

# In Search of Mechanisms of Change in Identity Development: Integrating the Constructivist and Discovery Perspectives on Identity

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This article represents an attempt to specify the mechanisms of identity development by integrating the self-construction and self-discovery viewpoints on identity with social-psychological elements of Erik Erikson's theory of identity development. Individualization theory, derived from the sociological literature, is utilized as the template for this integration. Self-construction is conceptualized as the path, and self-discovery as the optimal destination, of the identity development process. Four levels of identity coherence are derived from this integration of the constructivist-discovery issue with Eriksonian theory. Preliminary data are presented to support this continuum. Implications for identity theory and intervention are discussed.

The study of psychosocial identity formation has its roots in Erik Erikson's (1950) classic *Childhood and Society*. Drawing on the work of earlier theorists such as Cooley (1902), Freud (1930/1965), James (1892), and Mead (1934), Erikson viewed identity formation from a social psychological perspective, as occurring at the intersection of self and society. In reference to this source of identity, Erikson (1950) wrote that "the sense of ego identity ... is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (p. 261). Thus, Erikson clearly stated that identity is formed through psychological experiences with the social environment.

More specifically, Erikson (1950, 1968) carefully placed identity development at the intersection of intrapsychic ego processes and external social contexts

(Côté, 1993). In certain cultural contexts, particularly in the West, young people can wrestle with ideological dilemmas and self-defining ideas against the backdrop of interpersonal and cultural issues that define and shape their experience of the transition to adulthood. For example, in *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (Erikson, 1958), young Luther's struggles to define himself are framed within both the societal context of religious intolerance and the familial context of his father's perceived rejection. Erikson clearly specified that Luther's philosophical and personal explorations, which eventually led to his far-reaching revolt against the Catholic Church, were not only influenced by, but were defined by, the interpersonal relationships and societal conditions in which he participated. In a broad sense, then, Erikson spelled out the mechanisms of social change that can be tied to individual identity development. Prompted, inspired, and driven by the prevailing social issues of the day and by the feedback received from important relationship partners, people can seek to define themselves sympathetically or antagonistically in relation to their social milieu (Erikson, 1958, 1969).

As Western culture changed during the 20th century, its social structures became less well defined. As a consequence, socially prescribed roles for young people became more ambiguous, and collective support for identity formation processes from conventional institutions waned in many respects. As a result, the process of defining an adult identity with limited guidance from the adult community became increasingly common and even compulsory (Côté & Allahar, 1994). In understanding the significance of these social trends, and individual reactions in coping with them, two distinct trajectories of identity formation were identified (Côté, 2000; Côté & Schwartz, in press). These trajectories are distinguished in terms of the nature and quality of the individual's interactions with his or her social environments, and are referred to as *developmental individualization* and *default individualization*.

Developmental individualization represents consciously and deliberately searching for growth opportunities, including identity options that are consistent with and enhance existing perceptions of one's self and its potentials. The person following this trajectory transacts with the environment in a bidirectional and purposeful way, and may even utilize the lack of structure in late-modern society as an opportunity to form a unique and self-directed sense of identity. Thus, the individual evaluates identity opportunities according to their potential for furthering self-development and for providing personal benefit and advancement.

Default individualization, on the other hand, represents a trajectory of selecting identity options and elements without much effort or consideration. This other-directed stance may involve simply following the latest trends in personal appearance and behavior repertoire because these do not require exerting much psychological effort. Individuals following a default individualization trajectory tend to pay little attention to ways in which their choices might affect their future options, their self-development, or the quality of their lives. Thus, these individu-

als' choices tend to be dictated for them by trends and forces in the social environment, without significant input from themselves.

The primary difference between default and developmental individualization lies in the intrapsychic response to, and interplay with, the environment. Individuals characterized by developmental individualization take advantage of societal resources in the process of developing and revising an identity (cf. Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997). In turn, the identity-related changes that accompany such contemplation and reflection, when aggregated across groups of individuals, serve to enact change processes within the social ecology (cf. Kegan, 1982; Kroger, 1989).

In contrast, the individual characterized by default individualization is more likely a passive receptor of environmental and contextual influences (cf. Kerpelman et al., 1997). Experiencing the social environment and reacting to it without a significant intrapsychic contribution has the effect of minimizing the bilaterality of the person–environment interaction. Certainly, the environment itself may be modified by the individual's reactions to it, but without an independent contribution from the individual's inner world, it can be argued that conditions in the existing social environment dominate the interactive context. Indeed, a social environment's own evolution is diminished when the individual is not an agentic participant.

Erikson (1950) characterized this form of passive receptivity during the identity stage as a benign form of identity confusion rather than an acute identity crisis; it may involve an absence of self-direction and a clear sense of purpose, but not psychiatric symptoms such as severe anxiety or depression. The default-individualization person may believe that he or she has established a sense of self (i.e., integrated his or her self-definition from the influences of significant others), but when put to the test in situations of stress and crisis, such an other-directed identity may not be capable of sustaining independent functioning (cf. Marcia, 1994).

Although the default–developmental distinction provides a great deal of insight into individual differences in identity development, this distinction does not specify the mechanisms by which late-adolescent and adult identity is formed. Although Erikson addressed identity transformations in his writings, particularly in the case studies of Gandhi and Luther, he did so in a clinical, figurative sense. Greater specification of identity processes would allow for the design of more focused and targeted interventions to facilitate identity formation. It would also help to identify individuals who would likely benefit most from such interventions.

