Measuring a Student’s Sense of Purpose In Life

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This quantitative study of 354 sophomores at a large mid-western research university used web-based data collection methods to compare Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vector 6, Developing Purpose, as measured by the SDTLA–PUR, and Frankl’s (1959) purpose in life, as measured by the Purpose in Life Test. The study found weaker correlations between the two instruments than expected, and provides recommendations for future study of purpose in life.

For decades, researchers in higher education have empirically explored how to enhance programs and services to assist the college student in learning and personal development. The best instructional methods for the classroom, administrative efficiency, appropriate intervention techniques for struggling students, the impact of particular activities and programs on various student outcomes, and a host of other issues have been explored through a variety of research approaches. An area of study that has gained increasing attention over the last 30 years is the developmental processes of college students.

Erikson (1968), Havinghurst (1972), Kohlberg (1971), Perry (1970), and others have made major contributions to the understanding of how and in what ways students develop when in college, guiding the work of student affairs practitioners who make decisions about policy and practice. Chickering (1969), an educational researcher in socio-developmental processes, created one of the first and most widely known college student development theories. Chickering held that in an increasingly complex society, an important psychosocial developmental period emerges during the college years from age 18 to the mid-20s. He recognized the critical task for college students as the establishment of their identity and proposed seven vectors of development through which students must progress. Chickering and Reisser (1993) later revised the seven vectors to include more recent research and a broader demographic base (Figure 1).

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors of student development are commonly used in student affairs practice in the United States to implement programs and services that meet the developmental needs of students. The purpose of this study was to compare one of Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors, Vector 6, Developing Purpose, with another similar, but more widely used theoretical model, Frankl’s (1959) Purpose in Life. A sense of purpose in life has been shown in the literature to be important to the overall development and growth of college students. Comparing Chickering and Reisser’s work on developing purpose with a more established theory of purpose in life will assist student affairs practitioners and scholars in better understanding developing purpose in life among college students.
Extensive research has been conducted on the seven vectors generally and individually, and application of the theory in student affairs practice is widespread (e.g., Greeley & Tinsley, 1988; Itzkowitz & Petrie, 1986; Jordan-Cox, 1987; Polkosnik & Winston, 1989; Straub & Rodgers, 1986). This research has resulted in partial validation, partial revision, and partial reconfiguration of the seven vectors (Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005). Of the seven vectors, Vector 6, Developing Purpose, has been researched the least, thus far.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) believe that in Vector 6 students determine their place in society by establishing a plan of action that integrates vocational plans, avocational personal interests, and interpersonal and family commitments. Moran (2001) recently called for student affairs professionals to give greater attention to developing purpose because it increases student connectedness with the campus community, decreases risky behaviors, and influences overall well-being. The results of a recent Freshmen Survey (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2004) support Moran’s call for greater focus on this issue in student affairs. In the Freshman Survey, 34% of first year students indicated that the phrase “Searching for Meaning/Purpose in Life” described them to a great extent.

To assist student affairs practitioners and scholars in measuring the development of purpose, Winston, Miller, and Cooper (1999) developed the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment–Purpose instrument (SDTLA-PUR). Research is needed that compares the SDLTA–PUR with other tools for measuring purpose in life to ensure that the SDLTA-PUR truly measures a student’s sense of purpose, and to lend greater understanding to this vector of student development.

The field of clinical psychology provides another approach to measuring purpose. Victor Frankl (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) made substantial contributions toward developing a theoretical foundation for the study of purpose in life and is considered the preeminent scholar on this subject in the field of psychology (Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Based on Frankl’s Purpose in Life Theory, Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) developed the Purpose in Life Test (PIL). The PIL measures the degree to which a person experiences a sense of purpose in life. In the field of clinical psychology, the PIL is the most commonly used instrument to assess developing purpose (Moran, 2001).

