

Identity

- 6.8 Connect Erikson's theory of identity development to the identity status model on which most research is based.
- 6.9 Evaluate Erikson's theory from the perspective of postmodern theory, and note the theory's limitations concerning gender and culture.
- 6.10 Describe Phinney's model of ethnic identity in adolescence.
- 6.11 Explain how globalization is influencing identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood.

For me, I'm exploring who I am—trying to find out more who I am, because I'm not really sure any more. Because up till about seventh grade, I was just a kid. I was me and I never really thought about it. But now I've thought about it a lot more and I'm starting to have to make decisions about who I want to be.

—Conrad, age 13 (in Bell, 1998, p. 72)

One of the most distinctive features of adolescence is that it is a time of thinking about who you are, where your life is going, what you believe in, and how your life fits into the world around you. These are all issues of **identity**. It is the adolescent's nascent capacity for self-reflection that makes consideration of identity issues

possible. Adolescents are able to consider themselves in the abstract, in the "third person," in a way that younger children cannot. During adolescence and continuing through emerging adulthood, explorations are made into various aspects of identity, culminating in commitments that set the foundation for adult life.

Because adolescence and emerging adulthood are crucial periods for identity development, theorists and researchers have devoted a considerable amount of attention to this topic. In this section, we will look first at Erikson's theory of the adolescent identity crisis, then at the research that has been conducted to explore Erikson's theory. After that, we will consider the roles of gender and culture in adolescent identity development, with a special focus on ethnic identity.

psychohistory The psychological analysis of important historical figures.

identity Individuals' perceptions of their characteristics and abilities, their beliefs and values, their relations with others, and how their lives fit into the world around them.

identity versus identity confusion Erikson's term for the crisis typical of the adolescent stage of life, in which individuals may follow the healthy path of establishing a clear and definite sense of who they are and how they fit into the world around them, or follow the unhealthy alternative of failing to form a stable and secure identity.

Erikson's Theory

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) is one of the most influential scholars in the history of the study of adolescent development. Indeed, he has had a substantial influence on the study of human development from infancy to old age. Drawing on his diverse experience as a teacher, psychoanalyst, ethnographer among Native Americans, and therapist of World War II veterans, he developed a comprehensive theory of human development across the life span. However, the primary focus of Erikson's work was on adolescence, and adolescent development is where he has had his greatest influence.

In Erikson's theory of human development, each period of life is characterized by a distinctive developmental issue or "crisis," as he described in his classic book *Childhood and Society* (Erikson, 1950). Each of these crises holds the potential for a healthy path of development and an unhealthy path. For example, Erikson views infancy as a period of *trust versus mistrust*. Infant development follows a healthy path, in Erikson's theory, when the infant establishes a secure sense of trust with at least one person who can be counted on to provide protection and loving care. The unhealthy path is mistrust, which results from a failure to establish that secure sense of trust.

Each stage of life has a central crisis of this kind, according to Erikson (1950). In adolescence, the crisis is **identity versus identity confusion**. The healthy path in adolescence involves establishing a clear and definite sense of who you are and how you fit into the world around you. The unhealthy alternative is identity confusion, which is a failure to form a stable and secure identity. Identity formation involves reflecting on what your traits, abilities, and interests are, and then sifting through the range of life choices available in your culture; trying out various possibilities, and ultimately making commitments. The key areas in which identity is formed are love, work, and ideology (beliefs and values) (Erikson, 1968). In Erikson's view, a failure to establish commitments in these areas by the end of adolescence reflects identity confusion.

Erikson did not assert that adolescence is the only time when identity issues arise and that once adolescence is over identity issues have been resolved, never to return. Identity issues exist early in life, from the time children first realize they have an existence separate from others, and continue far beyond adolescence as adults continue to ask themselves questions about who they are and how they fit into the world around them. As Erikson observed, "A sense of identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all. . . . It is constantly lost and regained" (1959, p. 118).



Erik Erikson proposed that the central developmental issue of adolescence is identity versus identity confusion.

Nevertheless, Erikson saw adolescence as the time when identity issues are most prominent and most crucial to development. Furthermore, Erikson argued that it is important to establish a clear identity in adolescence as a basis for initial commitments in adult life and as a foundation for later stages of development. Erikson viewed this as true of all his stages; developing via the healthy path provides a stable foundation for the next stage of development, whereas developing via the unhealthy path is problematic not only in that stage but as an unreliable foundation for the stages to come.

