Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Notes:

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Various social contexts influence an adolescent's identity development. These include:

  i. Family relationships
 ii. Culture and ethnicity
iii. Gender

Before we understand how each of these social contexts influence an adolescent's identity development, let us understand <u>James Marcia's 4 statuses of identity</u>:

He uses the term '**crisis**' to refer to a period of identity development during which the adolescent is choosing among meaningful alternatives. We can also refer to 'crisis' by using the term 'exploration'. By '**commitment**', he means a personal investment in what an individual is going to do.

The four identity statuses given by James Marcia are as follows:

* Identity Diffusion:

The state an adolescent is in when they have not yet experienced an identity crisis i.e. they have not yet explored meaningful alternatives and have not

made any commitments. Not only are they undecided but they are also uninterested in exploring various alternatives and making any commitments.

- Identity foreclosure:

The state adolescents are in when they have made a commitment but have not experienced an identity crisis. This mostly happens when authoritative parents hand down commitments to their adolescents. Adolescents with this status have not had adequate opportunities to explore alternatives on their own.

- Identity moratorium:

The state of adolescents who are in the midst of an identity crisis i.e. they are exploring the alternatives before them, but have not made a clear commitment to an identity.

- Identity achievement:

The status of adolescents who have undergone an identity crisis and made a commitment.

Let us now understand how various social contexts influence an adolescent's identity development:

i. **Family relationships**:

Parents play an important role in an adolescent's search for identity. Different parenting styles can influence an adolescent's identity development in different ways. Studies have proven that:

Democratic parents i.e. parents who encourage their children to participate in the family decision making processes foster identity achievement among adolescents.

Autocratic parents i.e. parents who control adolescents' behaviours and do not give their children an opportunity to express their views foster Identity foreclosure.

Permissive parents i.e. those who provide very little guidance to their children and give complete freedom to them to make their own decisions promote Identity diffusion.

Research has found that poor underline communication between mothers and adolescents as well as persistent conflicts with friends are linked to less positive identity development (Reis & Youniss, 2004)

Individuality and connectedness are two personality characteristics that play an important role in an adolescent's identity development. Catherine Cooper and her colleagues believe that a family atmosphere which promotes individuality as well as connectedness is important to an adolescent's identity development

Individuality has two dimensions:

- Self assertion: the ability to have a point of view and communicate it
- Separateness: the use of communication patterns to express how one is different from others.

Connectedness has two dimensions:

- Mutuality: sensitivity to and respect for others' views
- Permeability: openness to others' views

Cooper's research findings reveal that family relationships that are both individuated as well as connected, provide a secure base from which to explore the social world. However, when connectedness is strong but individuation is weak, adolescents often experience identity confusion.

Stuart Hauser and his colleagues have highlighted other family processes that promote adolescent identity development.

Parents who engage in enabling behaviours (such as explaining, accepting, giving empathy) facilitate the adolescent's identity development more than parents who engage in constraining behaviours (such as judging and devaluing)

In sum, family interaction styles which give adolescents the right to question and to be different within a context of support and mutuality foster healthy patterns of identity development.

ii. Culture and ethnicity
➢ Erikson opined that culture plays an important role in identity development.

- He noted that throughout the world, ethnic minority groups struggle to maintain their cultural identities while trying to be a part of the dominant culture.
- For ethnic minority individuals, adolescence is often a special point or juncture in their development. During childhood, children are aware only of some ethnic and cultural differences, but during adolescence, individuals consciously confront their ethnicity for the first time. During adolescence, an individual is able to interpret ethnic and cultural information, to reflect on the past, and to speculate about the future.

➢ Jean Phinney (1996) defines ethnic identity as 'an enduring, basic aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group, along with the attitudes and feelings related to that membership.'
- For adolescents from ethnic minority groups, the process of identity formation has an added dimension: the choice between two or more sources of identification i.e. their own ethnic group and the dominant culture.
- Many adolescents resolve such a conflict by developing a bi-cultural identity – they identify in some ways with their ethnic group and in other ways with the majority culture.
- For every succeeding generation, the indicators of identity change often differ.
- First generation immigrants tend to be secure in their identities and are less likely to change much. They may or may not develop a new identity.
- Second generation immigrants are more likely to identify with the mainstream culture. (For e.g. an Indian family that has migrated to the US. The second generation immigrants are more likely to think of themselves as "American", perhaps because citizenship is granted at birth). Their ethnic identity is likely to be linked to retention of their ethnic language and social networks.
- In the third and later generations, the issues become more complex. Historical, contextual, and political factors that are unrelated to acculturation may affect the extent to which members of this generation retain their ethnic identities.

- Researchers have found that:
  - Ethnic identity increases with age
  - Higher levels of ethnic identity are linked to more positive attitudes, toward one's own as well as other ethnic groups.
  - Ethnic identity is stronger among members of minority groups than among members of mainstream groups.
  - Minority students who had thought about and resolved issue involving their ethnicity had higher self-esteem than minority students who had not.
  - A positive ethnic identity is related to positive outcomes for ethnic minority adolescents.
  - For e.g. ethnic identity was linked with higher school engagement and lower aggression. (Van Buren & Graham, 2003)
  - A stronger ethnic identity was linked with higher self-esteem in African American, Latino, and Asian American youth (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004)

- The contexts in which ethnic minority youth live influence their identity development.
  - In the US, many ethnic minority youth live in low socio-economic-status urban settings where support for developing a positive identity is lacking.
  - In such settings, support organizations and programs for youth can make an important contribution to their identity development.

iii.   Gender and Identity:
- According to Erikson, males were mainly oriented toward career and ideological commitments; females were mainly oriented toward marriage and child-bearing.

- Researchers found support for the assertion of gender differences in identity in 1960s and 1970s.
- But, today, as females have developed stronger vocational interests, these gender differences have begun to disappear.

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL INTIMACY

During Erikson's sixth developmental stage, which is experienced during the early adulthood years, the individuals face the developmental task of forming intimate relationships with others.

Erikson describes intimacy as finding oneself, yet losing oneself in another. If young adults form healthy friendships and an intimate relationship with another individual, intimacy will be achieved; if not, isolation will result.

An inability to develop meaningful relationships with others can harm an individual's personality.