


# Identity Development: Narrative Identity and Intergenerational Narrative Identity

## Kimlik Gelişimi: Anlatı Kimliği ve Kuşaklararası Anlatı Kimliği

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the development of identity and the role of identity theories on identity in the related literature. In Erikson's psychosocial identity theory, it is emphasized that the variables in the biological-individual-social aspects of the individuals are critical in ego identity formation. The theorists who came after Erikson and were influenced by his ideas were predominantly focused on one aspect of identity in their identity studies. In the developmental psychology literature, individual-internal factor centered theories have been put forward in the identity formation. In the last three decades, it is seen that narrative theorists have holistically studied Erikson's theory by examining identity formation and development. In the narrative identity form, individuals form a story based on their past experiences, and they live and form an identity according to the story they create. Individuals have the chance to express the relationship of all the variables in their identity formation because they narrate all the variables related to their identities through narratives. Narrative theorists have tried to clarify that self-stories, inter-generational stories, master narrative, historical and social events form an identity.

**Keywords:** Identity, narrative identity, intergenerational narrative identity, holistic perspective

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, alan yazında kimlik olgusunun gelişimini ve buna dair kuramların kimlik olgusundaki rolünü incelemektir. Erikson'un psikososyal kimlik kuramında, bireylerin biyolojik-bireysel-sosyal yönlerindeki değişkenlerin onların ego kimliği oluşturmalarında son derece önemli olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Erikson'dan sonra gelen ve onun fikirlerinden etkilenen kuramcılar ise kimliği çalışırken daha çok kimliğin bir yönünü merkeze aldıkları görülmüştür. Gelişim psikolojisi literatüründe daha çok kimlik oluşumunda bireysel-işsel faktör merkezli kuramlar ortaya konulmuştur. Son 30 yıllık zaman diliminde ise anlatı kuramcılarının kimlik oluşumunu ve gelişimini çalışarak Erikson'un kuramını bütüncül bir şekilde ele aldıkları görülmektedir. Anlatı kimlik formunda bireyler geçmişlerindeki deneyimlerden yola çıkarak bir hikaye formu oluşturmakta ve oluşturdukları bu hikaye formuna göre yaşayıp bir kimlik var etmektedirler. Bireyler anlatılar aracılığıyla kimliklerine dair tüm değişkenleri hikayeleştirerek anlattıklarından dolayı kimlik oluşumlarındaki tüm değişkenlerin ilişkisini ifade etme şansı bulmaktadırlar. Anlatı kuramcılar kimlik oluşumunda; öz hikayelerin, kuşaklararası hikayelerin, ana anlatıların, tarihsel ve sosyal olayların kimliği şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaya çalışmıştır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Kimlik, anlatı kimliği, kuşaklararası anlatı kimliği, bütüncül yaklaşım

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Understanding self-identity allows one to know what to do and how to do it. Moreover, knowing about the identity of others helps one to predict their thoughts and behaviors during interaction. Identity perception makes daily life easier. The interaction between the environment and human constructs identity as much as knowledge of identity regulates human interactions. One's thoughts about oneself (reflexive thinking) encourage one to consider who one is, what one wants to be, how one is perceived and known by others and helps one develop a self (Hogg and Vaughan 2014). Human interaction with the environment not only depends on but also determines self and identity. Identity is individual (i.e., biological and psychological) as much as it defines the sense of belonging. Culture, especially family culture, affects identity development. In other words, identity both expresses personality and self and symbolizes society, culture, and nation (Bendle 2002, Kroger 2003). In short, identity has individual, cultural, and social characteristics (Featherstone 2000).

Identity has been studied extensively in the field of psychology. Although the American Psychological Association (APA) has a definition for it, it can most likely not be brought under one definition (Vignoles et al. 2011). APA (2015) defines it as an individual's sense of self defined by a set of social relationships and interpersonal characteristics and a range of affiliations (VandenBos 2015). Vignoles et al. (2011) argue that identity can be defined in three ways: (1) the individual aspect of identity involves self-definition, (2) the relational aspect of identity points to interaction with others, and (3) the collective aspect of identity relates to social class and group identification. These definitions show that individual identity highlights the internal character while relational and social identity highlight the external character in one's answers to the question of "Who am I?" (Banks 2013).

Identity plays a key role in both self-identification and positive interaction with others and also affects psychological well-being (Schwartz et al. 2011a), self-esteem (Schwartz et al. 2009), tendency to disruptive behavior (Schwartz et al. 2011b), substance abuse (Bishop et al. 2005), the level of numerous psychiatric problems (depression, anxiety etc.) (Schwartz et al. 2009), and social and academic adaptation (Luyckx et al. 2005). It can, therefore, be argued that identity and identity development affects life in many ways. One's answers to the question of "Who am I?" also determine what behavior one is likely to exhibit. Healthy identity development ensures a smooth transition to adulthood and allows one to take on adult roles more easily (Erikson 1968, Luyckx et al. 2008).