How does an adolescent develop a healthy identity? In Erikson's view, identity formation is founded partly in the **identifications** the adolescent has accumulated in childhood (Erikson, 1968). Children *identify* with their parents and

other loved ones as they grow up—that is, children love and admire them and want to be like them. When adolescence comes, adolescents reflect on their identifications, rejecting some and embracing others. The ones that remain are integrated into the adolescent self, combined of course with the adolescent's own individual characteristics. Thus, adolescents create an identity in part by modeling themselves after parents, friends, and others they have loved in childhood, not simply imitating them but integrating parts of their loved ones' behavior and attitudes into their own personality.

The other key process that contributes to identity formation, according to Erikson, is exploring various possible life options. Erikson described adolescence as often including a **psychosocial moratorium**, a period when adult responsibilities are postponed as young people try on various possible selves. Thus, falling in love is part of identity formation because during this process you get a clearer sense of yourself through intimate interactions with other persons. Trying out various possible jobs—and, for college students, various possible majors—is part of identity formation, too, because these explorations give you a clearer sense of what you are good at and what you truly enjoy. Erikson saw ideological exploration as part of identity formation as well. "Trying out" a set of religious or political beliefs by learning about them and participating in organizations centered around a particular set of beliefs serves to clarify for adolescents what they believe and how they wish to live. In Erikson's view, the psychosocial moratorium is not characteristic of all societies but only those with individualistic values, in which individual choice is supported (Erikson, 1968).

Most young people in Western societies go through the explorations of the psychosocial moratorium and then settle on more enduring choices in love, work, and ideology as they enter adulthood. However, some young people find it difficult to sort out the possibilities that life presents to them, and they remain in a state of identity confusion after their peers have gone on to establish a secure identity. For many of these adolescents, according to Erikson, this may be a result of unsuccessful adaptation in previous stages of development. Just as identity formation provides the foundation for further development in adulthood, development in childhood provides the basis for development in adolescence. If development in any of the earlier stages has been unusually problematic, then identity confusion is more likely to be the outcome of adolescent development. For other adolescents, identity confusion may be the result of an inability to sort through all the choices available to them and decide among them.

At the extreme, according to Erikson, such adolescents may develop a **negative identity**, "an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages

identifications Relationships formed with others, especially in childhood, in which love for another person leads one to want to be like that person.

psychosocial moratorium Erikson's term for a period during adolescence when adult responsibilities are postponed as young people try on various possible selves.

negative identity Erikson's term for an identity based on what a person has seen portrayed as most undesirable or dangerous.

of development, had been presented to them as most undesirable or dangerous" (Erikson, 1968, p. 174). Such adolescents reject the range of acceptable possibilities for love, work, and ideology offered by their society, and instead deliberately embrace what their society considers unacceptable, strange, contemptible, and offensive. Youth subcultures such as skinheads and "metalheads" (fans of heavy metal music) have been formed by adolescents who share a negative identity (Arnett, 1996; Roe, 1992).

Research on Identity

Erikson was primarily a theoretical writer and a therapist rather than a researcher, but his ideas have inspired a wealth of research over the past 30 years. One of Erikson's most influential interpreters has been James Marcia (1966, 1980, 1989, 1993, 1994, 1999; Marcia & Carpendale, 2004). Marcia constructed a measure called the Identity Status Interview that classified adolescents into one of four identity statuses: *diffusion*, *moratorium*, *foreclosure*, or *achievement*. This system of four categories, known as the **identity status model**, has also been used by scholars who have constructed questionnaires to investigate identity development in adolescence rather than using Marcia's interview (e.g., Adams, 1999; Benson, Harris, & Rogers, 1992; Grotevant & Adams, 1984; Kroger, 2007).

As shown in Table 6.2, each of these classifications involves a different combination of exploration and commitment. Erikson (1968) used the term **identity crisis** to describe the process through which young people construct their identity, but Marcia and other current scholars prefer the term *exploration* (Adams et al., 1992; Grotevant, 1987; Kroger, 2007; Marcia & Carpendale, 2004; Waterman, 1992, 2007). Crisis implies that the process inherently involves anguish and struggle, whereas exploration implies a more positive investigation of possibilities.

Identity diffusion is a status that combines no exploration with no commitment. For adolescents in identity diffusion, no commitments have been made among the choices available to them. Furthermore, no exploration is taking place. The adolescent at this stage is not seriously attempting to sort through potential choices and make enduring commitments.

