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environments are but a few of the potential changes that could benefit individuals. However, augmentation of intellectual development is also important for society. While intelligence is often associated with increased monetary income, it has other outcomes that are altruistic. Aiding others through healthcare, research, and education are manners of elevating quality of life while maximizing one's own capacities. An intelligent populace allows for continued growth as a culture. This is important as we shift into an information era. Allowing intelligence to go uncultivated may be detrimental to an individual, but it also has possible effects for society at large.

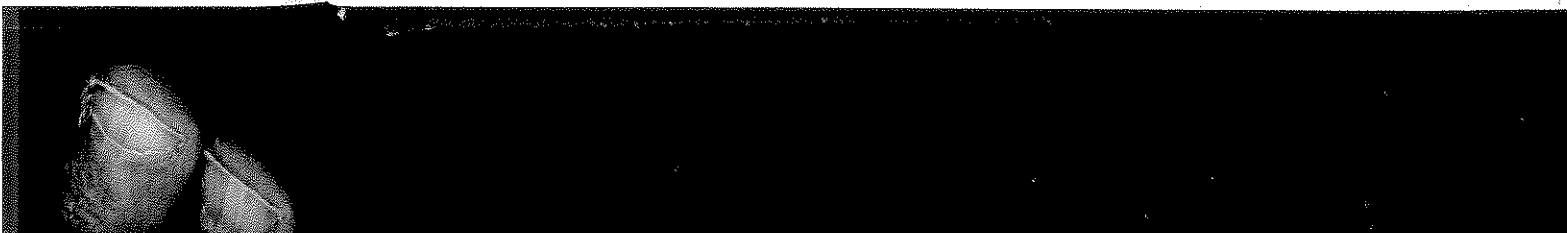
It should be noted, though, that intelligence is not the sole factor in determining academic, career, or personal success. Many issues impact each of those outcomes and may include motivation, peers, role models, parental guidance, teachers' influence, pedagogical style, poverty, discrimination, and other psychological strengths such as self-efficacy and hope. However, focusing on and enhancing students' strengths is a process through which increased utilization and nurturance of intelligence may occur. Lopez stated that by emphasizing students' assets as well as the positive components of students' effort and accomplishment, a significant change in the outcome of education could be attained. This may increase one's awareness of and ability to use their intelligence. As the positive psychology initiative is to enhance human functioning, the increased availability of intellectual resources and their cultivation improves not only the individual, but society at large. By being cognizant of intellectual skills, persons can utilize them to their fullest potential. Without this awareness, intellectual potential remains latent – an occurrence that diminishes us.

SEE ALSO: ► Character strengths (VIA) ► Curiosity ► Giftedness
► Wisdom

Intentional Self-Development

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Intentional self-development (ISD) refers to a process of personal growth in which one purposefully takes actions that are designed to shape one's self-identity and personality. ISD can also be viewed as a form of self-regulation in which people act, observe outcomes, adjust, and so on, although with a greater focus on intentionality than typically examined in self-regulation research. Central to ISD are personal goals, actions, concepts of self, and the interpretive processes through which the individual comes to generate and evaluate goals, actions, and selves. ISD is typically studied by comparing goals (notably, goals aimed toward personal growth) with measures of goal progress, self-appraisals, and personality characteristics. Ultimately the study of ISD aims to demonstrate how individuals uniquely shape the development of their own life course.



Historical Background

Psychology's mainstream view of development is that the individual person is a personally unintended by-product of nature and nurture. In contrast, the study of ISD suggests that the individual human contributes something unique to personality development that the unintentional forces of biology and social environments cannot explain. So it might seem that psychology has little room for the notion of ISD. Paradoxically, the history of psychology is filled with great figures who have been deeply concerned with issues related to ISD. Early in developmental psychology's history, James Mark Baldwin and Jean Piaget presented models of development in which individuals actively constructed their understandings of the self and world. Outside developmental psychology, William James advanced psychological notions of free will and the subjective self. Franz Brentano championed a phenomenological understanding of psychological life that can be shown to have a direct lineage through the works of Freud, Jung, Allport, Horney, Erikson, Maslow, Rogers, Kelly, Kohut, and others. These theorists have outlined processes through which individuals consciously steer their own development by becoming familiar with various unconscious forces and mental representations of one's psychosocial life and ultimately developing a broader, deeper self-identity. The personality theorist Gordon Allport called on psychology to study the person as a whole, with special attention to self-understanding and the role of values in creating personality. Amid behaviorism's general aversion to studying intentions, Edward Tolman advanced the notion of purposive behavior, and Albert Bandura later introduced self-regulatory functions to learning theory as well as the study of self-efficacy, a key factor in ISD. Despite this longstanding interest in topics related to ISD, empirical work on ISD is perhaps most directly tied to the flourishing of research on personal goals around the 1980s.