Given all this, identity can be defined as one's answer to the question of "Who am I?" based on one's accumulated life stories. Therefore, identity emerges in adolescence rather than in childhood and grows stronger throughout young adulthood or emerging adulthood (Erikson 1968, McAdams 2001).

The aim of this study was to examine the theories of identity developed in the field of psychology and to discuss in what way the theory of narrative identi-

ty addresses the concept of identity. The study first addressed the theories of identity in the field of developmental psychology and social psychology, and then pointed out the critiques of those theories and focused on the theory of narrative identity as a response to those critiques and lastly discussed the similarities and differences between the identity theories in the field of developmental and social psychology and the narrative identity theory.

## **Analysis of the theories of identity in developmental and social psychology**

### **Theories of identity from the perspective of developmental psychology**

Erikson (1968) focuses on both individual and society to integrate identity development into social. He developed the theory of psychosocial development by integrating cognitive, affective, and social components in identity development. He defines development as the interaction between nature, nurture, and attachment (especially with the caregiver) and self-experiences (ego). Erikson's theory of identity development postulates that both biology and identity develop gradually and that biological development plays a key role in identity development. He also developed the model of social function by claiming that social relationships construct social identity. Lastly, he argues that identity undergoes a dynamic transformation owing to personal experiences and provides the individual with the opportunity to construct an ego sense of identity. This allows the individual to reconstruct social roles and conditions and boost her confidence in her own identity and helps her create a self-history with her own perceptions of identity and a sense of personal sameness and continuity throughout the process.

Erikson (1968) integrates individual identity and social identity constructs into its ego identity to test a sense of personal sameness and continuity. He regards individual identity and social identity not as separate constructs but as components of ego identity. He argues that not only biological development and personal experiences, but also the integration of those experiences in society should be examined in identity development. In his social function model, individual-caregiver interaction and its interpretation (ego sense of identity) are important in identity development.

Erikson defines four distinct aspects of identity development: (1) individuality, (2) wholeness and synthesis, (3) sameness and continuity, and (4) social solidarity (Yazgan İnanç and Yerlikaya 2017). He states that the individual should support with a sense of existence, integrate and synthesize self-attributions over time, enliven the sense of continuity and inner sameness between the past and that the future and all this synthesis should be approved and supported by a group to ensure identity development. Although those four aspects point out that identity depends on identification in childhood, identity development or psychosocial analysis of identity begins in adolescence (Erikson 1950, 1968,

Marcia 1966). Though identity is more of an answer to the basic concept of “I” in childhood, it is not a psychosocial problem for children to integrate personality (McAdams 2001).

Erikson (1950, 1968) states that identity begins to develop and continues to develop in adolescence, which is supported by numerous studies (Marcia 1966, McAdams 2001). Although identity development is the focal point of adolescence, it does not end in that period. Research shows that identity development continues throughout life and becomes significantly critical in young adulthood (Arnett 2000, 2003, 2015, McAdams 2001).

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Côté 2018). During adolescence, identifications in childhood are revised and then integrated into adult identity. During that period, changes are culturally adjusted to social norms. Erikson, therefore, refers to adolescence and young adulthood as a normative crisis of identity (1968 p. 17). He argues that identity development begins where identification is useful (Côté 2018).

Erikson (1968) argues that adolescence is a period of identity crisis and that identity development plays a key role in transition to adulthood. However, Arnett (2000) maintains that although identity development begins in adolescence, an identity similar to the original adulthood is explored during emerging adulthood. Therefore, his views differs from that of Erikson in that regard. However, some theories approach Erikson's views from an individual (internal) perspective, such as Marcia's identity status model.

Erikson's theory was first put into test by Marcia's identity status model (1966), which later inspired hundreds of studies. However, Marcia's theory was criticized for falling short of explaining Erikson's theory and failing to account for the dynamics in non-western cultures (Schwartz et al. 2013). In his model, Marcia (1966) used the concepts of exploration (actually replacing the concept of “crisis”) and commitment to define Erikson's aspects of identity. Exploration is choosing between alternative identities while crisis is choosing between invested identities. Arguing that those two concepts are at two levels (present and absent), Marcia also develops four identity statuses based on the model: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion.

Marcia's model has been improved by some theorists, some of whom are considered identity status theorists because of their contribution to the model (Atak 2011). Assuming sequential transitions between identity statuses, Waterman (1999) adds “expressiveness” as the third variable to Marcia's model and argues that the individual defines it by herself and lives accordingly. Luyckx et al. (2006) stated that Marcia's therefore called for additional identity statuses because it failed to encompass everybody. Luyckx et al. (2006), therefore, offered six identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, diffusion, carefree diffusion, and undifferentiated status.

