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Self-Definitions and a Whole Identity : Formation of Self-Definitions in Specific Domains Leads in the Postmodern Age to a Whole Identity Formation

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SELF-DEFINITIONS AND A WHOLE IDENTITY. FORMATION OF SELF-DEFINITIONS IN SPECIFIC DOMAINS LEADS IN THE POSTMODERN AGE TO A WHOLE IDENTITY FORMATION¹

ABSTRACT

Some researchers on self and identity have contested Erikson's view of the adolescent identity formation pattern (i.e. the achieved identity) and proposed the postmodern identity instead. The problem, however, is that the two theories have not been integrated into a general theory of adolescent identity formation in the postmodern age. Although Schachter integrated them through his idea of the "identity configuration", he paid too much attention to the configuration itself, and therefore the total dynamics in his identity study was eventually a centralized dynamics like Erikson's rather than decentralized dynamics. In this article, I move Schachter's emphasis back to the level of specific domains. Additionally, I contend that adolescents in the postmodern age take two different positions in their identity formation process on the level of specific domains: "the specific domains position" and "the whole position". Finally, I elaborate on the function of the two different positions on this level with the help of Hermans' theory of dialogical self.

Key words: adolescent identity formation, postmodern identity, self-definitions, position, decentralization.

Late adolescence is the developmental stage when young men and women consider self-definitions for their adult lives. The self-definitions in late-adolescence concern the occupational roles for both males and females, although the occupation itself is not always a strong predictor for the identity of female adolescents (Schenkel & Marcia, 1972). Many researchers have thought it important to understand the occupational roles of adolescents in a wide range of contexts, such as attitudes toward sex roles, family planning, and

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interpersonal relationships (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Grotevant, Thorbecke & Meyer, 1982; Thorbecke & Grotevant, 1982).

Erik H. Erikson (1950/1963, 1956, 1959, 1968) argued that the main adolescent developmental task was ego identity formation or the establishment of a sense of identity. He classified adolescents into “identity achievement” or “identity diffusion” categories according to whether the identity was established or not.

1. HISTORICAL TRANSITIONS OF IDENTITY FORMATION PATTERNS

1.1. FROM THE ACHIEVED TO THE MANAGED

Baumeister & Tice (1986) acknowledged that Erikson proposed his idea of identity formation during the period of industrialization and urbanization: that is in the “modern age”. Côté (1996) located Erikson’s achieved identity formation pattern historically within the three levels of his analytical theory: social identity, personal identity, and ego identity. Below, I focus on and explain his social identity in the context of my purpose in this article. His notions of personal identity and ego identity will appear in the middle of the explanation.

Côté described three different patterns of identity formation according to different historical periods: the “ascribed identity” in the pre-modern age, the “achieved” one in the early-modern age, and the “managed” one in the postmodern (contemporary) age². Côté (1996) explained that in the pre-modern age intergenerational linkage was extremely strong, and adolescents formed their identities by inheriting traditional and rather stable knowledge and skills from their parents and grandparents (which is called a “postfigurative” identity by Mead [1970]). Becoming an adult meant ascribing to the world of preceding generations, and therefore adolescents had little reason to question these traditional self-definitions. In addition, Côté viewed the structure of ego identity in this age as “foreclosed”. The identity formation pattern in the pre-modern age was passed on from generation to generation.

In the early-modern age, intergenerational linkage became tenuous for adolescent identity formation due to gradual industrialization and urbanization. New generations had to form their identities using a rapidly increasing new knowledge and skills learned at school (called “cultural capital” by Bourdieu & Passeron [1970]). Although it did not mean the loss of family support and advice for adolescents, the new identity formation went beyond their prior

² Côté (1996; Côté & Levine, 2002) used the term “late-modern” in his discussion of adolescent identity formation. I replaced it with the term “postmodern” in the present article because many identity researchers use it (Berzonsky, 2005; Gergen, 1991; Kroger, 2005; Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997). This, however, is not criticism of Côté’s view of the late-modern age, at least here. Whether we should call it they view social phenomena or the relationship between individuals and society. I don’t think there are universal answers to this problem. I will detail it in a different article.

generations and families. Thus, adolescents explored and defined their selves to adapt to developing society, and achieved their social positions. This is consistent with the identity formation pattern Erikson (1950/1963, 1956, 1959, 1968) described as achieved ego identity - in what follows I call this pattern the achieved identity.

