

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Identity Development during Adolescence*

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#### **Introduction**

Billy, the adolescent hero in Cormac McCarthy's novel, *The Crossing* (1994), pauses in his search for the path that will lead him to his stolen horses and, symbolically, point the way into his own adult life. He listens to the words of an older opera singer as she conveys something of the road ahead. That journey one must make alone, she informs him. It is difficult even for two brothers to travel together on such a journey, for each person will have a different understanding of the same road. And some may not even wish to see what lies before them in plain sight. Everyone's journey upon the road will lead somewhere, whether to their original purposes or not.

The road lying in front of Billy holds many fearful, painful, as well as pleasurable rites of passage and symbolizes the journey that each youth must make into the unknown terrain of adult life. Billy is equipped with a goal (to retrieve stolen horses and avenge his parents' deaths), with his own mental and physical skills sharpened for survival in pursuit of this goal, and with the companionship of his younger brother and a girl. It is the vision of a desired future, retrieving horses, which enables Billy to set out on a road. And it is *this* particular desired future that causes him to select the particular road that he chooses, from among many possibilities. Community response, sometimes sage, sometimes shattering, provides Billy with a sense of where his boundaries are and who and what he will become.

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It is this *very* unique combination of Billy's individual interests, needs, wishes, defenses (psychological elements), physical features such as his gender, strengths, limitations (biological elements), coupled with social response (social elements), that combine to form what Erik Erikson (1968) would refer to as Billy's sense of "ego identity." Key concepts used by Erikson to define identity and explain its developmental process are highlighted below, and empirical efforts to refine further Erikson's ideas will provide the frame for this chapter. Erikson's attempts to define and understand ego identity seek ultimately to explain how youths, like Billy, come to find meaningful directions in the search for a way into adult life.

## What is Identity?

Erikson adopted a psychosocial approach to understanding identity by describing the interplay between the individual biology, psychology, and social recognition and response within an historical context. He gave equal emphasis to these elements, also stressing the importance of historical context for their definition. Later theorists, however, have differentially emphasized these particular elements both in defining identity and in researching its parameters. Historical, structural stage, sociocultural, and narrative models have all offered alternatives to a psychosocial definition of identity. These approaches, respectively, emphasize the overarching role of historical epoch in giving rise to identity questions, developmentally different ways in which individuals construct meaning and identity, social and cultural forces that create and shape identity, and the narrative of one's own life story as the creation and foundation of identity. All of these approaches hold their own strengths and limitations, and a more complete review can be found in Kroger (2000).

## Erikson's Theory of Identity: Key Concepts

Erikson has detailed many important concepts in describing the nature of ego identity and its developmental course over the years of adolescence. Some key Eriksonian contributions include the concept of *ego identity*, the *Identity vs. Role Confusion* task of adolescence, the *identity-formation process*, *identity crisis*, and the phenomenon of a *psychosocial moratorium*.

By *ego identity*, Erikson (1968) refers both to a conscious sense of individual uniqueness as well as an unconscious striving for continuity of experience; an optimal identity is experienced as a psychosocial sense of well-being. "[Ego identity's] most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of 'knowing where one is going', and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1968, p. 165).

*Identity vs. Role Confusion* marks the fifth in Erikson's eight-stage lifespan sequence of developmental tasks, which comes to the fore during adolescence. During this time, adolescents will seek to find some resolution between these two poles. Optimally, adolescents undergo the *identity-formation process*. This process involves the ego's ability to synthesize and integrate important earlier identifications into a new form, uniquely one's own. Erikson also stresses the important role played by the community in both recognizing and being recognized by the maturing adolescent. Erikson viewed a *psychosocial moratorium* to be an important developmental process in which young adults freely experiment with various possible adult roles in order to find one that seems to provide a unique fit (Erikson, 1968, p. 156). Perhaps one of Erikson's most widely used and related concepts has been that of the *identity crisis*. By crisis, he does not mean an impending catastrophe, but rather a critical turning point in the life history of an individual, in which development can only move forward by taking a new directional course.

## Empirical Operationalizations of Identity

Over the years since Erikson first presented these concepts, there have been many attempts to operationalize and empirically examine each of them. Attempts to study Erikson's fifth psychosocial task of Identity vs. Role Confusion have been undertaken in different ways. One line of research has examined the place that "Identity vs. Role Confusion" holds in the eight-stage lifespan scheme (e.g. Constantinople, 1967, 1969; Rosenthal, Gurney, & C Moore, 1981). A second line of work has focused on Erikson's fifth psychosocial stage alone and has conceptualized it in bipolar terms - as something one "has" to a greater or lesser degree (e.g., Simmons, 1970). A third, very general approach has attempted to study one or more dimensions of ego identity outlined by Erikson (e.g., Blasi & Milton, 1991).

Within this third tradition, a very popular approach has emerged in the attempt to understand the relationship between exploration and commitment variables to the formation of ego identity. The identity-status model developed by Marcia (1966, 1967) identifies four different styles (or statuses) by which late adolescents approach identity-defining roles and values. Various personality features, subjective experiences, and styles of interpersonal interaction have been associated with the four positions. Given the popularity of this model, it will be described in some detail below, and empirical findings and questions emerging from its use will be the focus for the remainder of this chapter.