There are different theories that address identity. Berzonsky's identity style model (1992) argues that there are different processes at work under identity statuses and that the individual uses different strategies for identity issues, problem solving, and decision making. The model focuses, therefore, on social and cognitive processes in identity development. Those strategies can be informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant (Berzonsky 1992, Berzonsky and Ferrari 1996). Therefore, the individual considers her options before making a decision and then develops an identity based on her decision. Berzonsky (1992) argues that identity development is a dynamic process and that the individual evaluates consequences before making a decision during that process.

The theories of identity, which are based on Erikson's theory, have influenced research on identity in different cultures as well. For example, studies on identity in Turkey address identity styles (Çakır and Aydın 2005, Demir and Derelioğlu 2010, Morsünbül and Çok 2013), identity statuses (Demir and Derelioğlu 2010, Morsünbül and Uçar 2017), identity functions (Demir 2011), and Arnett's emerging adulthood (Çok and Atak 2015, İlhan and Özdemir 2012). These studies adapted Eurocentric scales to the Turkish language and then put them to the test in the context of Turkish culture. Although these studies are important, it is not known whether they are able to determine identity development in different localities.

### **Theories of identity from the perspective of social psychology**

According to the theories of identity in the field of social psychology, the individual interacts with the group to which she belongs and identifies with group members and constructs an identity through self- and group-based assessment and identification. She might construct an identity based on how she is perceived by others or might differ from the group and construct a unique self (Hogg and Vaughan 2014). Social identity theory, self-categorization theory, symbolic interactionism, and social comparison theory are the main theories on identity development in social psychology, the most important of which is social identity theory.

Social identity theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). It asserts that social relations play a key role in defining an individual's own identity. According to Abrams and Hogg (1990), intergroup relations focus on group processes and social-self, and social identity is part of the self-consisting of group membership and group meanings and values in identity development. The individual, therefore, favors the group (in-group) to which she belongs and develops negative attitudes towards the others (out-group) (Turner et al. 1979). Therefore, social identity theorists make some assumptions: (a) positive group feedback on identity results in high self-esteem, (b) the individual tends to categorize societies, allowing her to identify with the group to which she belongs, (c) the individual determines the values of her own group by comparing it with others

(Turner et al. 1979). These show that the individual performs a social classification based on the group to which she belongs in order to construct a social identity (Tajfel 1981).

Self-categorization theory and social identity theory share numerous assumptions and methods because both are based on the same ideological and theoretical perspective (Hornsey 2008). Self-categorization theory has three types of self-categorizations: human identity, group identity, and personal identity. The individual makes self-categorization at the highest level and then identifies with her own group to make group categorization. She then compares the people with whom she interacts and makes self-categorization at the lowest level. Turner et al. (1987) state that those self-categorizations are transient and context-dependent, prompting the individual to make self-categorization. To account for the transition from individual identity to group identity, the individual abandons the former and identifies with the latter. This process is defined as depersonalization (Turner et al. 1987, Turner and Reynolds 2011 p.402).

Although Herber Blumer (1937) was the first to conceptually develop symbolic interactionism, William James, Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, and George H. Mead made great contributions to it as well (Schellenberg 1990). Especially Mead is at the center of the theory. Symbolic interactionism argues that the individual bases objects on their meanings which she socially learns and expresses them in an interpretive way (Blumer 1969). The individual sets her perspectives, behaviors, and statements based on social interactions. In this context, Schellenberg (1990) argues that the individual constructs self-identity based on positive and negative feedback from others.

Social comparison theory states that the individual compares her own ideas and skills with those of others or tends to interact with people with similar ideas and skills (Festinger 1954). Festinger (1954) also argues that the individual tends to evaluate her own ideas and skills and make comparisons to construct a self. Research shows that the individual compares herself with people who are inferior to her in order to raise her self (Wood et al. 2000) but that she not only compares her ideas and skills but also compares her attitudes, self-esteem, income, emotions, and personality traits (Taylor et al. 2007 in Aslan 2013).

### **General critiques of the theories of identity**

Most theories based on Erikson's theory of ego identity development are individual-internal theories. Côté and Levine (1988) criticize Marcia's model on the grounds that it fails to take into account the historical, psychological, and sociological aspects of identity and is more useful in distinguishing character typologies than in determining developmental processes. Therefore, most theories are Eurocentric theories that fall short of addressing cultural, historical, and social aspects, and therefore, diverge from Erikson's psychosocial identity theory.