One attempt to specify the particular mechanisms underlying identity formation was developed by Waterman (1984), who posed the question of whether identity development is a process of construction (i.e., using person–environment interactions to build a sense of self from the ground up) or a process of discovery (i.e., using person–environment interactions as a means of discovering an optimal self or set of unique potentials). Waterman argued that these perspectives are mu-

tually exclusive and that identity formation could be viewed as a process of self-construction or self-discovery, but not both.

However, it can be argued that both the construction and discovery views of identity are associated with different mechanisms of identity change and are consistent with Erikson's (1974) focus on the potential interplays between self and context in stimulating ego identity formation. Therefore, a discussion of the implications of the construction-discovery issue for Eriksonian theory, and for identity theory and research in general, could help to facilitate further specification of the intrapsychic and transactional processes underlying developmental individualization. Such a discussion would require exploring the incompatibilities between the construction and discovery views of identity, as identified by Waterman (1984), and resolving his assumption of mutual exclusivity. If this were to be accomplished successfully, the construction and discovery perspectives could be integrated into Erikson's broad vision of identity formation to provide a more precise understanding of change and development in one's sense of self.

#### CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL INDIVIDUALIZATION: EXPLORING COMMONALITIES AND CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE SELF-CONSTRUCTION AND SELF-DISCOVERY UNDERSTANDINGS OF IDENTITY

The apparent contrasts between self-construction and self-discovery understandings of identity can be traced to each position's assumptions about the existence of an unrealized "true self." The constructivist position explicitly rejects the concept of a "true self," relying instead on the person piecing together socially and contextually presented alternatives (e.g., Berzonsky, 1990; Harter, 1999). The individual's inner world serves as a workspace in which he or she rationally considers, sorts through, and integrates personally salient aspects of social ideologies, career alternatives, and interpersonal styles into a coherent identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996). The quality and consistency of the identity formed is dependent on the degree to which the individual actively and consciously participates in the selection, internalization, and integration of externally presented elements (i.e., the extent of active exploration).

In contrast, the discovery perspective emphasizes the existence of an optimal self and its realization through engagement in activities that resonate with or reflect it (Aristotle, trans. 1985; Waterman, 1995). This optimal self is referred to as the *daimon*. The daimon represents the set of unique potentials, talents, skills, and capabilities that are natural to a given individual. For example, some people are naturally drawn to and gifted at teaching, music, athletics, art, or philanthropy.

The focus of the discovery perspective is on the individual's inner world, particularly as it pertains to progression toward realizing the daimon (Norton, 1976). The external world serves as a vehicle through which one experiments with life,

career, and interpersonal alternatives, intuitively choosing from among these possibilities those that “feel right” and appear to correspond to one’s true self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996; Waterman, 1993a). From a self-discovery perspective, individuals begin to form an identity as they progress from identifying personally meaningful activities and choices within the external context, to intentionally seeking out these types of activities and alternatives, and finally to realizing and understanding the unique inner potentials that led them to select and pursue those particular alternatives in the first place (Waterman, 1990).

### Points of Agreement and Disagreement Between the Self-Discovery and Self-Construction Perspectives

During the years since Waterman (1984) first posed the fundamental question of self-construction versus self-discovery, writings on this issue have emphasized points of disagreement between the two perspectives (e.g., Berzonsky, 1986, 1990; Waterman, 1986, 1993a). Indeed, in his article introducing the conundrum, Waterman (1984) himself conceptualized construction and discovery as opposing and inherently incompatible metaphorical processes. Simply stated, the construction metaphor implies building a self that did not previously exist, whereas the discovery metaphor implies searching for a preexisting “optimal self” representing one’s unique best potentials (where the context is receptive to the individual’s daimon). These two sets of assumptions appear, at first glance, to be mutually exclusive; that is, if one were to be true, then by definition, the other could not be true.

The most fundamental area of disagreement between the constructivist and discovery perspectives involves the basic nature of identity. The constructivist perspective argues that one cannot construct a self that exists prior to its creation, and the discovery perspective argues that one does not need to discover a self that has already been constructed. On a more specific level, the decision-making strategies associated with the respective perspectives are potentially opposing and contradictory (Waterman, 1984, 1986). The constructivist perspective assumes that exploration involves largely rational consideration of various alternatives based on external and evaluative criteria, followed by the eventual selection of one or more of these alternatives (e.g., Kurtines, Berman, Ittel, & Williamson, 1995). Conversely, the discovery perspective assumes that exploration involves the intuitive (i.e., based on internal criteria) identification of “fit” between oneself and specific identity opportunities presented by the environment (Waterman, 1992b). This sense of fit often takes the form of unusually strong involvement or meshing with certain alternatives.

A more in-depth examination of the metaphors, however, may reveal some areas of commonality between them. The rational–intuitive decision-making issue does not seem to indicate a particularly strong incompatibility. It is entirely possible that rational and intuitive decision-making strategies could be used simulta-

neously or sequentially, depending on circumstances (Epstein, 1991). A person could easily consider the relative benefits and risks of a given identity alternative while at the same time estimating the degree of fit or meshing that he or she experiences when engaged in activities reflective of that alternative. Using this type of integrative decision-making process, it would seem that options fulfilling both rational and intuitive criteria would have the best chance of being selected and integrated into one's sense of self. Therefore, it is quite possible that developmental individualization consists of both rational (outward) and intuitive (inward) components.