Erikson had indicated that issues of vocational decision-making, adopting various ideological values, as well as a sense of sexual identity form the foundation of one's ego identity. Thus, Marcia and others have examined how an individual selects meaningful personal directions regarding these issues through the processes of exploration and commitment. Marcia reasoned that if an identity had been formed, an individual could be expected to have commitments in certain areas that Erikson had detailed. After his

first 20 interviews, however, Marcia found that commitments were arrived at in different ways and the manner of being non-committed took different forms. The identity statuses thus emerged from the interview data itself (Marcia, personal communication, 2000).

The identity statuses were originally conceptualized by Marcia as topographical features of some underlying identity structures. The more areas or domains in which identity had been achieved, the greater the probability of a certain kind of identity structure being present. *Identity-achieved* individuals have undertaken explorations of meaningful life directions prior to their commitments, while *foreclosed* individuals have formed commitments without significant prior explorations. Many of the values and roles adopted by the foreclosed individual are based on parental values, with which an adolescent has strongly identified. Individuals in the *moratorium* identity status are very much in the process of searching for meaningful adult roles and values but have not yet formed firm commitments, while those in the *diffusion* status appear uninterested in finding personally expressive adult roles and values. These youths may lack commitment for a variety of reasons, ranging from merely a happy-go-lucky approach to life to severe psychopathology.

The original identity status interview lasted about 30-45 minutes and covered themes of vocation, religious and political values (ideology), and, later, sexual-expression and sex-role values (Marcia et al., 1993). Each identity domain was assigned an identity-status assessment, and an overall identity rating was given according to the clinical judgment of the rater. Independent reliability checks generally revealed 75-80 percent agreement percentages between two independent raters. Since the original identification and validation work on the identity statuses, further measures of identity status have also been developed.

Among the most popular of these instruments has been the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-II (EOM-EIS-II; Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989; Adams, 1999), which has undergone several revisions. This paper-and-pencil measure comprises 64 items that assess the degree of identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion for an individual within each of eight identity-defining areas. Occupational, political, religious, and philosophy of life values comprise a general ideological domain, and friendship, dating, sex-role, and recreational values comprise a general interpersonal domain. Items use a Likert-type scale format to assess the presence or absence of exploration and commitment an individual has experienced with regard to each statement.

While the Identity Status Interview (Marcia et al., 1993) and the EOM-EIS-II (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989; Adams, 1999) have remained the most popular ways to assess ego-identity status, other alternatives have appeared. The Groningen Identity Development Scale (GIDS; Bosma, 1985, 1992) combines interview and questionnaire material to assess ego-identity status in the areas of school, occupation, leisure-time activities, parents, philosophy of life, friendship, and personal characteristics. The Delias and Jernigan (1990) Identity Status Inventory assesses identity status (identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure); diffuse-luck, having no commitment with dependence on luck or fate; and diffused-diffuse (having superficial search with no commitment) in the areas of occupation, religion, and politics. Mallory (1989) has developed a Q-sort personality

profile for each of the four ego-identity statuses, based on Block's (1961/1978) California Q-set.

Additional measures have examined exploration and commitment components of identity in somewhat different ways than solely through Marcia's identity statuses. Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger (1995) have developed a self-report Ego Identity Process Inventory that focuses more fully on the processes of commitment and exploration in a number of identity-defining domains. This instrument provides continuous scale measures of exploration and commitment for each individual, though it is possible to derive an identity status assessment from it. Meeus et al. (1999) have focused on exploration and commitment variables to study identity transitions and pathways over time.

### Criticisms of the Identity-Status Approach

Since 1988, several critical commentaries of the identity-status approach have appeared (Blasi & Glodis, 1995; Cote & Levine, 1988; van Hoof, 1999). One focus of criticism has been whether or not Marcia's identity-status approach captures Erikson's theoretical conception of identity. Blasi and Glodis (1995, p. 410) have criticized the identity-status construct for failing to address phenomenological dimensions of identity: "[Measures assessing ego identity status] neglect to address the experience of one's fundamental nature and unity, which, in Erikson's descriptions as well as in common understanding, constitutes the subjective side of the phenomenon." From a somewhat different perspective, Cote and Levine (1988) point to a theoretical hiatus between Marcia's formulations of identity and Erikson's theory. Cote and Levine note that while the identity-status paradigm has focused on at least one essential element expressed in Erikson's writings on identity (the formation of commitments during the identity formation process), the identity-status construct has largely ignored not only the role of developmental contexts but also the interaction between person and environment. A third critique has come from van Hoof (1999), who argues that Marcia's identity statuses ignore what she believes to be the core of identity - spatial-temporal continuity. She also points to construct underrepresentation of Erikson's theory in the identity-status approach and questions what construct actually underlies the ego-identity statuses.

