Identity

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In the previous chapter we considered the development and functions of the self. In this chapter we consider aspects of the development of identity.

Identity deals with that which we consider to be most basic to our sense of self—the things that identify who we are, both to ourselves and to others. It includes our most basic values and goals and our ethnic and gender identifications. As fans of science-fiction movies or amnesia victims know, there is nothing more terrifying than the sense of losing one's identity. Identity involves the fundamental sense of *continuity* in one's life: I am who I was yesterday, and I am who I will be tomorrow. It provides a framework for taking action in the future.

Self-concept and identity are closely related ideas. Both can provide answers to the question "Who am I?" Yet they differ. *Self-concept* is one's *description* of who one is. *Identity* is one's *definition* of who one is (Baumeister, 1986); it consists of those things that most basically define who we are. Something can be part of one's self-concept ("I am sloppy") but not part of one's identity ("I don't consider sloppiness an integral part of who I am"). Identity is defined by our connection to various aspects of our life, and it helps us locate ourselves in terms of who we are and where we belong (Lewis, 1990).

Many psychologists believe that adolescence is the key developmental time period for the formation of identity. While individuals begin to develop an identity in early childhood and may continue to modify their identities throughout their lives, adolescence is thought to be the most crucial organizational period for forming an identity. This view characterizes the perspectives of Erik Erikson, James Marcia, Dan McAdams, and those who have developed models

identity The goals, values, and roles that are the key descriptors of who we are to ourselves.

of ethnic identity formation. However, gender identity, as we shall see, appears to develop considerably earlier.

Stages of Identity Formation: Erikson and Marcia

Erik Erikson has been the most influential theorist of identity (see Chapter 4). Erikson emphasized the ability to experience oneself as having continuity and sameness as an important aspect of identity. Identity includes one's bodily identity, the ability to sustain loyalties, and a sense of having a future. It also includes having a stable sense of self versus feeling self-conscious, being able to pursue a career versus feeling paralyzed in terms of work, being able to experiment with various roles versus rigidly locking oneself into a fixed role, feeling clear about one's sexual identity versus being confused about one's sexual identity, and having ideological commitments versus being confused about one's values.

Determining an identity is a major task of adolescence. Choosing a career path is often a part of that identity.

Erikson believed that late adolescence was the time of identity achievement, although earlier developmental periods played a role. Identity achievement precedes the development of the capacity for intimacy, which occurs in early adulthood. However, Erikson theorized that this sequence is more characteristic of males than of females. For females, interpersonal aspects are at the core of their identity. Men therefore achieve identity first and intimacy second, while women achieve identity and intimacy concurrently, or intimacy first. Erikson also assumed that women do not complete an identity in adolescence because marriage and having children complete their identities.

James Marcia (1980), using an interview format, followed Erikson's ideas on the development of identity in adolescence. Others have subsequently developed objective measures based on Marcia's interview format (Grotevant and Adams, 1984). An example of items from one of these measures is given in Table 11.1.

TABLE 11.1 Sample Items from the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status

Status	Item
Diffusion	I haven't chosen the occupation I really want to get into, but I'm working toward becoming a ____ until something better comes along. When it comes to religion, I just haven't found any that I'm really into myself.
Foreclosure	I guess I'm pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such. I've never really questioned my religion. If it's right for my parents, it must be right for me.
Moratorium	I just can't decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs I'll be right for. There are so many different political parties and ideals, I can't decide which to follow until I figure it all out.
Identity-achievement	A person's faith is unique to each individual. I've considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.

Source: Adams, Gullota, and Markstrom-Adams, 1994, p. 274.

Marcia's original research involved interviewing adolescents about their vocational plans and goals, and their values and beliefs. They were asked about the degree to which they had explored each of these areas and the degree to which they had made a commitment in each area. In early versions, the identity interview focused on vocational achievement. Later, to correct for this bias, interpersonal elements were added to the interview. Currently the interview includes questions about vocational plans, avocations, religious beliefs, political ideologies, gender-role orientation, sexuality, values, friendships, dating, marriage, parenting, family and career, setting priorities, and ethnicity.

Marcia identifies four identity *statuses* during adolescence: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. These four statuses vary along two dimensions: commitment and exploration. **Identity diffusion** is characterized by low levels of both commitment and exploration. The person neither has a set of commitments to goals or values nor is actively struggling with the process of forming such commitments. **Foreclosure** is characterized by a high level of commitment and a low level of exploration. Individuals in this stage are most likely those who have adopted an identity from their parents or culture without actively exploring and choosing. **Moratorium** is what we typically think of as an identity crisis and is characterized by high levels of exploration but a low level of commitment. The person is in the process of exploring who he or she is and what he or she wants to be but has not come to any stable set of commitments yet. **Identity achievement** is arrived at through exploration which results in a personally chosen commitment to a set of values and goals for one's life. The different combinations can be seen in Table 11.2.

In Marcia's scheme, identity achievement is the "highest" level, with moratorium the next, foreclosure third, and diffusion the lowest. However, a number of writers have noted that this order may be culturally biased. Only in Western society must one achieve an identity. In many other cultures, one attains one's identity from the culture and the role one plays in it (foreclosure). Therefore, for many cultures a foreclosed identity may be the healthiest. In fact, it has been found that for members of minority groups in the United States a foreclosed identity is more common than an achieved one. It has been argued that foreclosure may be a more functional identity for members of minority groups in a hostile society (Hauser and Kasendorf, 1983; Markstrom-Adams, Berman, and Brusch, 1993). Taking on an identity provided by one's group may be more adaptive than trying to individually achieve an identity in a society that blocks opportunities and conveys negative messages about one's minority status. This topic is discussed further in the section on ethnic identity.

Each of the four identity statuses can be thought of either as the state that a person is in or as a developmental stage. For some individuals, identity status remains relatively constant with time. In one study (Adams and Montemayor, 1988), constancy of identity status was found to occur for about 15 percent of the adolescents studied. For other individuals, the identity statuses form a kind of stage model, in which the individuals progress upwards through the four stages over time. About 50 percent of individuals were found to show steady progression over time. Still others showed an up and down pattern of progression and regression through the four statuses. A meta-analysis of 124 studies conducted

identity diffusion The status of a person who has low levels of both commitment and exploration to an identity.

foreclosure A person who has adopted an identity without consideration or exploration of alternative identities.

moratorium The status of a person who is in the process of exploring who he or she is but has not committed to an identity.

identity achievement Personally chosen commitment to a set of values and goals for one's life.

TABLE 11.2 The Two Dimensions of Marcia and the Four Alternative Identity Statuses

		Commitment	
		Yes	**No**
Exploration of alternatives	Yes	*Identity achievement*	*Moratorium*
	No	*Foreclosure*	*Identity diffusion*

by Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia (2010) found that 49 percent of the adolescents in those studies remained stable in their identity, while 36 percent progressed to a higher identity status. Importantly, 15 percent regressed in their identity. Recognize that stability could be in any of the four identity statuses and that progress does not necessarily mean identity achievement.

