Personal-Change In Adolescent

1Abdullah Turkmen and 2prof. Bəxtiyar Əliyev

1Ph.D. Candidate of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Psychology, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan.
2Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Psychology, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan.

ABSTRACT

Annotation. Incongruence in the literature about personal-change in adolescent prompted the question: How do adolescent in their 16s and 22s who report significant personal-change in the past 5 to 7 years experience this change? These aspects are a disruption in the direction of life and a perceived permanency to that redirection. Evaluation of the stories also suggested that patterns, identity, and imagined future possibilities were elements associated with personal-change. Energizing life purpose and self-esteem may also be part of the experience. Identity, imagined future possibilities, and energizing life purpose emerges as expressions of who-I-think-I-am; self-esteem emerges as an expression of feelings for who-I-am; and patterns emerge as expression of the processes of who-I-am. This difference includes a permanent change in life’s direction, and a person’s imagined future and identity are impacted by the change.

INTRODUCTION

Identified, it is not well understood why some events are associated with personal-change in adolescent and other events are not. Furthermore, some theorists have proposed that who-I-am as an adolescent is relatively stable, while other theorists have proposed that who-I-am is ever evolving. Events or relative stability aside, it was difficult to locate a definition for personal-change. The aim of this study was to examine the experience and stories of adolescents who are undergoing or have recently undergone personal-change in an effort to better understand the phenomena.

Fig. 1: Who-I-am and the personal-elements [13].

Corresponding Author: Abdullah Türkmen, Ph.D. Candidate of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Psychology, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan
Personal-change:
Throughout this paper I refer to “the person that I am” as who-I-am and a change to who-I-am as personal-change. The etymology for the word self is “one’s own person, same” [4]. Who-I-am is referred to in the literature as either self, personal-identity, or as identity. While I explore and describe theoretical meanings underlying the concepts of self and identity, these theoretical meanings do not reside in everyday experience or in everyday language. People are likely to describe change to self or to identity as a change to “the person I am” or a change to “who I am” without distinguishing between self-change or change to identity.

As such, I decided to refer to self and personal-identity as who-I-am, person, or personal. Similarly, I refer to the phenomena of self-change and of change to identity as personal-change. Schultz [11] suggested that personal-change is associated with narration of a transitional life experience. The transitional experience is understood by the narrator as the narrators experience of who-I-am against who I was. “The person is his or her own control group. His or her life is what preestablishes the baseline from which the departure occurs”. Personal-change, as used herein, is a subjective experience in which a person believes he or she is different now than he or she was a few years ago and this difference includes a permanent change in life course. All of the participants in this study reported they are a different person than they were 5 to 7 years ago.

I had no assessment tool to evaluate their claim, nor did I attempt to measure the depth and breadth of the change they reported. People told me they had changed and shared their story of personal-change. They told me parts of their experience they thought were salient within the context of my request and of our time together.

Who-I-am:
This section introduces literature on the topic of who-I-am. It does not link the literature on who-I-am to the five personal-elements. The next section on personal-elements pulls together the literature on who-I-am and personal-elements. The theoretical underpinning of the review and my conception of who-I-am comes primarily from the pragmatists.

Pragmatism is grounded in the practical and the everyday. The self exists, knows itself, and has a sense of wellbeing because it is experiential [2]. Pragmatism provides a view of self drawn from everyday experience and language, including situating the self in the context of ordinary social life [6]. Who-I-am is everything. I remember of who I have been, imagine I will become and feel towards who-I-am. It is an object within the mind and feeling in the body but to be an object and feeling it must be meaningful.

The meaning of who-I-am:
The self-concept is the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. [12] Meaning is the foundation underlying assumptions about how the world works. It underlies beliefs and values [9]. Stimuli are interpreted and the world constructed through the filter of meaning [2,8]. It forms the foundation for a personal’s point of view on the world [9]. This point of view shapes a personal’s perspective about self, others, and the world [7]. [8] views meaning as an emergent property of a system that includes being actively involved in interaction. Meaning is not inherited, but rather emerges within experience. The mechanism that brings about the emergence of meaning is the triadic system of action-reaction-response [8]. For example, a child makes her first Mother’s Day card and presents it to her mother: “I made the card for you.” This presentation is the action. Her mother’s reaction to the card is what the card means to her mother. The child has a response to her mother’s reaction. The child’s response is associated with the mother’s reaction that resulted from the child’s action of presenting the card.

