

ABSTRACT

GERSTACKER, MATTHEW D. Becoming an Emerging Adult: Demographic and Cultural Factors, Coping Style, and Coping Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Exploration and Commitment during the Resolution of an Emerging Adult's Identity Crisis. (Under the direction Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan.)

Throughout the course of human history, individuals have been forced to face a vast array of stressful situations. Each of these experiences and encounters required adequate management, if not to ensure survival, then to provide education or protection. Simultaneously, human beings were diversifying, establishing groups based on physical and cognitive representations, values, beliefs, and other environmentally based concepts. What appeared to emerge is the idea of culture, a concept developed out of vastness that is the human being, and a need for individual identities. The current investigation examined these concepts, guided by six research hypotheses (a) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution of emerging adults, (b) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of selected dispositional and situation specific coping approaches, (c) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of the self-efficacy of implemented coping styles, (d) dispositional and situation specific coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, (e)

self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors is a significant predictor of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, and (f) when combined, dispositional coping, situation specific coping, and self-efficacy of implemented coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution.

A sample (n = 246), drawn from a public college campus in the Southeastern United States, was asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and four self-report questionnaires aimed at exploring each of the six research hypotheses. Collected data were analyzed using hypothesis specific multiple regression analyses. The regressions suggested that selection of various coping styles are predicted by demographic and cultural variables. It was further suggested that the selected coping styles and a combination selected coping style and self-efficacy of the selected style are predictive of exploration and commitment during the resolution of the emerging adult identity crisis. Accompanying the results are theoretical and conceptual implications, limitations of the findings, and implications for practice and research.

Becoming an Emerging Adult: Demographic and Cultural Factors, Coping Style, and
Coping Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Exploration and Commitment
during the Resolution of an Emerging Adult's Identity Crisis.

by
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DEDICATION

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the Pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate;

I am the captain of my soul.

--William Ernest Henley, *Invictus* 1875

To the followers of Dr. M. L. King, Jr., readers of Dr. T. Seuss Geisel, and believers of Sir

Isaac Newton, this work is dedicated to each of you and your unconquerable souls.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in rural north central Ohio, Matthew D. Gerstacker did not have an abundance of extraordinary opportunities. He did not live in a town, and instead was forced to use his imagination as a guide. His curiosity was fostered, evolving into an intense need for knowledge. This need grew throughout his formative years, leading him to pursue academic endeavors that took a unique perspective on the status quo. During the adolescent years of high school and college, Matthew put his curiosity to use. His interests were diversified, his beliefs ever-evolving, resulting in his decision to set out on numerous academic adventures. The adventures resulted in a B. S. in Biology, with emphases in Chemistry and Psychology.

While earning his M.Ed. in Human Services and Counseling, Matthew began to explore his identity. This personal exploration led him to scholarly interests in coping, creativity, and culture. As these interests grew he began to question many of the underlying assumptions offered as curriculum in his academic coursework. Again, relying on his curious and inquisitive nature, Matthew set out on another adventure, the pursuit of a doctoral degree. The culmination of this degree and his life-long pursuit is this manuscript, an in-depth analysis of the process he underwent – the identity resolution of emerging adults.

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First, I must thank my parents – To my mother who taught me to question the status quo and never accept the answer, “Because that is the way it has always been done,” and to my father who encouraged and supported me in my search for alternatives, teaching me to graciously accept defeat and humbly accept victory, I thank you with love and gratitude.

To my advisor, Dr. Nassar-McMillan, I give much thanks and admiration. Your ability to facilitate my driven nature, allowing me to struggle with the process and take the path less trodden, has indeed, made all the difference. To Dr. Gerler, Dr. Grimmert, and Dr. Martin, I am genuinely grateful for your willingness to participate in my academic growth. Each of you, in your own way has fostered my personal growth, tolerance, and vision for future endeavors and experiences. And to all others whose paths I have crossed, I thank you for being a part of my development. Finally, to my partner Nicole, thank you.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In 1976, Shel Silverstein wrote a book that opened, “It was missing a piece. And it was not happy. So it set off in search of its missing piece.” It seems apropos to reference Silverstein’s (1976) *The Missing Piece*, when entering a discussion of development, especially among adolescents and young adults. Within this age range there is a group of individuals whom do not seem to fit into adolescent roles, but do not perceive themselves as adults. Society does not have a classification, nor do the individuals themselves, for the period they are in (Arnett, 2000). This age purgatory is not a new concept though. Similar life chapters have been suggested, but never named, by several theorists. Erikson (1968) commented that it was not uncommon for young women and men in developed societies to experience an extended adolescence, or psychosocial moratorium, wherein these individuals would utilize free role experimentation to seek out their personal and societal niches. Analogous with Erikson’s observations, Levinson (1978) professed that young women and men progress through a novice phase, during which the individuals attempt to enter into the adult world and create a stable life for themselves.

Throughout this process of formation and self-discovery, individuals will grapple with numerous fluctuations and life changes associated with their career and personal lives. Such distinguishable crises prompted Arnett (2000) to name this stage of identity purgatory, ranging from 18-25 years of age, emerging adulthood. Arnett (2000) acknowledges the concepts posited by Erikson and Levinson, but goes further in his differentiation and explanation of the stage of development. Emerging adults have relinquished the

dependencies commonly seen in children and adolescents, but have yet to fully accept the continuing responsibilities common in adulthood. Rather emerging adults are distinguished by their moderate independence from societal roles, expectations, and desires to explore the plethora of options available in love, careers, and worldviews. Arnett (2000) ends his description of this age group contending that this stage of development, unlike others, lacks direction but not choices; for most, their future is still uncertain therefore creating greater opportunities to explore life's endless possibilities, than any other stage of development.

Problem Statement

The seeming lack of direction has prompted multiple myths regarding emerging adults' identities to develop. One such myth was set forth by Robbins and Wilner (2001), themselves emerging adults, who posited that a "quarter life" crisis takes place among 18-25 year old individuals, wherein they are characterized as suffering from immense agony and overwhelming thoughts of helplessness, indecision, and apprehension. What such a characterization suggests is that emerging adults are in a time of turmoil and strife. Erikson offered an alternative portrayal; his depiction suggests individuals within this age range are faced with the challenge of evaluating their abilities and interests as well as the social influences on them, in an effort to develop and sustain beliefs that they are capable of building a high quality and satisfying life for themselves and their loved ones (Arnett, 2007).

A second common myth is that this age group is selfish and egocentric, avoiding the adult world to continue living a materialistic lifestyle with little concern for the world around them (Arnett, 2007). An often overlooked aspect of this myth is that emerging adults, by definition, are in a stage of identity development that requires exploration. During

this 7-8 year period, most emerging adults will not live with their parents or an intimate partner, and in keeping with Arnett's characterization, emerging adults are going to explore numerous opportunities in love, career, and education. From this perspective, considering emerging adults selfish may not be an accurate characterization. The final myth to be dispelled is that emerging adults are simply trying to find ways to avoid growing up. At first glance this may appear true, but it should be noted that this is a subjective assessment. Those making this judgment might be gauging their thoughts based on the social rules of their times, not current social norms. Secondly, it is important to note that many of today's careers and occupations require some type of postsecondary degree. Those that do not seek a postsecondary degree will struggle to find a job that will support them and possibly a family (Arnett, 2007). Each of these myths is presented to provide a clear understanding of the age group being explored. They are in time of instability and uncertainty, wandering aimlessly in search of a mythical missing piece, but all the while they are being evaluated and pressured by societal norms that may or may not be applicable. Furthermore, the shifts that have taken place socially have this age group trying to develop an identity that has not yet been thoroughly conceptualized.

Rationale of Study

Unlike other stages of development, for example puberty, the stage of emerging adulthood is not a universal stage. As has been previously presented, the stage being discussed has been theorized on since the 1960's, however was not formally labeled until Arnett (2000) assigned the stage the emerging adulthood title. During these early theorizations, and in Arnett's characterizations, it has been suggested that emerging

adulthood is a life stage common to Western and industrialized societies. With this contention, the period of emerging adulthood would appear to be a culturally constructed paradigm, not a collective and absolute construct (Arnett, 2000). Accepting emerging adulthood as cultural construct, influenced by the social frameworks of industrialized civilizations, it could be surmised that the concept has evolved.

Acknowledging that evolutionary approaches have generally focused on biological concepts such as genes, selection, and replication, Dawkins (1989) applies Darwinian Theory to cultural evolution. Building on a theory contending that organisms are constantly varying within their respective species, searching for the advantages in the game of survival, Dawkins (1989) propounds that culture, too, may have developed in this way (Distin, 2005). Again drawing on the biological Dawkins offered a term to describe this cultural unfolding – a meme. As in gene theory, whereby biological replicators (i.e., genes) demonstrating longevity, fidelity, and increased benefit to the organism are more likely to be passed on to offspring, memetics examines the germination process of cultural replicators (i.e., memes) (Distin, 2005). This competition in genes is often seen in the form of mutations and adaptations to phenotypic characteristics in order to increase survival rates of the genes. The analogous process in memes involves the competition for resources, such as attention from the brain. Success in this competition is dependant upon a meme's stability and dissemination in the cultural environment (Distin, 2005). It is the attractiveness of the meme, its ability to make the most of its context, whether through exploitation, cooperation, or some combination, that will most likely insure its continued existence (Distin, 2005).

Using a meme's biological equivalent, it is possible to understand how the concept is perpetuated, but what is a meme? Again like a gene, a meme is a unit of information that is successful by proxy phenotypic effects (Distin, 2005). For a meme, the unit of information that is passed is difficult to isolate, however is substantiated when words or skills are used to convey values and beliefs (Distin, 2005). And just as with genes, as a meme is passed from generation to generation, it will adapt and become more conducive to its surrounding cultural environment. To provide more conceptualization, each of the numerous and varied reference groups that make up our population have specific sets of values, traditions, beliefs, etc., which are passed along through the generations (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005), changing ever so slightly as they are passed. The current traditions are likely to be different than the original, if only because the original belief does not prove beneficial for its host human in its current cultural environment. What is being suggested is that like our genetic make-up, each of us is also a host for cultural DNA (Distin, 2005) that will continue to evolve as our environments do aiming to provide reference groups with the necessary adaptations for survival.