Industrialization and urbanization in the postmodern and contemporary age have greatly progressed. Postmodern society has shifted from fulfillment to consumption. Adolescents have to find their self-definitions through gradual impression management: namely, they reflexively and strategically fit themselves into a community comprised of strangers, in which they have to interact and obtain approval through the creation of the so-called right impressions. In addition, the authority of prior generations and families has greatly diminished, so in this age even parents and adults learn things from children and young people, and individual capital has become more important. Côté called his idea of the individual capital “identity capital” as well, and argued that it was different from Bourdieu & Passeron’s [1970] cultural capital. If we consider the effect of uncertainty caused by excessive information and globalization (cf. Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Hermans, 2001; McAdams, 1997), adolescents with versatile and constantly changing identity types may be more adapted to society in the postmodern age (Josselson, 1994).

1.2. THE POSTMODERN IDENTITY

In addition to Côté (1996), some other researchers on self and identity contested Erikson’s adolescent identity formation pattern. Schachter (2004) quotes some related remarks by proponents of postmodern theory: for example, Gergen (1991), who is known for his idea of “the saturated self”, argued that “in place of the enduring and identifiable self, we find fragmentation and incoherence (in the self)... the postmodern sensibility questions the concept of ‘true’ or ‘basic’ self, and the concomitant need for personal coherence or consistency” (pp. 172-178). Lifton (1993), who is known for his concept of “the protean self (man)” stated that “the older version of personal identity, at least insofar as it suggests inner stability and sameness, was derived from a version of traditional culture in which relationships to symbols and institutions are still relatively intact - hardly the case in the last years of the twentieth century”(p. 4). Both Gergen and Lifton pointed out that a mature individual in the constantly changing postmodern age no longer explored his or her integrated and consistent-identity. What is then the identity adolescents explore? Although in case of each individual perspective is slightly different, a new identity in the postmodern age-hereafter referred to as the postmodern identity-can be characterized as being decentralized, dynamic, multiple, context-specific, relativistic, fluid, and fragmented (Gecas & Burke, 1995; Glassner, 1989; Kvale, 1992; Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997; Zurcher, 1977).

Marcia (1989a) takes a unique position on the postmodern identity which he calls “a culturally adaptive diffused identity”. His proposal is important because he not only offered a new type of identity but also contrasted it with his

original identity statuses (achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure, see Marcia, 1966, 1967, 1980). His research results showed that his original diffused identity was the most pathological among the identity statuses, whereas culturally adaptive identity diffusion was adapted to society. He argued that the new identity diffusion tended thoroughly to adapt the ego to social situations that promoted exploration but discouraged commitment. Marcia thought that many adolescents with the culturally adaptive diffused identity type had the developmental potential for identity achievement, but they preferred diffusion because it was better adapted to a society where commitment was not valued, and, in fact, may have been punished.

In any case, postmodern self and identity researchers observed the historical transition from Erikson's modern age to contemporary age, in which the newly emerging identity does not struggle to construct a coherent inner structure of the self (much unlike in Erikson's idea of the achieved identity). This difference, however, was not considered to be negative because the "new" identity was thoroughly adapted to society.

1.3. IDENTITY CONFIGURATION

Most identity researchers seem to have accepted the emergence of the postmodern identity, yet when the discussion comes to the identity formation process, many researchers, who rely on Erikson's idea of achieved identity, disagree with those who argue for the postmodern identity: the two theories seem to be incongruent and incapable of integration. I think that the key problem here might be the lack of a general theory coherently explaining the identity formation process. The question, therefore, is about the reconstruction of the theories. We have to consider simultaneously the processes of the achieved and postmodern identity formations.

Schachter (2002, 2004, 2005) focused on recent discussions on the postmodern identity and tried to integrate theoretically both Erikson's idea of the achieved identity and the postmodern identity. He described the essential process of the formation of postmodern identity as the transformation of self-definitions in multiple specific domains into a coherent inner structure of the self. Furthermore, Schachter re-examined Erikson's writings and eventually found the concept of "configuration" (Erikson, 1968). Configuration is defined as a single set of relationships between many components (see also Adams, 1976), so it may bridge the gap between self-definitions in multiple specific domains and the whole identity.

