfunction occurring in the future
  - **PYD intervention** = promoting adaptive functioning

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**Changing Lives Program (CLP) Study**

- CLP group counseling in the Miami alternative high schools
  - Students came from low-income, inner-city neighborhoods with high rates of crime and violence
  - Had below-average school performance
- Sample:
  - 209 African-American and Hispanic adolescents
  - 14-18 years old
- Design
  - Pretest, Posttest, and 4-month follow-up
  - Non-randomized comparison group

**Study 3: N = 209**

1. **Does it work?**

   - Changing Lives Program
   - Self-Discovery Processes
   - Self-Construction Processes
   - Meaning and Significance of Life Goal
   - Identity Synthesis
   - Internalizing Problem Behaviors
   - Externalizing Problem Behaviors

Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, & Kurtines, in press
**Most Important Life Goal**

1. **Three Life Goals**
   - “We would like you to describe your three most important life goals. The goals that you describe should be your most important life goals. Focus on your three most important life goals when you ask yourself the question, ‘**What do I want to do with my life?**’”

2. **Most Important Life Goal**
   - “Would you please tell us which of these life goals you consider your most important life goal, that is, the goal that comes to mind MOST when you ask yourself the question, ‘What do I want to do with my life?’”
Most Important Life Goal

3. Meaning of Most Important Life Goal
   • “What does this life goal mean to you?”

4. Significance of Most Important Life Goal
   • “Why is this significant or important to you? How significant or important is this to you?”

Rinaldi, Meca, Eichas, Kurtines, Albrecht, & Goodletty, 2012

Most Important Life Goal meaning and significance

• Majority (92%) of life goal narratives did not show integration of life goal and self
• Most (75%) life goal narratives were self-satisfying and focused on personal gain
• “Travel a lot. Explore the world. Having freedom. Free my mind and be like an eagle.”

Rinaldi, Meca, Eichas, Kurtines, Albrecht, & Goodletty, 2012

Meaning and Significance of Most Important Life Goal

- A much smaller percentage (8%) of life goal narratives showed integration the life goal and the self
- A fit between life goal elements and personal interests, talents, and potentials
  • “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”
  • “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.”

Rinaldi, Meca, Eichas, Kurtines, Albrecht, & Goodletty, 2012

Most Important Life Goal meaning and significance

- Non-Personally Expressive
- Personally Expressive
- Mixed
- Self-Satisfying
- Prove to Others
- Benefit of Others
- PE through Others
- PE through Self

92%
8%
Study 3: N = 209

Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, & Kurtines, in press

Most Important Life Goal meaning and significance

Rinaldi, Meca, Eichas, Kurtines, Albrecht, & Goodletty, 2012

Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, & Kurtines, in press
Most Important Life Goal *meaning and significance*

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<th>Non-Personally Expressive</th>
<th>Personally Expressive</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
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<td>91</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>164</strong></td>
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Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, & Kurtines, in press

Summary of findings

- Promising pattern of outcomes
- Self-Construction
- Self-Discovery
- Qualitative change in sense of identity
- **Links to problem behaviors (not targeted by the intervention)**

Summary of findings

- These findings suggest that PYD interventions for marginalized adolescents,
  - *including those living in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods with high rates of crime and violence*,
  - can create opportunities for these youth to discover and actualize personal potentials
  - and to make choices that construct a positive sense of identity.

3. PYD as an alternative

- Can we use links between positive development and problem behaviors to build an **integrated intervention science**?
Treating/preventing problems

Problem-focused treatment and prevention: aims to reduce/prevent youth’s problem behaviors

Self
Past Future
Society
Past Future
Disconnection and alienation

Promoting Positive Identity

Identity-focused positive development: aims to get youth invested in changing their own lives for the better and re-connected to social institutions.

Self
Past Future
Society
Past Future

A developmentally integrated intervention science?

- Goal: Developmental Intervention Science
  - Treating dysfunction when it occurs
  - Preventing future dysfunction
  - Promoting positive development
  - More useful in real-world practice settings

The present: Intervention science

Eichas, Meca, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2014
Promoting PYD [Take Home Message]

- When we build interventions to help young people change their lives for the better,
  - we might succeed in helping them change their lives
  - AND reduce/prevent dysfunction.
  - *Maybe fully prepared and fully engaged is also problem-free.*

- “Problem-free isn’t fully prepared. And fully prepared isn’t fully engaged.”
  - Karen Pittman
References


References