Furthermore, empirical models derived from the constructivist and discovery viewpoints appear to share some common correlates. For example, high levels of self-construction and self-discovery have both been associated with self-determination (i.e., freely chosen engagement in activities and adoption of ideals; Berzonsky, 1990; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Waterman et al., 2002), development of a coherent sense of self (i.e., identity achievement; Berzonsky, 1989; Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, & Dunham, 2000), and feelings of happiness and satisfaction (Berzonsky, 1992; Waterman, 1992a). Furthermore, both self-construction and self-discovery are negatively related to measures of identity confusion or diffusion (Berzonsky, 1989; Schwartz et al., 2000).

Based on these associations, one could argue that both constructive and discovery mechanisms facilitate the relationship between process (i.e., deliberate interplay between self and context) and outcome (i.e., a coherent, flexible, and comprehensive sense of identity) in Erikson's theory and its extensions (e.g., individualization theory). The initiation and continuation of self-construction or self-discovery is linked with freely chosen and purposeful exchanges with the external context, indicating that both processes are associated with developmental rather than default individualization. Furthermore, advanced degrees of self-construction and self-discovery are both related to the development of a coherent, workable, and adaptable sense of self. Therefore, regardless of whether one perceives oneself to be internalizing and piecing together aspects of the outside world, or whether one believes that one is "finding" oneself, the implications with regard to Eriksonian (and neo-Eriksonian) theory appear to be the same. As long as individuals deliberately participate in interactions with their interpersonal, social, and cultural environments, they are likely to develop a positive and synthesized sense of identity.

Moreover, when overlaid onto the two primary components of Erikson's model of identity, self-construction and self-discovery appear to point largely to different aspects of Erikson's model. Self-construction points principally to the importance of the outer world, whereas self-discovery points largely to the importance of the inner world. Given the sharp contrasts between the two perspectives, points of agreement and disagreement between them may best be addressed empirically. It is for this reason that I now turn to an explication of empirical operationalizations derived from the constructivist and discovery perspectives.

## Operationalizations of the Constructivist and Discovery Perspectives

With the introduction of the constructivist and discovery viewpoints, new identity models were introduced as intersections between their respective metaphors and Marcia's (1966) identity status paradigm. Identity status is an extension of Eriksonian theory that puts forth four identity statuses: *diffusion* (identity confusion), *foreclosure* (passive adoption of external standards without question), *moratorium* (active and purposeful identity exploration), and *achievement* (consolidation of identity elements identified during some amount of time in moratorium).<sup>1</sup> Research with the newer models has used the identity statuses as references points for validation, both conceptually and empirically (Berzonsky, 1989, 1990, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2000; Waterman, 1992b, 1993a).

The empirical models introduced to represent the construction and discovery metaphors are referred to as *identity style* and *personal expressiveness*, respectively. Identity style draws on the constructivist theory of Kelly (1955) in proposing a person-as-scientist view of identity development (Berzonsky, 1993). Individuals are seen as positing and testing hypotheses about themselves, ideological issues in the outside world, and their relationship to the world around them (Berzonsky, 1999). Specifically, identity style focuses on individual differences in the ways in which people put forth and test these real-world hypotheses (Berzonsky, 1990), and in the results and correlates of different methods of handling ideological issues and life choices.

Personal expressiveness, on the other hand, draws on self-realization theories created by Maslow (1968) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Personal expressiveness focuses on the discovery and realization of the daimon. From the personal expressiveness perspective, people identify externally presented activities and identity alternatives with which they feel a special fit or meshing (Waterman, 1990). In turn, repeatedly choosing these activities and alternatives leads to further realization of the true self (Waterman, 1992a). Through its presentation of alternatives to the individual, the environment serves as a catalyst or vehicle for self-realization.

With this brief introduction, the identity style and personal expressiveness approaches can now be concisely reviewed. Following these reviews, points of commonality between the two models, as well as empirical findings concerning their potential convergence, are addressed. These models, and the network of relationships between them, are used to generalize back to the perspectives from which the models were drawn. The relationships between models are utilized in the service of formulating an integrative perspective. Finally, social and psychological mechanisms of identity development are derived from this integrative perspective.

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<sup>1</sup>Because the identity status paradigm is well-known, an extensive review is not provided here. The reader is referred to Marcia (1980, 1993), Schwartz (2001), and Waterman (1982, 1999) for more detailed reviews.

*A Constructivist View of Identity Formation: Berzonsky's Identity Processing Style Perspective.* Berzonsky (1990) designed an identity model based on the construction metaphor identified by Waterman (1984). Berzonsky's model was based on Kelly's (1955) person-as-scientist view, in that each individual is assumed to engage in some degree of rational, hypothesis-testing behavior (i.e., exploration or developmental individualization) when confronted with life choices or dilemmas (Berzonsky, 1999). The success and viability of both self-construction process and outcome was assumed to be dependent on the quality, flexibility, and vigilance of a person's hypothesis testing. Individuals who persistently explored options and committed to a potential solution or identity alternative only after gathering enough information would be expected to construct a relatively coherent and workable sense of self (Berzonsky, 1990). In contrast, one would expect that individuals insisting on resolving the issue immediately or choosing to avoid the issue altogether would construct a more fragmented and fragile sense of self.

Berzonsky (1989) extended Marcia's (1966) model by hypothesizing and emphasizing three processes that underlie individual differences among the four identity statuses. Drawing on the differential relationships of the identity statuses to comparison variables, one process within Berzonsky's model was proposed to underlie the diffused status, a second process to underlie the foreclosed status, and a third process to underlie the moratorium and achieved statuses. Because moratorium is conceptualized as a way station on the route to achievement, the same basic process was hypothesized to underlie both of these statuses.