Chickering and Reisser and Frankl: A Comparison

Comparing Frankl’s (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) work with Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) work on purpose in life, it is clear that both theories have several themes in common, but also a few differences. Both theories define developing purpose as establishing goals and then make necessary adjustments to achieve them. Chickering and Reisser described this process as a highway; Frankl (1984) used the metaphor of a pilot in the fog. The road map or air control tower corresponds to a person’s sense of purpose in life that allows the individual to progress in a forward thinking, intentional way. In addition, all authors indicated that purpose stemmed from three distinct areas. Chickering and Reisser believed that vocational plans, avocational and recreational interests, and the commitment to interpersonal relationships and lifestyles, formed the foundation for developing a student’s purpose. Frankl believed that one’s work, nature or cultural interests, and love were the foundation.
of purpose. Although the semantics differed, the authors both identified three very similar elements of purpose.

An additional commonality between the two theories relates to what happens if one does not develop a sense of purpose. Both Frankl (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) articulated that developing purpose is a critical task if the individual is to be happy and healthy. Both theories have in common the notion that not developing a sense of purpose leads to harmful outcomes. Frankl’s focus as a clinical psychologist was more clearly centered on these harmful outcomes than was Chickering and Reisser’s.

The primary differences between the two theories are on the centrality of purpose to the individual and the time at which development of purpose occurs. Frankl (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) placed purpose in life as the single central focus of a person’s development, with other dimensions stemming from this dimension. Chickering and Reisser (1993) placed development of purpose as one of seven vectors; it was a piece of the larger development but not necessarily central to all others. Frankl believed that age was irrelevant to the development of purpose—that regardless of a person’s place in life, a student could develop a sense of purpose. Chickering and Reisser believed that students must progress through the earlier vectors and that developing purpose generally happens in the later college years and beyond. In spite of the differences and similarities found in the approaches of Frankl and Chickering and Reisser, no empirical research has been published that compares the instruments designed to assess each theory.

Study Purpose

This study compared Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vector 6, Developing Purpose, as measured by the SDTLA–PUR and Frankl’s (1959) Purpose in Life Theory, as measured by the Purpose in Life Test (PIL) (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964). Chickering and Reisser’s vectors of student development are commonly used in student affairs practice in the United States to implement programs, policies, and services that meet the developmental needs of students. As the preeminent psychological scholar on the subject of purpose in life, Frankl’s work provides a useful comparison in this study for evaluating how the SDTLA–PUR measured Vector 6, Developing Purpose. Specifically, this study is designed to address the question: Are there differences in the way the PIL and SDTLA–PUR measure a student’s sense of purpose in life? A sense of purpose in life has been shown in the literature to be important to the overall development and growth of college students. Comparing the SDTLA–PUR with the more established PIL will assist student affairs practitioners and scholars to better understand the way the SDTLA-PUR measures purpose in life, and the usefulness of this instrument in measuring purpose among college students.

Methods

Instrumentation

Student Developmental Tasks and Lifestyle Assessment–Purpose. The SDTLA-PUR was designed to assess the socio-emotional development of developing purpose among college students, based on Chickering’s (1969) and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors of college student development (Winston et al., 1999). The SDTLA-PUR task score is comprised of four subtasks: Career Planning, Educational Involvement, Cultural Participation, and Lifestyle Planning. Students responded to 57 questions in form 2.99 of the SDTLA-PUR that was designed to measure developing purpose. Questions included multiple-choice items such as “I seek out opportunities to learn about cultural/artistic forms that are new to me” and “I seek to broaden my understanding of culture (e.g., art, music, or literature)”. Students selected from the choices of never (almost never) true of me, seldom true of me, usually true of me, or always (almost always true of me). A series of true-false statements are included, such as “I never regret anything I have done” or “I am currently involved in one or more activities that I have identified as being of help in determining what I will do with the rest of my life.” Scoring involved the coding of different weighting values for
each response option, averaging of the student’s score, and comparing the student’s score to nationally established normative data disaggregated by class and gender.

Through validity testing, the scores were found to be sensitive to test–retesting, establishing growth from the freshmen to senior year (Wachs & Cooper, 2002). Additionally, Winston et al. (1999) found Pearson product corrections for all tasks in a test–retest situation to cluster around .80, \( p < .01 \). Although the SDTLA has not been reviewed in the Mental Measurements Yearbook, earlier versions upon which this instrument is based, have been reviewed. Henning-Stout (1992) established the reliability and validity of the SDTI–2 (the earlier version from which the SDTLA evolved) in the 1992 yearbook and concluded that the instrument was psychometrically sound, would be useful in program development, and had potential research applications.