Researchers have found a variety of correlates of the four identity statuses. Identity diffused individuals tend to show signs of poor psychological adjustment, such as feelings of inferiority and poorly articulated self-concepts. They are more likely to have parents who are rejecting or not affectionate and are more likely to have problems with substance abuse (Adams, Gullota, and Markstrom-Adams, 1994; Markstrom-Adams, 1992; Jones, 1992). Foreclosed individuals are more likely to be hardworking, quiet, obedient, respectful of authority, and industrious. They tend to come from families that are warm and supportive but that appear to stifle autonomous growth (Adams et al., 1994). Individuals in the moratorium status tend to be the most anxious, which is not surprising because they are in the midst of questioning their identity status. They appear to be high in self-directiveness while open to exploring alternative perspectives. They also tend to be introspective and emotionally responsive (Adams et al., 1994). Their families are likely to be democratically organized, but there is liable to be strain between the adolescent and the parents (Fuhrmann, 1986).

Identity achieved students have been found in many studies to have high levels of self-esteem, moral reasoning, self-confidence, psychological integration, emotional maturity, and social adeptness. They are also most likely to have established strong intimate relationships (Adams et al., 1994; Waterman, 1992). As with adolescents in the moratorium status, they are likely to have come from democratic homes (Fuhrmann, 1986). However, while the vast majority of the evidence indicates that identity achievement is associated with positive qualities, the findings are not entirely uniform. Kroger (1992) reports that some studies have found a high percentage of identity achieved participants to be excessively self-sufficient or detached.

Differences between men and women have been a major focus of investigation. As we have noted, Erikson assumed that interpersonal issues were at the core of women's identity, suggesting that their identities might not be completely formed until the intimacy stage in early adulthood. Research indeed supports the idea that identity and intimacy tend to merge for many women, while for men they are separated, that is, identity first and intimacy second (Patterson, Sochting, and Marcia, 1992). However, these researchers also conclude that the task of identity *begins* in adolescence both for women and for men. Further, for nontraditional women, late adolescence is the optimal time for resolution of the identity, as it is for men. For traditional women, whom Erikson expected would complete their identities when they married and had children, the evidence suggests that marriage and children do not complete their identities. Rather, these women put their identities "on hold" until their children have grown up, when they resume the task of identity completion. Josselson (1988) has studied identity formation in women by interviewing them in college and again when they were in their mid-thirties. She found that identity development for women does involve issues of interpersonal connection.

In early research on identity status it was found that for men, identity achievement and moratorium were the most "healthy" patterns (e.g., high self-esteem, etc.), while for women identity achievement and foreclosure were the healthiest (Patterson et al., 1992). At the time, Marcia (1980) suggested that the foreclosure status might be adaptive for women because society did not provide support for women, as it did for men, to explore and choose their identities. He predicted that if society changed, so would the pattern of these early research findings. Making Marcia look like a prophet, recent findings show that for women, as well as for men, identity achievement and moratorium are the more adaptive patterns. Patterson and colleagues (1992) note that this might be due to the fact that the identity status interview was changed over the years to take interpersonal issues more into account. However, they think this shift is more likely due to societal changes that now provide more support for women to choose careers.

Beyond Four Statuses

There is significant heuristic value in using Marcia's four identity statuses, but recent research has suggested a more nuanced view. Luyckx and colleagues have suggested that as a person commits to an identity, there is then a further exploration as to whether that identity is a truly workable identity (Luyckx, Goossens, and Soenens, 2006; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, and Beyers, 2006). A recognizable experience would be selecting a college major (Luyckx, Teppers, Klimstra, and Rassart, 2014). The first step is to identify the possible majors; this would be considered the moratorium stage. Then the person would decide on a major, which they termed exploration in breadth. Finally, the person deeply examines whether that is the right choice for who he or she is as a person, which they term exploration in depth (Meeus, 1996). For many people, that is the process. However, some people find the exploration to be very difficult and stressful. These people will continue to consider and reconsider *and reconsider* identities; this style is termed ruminative exploration (Luyckx et al., 2008).

It is also useful to consider different reactions to the diffusion stage as marked by concern over the lack of identity, or a relatively carefree diffusion in which the person is unconcerned about a lack of identity. The carefree diffusion is typically observed in the youngest adolescents and tends to be less common as the cohort ages (Verschueren, Rassart, Claes, Moons, and Luyckx, 2017).

There are several problems with the research done on identity statuses from Marcia's perspective. One problem is that most of the research has been done on college students, typically between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. There is less research on adolescents not in college. In one study, Morash (1980) examined working-class youths and college students. It was found that working-class youths were more likely to be either identity achieved or diffused, while college students were more likely to be in moratorium or foreclosure. Working-class youths were also more likely to have experienced shorter, more concrete moratoriums. It may be that being in college allows one the luxury of a more leisurely moratorium period in which one can explore one's identity before making commitments. However, much more research is needed on adolescents not in college.

From a feminist perspective, Archer (1992) has criticized the research on identity statuses. She argues that focusing on differences between the genders is not fruitful. Individual men and women vary among themselves enormously, and the differences that have been found between men and women as groups are minimal. She believes it is more interesting to look at the question of how *individuals* pattern their identity achievement rather than at group comparison of genders. For instance, some of her research has found that reasoning about identity is "domain specific." This means that an individual's reasoning about identity in one area, such as vocation, is not necessarily the same as his or her reasoning in another area, such as relationships.

One criticism of identity status theory and research has previously been mentioned. That is that the whole concept of achieving an identity has a distinctly Western flavor. Myers, Speight, Highlen, Cox, Reynolds, Adams, and Hanley (1990), working from an Afro-centric paradigm, have noted that in Western culture one must establish one's worth through one's activities, while in other cultures one is valued just because one is. They believe that the Western idea is a product of our cultural assumptions, which separate self from others and separate the material from the spiritual. As previously noted, the foreclosure stage, therefore, may not necessarily be a less developed stage than the identity achieved stage in many cultures.

In conclusion, Marcia's theory of identity statuses has led to research that has helped clarify the process of identity development in adolescence. At the same time many issues remain to be clarified.

Racial and Ethnic Identity

We now turn to an important specific component of identity: **racial and ethnic identity**. Racial and ethnic identity has to do with those aspects of one's identity that relate to one's identification with one's ethnic group. Not everyone has specifically worked out an ethnic

racial and ethnic identity Those aspects of one's identity that relate to one's identification with one's ethnic group.

identity. However, it is a particularly important issue for minority group members in our culture. Because ethnicity and race are closely related, and at times fully mixed, many researchers use ethnicity to refer to both race and ethnicity (Schwartz et al., 2014). We will use that convention here, as the effects of discrimination seem to be the same whether it is based on race or ethnicity (Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier, 2006).