Identity moratorium involves exploration but no commitment. This is a stage of actively trying out different personal,

Is the sense of identity conscious? At times, of course, it seems only too conscious. For between the double prongs of inner need and inexorable outer demand, the as yet experimenting individual may become the victim of a transitory extreme identity consciousness, which is the common core of the many forms of "self-consciousness" typical for youth. Where the processes of identity formation are prolonged (a factor which can bring creative gain), such preoccupation with the "self-image" also prevails. We are thus most aware of our identity when we are just about to gain it and when we (with that startle which motion pictures call a "double take") are somewhat surprised to make its acquaintance; or, again, when we are just about to enter a crisis and feel the encroachment of identity confusion.

—Erik Erikson (1968), p. 165

occupational, and ideological possibilities. This classification is based on Erikson's (1968) idea of the psychosocial moratorium, discussed earlier. Different possibilities are being tried on, sifted through, some discarded and some selected, in order for adolescents to be able to determine which of the available possibilities are best suited to them.

Adolescents who are in the **identity foreclosure** classification have not experimented with a range of possibilities but have nevertheless committed themselves to certain choices—commitment, but no exploration. This is often a result of their parents' strong influence. Marcia and most other scholars tend to see exploration as a necessary part of forming a healthy identity, and therefore see foreclosure as unhealthy. We will discuss this issue shortly.

Finally, the classification that combines exploration and commitment is **identity achievement**. Identity achievement is the classification for young people who have made definite personal, occupational, and ideological choices. By definition, identity achievement is preceded by a period of identity moratorium in which exploration takes place. If commitment takes place without exploration, it is considered identity foreclosure rather than identity achievement.

Two findings stand out from the many studies that have been conducted using the identity status model. One is that adolescents' identity status tends to be related to other aspects of their development (Kroger, 2003, 2007; Schwartz & Pantin, 2006). The identity achievement and moratorium statuses are notably related to a variety of favorable aspects

TABLE 6.2 The Four Identity Statuses

		Commitment	
		Yes	No
Exploration	Yes	Achievement	Moratorium
	No	Foreclosure	Diffusion

identity status model An approach to conceptualizing and researching identity development that classifies people into one of four identity categories: foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium, or achievement.

identity crisis Erikson's term for the intense period of struggle that adolescents may experience in the course of forming an identity.

identity diffusion An identity status that combines no exploration with no commitment. No commitments have been made among the available paths of identity formation, and the person is not seriously attempting to sort through potential choices and make enduring commitments.

identity moratorium An identity status that involves exploration but no commitment, in which young people are trying out different personal, occupational, and ideological possibilities.

identity foreclosure An identity status in which young people have not experimented with a range of possibilities but have nevertheless committed themselves to certain choices—commitment, but no exploration.

identity achievement The identity status of young people who have made definite personal, occupational, and ideological choices following a period of exploring possible alternatives.

of development. Adolescents in these categories of identity development are more likely than adolescents in the foreclosure or diffusion categories to be self-directed, cooperative, and good at problem solving. Adolescents in the achievement category are rated more favorably in some respects than adolescents in the moratorium category. As you might expect, moratorium adolescents are more likely than achievement adolescents to be indecisive and unsure of their opinions.

In contrast, adolescents in the diffusion and foreclosure categories of identity development tend to have less favorable development in other areas as well (Abu-Rayya, 2006; Kroger, 2003; Waterman, 2007). Diffusion is considered to be the least favorable of the identity statuses and is viewed as predictive of later psychological problems. Compared with adolescents in the achievement or moratorium statuses, adolescents in the diffusion status are lower in self-esteem and self-control. Diffusion status is also related to high anxiety, apathy, and disconnected relationships with parents.

The foreclosure status is more complex in its relation to other aspects of development (Hardy et al., 2011; Meeus, 2011). Adolescents in the foreclosure status tend to be higher on conformity, conventionality, and obedience to authority than adolescents in the other statuses (Kroger, 2003). These are generally considered negative outcomes by researchers from Western majority cultures, although they are virtues in many non-Western cultures (Heine et al., 1999; Shweder et al., 2006). Also, adolescents with the foreclosure status tend to have especially close relationships with their parents, which may lead them to accept their parents' values and guidance without going through a period of exploration as adolescents with the achievement status have done (Phinney, 2000). Again, this is sometimes portrayed as negative by psychologists who believe it is necessary to go through a period of exploration in order to develop a mature identity, but this view rests partly on values that favor individualism and independent thinking.

