Identity Process and Career Development During Adolescence

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Research on Role of Identity Formation & Career Development

- There is growing research on identity as an outcome and its relation to career exploration, occupational commitment, and career adaptability

- No research on identity formation as a process and adolescent career development

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Adolescent Career Theory's Isolation from Human Developmental Theory

- Many career theorist appear less concerned with the intrapersonal struggles adolescents encounter than with the outcomes of that struggle.

- Needed is an increased attention to developmental research and the psychological aspects of identity formation.

Berzonsky's(1989) Identity-Processing Styles

- **Informational**   *most adaptive & committed*
  - actively seek out, flexible commitment, utilize self-relevant information; higher self-esteem

- **Normative**
  - conforming to the prescriptions and expectations of significant others or reference groups

- **Diffuse/Avoidant**   *least adaptive & committed*
  - avoid dealing directly with personal problems and identity questions; lower self-esteem

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Super et al., (1981) Career Adaptability

- Career Development Inventory
- **Attitudes**
  - *Planning*. Attitudes toward planning and future
  - *Exploration*. Attitudes toward career exploration
- **Competencies**
  - *World-of-Work Information*. Ability to apply knowledge and insight to career planning and decision making
  - *Career Decision Making*. Knowledge of the career developmental tasks in the exploratory and early establishment stage

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Career Development Outcomes

- **Crystallization**
  - Appraisal of the self (i.e., abilities, interests, goals) as well as the environment (i.e., what type of occupations exist). Tentative and vague.
  - Facilitated by exploratory behaviors
- **Specification**
  - Sorting through tentative preferences to eventually commit to a specific idea (e.g., college major, post high school training, type of job to get)
- **Career Indecision**
  - Inability to select, or commit self to, a particular course of action...

Research Questions

1. Are there significant relations between identity-processing styles and career adaptability among adolescents?

2. If there are significant relations between identity-processing styles and career adaptability among adolescents, then how might the relations account for the career outcomes of crystallization, specification, and decidedness?

Demographics

- High school students
  - 98 female (47.1%)   110 male (52.9%)
  - 108 11th (51.9%)   98 12th (47.1%)
- 2 high schools in northeastern Ohio
  - working class and upper middle class SES
- Various classes; academic and vocational
- Ethnicity
  - Caucasian (88.9%); African American (6.3%); Asian American (3.4%); Hispanic/Latin American (1%)

Measures Used in Study

Independent Measure
- Identity Style Inventory 3 (Berzonsky)

Independent and Dependent Measure
- Career Development Inventory (Super et al)

Dependent Measures
- Career Crystallization Scale (Super)
- Career Specification Scale (Super)
- Career Decision Scale (Osipow)

Statistics Used in Study

- Bivariate Correlational Analysis
- Multiple Regression Analyses
- Test for Direct Effects
- Test for Mediator Effects
- Test for Moderator Effects

RQ1: Patterns of Relations Between Identity Styles and Career Adaptability

- Berzonsky's identity styles partially subsume Super's model of career adaptability
  - Specifically career planning and exploring
  Adolescents may initially approach their career development with a distinct worldview or schema, evident by their preferred identity style, that becomes funneled through the more specific attitudes toward career development.

  Future research may explore if identity styles are antecedents to career adaptability

RQ2: Direct Effects

- The **identity styles** that adolescents use while constructing their identity may assist them in **crystallizing** career preferences but appear less involved when **specifying** a career choice.

- Positive **attitudes** toward planning and exploration foster coping with developmental tasks of **crystallizing** career preferences, **specifying** a choice, and feeling **decided** about a career course.

RQ2: Mediator Effects

- Having specific **career coping resources** may facilitate one's **general style of problem solving** for negotiating the **exploration** stage of career development

- Use of the **identity adaptive styles** alone (i.e., informational and normative) may not be sufficient enough to facilitate adequate **crystallization** during adolescence

RQ2: Moderator Effects

- **Diffuse/avoidant** adolescents who develop planful and exploratory **attitudes** appear more likely to **crystallize** career preferences

Implications: Theory

- Results of research serve viable in advancing and understanding the gap in the research of how identity as a process relates to adolescent career development

- More understanding of how adolescents cope with the tasks of career development

Implications: Practice

- The use of more adaptive styles (i.e., informational, normative) may assist adolescents faced with negotiating various career developmental tasks during the later years of high school

- Students who use a diffuse/avoidant identity style may benefit from interventions that foster planning and exploration

- May facilitate successful school-to-work transition and transition to the college environment

Limitations of Study

- Generalizability
- Low reliabilities of several scales
- Instrument selection
- Cause and effect relations

- Need more research on identity styles as possible coping mechanisms for negotiating the tasks of career development during adolescence