**Purpose in Life Test.** Based on Frankl’s (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) Purpose in Life Theory, Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) developed the Purpose in Life Test (PIL) to assist in measuring the degree to which a person experiences a sense of purpose in life. The test consists of 20 statements. For each statement, participants rate themselves on a 7-point scale. The end points of each scale are descriptive anchors and position 4 is labeled as neutral. An example of a statement in the PIL is, “I am usually...” and the choice of a seven-point scale with one anchor label of *completely bored* and the other anchor label of *exuberant, enthusiastic*. In different statements on the PIL, the more positive and more negative anchors are rotated to different ends of the scale to increase validity. The final score is calculated by coding the highest score of seven-points to the most positive anchor and one-point to the most negative anchor. Adding the scores of each of the 20 statements creates a composite PIL score of between 20 and 140 points. Based on the findings of previous studies, participants with higher PIL scores are expected to have a greater sense of purpose in life.

The PIL is used widely in both clinical and nonclinical populations (Hutzell & Peterson, 1986). Support for the validity of the instrument for measuring Frankl’s construct in relation to other similar measures of this construct, as well as in test–retesting and factorial analysis, is reported in the literature (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964. See also Kinnier, 1994; Leman, 1993; Seeman, 1991; Waisberg & Porter, 1994; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Dale (2002) and Marsh, Smith, Piek, and Saunders (2003) found that the PIL had good reliability and good criterion-related validity.

**Participants**

The population frame for this study was defined as 18-24 year old, sophomore students, enrolled full-time (12 or more credit hours), residing both on-campus and off-campus at a large Midwestern university. Three important considerations emerged that had direct implications for this definition of the population and sample for this study. First, the enrollment status and age of the population were considered. The University Registrar keeps records on all individuals who have taken a class at the institution, from the full-time, traditional student to the retiree taking one course—a population difference that seemed inappropriate for the purposes of this study. Because much of the data collected on the SDTLA generally is focused on the “traditional student,” it was determined that this study would make the greatest contribution to the literature by examining only traditional college students. For the purposes of this investigation, only 18-24 year old students who were enrolled full time as defined by the institution (12 or more semester credit hours) were included in the sample.

Second, Chickering and Reisser (1993) found that development reflected in some of the seven vectors occurred more naturally earlier in the student’s college experience, while others, such as developing purpose, more naturally occur later. Recent research indicates that progression through developing purpose may occur as early as the first year and continue throughout college (Foubert et al., 2005). To control for natural maturation on development, only one class, sophomores, was included in the sample.

Finally, the environmental factors of residential setting on socio-development were considered. Studies related to the impact
of students’ residential status on their development have been widely cited in the literature (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). These studies typically compare students living in a residence hall to those living in a residential college and students living on-campus to those living off-campus. To address this potential influence on development previously discovered in the literature, the sample was selected to equally represent both students living on-campus in the residence halls and off-campus in apartments and houses.

In sum, the population frame for this study was defined as 18-24 year old, sophomore students, enrolled full-time (12 or more credit hours) at a large Midwestern university. A random sample of 1,000 sophomores, 18-24 years old, enrolled full time (12 or more credit hours) stratified on-campus and off-campus was used. The University Registrar provided the contact name, university-administered e-mail address, local address, and phone number for each participant.

Data Collection Method

This study used the innovative web-based data collection method. Crawford, Couper, and Lamias (2001) believed that the high penetration of computer use by college students made Web-based surveys especially popular with this population. Deception and duplication are often perceived as significant challenges to the integrity of Web-based data. The software package (SurveyMonkey) selected for this project minimized chance encounters by random users into the Web site by assigning a unique and complex Web site address for each respondent. Additionally, once students submitted the Web survey they could not return to complete another. This procedure provided an appropriate level of security to ensure that only invited users could participate, and thus eliminated the opportunity for repeaters.