Schachter (2018) argues that post-Erikson studies on identity focus less on the causes of identity development put forward by him, especially interactions that last for generations. According to Rogers (2018), there are numerous studies on individual identity but they focus little on social identity development. He, therefore, argues that research on interactive identity should involve three perspectives: (1) historical development to analyze the effect of both individual and social development on identity development and the impact of policies and their socio-historical repercussions on younger generations (Hammack 2006, 2008, McLean 2008, McLean et al. 2007, McLean and Syed 2015a); (2) intergenerational perspective, which was inspired by recent narrative research but can be traced back to Erikson's perspective based on the assumption that interaction with other group members promotes identity development; (3) research on the effects of social and political components (ideologies, historical events, political structures etc.) on identity. In fact, the researchers who advocate the theory of narrative identity address identity from that perspective (Hammack 2006, McLean and Syed 2015b).

Although the theories of identity development in the field of social psychology take into account psychological factors, they focus mainly on the society or group to which the individual belongs and on the people with whom she interacts. In other words, they focus mostly on social factors. Hogg and Vaughan (2014) draw attention to interactive dimensions by arguing that interaction with people regulates identity and interaction with the environment constructs identity. Therefore, despite the fact that some social psychology theories, such as self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987), emphasize personal identity, they approach identity more from a group-oriented perspective. They focus on social and group factors even in personal identity development. In other words, individual and psychological factors are of secondary importance or underappreciated.

### **Analysis of identity in locality**

Most studies on identity in different localities generally strive to adapt Eurocentric theories or models to local contexts. Those are important studies, albeit with limitations. For example, Kağıtçıbaşı (2000) argues that Eurocentric models take individual freedom in thought and action for granted whereas eastern models focus on relationality and collectivity in identity and self-development. She also states that the Turkish society is half individualistic and half collectivist when it comes to identity development, which is also supported by identity exploration in emerging adulthood put forward by Arnett (2000, 2015), who argues that identity exploration may not be observed in emerging adulthood in some members or even some segments of society. Identity exploration in emerging adulthood is more common among college students than among collective rural communities. Davis (2000), on the other hand, argues that while cultural trans-

formation affects collective societies, individual identities go through transformation with changes in everyday life and social roles. Even only this result indicates that there should be more research on the effect of locality on identity development.

Existing theories might pose challenges to the analysis of the effects of locality on identity development. Demir (2007), therefore, conducted a qualitative research to investigate the effect of different contexts on identity development in youth. He concluded that “the question of ‘Who are young people?’ should first be answered regardless of social categories to be able to make correct assessments on them and to determine the appropriate services for them” (p.8). Erikson's theory of identity (1968) also argues that society and culture play a key role in identity development and that interaction, especially interaction with earlier generations, promotes identity development (Schacter 2015, 2018). This might be hard to determine with a model.

Qualitative studies are, therefore, of paramount significance in identity analysis. Qualitative research allows the individual to provide information about her personality traits and also narrative of her identity, personality, and self. It also allows her to express her identity and organize it in accordance with her narrative. Narrative identity theory is a form of qualitative research used to determine the effects of culture, society, and intergenerational factors on identity development. It allows researchers to approach identity from a socio-psychological perspective and analyze how sociocultural factors come into existence.

## **Narrative identity**

### **Definition and significance of narrative identity**

People interpret their experiences and make inferences about them. They turn their experiences, motivations, and goals into narratives to understand who they really are (McAdams 2001). Conveying past experiences is an extremely important means of creating stories and developing a narrative identity (McLean et al. 2007, Thorne 2000). Thorne (2004) argues that narratives or stories are an efficient way of making the tough and rigorous areas of the social world more visible.

McAdams and Pals (2006) argue that personality has three levels: (1) dispositional traits, (2) goals, motivations, and coping mechanisms, and (3) life stories or experiences involving life stories. The first level refers to common general tendencies that have existed since childhood and forms the character. The second level is more individual and results from interaction with the environment. The third level refers to unique individual aspects because nobody can narrate something better than the one who have experienced it. The individual uses life narratives to define herself and to define the way she describes herself (McAdams and Pals 2006).



In the broadest sense, narrative is defined as a cultural canonical linguistic form (a linguistic structure developed to create a continuous and coherent identity within the fluidity of experience) that determines how one interprets and shares one's life experiences and how sharing affects one and those with whom one interacts (Merrill and Fivush 2016). Based on McAdams' life story model of identity, people turn the past, present, and future into a coherent narrative identity to create a sense of unity and purpose. People's ability to make sense of and express their experiences are related to their identities (Waters and Fivush 2015).

Researchers consider identity a narrative construct (Bamberg 2004 in Thompson et al. 2009). From birth to advanced ages, people transform their experiences into narratives and interpret and convey them (McAdams 2001, 2006). In other words, they use narratives to express themselves (Gergen and Gergen 1988). A narrative/story has three stages: introduction, development, and conclusion. A narrative provides a more analytical description and understanding of the cause of an event (Sarbin 1986). Therefore, narrating and interpreting or conveying experiences is an answer to the question of "Who am I?" (Sarbin 1986).