Individuals who are members of minority groups in our society face a particularly complicated task in forming an identity. First, they are often confronted with conflicting messages concerning important life values. For instance, the particular minority culture may hold the value that an individual's choice of careers should be influenced by the family, while the dominant culture in the United States emphasizes individual choice. Second, we have already seen that different cultural groups hold different views of what a self is: is it a "we" interconnected with others, or is it an "I," a separate, autonomous entity? Third, such individuals are often confronted with the social devaluation of their minority group status. In various implicit and explicit ways they are told that they are "less than" because they are members of a particular minority group. This message might be conveyed, for instance, through stereotypic television portrayals or through the relative invisibility of their group in television shows. Fourth, they face some objective limitations to their hopes and aspirations because of their minority group status and various concomitants, such as economic inequality.

There are two interrelated aspects to the formation of an identity for ethnic minority members. First is the issue of forming a positive, proactive identification with one's ethnic group. This is the issue that most models of ethnic identity formation have focused on. A second issue is that of acculturation—the degree to which the individual attempts to integrate with the dominant culture or chooses to remain separate and identify exclusively with the minority culture.

Ethnic identity, according to Phinney (1990), includes one's sense of self-identification as a group member, attitudes and values in relation to one's group, attitudes about oneself as a group member, the adoption of ethnic behaviors and practices, and the extent of one's ethnic knowledge and degree of commitment to one's group.

There is a commonality to many models of ethnic identity development. This commonality is shared by models of identity development for nonethnic minority groups as well, such as for gays and lesbians. The models tend to describe the process as proceeding in five stages (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014):

1. Pre-encounter, in which one is unaware of or unconcerned about differences
2. Experiences with others leading to awareness of differences
3. A period of conflict between the old unawareness and the new awareness
4. Resolution and habituation
5. Commitment to the group and identity

Phinney (Phinney, 1990; 1991; Phinney and Rosenthal, 1992) has proposed a model of ethnic identity development that is synthesized from other models but is also based on the work of Erikson and Marcia. The first stage is that of an unexamined ethnic identity, which could be likened to Marcia's either foreclosed or diffused status. The adolescent either adopts an unexamined commitment to his or her ethnicity from the parents and is therefore foreclosed, or has no clear sense of commitment to ethnic identity but is not exploring it either and is therefore in a diffused state. In the second stage, some event—perhaps some act of discrimination (Quintana, 2007)—triggers the adolescent's awareness of his or her ethnic identity, and he or she begins to think about it. This stage is equivalent to the moratorium stage in Marcia's model. Indeed, during adolescence, exploration of ethnic identity tends to rise (French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber, 2006). In the third stage of ethnic identity development, some kind of commitment to an ethnic identity occurs. This follows a process of resolving conflicts and contradictions involved in being a minority in a majority culture where minorities have often experienced discrimination. Phinney and Chavira

(1992) studied the development of ethnic identity in minority youths between the ages of sixteen and nineteen and found movement from lower to higher stages, as predicted.

Using an ethnically diverse sample and statistical technique called cluster analysis, Yip (2014) found that the Marcia model fit her data well. Adolescents in the achieved category included ethnic identity across situations. The achieved adolescents showed higher levels of exploration and higher self-esteem. The achieved and moratorium adolescents reported being more aware of the ethnicity in their everyday life.

A fundamental question is whether ethnic identity status has a positive or negative impact on psychological adjustment. Phinney (1991) found that not all components of a positive ethnic identity correlated with high self-esteem, but the trend was that individuals with a strong ethnic identity were more likely to have high self-esteem. Having a developed ethnic identity appears to work as a defense against perceived discrimination, allowing healthier adaptation (Sellers, Copland-Linder, Martin, and Lewis, 2006).

With respect to acculturation, Berry and his colleagues (1989) have defined four modes of acculturation. Those who strongly identify only with their ethnic group are in a state of separation. Those who strongly identify only with the dominant culture are in a state of assimilation. Those who identify with both their own group and the dominant culture are considered to be bicultural. Finally, those who identify with neither are considered to be in a state of marginalization. In general, most theorists now hold that biculturation is the most adaptive mode. For instance, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) have argued that biculturated individuals are those who have developed the competencies to function both in their culture of origin and in the larger majority culture. They are able to utilize the best of both cultures. Meta-analysis of 83 studies, which included 32,197 individuals, found that psychological and social adjustment tends to be higher in people who identify with two cultures (Nguyen and Benet-Martínez, 2013). In this sense, they will have also developed a more complex, differentiated, and integrated identity.

Having a sense of identification with one's own culture can have a positive influence on one's own identity.

Source: LightField Studios/Shutterstock

Sexual Orientation Identity Development

The process for forming identity for gay and lesbians has informed the models of race and ethnic identity, and been informed by those models as well. Unlike members of most race and ethnic groups, homosexuals are usually in the minority in their own families. Also, gays and lesbians can hide their identity, which members of many minority groups cannot do. There are two major theories of sexual orientation identity, and as we will see, they are similar, though not identical. Although both models were laid out to explain and understand the process for homosexuals, we can probably assume that the models work for other sexualities outside the mainstream.

Cass's model (1984) suggests that there are six stages to developing a sexual orientation identity that is different from the dominant model:

Stage 1: Identity confusion. A person starts to wonder if he or she may be homosexual. If that is accepted as a possibility, the person moves to the next stage.

Stage 2: Identity comparison. The person starts to compare himself or herself to homosexuals and nonhomosexuals.

Stage 3: Identity tolerance. The person starts to make more and more contacts with other homosexuals. The identity is tolerated, but not embraced.

Stage 4: Identity acceptance. A positive view of homosexuality starts to develop. However, disclosure of sexual orientation will be limited, and the person may often attempt to pass as heterosexual.

Stage 5: Identity pride. People will start to feel a great deal of pride about their sexual orientation. They will identify strongly with other homosexuals, and feel anger at the intolerance society directs toward homosexuals.

Stage 6: Identity synthesis. Roles models have typically helped the individual settle into the community and identity. The person feels comfortable in that identity, needing neither to hide nor flaunt the identity.

In this model, we see similarities to the moratorium and identity achievement stages that are key components of the Marcia model.

The other major model was laid out by Troiden (1988). This model includes typical ages at which the stage is experienced. He warns that the model is an ideal and simplified process. The real process is not linear and has many movements both forward and backward. Stages may overlap and be experienced more than once.

The first stage is sensitization. This is typically experienced before puberty. The child becomes aware that he or she is different from peers. Usually, this difference is not noted to be a sexual difference until after the onset of puberty.