Up to this point, the content has focused on two moderately contemporary constructs, emerging adulthood and memetics. And up until now fair questions are, how and in what manner are these two notions related? The simple response would be psychosocial identity formation. Beginning in the mid to late 1960's James Marcia proposed a rationale for empirically measuring identity development during late adolescence. Out of this proposition emerged four facets of psychosocial identity development (Marcia, 1966). Presented earlier is Arnett's (2000) suggestion that this formative process takes place during

the late teens and early twenties, subsequently labeled emerging adulthood. Accompanying Arnett's hypothesis are several myths which introduce a social aspect in the identity formation process. This social aspect is addressed via a conjecture that traditions and values can evolve and be adapted to current contexts to permit their continued existence. Such a supposition is based on the fact that skills and values may be passed from generation to generation through processes of observation and learning. This review demonstrates how emerging adulthood and memetics are related. The following is intended to describe one possible form of relationship that might exist.

Arnett (2000) mentions emerging adults' freedom and autonomy afford them immense opportunities to explore diverse arenas of love, career, and worldview. As this exploratory and formative process unfolds, individuals will experience rejection, loss, and increased responsibility, among many others (Arnett, 2000). Essentially what is being conveyed is that emerging adulthood is a life stage fraught with stressful events and encounters, filled with rejection and disillusionment, and largely experienced without a support network of family and friends (Jonsson, 1994; Morch, 1995; Arnett & Jensen, 1999; Arnett, 2000). To navigate such a tumultuous time individuals are going to need a strong set of coping processes, beginning with what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) term primary and secondary appraisal processes. During primary appraisal the outcome or anticipated outcome of the encounter is the focus. Secondary appraisal processes are different in that they are not concerned with the end result. Instead the focus is on effective management of the encounter including an evaluation of what can or might be done in the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The evaluation in a secondary appraisal is laden with complexities, such

as accounting for what coping behaviors are available, will the available strategies bring about desired results, and can the individual effectively carry out the strategies. In other words, does the emerging adult have a proper outcome expectation based on the selected strategy, and is this person efficacious in his or her ability to properly implement the coping option (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

As an emerging adult attempts to appraise one of the numerous stressful encounters that may be faced, this person must also be prepared to act, or cope, with the stressor. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) contend that coping is more than an outcome based process of what is beneficial or detrimental. They contend it is an effortful process of managing stressors, and because it is a process, it is constantly changing based on context and available resources. With this in mind, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posit two forms of coping strategies, emotion- and problem-focused approaches. Emotion-focused strategies attempt to regulate the emotions encountered when stressing and often occur when it has been decided that the stressor cannot be altered (e.g., avoidance). Problem-focused approaches aim to manage the situation via an assessment of the issue, creating alternatives, weighing these options, and making the most beneficial choice (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Each of these approaches can be viewed as dispositional (i.e., general approaches or tendencies to managing stress) or situation specific (i.e., responses implemented in a recent stressful event) which addresses more contextual factors (Lazarus, 1999).

Research Questions

Building to this point, multiple hypotheses have been introduced in regards to the concepts presented. However a unifying focus is still needed, therefore the aim of this study

is to explore the process of coping among emerging adulthood. The selection process will be explored from a psychosocial identity formation framework, with emphasis placed on the roles of cultural and sociological influences. During this investigation several questions will be used as guides (a) When combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, (b) when combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of selected dispositional and situation specific coping approaches, (c) when combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of the self-efficacy of implemented coping styles, (d) do dispositional and situation specific coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, (e) are levels of self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors a significant predictor of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, and (f) when combined, do dispositional coping, situation specific coping, and level of self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors significantly predictor levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution?

Chapter Two

It seems apropos to reference Silverstein's (1976) *The Missing Piece*, when entering a discussion of development, especially among adolescents and young adults. Within this age range there is a group of individuals whom do not seem to fit into adolescent roles, but do not perceive themselves as adults. Society does not have a classification, nor do the individuals themselves, for the period they are in (Arnett, 2002). Seemingly each of these individuals is missing a piece. Fortunately, this lost group is in a period that offers immense opportunities for exploration of diverse identities (Arnett, 2002).

This process of exploration and development may be viewed from various vantage points with many external influences. Erikson (1968) used an epigenetic approach to describe his perspective, which requires any organism that grows to have a plan for growth. Each of the facets comprising the whole will have a specific time to develop, cultivating in a fully functioning organism. Parts of this cultivation process are interactions with social environments, termed the person-environment relationship. The interaction(s) suggest that environment and behavior should not be viewed as separate entities, but instead as an interaction(s) (Gallant & Thayer, 1999). Identity development among the 'missing piece' group will be explored via social contextual lenses (i.e., person-environment relationship).

Review of Theoretical Literature

Psychosocial Identity Development

Based on the epigenetic perspective, Erikson proposed eight habitual stages that a human will progress through (Waterman & Archer, 1991), and unlike other scholars of his day, addressed the unique role an individual's environment plays in the maturation process.

Incorporating such influences into this process revealed an alternative, psychosocial, perspective to the prevailing psychosexual stance (Hoover, 1997). The psychosocial framework uses a myriad of terms, including identity and identity crisis, described in various manners (e.g., phenomenological, behavioral, and structural), but not until Marcia (1966) was the framework empirically validated. The validation provided means by which this framework could be examined cross-culturally, measures to examine various components of specific stages, and the production of over 300 more empirically derived studies founded on the ego identity (i.e., psychosocial) development perspective (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, and Orlofsky, 1993). What follows are an investigation into and analysis of Marcia's (1966) derivative of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial perspective of human development. The inquiry will briefly survey the theory's background, while defining key constructs and tenets.

Psychosocial identity formation emphasizes the role of the ego not only as a mediator between id impulses and superego demands, but also in the development of competencies and principles intending to serve as the foundation of a dynamic, proficient social being (Berk, 2007). Beginning in infancy and extending through old age, each of the eight stages are characterized by a single psychological conflict between two opposing forces, referred to as a crisis. Thus, the critical, and environmentally related, feature of each stage is the resolution of the conflict. The nature of the subsequent solution, positive or negative, is the major determinant of the outcome (e.g., healthy or maladaptive behavior) of each stage (Turner & Helms, 1995; Berk, 2007). Noting the formation process is discontinuous, resolution of the appropriate crisis and age determine passage to the next

level of development; however events taking place at later stages may undo previously resolved conflicts (Turner & Helms, 1995).

Marcia (1987) concurs with Erikson, that each stage can be identified by a key conflict, however goes further to suggest that only one stage, adolescence (i.e., identity versus identity diffusion) creates a new configuration. The reorganization and synthesis of a new structure during adolescence will be completed continually in each stage from this point on, making the concept a measureable construct. This evaluative property led Marcia (1966, 1987) to conceptualize and formulate a framework of four measurable identity statuses based on Erikson's identity stage of development. Distinguishing itself from other psychoanalytic approaches, Erikson's perspective suggests the environment, not impulse, is the predominant driving force. For example, the adolescent stage is marked by the onset of puberty. If a psychoanalytic paradigm is applied the dominant achievement is sexual gratification, leading to offspring (Berk, 2007; Buss, 2008). However, an Eriksonian perspective contends that the individual is attempting to find a distinct and personally accepted sense of self, while matching this persona with unwritten, but long established societal norms (Marcia, 1987; Turner & Helms, 1995).

Social Cognitive Theory

Disagreement with the popular learning theories of the times, which stressed rewards and punishments for responses (i.e., operant conditioning), led Bandura to believe that social responses would likely not develop if this operant conditioning were the lone method of learning (Bandura, 1962). This belief prompted Bandura and others to explore concepts from an array of sources. The result of this departure was a theory of learning based on two

divergent trends, reinforcement concepts and cognitive theories using subjective thinking to evaluate objective behaviors (Rotter, 1982). Bandura and Walters (1963) took this concept and realigned the focus on personality development, emphasizing learning via imitation. Still viewed as an alternative variation of internal drive reduction, Bandura adjusted yet again, placing emphasis on individual expectancies of imitated behaviors (Rotter, 1982). As a result, the sociobehavioristic approach was developed, distinguishing itself from other learning theories in that it addressed social issues that may be influenced and focused on the techniques used to acquire and modify social behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Grusec, 1994).

The persistent advancement revealed a view of human learning in which development is neither perceived as the result of inner drives nor controlled by external forces. Rather this perspective seeks to view development as an effect of a triadic relationship between a person, their behavior(s), and environment(s). The viewpoint is referred to as social cognitive theory (SCT; Bandura, 1986). What follows are descriptions of some fundamental concepts and necessary competencies that distinguish SCT from those theories it is derived from.

Constructs

Identity. Erikson constructed a definition for the observed dissonance he noticed in some World War II veterans, often alluded to as a sense or attitude, indicating that identity was not merely a state of being, but also a state of becoming (Marcia, 1980; Kroger, 2004). Marcia (1980) took the concept a step further, interpreting identity as a self-structure, nurtured within an individual, based on previous life experiences, internal and external

drives and values, and personal abilities and beliefs. Environments and individuals are not static, therefore neither is one's identity; identity constituents are continually added and removed as persons navigate their worlds (Marcia, 1980).

Keeping with the fluid nature of an identity Marcia (1991) believes that identity can be described from three diverse and interactional perspectives. The first is a phenomenological approach, positing that individuals are conscious of their Gestaltist cores, while outward personas simultaneously attempt to fulfill diverse societal roles. It is described as an individual's sense of self developed from the individual experiencing him- or herself within their culture (Marcia, 1994). The second approach is behavioral, suggesting that a person with an identity will perpetrate acts that display commitment to specific values and beliefs (Marcia, 1991). Lastly, a structural orientation contends that after an individual has developed an identity, it will influence perceptions of the world, the organization of these perceptions, and how one acts on such perceptions (Marcia, 1991).