The other prominent finding in research on identity formation is that it takes longer to reach identity achievement than scholars had expected. In fact, for most young people this status is reached—if at all—in emerging adulthood or beyond rather than in adolescence. Studies that have compared adolescents from ages 12 through 18 have found that, although the proportion of adolescents in the diffusion category decreases with age and the proportion of adolescents in the identity achievement category increases with age, even by early emerging adulthood less than half are classified as having reached identity achievement (Kroger, et al., 2010; Meeus, 2011; van Hoof, 1999).

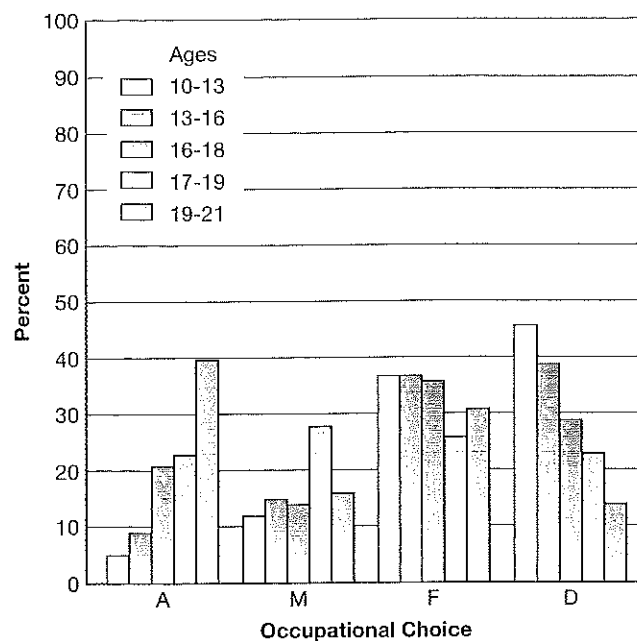


FIGURE 6.3 Changes in identity status with age. The numbers indicate the percentage of people in each identity status category at each age. A = Achievement, M = Moratorium, F = Foreclosure, D = Diffusion. Source: Waterman (1999).

An example of this pattern, reported in an American study (Waterman, 1999), is shown in Figure 6.3. Similar findings were reported in a study of 12- to 27-year olds in the Netherlands (Meeus et al., 1999).

Studies of college students find that progress toward identity achievement also takes place during the college years, but mainly in the specific area of occupational identity rather than for identity more generally (Waterman, 1992). Some studies indicate that identity achievement may come faster for emerging adults who do not attend college, perhaps because in the college environment young people's ideas about themselves are challenged and they are encouraged to question previously held ideas (Schwartz et al., 2011). However, even for noncollege emerging adults, the majority have not reached identity achievement by age 21 (Kroger et al., 2010; Waterman, 1999).

Emerging adulthood is now regarded by many identity researchers as an especially important time for identity development (Coté, 2006; Schwartz & Pantin, 2006). Even 40 years ago, Erikson observed that it was taking longer and longer for young people in industrialized societies to achieve identity formation. He commented on the "prolonged adolescence" that was becoming increasingly common in such societies and how this was leading to a prolonged period of identity formation, "during which the young adult through

postmodern identity A conception of identity as complex and as highly variable across contexts and across time.

intimacy versus isolation Erikson's term for the central issue of young adulthood, in which persons face alternatives between committing themselves to another person in an intimate relationship or becoming isolated as a consequence of an inability to form an enduring intimate relationship.

free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society" (1968, p. 156). Considering the changes that have taken place since Erikson made this observation in the 1960s, including much higher ages of marriage and parenthood and longer education, Erikson's observation applies to far more young people today than it did then (Coté, 2000, 2006). Indeed, the conception of emerging adulthood as a distinct period of life is based to a considerable extent on the fact that, over recent decades, the late teens and early 20s have become a period of "free role experimentation" for an increasing proportion of young people (Arnett, 2000a, 2004a, 2007a). The achievement of an adult identity comes later, compared with earlier generations, as many emerging adults use the years of their late teens and early 20s for identity explorations in love, work, and ideology.

Critiques and Elaborations of Identity Theory and Research

Erikson's theory has dominated identity theory and research for over half a century, and like any long-standing theory it has been critiqued and modified over time. Three of the most prominent critiques have been a critique of the identity status model, a gender critique, and a cultural critique. Two important elaborations of identity theory and research have been the study of ethnic identity among minority groups and the analysis of how globalization influences identity development. The following sections explore each of these topics.