The reaction of mother and response of child are the consequence and meaning for the action of presenting the card [13]. The card is an object that now has meaning. Once the meaning is given a symbol or label, such as a word, the meaning can be shared with others [8]. Mother’s reaction to the child’s card is not only a reaction to the card, but also to the child. The child may interpret her mother’s reaction as being toward the card and toward the child. With action-reaction-response interpreted towards the child, the child develops meaning for who-I-am, albeit simple at this point [8]. Within social interactions, meaning for “card” becomes generalized over time so that “card” comes to mean something generic or general. This generalization occurs as action-reaction-response is performed repeatedly such that a pattern of interaction and meaning occurs. There are, for example, birthday cards, wedding cards, get well cards, funny cards, big cards, little cards, and homemade cards. Thus, the label “card” stands for a generic or generalized meaning that includes a broad array of objects. Just as the meaning of an object, such as a card, becomes generalized, so too does otherness. What it means, for example, to be a Republican or a Democrat, what it means to be a man or a woman, or what it means to be a student going to one particular university as opposed to being a student at another university become a generalized meaning. As Mead [8] would say, these are generalized others. The generalized other contains the standard or general meaning of what a typical person will normally, ordinarily, and generally do in a given situation when the person is exposed to other people reacting to the situation in a patterned way of behaving [5].
These standard and generalized meanings facilitate the smooth flow of facts and interactions in the social world [8]. While Mead does not talk about a generalized self, it can be implied from his writings.

Who-I-am is a generalized meaning, both implicit and explicit, thought and feeling, combined into a whole action-reaction response.

Meaning contains the various components of a person’s reaction, as a whole, implicit and explicit, combined with another’s response to the action [8]. In this respect, meaning can be thought of as being like a container. The components meaning contains are such things as the sensual, emotional, thought, action, and results that are in the action-reaction-response triadic system [3]. All the components of a person’s whole reaction, implicit and explicit, thoughts and feelings, are combined with the action and reaction to form the consequence or end-result of action-reaction-response. A person has an attitude when a container of meaning is released [8]. Albert and Ramstad define attitude as a nondeliberative, emotional, and physiological state of readiness to act, whether that readiness is expressed as a thought, muscular movement, or turning of attention towards potential oncoming stimuli. When a person has an attitude, the whole attitude, or all the components within the container of meaning, is experienced at once. The way Mead [8] described the experience of an attitude reminds me of Gendlin’s felt-sense, which “is a body-sense of meaning”. Gendlin described a body-sense of meaning as “an internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject at a given time — encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail” Cooley [3] noted the same concept of wholeness when he said, “concrete self-feeling, as it exists in mature persons, is a whole. We can expect to know what it is only by experiencing it” . This whole response is something different than can be conceived by examining the constituent components separately. What is released from the container causes a person’s entire being to become a “sounding-board”

However, most of the time we are unaware of the sound. While we may not be aware of many of the “sounds” that emerge from an attitude, the release of an attitude may be experienced as a thought, idea, and/or an emotion. For example, a person’s body may desire rest after standing for a period. This may trigger the release of an attitude that brings to mind the idea of sitting down. In such a case, the consequence and action are thought about privately before they are enacted publicly [8]. Attitudes are an activating element because attitudes incite a nondeliberative state of readiness that poises a person to achieve a meaningful result in the future [2]. Attention may be turned towards objects in the environment when an attitude is released. All objects are a distance and a direction away from the person. Having a distance and a direction places the objects in the future, even if that future is only seconds away. In this way, attitudes organize acts towards the fulfillment of a future meaningful result. For example, the attitude of sitting turns attention towards objects in the environment that are suitable as chairs. Possible chairs are some distance and direction away from the person, even if the direction is simply down on the ground, so the attitude is seeking a future result.

An attitude, and in general, meanings toward who-I-am, provide self with a past, present, and future component. Staying with the example of sitting, there is a present-person who desires to sit. The image of moving towards a chair and sitting is a projection of who-I-am in the future, or future-person. Past-person informs present-person as to how realistic, viable, and comfortable it might be to accomplish the desire of present-self in accord with what has been envisioned as possible future-selves. In this respect, we are not a self, a person, as much as we are selves, past, present, and future-persons [13].