Berzonsky (1989) called these underlying processes *identity styles*, where an identity style represents the usual manner in which someone addresses (or fails to address) life choices, life dilemmas, and identity issues. He assigned the term *diffuse/avoidant style* to the evasive and procrastinatory orientation that diffusion-based individuals tend to adopt toward problem solving and decision making. The term *normative style* was assigned to the rigid and rule-focused orientation that foreclosure-based individuals generally utilize when faced with choices and problems. The term *informational style* was assigned to the problem-focused and exploratory tendencies that characterize moratorium- and achievement-based individuals' responses to life issues.

It was discussed earlier that the constructivist viewpoint is concerned largely with the external context and how the individual handles interactions with that context. As a process conception, identity style represents a path or trajectory by which people construct identities, along with the quality and completeness of the identity constructed. Other psychological activities are of considerably less importance, in that the identity style typically utilized has little to do with the specific contents of the identity formed.

The identity style perspective assumes that, provided the individual participates actively in exchanges with the social and ideological environment (i.e., uses an informational style), the identity that he or she forms will be workable, internally con-

sistent, and revisable (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). Use of the normative or diffuse/avoidant styles would be reflective of default individualization. The normative individual adopts the standards of significant others and utilizes those standards in interacting with the outside world, whereas the diffuse/avoidant individual tries to evade active participation with the outer context and acts only when situational factors dictate that such action is absolutely necessary (Berzonsky, 1993).

*A Discovery View of Identity Formation: Waterman's Personally Expressive Identity Perspective.* Waterman (1990) developed an identity model based on the discovery account of identity formation. The goal of identity formation from Waterman's perspective is the discovery of the daimon and the concomitant realization and actualization of the potentials that the daimon represents. The first step toward discovering the daimon involves engaging in an array of activities and identifying those to which one feels naturally drawn, that are sufficiently challenging, and to which one brings an ample level of skill and proficiency (Waterman, 1993a). The combination of feeling drawn to a given activity, experiencing the activity as challenging, and possessing adequate skills to meet those challenges has been termed *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is generally accompanied by intense and unusual involvement in an activity, a distorted sense of time, lack of concern about failure, and loss of self-consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Purposeful and repeated engagement in flow-producing activities is likely to lead to increased discovery and realization of the daimon (Waterman, 1995). Repeated engagement in specific activities should contribute to developmental individualization, in that it involves a purposeful exchange with the outside world. Deliberately engaging in activities (and, therefore, selecting identity alternatives) that are consistent with one's daimon should produce feelings of intense involvement, happiness, and personal meaning.

Following Aristotle (trans. 1985), Waterman (1990) designated the term *personal expressiveness* to refer to feelings of optimal experience accompanying intentional engagement in activities that produce feelings of flow and draw on or reflect the daimon. Whereas flow refers to somewhat unintentional engagement in activities that reflect the daimon, personal expressiveness goes a step further, implying that the identity elements that these activities represent have been integrated into one's sense of self. For example, flow corresponds to experiencing a special sense of fit when engaged in painting, whereas personal expressiveness corresponds to experiencing the act of painting as who one is.

Clearly, not all activities and identity elements that individuals explore or participate in are in concert with the daimon. Activities in which one is required to take part, such as one's job, are not likely to lead to discovery of one's daimon regardless of how often or how intensely one engages in them. Similarly, in many cases individuals make choices without regard for their potential compatibility with the daimon. It is entirely possible to explore and commit to a set of activities and identity elements that do not represent the daimon at all.

The individual's inner experience is of great consequence to self-discovery theory. It is precisely that inner experience, in the form of intuitive reactions to externally presented activities and choices, that determines whether a given activity or identity alternative is consistent with the person's unique talents, skills, and potentials. The outer world provides opportunities to deliberately seek out and select alternatives that will facilitate progress toward self-realization. Furthermore, in contrast to identity style, personal expressiveness theory is quite concerned with the specific content of the identity that one forms. Specifically, choices and pursuits selected on the basis of the daimon represent successful movement toward self-discovery, whereas activities and options selected for other reasons represent lack of progress toward self-realization and the potential failure of the self-discovery process. Waterman (1992b) specifically noted that it is entirely possible for individuals to actively interact with their environments, deliberate among several prospective options, and choose one or more of those options without ever considering one's unique potentials and talents. As Marcia (2001) commented, "there seem to be inner imperatives that one ignores at the possible peril of a lifetime of dissatisfaction with an apparently successful life" (p. 64).

#### CONVERGENCE BETWEEN SELF-CONSTRUCTION AND SELF-DISCOVERY THEORIES OF IDENTITY

Some degree of convergence, both direct and indirect, has been found between constructivist (identity style) and discovery (personal expressiveness) models of identity development. With regard to indirect associations between models, both the personal expressiveness and identity style constructs have been validated by way of theoretically predicted and empirically obtained associations with identity status (Berzonsky, 1989, 1990; Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994; Schwartz et al., 2000; Waterman, 1992b, 1993a). This was especially true with respect to the statuses corresponding to the two poles of Erikson's identity stage—achievement (identity synthesis) and diffusion (identity confusion). As expected, the achieved status was related to the most complete levels of both self-construction (informational style) and self-discovery (personal expressiveness). The diffused status was related to the most incomplete levels of both self-construction (diffuse/avoidant style and low informational style) and self-discovery (low levels of personal expressiveness).