Identity formation. The term identity crisis has been used since the early 1940's, referring to conflicting or exigent issues often resulting in the reformation of an identity (Baumeister, 1991). The conflict results from the seminal convergence of physical development, cognitive skills, and pressures for societal conformity (Marcia, 1980). It should be noted that resolution of this initial convergence does not signal the end of the conflict, nor advancement to the next developmental stage. Instead, this suggests the beginning of identity formation, which is generally concluded at the latter limits of the period (i.e., emerging adulthood; Marcia, 1994). Ensuing stages cannot be entered until the

adolescent proceeds through two separate progressions – exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1966).

As an individual explores, he or she actively pursues various alternative facets of identity, attempting to cultivate a more complex sense of self. Commitment, on the other hand, requires the individual make a decision, regarding the explored facets, adhering to the goals, values, and beliefs associated therewith (Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, Dunham, 2000). This informal identity is often founded upon borrowed or conferred ideologies, because the individual lacks enough experience to formulate a thoroughly constructed identity; it does provide the beginnings of a fairly consistent decision-making framework (Marcia, 1980, 1994). The management of choices within this framework can follow several paths towards resolution, which Marcia (1966) developed into four empirically measurable and validated statuses – identity achievement, foreclosure, identity diffusion, and moratorium.

Identity statuses. The four potential statuses are shaped by the existence or absence of decision-making combined with the amount of time devoted to exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1980, 1994). Widely considered the most advanced of the four outcomes, identity achievers generate their own identities deciding what factors become a part of their identities. Conveying the sense that they have prompted the onset of and directed the judgment process, identity achievers conduct themselves in a culturally-accepted and stable manner, upheld by a strong sense of maturity (Marcia, 1966, 1987, 1993, 1994; Baumeister, 1991). The status is displayed by individuals that are committed to a self-chosen career, ideology, or relationship, while demonstrating an ability to utilize

previously constructed adaptive skills in future self-definement (Marcia, 1993; Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, & Dunham, 2000).

A foreclosed identity, believed to be the origination of the identity formation process, suggests an individual has not yet explored alternatives to a pending crisis (Baumeister, 1991; Marcia, 2002; Schwartz *et al*, 2000). The identity is often the result of a child moving from the latency period of development deeming parental and authoritarian figures' beliefs and values unquestionable. Marcia (2002) contends that foreclosed persons are nothing more than more intricate and refined renderings of themselves as ten-year olds and find themselves challenged for adherence to values that have been adopted without critical analysis (Baumeister, 1991).

The moratorium stage, described as the crisis of modern youth, provides individuals with adult-like responsibilities, but not a clear standing within the societal hierarchies (Baumeister, 1991). Dissonance arises because adolescents are equipped with a developed value system and instilled occupational goals, but are under constant scrutiny for holding and defending these systems (Marcia, 2002). The final and least mature status is identity diffusion, exemplified by attempts to explore without commitment, leads identity diffusers to be classified as perpetual adolescents (Baumeister, 1991; Marcia 1987; Schwartz *et al*, 2002). The absence of any type of stable exploration and commitment towards an established, mature identity also leads to a diminutive and insecure sense of self (Baumeister, 1991; Marcia, 2002).

Triadic relationship. The person-environment interaction is a common construct in social learning theories; at its core people and environments are represented based on traits

or general classifications (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Reliance on traits and classifications, which may remain constant, does not account for the fluidity of the interaction that may be influenced by an individual's ability to adapt, change, or self-regulate in specific situations (Lent *et al.*, 2002). To account for this variability, SCT contends that each constituent has a bidirectional influence on the other two termed reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1994). In this model, a person, including cognitive factors, a behavior, and environmental influences act as co-determinants of effects. The reciprocal nature of this model does not suggest that all facets will be simultaneously acting upon each other, nor will each interaction be equal in strength, instead each aspect is a producer and product of the other two (Bandura, 1986; Lent *et al.*, 2002).

Observational learning. According to Bandura (1986), human behaviors and social principles are gathered via observation of actions and the resulting consequences of these actions. Designated imitation or modeling, the process necessitates an observer formulate rules of behaviors to be employed as guides for future actions (Bandura, 1986). Simply watching another perform an action will result in mimicry of the behavior, whereas imitation requires the person to pay special attention to the actions taking place (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1994). Attending to the actions allows the observer to create an original symbol of the event (i.e., a memory or rule set) to be implemented in similar situations (Grusec, 1994). Through the use of forethought and the accompanying flexibility of the novel symbol, an observer can now prepare how to deal with similar scenarios. Anticipation and foresight allows an individual to gauge the nature of potential outcomes, motivating a person to develop schema that may have a contributory effect on current behavior. Observational

learning permits people to create original rule sets to guide future actions as opposed to haphazard problem-solving that may result in misfortune or harm (Bandura, 1986).

Self-regulation and reflection. In his early writing Bandura (1963) asserted that many individuals and communities maintain social control via internal and external sanctions. In turn the restrictions begin to influence a person's choice of social groups based on like-mindedness, but self-evaluated based on group reactions. Bandura (1986) asserted that individuals do not act in specific ways only to please those in their surroundings, but also to meet internal standards used for self-evaluation.

The self-evaluative standards that guide self-regulation are derived from external sources such as parental behaviors (Grusec, 1994). Traditionally, operant forms of learning were given credence over other methods, however any behavior that can be learned via experience can also be learned vicariously. What this suggests is a behavior does not have to be performed to be learned, rather guiding patterns may be developed from vicarious interactions (Bandura, 1986). The downside to such behavioral development is that cultivated guidelines are not objective. Due to the subjective nature of this form of learning, it is important to note that behaviors are actively selected by an individual, based on external influences (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1994). To combat the bias nature that self-regulatory mechanisms develop from, it is vital to cultivate behavioral patterns from competent environments that foster an understanding of the behaviors being learned and that the individual is in control, not the environment, of what is being learned (Grusec, 1994).

Humans have a unique skill that can be used in the development of self-regulatory methods, self-conscious reflection. The ability to self-reflect permits people to evaluate

behaviors and environments, gaining a general understanding of persona and surroundings (Bandura, 1986). Part of this reflection process involves the development of self-efficacy. Within this construct, the perception an individual has regarding a looming situation will determine the level of achievement and amount of effort put into achieving (Grusec, 1994). What results is an individual attempting to perform an observed behavior that is in line with effort and expectations of the model. As such observed behaviors are performed and consequences experienced, an individual will reflect in an attempt to alter current behavioral schema and seek out alternative sources from which to formulate new guidelines (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1994).

Review of Quantitative Literature

Bowlby (1980) indicates a person's sense of security and trust in others is molded by experiences of emotional availability from their care-providers (Laible, 2007). Presumably, individuals will develop and form concepts and identities of themselves, others, and relationships based on the early experiences with parents, guardians, and other care-givers (Laible, 2007). Previous research (Shaver & Hazen, 1993; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2003) indicates persons with secure attachments will be more optimistic, comfortable seeking support when stressed, and use more constructive coping strategies. Such findings led Laible (2007) to posit that social behaviors are based on individuals' prior experiences with attachment and due in part to emotional skills learned and developed in the close relationships. At an increasing rate adolescents are turning to their peers, rather than parental figures, when faced with anxious or distressing situations in an effort to

demonstrate autonomy, therefore emerging adults must form new or alternative identities (Allen & Land, 1999; Arnett, 2000; Laible, 2007).

Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, and Berzonsky (2007) explore the identity formation stage of late adolescence, developed by Erikson (1968). Marcia (1980) further conceptualizes identity formation into two facets, with an encompassing focus of commitment to an option after exploring multiple alternatives. Luyckx *et al* (2007) divide exploration and commitment further (e.g., exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, and identification with the commitment) hypothesizing that identity forming factors will be impacted by parental psychological control. The directives are parents' means of pressuring their children to adhere to their standards and values, without considering the needs and values of the child (Luyckx *et al*, 2007). Due to societal changes in Western nations the onset of this of this process has been delayed, now beginning in the late teens and early twenties (Luyckx *et al*, 2007), causing Arnett (2000) to rename the period emerging adulthood.

Luyckx *et al* (2007) reference university and college campuses as common environments for this age group serving as a source of immense opportunity for identity exploration, in part due to high levels of personal freedom and low levels of social responsibility. These opportunities are outwardly depicted when an individual chooses between potential worldviews, love interests, or career paths (Bradley & Wildman, 2002; Luyckx *et al*, 2007). Arnett (2000) suggests risk-taking and reckless behaviors are outward portrayals of these levels, serving as methods of identity investigation for the emerging adult. Bradley and Wildman (2002) utilize sensation seeking and peer pressure to explore

psychosocial predictors of these behaviors among the emerging adults. Sensation seekers are characterized by their habitual search for self-reliance and transformation (Bradley & Wildman, 2002). Peer influence was selected because it signals influences of the social environment and has been mentioned as an etiological factor for the development of reckless behaviors in adolescents (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Kandel, 1985; Oetting & Beauvais, 1986; Bradley & Wildman, 2002).

Effective stress management (e.g., seeking alternatives to reckless behavior) is an important and often overlooked task of everyday life. Because of its importance, research has focused on the various methods of stress management, the resultant outcomes, and individuals' responses to these outcomes. Coping behaviors are means by which stress and straining situations are reduced. In a broader sense, coping behaviors are a collection of responses implemented when a people are challenged, threatened, or believe their emotional stability has been displaced (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007). Therefore coping must be defined contextually, as situation-specific or dispositional.

A situation-specific approach assesses what behaviors were used when considering a recent stressful event. Conversely, a dispositional approach examines the general tendencies when facing stressful situations (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007). The approach implemented may be broken down into two separate and distinct dimensions – approach or avoidance. An approach-driven coping response is characterized by actively responding to the situation. In effect, individuals employing approach-driven coping strategies will confront the stressor attempting to actively manage it. On the other hand, avoidance-driven responses permit individuals to remove themselves or disengage, from the situation.