At no time has Marcia claimed that his attempt to operationalize identity via the identity statuses captures all dimensions that Erikson included in his concept of ego identity. Any attempt to operationalize all of Erikson's identity dimensions in a single construct would be simply unwieldy, if not impossible. However, exploration and commitment variables used by Marcia to define the identity statuses were taken directly from part of Erikson's construct of identity. Similarly, the identity-defining roles and values of vocation, ideology, and sexuality, deemed by Erikson to be so critical for adolescents in the identity-formation process, are those same values which are examined in commonly used measures of ego-identity status. Clearly, Marcia's identity-status approach has been based on some of Erikson's key ideas regarding ego identity.

Berzonsky and Adams (1999) have addressed the question of whether or not the identity-status construct is a valid measure of Eriksonian identity. They point out that in the need to be precise and specific, operationally defining a construct involves a trade-off, often in the loss of theoretical richness and scope. Multiple measurements are also necessary to establish construct validity. The identity statuses are an operational attempt to define and expand some, but not all, of Erikson's rich, clinically based observations included in his identity construct. Certainly, it is important and necessary to operationalize and research other dimensions of Erikson's identity construct. The identity-status construct has given rise to an estimated 500 studies of various personality variables, family antecedents, and developmental consequences associated with the various identity statuses (Waterman, 1999). As van Hoof (1999) has pointed out, however, a number of these studies have failed to hypothesize relationships that are directly grounded in Eriksonian theory. Future identity status research should take heed of this criticism as well as focus on additional identity dimensions that Erikson has described.

A second issue under recent discussion has been the construct validation of the identity statuses themselves. Van Hoof (1999) has adopted the rather conservative position that each of the four identity statuses must respond statistically differently to variables used to help establish their construct validity. She points out that most commonly only one or two identity statuses differ significantly from remaining identity statuses on measures of constructs used for validation. She concludes, therefore, that construct validity of the four different identity positions has not been established. Waterman (1999) has addressed this issue by noting the lack of any typological or complex stage system in psychology that would likely satisfy this stringent criterion for construct validation. Validation of a construct, Waterman and others have argued, should require that a distinctive pattern of responses be demonstrated. Thus, construct validation of the identity statuses should require not that each identity status be related significantly differently to every other identity status on dependent variables used to help establish construct validation. Rather, only a distinctive and hypothesized pattern of response should be associated with the four identity-status positions.

One would not, furthermore, expect individuals in each identity status to score significantly differently from those in every other identity status on some variables used to help establish construct validity. (Although some data do discriminate among the four identity positions; see Berzonsky & Adams, 1999.) Thus, for example, moratoriums would be theoretically expected to score higher than the other identity statuses on a measure of anxiety because of the uncertainty and indecision likely to be associated with the identity-formation process. However, they may not score *significantly* higher than every other identity status, and no theoretical expectations would be held for the interrelationships among remaining identity statuses. According to more commonly used criteria for the establishment of construct validity in psychology, considerable evidence has accrued for expected patterns of responses for each of the four ego identity statuses. However, a useful direction for future research would be a meta-analysis of variables commonly researched in relation to the identity statuses. This procedure would provide a mean estimate or effect size and make it possible to study variation among studies in actual effect sizes, ultimately enabling one to determine whether or not the mean effect could be generalized across settings (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990).

## Characteristics of the Adolescents in Various Identity-Status Groupings

Numerous studies have been undertaken to examine a broad range of personality features, interpersonal behaviors, family antecedents, and developmental patterns of movement for each of the identity statuses. Within many Western contexts, these characteristics have been found for both men and women in more recent decades. Early stages of identity status research through the 1970s focused primarily on core personality features of each identity status within the United States and Canada, with developmental patterns studied over only two data-collection points during adolescence. However, the past two decades have seen a wide range of personality features examined in many countries around the world. Developmental patterns have been examined over more points in time, and the study of identity-status patterns of change and stability has been extended into the years of early and middle adulthood. Recent criticism of the developmental nature of the identity statuses will be addressed in a subsequent section. The following section details personality variables, patterns of family interaction, and behavioral consequences associated with each of the four identity statuses.

### *Identity achieved*

Identity-achieved individuals have shown such personality features as the high levels of achievement motivation and self-esteem (along with moratoriums; e.g., Orlofsky, 1978) and low neuroticism and high conscientiousness and extrovertedness (e.g., Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Conversely, the identity-achieved have also shown the lowest use of defense mechanisms (e.g., Cramer, 1997), and low levels of shyness (e.g., Hamer & Bruch, 1994) relative to those of other identity statuses. They also have shown the highest levels of internal locus of control (e.g., Abraham, 1983).

In terms of cognitive processes, identity-achieved individuals have demonstrated the ability to function well under conditions of stress (e.g., Marcia, 1966) and to use more planned, rational, and logical decision-making strategies than other identity statuses (e.g., Blustein & Phillips, 1990; Boyes & Chandler, 1992). This group has also demonstrated the highest level of moral reasoning regarding issues of both justice and care (e.g., Rowe & Marcia, 1980; Skoe & Marcia, 1991). They have also demonstrated the highest levels of ego development in Loevinger's (1976) ego development scheme (e.g., Berzonsky & Adams, 1999).

