

Preface

By contemporary I mean a present with an anticipated future, for we must do our best to overcome clinical habits which make us assume that we have done our part if we have clarified the past.

(Erikson, 1968, pp. 30–31).

The scope of time ahead which influences present behavior, and is therefore to be regarded as part of the present life-space, increases during development. This change in time perspective is one of the most fundamental facts of development. Adolescence seems to be a period of particularly deep change in respect to time perspective.

(Lewin, 1939, p. 879).

I chose to open this book with two excerpts from Erikson's and Lewin's writings because they indicate that future orientation has had its deep roots in psychological thinking, and call readers' attention to the long standing interest in two fundamental issues: the motivational power of constructed future images and their development across age. More specifically, Erikson and Lewin's writings underscore the importance of future thinking for influencing present behavior tendencies, and point out that the ability to think about the future and realize the "scope of time ahead" increase with age, and reach a special developmental significance in adolescence.

Accordingly, this book is on how individuals across the life span construct the subjective images of their future and how researchers drawing on different approaches define, conceptualize and examine the formation of these images, their inter- and intrapersonal antecedents, personality correlates, and effects on behavioral and developmental outcomes. However, while multiple approaches enrich the conceptual foundation and empirical research of any area, inadvertently they also lead to the use of diversified terminology. An incomplete list of terms indexing the construction of future images in current use includes *future orientation*, *future thinking*, *future time perspective*, *episodic future thinking*, *future self*, *personal strivings*, *personal projects*, *life tasks*, *considering future consequences*, *prospective memory*, *time perspective*, *possible selves*, and *mental time travel*. Two historical terms have been *futurism* (Israeli, 1930) and *psychological future* (Lewin, 1942/1948).

As biblical wisdom – here illustrated by the story of the tower of Babel – has instructed us, the strength a community draws from the use of one common language is considerably curtailed when its members each uses a different language:

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; . . . and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. . . let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (Genesis, Chap. 11, 6–7).

Applied to the scientific scene, diversified terminology emanates from the use of different theoretical approaches that their interface augments shared knowledge and creates new research options. Their cost, however, is limited access to relevant information packaged in different language. Therefore, one aim of this volume has been to give voice to the different approaches, conceptualizations, and ensuing terminologies. Nonetheless, it is plausible that not all approaches – and certainly not all studies – have been registered and included.

As is clear from the title of the book, the work we have been carrying out at the University of Haifa describes the subjective images individuals construct about the future as *future orientation*. By using this term, those of us who do so emphasize the quality of future orientation as an active engagement in future thinking and future-related behavior that facilitates acquaintance with prospective events, experiences, and options and makes the future psychologically closer, more real, and amenable for planning.

The capacity for orienting to the future is innate and its early expressions are noted in infancy. However, its form, content and function change with age and as first suggested by Lewin, its capacity for self-direction becomes more pronounced in adolescence, as transition-to-adulthood and adult roles become more tangible and getting ready for them a normative expectation. This is probably why for psychologists, writers, educators and parents future orientation is related to adolescence more than to any other developmental period and why in addition to Erikson and Lewin, as early as the 1960s several other developmental psychologists (e.g., Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Mönks, 1968) considered future orientation an essential adolescent developmental mechanism. For the same reason interest in adults' future orientation is relatively scant and recent (e.g., Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, Saisto, & Halmesmäki, 2001; Salmela-Aro & Suikkari, 2008; Wilf, 2008). Until recently it was right to say that even fewer researchers have been studying the future orientation of old-age individuals (Cottle & Klineberg, 1974; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Nurmi, 1992). However, interest in the neuropsychology of memory and questions about similarities and differences between the neuropsychology of remembering and expecting ("prospective memory") has added several studies (e.g., Addis, Wong, & Schacter, 2008; Spreng & Levine, 2006).

Main Issues

These emphases have led to several questions about the development of future orientation, its antecedents and outcomes. Although the book addresses future

orientation across the life span, its main focus is on adolescence and emerging adulthood. Thus, following review of the developmental origins of future orientation (How and when does future oriented thinking emerge?), the book examines the intrapersonal underpinnings of future orientation (Do adolescents varying in self-evaluation, control beliefs, or defensive pessimism differ in their construction of future orientation?), its gender specificity (Can we identify feminine and masculine future orientation?), and the extent to which interpersonal relationships with parents, siblings and peers shape it (Do adolescents experiencing high positive parenting, close sibling relationships and peer acceptance construct their future orientation differently than do adolescents experiencing less positive parenting, close sibling relationships and peer acceptance?). Finally, the effect of future orientation on developmental outcomes is examined, asking: Do adolescents with high future orientation scores do better at school? Do adolescents and emerging adults adjust better to new situations and experience a higher sense of identity and intimacy?