The Identity Status Model: A Postmodern Perspective In recent years, the identity status model has come under increasing criticism from scholars who view it as a narrow and outdated model of identity formation (Coté, 2000; Schwartz, 2005; van Hoof & Raaijmakers, 2003). According to these critics, identity is not nearly as stable and unitary as the identity status model portrays it, nor does identity development proceed through a predictable set of stages that culminate in identity achievement some time in late adolescence or emerging adulthood. On the contrary, in this view, the most common form of identity today is the **postmodern identity**, which is composed of diverse elements that do not always form a unified, consistent self (Schacter, 2005a, 2005b).

The postmodern identity changes across contexts, so that people may show a different identity to friends, family, coworkers, and others. It also changes continuously, not just in adolescence and emerging adulthood but throughout the life course, as people add new elements to their identities and discard others. As noted in Chapter 1, a similar theme has been sounded by globalization theorists, who have argued that young people around the world increasingly develop a complex identity that combines elements from their culture and the global media culture and that changes as these cultures change (Arnett, 2002a; Giddens, 2000; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). The identity status model continues to dominate research on identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood, but the postmodern critique may lead to new methods that will expand our understanding of identity issues.

applying your knowledge

Which better fits your own sense of identity, the identity status model or the postmodern identity theory? How would you devise a study to test the claims of the postmodern identity theorists?

Gender and Identity Another critique of identity theory and research concerns the role of gender. Erikson has been the subject of theoretical critiques for being biased toward male development (Gilligan, 1982; Montgomery, 2005). Erikson believed that to some extent "anatomy is destiny," meaning that there are sex differences in psychological development, including identity development, that are based on biological sex differences (Erikson, 1950, 1968). Specifically, he believed that women's biology, represented by the "inner space" of the uterus and the capacity for bearing children, makes them oriented toward relationships with others, whereas men's biology, represented by the penis, makes them oriented toward independent, instrumental activity. With regard to adolescence, in Erikson's theory forming an identity means becoming separate and independent from others; consequently, according to Carol Gilligan (1982) and others, Erikson presents the male goal of striving for an independent identity in adolescence as the healthy standard for normal development. In contrast, adolescent girls' emphasis on relationships with others is a less-desirable deviation from normal development (Archer, 1992; Sorell & Montgomery, 2001).

Until recently, studies often found gender differences in identity development, especially in relation to occupational exploration (Kroger, 2007; Waterman, 1992). That is, some evidence suggested that females were more willing than males to constrain their occupational exploration to maintain their relationships (Archer, 1989; Cooper & Grotevant, 1987; Marcia, 1993; Patterson et al., 1992). That is, some females seemed to be less willing than males to take advantage of an educational or occupational opportunity that would require them to move a great distance because that would mean leaving their parents, their friends, and perhaps their romantic partner.

In Erikson's theory, this means that intimacy was often a higher priority than identity for females, whereas for males identity tended to come before intimacy (Gilligan, 1982; Lytle et al., 1997; Miller, 1991; Scheidel & Marcia, 1985; Surrey, 1991). According to Erikson, **intimacy versus isolation** is the central issue of young adulthood. Establishing intimacy means uniting your newly formed identity with another person in an intimate relationship. The alternative is isolation, characterized by an inability to form an enduring intimate relationship. Research on the relation between identity and intimacy has often focused on gender differences. Most studies until about a decade ago indicated that developmental processes of forming an identity and establishing intimacy took place simultaneously for females, whereas males tended to achieve identity before intimacy (Lytle et al., 1997; Miller, 1991; Surrey, 1991).

However, the most recent studies have found **no gender differences in identity and intimacy patterns**. This finding



Intimacy issues may arise alongside identity issues for some young women.

has been reported on samples in the United States (Montgomery, 2005), the Netherlands (Meeus & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010), Australia (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006), and Israel (Seginer & Noyman, 2005). The change may be due to increasing gender equality in Western countries, as noted in Chapter 5.

- 3) **Culture and Identity** Erik Erikson's cultural background was diverse—he was the son of Danish parents, raised in Germany, and spent most of his adult life in the United States—and he was acutely aware of the relation between culture and identity formation. He spent time as an ethnographer among the Sioux and Yurok tribes of Native Americans, and he devoted a chapter in *Childhood and Society* (1950) to adolescent identity development in these tribes. Nevertheless, virtually all of the research inspired by Erikson's theory has taken place among White middle-class adolescents in the United States. What can we say about identity development among adolescents in other cultures?