Interpersonally, identity-achieved individuals have demonstrated the highest levels of intimacy relative to other identity positions (e.g., Kacerguis & Adams, 1980; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). They are able to develop mutual interpersonal relationships with both close friends and a partner, and they are genuinely interested in others. Identity-achieved individuals have shown the greatest willingness to reveal themselves to others (e.g., Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 1987), and have also shown the most secure patterns of attachment to their families (e.g., Kroger, 1985). Identity-achieved and moratorium adolescents have been least likely to report maternal socialization behaviors that

control or regulate but rather encourage free and independent behavior (e.g., Adams & Jones, 1983). Families of both identity-achieved and moratorium adolescents have emphasized both individuality and connectedness in family relationships (e.g. Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984).

### *Moratorium*

Anxiety has been a key personality variable associated with those in the moratorium identity status (e.g. Marcia, 1967). Moratoriums are in the process of searching for identity-defining commitments, and this appears to be a very anxiety-provoking process. Anxiety regarding death has been found to be significantly higher among moratoriums compared with each of the other three identity statuses (e.g., Sterling & Van Horn, 1989). Moratoriums have been shown to use denial, projection, and identification to help keep general anxieties at bay (e.g., Cramer, 1995). In research by Berzonsky and Kuk (2000), the more self-exploration that students had engaged in (those in both identity-achieved and moratorium identity statuses), the more prepared they were to undertake tasks in a self-directed manner without needing to look to others for reassurance and emotional support. Moratorium individuals have also shown a greater disposition to adaptive regression than those in other identity statuses (e.g., Bilsker & Marcia, 1991).

Cognitively, students in a moratorium process have also been found to be skeptical about ever knowing anything with certainty (e.g., Boyes & Chandler, 1992). Moratoriums and achievements are significantly more experientially oriented compared with foreclosures and diffusions (e.g., Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). They, like the identity achieved, have also demonstrated an analytic/philosophical cognitive style (e.g., Shain & Farber, 1989). In a study of adolescent females, both moratorium and achievement women were able to integrate and analyze information from a variety of perspectives, in contrast to other identity groups (e.g., Read, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). Berzonsky (1990) has found moratorium and achieved individuals to use an information-oriented style to construct a sense of identity. In general, moratorium adolescents have demonstrated the ability to reflect on diverse information in an analytical manner.

Interpersonally, those in the moratorium status have been found most frequently to be preintimate in their style of intimacy - that is, they are most likely to have established close friendship relationships which are characterized by respecting the integrity of others, being open and nondefensive, but have not yet committed themselves to a partner. In relation to their families, moratorium adolescents have appeared ambivalent; for men, conflictual independence from parents has predicted degree of identity exploration (e.g., Lucas, 1997). Parents of moratorium adolescents have emphasized independence in their child-rearing patterns (e.g., Campbell et al., 1984).

### *Foreclosure*

Foreclosed individuals have consistently shown personality characteristics such as high levels of conformity, authoritarianism, and levels of aspiration change, coupled with low

anxiety, and use of defensive narcissism (e.g., Cramer, 1995; Marcia, 1966, 1967). The foreclosed identity status has been associated with racial and homophobic prejudice (e.g., Fulton, 1997). Foreclosed individuals rely on dependent strategies for their decision making (e.g., Blustein & Phillips, 1990) and are not generally open to new experiences (e.g., Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). They use an external locus of control (e.g., Clancy & Dollinger, 1993) and are especially oriented toward the more distant future, compared with other identity statuses (e.g., Rappaport, Enrich, & Wilson, 1985).

Cognitively, foreclosed adolescents have been least able to integrate ideas and to think analytically; they, along with diffusions, have also been most likely to make errors in judgment because of reduced attention (e.g., Read, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). In addition, the foreclosed, along with the diffuse, are most likely to share the view that absolute certainty is attainable (e.g., Boyes & Chandler, 1992). Foreclosure adolescents have been found to use a normative orientation in constructing a sense of identity - they conform to the expectations of significant others and are concerned about preserving their existing identity structure (e.g., Berzonsky, 1990, 1992). Foreclosed and diffuse individuals are also most likely to be preconventional or conventional in their level of moral reasoning (e.g., Rowe & Marcia, 1980) and the foreclosed are more oriented toward others needs only in their ability to care (e.g., Skoe & Marcia, 1991).