Commonly implemented avoidance-driven strategies include denial or minimization of the stressor, as well as conduct that requires circumvention of confrontation. Wishful thinking is a common example of an avoidance-driven method (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007).

Having acknowledged that close personal relationships play an integral role in adaptive functioning (e.g., conduct and academic achievement), it is imperative that researchers are mindful of the multitude of social environments in which adolescents encounter and try to manage stress (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001). Current research presents the family as the most powerful environment for the socialization of coping behaviors to occur (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007). The familial domains found to be influential include the family structure and environment, parent-child relationships, and modeling of behaviors (Kliewer, Fearnow, & Miller, 1996). Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) revealed that parents who demonstrate high levels of involvement in a moderately restrictive structure and provide ample autonomic support have children that develop increased levels of social competence and prosocial behavior. A summary of environmental influences revealed that families displaying strong communication, cohesiveness, and low levels of conflict model beneficial active coping behaviors. The result is children who are capable of actively managing stressful situations more productively (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007).

Methodologies

Participants. Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan (2008) note, descriptive research is fraught with uncontrollable variables, but careful observations and experimental control, including those of the population to be sampled, create the potential for reduced error

variance. For example, was the sample drawn from a population of full-time traditional students enrolled at a large land-grant university located in the southeastern United States, or was the sample taken from a population of students enrolled in a religiously-affiliated private college located in the Midwestern United States. Such clarification provides a more comprehensive description of the available population to be sampled. When combined with a large sample a clearer description of the population is provided, while drastically reducing the potential for insufficient statistical power and an inaccurate estimation of effect size (Heppner *et al*, 2008).

For example, Luyckx *et al* (2007) sampled an entirely Caucasian and predominantly female (n=482; 85.3%) traditional university students, whereas Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) draw their sample from an urban population, but did not provide clear demographic information. The majority of the participant's families (84%) had co-habiting parents or guardians and 13% of the participants were from divorced families. Luyckx *et al* (2007) note that most Belgian university students go home for the weekend and rely heavily on parental figures for financial support. To address issues of gender socialization and diversity, Bradley and Wildman (2002) sample a population that does not consist solely of traditional university students. Their sample (N = 380) of unmarried Australian university students, and again of predominantly White European descent, is comprised of individuals enrolled in a first year psychology program (n = 212), distance education students (n = 120), a volunteers who must be employed full-time (n = 54).

The most noticeable confound among these samples is the lack of a significant representation of non-White European descendants. The generalizability of the results is

reduced because of such confounds. Of slightly lesser importance, but confounding nonetheless, is that both samples are composed of unmarried individuals. As Brown and Clausen (1985) mention, emerging adults tend to view peer pressure as encouraging, and when accompanied with self-report measures intended to reveal levels of reckless behavior (e.g., drug use and promiscuous sexual activity), the potential for skewed results may be greatly increased. A final limitation of these studies pertains to the demographic make-up of the participants. This limiting factor decreases the external validity of the results; in fact it greatly reduces the populations the results may be generalized to.

Data Collection. The MAXMINCON philosophy states investigators should attempt to maximize variance among variables, while minimizing error and controlling for biases that might skew the results. Using multiple measures attempts to maximize variance attributed to the variables being examined, minimize the variance due to a sample size or difference, and control for any variance that may be caused by unrelated or unwanted variables (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Heppner *et al* (2008) advise using multiple methods of assessment when completing descriptive designs. The presumed purpose of a measure is to assess the level(s) of evident variables. However in this appraisal process it is assumed that participants will accurately evaluate themselves, resulting in a more precise reflection of underlying variables (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Aware of this, using multiple measures to evaluate latent variables accompanied by confirmatory factor analyses of the relationship of the same constructs increases the potential for more accurate estimates of the true relationship(s) (Heppner *et al*, 2008).

A concern in the selection process of measures is the availability of a tool addressing the variable of interest within the population being sampled.

Because of this self-report measures are a popular method of data collection. This is due in part to the ease with which they can be administered, the range of phenomena that they can address, and their compatibility with constructs within this wide range of phenomena (Heppner *et al*, 2008). However, it is also important to note that self-reports are subjective in nature, allowing for misrepresentations in the data, attribution biases, other troublesome issues (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Participants may respond in an effort to adhere to socially accepted norms or in an attempt to please the investigators; adolescents, in an effort to self-preserve, are likely to distort reports of the actual levels of problematic behaviors (Johnson, 1985). Moreover, misreporting may be done to evoke social desirability within peer groups (Bradley & Wildman, 2002). Responses of this nature are the result of mono-method bias and pose a threat to validity. This form of bias may be reduced or offset by using distractor measures with compiled results having no relevance to the current study (Heppner *et al*, 2008).

Reliability coefficient levels above 0.70 are considered acceptable; those ranging from 0.80 and 0.95 are the most advantageous, but this range is open to interpretation. For example, measures that are based on real-time self reports (e.g., personality, interest, or attitudinal measures) may have coefficients outside the recommended range (Hood & Johnson, 2002). A lower score on one of these measures may not signal erratic responses as a test-retest reliability figure might suggest. Instead, due to the real-time nature, responses are expected to vary depending on numerous influencing factors. Interpretation of the

coefficient(s) using internal consistency and inter-item consistency report findings indicating the assessments are reliably sampling the traits intended to be measured (Hood & Johnson, 2002).

Results

Correlational Analyses. Pearson product-moment correlations are calculated, establishing whether a linear relationship between the variables exists and subsequently examine any such correlations (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Significance levels for each correlation were set at .05; however the critiqued studies did not provide previous research to substantiate significance levels being set at this value. Luyckx *et al* (2007) report higher levels of psychological control were associated with less commitment making ($r = -.27$ to $-.30$, all $ps < .05$) and less identification with commitment ($r = -.10$ to $-.24$, all $ps < .05$) at each time interval. Heightened psychological control was related to increased breadth of exploration ($r = .19$ to $.27$, all $ps < .05$), but unrelated to the depth of exploration ($r = -.07$ to $.07$, all $ps > .05$).

Laible (2007) reported correlational and descriptive information for the variables examined. Of note are the relationships between peer and parent attachment ($r = 0.51$; $p < 0.01$), empathy and positive expressiveness ($r = 0.49$; $p < 0.01$), and negative dominant expressiveness and aggressive behavior ($r = 0.63$; $p < 0.01$). Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) compiled descriptive and correlational data between variables, relative to age, context, and coping approach. The results revealed that older adolescents were employing more diverse approaches than young adolescents, particularly in the school atmosphere, but

the magnitude of the relationships was minimal at best indicating that age did not have strong ties to the coping approach selected (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007).

Referring to previous research (Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996) Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) note that intercorrelations have been found to exist between active and avoidant coping strategies. Building on these previous findings, positive correlations were found between active and avoidant approaches used in both home and school environments. It should be noted that while statistically significant, the correlations were again minimal at best. Correlations strengthened though, when the relationships between wishful thinking and active or avoidant coping were examined. Wishful thinking was positively correlated to active ($r = 0.29, p < 0.01$) and avoidant ($r = 0.38, p < 0.01$) approaches at school; at home the findings were similar – active approaches ($r = 0.39, p < 0.01$) and avoidant ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$). These data suggest that strategies implemented in one setting will likely be the more abundant strategies implemented in other settings. Correlations supporting this finding range from 0.44 to 0.64 (all $p < 0.01$).

Regression Analyses. Selecting the proper form of multiple regression is important because each method has a discrete purpose that produces a slightly different outcome (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Cognizant that correlations do not suggest causality of the relationships, a simultaneous regression may be used to assess the amount of variance uniquely contributed by each variable and is generally used when evidence of a specific entry order is lacking. Therefore, in a simultaneous regression all predictors are entered at once. Accounting for common variance, what remains is the unique contribution of each variable to the prediction of the criterion variable (Heppner *et al*, 2008). A stepwise

approach is based on correlations between the predictors and criterion variable. The predictor with the highest correlation to the criterion is added first. Subsequent variables are added based on which yields the largest increase in the correlation. This is done until there is no longer an increase in the correlation that is statistically significant (Heppner *et al*, 2008).

When the nature of the subjects being examined is speculative hierarchical regressions prove to be the most applicable. With this method predictors are entered in a specific order, based on theoretical foundations, relevance to the current research, causation, or some combination of these. Bradley and Wildman (2002) use hypotheses as justification of predictor variable entry. Demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, and educational attainment) were entered first. Social desirability was entered at the second step, and the gender-social desirability interaction at the third step. Social desirability is a continuous predictor and was centered before the results were calculated to address any concerns of multicollinearity, the inflation of standard error due to redundancy of explanatory variables (Agresti & Finlay, 1997).

A hierarchical regression model was also used to assess the predictive potential parent and peer attachments have on socioemotional behaviors. Results of the regression predicting social behavior (e.g., prosocial behavior and aggression) demonstrated that both control variables and attachments were responsible for significant increases in the variance accounted for. The regression analysis for emotional awareness revealed significant increases with peer and parent attachment only in variance accounted for (Laible, 2007). Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) found the hierarchical method applicable in their

exploration of the predictive ability of age, gender, and relationships (e.g., teacher and family contexts).

Discussion

Based on the lack of empirical evidence on emerging adults, it is important to first establish if there is any type of relationship between the variables of interest. A correlational study serves each of these purposes based on the application of the MAXMINCON principle. The tools used to collect the data, self-report questionnaires, raise concerns about mono-method bias. Bradley and Wildman (2002) indicate that available and current research has numerous limitations namely, improperly operationalizing the predictors. Luyckx *et al* (2007) sample was taken from freshmen students, enrolled in a specific university department, entirely Caucasian and predominantly female, issues of validity arise. The first of these would be the generalizability of the results. The investigators cite this as a limitation, suggesting that non-White, non-Western, or both cultures would manage the identity formation process differently (Luyckx *et al*, 2007); however no attention was given to the influence the high rate of dual-parent homes may have, or how non-White or non-Western cultures view identity development among women.