People make use of their experiences and interactions to construct narrative identities (Hooker, 2016). Narrative identity, therefore, involves the capability of expressing and re-expressing factors based on experiences, interactions, and repercussions (Christman 2008). Narratives help people make sense of their lives (McLean et al. 2007). From this perspective, people use their experiences and life stories to attribute meaning to their dispositional traits, desires, feelings, and beliefs in order to develop identities. Bruner (1990) argues that people live in narrative structures. According to the theory of narrative identity, people turn their life stories into narratives and convey them to others, which allows them to live in a way similar to those narratives (Bruner 1990, McAdams 2001). They think, dream, interact, and make moral decisions based on their narrative structures (Sarbin 1986).

### **Narrative identity development**

People, either consciously or unconsciously, construct their own narratives during identity development (McAdams 2001, 2006). The theory of narrative identity postulates that identity becomes prominent in adolescence and develops from late adolescence through young adulthood. However, narrative formation and its coherence with the self begins at an earlier age (Fivush and Merrill 2016, McAdams, 2001). Stories in childhood, and even in infancy, play a key role in narrative identity development. Therefore, McAdams (2001, 2006) argues that people construct narratives from childhood until advanced ages. Approaching narrative identity from a developmental perspective, McAdams (2013) states that the individual is the primary actor in early childhood, an agent in middle childhood and finally becomes an actor of her own life from early adolescence

on. Adolescence is, therefore, a critical stage of life narrative development (Habermaas and Bluck 2000, McLean et al. 2007).

McAdams is one of the first to address narrative identity development in detail. The life story model of identity is based on many of his works and inspired by Erikson's work on identity. McAdams classifies narrative identity development into periods just like Erikson divides it into stages until advanced ages. McAdams (1989) argues that the effect of narratives can be traced back to infancy and that early attachment and the tone of voice of the caregiver determine whether the infant can understand whether the story being told is funny or scary, affecting the likelihood of the infant growing to be an optimist or a pessimist. The way the story is conveyed also affects infant-caregiver attachment. In later years, Piaget's work points out that children make sense of stories through cognitive processes such as images and themes. McAdams (1989 p. 164) states that narratives provide a rich stock of images that become the raw material of self-narrative during the preschool period whereas school-age children have perceptions beyond images that allow them to focus on the subject of a story, which provides motivation.

McAdams (1989, 2001) argues that the individual, whether consciously or unconscious, accumulates stories until adolescence, and thereafter, starts setting her own story, which is always ideological and concerns the abstract concepts of the adolescent mind. Adolescents can tell right from wrong in their stories and make their own ideological organization. If the adolescent can achieve ideological organization to unlock the narrative identity, she can reach life scenes referred to by McAdams as "nuclear episodes." After that stage, the individual understands that she is not a child anymore, but still cannot fully tell who she really is. She enters the concrete narrative stage where she knows that she has a past and a story about that past and starts developing ideas about what she wants to do in the future. Narrative identity in adulthood has two stages: "character" and "the end" (McAdams 1989). The end of adolescence through young adulthood is a critical period where character is important and the individual thinks of her own life story, of its main characters and their development, of her achievements and failures, and of her development based on her goals. Towards the end of adulthood, she develops an image of her own character and comes up with ideas for how the characters in her story will come to an end and sets objectives for herself.

Based on the narrative identity development explained above, McAdams (1989, 2001, 2011) argues that narrative identity emerges towards the end of adolescence and during early adulthood (young adulthood in Erikson's model and emerging adulthood in Arnett's model) and that narrative identity continues to develop throughout life. In other words, narrative identity continues to develop throughout life and allows people to reinterpret their lives. It, in a sense, al-

lows them to reinterpret their narrative identity at different times to generate a new narrative.

Although narrative theorists argue that identity development is not limited to a certain stage, they agree that adolescence is a very critical developmental stage, as stated by Erikson (McAdams 2001). In other words, narrative theorists maintain that narrative identity develops in adolescence it is the stage where people explore and face social roles, values, and behavior (Merrill and Fivush 2016). Adolescence is a period when people face the challenges of identity development (Erickson 1968). Adolescents become independent from their parents and start their own lives and shape their lives by their romantic relationships, jobs, ideologies, and personal values, and therefore, they are highly motivated to “construct an identity” at that stage (Merrill and Fivush 2016). Individual development and sociocultural pressures prompt adolescents to take their lives into their own hands. They take their own experiences and current situations into consideration to develop a coherent self for their future (McAdams and McLean 2013, Merrill and Fivush 2016). Adolescents start using narratives to recapture the details of their experiences and interpret them to find out what those experiences say about them. In other words, they use their own experiences to learn about themselves (McLean 2008). It can, therefore, be stated that personal narratives help people develop healthy identities.