Using these ideas Schachter interviewed Jewish modern orthodox young adults³ about their lives. His research focused mainly on religious practitioners so his subjects' lives were primarily religion-centered. Despite their religious convictions, some of the interviewees showed symptoms of the inner conflict

³ Schachter did not interview adolescents, but young adults; however, I understand that there would be no big difference between the two as far as the identity formation processes in the post-modern age are concerned.

between religion and sexual behavior because the Jewish code of law forbade premarital intercourse and all other forms of premarital sexual behavior. Traditional religious and modern liberal perspectives were potentially at odds. In other words, sexual behavior is one of the domains that can cause strong conflict in adolescent identity formation. Accordingly, Schachter began to explore it in his identity research. It's worthwhile to pause here for a moment and review his research results; they provide good examples for the theory behind identity formation processes in both Erikson's concept of the achieved identity and the postmodern identity that I will discuss in the following sections.

Schachter (2004) summarized his interview results in four identity configurations: (1) the configuration based on choice and suppression, (2) the assimilated configuration, (3) the confederacy of identifications configuration, and (4) the thrill of dissonance configuration. Schachter (2004) found a large number of cases for each of the four identity configurations; I provide one example of each below.

Hayim, a 25-year-old male, exemplifies the configuration based on choice and suppression. He grew up in a family that was originally secular but became religious. His father was very strict and looked at the world from a very narrow perspective. Because of this, Hayim was against his father in everything; however, the conflict soon became a general problem for his religious identity. After going through high school in this state of conflict, he went to yeshiva (a religious seminary). It was a place for him to do whatever he liked. In fact, he could decide truly by himself what was best. His religious belief was gradually and totally internalized to sustain his identity, although he always had to reject secular attractions to maintain his religious identity. Thus, his identity configuration was achieved by making the choice and was kept by using suppression.

Roy provides a good example of the assimilated configuration. He was born into a deeply religious family and had grown up in an atmosphere of Torah study since his early childhood. The study of the Torah became very important to him. He studied Talmud during high school, and after that, he chose to go to yeshiva to continue religious studies. There - unlike in an ultraorthodox yeshiva or a modern orthodox yeshiva - he was allowed to study what he thought to be authentic and to develop freely his religious interests. It was the place he had always wanted. In the end, he established his religious identity but not until he had synthesized some seriously conflicting identifications. One day he came to realize that he did not believe in God anymore, even though he identified with the Torah scholars. This was an unacceptable position for him. Nevertheless, his rabbi acknowledged Roy's identity as acceptable within a certain framework, invoking God's name. This meant that Roy received confirmation from the rabbi as an agent of Jewish religious tradition and culture. It did not mean that Roy had actually resolved his conflict of identifications, but that he had psychologically synthesized them through his rabbi's confirmation i.e. through socially accepted assimilation.

Tali, a 25-year-old female, demonstrates the confederacy of identifications configuration. She had a sexual relationship with her older boyfriend when she was a student at a religious high school for girls. Her mother was so conservative that she regarded all kinds of relations with boys as something terrible and dreadful. Tali kept her relationship with her boyfriend secret from her mother because she did not want to lose him, but was afraid at the same time of losing her good reputation. She chose to lead a double life: she continued to have sexual relationships with men, but pretended to be a religious girl at the same time. In fact, she identified herself as religious. She could not maintain her identity configuration with confidence all the time, but repeatedly chose to lead double life. Although she could not integrate her incongruent senses of the self, her sexual behaviors and religion were compartmentalized into two different spheres in her mind that did not overlap. The best possible solution for her identity configuration became permanent. Her identity did not have a coherent inner structure of the self as Erikson claimed; however, it showed a coherent identity configuration as a whole.