These syllogistic associations between constructivist and discovery models paved the way for studying the direct relationships between models derived from these seemingly opposing and incompatible metaphors (cf. Schwartz, 2001). In a study that examined the associations between identity style and personal expressiveness, Schwartz et al. (2000) found that identity style and personal expressiveness were related in theoretically predictable ways. Specifically, the informational style was related to high levels of personal expressiveness, the normative style to

moderate levels of personal expressiveness, and the diffuse/avoidant style to low levels of personal expressiveness. In concrete terms, individuals who searched vigilantly and open mindedly for a workable set of identity alternatives were most likely to have made progress toward self-realization. Individuals who avoided the task of searching for and considering identity elements were least likely to have happened on activities and alternatives consistent with their daimon. Individuals who sought to conform to external expectations were intermediate in terms of participating in personally expressive activities.

Promising conclusions can be drawn from the relationship patterns between self-construction and self-discovery models and between each of these models and identity status. The diffused status, which corresponds to a sense of identity confusion, was associated with the lowest levels of both self-construction and self-discovery. Achievement, which corresponds to identity synthesis, was associated with the highest levels of both self-construction and self-discovery. These results suggest that both the construction-based and discovery-based understandings of identity are consistent with Erikson's fundamental conceptualization of the identity crisis and with the notion of developmental individualization (cf. Côté, 2000), a suggestion that is discussed later in terms of its implications for more precisely defined mechanisms of growth and development within Eriksonian theory.

On a more conceptual level, a network of relationships and parallels between constructivist and discovery models of identity opens up the possibility that their relative strengths can be combined. The areas of independence between the perspectives (i.e., much of the inner world is addressed primarily by self-discovery, and much of the outer world is addressed primarily by self-construction) indicate the benefit that could be derived from integrating the perspectives. In turn, focusing significantly on both person and context may allow for greater examination of the developmental individualization process (Côté & Schwartz, *in press*). Furthermore, a combinative approach would merge the process focus of the constructivist viewpoint with the content focus of the discovery viewpoint, again consistent with Eriksonian theory and with developmental individualization.

#### EXTRAPOLATING FROM THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG IDENTITY MODELS: POTENTIAL CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTIVIST AND DISCOVERY METAPHORS

At least some of the inherent incompatibilities between the discovery and construction metaphors can be attributed to the assumption that the two perspectives address the same aspects of identity and are competing explanations of the same phenomena. Waterman's (1984) portrayal of the metaphors as mutually exclusive was based largely on this assumption. However, it can be argued that the identity models derived from the two perspectives emphasize differing aspects of identity develop-

ment from an Eriksonian perspective (i.e., contextual vs. intrapsychic and process vs. content). The differential focuses of self-construction and self-discovery models may reflect more than simply a methodological artifact or the idiosyncratic preferences of specific theorists. These differences in emphasis may reflect a fundamental distinction between the constructivist and discovery viewpoints—a distinction that calls into question the assumption of inherent incompatibility.

The primary difference in focus between self-construction and self-discovery theories of identity can be conceptualized as the distinction between path (process) and destination. A path or process is operationalized here as a dispositional tendency that leads the individual in a specific direction. A destination is conceptualized as the outcome of a given path or process—in this case the particular content of the identity formed.

With regard to the distinction between path and destination, self-construction theory focuses principally on the quality of the path that individuals construct toward a coherent sense of self. Informational individuals can be said to construct their identity paths carefully and deliberately, and be willing to change direction if necessary. Normative individuals are seen as constructing their identity paths largely on the basis of outward expectations and externally imposed rules, and their paths are likely to be rigid and inflexible. Diffuse/avoidant individuals generally construct their identity paths haphazardly, with little forethought, and without much consistency. The quality of the path, and thus the workability and flexibility of the self that is formed as a result of traversing that path, is a function of the degree to which one engages in deliberate and purposeful mutual interactions with the environment, as Erikson (1958, 1969) asserted.

Self-discovery theory, on the other hand, is quite concerned with the specific destination of the identity formation process. Specifically, the match between the content of the identity being formed and the individual's daimon is the primary variable of interest (e.g., Waterman, 1993a). This match is operationalized as the extent of flow and personal expressiveness experienced while participating in activities reflective of the identity being formed. Only an identity whose content draws on the daimon represents a successful outcome of the self-discovery process. If the identity formed is not compatible with the daimon, then the self-discovery process is seen as incomplete or failed (Waterman, 1995).

The path or process by which individuals come to discover their daimon is not as clearly specified in self-discovery theory. Waterman (1992b, 1993a) did stipulate that identifying activities that facilitate feelings of flow is the first step toward self-discovery, but he did not indicate how exactly these activities are initially selected. More or less, self-discovery has been operationalized as an outcome or event rather than as a process. Chosen activities and identity elements are classified as either personally expressive or not, depending on their concordance with the daimon, but currently there is no known process measure that can differentiate individuals who select personally expressive alternatives from those who do not. The path toward self-discovery, and progress along that path, would certainly

qualify as a process, but this process may most clearly and usefully be specified as a self-constructive one, as discussed next.