### **How does the theory of narrative identity work?**

Life narrative skills in adolescence develop with the emergence of multiple cognitive and social skills, such as hypothetical reasoning and social perspective (Habermas and Bluck 2000). Adolescents start using narratives to recapture the details of their experiences and seek answers to such questions as “What does this experience say about me?” in order to interpret their experiences that potentially affect their self-perceptions (McLean 2008). People make evaluation and interpretation, determine cause-effect relationships, and relate to fuller life stories to develop narratives (Merrill and Fivush 2016).

According to Habermas and Bluck (2000), the primary indicator of narrative identity development is autobiographical reasoning, which contributes to the global coherence of a life story because one rarely tells one's whole life story. To convey their life narratives, people present autobiographical arguments proving that they think about their past lives (Reese et al. 2017). The proof is based on reasoning. Habermas (2011) argues that autobiographical reasoning is multidimensional. However, the critical part of that reasoning is one's ability to establish a causal link between one's past life and current life and personality (Reese et al. 2017). In fact, the causal link means causal coherence (Habermas and de Silveira 2008). Causal coherence allows one to clearly see the connections between events and appreciate their significance for one's own life, which contributes to

the coherence of one's life stories. Causal coherence, therefore, plays a critical role in narrative identity (Reese et al. 2017).

Causal coherence is important for narrative identity, but it is not enough (Habermas and Reese 2015) because the coherence of life stories is multidimensional (Habermas and Bluck 2000). Another important driving force of narrative identity is coherent themes (Reese et al. 2017). Global thematic coherence enables one to establish links between events and make sense of the theme of one's own life throughout one's life story (Habermas and de Silveira 2008). Research shows that the turning point is not the local and internal coherence of narration, but the thematic coherence of the story (Reese et al. 2017). Thematic coherence is used to analyze how detailed one conveys one's life story, whether the story is intelligible and has a main idea, and how one ends it.

An individual narrative is important for identity also because narrative content evaluation depends on the subjectivity of events (Bohanek and Fivush 2010). Cognitive, emotional, and terminating/evaluative words in subjective narratives give clues as to in what way an event affects the narrator and what kind of conclusion she draw out of that event. The causal, thematic, and subjective aspects of the narrative paves the way for the development of narrative identity (Reese et al. 2017).

In short, research on the theory of narrative identity shows that the language that the individual uses to narrate her story is of paramount significance. The words in the introduction, development, and conclusion parts of her narrative and the meanings that she attributes to them can be categorized or integrated into themes. Thematic dimensioning can be performed using coherence and cause-effect relationships in narrative (Hammack 2006). Sometimes, one's narrative is analyzed in a holistic way to focus on the important aspects of one's development. The role of those important aspects in one's current identity is analyzed to find coherence in the form of a story. Habermas and de Silveira (2008) refer to it as global thematic coherence. People commonly use it to develop narrative identity forms based on their life stories (Hammack 2006).

### **Mental health indicators in narrative identity research**

Research draw numerous important conclusions on the relationship between narrative identity/narrative/autobiographical memory narrative and psychological variables. Adolescents and adults with coherent narratives have lower levels of depression and higher life satisfaction (Baerger and McAdams 1999). Psychiatric problems are more common in people with less coherent life narratives (Adler 2012). A study on adults reported a negative correlation between coherent life narratives and borderline personality disorders (Adler et al. 2012). Waters and Fivush (2015) conducted a study with an emerging adult group and found a significant correlation between coherent life narratives and psychological well-being. The compatibility of coherent narratives with narrative identities is de-

terminated, and coherent narrative identity moderates coherent life narratives with psychological well-being. This result is compatible with the finding that narratives play a key role in psychological well-being (Adler 2012).

Fivush et al. (2007) conducted a study with adolescents (9-13 age group) and reported that those evaluating and expressing themselves more negatively have reduced psychological well-being. According to Bohanek and Fivush (2010), female adolescents express their positive or negative experiences more emotionally than do male adolescents. Male adolescents who express their emotions in a richer way have higher psychological well-being, which is not the case for female adolescents.

## **Intergenerationality in Narrative identity**

### **Definition and significance of intergenerational narrative identity**

Fivush and Merrill (2016) interpret family narratives using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. They put the individual's autobiographical memory on the center, place family narrative and child-parent memories on micro-system, intergenerational identity narratives and family narratives on eco-system, and family history, cultural history, master narrative and cultural myths on macro-system. They explain the effects of all dimensions of culture, myth, master and family narratives on identity development within the framework of all these facts. Therefore, intergenerational narratives, culture, and master narrative play a key role in narrative identity development.