Review of Qualitative Literature

The quality of a study and subsequent findings is often founded on the illusion that experimental designs are superlative to any other design. Yet, descriptive designs disseminate information on phenomena that may lead to increased effectiveness in the counseling field (Heppner *et al*, 2008). This assumption of a perfect design transcends quantitative designs, creating additional myths about qualitative research. Way (2005)

contends that the difference in methods is not one of numbers as opposed to words. Instead, variations are philosophical, thus raising issues of subjectivity. Qualitative designs attempt to explore phenomena of interest with increased depth and breadth expressing participants' lived experiences, whereas quantitative designs construe findings based on deductions of data viewed through potentially prejudiced lenses (Way, 2005; Heppner *et al*, 2008).

Dworkin (2005) explored the role of experimentation in the identity formation process among university and community college students, positing a thorough understanding of college student behavior requires observation of the interface between the student and the environment.

Methodology

Participants. The sample (n = 32) was comprised of students from a large, Midwestern university (n = 20) and students from a Midwestern community college. All of the participants were enrolled as full-time students. Dworkin's (2005) use of two different higher education settings, and recruitment through various student organizations (e.g., cultural, ethnic, athletic, artistic, and academic groups) on each campus allow for multiple exemplars of college students and their experiences, increasing the representativeness of the sample. Students (N = 1,500) engaged in campus organizations on the four-year campus were recruited via electronic mail. The message requested that those interested in participating contact the investigator to gain further knowledge of the study and schedule an interview. Students (N = 100) on the community college campus were recruited via messages sent electronically from faculty advisors of fifteen separate student organizations.

With the exception of one student, all that contacted the investigator voluntarily agreed to participate in the study (Dworkin, 2005).

Data Collection. Information was collected via a semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interview with each participant. Questions asked during the interview were developed from an exhaustive review of the literature, providing some structure to the interviews. However, keeping with methods of grounded theory, the interview process was constantly being adapted and modified using data to inform the direction of the interview (Heppner *et al.*, 2008). The investigator also reported journaling in the time immediately following each interview. Any such information recording therein was treated as data, and correspondingly coded and analyzed.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, with prominent elements (e.g., laughter and extended pauses) noted. Transcriptions were checked for accuracy and examined for themes, patterns, and concepts. The data were then categorized according to the interview question that was answered or addressed, completing the comparing incidents, category integration, and theory delimitation stages of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Heppner *et al.*, 2008). This led to the first level of coding, in which each reported event was named, then categorized around a specific phenomena (e.g., reported data being categorized based on a type of activity; Dworkin, 2005). The second level of coding, axial coding, provided specificity. In this stage, explicit properties of the previously identified categories are delineated, creating sub-divisions and allowing for more in-depth examination. The third and final coding stage, selective coding, separated subcategories that were significantly related to the main category, thus supplying further operationalization of

the category (Dworkin, 2005). The final stage of constant comparative analysis was then completed via a diagram of the discovered relationships between each of the constructs (Dworkin, 2005).

Results

By means of a dual interpretive methodology data was analyzed based on a phenomenological perspective through which meanings assigned to experimentation by students were explored. Secondly, a useable theory of experimentation, void of predetermined concepts of risk-taking, was developed via grounded theory methods (Dworkin, 2005). Employing a constant comparative analysis, consisting of seven total steps, four stages of analysis and three levels of coding, gathered data was examined (Dworkin, 2005; Heppner *et al*, 2008). Dworkin (2005) stated the potential for investigator influencing during the interview, prompting the need to distinguish between requested and unrequested information. Dworkin (2005) was also cautious to note that participant reported experiences were accepted as true experiences and directly corresponding with meanings that were applied to the experiences.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, findings are reported as definitions and descriptions rather than numerically. Dworkin (2005) describes three distinct aspects of experimentation. The relationship between experimentation and risk taking among interviewed emerging adults is examined first. Second, the methods through which the college culture promotes experimentation are addressed. The last aspect examined is the means by which experimentation can be appropriate developmental behavior for the consulted age group (Dworkin, 2005). Experimentation was described as an active process

in which students attempt to figure out who they are and what they have the potential to do. The deliberate and intentional decision making process is driven by desires to test personal and behavioral limits. Examples included active questioning of religious beliefs impinged upon students by their parents, developing social networks with diverse groups of people, and alcohol or substance use. Interviewees reported experimenting to learn about others that were different than they, aiming to debunk common myths and stereotypes about the groups (Dworkin, 2005).

Some emerging adults struggled to distinguish whether risk was a behavior or the result of an action (Dworkin, 2005). The need for such a distinction was made by one participant who surmised that a person's perception of substances as risky is founded on potential outcomes of using the substances. Regardless of the behavior, emerging adults base decisions on the potential outcomes, the likelihood of attaining a certain outcome, and personal valuing of potential outcomes, not if the outcome will actually occur.

The majority of students (n = 24) suggest that each behavior is its own construct. The distinction between the two was made at the public and personal levels. Emerging adults defined experimentation as a learning process aimed at goal achievement (Dworkin, 2005). At the personal level, the distinction is influenced by knowledge and preparation; however at the public level the influences are more contextual. A common example provided by respondents was a college campus. Students contend that campuses are advantageous settings that encourage and potentially facilitate experimentation, unlike other settings. Interviewees also suggested that risk is defined by individual values (Dworkin,

2005), confirming previous findings (Beyth-Marom & Fischhoff, 1997; Furby & Beyth-Marom, 1992)

Emerging adults described this as an environment of struggling academics and all night parties that include drinking, promiscuous sexual activity, and substance use. Further, the college culture was said to provide emerging adults with large amounts of free time, prospects for experimenting with independence from parents, and questioning what they have been told is acceptable or safe (Dworkin, 2005). The development of a college culture and risk taking behaviors was said to be influenced by increased independence and living away from home, a lack of real-world or financial responsibilities, and being surrounded by other people who are in a similar situation. The community college students reported higher levels of familial contact thus more family influence on their decision making process(es) (Dworkin, 2005). This apparent lack of familiarity with negative consequences of behaviors is consistent with Arnett's (1991) work that suggests young persons do not experience detrimental effects as a result of their risky behaviors.

Discussion

Dworkin (2005) notes that this study provides a foundation for future research, both with its findings and limitations. Dworkin (2005) draws attention to the personal identification of the emerging adults; the participants did not view themselves as risk takers, but instead as experimenters. Such identification may have led to bias in reporting. This bias may have been confounded further by using the terms risk taker and experimenter. Implicitly, the term risk taker may be received with negative connotations, causing participants to identify as experimenter; an experiment on the other hand, suggests a

systemic process, generally filled with precautions that is more socially accepted (Dworkin, 2005).

Conscious that emerging adults do not perceive their actions to be innately dangerous (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Jessor, 1987) or often experience negative consequences resulting from their actions, future explorations should include the identification of experimenting behaviors that are functionally analogous to risk taking behaviors. Implementing such an approach may reduce the potential for participant bias. Way (2005) contends that qualitative designs allow for the unexpected to occur, creating a setting that encourages connectivity. Engagement allows for contextualization of an account, increasing the possible explanations of an occurrence and a better understanding of an individual's experience (Way, 2005).

The development of a college culture and risk taking behaviors was said to be influenced by increased independence and living away from home, a lack of real-world or financial responsibilities, and being surrounded by other people who in a similar situation. The community college students reported higher levels of familial contact thus more family influence on their decision making process(es) (Dworkin, 2005). This apparent lack of familiarity with negative consequences of behaviors is consistent with Arnett's (1991) work that suggests young persons do not experience detrimental effects as a result of their risky behaviors.

Critique of Empirical Literature

Moderate levels of external and low levels of internal validity are not uncommon in descriptive designs, nor are the previously addressed limitations. For example, Laible

(2007) used only self-reports in the data collection process, which are susceptible to misrepresentations and raises the potential for mono-method bias (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Secondly, Laible (2007) mentions reported relationships are void of causality, again a common limitation of descriptive designs that employ correlational analyses. Cognizant that reviewed samples were comprised of predominantly White persons, it is suggested that future research explore populations that will provide a more representative sample (i.e., a more culturally diverse sample that includes legally joined couples), potentially increasing the external validity of the study.

Recognizing the importance of sample size and data collection, it is just as imperative to give attention to issues of measurement. Tuckman (1999) identifies various levels of effect size, with those at or below 0.20 considered low. At these levels, the effect the predictor variable(s) have on the criterion variable(s) is minimal. Even at the 0.50 level, the predictor(s) are accounting for only half of the influencing effects (Tuckman, 1999). This limitation is compounded by the use of only one form of measurement, a self-report questionnaire. The constructs examined also provide increased chances for measure error, in the form of participant biases and reactivity. Lazarus (1999) contends that adolescents are more likely to report socially desirable responses when asked to reflect on the management of a recent stressful situation.

This limitation exposes yet another measurement issue, participant bias when reporting undesirable behaviors. Accurately measuring avoidant coping behaviors has proven problematic in past studies (Ebata & Moos, 1991; Kliewer *et al*, 1996; Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007). It is surmised, that when completing a self-report measure,

under the observation of a researcher and teacher, the participant will be more likely to respond in a manner that appears pleasing to the observers. Reactivity is another measurement confound. This is based on the use of a self-report measure attempting to assess actions that are not openly reported due to their less than socially desirable nature.

When methods of this nature are combined with the emerging adult age demographic and their desires to please observers, potential measurement errors may be drastically increased. Acknowledging each of these limitations and aware that all research will be flawed, a trade-off must be made between levels of validity and attending to the influence of confounds. Such quid pro quo necessitates restrictions due to sample size and demographic composition, clarity between construct characteristics, or vetting of selected assessment tools be addressed.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

Throughout his lifetime, Erikson focused on the human development of various backgrounds and populations, including Native American and American Indians, White-, African-, and Black-Americans, numerous levels of socioeconomic status, educational level, and gender (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004). From this work, Erikson was able to summarize his thoughts into a culturally sensitive and solidly constructed view of human development – to fully understand an individual requires understanding this individual from the perspective in which the person grows, his or her social context; people and society are elaborately interconnected in diverse and continually evolving methods (Erikson, 1959).