The second stage is identity confusion. This stage is typically experienced in adolescence. The person realizes that he or she sexually different. Because most of the models to which the person is exposed are not homosexual, and because homosexuality is often stigmatized, this is often not a welcome recognition. Adding to the confusion is the general ease of arousal in adolescence that may lead to being aroused by either gender. At this point, the person can respond in several different ways. A person may deny or seek to change his or her sexual orientation. He or she may avoid situations that confirm desires. Among the forms of avoidance are the formation antihomosexual attitudes or escape via drugs or alcohol. A person may respond by redefining his or her desires—for instance, by claiming bisexuality, considering it a temporary stage, or describing it as a special case ("I'd only do this with you"). It is also possible that the person will accept the prospect and seek more information.

The third stage is identity assumption. This stage typically happens in the early twenties for men and somewhat later for women. At this point, the person will have included homosexuality into his or her self-concept. There is tolerance and acceptance of the identity, along with sexual experimentation and association with others in the community. Although a homosexual identity is developed, the identity is more tolerated than embraced.

The fourth stage is commitment. Homosexuality becomes a major part of the person's self-identity. The person usually enters into a same-sex love relationship. Typically, he or she finds it is much easier to live having adopted this identity than to continue to fight against it. As a result, personal happiness tends to increase.

Troiden's model has similarities to both Marcia's model of general identity development such as confusion and successful identity achievement. We also see aspects of the model of ethnic identity development with the experiences leading to awareness of differences, the resolution and habituation, and finally commitment to the group and identity.

Beyond the development of one's sexual orientation identity, members of the LGBTQ community must face another step: that is the process of coming out. The process of coming out can be a dangerous time, as there can often be an increase in prejudice and victimization directed at the person (Davison, 2005). Gay and lesbian youth show a suicide rate high above others of similar ages (Hottes, Bogaert, Rhodes, Brennan, and Gesink, 2016; Remafadi, French, Story, Resnick, and Blum, 1998), though legalizing same-sex marriage has been found to reduce the suicide rate in homosexual teens (Raifman, Moscoe, and Austin, 2017).

Legalization of same-sex marriage may reduce suicide rates for homosexual teens.

Gender Identity, Gender Typing, and Gender Differences

Some of the most active current research in developmental psychology concerns the development of gender identity and the related issues of gender differences and gender typing. While gender identity has to do with individuals' self-perceptions of who they are as males or as females, gender differences have to do with the question of whether there are objective differences in psychological functioning between the two genders. The issue of gender-typing has to do with how males and females develop their masculine or feminine identities, attributes, or behaviors. The issue of whether there are gender differences and how gender-typing occurs are intimately related to the development of gender identity. We first examine gender identity, then consider the issue of gender differences, and finally reflect upon how gender differences and gender identity develop, i.e., the issue of gender-typing.

The convention that we use when describing the differences between males and females is to use the term **gender** for anything that might be due to culture and socialization and sex to refer to differences that are due to biology (Frieze and Chrisler, 2011). We need to be very careful about the term sex, as it is easy to confuse biological influences with social and cultural influences. We might look at something such as running a foot race as a sex difference where anatomical differences mean that males are faster than females. However, the current world record time for women in the 200-meter race (21.34 seconds) would have won every men's 200-meter Olympic final from 1900 to 1928. It might be argued that the reason is changes in training, and that is likely correct. But, think of training as something that is cultural. So, even in something that seems obviously to be based on a sex difference, culture matters.

gender Aspects of oneself as male or female that may be due to culture and socialization.

Gender Identity

One of the most important components of identity is gender identity. In introducing his model of gender identity, Ashmore (1990), says that "it is assumed that sex and gender pervade most aspects of daily life and can shape many aspects of psychological structure and function" (p. 512).

One's **gender identity** is defined by how one's perception of gender influences or plays a role in other aspects of identity. It could be said to be the answer to the issue of what it means to the individual to be a man or woman. It is how one's view of oneself as male or female is interwoven with all the various other aspects of one's identity. According to Ashmore (1990), gender identity consists of five general content areas. The first is the biological and physical attributes associated with gender, including aspects of appearance and dress. The second area is "symbolic and stylistic behaviors," including how one walks, one's body bearing, and how one communicates nonverbally. The third area consists of the interests and abilities that one sees as relevant to and characteristic of one's gender. The fourth area is "social relationships," which includes images of how one will differentially relate to men and women as well as how one's sense of masculinity or femininity are organized and expressed in relationship with others. The fifth area is perception of one's personal and social attributes—for instance, one's personality traits and how these relate to masculinity and femininity.

Gender Differences

Many differences can be observed between boys and girls and men and women in terms of "typical" behavior. More boys play with blocks and fire trucks than do girls, who tend to play with dolls and paper cutouts more than do boys; boys prefer football, while girls prefer dramatic play. Gender differences in toy and activity preference can be observed early in development, well before the age of three (Lewis, 1987). Later in life, more men than women study to be architects and engineers, while more women become nurses and school teachers than do men. There are many exceptions and, although changes are occurring in traditional gender roles, there are still gender differences in preferred activities and in such diverse domains as child-care responsibilities, work roles, and occupations. These differences are most likely a reflection of the contrasting social roles ascribed to men and women. Comparable kinds of gender differences in social roles are observed in other societies, both modern and preliterate.

We know that these gender differences exist at the social level. The intriguing question is what they are related to at the psychological level. To what extent do boys and girls differ in intellectual abilities motivation social skills and other personality attributes? There are many common stereotypes concerning gender differences in personality. For example, males have been regarded as aggressive, rational, and ambitious, while females have been described as passive, emotional, and nurturant. These stereotypes are opinions and are in part responsible for the differential occupational roles, income levels, and statuses of the genders. But to what extent do these gender stereotypes have a basis in fact?

Source: Stas Ponomarencko/Shutterstock

Gender-typing begins early in life.

One task undertaken by psychologists has been to determine possible personality and cognitive attributes that distinguish the two genders and, in addition, to discern the age levels at which gender differences appear. This empirical task has proved to be far more complex than it initially seemed. First, one must assume that the samples of the genders studied are comparable on such variables as socioeconomic status and educational opportunity. It is also important to sample different ethnic and economic groups to establish that the findings are representative of boys and girls in general, rather than restricted to some particular segment of society. To add a further complication, as the culture undergoes economic and social change, there may be corresponding alterations in personality traits. For example, differences in dependency between the genders seem to have been greater in previous decades, indicating that gender differences reported at one time may not hold for another. Conversely, where there once were similarities, differences may suddenly

appear. Finally, some of the psychological attributes distinguishing the genders are subtle and difficult to measure.

A second and even more challenging task for psychologists is determining how differences between the genders have come about, or how gender typing occurs. The role of biological versus social factors in determining behavioral differences between the genders is an especially interesting issue. It is evident from the extensive amount of research that has been conducted on gender differences that there is a great deal of overlap between the genders with regard to virtually any behavior. Because of individual variability within a gender and the overlap between genders, gender discrimination is psychologically, as well as legally, unjustified.