Motti, a 24-year-old male, exemplifies the thrill of dissonance configuration. He was born into a religious family. His family and school did not force him to have a strong belief; however, he was attracted in his early childhood to what he termed the “episodic and piquant”, such as extraordinary religious experiences or ways of study. He continued advanced religious studies but this did not mean that he was particularly devout, a fact that was proven when he spent a couple of days partying with a group of foreign tourists. While with them he had a sexual relationship for the first time. Unlike Tali, he felt that it was a spiritual experience, and hence he found a common origin for both religion and sexual relationships. Although they were regarded socially as opposites, he felt that both experiences were similar. He enjoyed the thrill of dissonance between socially conflicting self-definitions in specific domains from his meta-perspective - the overarching viewpoint of the self. Schachter regarded this identity configuration as a form of postmodern identity.

From Schachter’s identity configuration perspective, all of these cases certainly fit into Erikson’s scheme of the achieved identity in that they eventually achieve ego identity with the coherent configuration. According to Marcia’s identity status approach criteria - i.e. exploration and commitment - the examples of Tali and Motti might be interpreted as “moratorium” and “diffusion” respectively, but within the framework of Schachter’s theory they build up coherent identity configurations through the synthesis (from their meta-perspectives) of incoherent self-definitions in specific domains (see also McAdams, 1988; 1997). Thus, Schachter concluded that the concept of identity configuration simultaneously connected and explained the identity formations in both the achieved identity and the postmodern identity. This also enables Erikson’s idea of achieved identity to (partly) explain the phenomena of the postmodern age.

2. THE AGE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN SELF-DEFINITIONS IN SPECIFIC DOMAINS

Schachter's idea of identity configuration offered us a theoretical framework with which to understand the coherent configuration of the whole self of postmodern identity built up on the basis of incoherent self-definitions in specific domains; however, this did not mean that the postmodern identity had an inner coherent structure of the self. For example, Tali and Motti's postmodern identities, showed low levels of self-consistency in specific domains. While Schachter clarified the difficulty of forming self-definitions in specific domains for the postmodern identity, his identity study did not stress the specific domains; instead, it stressed the configuration of the whole self, which had a rather centralized dynamics of the ego, similar to what we find in Erikson's theory of identity (Gergen, 1991; Kernberg, 1975; Kroger, 1989; Sampson, 1985). In the postmodern age, more attention should be paid to the difficulty of forming self-definitions in specific domains based on the decentralized dynamics of the ego, and, from that perspective, I would like to theoretically integrate both the achieved identity and the postmodern identity.

In this section, I will discuss studies related to the difficulty of forming self-definitions in specific domains; moreover, I will refocus Schachter's theory, moving the emphasis from the level of the whole to the level of the specific domains, thereby attempting to reorganize our concepts of identity formation in the postmodern age.

2.1. CONFLICTS BETWEEN SELF-DEFINITIONS IN SPECIFIC DOMAINS

For a deeper understanding of adolescent identity formation in the postmodern age, we should note that empirical results of the past research on adolescent identity formation not only indicated the emergence of a new identity, but also implied an increasing tendency toward conflicts between self-definitions in specific domains.

When Marcia (1966, 1967, 1980) set his three specific domains (occupation, politics and religion), and even when female specific domains such as attitudes toward sex roles began to be added (Marcia & Friedman, 1970; Schenkel & Marcia, 1972), there was little discussion about conflicts between self-definitions in the specific domains. In the beginning of the 1980s, further additions to the specific domains of female adolescents' identity eventually modified the scope of research on specific domains in identity status (further research concerned not only female but also male adolescents). The explored domains were the following: philosophical lifestyle (Grotevant & Adams, 1984; Shain & Farber, 1989), family-career priorities (e.g., Archer, 1985), friendship and dating (e.g., Grotevant & Adams, 1984; Grotevant, Thorbecke, & Meyer, 1982; Shain & Farber, 1989; Sugimura, 2001), and recreation (e.g., Grotevant & Adams, 1984; Shain & Farber, 1989) (see also the review of van Hoof, 1999). With this expansion and modification, identity researchers gradually began to recognize conflicts between self-definitions in the specific domains: Archer's family-career priorities domain (1985) was a typical example.