The differential focus on path versus destination between the constructivist and discovery metaphors may provide an initial window for integrating the two perspectives. Simply stated, one could put forth the hypothesis that self-construction theory provides the path or process by which identity is formed, whereas self-discovery theory provides a method of evaluating the content of the identity that results from this path or process. From such a perspective, informational individuals, with their vigilant insistence on open-mindedness, information seeking, and exploration, would be most likely to sort through activities and identity alternatives until they discovered something that produced feelings of flow and personal expressiveness. Normative individuals, in adhering to socially and familially sanctioned paths, would identify daimon-concordant activities and identity alternatives only if those elements happened to correspond to the path that the individual was already on. Finally, diffuse/avoidant individuals, in haphazardly negotiating the path toward a fragmented sense of self, would be unlikely to continue engaging in flow-producing activities even if they did stumble across them.

Conceptualizing self-construction as the path, and self-discovery as the destination, of the identity development process carries with it the inherent assumption that self-construction must temporally precede self-discovery. Put another way, without the path, there can be no destination. Diffused individuals who make no attempt to construct a path toward an integrated and synthesized identity are unlikely to discover and actualize their daimon, regardless of how much they may wish to do so. A coherent and intentional path toward the destination of self-realization must be set in motion before discovery of the daimon can become a realistic possibility. Individuals may have an idea of what their daimon might consist of before they begin the process of developing a self, but the actual realization of that daimon is likely to require some self-constructive work.

If one accepts that both self-construction and self-discovery are needed to cover both of the significant elements in Erikson's model of identity (i.e., self and context), then individuals who satisfy the criteria for both successful self-construction and self-discovery should possess the most complete, coherent, flexible, and workable identities. Those who have constructed a consistent and effective path and have reached a personally meaningful and self-realized destination would likely be characterized by both stability, based on having followed a steady path, and passion, emanating from having formed an identity consistent with their unique potentials, talents, and skills. In contrast, individuals succeeding in self-construction but not self-discovery would probably be characterized by contentment without passion, and individuals who have an idea of what they would like to be (i.e., the identity that they believe they can discover), but are unable to formulate a path toward that destination, would most likely be characterized by frustration (A. S. Waterman, personal communication, March 14, 2001).

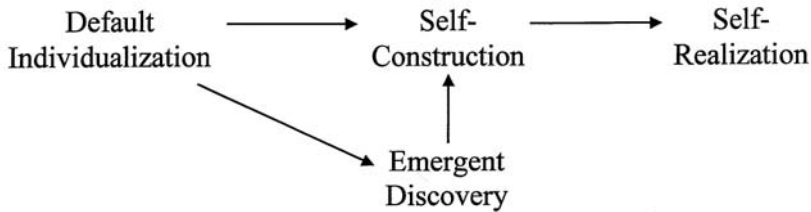


Figure 1. The Individualization Process Model

One would hypothesize, then, that individuals characterized by both successful self-construction and successful self-discovery would score highest on measures of both self-directed development (e.g., self-esteem, purpose in life) and self-actualization.

Based on the temporal ordering of constructivist and discovery, and on the additive nature of the metaphors (i.e., self-discovery building on self-construction), it is likely that a developmental model can be proposed, consisting of four steps of identity growth and change. This model is termed the Individualization Process Model (see Figure 1). It must be emphasized that, as in many developmental models, not all individuals necessarily reach the final step (or even progress beyond the first step).

*The Individualization Process Model.* Individuals characterized by default individualization represent the first step, whereas the other three steps are characterized by increasing degrees of developmental individualization. For people characterized by default individualization, identity development is a function of shifts in the external environment; as the context changes, the individual's sense of self changes in accordance (cf. Berzonsky, 1993; Schwartz, Mullis, & Dunham, 1998). The individual makes little or no unique contribution to modifications in the social and cultural environment, such that the person-environment relationship can largely be characterized as unidirectional.

The second category appears to represent the emergence of, or first step in, developmental individualization. This category includes people utilizing successful *self-construction*, but not self-discovery. At this stage, the person sorts through contextually presented alternatives and chooses the option supported by the best argument (Berzonsky, 1990; Kurtines et al., 1995). In turn, the identity elements selected become internalized as part of the individual's sense of self (Erikson, 1950, 1968). The individual's identity is revised and updated as needed, particularly when new environmental demands present themselves (Dunham, Kidwell, & Wilson, 1986). More important, however, the incorporation of new elements into

one's self-definition, and the removal of elements from that self-definition, occurs with considerable and deliberate input from the person (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). At this step of developmental individualization, the person–context relationship is bidirectional.

A third category represents a step through which some individuals may pass between default individualization and self-construction. This category, called *emergent discovery*, represents the state of having conceived of the identity destination that one would like to reach, but not yet having established a path toward that destination (cf. Norton, 1976). Emergent discovery is therefore a preliminary form of self-discovery that may precede self-construction for some individuals. Emergent discovery is significant in that the individual has acquired a sense of his or her daimon before embarking on a self-constructive path; it may be that individuals who enter emergent discovery may be more likely to self-realize (i.e., integrate identity elements consistent with the daimon) than individuals who pass directly from default individualization to self-construction. In terms of psychosocial functioning, emergent discovery individuals should fall somewhere between those characterized by default individualization and those who have self-realized. Furthermore, because they have established some sense of direction but have yet to reach their goals, their psychosocial functioning may be comparable to that of successful self-constructors.