In the sections that follow, we consider research studies on gender differences and on the development of gender differences and gender identity.

Studies of Gender Differences

We are all aware that men and women are socialized to be different in a number of ways, such as in how they dress. However, are there basic *psychological* differences? A good deal of research has been done to determine whether there are such differences. In a classic review of the literature on human gender differences, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) concluded that there were differences.

Research has indicated that men and women are now close to equal in the areas of both verbal and mathematical ability. In addition, even the finding that males are more aggressive appears to be just a moderate effect (Archer, 2004; Ashmore, 1990). Nonetheless, the data still indicate that men are more likely to be aggressive than women, although such a difference may depend on how aggression is measured (see the following discussion of how gender differences develop).

Ashmore's (1990) summary of research indicates that, overall, few psychological gender differences have been found that are of more than "small to moderate" size. There are differences between men and women in "social stylistic" behaviors, such as smiling and facial expressiveness. Women report themselves to be more empathic than men, although when empathy is objectively measured, only small differences are found. The largest differences found between men and women are in physical variables, such as in the distance to which they are able to throw a ball.

More recent findings have led to questions about some of these conclusions. For instance, early research on mathematical ability found differences between boys and girls; however, this difference has mostly disappeared in the United States (Hyde, Lindberg, Linn, Ellis, and Williams, 2008). Hyde (2014) reviewed the many meta-analyses that have examined the differences between the genders; many of the results of studies she reviewed are included in Table 11.3. A few of those meta-analyses she and her colleagues conducted, whereas others were conducted by other people as reported in her review.

Meta-analyses have been mentioned a few times so far in the text, and will be included several more times in the next chapters. **Meta-analysis** is a statistic process that allows an integration and analysis of multiple studies simultaneously. By doing this, the random variance that shows up in any one study is reduced, the impact of a single researcher's approach is reduced, and multiple methodologies can be combined. Meta-analysis is a uniquely powerful way of looking at research findings, and is one of the most trusted methods for confidently drawing conclusions about research. The product of a meta-analysis is the "effect size." In our table, the effect size indicates how much of a difference there is between males and females. By convention (Cohen, 1988), the absolute value of an effect size greater than .80 is considered large, near .50 is considered moderate, and near .20 is considered small.

It is worth noting that most gender differences are indeed quite small. Males report more interest in sex, but that is confounded with social demand characteristics (Fischer, 2007). Self-esteem differences build through adolescence, then become minimal in adulthood. Males do seem to be better at 3-D mental rotation, though even this may be due to practice effects in video games (Feng, 2007) and sports. The mental rotation effects do appear quite early (Quinn and Liben, 2008), which then might predispose boys to those activities.

meta-analysis A statistic process that allows an integration and analysis of multiple studies simultaneously.

TABLE 11.3 Gender Differences Effect Sizes from Various Meta-Analyses

Topic	Effect size	Topic	Effect size
Cognitive functions		Leadership effectiveness	−0.02
Mathematics	−0.05	*Temperament in childhood*	
Complex problem solving (HS students, 1990)	0.29	Inhibitory control	−0.41
Complex problem solving (HS students, 2008)	0.07	Negative affect	−0.06
3D mental rotation	0.56	Emotionality	0.01
Vocabulary	−0.02	*Personality traits*	
Reading comprehension	−0.03	Neuroticism facet anxiety	−0.27
Writing	−0.09	Extraversion facet assertiveness	0.49
Verbal fluency	−0.33	Agreeableness facet tender-mindedness	−1.07
Reading achievement U.S.	−0.26	Conscientiousness	−0.07
Math self-confidence	0.27	Sensation seeking	0.41
Math anxiety	−0.23	*Emotions*	
Interests		Guilt	−0.27
Engineering	1.11	Shame	−0.29
Science	0.36	Authentic pride	−0.01
Mathematics	0.34	*Aggression*	
Self-esteem		Physical	0.55
Elementary school	0.16	Relational	−0.19
Middle school	0.23	*Sexuality*	
High school	0.33	Masturbation	0.53
College	0.18	Use pornography	0.63
Post college adults	0.10	Number of sexual partners	0.36

Positive numbers mean males have larger scores; negative numbers mean females have larger scores. (Based on meta-analyses reported in Hyde, 2014).

In general, most researchers believe that there are far fewer differences in basic psychological attributes between the genders than there are similarities. For instance, Hyde (1984) notes that gender accounts for about 5 percent of the variation in aggressive behavior in children, which means that about 95 percent of the variation in aggressive behavior is due to factors other than gender. As she points out, humans have 23 pairs chromosomes and only one is the sex chromosome, so we should expect more similarity than differences (Hyde, 2014, p. 378).

While there may be relatively few basic psychological differences between the genders, some differences in behaviors begin to develop very early. Boys between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two months already prefer trucks and cars to play with, while girls prefer dolls

and soft toys (Smith and Daglish, 1977). Two-year-old girls prefer to play with other girls, and by age three boys prefer to play with boys (La Freniere, Strayer, and Gauthier, 1984).

Gender Typing: Development of Gender Differences and Gender Identity

There have been a number of different theories that try to account for differences that are observed between the genders. Biological theories hold that differences are based in biology and are observable as soon as children begin to interact and play with peers (around the age of two). Yet the role of biological factors is complex.

Evidence from primate studies indicates that male monkeys engage in more rough-and-tumble play than females do and that even male infants display more aggressive behavior when attacked than females do (Aldis, 1975; Devore, 1965). But whether these observations of monkey behavior are applicable to humans is uncertain. In humans in this culture, the process of treating males and females differently begins at birth, with pink and blue blankets. Girls and boys are not only differently identified through the use of different colors and clothing, but also reacted to with different expectations and behaviors. Thus, even these early differences in aggression may be attributed to social rather than biological factors.

Later in the book the question of gender differences in aggression and the role of biological and social factors are examined in more detail. At this point, it is useful to keep in mind that the greater aggressiveness noted in males is based on observations of direct physical and verbal aggression. Although the gender differences in direct aggression before the age of six have been questioned (Tieger, 1980), extensive evidence can be presented indicating that this difference is reliable (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1980) and can be observed in children as young as age three (Fagot, Leinbach, and Hagan, 1986). However, when one examines more indirect, subtle forms of aggressiveness, such as snubbing or ignoring peers or gossiping, there is some evidence that aggression is greater in females than in males (Feshbach, 1969; Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, and Peltorer, 1988). Indeed, the meta-analysis on relational aggression does indicate that girls use it more (Archer, 2004).

For the sake of completeness, we can include the psychoanalytic perspective. According to Freud, the process by which boys and girls develop sex differences and their gender identities is rooted in biology. For him, identification was the principal mechanism leading to sex typing. As a result of the process of identification, children acquire the attributes and orientations of their sex. The biological difference between boys and girls leads not only to their making a different choice of which parent to identify with, but also to a less satisfactory identification for females (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the process of identification has biological roots. Freud did recognize some influence of learning processes in the development of gender differences, however, and contemporary psychoanalysts acknowledge the importance of social variables to an even greater extent.