Mead [8] suggested that simple attitudes are a compilation of various components of action-response-reaction. The tacit combination, synthesis, reorganization, and generalization of attitudes form complex attitudes that are novel and cannot be recognized by examining the constituent parts. Complex attitudes provide the impetus for novelty in which the whole is different than the sum of the parts. This difference, combined with a unique combination of past, present, and future-selves, provides for the individuality of who-I-am.

Methods:
This study surveyed describes the methodology we utilized to explore the research question: How do adolescents in their 16s and 22s who report significant personal-change taking place in the past 5 to 7 years experience this change? Twelve adolescent in their 16s and 22s who reported personal-change as defined herein and who reside in the Turkey. Eight of the participants are female and four are male. Participants lived in Rize.

Participants excluded were those who have a history of clinical psychological illnesses or who have experienced a brain injury. Individuals with such histories may experience who-I-am and changes to that person differently than those without such a history. This is not meant to disparage or invalidate individuals with these histories nor who they are; rather, to recognize that these individuals may view who-I-am differently than those without such history. All participants who utilized video conference did so from their home and I did so with the office in my home. Interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes. Digital recorders were used to capture the narratives.

Recorder was located close to the person or to a computer speaker, in the case of Skype. The recorder located close to the participant was, in all cases, used for transcription.
We began the time together with concrete questions to get the conversation started. These questions are contained in the following list.
1- Where were you born?
2-Where have you lived?
3- Have you moved around a lot or pretty much stayed in this area most of your life?
4- How many siblings do you have?
5- Do you work? If so, what kind of work do you do?

We then asked participants, we are interested in the experience in which you believe you changed. Can you tell me about that experience?

Follow-up and clarifying questions were also asked. After asking questions, I followed “participants down their trails” [10].

Findings:
Similar to the literature review that was organized into three sections, this chapter is organized into three sections. The 1 section personal-elements and their association with personal change. We conclude this section with a suggestion that three of the personal-elements be included in a definition of personal-change.

Section 2 personal-change. We briefly address events and inner challenges followed by a discussion of personal-peripeteia and personal-change. This section concludes with a possible definition of personal-change. The reader may recall that a definition of personal-change was something we struggled to locate in the literature. Section 3 the typology of personal-change. We provide at the end of this section a revised typology that researchers and those experiencing personal-change may find useful.

For me, there are three findings of most importance. First, who-I-am is expressed in a number of different ways. We have called these expressions personal-elements. Some of the elements are associated with personal-change and we are certain there are other elements associated with such experiences as day-to-day living. Researchers can identify these elements and associate them with the meaningful object of thought that I have been calling who-I-am. Second, as we reviewed the literature on adolescent transformative experiences, We were often left with a question – what transformed? The definition contained in this section helps to frame the phenomena of personal-change while identifying the “what” of adolescent transformative experience. My hope is that future researchers of personal-change will be able to frame the experience within an acceptable meaning of the phenomena. May be the definition of personal-change contained in this chapter can at least be the beginning of that standardized meaning for personal-change.

Finally, the typology model of personal-change included in this chapter may assist helpers and those passing through personal-change. It does not explicate the experience of personal-change but there are a number of stories of personal-change available.

The typology may help researchers frame and examine aid helpers who are working with those passing through and increase sensemaking for people who are struggling in personal-change.

Conclusion:
The findings support Figure 1, who-I-am and the personal-elements, found on page 3 of this study. The figure suggested that identity, imagined future possibilities and energizing life purpose are primarily expressions of who we think I am; self-esteem is primarily an expression of feelings for who-I-am; and patterns are primarily an expression of the processes of who-I-am.

Patterns, identity, and imagined future possibilities are part of the experience of personal change for all of the participants in this study; as such, we recommend they be added to the typology of change. It may be valuable to include these three personal-elements in the definition of personal-change because they are associated with the experience and are expressions of who-I-am.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Preparation of this article was supported in part by Valerie Malhotra Bentz from Fielding Graduate University. We thank Valerie Malhotra Bentz for her comments and suggestions on an earlier draft.

REFERENCES