The fourth category appears to represent the most complete form of developmental individualization. This category, called *self-realization*, consists of people who successfully construct an identity path and for whom this path results in actualization of the daimon. Similar to the exploratory activities of successful self-constructors, person–environment interactions are intentional and bidirectional for self-realizing individuals. However, alternatives are selected not only because they make sense in light of socially or culturally established criteria, but also because they resonate with the individual's original self-related goals (cf. Waterman, 1993a). Identity work for self-realizing individuals is intentional and self-directed both in the sense of actively transacting with the environment and evaluating the “feel” of each possible alternative in terms of the anticipated identity goal.

These four categories can be organized onto a continuum of identity coherence, integration, and agency. Default individualization would be the lowest ranking category, given that the individual does not participate actively in interchanges with the environment and that the identity formed is likely to be comprised only of external elements. Individuals characterized by self-construction, that is, those who have set out on a coherent and consistent path, would be expected to display higher levels of agency and self-direction than would those characterized by default individualization. The self-realization category would rank highest, given the combination of intentional person–environment transactions and the deliberate search for alternatives that match one's unique potentials. Emergent discovery would be aligned alongside self-construction, given that some degree of identity work is underway; however, emergent discovery may be slightly less advanced

than self-construction because an identity path must be constructed to reach the goals conceived in the emergent discovery step.

This developmental model may have important implications for the philosophical basis of identity theory. Besides providing an integrative resolution to the constructivist-discovery conundrum, the model may help to qualify the claims of postmodernists such as Gergen (1991), who have asserted that the concept of a basic, fundamental, or consistent sense of self is an illusion. The postmodernist position advocates for the position that identity is formed and modified on a situation-by-situation basis, and that changing conditions in the external environment dictate these modifications—a premise consistent with default individualization. The model proposed in this article takes a different approach, namely that the postmodernist perspective delineates only one method of addressing identity issues—a default one in which the person is nonagentic. The construction of a consistent sense of identity, and in some cases the realization of one's daimon, may indeed constitute alternative, and perhaps more adaptive, ways of developing a self.

### Preliminary Analyses Using the Individualization Process Model

Some preliminary data are available that can provide an initial test of the developmental model put forth in this article. Analyses reported here were conducted utilizing a data set that was analyzed and reported elsewhere (Côté & Schwartz, in press, Study 2; Schwartz & Dunham, 2000, Study 2; Schwartz et al., 2000, Sample 2). The sample consists of 228 psychology students (54 men, 155 women, and 19 not reporting gender) from a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. The sample is ethnically diverse, with large numbers of Hispanics, non-Hispanic Whites, and mixed-race individuals. Measures administered to these participants included the Identity Style Inventory (Berzonsky, 1997); Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire (Waterman, 1993b); Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (Bennion & Adams, 1986); and Multi-Measure Agentic Personality Scale (Côté, 1997), which contains measures of self-esteem, ego strength, purpose in life, internal locus of control, and self-actualization.

For the purposes of these preliminary analyses, dichotomous variables were created for both self-construction and self-discovery. For the self-construction dichotomy, a median split was conducted on the informational style scores from the Identity Style Inventory. Individuals scoring at or above the median on the informational style were assigned to the high self-construction group, whereas those scoring below the median were assigned to the low self-construction group. This was done because the informational style is the only identity style orientation that arguably represents developmental individualization.

The self-discovery dichotomy was somewhat more complex in its calculation. The Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire requires participants to choose five activities of importance to them and to rate each activity on six items reflecting a number of criteria, including personal expressiveness. Waterman

(1993b) defined a personally expressive activity (i.e., one that taps into the daimon) as one to which the participant assigns an item mean of 6 or higher on a 7-point scale. Based on the relative distribution of personally expressive activities within the sample, individuals rating two or more activities as personally expressive were assigned to the successful self-discovery group. Those rating fewer than two activities as personally expressive were assigned to the unsuccessful self-discovery group.

Four groups, representing the categories (steps) in the Individualization Process Model, were created by crossing these two dichotomous variables with one another: (a) self-realization, (b) self-construction, (c) emergent discovery, and (d) default individualization (i.e., low on both self-construction and self-discovery). The percentages of the sample within each group were reasonable given the assumptions of the model; 40% of the sample was classified into the default individualization category, 11% into the emergent discovery category, 34% into the self-construction category, and 15% into the self-realization category.

One-way analyses of variance were conducted on the four identity status subscales from the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (in which each identity status is treated as a "trait" possessed in varying degrees) and on the self-esteem, purpose in life, ego strength, internal locus of control, and self-actualization subscales from the Multi-Measure Agentic Personality Scale, by individualization process category. The Multi-Measure Agentic Personality Scale consists of the (a) Self-Esteem Inventory (adult form; Coopersmith, 1981), (b) Ego Strength Scale (twenty-six 5-point items taken from Epstein, 1983), (c) Purpose-in-Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969); (d) six items from Rotter's (1966) Internal Locus of Control Scale (converted from the original dichotomous answer format to a 5-point Likert-type scale format); and (e) Self Actualization Scale (six 6-point items taken from the Personal Orientation Inventory; Shostrom, 1963).

With regard to identity statuses, only the diffused,  $F(3, 191) = 8.99, p < .001$ , and achieved,  $F(3, 186) = 12.47, p < .001$ , status subscales differed by individualization process category. For the diffusion subscale, the default individualization group scored significantly higher than did individuals in the other three groups. For the achievement subscale, the default individualization group scored significantly lower than did individuals in the other three groups, and the self-realization group scored significantly higher than did individuals in the other three groups. The self-construction and emergent discovery groups were not significantly different from each other on either status measure.