The social learning theorists stress the importance of the differential reinforcement boys and girls receive for "appropriately" imitating male and female models and for behaving in accordance with the norms and expectations of society. The behaviors that define the female and male roles are very much influenced by the culture in which a child is socialized. Gender role norms vary from society to society, but in each case children are rewarded for those behaviors that will help them fit the particular roles prescribed by society. This differential reinforcement begins very early. It is manifest in the disparate ways that males and females are handled by their parents, in the unequal rough-and-tumble play of fathers with boys versus girls, and in the reinforcements given for engaging in appropriate gender-typed activities. One of the earliest gender differences that is consistently observed is that a greater amount of physical stimulation and gross motor play is directed toward male infants than toward female infants (see Block, 1979; Parke and Suomi, 1980). Studies of child-rearing practices in this and other cultures (Antill, 1987; Block, 1973; Whiting, 1963) clearly indicate that parents have different expectations for

boys and girls and respond differentially according to the gender of their child. It is inevitable that these socialization practices define and shape male and female behavior.

Children even act as enforcers of gender roles. Children will punish through statements or teasing of other children for playing with toys associated with the other gender (Langlois and Downs, 1980). Children know which other children act most often as the enforcers (McGuire, Martin, Fabes, and Hanish, 2007, as cited in Martin and Ruble, 2010). Thus, children learn to play only with gender "appropriate" toys or risk social sanctions. In adolescence, there is a continuation of this pattern, as adolescents report pressure from peers to act in gender-conforming ways (Kornienko, Santos, Martin, and Granger, 2016).

Children often expect other children to not play with toys associated with the other gender.

It should be noted that in many instances of gender differences it is very difficult to disentangle the influence of biological and social variables. Parental practices may reinforce and enhance subtle biologically based sex differences or may obscure them. Application of the twin method to the analysis of individual differences in masculine and feminine personality attributes enables one to at least partially separate the independent roles of biological and environmental influence. In one study, monozygotic and dizygotic twins ranging in age from eight to fifteen years were administered several questionnaire measures of **masculinity** and **femininity** (Mitchell, Baker, and Jacklin, 1989). These self-report measures are based on attributes which men and women believe to be more typical of and appropriate to males and to females. An example of a masculine item is "I am often the leader among my friends," and a feminine item, "I am a kind and gentle person." The relationships between monozygotic twins proved to be much stronger than that for dizygotic twins for both femininity and, especially, masculinity scores, thus providing evidence of a genetic influence. Analysis of the data also reflected significant environmental influences.

It may be noted that masculinity and femininity are separate dimensions or traits rather than opposite ends of a single continuum. Thus, while boys tend to be higher in masculinity and girls higher in femininity, it is quite possible for a boy or a girl to obtain both high masculinity and high femininity scores. The original model of masculinity-femininity was unidimensional, meaning that as a person increased on one dimension, he or she

masculinity The extent to which a person manifests characteristics typically associated with men.

femininity The extent to which a person manifests characteristics typically associated with women.

necessarily decreased on the other dimension. The current conceptualization recognizes that individuals can have aspects of both dimensions as part of their personality.

The development of gender typing and gender-linked behaviors is a complex process in which maturational and cognitive factors are involved as well as gender and social influences. A study by Fagot and Leinbach (1989) illustrates the interaction of several of these factors. A sample of boys and girls and their parents were seen when the children were approximately eighteen months, twenty-seven months, and forty-eight months of age. At age twenty-seven months, half the children, designated as "early labelers," were able to successfully identify the gender of children and adults in photographs presented to them. The other half, who made several errors in identifying males and females, were designated as "late labelers." Differences between boys and girls, and between early and late labelers, in gender-linked behaviors at eighteen and at twenty-seven months are presented in Table 11.4. At eighteen months, there were no significant differences between the groups. However, at twenty-seven months, gender differences in male- and female-typed toy play and in aggressive behavior can be seen. In addition, these differences are strongly influenced by whether the child can successfully identify gender. The largest gender differences in gender-typed behaviors are between the boys and girls who can successfully identify gender (early labelers). Clearly, learning factors are entailed in the development of gender typing.

Kohlberg proposed that children pass through three stages as they acquire an understanding of what it means to be a male or female. The first stage is that of "basic gender identity," which consists of acquiring the basic label of oneself as a boy or girl, usually achieved by about age three. The second stage is that of "gender stability." A number of researchers have found that very young children, even when they understand that they are boys or girls, do not understand that gender is a stable attribute that does not change over time. This developmental achievement occurs somewhat later, around five or six. The third stage is "gender consistency," which is the understanding that one's gender is stable across situations. That is, one's gender is not changed by dressing in clothes of the opposite gender or by engaging in play activities preferred by the opposite gender. This is typically achieved by age six to seven. Some research has found that the gender concept does indeed develop sequentially, passing through the stages, and that this sequence has been observed across cultures (Munroe, Shimmin, and Munroe, 1984).

TABLE 11.4 Mean Percent of Time Children Spent in Gender-Stereotyped Behaviors

Child activity and child age	Boy		Girl	
	Early Labeler	Late Labeler	Early Labeler	Late Labeler
Male-typed toy play:				
18 months	4.1	6.8	.8	3.0
27 months	23.8	11.2	4.6	7.6
Female-typed toy play:				
18 months	2.7	4.7	4.5	4.1
27 months	1.9	5.1	20.8	10.2
Aggressive behavior:				
18 months	.8	2.5	1.1	.9
27 months	2.1	2.2	.4	1.9

Based on Fagot and Leinbach (1989)

An alternative to Kohlberg's view, Martin and Halverson (1981, 1987) have developed **gender schema theory**. They suggest that children develop a set of gender schemas, which are organized sets of concepts about males and females. Children begin very early to develop a basic gender identity based on a simple classification of toys and behaviors as "for males" or "for females." Using this basic categorization, they then begin to explore and gradually add more and more information to their gender schemas until they have developed a stable and consistent gender identity by about the age of seven. Of course, this does not signal the end of learning about gender, which continues throughout childhood and adolescence.

A study by Stangor and Ruble (1989) tested the gender schema model. One of the properties of a schema is that it selectively influences the kind of information one pays attention to and remembers. In this study, it was found that the proportion of pictures remembered by children that were consistent with their gender-role in contrast to pictures that were inconsistent with it, increased with age.