In a discussion of the construct of identity, Marcia (1994) adamantly expresses the need to evaluate the idea for utility in measuring a set of behaviors while predicting others.

To this end an identity statuses approach in analyzing identity formation has been the foundation for more than three-hundred empirically derived studies (Marcia *et al*, 1993). This approach is considered the first method used to operationalize identity into a term that may be empirically studied (Schwartz *et al*, 2000). It has been approximated that the first 25 years of research, dating back to Marcia's (1966) seminal investigation, have yielded an abundance of findings supporting the statistical proficiency of the identity statuses approach (Marcia *et al*, 1993; Meuss, 1996). Commenting on the future of identity and how this growing body of evidence bodes for the construct's future, Marcia (2004) said his intention was political; he intended to provide a concept that was wide-ranging, logical, and straightforward, yet refined, and develop it into a theory housed in every college textbook. Having created a statistically validated construct to measure identity development, it is important to also explore the other aims of the theory's development.

Aforementioned were commonalities in physical maturation due to biological growth. Such commonalities provided a reference point for Erikson to suggest that identity crises result from the interaction between physical changes and cultural forces (Hoover, 1997). Aware that each individual is unique, Hoover and Ericksen (2004) draw on Carol Gilligan's work on the impact of gender roles in female development and Marcia and Kroger's work with varied cultural background in their defense of identity as a sound construct. The critical aspects of their research included three questions that were commonly used by numerous cultures to describe their identities – Competencies (e.g., one's occupation), communities (e.g., where does one live, associated beliefs and values), and commitments (e.g., personal relationships) (Hoover & Ericksen, 2004). Primitive as it may

sound, all cultures give birth to dependent infants that are socialized to culturally implicit and explicit standards in efforts to increase independence. It is further contended that the transition from childhood to young adulthood is a culturally formal process indicated by the child's maturation and coming of age (Marcia, 2004).

Carter and McGoldrick (2005) provide further support with their ecological take on family's and their life cycles. From their perspective stress in the life flows on vertical and horizontal axes. The vertical stresses or system levels begin at the microlevel and include the individual, immediate and possibly extended families. The fourth system level is comparable to the mezzolevel, consisting of community relationships. The fifth and final level is larger society (i.e., macrolevel). Society has an impact at each level, regardless of age. For example, in the microsystem level (i.e., individual, and family levels) an individual's identity formation will be influenced not only by familial history, traditional, and values, but also perpetuated stereotypes and labels (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). On the mezzo and macro levels, an adolescent is confronted with -isms and community conformity. The other axis presented is the horizontal axis that addresses time related issue and is exemplified by such stressors as untimely loss of life, unemployment, or addition of an unexpected family member (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). Such an approach further disputes contentions that the construct of identity is too wide-ranging for use between cultures. Instead it provides support for the claim that identity varies on each of the three described levels (i.e., competencies, communities, commitments; Hoover & Ericksen, 2004).

To foster increased cultural applicability and understanding, it is imperative to appreciate the multiplicity of options when determining what is beneficial developmentally

(Christopher, 2006). From this stance a culture's ethos, or underlying view of themselves and their surroundings, will determine societal standards of identity and its formation. This suggests that regardless of worldview, the culture of the individual is an identity determinant (Christopher, 2006). The hermeneutic perspective requires an understanding of the relationships in the culture the adolescent is forming an identity within. Stemming from Miller's (1976) work, relational-cultural theory (RCT; Comstock, Hammer, Stentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, & Salazar, 2008) addresses the influence of contextual and relational knowledge on well-being. RCT attempts to address recent Western individualistic stances by contending that such views obstruct developmental competencies via perpetuation of power, privilege, and marginalization among various culturally distinct groups (Comstock *et al*, 2008). Acknowledging that inextricable effect racial, social, or cultural alignment has with life span development, Comstock *et al* (2008) also contend that such relationships will precede feelings of isolation, shame and humiliation. Tying this all together, RCT (Comstock *et al*, 2008) and Carter and McGoldrick's (2005) perspective suggest the influence culture will have on the development and formation of an identity. Furthermore, the hermeneutic approach requires understanding the adolescent's culture, and in conjunction with relational learning suggest that positive or negative identity formation not be defined from the majority's view, but from the view of the culture the adolescent is developing within (Christopher, 2006; Loewenthal, 2006).

Drawing on the simplistic nature of Miller and Dollard's (1941) belief that the behaviors used to classify human beings as rational persons or into social or political strata are not innate, but are learned, culture may be viewed as a manner through which social

behaviors are transmitted. To learn these transmitted norms, individuals will imitate those behaviors that have produced positive or rewarding outcomes (Jensen, 2007). Carter and McGoldrick (2005) emphasize the importance of family in the development of individuals. They also suggest that development is not solely the result of the family structure, but has a cultural component. The cultural component allows for flexibility in development, permitting an individual to follow a unique evolutionary cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005).

The flexibility is the result of culture's underlying capacity to influence how information is interpreted and responded to (Loewenthal, 2006). Prior experiences throughout the life span influence current perceptions and identities (Comstock *et al*, 2008). Depending on who has set standards by which others are to be judged, the opportunity to observe and imitate behaviors will be greatly skewed. As a basic tenet of SCT, observational learning and imitation is vital for the development of behaviors. But so is the context within which the learning takes place. It is the individual's environment that should be critiqued when determining progress, not the competencies and standards set for the by majority groups intent on oppressing those that differ from them (Comstock *et al*, 2008).

The idea of vicarious learning is applicable to other areas as well. For example, career choice is often influenced by observed outcomes and related experiences. Lent *et al* (2002) describe this as a process of goal attainment and increasing self-efficacy via personal expectations of the performance of a specific behavior. As an individual engages in various tasks and performance domains, the occurrence of success will lead to an increase self-efficacy (Lent *et al*, 2002). Additionally, expectations regarding imagined consequences

also develop. The outcome expectations are formulated through various experiences wherein an individual begins to expect certain consequences when performing certain behaviors (Lent *et al*, 2002).

Pertaining to career exploration, an individual will make occupational choices based on the assessment of previous outcomes. At this point an individual is making a decision to engage and possibly affect a future outcome (Bandura, 1986). By making this decision, a person is self-empowering via the organization, guidance, and sustaining of behaviors, without external reinforcement (Lent, *et al*, 2002). What results from this process are individuals who are organized and self-sufficient, comfortable with their abilities, and able to perform without external rewards. Applied to career selection, individuals will continually search for an occupation that provides some form of reward. It may be in monetary form, personal satisfaction, or prestige, but regardless of the reward, the choice was made based on the observed outcomes, developed expectancies, and belief in performance ability.

Adolescents spend large amounts of time in school or at home, suggesting nature these two environments may have an influence on the promotion of specific coping approaches utilized by adolescents. Further, positive relationships with parents and teachers will encourage the use of active coping methods while diminishing the potential use of avoidant techniques, regardless of the setting. Confirming their claims, Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) reported that the family milieu plays a predominant role in the development of active coping behaviors. For example, adolescents reporting more positive relationships with parents were more prone to actively cope, and less likely to avoid the

situation. Adolescents who live in organized settings, founded on clear guidelines, with parents who display warmth, and are supportive of an adolescent's choices, will be more apt to face a challenge, actively think about it, and plan solutions (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007).

Chapter Three

Method

Every person is susceptible to societal influences; whether from parents, teachers, peers, or the general public, human beings must be prepared to manage these influences, distinguishing which stimuli are most important. Emphasis has been placed on several underlying concepts, including predetermined social norms (Dworkin, 2005), parental psychological control (Luyckx *et al*, 2007), and outcome expectations (Bandura, 1997), that act as influencing factors of individuals' interactions with their environments. Alluded to as a search for *The Missing Piece* (Silverstein, 1976), Erikson (1963) intended this enduring, yet arduous, process of becoming to be a time for defining who a person is, what this person does, and where this person is located (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004), and has ultimately become known as identity development. But who are the people that search for their missing pieces? They are a group of indiscernible young people, referred to as emerging adults.

During this process of identity formation emerging adults aim to develop their own unique personas, with each eventually facing numerous influences that must be navigated. Some may have strong bonds with parents or peers, staunch memetic adherence or community ties that have fostered the production of beneficial coping strategies. Others may have utilized or are utilizing their college years to experiment, searching for a sense of self. Some may behave in a certain way in an effort to explore as many opportunities as possible, while still others are behaving to test the limits of social acceptance. As Arnett (2000) has suggested, this age range is one fraught with potential exploratory opportunities, but due to the uniqueness of the group little is known about emerging adults' identity

formation. Regardless, each individual is going to encounter environmental interactions that will require the individual to adapt.

Restatement of Research Questions

Building to this point, multiple conceptual assumptions (i.e., observation learning, outcome expectations, and memes) have been presented, yet for the purposes of this study have not been integrated into a unifying focus of inquiry. Therefore the aim of this study is to explore the process of coping among emerging adulthood. The selection process will be explored from a psychosocial identity formation framework, with emphasis placed on the roles of cultural and sociological influences. To investigate the discussed theoretical and conceptual assumptions, six research questions were asked: (a) When combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance significantly predict levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution?, (b) when combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance significantly predict the selection of dispositional and situation specific coping approaches?, (c) when combined, do the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance significantly predict the self-efficacy of implemented coping styles?, (d) do dispositional and situation specific coping behaviors significantly predict levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution?, (e) do levels of self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors significantly predict levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution?, and (f) when combined, do dispositional

coping, situation specific coping, and level of self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors significantly predict levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution?

Research Hypotheses

The provided research questions translate into six research hypotheses (i.e., null hypotheses) that were used to guide the data analyses. The six hypotheses were, (a) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution of emerging adults, (b) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of selected dispositional and situation specific coping approaches, (c) when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of the self-efficacy of implemented coping styles, (d) dispositional and situation specific coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, (e) self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors is a significant predictor of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution, and (f) when combined, dispositional coping, situation specific coping, and self-efficacy of implemented coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution.