Interpersonally, foreclosures are most likely to be stereotyped in their styles of intimacy (more concerned with superficial features of a relationship) (e.g., Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). Additionally, mutually identified best friends shared distinct similarities in ego-identity status; foreclosed adolescents were most likely to have best friends who were also foreclosed (e.g., Akers, Jones, & Coyl, 1998). In terms of family patterns of interaction, foreclosed adolescents have reported their families as very close and child-centered; in a study of adolescent females, when the mother is too close, involved, and protective of her daughter, the daughter mirrors parental values rather than exploring other possibilities (e.g., Perosa, Perosa, & Tam, 1996). Less reported conflict in families has also been associated with the foreclosed identity status (e.g., Willemsen & Waterman, 1991). Foreclosed adolescents have evidenced patterns of severe anxious attachment in the face of family separation threat more frequently than any other identity status (Kroger, 1985). Observational research has found parents who discourage the expression of individual opinions among family members have adolescents demonstrating low levels of identity exploration (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). Youths who remain foreclosed during late adolescence have shown more anxious or detached attachment profiles relative to other identity statuses (e.g., Kroger, 1995).

### *Diffusion*

Diffuse individuals have shown low levels of autonomy, self-esteem, and identity (e.g., Cramer, 1997; Marcia, 1966). Having no firm identity-defining commitments nor interest in making them, diffusions seem content to "go where the wind blows" or wherever circumstances push them; they have demonstrated the lowest sense of personal integrative continuity over time (e.g., Berzonsky, Rice, & Neimeyer, 1991). Diffusions are also most likely to have difficulties in adapting to a university environment (e.g., Berzonsky

and Kuk, 2000) and are most likely to be shy (e.g., Hamer & Bruch, 1994). Adams et al. (1984) found diffusions to be most influenced by peer pressures toward conformity, compared with other identity statuses. Diffusions were also the most self-focused of all identity statuses on a task that required them to estimate being the focus of others' attention (Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 1987); grandiose self-expression as well as disagreeableness have been associated with the identity diffusion status (e.g., Blustein & Palladino, 1992; Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Diffusions have also shown high levels of neuroticism (along with the moratoriums) and lowest levels of conscientiousness (e.g., Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Taken together, these findings suggest impaired psychosocial development for the late adolescent diffuse individual.

Cognitively, the adolescent diffuse either rely on intuitive or dependent styles of decision-making or show an absence of systematic approaches to solving problems (e.g., Blustein & Phillips, 1990). A diffuse/avoidant orientation to identity construction has been associated with the diffusion identity status (e.g., Berzonsky, 1990). This social-cognitive style is marked by procrastination and defensive avoidance of issues, as well as reliance on an external locus of control. Diffusions have demonstrated preconventional, conventional, or generally low levels of moral reasoning (e.g., Podd, 1972; Skoe & Marcia, 1991). Conformist or preconformist levels of ego development have also characterized the identity diffuse and foreclosed (Ginsburg & Orlofsky, 1981). Diffusions have also scored highest of all the identity statuses on a measure of hopelessness (Selles, Markstrom-Adams, & Adams, 1994).

In terms of interpersonal relationships, diffusions have reported distant or rejecting caretakers or low level of attachment to parents (e.g., for males, Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; for females, Josselson, 1987). In addition, communication patterns have often been inconsistent. Memories of diffusions regarding their families has carried themes of a wistful quality, wishing for strong adults to care and set guidelines (e.g., Josselson, 1987). In terms of social relationships, diffusions have been most likely to use bribes and deception to exert influence on others compared with the other identity statuses (e.g., Read, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). Diffusions are most likely to be isolated or stereotyped in their styles of intimacy with others (e.g., Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). In other words, they either have established no close relationships, or tend to have relationships focused on very superficial issues.

#### *Developmental patterns and processes*

Cross-sectional, longitudinal, and retrospective studies of identity status movements over time have all pointed to increasing numbers of adolescents in more mature (moratorium and achievement) identity statuses and decreasing numbers in less mature (foreclosure and diffusion) statuses over time. This pattern has appeared for identity status ratings assigned both in global terms as well as in most individual identity domains (e.g., Archer, 1982; Cramer, 1998; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Foster & LaForce, 1999; Josselson, 1987; Kroger, 1988, 1995; Kroger & Haslett, 1987, 1991; Marcia, 1976; Meilman, 1979; Waterman, Geary, & Waterman, 1974; Waterman & Goldman, 1976; Waterman & Waterman, 1971). It is noteworthy, however, that across all of the above studies,

approximately one-half of late adolescents have retained a foreclosed or diffuse identity status, in both global or domain ratings, by the time of leaving tertiary study. This pattern suggests considerable scope for change through the years of adult life. Developmental research has benefited the most from longitudinal studies designed to enable the observation of intraindividual pathways of identity development. Because of the generally short duration of the moratorium status, it is also important for longitudinal researchers to collect data at reasonably frequent intervals to enable a fuller understanding of all steps taken in various developmental trajectories of adolescence.