Two types of social change fuelled conflict between self-definitions in specific domains; the growing importance of personal values, beliefs, and sex roles; and

the decline of ideologies, traditional values, and beliefs (cf. Gecas & Burke, 1995; Grotevant, Thorbecke & Meyer, 1982; Josselson, 1994; Pizani, 1996; Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997). People gradually began to select their attitudes from a variety of options, and sometimes had to resolve conflicts among the attitudes. The ideologies, traditional values and beliefs still function; however, new values and beliefs relativize them. Even when a female adolescent, for example, conforms to the traditional sex role, this role is seen as a more personal one because it is a result of the personal choice. Thus, Grotevant (1987) included these conflicts in his model of identity formation process, referring to them as “competing forces” (see other discussions in Grotevant & Cooper [1988], Kerpelman & Lamke [1997]).

2.2. CONFLICTS BETWEEN LIFE ROLES FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Self-definition in the occupational domain is one of the main developmental tasks of adolescence, regardless of gender. Interestingly, researchers who study vocation or occupation have increasingly used the term “career” instead of “vocation” and “occupation”. This shift in terminology reveals a different kind of conflict between self-definitions in specific domains. Let’s take a closer look.

Donald Super is one of the most important contributors to career development studies. He often used the term “vocation” in his earlier studies (Super, 1942, 1949, 1951). At the same time, he used a couple of key terms: “adjustment” and “fitness”. “Adjustment” is the process of comfortably “fitting” into a given environment (see also Marcia, 1989b). Super thought that for adolescents, the given environment of their next development stage was an adult vocational world; the terms vocation and occupation were used in the limited context of work.

In 1953, Super switched to the term “career”, as the vocation and occupation were added to the multiple roles in life and thereby began to create role conflicts (Super, 1953). In fact, Super (1980) reviewed previous studies in the field and found that the term “occupational choice” had been used more frequently than “career development”. From these results he inferred the conclusion that the term career had now come to be used in the context of life-span development.

Super (1980) divided this career and lifelong development framework into nine life roles and four theaters. The life roles were: (1) Child (including son and/or daughter), (2) Student, (3) “Leisurite” (no standard term is available to describe the position and role of an individual engaged in the pursuit of leisure-time activities, including idling), (4) Citizen, (5) Worker (including Unemployed Worker and Nonworker as ways of playing the role), (6) Spouse, (7) Homemaker, (8) Parent, and (9) Pensioner; and he added sibling, worshipper, lover, reformer, criminal, etc. to these life roles. The theaters for life roles were (1) The Home, (2) The Community, (3) The School (including College and University), and (4) The Workplace; and additionally, The Church, The Union, The Club, The Retirement Community, Home, etc. Super argued that

“...when the worker role is played at home where the spouse and homemaker roles are primary, it may cause a certain amount of role conflict in the person playing them, and a certain amount of confusion in the minds or feelings of others in the same theater.” (Super, 1980, p. 285)

Using this framework, Super examined conflicts between life roles in the process of career exploration and development. I think that his framework for career development is also applicable to the conflicts between self-definitions in specific domains in adolescent identity formation.

2.3. POSITIONING BACK TO THE SPECIFIC DOMAINS LEVEL

In my opinion, position – or positioning – may be a key concept to acknowledge the aforementioned conflicts and the difficulty of forming self-definitions in specific domains, as well as, to integrate the achieved identity and the postmodern identity within the same theoretical perspective.

Harré & van Langenhove (1991) were the first to propose the concept of position in the field of psychology; the idea, however, can be traced back to Ries and Trout's book, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* (1981). They began to use the concept in relation to marketing strategies in 1972: for example, when people identify a coffee company as the third largest in the coffee industry, it is a result of positioning. "Light beer," "dry beer," and "sweet beer" are other examples of positioning because people locate one kind of beer in relation to other kinds. Thus, "position" is a relational and organizational concept to locate one in contrast to others (Bamberg, 1997; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991).

Using the concept of position, we can thoroughly understand different dynamics of the achieved identity and the postmodern identity while explaining them within the framework of same theory. As we saw in the previous discussion, adolescents with the achieved type of identity formation (like Hayim and Roy in Schachter, 2004) form their self-definitions around a significant specific domain (e.g. religion). Even though conflict occurs with other specific domains (e.g. secular attractions), it is eventually suppressed, or ignored. I can conclude that adolescents with the achieved type of identity formation take a fixed position in one significant specific domain in their identity formation process. In contrast, adolescents with the postmodern type of identity formation (like Tali and Motti) do not concentrate on forming only one self-definition. Even when they explore a significant self-definition (e.g. religion), they do not suppress and ignore other self-definitions (e.g. sexual behavior). Instead, they tend to treat all the self-definitions involved more or less equally. In this way, adolescents with the postmodern type of identity formation do not take fixed positions like those with the achieved type but take several positions, and these positions move back and forth among the specific domains in the processes of identity formation.