Participants

Statistical power analyses are often neglected in the selection of sample sizes. Before addressing this issue, a definition is required. Statistical power is the likelihood of accurately determining a true relationship exists, should an actual relationship exist. In terms of hypotheses, power is the probability of rejecting the null, or stated hypothesis, in favor of the alternative (Heppner *et al*, 2008). Regarding effect size, or the level of impact a predicting variable has on the criterion variable, power is the probability of accurately identifying an impact when an impact is present (Heppner *et al*, 2008; Murphy, Myors, & Wolach, 2009).

Cohen (1992) addresses this concern in his presentation of required sample sizes for various methods of statistical inquiry. Of these various methods of inquiry, multiple correlates and regressions were listed. When implementing such modes of investigation, Heppner *et al* (2008) suggest using a significance level of 0.05, a power level of 0.80, and medium effect size of 0.5. To summarize, it is suggested that the chances of rejecting the stated hypothesis when it is true be set at 5%, the likelihood of accurately determining the existence of true relationship be set at 80%, and the impact of the predictors on the criterion be set at 50%. Based on these recommended levels, Cohen (1992) suggests a required minimum sample size of 107 participants. Altering only the significance level, to 0.01, the sample size would increase to 147 participants. Recognizing survey and self-report research as an advantageous method when attempting to sample geographically varied areas, and an expected return rate of approximately 35% (Heppner *et al*, 2008), it was determined that 363 emerging adults would need to comprise the sampled population.

College and University campuses offer immense opportunities for identity exploration, formation, and reformation, thus are teeming with emerging adults. Taking advantage of the limitless opportunities, emerging adults in these setting must choose between potential worldviews, love interests, career paths, or some combination of these in an effort to explore, form, and potentially reform, their personal sense of self (Bradley & Wildman, 2002; Luyckx *et al*, 2007). As such, this setting and its dominant population were selected for sampling. In an effort to provide empirically significant and generalizable findings, a sample of 252 students was compiled; of the 252 assessment packets gathered, six were removed due to noncompliance (e.g., failure to sign informed consent form, did not meet age requirement, failure to complete the assessment packet in its entirety). The sample (n = 246) of emerging adults, ages 18-25, are currently enrolled at a large public University in the Southeastern United States.

Respondents self-identified as predominantly Caucasian (n = 190; 77.2%), African-American (n = 29; 11.8%), and Bi-racial (n = 10; 4.1%). Other reported ethnicities include Hispanic (3.7%) and Latino/a (1.2%). Female participants (n = 110) comprised 44.7% of the population, with 55.3% percent self-identifying as male (n = 136). One-hundred fifty volunteering subjects comprise the 18-20 age bracket. The 21-22 year old age bracket comprises 30.9% (n = 76) of respondents, while the eldest age group, 23-25 years of age comprises the remaining 8.1% (n = 20). In addition to ethnicity, gender, and age, participants were asked to disclose if they were currently affiliated (i.e., a member of) with a place of worship to which 64.6% responded yes. Respondents also reported major religious denominations: Unspecified or non-denominational (n = 134), Baptist (n = 40), Catholic (n

= 27), Methodist (n = 17), Presbyterian (n = 13), Episcopalian (n = 5), Lutheran (n = 4) and Hindu, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Greek Orthodox one participant each. Information on service attendance was also gathered, with 44.7% of participants reporting attendance was never or only on major holidays. Thirty-five percent of respondents attend services one to three time per month, with 19.5% attending one to three times per week; two participants report attending religious or spiritual services at least four times per week.

Instrumentation

Mindful of Heppner *et al's* (2008) suggestions, each of the following assessments was selected for its utility in evaluating a specific variable. Sensitive to the drawbacks often associated with descriptive research and self-report measures, these tools were also selected for their ability to consistently measure the phenomena of interest. With the exception of the informed consent and demographic forms, authors of the selected assessment tools were contacted requesting their permission to replicate and reuse their respective measures for the purpose of this study. The informed consent document, provided by the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board, was amended and the demographic form developed to suit the needs of the current study. All documents can be located in their entirety in the appendices.

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire. Previous assessment tools, measuring Erikson's (1963) ego identity were arduous and time consuming, requiring the use of paper-pencil assessments and extensive interviews. Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger (1995) developed the Ego Identity Process (EIPQ) in an effort to address the need for a time sensitive, objective measure of ego identity and its related constructs (Marcia, 1966, Marcia

et al, 1993). In a brief report of two different measures of ego identity statuses, Schwartz (2004) contends the EIPQ is the preferred assessment when differentiating between identity statuses.

The EIPQ (Balistreri *et al*, 1995) is a 32-item self-report questionnaire, comprised of 20 positively worded and 12 negatively worded questions, that evaluates eight areas of the exploration and commitment facets of ego identity development. The eight areas explored are: occupation, religion, politics, values, family, friendships, dating, and sex roles. Each of these eight areas is divided into sub-categories whereby each domain is examined via two exploration-focused and two commitment-focused items. Each of the items is then assessed using a 6-point Likert scale on which participants indicate their level of agreement or disagreement; scores on the 12 negatively worded items are reversed scored yielding an overall range of scores ranging from 16-96 (Balistreri *et al*, 1995; Mullis, Mullis, & Cornille, 2004). Initial estimates of internal consistency for the commitment and exploration dimensions yielded scores of 0.80 and 0.86, respectively. Mullis *et al* (2004) provided further support of these scores, citing similar internal consistencies for commitment (0.86) and exploration (0.84) in their study. Similar correlations between the dimensions of commitment and exploration were also found and reported (Mullis *et al*, 2004). Cronbach's alphas for the current study were 0.76 for commitment and 0.73 for the exploration items.

COPE Inventory. Developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), the COPE inventory is a theoretically derived, multidimensional assessment inventory designed to appraise the different manners in which individuals may respond to stress. The 60-item self

report questionnaire is divided into fifteen groups (e.g., denial, humor) composed of four items each (e.g., I say to myself “this isn’t real,” I laugh about the situation). The COPE inventory may be administered from various perspectives, including a dispositional approach exploring typical responses to stress. Using this approach, item responses are assessed using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = I usually don’t do this at all; 4 = I usually do this a lot) (Bouchard, Guillemette, & Landry-Leger, 2004). During development, internal consistencies scores ranged from 0.45 to 0.92 and eight-week test-retest reliabilities yielded a similar range of scores, 0.46 to 0.77 (Cook & Heppner, 1997). Bouchard *et al* (2004) provided similar alpha coefficients, 0.86 for problem-solving and 0.77 for distancing-avoidance, as did Litman’s (2006) citing of a 0.73 median internal consistency. The current study provided an overall internal consistency of 0.88.

Coping Strategies Inventory. Designed to indicate the extent to which individuals employee situation specific coping behaviors, the Coping Strategies Inventory – Short Form 32 (CSI-SF; Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds, & Wigal, 1989) was originally developed to duplicate scores obtained via the Ways of Coping Checklist (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). The CSI-SF is a 32-item measure composed of eight primary subscales (problem solving, cognitive restructuring, express emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism, and social withdraw), assessed via self-report using a 5 point Likert-type scale (Not at all, A little, Somewhat, Much, Very Much); responses are tallied, with higher tallies signifying an increased likelihood of implementing the strategy.

Modeled after previous coping hypotheses (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), Tobin *et al* (1989) organized the eight primary subscales into one of two

categories – engagement or disengagement strategies, each separated into problem or emotion subgroups. Engagement strategies (problem solving, cognitive restructuring, express emotions, and social support) are those that aim to alter or manage the stressor being experienced. Disengagement strategies (problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism, and social withdraw) attempt to control or regulate emotive responses to the problem being faced (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Mullis, Mullis, Schwartz, Pease, & Shriner, 2007, Tobin *et al*, 1989). Tobin *et al* (1989) reported alpha coefficients for the primary scales ranging from 0.71 to 0.94. Similarly, Mullis *et al* (2007) reported reliability coefficients ranging from 0.67 to 0.87, with a median of 0.78. An overall Cronbach’s alpha level of 0.85 was found for the current study. Internal consistencies were calculated for each of the four subcategories and are as follows – engagement-problem items (0.82), engagement-emotion items (0.94), disengagement-problem items (0.74), and disengagement-emotion items (0.83).

General Self-Efficacy Scale. Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) developed the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) to measure an individual’s perceived self-efficacy when confronted with stressful situations. The intent is to measure personal beliefs in one’s capabilities to manage challenging demands and control their own functioning (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005). Utilizing 10-items scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all true; 4 = exactly true), respondents are asked to provide perceived management and control level to statement such as “I can handle whatever comes my way.” Higher scores are suggestive of higher general self-efficacy (Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash, & Kern, 2006).

The GSES has been translated into 28 languages, thus commonly used by researchers outside of the United States (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Scholz, Gutierrez Doza, Sud, & Schwarzer (2002) noted internal consistency coefficients, taken from an array of samples and countries, ranging from 0.75 to 0.91. Luszczynska *et al* (2005) confirmed this range, citing the following alpha levels: 0.94 for German cardiovascular disease patients, 0.90 for Polish students, 0.89 for German cancer patients, 0.87 for Polish patients with gastrointestinal disease and Polish swimmers, and 0.86 for a South Korean sample. Previous studies (Leganger, Kraft, & Roysamb, 2000; Schwarzer, Mueller, & Greenglass, 1999) have reported similar reliability coefficients, as well as acceptable levels of construct stability and validity. The current study yielded an internal consistency coefficient of 0.84.

Procedures

A population of 252 emerging adults, enrolled at a large Southeastern public university was contacted. Participants were members of the university's First Year College, Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes, University Studies Courses, and the Department of Natural Resources via the department's Director of Community Diversity. The author maintains an academic and professional relationship with individuals in the Department of Natural Resources, the First Year College, the instructors of the university studies courses, and is employed by the Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes. During a designated class period, each volunteering participant was provided an assessment packet containing a recruitment letter and an informed consent document (see Appendices A and B, respectively). The letter served to provide potential participants with a brief, but overarching description of the study being conducted and its purpose, intentions, and goals.