One observation that can be made is that, although Erikson sought to ground his theory in historical and cultural context, his discussion of identity development nevertheless assumes an independent self that is allowed to make free choices in love, work, and ideology. The focus of Erikson's identity theory is on how young people develop an understanding of themselves as unique individuals. However, as we have discussed, this conception of the self is distinctively Western and is historically recent (Baumeister, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder et al., 2006; Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). In most cultures until recently, the self has been understood as interdependent, defined in relation to others, rather than as independent. Even today, Erikson's assertions

of the prominence of identity issues in adolescence may apply more to modern Western adolescents than to adolescents in other cultures.

A related cultural observation is that the psychosocial moratorium, the period of exploration that Erikson viewed as a standard part of identity formation, is considerably more possible in some cultures than others (Arnett, 2006a; Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). In today's industrialized societies, there are few pressures on young people to become economic contributors in childhood or adolescence. Young people in these societies are generally allowed a long psychological moratorium in adolescence and emerging adulthood to try out various possible life choices in love, work, and ideology. However, the experience of adolescence is often much different in traditional cultures. Explorations in love are clearly limited or even nonexistent in cultures where dating is not allowed and marriages are either arranged by parents or strongly influenced by them. Explorations in work are limited in cultures where the economy is simple and offers only a limited range of choices.

Limitations on exploration in both love and work are narrower for girls in traditional cultures than for boys. With regard to love, as noted in Chapter 5, some degree of sexual experimentation is encouraged for adolescent boys in most cultures, but for girls sexual experimentation is more likely to be restricted or forbidden. With regard to work, in most traditional cultures today and for most of human history in every culture, adolescent girls have been designated by their cultures for the roles of wife and mother, and these were essentially the only choices open to them.

In terms of ideology, too, a psychosocial moratorium has been the exception in human cultures rather than the standard. In most cultures, young people have been expected to grow up to believe what adults teach them to believe, without questioning it. It is only in recent history, and mainly in industrialized Western countries, that these expectations have changed and that it has come to be seen as desirable for adolescents and emerging adults to think for themselves, decide



Identity explorations are often limited in traditional cultures, especially for girls. Here, girls in Zambia cultivate a field.

on their own beliefs, and make their life choices independently (Arnett, 1998a; Bellah et al., 1985).

For modern young people in the West, then, identity development is a longer and more complex process than in the past and compared with traditional cultures. As we will see later in this chapter, this is increasingly true for the rest of the world as well, as industrialization increases worldwide and as Western values of individualism influence traditional cultures through globalization (Schlegel & Hewlett, 2010).

Ethnic Identity

In discussing identity, we have noted that in Erikson's theory the three key areas of identity formation are love, work, and ideology. For a large and growing proportion of adolescents in industrialized societies, one aspect of ideology is beliefs about what it means to be a member of an ethnic minority within a society dominated by the majority culture. Scholarly attention to this topic has increased in recent years as immigration from developing countries to industrialized societies has grown and as scholars have begun to devote greater attention to cultural issues in development (Berry, 2010).

Like other identity issues, issues of ethnic identity come to the forefront in adolescence because of the cognitive capacities that adolescents develop (Pahl & Way, 2006; Portes, Dunham, & Castillo, 2000). One aspect of the growing capacity for self-reflection among adolescents who belong to ethnic minorities is likely to be a sharpened awareness of what it means for them to be a member of their minority group. Group terms such as *African American*, *Chinese Canadian*, and *Turkish Dutch* take on a new meaning as adolescents can now think about what these terms mean and how the term for their ethnic group applies to themselves. Also, as a consequence of their growing capacity to think about what others think about them, adolescents become more acutely aware of the prejudices and stereotypes that others may hold about their ethnic group.



Adolescents with a bicultural ethnic identity are able to alternate their identities depending on the group they are with.

Because adolescents and emerging adults who are members of ethnic minorities have to confront such issues, identity development is likely to be more complex for them than for those who belong to the majority culture (Phinney, 2000, 2006). Consider, for example, identity development in the area of love. Love—along with dating and sex—is an area where cultural conflicts are especially likely to arise for adolescents who are members of ethnic minorities. Part of identity development in Western majority cultures means trying out different possibilities in love by forming emotionally intimate relationships with different people and gaining sexual experience. However, this model is in sharp conflict with the values of many ethnic minority groups. In most Asian American groups, for example, recreational dating is disapproved, and sexual experimentation before marriage is considered disgraceful—especially for females (Qin, 2009; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Wong, 1997). Similarly, among Latinos, gaining sexual experience in adolescence is considered wrong for girls, and they are often highly restricted by their parents and their brothers to prevent any violation of this norm (O'Sullivan & Hearn, 2008). Young people in these ethnic groups face a challenge in reconciling the values of their ethnic group on such issues with the values of the majority culture, to which they are inevitably exposed through school, the media, and peers (Qin, 2009; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992).