People derive personal narratives from past experiences, roles, and relationships with the family and the environment. There is also a peer effect on identity which continues to develop in adolescence, however, parents still have an impact on their child's identity development (Merrill and Fivush 2016). Experiences conveyed by parents to their children in both childhood and adolescence are of significant importance. Therefore, how young people are affected by experiences conveyed by parents and how they narrate them is an important field of research.

Schachter (2018) critically addresses some aspects of the lifelong development model developed by Erikson and states that three important aspects underlined by Erikson's theory of identity have been understudied. The first of those aspects is intergenerational identity, suggesting that identity development in adolescents and productivity development in adults are interconnected, the dynamics of which should be further studied. Although Erikson states that identity is a critical stage of youth, identity development is a matter of generation (Erikson 1968 p. 29), many identity studies still focus on puberty (Schachter 2018). Schachter also argues that Erikson's identity development theory is a psychosocial theory that emerges through social interaction (2015) and is based on the assumption that development depends mostly on intergenerational interaction (2018).

When children and young people go through development, adults try to maintain productivity, which is an important stage of development. Therefore, intergenerational interaction has an impact on everyone and on their identity development. This is a cyclic process. In other words, identity development in adolescence depends on the development of productivity in adulthood, and vice versa. It can, therefore, be stated that young people create a sense of ego identity during identity development that starts in adolescence. They just turn inward and do not do it. Adults evaluate reactions and focus on how they are accepted. The individuals, therefore, complete their self and identity in harmony and with intergenerational interaction (Schachter 2018).

The individual hears the first narrative structure and story in her family. Parents both become role models for their children and convey their own experiences to them, which is an important narrative structure. Narratives play a key role in daily familial interaction. Family experiences are frequently talked about and shared (Merrill et al. 2015), which means that family experiences are passed down to younger generations. Children or teenagers make use of not only their own experiences but also familial experiences to ensure social learning. Family narratives are the first social structure to be witnessed by the child.

For generations, multiple participants not only tell stories but also evaluate them together, and therefore, intergenerational story narrative is of key importance for identity development (Peterson and Langellier 2006). Intergenerational narrative refers to the process in which parents or other family members tell their children about their experiences (Merrill and Fivush 2016). In this way, they establish links between individual and collective memories and enable younger generations to learn about their family history (Reese and Fivush 2008). Younger generations draw on the experiences of previous generations and interpret the environment, society, and life. Thus, young generations take a stance about the world and evaluate their own identity. Some family stories are about isolated incidents, while others become intergenerational family heritage. If a family story is passed down from generation to generation, it becomes heritage (Thompson et al. 2009). Such stories shape the worldview of that family. In emerging adulthood, the individual thinks more about her own family experiences and construct an identity associated with that family heritage (Thompson et al. 2009).

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Family stories, especially those conveyed by mothers to adolescent children enable adolescents to have higher self-esteem and emotional regulation (Fivush et al. 2009, Marin et al. 2008). If a family conveys experiences, recognizes different perspectives, and defines itself as “a storyteller family,” its members have higher satisfaction (Koenig Kellas 2005). Fivush and Merrill (2016) argue that adoles-

cent family members have high self-esteem, perceived self-efficacy, and academic success and less depression, anxiety, and regression when their family members share challenging experiences with other family members. These results indicate that senior family members pass down their life experiences to younger generations. This allows younger generations to create bibliographic memory and learn about family identity (Fivush 2014). Familial and intergenerational narratives play a key role in psychosocial development in adolescents, which is identity (Merrill and Fivush 2016). Story narration plays an important role in identity development and presents a narrative form and helps other family members to find out who they are (Stone 1988 in Thompson et al. 2009).

Lastly, it is not only parents who play a role in intergenerational narrative identity. Sometimes past events are passed on through generations and becomes the master narrative. If the individual identifies with the master narrative, she develops group commitment and a sense of belonging. However, she sometimes narrates a different story from the master narrative. She manages to construct a unique individual identity by breaking free from the master narrative. Some researchers state that further research is warranted to examine the relationship between the positive-negative self or individual identity development and the master narrative (Hihara et al. 2018). In other words, they state that the master narrative turns from intergenerational narrative identity into a dominant one and is passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, its effect on identity should be further studied.

## Discussion

In search of identity, people ask themselves the question “Who am I?,” to which they always have an answer. However, it is the stage of adolescence where identity gains a holistic, abstract, and socio-cultural form suggested by Erikson, and therefore, that question becomes more and more important during that stage. From the end of adolescence throughout emerging adulthood, this form turns into a character and enables the individual to achieve future goals (McAdams 2001). In fact, researchers underline the role played by cultural and social factors and the master narrative in identity development (Hammack and Toolish 2015). The main perspective is that historical development, social identity, and cultural canonical narrative shape identity. According to identity development proposed by narrative researchers, identity depends on life stories, which are first encountered in the family and then intensified through individual and group interactions and are shaped by the dominant culture and environment (Bruner 1990, Fivush and Merrill 2016, McAdams 2001).