Some additional issues regarding identity status change have also been explored. Some researchers are currently focusing on issues involved in the moratorium process and the examination of factors most likely to precipitate developmental change. Personality factors (including readiness for change, the experience of conflict, and openness to new experience), in combination with various environmental factors (for example, the importance of a "bridging other") all may be important to understand movement into the moratorium process. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) provide a good review of recent researches into issues of identity-status transitions. The study of identity-status trajectories involving three or four data collection points has also been an important recent addition to the study of identity status development through the years of adolescence and adulthood. Works by Adams, Montemayor, and Brown (1992), Goossens (1992), Josselson (1996), and Mallory (1983) have all pointed to diversity of pathways as lives unfold during late adolescence and beyond. The meaning of identity status movements after the identity formation process of adolescence raises some complex issues, however, and a discussion is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

#### **Criticism Regarding the Developmental Nature of the Identity Statuses**

Since 1988, several critiques have appeared regarding the developmental nature of the identity-status positions. One line of criticism has been directed at whether or not the identity statuses are sensitive enough to measure the identity formation process. Van Hoof (1999, p. 540) has argued that because a high percentage of adolescents remain stable in foreclosure or diffusion positions at the end of late adolescence (noted in the previous section), the identity statuses are "not sensitive enough" to measure the identity formation process. Other models of related developmental schemes have also noted the large percentages of individuals who do not move to more complex forms of identity resolutions by adult life. For example, a review of studies of Kegan's (1994) meaning-making construct point to the fact that approximately "one-half to two-thirds of the adult population appear not to have fully reached the fourth order of conscientiousness" [Eriksonian equivalent of attaining a sense of personal identity, Kegan, 1982] (Kegan, 1994, p. 191). It appears likely that a number of adolescents do retain less mature identity positions at the end of adolescence; among those who do change, however, movement is primarily in the predicted, progressive direction. Waterman (1999), too, has observed that because stability of identity status is common during adolescence, one

cannot conclude that the identity statuses do not measure the identity-formation process for those who do change.

Another line of criticism has been directed at whether or not there is a continuum of identity-status movement and a theoretical rationale for it (Cote & Levine, 1988; Meeus et al., 1999; van Hoof, 1999). There is a clear, theoretical rationale for the prediction of movement from a foreclosed identity position to a moratorium to identity achievement. Erikson (1968, p. 159) has described a sequence in the movement of ego growth: "If we consider introjection, identification, and identity formation to be the steps by which the ego grows in ever more mature interplay with the available models, the following psychosocial schedule suggests itself." To Erikson, "tentative crystallizations of identity" occur during childhood, based upon identifying with the characteristics, roles, and values of important others. Identity attainment, at the end of adolescence, then, is "superordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past: it includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonably coherent whole of them" (Erikson, 1968, p. 161).

Marcia's (1966) foreclosed identity status is defined by identity commitments without exploration — an identity derived from identifications with significant others. The moratorium status reflects the identity formation process of individual exploration of identity-defining alternatives, while the identity-achieved status reflects an identity resolution based on a unique synthesis of previous identifications, following a time of exploration, to a position which is uniquely one's own. These three identity positions identified by Marcia correspond directly to Erikson's stages of ego growth in the identity-formation process. Marcia's diffusion-identity status, reflecting a position of little or no identity exploration and a lack of identity-defining commitments corresponds directly to Erikson's notion of identity diffusion. In nonpathological circumstances, Marcia's diffusion status is developmentally most likely to precede identity foreclosure, before one has begun to consider issues of identity definition.

As Meeus and van Hoof both note, among those individuals who do change identity status during adolescence, the most common pattern of movement is a progressive one, at least from the less mature (foreclosure and diffusion) to more mature (moratorium and achieved) identity positions. This movement is in accordance with theoretical prediction. At present, longitudinal studies of identity status change over late adolescence often have two- to three-year intervals between assessments. The longitudinal assessment of ego-identity status change at more frequent intervals over time is needed, however, before complete details of the continuum of movement for those who do move can be fully evaluated.

Van Hoof (1999) has argued that the frequent patterns of stability or decrease in the moratorium identity status in longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of identity status change argue against the notion of a developmental continuum. However, it is difficult to interpret what overall change or stability in the moratorium status actually means. One is expected to be in the moratorium status in late adolescence for a relatively brief period of time (Waterman, 1999). Time estimates for the area of vocational identity, for example, show the probability of movement from a moratorium position over a one-year timespan during late adolescence/young adulthood to be 50-100 percent for various subgroups of the larger sample (Kroger & Haslett, 1987). At the same time, there is commonly a

relatively long interval between identity-status assessments in both longitudinal and cross-sectional research. Thus, it is possible that considerable movement into and out of the moratorium status may have taken place unobserved. Such change may either fail to have been recorded by researchers at their infrequent data-collection points or appear as no change in cross-sectional studies, as comparable numbers of different individuals move into and out of this identity status.

Additionally, the times at which identity status assessments have been made in longitudinal studies of adolescent identity development are generally at entry and exit points of university attendance (e.g., Cramer, 1998; Kroger, 1988, 1995; Waterman & Goldman, 1976). University entry and exit times are unlikely to capture the moratorium identity-status position for those late adolescents who will undergo change. One might expect to find late adolescents in a moratorium position after they have had time for exposure to the diversity of new ideas and people in the university environment, as well as at the point of having to make identity-defining decisions such as choosing a college major or otherwise considering important adult life options, some time prior to university completion. Waterman and Waterman (1971) and Fitch and Adams (1983) have undertaken longitudinal studies over a 9–12-month interval following university entrance, when such processes are likely taking place. Both of these researches show considerable increases in the numbers of students moving into the moratorium position after 9-12 months at university. Longitudinal data collection at intermediate time intervals over the time of tertiary study is necessary to assess individual trajectories of movement across any identity-status continuum.