How, then, does identity development take place for young people who are members of minority groups within Western societies? To what extent do they develop an identity that reflects the values of the majority culture, and to what extent do they retain the values of their minority group? One scholar who has done extensive work on these questions among American minorities is Jean Phinney (1990, 2000, 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1987; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). On the basis of her research, Phinney has concluded that adolescents who are members of minority groups have four different ways of responding to their awareness of their ethnicity (Table 6.3).

TABLE 6.3 Four Possible Ethnic Identity Statuses

		Identification With Ethnic Group	
		High	Low
Identification with Majority Culture	High	Bicultural	Assimilated
	Low	Separated	Marginal

Examples

Assimilation: "I don't really think of myself as Asian American, just as American."

Separation: "I am not part of two cultures. I am just Black."

Marginality: "When I'm with my Indian friends, I feel White, and when I'm with my White friends, I feel Indian. I don't really feel like I belong with either of them."

Biculturalism: "Being both Mexican and American means having the best of both worlds. You have different strengths you can draw from in different situations."

Source: Based on Phinney & Devich-Navarro (1997).

Assimilation is the option that involves leaving behind the ways of one's ethnic group and adopting the values and way of life of the majority culture. This is the path that is reflected in the idea of American society as a "melting pot" that blends people of diverse origins into one national culture. **Marginality** involves rejecting one's culture of origin but also feeling rejected by the majority culture. Some adolescents feel little identification with the culture of their parents and grandparents, nor do they feel accepted and integrated into American society. **Separation** is the approach that involves associating only with members of one's own ethnic group and rejecting the ways of the majority culture. **Biculturalism** involves developing a dual identity, one based in the ethnic group of origin and one based in the majority culture. Being bicultural means moving back and forth between the ethnic culture and the majority culture, and alternating identities as appropriate.

Which of these ethnic identity statuses is most common among minority adolescents? The bicultural status is the most common status among Mexican Americans and Asian Americans, as well as among some European minority groups such as Turkish adolescents in the Netherlands and Pakistani adolescents in Great Britain (Hutnik & Street, 2010; Marks et al., 2011; Verkuyten, 2002). However, separation is the most common ethnic identity status among African American adolescents, and marginality is pervasive among Native American adolescents (see the Cultural Focus box). Of course, each ethnic group is diverse and contains adolescents with a variety of different ethnic identity statuses.

Adolescents tend to be more aware of their ethnic identity when they are in the minority. For example, in one study, Latino adolescents attending a predominantly non-Latino school reported significantly higher levels of ethnic identity than adolescents in a predominantly Latino or a balanced Latino/non-Latino school (Umaña-Taylor, 2005). Recently, Phinney (2006, 2008) has proposed that emerging adulthood may be an especially important time for developing ethnic identity because emerging adults often enter new contexts (new schools, new jobs, perhaps new living situations) that may involve greater contact with people outside their ethnic group and thus sharpen their awareness of their ethnic identity.

Is a strong ethnic identity related to other aspects of development in adolescence and emerging adulthood? For the most part, having a well-defined ethnic identity appears to play a positive role in adolescents' lives (Hughes et al., 2009). Specifically, studies have found that having a strong sense of one's ethnicity is related to a variety of other favorable aspects of development, such as overall well-being, academic achievement, and lower rates of risk behavior

(Giang & Wittig, 2006; St. Louis & Liem, 2005; Yasui et al., 2005; Yip & Fuligni, 2002).

Some scholars have argued that, for African American adolescents in particular, cultivating pride in their ethnic identity is an important part of their identity formation, especially in a society where they are likely to experience discrimination because of the color of their skin (Street et al., 2009; Whaley & McQueen, 2010). However, other scholars have argued that promoting ethnic identity may lead adolescents to adopt a separation identity that cuts them off from the majority culture in a way that inhibits their personal growth (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). These scholars express concern that some minority adolescents may come to define themselves in opposition to the majority culture—developing a negative identity in Erikson's (1968) terms—in a way that may interfere with developing a positive identity of their own.

