

Adolescent psychological well-being by identity style

Tommy M. Phillips^{a,*}, Joe F. Pittman^b

^a*Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265, USA*

^b*Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University, USA*

Abstract

High school-age adolescents ($N = 262$) in two samples completed a measure of identity style, along with measures of self-esteem, hopelessness, delinquent attitudes, educational expectations, and optimism/efficacy. Analysis of variance was used to evaluate the relationship between identity style and the other psychosocial variables. Participants classified as having a diffuse/avoidant orientation had lower self-esteem and higher delinquent attitude scores than those with either an information or normative orientation. At the same time, the diffuse-avoidant style was associated with higher hopelessness and lower optimism/efficacy scores than the normative and information styles. The normative and information styles did not differ significantly in terms of the dependent variables. Results also indicated that males were more likely to be diffused and females more likely to be information-oriented.

© 2007 The Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Identity; Identity style; Adolescent well-being; Psychosocial development

Introduction

According to Erikson's (1980) psychosocial theory of development, identity formation is the major task of adolescence. Although Erikson deserves immense credit for calling attention to identity formation as a key psychosocial task, his thoughts on the matter did not lend themselves

*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: tphillips@jsu.edu (T.M. Phillips), joe.pittman@auburn.edu (J.F. Pittman).

easily to empirical research methods. Marcia's (1980) identity status paradigm represented an attempt to render the concept of identity formation amenable to research. Marcia proposed four identity statuses: achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffused, with the status occupied being determined by the adolescent's levels of identity exploration and commitment to self-chosen goals. While the identity status paradigm has formed the basis for a great deal of identity research since first formulated (Berzonsky, 1997), it has been criticized for its focus on identity as an outcome while giving relatively little attention to the processes underlying identity development (Berzonsky, 1989).

For Berzonsky (1990), self-identity is essentially a self-theory. A self-theory, in Berzonsky's view, is an integrated, conceptual structure comprised of assumptions, constructs, and postulates relevant to the self. Self-theories serve a pragmatic purpose in that they function as interpretive and problem-solving frameworks. In the interest of maintaining effectiveness, self-constructs have to be monitored, evaluated, and revised (when appropriate) across the lifespan.

Individuals differ in the manner in which they go about monitoring, utilizing, testing, and revising their identities (Berzonsky, 1997). Berzonsky (1989, 1990) proposes three styles of self-theorizing: the informational style, the normative style, and the diffuse-avoidant style. The informational style is associated with a stronger orientation to explore and involves actively seeking out, processing, and evaluating self-relevant information. The normative style is associated with a less powerful orientation to explore and is characterized by a concern with the standards and expectations of significant others (e.g., parents). The normative style may also entail resisting change and defending against information that challenges currently held beliefs and values. Finally, individuals with a diffuse-avoidant style typically pay little attention to their futures or the long-term consequences of their actions, make emotion-based decisions, and tend to procrastinate until consequences determine a course of action.

The three identity styles have been found to map well onto Marcia's four identity statuses, with the diffuse-avoidant style being associated with the diffused identity status, the normative identity style being typical of the foreclosed identity status, and finally, an information-oriented style being characteristic of individuals in either an achieved (if commitment is high) or moratorium (if commitment is low) identity status (Berzonsky, 1989). According to Berzonsky, individuals are capable of using all three styles of accessing information, but tend to develop a preferred style which may vary from one identity domain to another.

Although the identity style construct has generated comparatively less research than the identity status paradigm thus far, several studies have demonstrated a compelling relationship between identity style and various indices of well-being. In particular, previous studies indicate a pronounced inverse association between a diffuse/avoidant orientation and well-being. For instance, in a study of the relationship between identity style and alcohol/work-related problems among naval personnel, Jones, Ross, and Hartmann (1992) found a relationship between a diffuse orientation and both alcohol- and work-related problems. Information and normative orientations, on the other hand, were negatively associated with such problems. In another study, White and Jones (1996) administered a measure of identity style to a group of state prison inmates, finding that individuals with a diffuse orientation became involved in criminal activity at an earlier age, had a greater total number of arrests, were less educated, and were more likely to violate parole. Individuals with an information orientation had fewer total arrests, higher levels of educational attainment, and were less likely to have parole violations than individuals with a

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/881370>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/881370>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)