Kroger and Haslett (1987, 1991) and Meeus et al. (1999) have pointed to the advantages of the use of loglinear models and Markov chains for the analysis of identity-status movements over time as an alternative to chi-square analyses. Van Hoof (1999), however, has been highly critical of the use of Markov chains used to estimate the probabilities of being in a particular identity status at a particular age, while at the same time advocating the use of dynamic systems models. Markov chains belong in the general class of dynamic models (Kiiveri & Speed, 1982; Berzuini et al., 1997). Markov chains are, simply, dynamic models for categorical variables (Kroger & Haslett, 1987; Liu & Chen, 1998). Use of simulation techniques (e.g. Markov Chain Monte Carlo and Bootstrap: Gilks, Richardson, & Spiegelhalter, 1991) will in some circumstances add to the discussion of movement patterns for the various identity statuses at the cost of additional model complexity. However, Markov chains per se have both a sound and well-documented history. They have further potential in the study of processes with time-varying states or statuses, and this includes the study of identity-status movements over time.

## Identity and Broader Social Contexts

Though Adams and Fitch (1983) first pointed to the important role of one context (differing academic environments) beyond the family in adolescent identity development, it has only been very recently that researchers have been increasingly focusing attention on

social context and its role in adolescent identity development. Clear patterns of difference in identity-status pathways of movement have been found in various adult lifestyle contexts under study, even when key demographic variables such as education level, marital status, parental status, and/or age group have been held constant (Josselson, 1996; Kroger & Haslett, 1987, 1991). To date, however, it has been difficult to determine the direction of effects and the question remains open as to whether individuals with certain kinds of identity structures are attracted to particular kinds of settings, whether particular settings steer the process of identity development, or a combination of both factors. At this point, from the above research on contexts it seems that social circumstances may set broad limits to likely behaviors, though individual personality characteristics do play a key role in influencing the course of identity development over time.

Contexts, in broader terms, and their role in identity development have been a recent focus for several recent articles, including those by Adams and Marshall (1996), Cote (1996), and Yoder (2000). Adams and Marshall have stressed that identity develops out of both individual and social processes. They point out how processes of differentiation and integration underlie the relationship between individual and context, and how identity both shapes and is shaped by the surrounding milieu. An interesting issue that could be explored in future research would be developmentally different ways in which individuals become differentiated from and integrated with their contexts over time. Cote has stressed that the best way to understand the relationship between identity development in context is to delineate the levels or dimensions of identity being explored in relation to a given context. He has also stressed the need to understand particular individual factors such as ethnicity and gender and the particular meaning such issues take on within particular contexts. A further perspective has been stressed by Yoder, in which she details various external "barriers" to development and how they may limit individual developmental options. Barriers may appear and disappear over time, and Yoder stresses various characteristics of barriers (e.g., sociocultural bias) which may be identified over a continuum. Her formulations present an interesting new way of examining the impact of changing historical circumstances on the identity-formation process of adolescence.

## Identity and Gender

Several years ago, I undertook an extensive review of identity status research regarding possible gender differences on three questions: (1) Are there gender differences in the identity-status distributions of adolescents and adults to deal with identity-defining roles and values? (2) Are there gender differences in the identity domains most important to self-definition? (3) Are there gender differences in the developmental process of identity formation? (Kroger, 1997). I examined all published studies appearing between 1966 and 1995 in the Social Science Citation Index that made use of one of the more common measures of identity status or style for both genders. After eliminating sample duplications, some 56 studies were examined.

Surprisingly few gender differences appeared in response to the above three questions. With regard to the question of possible gender differences in identity structure (global identity status ratings), some 35 studies reporting some 42 testings provided meaningful

data. Only six distributions showed clearly statistically significant gender differences in identity status or style; there was no consistent pattern of gender differences across these studies. Some gender differences did appear in the identity-status distributions for the various identity content areas (or domains). However, no consistent patterns across studies could be observed with one exception. For the few studies that included both genders and the content area of family/career priorities and/or sexual values, women generally predominated over men in moratorium and achievement-identity statuses. No gender differences appeared in the developmental pathways taken; both men and women showed increasing frequencies of moratorium and achievement ratings and decreasing foreclosure and diffusion ratings over time. By 1995, few studies had explored the issue of possible gender differences in relation to social context, with no trends apparent. In sum, there has been little evidence of gender differences regarding questions of identity structure, domain salience, or developmental process. It is important to note, however, that my review did not include an examination of possible gender X identity status interactions for dependent behavioral, psychological, or social variables. Recent work by Cramer (2000) suggests some gender X identity status differences in personality processes supporting identity development as well as in self-descriptions.