Furthermore, adolescents with the achieved type of identity formation may concurrently form their whole identities and their self-definitions around one significant specific domain. If this is the case, it becomes clear why we did not discuss whether Erikson's achieved identity was based on the centralized dynamics of the ego or not. In contrast, adolescents with the postmodern type of identity formation do not always form their self-definitions in specific domains simultaneously with those of their whole identities. This is because there are at least two different processes and hence two different positions in postmodern

identity formation: the specific domains position, which takes on several specific domains in forming self-definitions, and the whole position, which overarches and synthesizes potentially opposing specific domains into a whole identity (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997).

To summarize, adolescents in the postmodern age could take two different positions in their identity formation process: the specific domains position and the whole position. In general, the achieved identity does not necessitate the synthesizing process, whereas the postmodern identity necessitates both processes. This single theoretical perspective of positioning can explain both types of identity formation in the postmodern age; furthermore, it explains the difficulty of identity formation on the level of specific domains while taking into account the formation of the whole.

3. CENTRALIZED OR DECENTRALIZED DYNAMICS OF THE EGO FOR THE POSTMODERN IDENTITY?

Some theoretical problems still remain. If an agent takes the whole position, particularly in the postmodern type of identity formation, and it is regarded as the transcendent ego that controls all the self-definitions in specific domains, the postmodern identity is not in the decentralized dynamics of the ego any longer, but in the centralized one, similar to dynamics described by Erikson's identity theory. In the previous section, we moved Schachter's focus from the level of totality to the specific domains level and analyzed the difficult position dynamics in forming identity; however, we have not yet discussed whether those discussions also affirmed the decentralized dynamics of the ego in postmodern identity formation. The final section will deal with this very issue.

3.1. CONFUSION OF THE FIRST-PERSON AND THE THIRD-POSITION PERSPECTIVES

Berzonsky (2005), who is known for his concept of identity style, raised an important problem concerning ego dynamics of the postmodern identity: he argued that postmodern identity researchers had created confusion between the concepts of whole identity and multiple self-definitions in specific domains. Rattansi and Phoenix (1997), identity postmodernists, stated that "individuals occupy multiple positions and therefore have a range of identities, with different ones acquiring salience in different contexts" (p.104). Berzonsky criticized them for adopting the third-person perspective, not the first-person perspective. For example, people's behaviors could vary according to contexts if you observe them from the third-person perspective, but that represents little of how people interpret their behaviors from their own first-person perspectives. Berzonsky considered that the behaviors seen from the third-person perspective would correspond to self-definitions in specific domains that were components of identity arising from different roles, attitudes, motives, autobiographical experiences, standards, values, goals, self-views, regulatory strategies, and the like. On the other hand, behaviors construed or interpreted from the first-person perspective would correspond to the whole identity. This is his superordinate conceptual structure of identity that he used in his attempt to unify and organize

separate aspects or components in some meaningful or intelligible fashion, as he still espoused Erikson's identity theory based on centralized dynamics of the ego.

Berzonsky added a lucid metaphor to further clarify his claim. A university is a structure comprised of libraries, dormitories, laboratories, administration buildings, and so forth. Suppose visitors, while visiting all of these buildings and facilities, ask, "All of these buildings are fine, but where is the university?" Berzonsky answers that the visitor made a category mistake because the university is a category or an entity separate from its components. Needless to say, the university exemplifies the totality of a whole identity, while its components exemplify self-definitions in specific domains.

3.2. I-POSITIONS AND META-POSITION IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

Hubert Hermans, a Dutch psychologist, has dealt with a similar problem by means of his theory of the dialogical self. It has been almost 15 years since Hermans, Kempen & van Loon (1992) and Hermans & Kempen (1993) proposed the idea of the dialogical self, which was characterized as being socialized, historical, cultural, embodied, and decentralized. This was in opposition to Cartesian notion of the self that was characterized as being individualized, ahistorical, noncultural, disembodied, and centralized. The concept of dialogical self can be used to explain position dynamics as well as the aforementioned confusion of perspectives in the dynamic process of self-construction because it was developed in connection with the therapeutic technique called the Self-Confrontation Method (Hermans, 1987; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). Let us see what the dialogical self is.