With respect to the agentic personality scales, self-esteem,  $F(3, 194) = 4.09, p < .01$ ; purpose in life,  $F(3, 197) = 9.33, p < .001$ ; and ego strength,  $F(3, 194) = 3.07, p < .03$ , differed significantly by individualization process category. The patterns for these scales were similar to that obtained with regard to the achieved identity status—the default individualization group scored significantly lower than did individuals in the other three groups, the self-realization group scored sig-

nificantly higher than did individuals in the other three groups, and the self-construction and emergent discovery groups were not significantly different from each other.

The self-actualization measure also differed by individualization process category in a similar way,  $F(3, 194) = 7.57, p < .001$ . In terms of self-actualization, the default individualization group scored significantly lower than did the other three groups, and the self-realization group scored higher than did the default individualization or emergent discovery groups. The self-construction group was not significantly different from the self-realization group.

The results of these preliminary analyses provide some degree of validation for the developmental typology presented previously. Individuals characterized by default individualization, purposeful self-construction, and self-realization form three distinct groups. Moreover, indexes of identity synthesis (identity achievement) and of agentic functioning (self-esteem, purpose in life, and ego strength) increase significantly as one moves progressively from default individualization, to purposeful self-construction, and finally to self-realization. Identity diffusion, which can be seen as an index of low degrees of participation in person-environment interactions, was highest in the default individualization group.

The emergent discovery group, which consists of individuals who have set goals but have not yet constructed a path toward those goals, was equivalent to the self-construction group on the agentic personality measures but scored significantly lower on the self-actualization measure. The comparability of these two groups on identity coherence and agency suggests that the degree of self-direction and identity integration is equivalent between (a) those who have established identity-related goals but have yet to build a path toward those goals and (b) those who have constructed a path but may not be sure what their destination will be. The difference between these groups on self-actualization suggests that self-realization is dependent on the construction of a viable identity path. If the default-individualization individual is to set out on the path to self-realization, some intervention may be needed to begin that journey. It is for this reason that I now turn to a discussion of the implications that this integrative perspective might have for identity-based interventions.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

Clearly, any intervention approach has as its primary objective facilitating movement from a less complete and coherent sense of self to a more synthesized and workable identity (Josselson, 1994). In the past, this goal has often been operationalized as moving individuals away from the diffused status and toward the achieved status (Marcia, 1989). In Eriksonian terms, identity interventions have been designed to facilitate progression in the direction of increased identity consolidation and synthesis while reducing confusion and uncertainty (i.e., from default to developmental individualization). Moreover, results obtained from

these intervention programs have been promising (Enright, Ganiere, Buss, Lapsley, & Olson, 1983; Markstrom-Adams, Ascione, Braegger, & Adams, 1993), with decreases in feelings of uncertainty and distress accompanying progress toward identity achievement.

In terms of the developmental model proposed in this article, these identity interventions have succeeded, to some extent, in shifting individuals from default to developmental individualization. They have helped individuals to participate actively in bidirectional interchanges with their environments and have facilitated self-constructive processes (e.g., Arrufat, 1997; Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002). In addition, because the individual characterized by developmental individualization utilizes resources of, and may enact changes (however minor) in, his or her environment, these identity interventions have the potential to prompt some degree of social-institutional change (cf. Josselson, 1994).

What these efforts have not incorporated, however, is self-discovery. With one notable exception (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2002), no intervention efforts have focused on furthering self-realization and on helping young people to evaluate alternatives using internal as well as external criteria. The encouragement of setting goals and of establishing a general sense of direction before beginning the formal intervention has not yet been incorporated into identity interventions. The fostering of self-realizing individuals through intervention has not been attempted.

Some specific recommendations for identity interventions based on the issues discussed in this article are in order. First, the temporal ordering of self-construction and self-discovery processes has significant implications for identity interventions. Although both construction and discovery oriented intervention programs have been successfully implemented (Schwartz et al., 2002), a discovery-based intervention may require that individuals have done some identity work prior to beginning the intervention. If one has a sense of one's daimon but lacks the person-environment bidirectionality that would facilitate progress toward realization of that daimon, as in the emergent discovery step, frustration may result. This frustration may be analogous to an imbalance of challenges and skills (i.e., challenges outweighing skills) in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow model. What is needed in such cases is facilitation of a self-constructive path, by way of focusing on problem-solving and decision-making skills. Such a path may help emergent discovery individuals to reach the self-realizing goals that they have set.

When working with individuals who have neither established a coherent and integrated identity path nor envisioned an identity-related destination (i.e., default individualization), it is probably necessary to facilitate self-constructive processes at first to help place the individual on a consistent identity path (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002). Implementation of self-discovery interventions is likely to be effective only after self-constructive processes have been set in motion. Asking individuals to sort through activities and choices of interest to them and to identify which elements produce feelings of flow requires that the individuals have identified some

set of activities and choices that interest them (through self-construction or emergent discovery, or both). Diffused individuals, who are often the target of identity interventions (Archer, 1994; Schwartz, 2001), may not have any idea of what interests them.

Further research should investigate the usefulness of the model derived in this study for the design and implementation of identity interventions as well as for the increased specification of the mechanisms underlying identity change and transformation. Indeed, as this article has suggested, the processes that facilitate identity change may be somewhat different at each of the steps within the model. The extent to which individual differences in the quality of identity development, and in the workability of the identity formed, reflect varying degrees of the same process (or the utilization of different processes) remains to be determined.

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