ISD and Self-Regulation

ISD is a form of self-regulation. ISD stands apart from most perspectives on self-regulation in three ways: the level of analysis, the emphasis on intentionality, and the emphasis on the self as a product of self-regulation.

Broadly speaking, *self-regulation* refers to the process by which individuals control and change their functioning in response to the environment. In their seminal model of self-regulation, Charles Carver and Michael Scheier frame self-regulation as a cybernetic process in which the individual compares (consciously or unconsciously) current conditions with some standard or expectancy and then makes approach or avoidance responses in order to regulate perceptions of expectancy-appraisal discrepancy. This process takes place at relatively more concrete and more abstract levels, which can be conceptualized as *micro*, *mezzo*, and *macro self-regulation*. Micro self-regulation deals with changing one's thoughts,

emotions, or behaviors in the immediate moment, e.g., changing one's present mood from bad to good. Mezzo self-regulation deals with changing patterns of behaviors or patterns of internal states in limited contexts, such as breaking an ongoing habit of smoking. Macro self-regulation deals with changing patterns of behaviors and internal states that constitute one's broader characteristics of personality or self-identity, such as trying to become a nicer person. Most research on self-regulation targets micro and mezzo self-regulation, as showcased in Roy Baumeister's and Kathleen Vohs's 2004 landmark *Handbook of Self-Regulation*. In contrast, ISD research is especially concerned with macro self-regulation, with forms of mezzo and even micro self-regulation serving the macro level. Still, some theory on self-regulation does address such hierarchies on all three levels.

ISD emphasizes the individual's intentional efforts toward development, whereas research on self-regulation more typically emphasizes appraisal processes that are largely reactive rather than visionary, consonant with the properties of a feedback system. Finally, self-regulation research typically studies internal concepts of self as a *factor* in the process of self-regulation, such as how appraisals of self-efficacy influence the course of self-regulation. While ISD research also examines self-knowledge and self-appraisals as factors in self-regulation, ISD research is especially concerned with subjective concepts of self as a *product* of self-regulatory processes. In other words, a primary phenomenon of interest is how goals and actions facilitate the development of self-understanding and broad personality characteristics.

The Process of ISD

As outlined most notably by Jochen Brandtstadter, as well as Richard Lerner, Werner Greve, Klaus Rothermund, and Dirk Wentura, the term *intentional self-development* refers to a dynamic process of interrelated goals, actions, and self. A person makes action plans that are designed ultimately to shape one's self and personality, then takes those actions, interprets them, adjusts plans according to those interpretations, takes modified actions, and so on, adjusting one's understanding of self along the way. The subjective interpretations of goals, self, and actions are key to this process. These subjective interpretations, not objective actions, are what shape the self-regulatory adjustments in actions, goals, and self. In other words, one's goals for personal growth, major life decisions, and other intentional plans that chart the broad trajectories of a life course – thus shaping self and personality more broadly – are ultimately based on interpretations of one's own past and future. As generally understood in personality, social, and developmental psychology, the self is a subjective interpretation of one's own personality. And the self is precisely what is being intentionally developed in ISD. Finally, it is important to note that these interpretive processes take place within contexts of culture and history. For example, the range of possibilities in which individuals choose a particular career or marital condition varies greatly, depending on the values of a particular culture, and then at a particular time in history.

The Empirical Study of ISD

Brandtstadter has suggested that research on ISD focus on three related phenomena: 1) the development of cognitive representations of intentionality; 2) the development of capacities for personal control over individual development (including self-efficacy for ISD); and 3) the development of self-concepts and self-identity that serve to organize systems of personal values. Indeed the empirical study of ISD has focused largely on growth-oriented goals, their outcomes as defined by measures of self and personality, and the various action-appraisals and self-appraisals that mediate those two. Ideally, a research study of ISD is longitudinal, showing how interpretations of goals, actions, and self lead to each other over time, resulting in the intentional development of the self and personality.