The participants were contacted three times via email and invited to complete the Web survey. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two Web sites, in which the SDTLA-PUR and the PIL were reversed in sequence to minimize bias. As an incentive, participants in the study were entered into a drawing for a $150 gift certificate from a store of their choice in the local mall.

Results

A total of 445 students responded to the survey. Not all of those participants completed a sufficient amount of the survey to be adequate for analysis. The SDTLA-PUR manual indicated that surveys should only be used when at least 88% of the survey is completed (Winston et al., 1999). However, review of the overall response patterns of participants indicated that a slightly more stringent standard for removing cases based on the SDTLA-PUR would also significantly reduce missing data on the later demographic questions. Students who completed fewer than 54 of the 57 (95%) questions on the SDTLA-PUR or fewer than 18 of the 20 (90%) PIL questions were removed from the data set. This precluded students who did not make a good-faith effort to complete the entire survey.

After coding and removing incomplete cases, 354 usable surveys remained, for a usable survey response rate of 35%. Of those usable surveys, 34% were men (n = 120), 13% (n = 47) students of color, and almost 4% (n = 14) indicated a sexual orientation categorized as non-heterosexual. The ages of the students included 5% who were 18 years old (n = 17); 55% who were 19 years old (n = 198); 31% who were 20 years old (n = 24); 6% who were 21 years old (n = 24); and 3% who were between 22 and 24 years old (n = 10). A total of 47% (n = 171) of the students indicated that they lived in a general on-campus residence hall; 9% (n = 34) said they lived in a residential college; 12% (n = 42) indicated they lived in an emerging off-campus apartment complex; and the remaining 32% (n = 116) said they lived off-campus. Chi-square analysis determined that the respondents did not vary significantly from the statistical makeup of the student population on the campus studied in terms of the variables of age ($X^2(4) = 3.90, p > .05$), race/ethnicity ($X^2(1) = 2.37, p > .05$), and gender ($X^2(1) = 3.23, p > .05$).
In the review of literature, studies indicated no definitive answer related to the variance in PIL scores due to demographic variables. The authors of the SDTLA-PUR indicated that scores vary by gender and class level (Winston et al., 1999), and other studies revealed variations on demographic variables. Variation in study participants’ test scores on the PIL and the SDTLA-PUR because of demographic variables was explored. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted on PIL and SDTLA-PUR scores and on the independent variables of Age, Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Residential Setting. Of the independent variables analyzed, only Gender had a statistically significant effect on the PIL score \[ F(1, 357) = 3.99, p < .05 \]. No other demographic variables showed a relationship with either test scores.

The relationship between the PIL and the SDTLA-PUR was explored through a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis. Correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between scores on both tests for the study participants \[ r = .55, n = 354, p = .00 \]. A correlation of this magnitude would indicate that only a moderate relationship existed between the two instruments. The authors of the SDTLA-PUR indicated that scores may vary based on gender and class level (Winston et al., 1999). Class was controlled for in the design of the study by sampling only sophomore students. Because the one-way ANOVA tests previously reported showed a statistically significant relationship between the variable of Gender and test scores, a partial correlation was conducted. Statistically controlling for gender differences had a negligible impact on the strength of a partial correlation \[ r = .55, n = 354, p = .00 \]. Correlation, partial correlation controlling for gender, means, and standard deviations, for the PIL and the SDTLA-PUR are shown in greater detail in Table 1.

## Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is that it included only a single large, residential campus in the Midwest. The role of organizational cultural differences in student development across institutional type could not be ascertained with this research design limitation. A multiple-institution study involving various types of institutions could aid in determining the impact of institutional setting and culture on the development of purpose. Additional studies of this nature may assist in determining if a student’s sense of purpose develops differently across institution types, or if a student’s sense of purpose influences college choice.