First of all, the dialogical self is a theory based on William James' notion of the self (James, 1890, 1892). This notion assumes (1) the distinction within the self, namely, "self as knower" or "I" and "self as known" or "me"; (2) the "I" characterized by continuity, distinctness, and volition; and (3) the three components of the "me": the material, the spiritual, and the social. Hermans & Kempen (1993) felt that James' self overcame the limitations of Cartesian notion of the self in several ways. First, his social "me" included others that is, others were regarded as part of the self, which went beyond Cartesian solipsism. Hermans therefore characterized James' self as being socialized and cultural. Second, his material "me" (mine) included body as part of the self: hence the "I" could never be dissociated from the body, and consequently from the "me" as well. Hermans further described James' self as being embodied and historical in opposition to Cartesian disembodied and ahistorical self - this feature enables us to understand the interplay between "I" and "me". Third, the three components of the "me" meant that James' self was decentralized, unlike Descartes' centralized one. Thus, Hermans viewed James' self as being socialized, historical, cultural, embodied, and decentralized.

However, as seen in the following passage, James' notion of the self was limited by his lack of conceptual terms:

"I am often confronted by the necessity of standing by one of my empirical selves and relinquishing the rest. Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed, and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a bon-vivant, and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher; a philanthropist, statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a 'tone-poet' and saint. But the thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's; the bon-vivant and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not well keep house in the same tenement of clay." (James, 1890, pp. 309-310)

The dialogical self theoretically resolved the conflicts between different "me"-s in James' statement, adding the multivoicedness of a polyphonic novel as a metaphor for the self (Bakhtin, 1984) to James' notion. That is, the dialogical self not only created multiple "me"-s (just like James' three components of the self), but also endowed each "me" with its own voice. Thus, people could talk about their self and position their multiple "me"-s, which Hermans called I-positions. As Hermans and Kempen (1993) stated, the "I" as narrator could be continuous even though its positions were discontinuous because narrative in its totality could obtain the continuity of the self. In addition, when the "I" as narrator moves from one position to another, the movement looks like the creation of multiple authors ("me"-s) with their own stories within the same individual. The multiple authors appear to enter into a dialogical relationship by agreeing, disagreeing etc. This is the world of the dialogical self. It explains the conflict between the philosopher and the lady-killer in James' statement and answers the question how a person can make a coherent story of the self while taking two or more contrasting I-positions.

In the discussion of his clinical cases, Hermans argues that meta-position plays a central role in synthesizing contrasting I-positions. Hermans & Kempen (1993) discussed it through Alice's case. Alice, a 28-year-old female, participated in the project on the dialogical self. During the first interview, she narrated that she was open and she felt that others agreed. Simultaneously she added a different aspect: being closed; it was pretty hard for her to accept it, and she often felt conflict between the open aspect and the closed aspect in her self. During three weeks of interviews, she gradually began to take an I-position to balance two contrasting I-positions-the new position that showed rather different characteristics from the open and closed I-positions. Hermans & Kempen (1993) considered it to be her meta-position that played a central role in synthesizing her contrasting "me"-s or I-positions (see Semerari et al, 2003, 2005 for similar discussions on metacognitive or metarepresentative function). Since then, she had not shown any preoccupation with either of them (although she narrated stories about two aspects of her self). Instead, she seemed to be concerned with relating two contrasting I-positions in her self-narrative in the way that she moved from one I-position to another and back to the original I-position.

Hermans (2004) summarized some specific qualities of the meta-position: (a) it allows for a certain distance from other I-positions, although it is attracted, both cognitively and emotionally, toward some I-positions more than others; (b) it provides some overarching view so that several I-positions can be seen simultaneously; (c) it leads to an evaluation of the several I-positions and their organization; (d) it enables linkages between I-positions to be seen as part of personal history (or collective history of the group or culture to which the individual belongs); (e) the importance of one or more I-positions for future development of the self becomes apparent; and (f) meta-position facilitates the creation of a dialogical space in which I-positions and counterpositions maintain significant dialogical relationships (see also Hermans, 2003).