The separation response is, at least in part, a result of the discrimination and prejudice that minorities often face in American society and that young people become more fully aware of as they reach adolescence. Their awareness of discrimination may also increase with the length of time their family has been in the United States. An interesting finding in this research is that foreign-born adolescents tend to believe in the American ideal of equal opportunity more than minority adolescents whose families have been in the United States for a generation or more (Phinney, DuPont et al., 1994; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). This suggests that recent immigrants may expect that they or their children will become assimilated into the great American melting pot, but after a generation or two many of them come up against the realities of ethnic prejudice in American society, leading to more of a separation identity. African American adolescents tend to be more in favor of separation than adolescents from other ethnic groups, perhaps because most of them are from families who have been in the United States for many generations and who have experienced a long history of slavery, racism, and discrimination (Phinney, Devich-Navarro et al., 1994; Seaton et al., 2011).

Identity and Globalization

One identity issue that has risen in prominence in recent years is how globalization influences identity, especially for adolescents and emerging adults. Two aspects of identity stand out as issues related to globalization (Arnett, 2002a). First, as noted in Chapter 1, because of globalization more young people around the world now develop a bicultural identity, with one part of their identity rooted in their local culture while another part stems from an awareness of

assimilation In the formation of an ethnic identity, the approach that involves leaving the ethnic culture behind and adopting the ways of the majority culture.

marginality In the formation of ethnic identity, the option that involves rejecting one's culture of origin but also feeling rejected by the majority culture.

separation In the formation of ethnic identity, the approach that involves associating only with members of one's own ethnic group and rejecting the ways of the majority culture.

biculturalism In the formation of ethnic identity, the approach that involves developing a dual identity, one based in the ethnic group of origin and one based in the majority culture.

hybrid identity An identity that integrates elements of various cultures.

their relation to the global culture. For example, India has a growing, vigorous high-tech economic sector, led largely by young people. However, even the better-educated young people, who have become full-fledged members of the global economy, still mostly prefer to have an arranged marriage, in accordance with Indian tradition (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012). They also generally expect to care for their parents in old age, again in accordance with Indian tradition. Thus they have one identity for participating in the global economy and succeeding in the fast-paced world of high technology, and another identity, rooted in Indian tradition, that they maintain with respect to their families and their personal lives.

Although developing a bicultural identity means retaining a local identity alongside a global identity, there is no doubt that many cultures are being modified by globalization, specifically by the introduction of global media, free market economics, democratic institutions, increased length of formal schooling, and delayed entry into marriage and parenthood (Jensen, 2008; Larson et al., 2010). These changes often alter traditional cultural practices and beliefs, and may lead less to a bicultural identity than to a hybrid identity integrating local culture with elements of the global culture (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

Increasing immigration is one of the forces promoting globalization (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Jensen, 2008), and identities become even more complicated for young people who are immigrants. They may develop identities that combine their native culture, the local culture to which they have immigrated, and the global culture, along with various hybrids, leading to a multicultural identity or a complex hybrid identity. Furthermore, people living in a culture to which immigrants have come may incorporate aspects of the immigrants' culture into their own identities. Thus for an increasing number of the world's young people, as Hermans and Kempen (1998) observe, "Different and contrasting cultures can be part of a repertoire of collective voices playing their part in a multivoiced self" (p. 118).

2) A second identity-related consequence of globalization is that it seems to be leading to an increase in identity confusion—a marginalized identity, in Phinney's scheme—among young people in traditional cultures. As local cultures change in response to globalization, most young people manage to adapt to the changes and develop a bicultural or hybrid identity that provides the basis for living in their local culture and also participating in the global culture. For some young people, however, adapting to the rapid changes taking place in their cultures is more difficult. The images, values, and opportunities they perceive as being part of the global culture undermine their belief in the value of local cultural practices. At the same time, the ways of the global culture seem out of reach to them, too foreign to everything they know from their direct experience. Rather than becoming bicultural, they may experience themselves as marginalized, excluded from both their local culture and the global culture, truly belonging to neither.

Identity confusion among young people may be reflected in problems such as depression, suicide, and substance use: A variety of cultures have experienced a sharp increase in



Young people in traditional cultures may develop a bicultural or hybrid identity in response to globalization. Here, a young man in India reads *Harry Potter*.

suicide and substance use among their young people since their rapid move toward joining the global culture (Arnett, 2002a; Chenhall & Senior, 2009). This increase in these problems seems to indicate the difficulty that some young people in traditional cultures experience in forming a stable identity in the context of the rapid social changes caused by globalization. Whether this means that young people in traditional cultures are more likely than young people in the West to experience identity confusion remains to be studied.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Which identity status is associated with the worst outcomes in adolescence?
2. Why does Erikson's theory have limited applications in more collectivistic cultures?
3. What are some reasons an ethnic minority might develop a separation orientation?
4. How does globalization contribute to identity confusion?