Related to each of these questions is the issue of culture. While initially the question has been how cultural settings affect the construction of future orientation, as future orientation models have become more elaborate and findings accumulated, the question guiding our research has been rephrased and we now ask what aspects of future orientation are more or less susceptible to cultural influences, and whether the effect of future orientation on developmental outcomes is culture specific?

Plan of the Book

The main issues of future orientation delineated above are discussed in detail in the following eight chapters. Although each chapter is devoted to one specific issue, the five chapters (3–7) focusing on factors affecting the development of adolescents and emerging adults' future orientation and its outcomes keep a similar structure. Each of these chapters (or their main sections) consists of three parts: conceptualization of the construct under consideration, propositions about the relations between that construct and future orientation, and its empirical examination.

Chapter 1 presents the conceptual framework of future orientation. Its first part delineates the evolvement of the future orientation construct. This part discusses three topics that differ both conceptually and chronologically: early conceptual analyses, the athematic and thematic approaches, and finally multivariate approaches whose development has built on knowledge accumulated from earlier research. The second part presents four interfacing approaches that like the future orientation construct examine the effect of future thinking on behavior and pertain to the motivational, goal, personal dispositions and possible selves approaches.

Chapter 2 describes future orientation in the first three developmental periods: infancy, early, and middle childhood. Its first part reviews research on the evolvement of future orientation in infancy, experimentally assessed by several indicators of visual anticipatory behavior; its second part addresses the development of young children's sense of the future as manifested in controlled experiments and

naturalistic interaction with adults (particularly mothers). The third part relates to the development of future orientation during the elementary school years by examining children's hopes and fears narratives and their changing character from fantasy to reality-based themes.

The aim of Chapter 3 is to examine how self and personality characteristics affect the construction of future orientation. Drawings on their pertinence to future orientation three self dimensions and three personality characteristics are included. The self dimensions pertain to self esteem and self agency as two aspects of individuals' generalized sense of self-worth, and the self schema of loneliness, and personality characteristics relate to primary and secondary control, defensive pessimism and strategic optimism. The effect of each on future orientation is examined in the context of culture and gender.

Chapter 4 focuses on sex differences. It opens with review of the three main approaches to gender differences – evolutionary psychology, social role theory and socialization of gender roles – and their explanations of the extent, origins and underlying processes, reviews psychological literature on gender effects on future orientation and presents recent analyses of the effect of social and cultural context on future orientation gender differences and similarities. These analyses draw on data collected from Israeli-Arab adolescents as an instance of a society in transition from traditionalism to modernity and particularly on the future orientation of Israeli-Arab girls describing how they construct a future that intertwines the traditional (i.e., being a devoted wife and mother) and the modern (i.e., pursuing higher education and career).

Chapter 5 is the first of two chapters focusing on the construction of future orientation in the context of interpersonal relationships. Specifically it examines how parenting affects future orientation by relating to three issues. The first two pertain to parent-adolescent relationships and parental beliefs about adult roles as experienced by adolescents. The third issue concerns similarity and association between adolescents' and parents' future orientation. Each of these issues is addressed in terms of multiple cultural settings indicating cross cultural commonalities and differences. In particular, the chapter shows that across different cultural settings the link between parenting and future orientation is mediated by global self evaluation and indicates the validity of the parenting-future orientation mediating model for both industrial and transition to modernity youths.

Chapter 6 describes the effect on the construction of future orientation of two adolescent contemporaries: siblings and peers. The effect of these interpersonal relationships and the confluence of parents, siblings and peers on future orientation is examined within modern and transition to modernity cultural contexts showing particularly three important findings. That the effect of relationships with siblings and peers like the effect of parenting on future orientation is not a direct one but rather mediated by the self; that parenting, relationships with siblings, and relationships with peers each has a net effect on future orientation, and that the mediating function of the self and the net effect of all three interpersonal relationships apply to different cultural settings.

Chapter 7 examines the effect of future orientation on five developmental outcomes relevant to adolescents, emerging adults, and midlife adults: academic achievement for adolescents, identity and intimacy for emerging adults, and adjustment to transition (military service) for emerging adults, and midlife men (early retirement). Finally, the Summary and Conclusions chapter (Chap. 8) consists of three parts. The first summarizes the book by relating to five issues pertaining to the conceptualization of future orientation, and developmental, personality antecedents, interpersonal antecedents, and cultural factors affecting it. The second part indicates directions for future research, and the third part discusses the path from theory to action, particularly addressing the use of accumulated knowledge on the antecedents and outcomes of future orientation for promoting educational outcomes and helping adolescents and emerging adults to secure a better future.

Altogether, the aim of this book has been to present an integrated description of future orientation research across the life span, particularly addressing the expression and developmental outcomes of future orientation and four factors underlying its construction: personality, gender, close interpersonal relations, and culture. Hopefully, this volume is not a summary but rather an overture, out of which additional new research directions will emerge.

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