Most of the longitudinal research on ISD deals with goals and goal progress, goal attainment, or goal adjustment. For example, studies by Ken Sheldon and colleagues as well as others have demonstrated that people who have personally meaningful or otherwise integrated goals are more likely to experience goal progress or goal attainment over time, which in turn predicts personality development in the form of psychosocial maturity or well-being, over the course of a semester, a year, or more. Less research has focused on a direct tie between goals and personality development over the course of years. Examples of this research involve narrative descriptions of personal goals, which allow for elaborations of people's intentions and motivations for growth. For example, Laura King and colleagues have shown that highly elaborated narratives of future possibilities predicted increases in psychosocial maturity 2 years later, whereas the personal investment in a future narrative predicted decreases in distress over 2 years. Jack Bauer and colleagues have studied narratives of major life goals, finding that growth goals aimed toward conceptual learning predicted increases in psychosocial maturity 3 years later, whereas growth goals aimed toward intrinsically meaningful concerns predicted increases in life satisfaction 3 years later – increases that were not due to personality traits like extroversion, neuroticism, or openness to experience.

Research comparing narratives of self-identity, trauma, and loss with measures of personality and adjustment over time also make contributions to the study of ISD. Robert Neimeyer and colleagues have described several ways in which people adapt to trauma and loss not by merely aiming to "get back to normal" but by reconstructing their narrative understanding of self. This tactic involves the formation of new purposes and goals in life that account for but move beyond the trauma or loss. Also, some research on posttraumatic growth has contributed to an understanding of how people intentionally use traumatic experiences as opportunities for personal development.

In another approach to ISD, particularly with respect to adult development and aging, the selection-optimization-compensation model of Paul Baltes and colleagues has provided a wealth of information on the processes under which people

choose particular goals and activities as a function of their age and environmental conditions. Most of this research does not aim to show people's intentional efforts to develop their selves and personalities, though some does. However, the model holds great promise for an age-nuanced understanding of ISD – an extremely important consideration, given this research's findings that people's goals change systematically over the adult years, such as engaging in and disengaging from particular actions. Much of this and related research focuses on approach and avoidance motivations, the individual's flexibility in choosing and adjusting goals, and the combination of conscious and unconscious processes involved in goal selection and implementation.

The research of Ravenna Helson and colleagues, as well as others, has demonstrated how particular patterns of interpreting one's life early in adulthood relate to personality decades later. For example, openness to experience, resilience, responsibility for others, optimism, and tolerance all speak to ways of interpreting the self and others that predict generally desired, prosocial development years down the road.

The Future of ISD Research

With the field's increasing interest in positive psychology, research on ISD is certain to grow. Since ISD research is new, the frontiers are difficult to enumerate. Research will certainly continue to build an understanding of the qualities of and hindrances to effective goal pursuit. More research will also emerge on how people subjectively frame their personal values and draw on them to create goals. Research on folk conceptions of personality – that is, how people think about what personality is – in relation to their own, subjective understanding of self is also likely to play a role. Research on goals, motivation, narrative self-identity, personality styles and traits, social and cultural contexts, and the aging process – and various combinations of these – will also contribute. Perhaps more difficult challenges lie in the empirical definitions of intentionality itself, such as the extent to which a personal goal is something that is consciously constructed versus something that emerges from unconscious motivations and developmental forces beyond one's awareness. Other difficulties lie in studying the highly idiosyncratic, subtler processes of personal growth, such as how people intentionally use the awareness of thoughts and emotions in micro self-regulation as touchstones for macro-level ISD; how people recognize constructive versus destructive ego ideals in their ongoing self-appraisal processes en route to ISD; or how people use particular metaphors to help make concrete their subtle patterns of thinking, feeling, and relating to others. In all these directions and more, research on ISD will demonstrate if and, if so, how, individuals make unique contributions to the development of their own personalities.

SEE ALSO: ► Growth goals ► Self-regulation ► Well-being