As we have mentioned, although gender-schema theory suggests that a stable and consistent basic gender identity is established by about age seven, new aspects of gender identity continue to develop as one grows older. Brown and Gilligan (1992) have showed that adolescence is an important time for socialization of certain aspects of the gender identity of girls. They studied how girls lose their "voice" during the transition from late childhood to adolescence. Nearly one hundred girls between the ages of seven and eighteen at a private girls' school were interviewed over a five-year period. It was found that as girls entered adolescence, they increasingly received pressure from their teachers and other adults to "be nice." They learned that in order to keep relationships, they had to lose an important part of relationships—authenticity. One of the girls says, "I do not want the image of a 'perfect girl' to hinder myself from being a truly effective human being, . . . yet, I still want to be nice, and I never want to cause any problems" (p. 41). In sum, girls' gender identity during adolescence comes to include "being nice" at the expense of being authentic.

Androgyny

Is there such a thing as a "healthy" gender identity? We have already seen how young girls making the transition from childhood to adolescence are socialized to lose a part of themselves that has traditionally been considered to be masculine—their assertiveness. At the same time it is likely that boys are being trained to lose a "feminine" part of themselves. Would it be better if children were able to retain both their masculine and feminine sides? Precisely this issue has been raised in the study of **androgyny**.

In early research, it was assumed that masculinity and femininity were two opposite ends of the same pole. If one was high in masculinity (that is, possessed traits characteristic of the male stereotype), one could not be high in femininity. Bem (1974), however, asserted that masculinity and femininity were two separate dimensions, and, therefore, a person could be high in both masculinity and femininity. As part of their gender identities, individuals could have traits characteristic of both the stereotypical male and the stereotypical female. Bem assumed that individuals who were high in both masculinity and femininity would be more flexible and adaptive. Using an inventory designed to measure both masculinity and femininity, it was found that such "androgynous" individuals did exist. Several research studies also found that individuals who were androgynous did appear to be more well-adjusted. However, there are a number of methodological problems that have made it difficult to conclude at this point that androgyny is indeed uniquely associated with better psychological adjustment (Ashmore, 1990).

Conclusions on the Development of Gender Identity and Gender Typing

Ashmore (1990) has pointed out that the development of gender identity is a product of a number of different factors, including general cultural factors, specific interactions with specific individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, etc.), and one's own self-guided activities. The result is that individuals' gender identities will vary from person to person, and it

may be meaningless to talk about "masculinity" and "femininity" as if they were global traits that individuals simply have more or less of. Ashmore suggests that culture has often been treated as if it were homogeneous, when in fact different subcultures in the United States may have different beliefs and expectations about the behavior of males and females. Individuals socialized in these subcultures may therefore have different concepts of male and female gender identities than do individuals socialized in the dominant or mainstream culture.

It is quite likely that gender typing and gender identity are functions of all the mechanisms that have been discussed: identification, selective reinforcement, cognitive labeling, and gender schemas. In addition, one cannot ignore the contribution of biological factors, even if they may be overridden by social reinforcement. In sum, gender typing and gender identity are the result of the interaction between social and biological processes, leading to personality differences between the genders and variations within each gender.

Narrative and Identity

Dan McAdams (1989; 2001) has focused on the **narrative identity**. Narrative identity is a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the past and future (McAdams and McLean, 2013). This reflects a recent more general trend toward viewing individual experience in terms of narrative constructions (Howard, 1991; Singer, 2004; Smith, 1988). What these views all have in common is the idea that people's personal realities are "constructed." How we construct our experiences of self, others, and the world determines the world we inhabit. Our constructions are significantly influenced by the cultures or subcultures in which we live. As we have seen, the self is constructed differently by different cultures. Even our experience of gender is now being seen as a social construction (Ashmore, 1990).

narrative identity A person's version of his or her life story.

Mair, and others who adopt a narrative perspective, assumes that our constructions of reality take the form of stories:

> Stories are habitations. We live in and through stories. They conjure worlds. We do not know the world other than as story world. Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are *lived* by the stories of our race and place. It is this enveloping and constituting function of stories that is especially important to sense more fully. We are, each of us, locations where the stories of our place and time become partially tellable. (1988, p. 127)

Therefore, life experience is constructed along the lines of stories. Lives have plots and subplots, and main characters and minor characters. Paul Ricoeur, a French psychoanalyst, has argued that it is how we "emplot" our lives that provides meaning for the events in it. An event without being embedded in a "plot" has no meaning. He says:

> [A] story is made out of events to the extent that plot makes events into a story. An event, consequently, must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot. A story, on the other hand, must be more than an enumeration of events in a serial order; it must make an intelligible whole of incidents. (1983, p. 152)

One's life can have a well-organized plot, a poorly organized plot, a plot that has few leads toward a productive future, or a plot poorly connected to the past.

The narrative perspective on personality is having an important influence on psychotherapy. Therapists representing psychodynamic, humanistic, and cognitive points of view have begun to view therapy as the "restorying" of an individual's life. Ricoeur (Smith, 1988) sees therapy as a process of reorganizing one's plot through sharing it with another. An important part of the healing process is the sharing of one's "untold" stories. What might be called "repressed experience" is really experience that has not previously been articulated and shared with another.

An example of how people can utilize narrative accounts to deal with a life problem is provided by Harvey, Orbuch, and Weber (1993). They studied hundreds of individuals

dealing with traumatic experiences such as incest, armed combat, an airline crash, or the loss of a loved one. They argue that it is in developing an account of the incident that the victim learns how to cope with the event and to restore a sense of meaning to life. An *account* is a "story-like construction containing attributions, trait inferences, descriptions, emotional expressions, and related material regarding self and outside world" (pp. 1–2). Confiding in others as one develops the account appears also to be an essential part of the healing process. One study by Harvey and colleagues (1991) found that there was greater recovery if the individual engaged in account making through diary work, confiding in responsive, empathic others, or participating in support groups. Feelings of completion appear to be associated with accepting loss and appear to be crucial to recovery (Cox and McAdams, 2014).

Source: wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock

Psychotherapy can be seen as the process of restorying one's life.

As we have noted, the narrative perspective has been applied to the study of identity by Dan McAdams (1989, 2001, 2013), who argues that identity is a narrative construction based on one's "life story." Our sense of ourselves, how we interpret events and experiences in our lives, comes from the sense of the "stories" we see ourselves as living. Further, our goals and motives only take on meaning in terms of our life story.

McAdams (1988) has researched this theory by collecting life stories from individuals. He had students enrolled in his developmental psychology courses complete "identity journals" in which they had to write about issues relevant to the class material. For instance, when the issue of consistency in personality was being discussed, students were asked to think about it in terms of themselves by trying to remember an incident in which they had done something completely out of character. McAdams has also interviewed midlife adults (see the interview format in Table 11.5). McAdams's research is a good example of the personological tradition of research in personality. That is, his interest has been in studying the life paths of whole individuals rather than in studying one aspect of behavior (say, achievement motivation) across large groups of individuals.