A promising line of future identity research is also likely to be exploring the potentially mediating impact of gender-role orientation (masculine, feminine, androgynous) on the identity-formation process of late adolescence. Preliminary evidence from five researches to date suggests that gender-role orientation, rather than gender per se, is an important predictor of difference in resolutions to questions of identity, moral reasoning, and intimacy (Bartle-Haring & Strimple, 1996; Cruise, as cited in Marcia, 1993; Dyk & Adams, 1990; Skoe, 1993; Sochting, Skoe, & Marcia, 1994). Future identity research must recognize considerable intrasex variation, particularly regarding gender-role adherence, and examine the impact of this potential mediator on dependent variables under study.

## Identity and Ethnicity

For most Caucasian-American adolescents, awareness of their cultural ancestry is important, but not of vital concern to their sense of ego identity. However, for members of many ethnic minority groups living within majority cultures, questions regarding ethnic identity have prompted vital identity explorations. Indeed, Phinney and Alipura (1990) have shown that self-esteem for many ethnic minority group members has been directly related to the extent to which individuals had thought about and resolved identity issues concerning their ethnicity. Smith et al. (1999) have found self-esteem to be strongly related to one's ethnic identity. In the words of one of my own research participants from an ethnic minority group, "I think feeling comfortable with my ethnic identity is a prerequisite to discovering my personal identity" (Kroger, 2000, p. 126).

Jean Phinney has been a researcher active in the development of measures of ethnic identity. She has developed an interview means of assessing ethnic identity, with identity statuses reflecting the degrees of crisis and commitment to questions of ethnicity (Phinney, 1989). With this measure, Phinney found stages of ethnic identity develop-

ment apparent across Asian American, black, and Hispanic high school students; interestingly, whites could not be reliably coded on this measure. Ethnically identity-achieved minority-group adolescents had the highest scores on independent measures of ego identity and psychological adjustment. Phinney and her colleagues (1999) have also developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). This measure has been used across a variety of ethnic groups and provides a global composite index of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity has been strongly related to measures of coping ability, mastery, self-esteem, and optimism and negatively related to loneliness and depression.

Studies over the past decade have examined a diversity of issues related to ethnic identity development in varied cultural settings. The relationship between Marcia's identity statuses (or exploration and commitment processes) and selected personality variables have been explored in various cultural settings (e.g., Alberts & Meyer, 1998; Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, 1996). The relationship between ethnic community context and ethnic identity has been examined among aboriginal Sami adolescents living in coastal and inland communities in northern Norway (Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 1996). Ethnic identity has been one predictor of fidelity among African American but not European American adolescents in a one-year longitudinal study (Markstrom & Hunter, 1999). Reviews of research that attempt to integrate the great diversity of important ethnic identity issues are badly needed. In addition, studies focusing on the impact of intercultural exposures to adolescent identity formation are a further area in need of investigation.

## Summary and Conclusions

This chapter began by examining five general approaches to the study of identity development during adolescence that dominate the field today. Erik Erikson (1963, 1968) first used the term "ego identity," and has provided central, identity-related concepts which researchers continue to explore today in empirical and narrative investigations. Among researchers, Marcia's (1966, 1967) identity-status paradigm has provided a popular model for expanding and empirically investigating Erikson's notions regarding identity. This chapter has focused primarily on this paradigm, overviewing key personality factors associated with the identity statuses, as well as developmental patterns of movement over time. The chapter has also focused, in conclusion, on general issues related to identity development in context, as well as on questions regarding the relationship of gender and ethnicity to adolescent identity development. Individual sections have presented some possibilities for future research directions that might fruitfully be explored, and responses to recent major criticisms of the identity-status approach have been presented.

## Key Readings

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton.

This volume was written by Erikson to elaborate his notions of ego identity and to describe how identity issues are worked into each psychosocial stage of development, from infancy through old

age. The book overviews the origins of the construct and elaborates concepts related to identity in adolescence via Erikson's clinical experiences as well as through his work in other cultural contexts.

Kroger, J. (2000). *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Beginning with a general review of contemporary approaches to identity, this volume explores identity contents and processes from early adolescence through the years of later adulthood. Chapters on selected identity issues of adolescence and adulthood focus on such topics as adolescent immigrants and adoptees, as well as adults who have lost a significant other or who experience threats to physical integrity.

Marcia, J. E., Waterman, A. S., Matteson, D. R., Archer, S. L., & Orlofsky, J. L. (Eds.). (1993). *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research*. New York: Springer.

This volume contains a review of identity research through the early 1990s and has chapters focusing particularly on issues related to identity and gender, as well as identity processes. The manual also contains adolescent and adult forms of the Identity Status Interview.

Bosnia, H. A., & Kunnen, E. S. (2001). Determinants and mechanisms in ego-identity development: A review and synthesis. *Developmental Review, 21*, 39–66.

This article provides an overview of research both into mechanisms of change of change in identity transitions and factors associated with various identity transitions. It also provides suggestions for researchers wishing to explore issues associated with identity transitions.

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