Hermans (2004) also urged us to pay more attention to the view that we should not consider the meta-position as the centre of positions repertoire in the self or an agentic force that guaranteed the unity and coherence of the self in advance. The meta-position is always bound to one or more I-positions that are created at a particular moment and in a particular situation; different meta-positions could emerge in different times and situations. They are far from being a “God’s eye view”. These conditions of the meta-position stem from the assumption that multiplicity precedes unity and coherence of the self. Hermans (2004) remarks that “unity and coherence are a goal rather than a given” (p. 24, see also Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

3.3. DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVE AND THE THIRD-PERSON PERSPECTIVE

As I said above, Berzonsky (2005) criticized the postmodern identity, proposing his concepts of the first-person and third-person perspectives. I agree with his criticism in that one adopts both the first-person perspective and third-person perspective in the process of identity formation. In fact, Tali and Motti (Schachter, 2004) adopted both perspectives alternately in forming their whole identities; many postmodern theories regarding identity may have lacked the first-person perspective (in my terminology, the whole position). This flaw should be eliminated. As far as I know, Rattansi & Phoenix (1997) partly referred to the whole position, but it was not fully explained.

On the other hand, I do not agree with Berzonsky’s criticism that adolescent identity formation in the postmodern age needs dynamic relationships between the two perspectives. Hermans provided us with a strong evidence of the connection between I-positions and the meta-position that enables us to discuss them in relation to the level of specific domains and decentralized dynamics of the ego. I should stress that the meta-position does not function as the agentic force controlling self-definitions in specific domains prior to their formation.

The metaphor of the university as a whole and its components offers a similar conclusion: libraries, dormitories, and laboratories are organized according to their own policies and criteria and in many cases they operate independently of the university. However, they are sometimes expected or forced to follow policies or orders imposed by the overarching university administration.

Under such circumstances, the different departments reconstruct or modify their policies, standards, and organizations so that they could adapt themselves to the whole university. In this way, the libraries, dormitories, and laboratories represent action on the specific and decentralized level.

From this survey of discussions concerning postmodern identity, one may draw a conclusion that adolescent identity formation in the postmodern age involves forming self-definitions in specific domains, sometimes synthesizing two or more contrasting self-definitions, adopting and balancing two different kinds of I-positions (the specific domains and the whole) on the level of specific domains and in decentralized dynamics of the ego. All of these processes concur to explain both the achieved identity and the postmodern identity.

4. CONCLUSION

Some researchers on self and identity have contested Erikson's view of adolescent identity formation pattern (i.e. the achieved identity). Even though their perspectives differed slightly, they all argued that a mature individual in the postmodern age that was constantly changing, would no longer strive, towards an integrated and consistent sense of identity. The postmodern identity was characterized as being decentralized, dynamic, multiple, context specific, relativistic, fluid, and fragmented. Most of the adolescence psychologists seemed to have accepted the emergence of the postmodern identity; but the problem was that it had not been fully incorporated into the traditional view of identity formation. Schachter tried to integrate the achieved identity and the postmodern identity through his idea of the identity configuration and his research confirmed that adolescents with the postmodern type of identity formation constructed a coherent configuration of identity from incoherent self-definitions in specific domains. Nevertheless, he paid too much attention to the configuration itself, thereby centralizing ego dynamics like Erikson earlier did. In this article, I refocused Schachter's observations onto the specific domains level. I also argued that adolescents in the postmodern age took two different positions in their identity formation process on the level of specific domains: the specific domains position and the whole position.

Furthermore, I examined the difference between two different perspectives in the process of identity formation: the first-person and the third-person. Hermans, in his theory of the dialogical self, called these two perspectives the I-positions and the meta-position. Their mutual relationship was a key factor in the process of self-construction. Hermans strongly argued that they both functioned on the level of specific domains. Even though the meta-position synthesized contrasting I-positions into a whole self, we should not see it as the center of positions repertoire guaranteeing the unity and coherence of the self. In conclusion, I stated that adolescent identity formation in the postmodern age was the process of forming self-definitions in specific domains, occasionally synthesizing two or more contrasting self-definitions and balancing the specific domains position and the whole position.

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