McAdams, like Erikson, argues that adolescence is the major period of identity and life-story construction, although one continues this process for the rest of one's life. Infancy contributes the "feeling tone" of the story—such as fundamentally hopeful or frightening—based on early experiences with caretakers. Early childhood contributes a variety of images (see Highlight 11.1). In late childhood, children are able to work with

TABLE 11.5 McAdams's Life Story Interview Format

I.	Life Chapters
II.	Specific Scenes
	A. Peak Experience (High Point)
	B. Nadir Experience (Low Point)
	C. Turning Point
	D. Earliest Memory
	E. Significant Childhood Memory
	F. Significant Adolescent Memory
	G. Significant Adult Memory
	H. Significant Other Memory
III.	Important Persons
IV.	Future Script
V.	Stresses and Problems
VI.	Personal Ideology
VII.	Life Motif or Message
VIII.	Other

Source: McAdams, 1993.

Young children begin to develop their life stories by playing the role of fantasy characters.

Early Childhood Roots of the Life Story

A turning point in my daughter's life was the day she saw *Snow White*. It was almost a year ago; she was three years old. The original Walt Disney version of the fairy tale was playing at a local theater, so I took the opportunity to escort Ruth Megan to her first full-length movie.

Since that day, my family has lived with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. All seven of the dwarfs ride with us in the car to nursery school—Grumpy, Happy, Doc, Bashful, Sleepy, Sneezy, and Dopey. The Wicked Queen, the Peddler Woman (who is the Queen in disguise), the Queen's Huntsman, and the Handsome Prince frequently show up for dinner. When she first met a classmate named William, Ruth told him that she lived in a little cottage (like the Dwarfs') tucked far away in the woods. (Incredulous, William told her she was crazy, and then reported that he would be traveling to nursery school next week in his flying car.) When William comes over for lunch these days, Ruth pretends that she is the Wicked Queen and he is the Queen's Huntsman, and the two of them terrorize her little sister, Amanda, who is 1 1/2 and cast in the pitiful role of Snow White. They steal her stuffed animals and threaten to lock her up, even kill her (William's idea, I am sure); they hide poisoned apples under her pillow. On other days, Ruth herself is Snow White, organizing regular birthday parties for Grumpy, her favorite dwarf, taping pink crepe paper all over the dining room, making birthday cakes out of sugar, pepper, oregano, and water.

My daughter is obsessed with the story of Snow White! Yet it is not so much the integrated story—from beginning to end—that so fascinates her. Rather, it is various pieces of the story, easily divorced from their coherent narrative context, that she appropriates into her daily life of fantasy, play, and fun. One day she is the Wicked Queen. The next day she is Bashful. Her identification with each of these characters is ephemeral and idiosyncratic. Recently she was Grumpy, rescuing three of the "Little Ponies" who were stranded on a cliff. Yet in *Snow White*, Grumpy never rescues anybody. And there are no ponies in the movie—they originate from a popular television show.

Although Ruth seems to recognize that stories have a certain canonical form, she does not insist that her own renditions conform to the canon. Her make-believe world is inconsistent, illogical, and very fluid. It is populated by a rich and ever-expanding repertoire of *images*. It is the images in stories—not the stories themselves—that Ruth zeroes in on. This is not to say that she cannot follow a story's plot or that she fails to appreciate the dramatic building of tension in narrative, the climax, and the denouement. Ruth has a pretty good sense of the whole story, from beginning to end, of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. But it is not the whole story that captures her imagination, for it is too big and complex, too systematic and progressive, to find its way *in toto* into her daily world of imagination and play. Instead, Ruth dwells on the images, reworking them daily into her own fantastical plots.

Source: McAdams, 1990.

themes, and they begin to construct more truly story-like narratives about themselves and the events in their lives. During adolescence, individuals rearrange their past to develop a story of self that will help them face the future.

As adults face obstacles and setbacks, the story takes a turn toward redemption. People whose life stories include themes of personal agency and exploration tend to show better psychological adjustment (McAdams and McLean, 2013). As individuals progress into adulthood, they have a number of different *imagoes*, or self-images, of themselves inside. This set of self-images acts like a Greek chorus commenting on and guiding behavior. McAdams (1988) found in his study of midlife adults that, although they were relatively normal individuals, their life story accounts were described as if they were "multiple personalities." In particular, they often had two conflicting primary self-images.

Some of the polarities in self-images found were: adventurer/housewife, humanist/barbarian, good citizen/bum, and worker/escapist. One subject, for instance, struggled with his two conflicting images, one of himself as an artist (with all its bohemian connotations) and the other of himself as a "successful, worldly moneymaker." Ultimately individuals integrate the various imagoes into one.

Summary

1. *Identity*, in contrast to self-concept, consists of all the things one identifies with—the things one considers to define who one is. An important component of identity is the sense of continuity in one's life.
2. Erikson felt that continuity and experiencing oneself are important aspects of identity. He believed that late adolescence is the time of much identity achievement. Marcia, extending the work of Erik Erickson, postulates that there are four different *identity statuses* during adolescence: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement.
3. Research has shown different patterns on how individuals move through the four identity statuses.
4. Erickson predicted that identity development would be more closely tied to the development of intimacy for women than for men. While some research has supported this, the results are complex and there are no clear patterns that characterize all or most of one gender in contrast to the other.
5. Ethnic identity development appears to pass through stages, going from a diffused or unquestioned state to a clearly defined and worked-out state. Strong ethnic identity appears to be associated with higher levels of self-esteem.
6. Biculturated individuals, who are able to flexibly utilize the best from both the majority culture and from their own minority culture, appear to be the healthiest psychologically.
7. There appear to be relatively few basic psychological differences between the genders, although members of the two genders are socialized to behave in different ways.
8. Biological theories of sex differences assume that these differences have a genetic basis. Psychodynamic theories focus on identification with the parent. Social learning theories focus on the reinforcement of gender-typed behaviors. Cognitive labeling and gender schema theories assume that children develop concepts about what behaviors characterize being a member of a given gender. Children then assimilate information to these concepts.
9. Narrative approaches to personality assume that people's lives are bound together by the stories they tell about themselves. McAdams's narrative approach to identity assumes that identity is a *life story*.

Key Terms

androgyny (p. 208)
femininity (p. 206)
foreclosure (p. 195)
gender (p. 201)
gender identity (p. 202)
gender schema theory (p. 208)
identity (p. 193)

identity achievement (p. 195)
identity diffusion (p. 195)
masculinity (p. 206)
meta-analysis (p. 203)
moratorium (p. 195)
narrative identity (p. 209)
racial and ethnic identity (p. 197)

Thought Questions

1. Do you think your identity can be easily classified into one of the four major identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, or achievement? Or do you think your identity may include components from more than one stage?
2. How have you struggled with the issue of your racial or ethnic identity, or sexual orientation identity?
3. What do you think accounts for differences between the genders?
4. In what way do you think you have constructed a "life story" that helps you make sense out of who you are?