According to narrative theorists, interaction shapes identity, but what is important is to examine how it is narrated (Bruner 1990, McLean 2008). Therefore, how one narrates an event indicates how one perceives it, which plays a key role in one’s identity development. In fact, self-expression is an important re-

search topic for narrative theorists, but it is not the only theory that propounds this. Waterman (1999) also takes into account “expressiveness” in addition to the identity statuses of the theories of identity narrative. The individual uses expressiveness to define an appropriate self and states that she lives by that definition, which shows that she, in some way, has a connection with narrative identity theorists. Aside from similarities, there are serious differences between Waterman’s model (1999) and narrative theorists’ self-narration. Narrative theorists argue that the individual tends to narrate her past and lives by that story to form an identity (Bruner 1990, McAdams 2000, Sarbin 1986).

Narrative identity accounts for how such factors as development, socio-psychological perspective, historical, and ideological phenomena integrate in identity. Narrative identity data are collected using qualitative approaches. Self-expression is based on narration and provides a holistic perspective in identity analysis, enabling research to access to all functions in self-expression. Self-expressiveness enables us to reach development cycles, sociopsychological factors, historical and ideological facts, and cultural and group effects (Hammack 2006, 2008). This shows that there may be a similarity between how narrative identity and social psychology explain identity development. However, narrative identity is different from social psychology because it focuses on more than single variable in self-identity development. Assessments of narrative identity may reveal social psychological factors. The researcher does not interfere with it either. A narrator decides by herself how she narrates her identity because narrative identity argues that the individual narrates all the phenomena that she recalls and develops a life story for herself by interpreting all her experiences throughout her life. Autobiographical memory research, which is a narrative approach, argues that studies should include individual identity to interpret situational narratives remembered by her. All this shows that the theory of narrative identity preserves its distinctness.

Those who advocate the theory of narrative identity make the best analysis of Erikson’s psychosocial identity theory. They preserve the individual identity development in Erikson’s model, but also believe that the individual is a social being and that identity is socially shaped in a social structure. They, therefore, extensively studied the effects of interaction within this social structure on identity development. Studies on intergenerational narrative identity point out the importance of infant-caregiver attachment in identity development proposed by Erikson (Fivush and Zeman 2011). This shows that the theory of narrative identity addresses Erikson’s theory in a more holistic way. In addition to Erikson’s theory of psycho-psychological identity, a different hypothesis on identity development claims that one creates a narrative language by expressing oneself and lives by that narration (Bruner 1990, McAdams 2001, Sarbin 1986). Identity studies focus on the way of interpreting the past and the role of master narrative in that interpretation, and thus, draw attention to the role of historical factors in



this form of narration (Hammack 2006, McLean 2008). This points to the fact that the way the past is narrated plays a key role in identity development.

Narrative identity leads to important results and effects in various aspects. First, it affects psychological well-being (Adler 2012). Baerger and McAdams (2007) state that people with coherent narratives have high life satisfaction and low depression. Narratives affect not only young people but also adults. Coherent life narratives are negatively correlated with borderline personality disorders in adults (Adler et al. 2012). In other words, the more coherent the life narratives, the less prevalent the borderline personality disorders among adults. Narratives affect not only the individual but also the family. Adolescent family members have high self-esteem, perceived self-efficacy, and academic success, and less depression, anxiety, and regression when their family members share challenging experiences with other family members (Fivush and Merrill 2016).

## Conclusion

Research on narrative identity addresses identity in a holistic manner and focuses on individual and intergenerational effects and historical, cultural, and social factors in identity development. Moreover, interpreting and conveying all this provides the individual with the opportunity to express all possible factors in identity development, allowing us to understand how she interprets and narrates her identity. Narrative identity studies are, therefore, of paramount importance for both researchers and mental health professionals. Mental health professionals (school psychological counselors, therapists etc.) who live in cities, where numerous cultures coexist, should be aware of the fact that narratives play a key role in identity development to be able to carry out further research. What is more, further research can help us better understand narrative therapy, which is a combination of psychological counseling and therapy approaches. Narrative identity is a postmodern approach, and therefore, helps mental health professionals to develop new perspectives. Tarragon (2008) lists the characteristics that mental health professionals should possess. Those characteristics show that the theory of narrative identity can help mental health professionals develop different perspectives. If mental health professionals and researchers address identity within the framework of the theory of narrative identity, they can perceive identity as an interdisciplinary and interpersonal social phenomenon, recognize the styles of language use in identity narration, evaluate identity from individual perspectives, and detect the localization factors of identity.

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