### Table 1.
**Correlation†, Partial Correlation‡, Means, and Standard Deviations of the PIL and the SDTLA-PUR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>( r )</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PIL</td>
<td>0.55†</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUR</td>
<td>0.55‡</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>16.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.56</td>
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<td>M</td>
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</table>

†Correlation coefficients for all participants \( (N = 359) \) are presented above the diagonal.
‡Partial correlations controlling for gender \( (Men = 120; Women = 234) \) are presented below the diagonal.
PIL = Purpose in Life Test; PUR = SDTLA-Purpose.

\( p < .00 \).
Discussion

The data analyzed in this study shows the SDTLA–PUR and the PIL have only a modest degree of correlation. Considering the similarities in the theoretical foundations of both instruments, a high or strong correlation should have been achieved. Cronk (2001) considered correlations above 0.70 to be strong and correlations less than 0.30 to be relatively weak. A correlation coefficient of 0.55 indicates that although the two instruments show some commonality in measuring a student’s sense of purpose, they do not accurately reflect the high degree of similarity between Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) and Frankl’s (1959) theoretical foundations. Controlling for the potential influence of gender with a partial correlation showed a negligible change in the correlation. This finding raises important considerations for potential study and use of both the SDTLA–PUR and the PIL.

Student affairs practitioners and scholars who use the SDTLA-PUR as a measurement of purpose should view the resultant scores with caution, as this study indicates the SDTLA-PUR may not truly indicate a student’s sense of purpose. Numerous studies have already shown the validity and reliability of the PIL as an appropriate measurement of the purpose in life construct (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964. See also Dale, 2002; Kinnier, 1994; Leman, 1993; Marsh, Smith, Piek, & Saunders, 2003; Seeman, 1991; Waisberg & Porter, 1994). Similar research on the SDTLA-PUR is not currently available in the literature. As an established instrument in psychology, the PIL has been the standard device for assessing a person’s sense of purpose. The failure to achieve a high degree of correlation between the SDTLA–PUR and the PIL indicates that further work is needed to ensure the SDTLA-PUR accurately reflects Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theoretical foundation. Additional correlation studies of the SDTLA–PUR with other instruments that purport to measure purpose in life may assist in determining how to improve the SDTLA-PUR to ensure it is measuring this construct.

Alternatively, the PIL is already widely used in the clinical environment and has been extensively used in research in the counseling setting. It may be helpful to expand the use of this instrument with college students in the future because as a measurement instrument, use of the PIL could contribute to the profession’s understanding of college student development. For example, since the inception and original validation of the instrument, continued study of the PIL has provided evidence of its relationship to a number of issues of interest to student affairs practitioners and scholars. There has already been broad research on the impact of the presence or absence of a sense of purpose on deleterious behaviors. Studies have shown the relationship of lower PIL scores with mental health problems (Kinnier, 1994); disengagement (Yalom, 1980); participation in risky and antisocial behavior (Sappington & Kelly, 1995; Sayles, 1994); suicide ideation (Harlow, Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Kinnier, 1994); alcohol abuse or alcoholism (Schlesinger, Susman, & Koenigsberg, 1990; Waisberg & Porter, 1994); and other drug abuse (Newcomb, Bentler & Fahey, 1987).

In addition, there have been a number of studies exploring the PIL in relation to more positive psychological constructs that are important in the development of students. Higher PIL scores have been found to be positively related to reduced anxiousness and increased self-confidence (Yarnell, 1971); self-acceptance (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969); coping with stress (Debats, Drost, & Hansen, 1995); achievement and high self-esteem (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003); responsibility and self-control (Simmons, 1980); well-being (Lazuras & Delongis, 1983); and happiness (French & Joseph, 1999).

Based on the published research reviewed here and elsewhere about the PIL, having a sense of purpose in life is clearly related to a range of very positive characteristics, values, and healthy mental outcomes. Lacking a sense of purpose is also shown to relate to a series of extremely detrimental behaviors. Although the PIL appears to be a very valuable construct for higher education, it is important to consider the context and methodology used in these previous studies before they are generalized to college students.
Frankl’s (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) Logotherapy and the PIL instrument are based in the field of clinical psychology. Therefore, much of the available research on the construct is focused on the clinical or outpatient population. Additionally, the few studies available in nonclinical situations tended to use convenience samples, or random samples with very narrow population definitions. These limitations in the research bring into question the direct applicability of the findings to college students. Yet, the consistency of the research on the PIL provides some sense of the relationship between purpose in life and other important constructs in non-student populations and points to the possibility of similar relationships in the context of higher education. For example, a number of studies relate purpose in life with alcohol and other drug use. Although these studies often included rehabilitation inpatient populations, the possibility of addressing college drinking problems by assisting students in developing their sense of purpose is compelling. Exploring PIL and alcohol and other drug use with randomized samples of college students could expand our understanding of both substance abuse problems in higher education and developing purpose among college students. Possible issues of interest could also include persistence in college, involvement with activities and organizations, suicide, major life changes, or others. Using stronger empirical methodology with randomized samples of college students will permit the findings to be generalized to college students with a greater degree of confidence. Similar research exploring the relationship of the SDTLA–PUR and these kinds of behaviors should also be completed.

Before it may be expanded, additional correlation studies of the PIL with other instruments specifically designed to measure Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vector 6 in college students may determine the suitability of the PIL for this age group. Additionally, contemporary normative data for the PIL is needed so that the instrument may add to our understanding of college student development.

One of the greatest criticisms of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors of student development is the lack of specificity in practical applications of the vectors in student affairs work (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Little research has been completed to develop a better understanding of how student affairs practitioners could assist college students in developing their sense of purpose. Regrettably, the data reported here will not provide greater clarity to this problem. Practitioners and scholars who are interested in developing interventions to assist students in developing purpose can explore the original theoretical frameworks on this issue for guidance. For example, both Frankl’s (1959, 1979, 1984, 1997) and Chickering and Reisser’s model recognized the role of vocation in developing purpose. Student affairs practitioners and scholars may be able to assist students in developing their sense of purpose by providing career exploration opportunities, practical work experiences, and goal clarification activities. Likewise, assisting students to identify avocational/recreational activities for which they have a passion can assist in developing a sense of purpose in life. This may include simply encouraging students to try a new outdoor activity, attend a cultural event, explore their artistic ability or connect with students with similar cultural/recreational interests. In this instance, assessing the outcomes of participation in these kinds of activities in relation to these models would be important to their continued use in developing purpose among college students.

## Implications

Research on purpose in life indicates that a lack of purpose may be related to a series of negative behaviors (e.g., college drinking, suicide ideation, disengagement, risky behaviors) with which student affairs professionals regularly address in their work. Additionally, having a sense of purpose has been shown to be related to very positive outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, achievement, responsibility, and well-being) that student affairs professionals strive to promote. This study identified four specific implications for both practitioners and scholars in student affairs and higher education.

1. The SDTLA-PUR may not be a suitable instrument for measuring a student’s sense of purpose in life. Practitioners...
and scholars should view the resultant SDTLA-PUR scores with caution, and/or use additional or other instruments, such as the PIL, to measure purpose.

2. Additional work is needed to refine the SDTLA-PUR to ensure that it adequately measures this construct. Correlation studies of the SDTLA–PUR with other instruments that purport to measure purpose may assist in determining how to improve the SDTLA-PUR to ensure it is measuring this construct.

3. The PIL may be a valuable instrument for use in college populations. Studies establishing normative data of the PIL for this population and exploring the relationship of the PIL to other important college behaviors (e.g., college drinking, achievement, self-esteem) could contribute to our understanding of college student development.

4. Practitioners interested in providing educational programs, policies and services to assist students in developing their sense of purpose do not have sufficient research to guide their efforts. Additional research on practical interventions to improve a student’s sense of purpose in life is needed. This research may be focused generally on factors that assist students in developing purpose, or the relationship of purpose in life to both positive and negative behaviors among college students.

Over one third of incoming freshmen believe developing purpose is an important outcome of their college experience (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2004). Having a sense of purpose is also critical to the socio-development and identity of students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Research that answers the questions raised by this study is critically needed. Additionally, exploring programs and activities designed to develop purpose, and assessing the outcomes, would contribute to our understanding of this vector of Chickering and Reisser’s model.

References