The informed consent form presented each perspective participant with an in-depth review of the goals, risks, and rights each participant.

Additionally, the form provided information regarding mental health counseling services should a participant recollect information that causes some form of personal strife. Consent was deemed given via a signature at the bottom of this form. Accompanying these documents were a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), and one copy of the following self-report measures, the EIPQ (Balistreri *et al*, 1995; see Appendix D), the dispositional form of the COPE (Carver *et al*, 1989; see Appendix E), the Coping Strategies Inventory (Tobin *et al*, 1989; see Appendix F), and the GSES (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; see Appendix G). Preceding each separate measure was an instruction sheet, providing each participant with the information necessary to complete the assessment tool. Instructors were informed of the option of providing course credit (e.g., extra points) to participants volunteering to complete the assessment packet. The amount and application of course credit was at the discretion of each individual instructor.

Data Analyses

Before exploring the rationale for selecting the chosen method of analysis, it is first important to provide a several foundational definitions. First, the term predictor or predicting variable, is used to describe the independent variable. This variable is systematically varied or controlled in an attempt to produce a significant observable change in the criterion variable. The a criterion variable may be referred to as the dependent variable (Heppner *et al*, 2008). The parallel existing between the independent and dependent variables is referred to as the correlation coefficient (R) and will be expressed as a

value ranging from one to negative one. In this range, a value of one signifies an extremely strong relationship, whereas negative one signifies the opposite. A value of or near zero signifies little to no relationship between the variables. It is important to note that the correlation coefficient does not suggest causality, but instead direction and level of connectedness between the variables.

When the correlation coefficient is squared, the coefficient of determination, or R^2 , is obtained. This coefficient is the proportional level of variance seen in a criterion variable that is predicted by the independent variable (Heppner *et al*, 2008). This level will be expressed as value ranging from zero to one. As the coefficient approaches one, the level of variance in the criterion attributable to the predictor is said to increase. In other words, as the level nears one all of data points begin to fall nearer or on a common line. Conversely, as the coefficient nears zero, fewer data points fall on this common line.

In essence, the correlation coefficient describes the relationship between the two variables as the predicting variable is altered. The coefficient of determination provides the level of variability seen in the criterion and that can be explained, not caused, by the variation or controlling of the predictor. For example, as predictors A, B, and C increase in number, so does criterion A, thus creating a positive correlation. When the square of the coefficient is taken, the amount of change seen in Criterion A and that is accounted for by the change in predictors A, B, and C is obtained. For the purposes of this example, assume the correlation coefficient is 0.9, therefore the resultant coefficient of determination is 0.81, and suggests the 81% of the variance in the criterion is explained by the predictors.

Selecting the proper form of multiple regression is important because each method of analysis has a discrete purpose and produces a unique outcome. For example, a simultaneous regression analysis is recommended for studies that do not have a basis for entering one predictor before another. This is in contrast to a hierarchical regression wherein the researcher requires some prior knowledge specifying the order in which predictor variables should be entered (Heppner *et al*, 2008). When employing a simultaneous regression, all predictors are entered at once accounting for a common variance. After the common variance is removed what remains is the unique contribution of each variable to the prediction of the criterion variable (Heppner *et al*, 2008). It is for these reasons, a lack of evidence supporting a specific order of entry for the predictor variables and a need for the overall and unique contributions of each predictor that a simultaneous regression was chosen as the method of data analysis.

For the purposes of this study five simultaneous regressions will be completed using the SPSS data analysis computer program. The predictors in the first four simultaneous regression analyses will be reference group, identifying gender, age, religious or spiritual affiliation, and educational background. The criterion in each of these will vary, with one analysis completed for each of the following – EIPQ, COPE, CSI, and GSES. The fifth and final analysis will utilize the COPE, CSI, and GSES as predictors and the EIPQ as the criterion variable. In addition to the results from each of these regressions, descriptive data obtained via a demographic questionnaire will be included.

Chapter Four

Results

Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted investigating six research questions and associated null hypotheses. Simultaneous multiple regression was selected as the method of statistical analysis due to the lack of empirical basis for entering one predictor before another in each independent regression analysis and a need for the overall and unique contributions of each predictor (Heppner *et al*, 2008). All of the analyses were conducted with a significance level of $p < 0.05$ unless noted otherwise.

In addition to the common significance level, several other concepts must be defined. Each of these concepts is presented in the tables providing a summary of the various multiple regressions that were completed. The first concept is the unstandardized coefficient (B) or raw score. This score is the original datum, not transformed or standardized to fit a normal distribution, and serves as the true score of the equation (Hood & Johnson, 2002). The second concept is the standard error, or estimated standard deviation. For example, if the standard error reads 0.5, then one standard deviation from the mean statistic will be a distance of 0.5. The final concept presented in the tables summarizing the regression analyses is the beta value (β). Beta signifies the probability of a Type II Error, or the chances of accepting the stated hypothesis when it should be rejected, and expresses the standardized score of the regression (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). One final statistical concept that is repeatedly used is the *F*-value. It is imperative to note that depending on the type of regression being conducted, the definition will alter slightly. In the case of this study, the *F*-value is viewed as a ratio. By definition the *F*-ratio is the regression divided by the residual,

simply put the F -ratio signifies the strength of the relationship between variables in the regression model (George & Mallery, 2008).

The first three research hypotheses inquire about the predictive nature of the stated demographic and cultural variables (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance) regarding the criterion identity crisis resolution, coping behaviors, and self-efficacy. The remaining three research questions inquire about the predictive nature of coping behaviors, perceived self-efficacy, and combination of coping behaviors and perceived self-efficacy in regards to levels of exploration and commitment during identity resolution.

Hypothesis One

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis one which states, when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution of emerging adults. The overall regression for exploration was significant, $F(5,240) = 2.59, p < .05, R^2 = .051$. The predicting variable of gender ($\beta = -.18, t(245) = -2.91, p < .004$) was significant; all other predictors were not significant. In an attempt to explore the potential contribution of a specific gender, a more in-depth analysis of this predictor was conducted. While evidence of differences in mean scores between genders existed, females ($M = 62.97$) scored higher than males ($M = 59.76$), the difference was not substantial enough to account for a significant level of variance, in females ($F(4, 105) = .905, p = .464, R^2 = .033$) or males ($F(4, 131) = .814, p = .519, R^2 = .024$). The overall regression for commitment was also

significant, $F(5, 240) = 7.35, p < .05, R^2 = .13$. The examined predictors of age ($\beta = .13, t(245) = 2.14, p = .03$), ethnicity ($\beta = -.17, t(245) = -2.77, p = .006$), and service attendance ($\beta = -.24, t(245) = -3.16, p < .002$) were significant. The predictors of gender ($\beta = .076, t(245) = 1.25, p > .05$) and religious affiliation ($\beta = -.06, t(245) = -3.16, p > .05$) were not significant. Table 1 presents a summary of the correlations between the subscales of identity crisis resolution and demographic and cultural variables.

Table 1

Correlations Between Identity Resolution Subscales and Demographic Factors^a

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Exploration Commitment	—					
2. Age	-0.065 0.109	—				
3. Gender	-0.177 0.062	-0.065 -0.065	—			
4. Ethnicity	0.112 -0.211	-0.035 -0.035	-0.001 -0.001	—		
5. Religious Affiliation	0.025 -0.213	0.092 0.092	0.05 0.05	0.181 0.181	—	
6. Service Attendance	-0.015 -0.279	0.07 0.07	0.01 0.01	0.108 0.108	0.589* 0.589*	—

^an = 246* $p < .001$. ** $p < .05$.*Hypothesis Two*

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis two which states, when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of selected dispositional and situation specific coping approaches.

The overall regressions for the dispositional coping behaviors of focus on venting ($F(5, 240) = 5.89, p < .001, R^2 = .11$), instrumental social support ($F(5, 240) = 2.81, p < .05, R^2 = .05$), religious coping ($F(5, 240) = 34.41, p < .001, R^2 = .42$), emotional social support ($F(5, 240) = 10.80, p < .001, R^2 = .18$), and substance use ($F(5,240) = 4.87, p < .001, R^2 = .092$) were significant. The gender demographic was a significant predictor of the dispositional coping responses focus on venting ($\beta = -.33, t(245) = -5.38, p < .001$), instrumental social support ($\beta = -.210, t(245) = -3.33, p < .001$), and emotional social support ($\beta = -.40, t(245) = -6.73, p < .001$). The religious or spiritual affiliation ($\beta = -.26, t(245) = -4.26, p < .001$) and service attendance ($\beta = -.43, t(245) = -7.12, p < .001$) variables were found to be significant predictors of religious coping. Age ($\beta = .209, t(245) = 3.38, p < .001$) was a significant predictor of the dispositional coping behavior substance use.

Again, in an attempt to uncover the potential contribution of each gender, further analyses of this predictor were completed for each of the coping behaviors gender was said to significantly predict. The first analysis explored gender and the focus on venting behavior. Females ($M = 10.71$) scored higher than males ($M = 8.64$) again, however the difference in scores was not considerable enough to suggest one gender accounted for more of the variance than the other. The second dispositional coping behavior to be investigated further was the implementation of instrumental social support. Females ($M = 12.45$) scored higher than males ($M = 11.41$), yet the difference was minimal at best. Even with the higher score, the difference was not enough to suggest that females ($F(4, 105) = .128, p = .97, R^2 = .005$) account for more variance than males ($F(4, 131) = 1.33, p = .24, R^2 = .041$). The third analysis explored gender and the use of emotional social support with more depth. Based

on mean scores, females ($M = 12.5$) make use of this coping behavior more than males ($M = 10.04$). When examined for specificity of variance accountability, neither females ($F(4, 105) = .180, p = .95, R^2 = .007$), nor males ($F(4, 131) = 2.39, p = .055, R^2 = .055$) provided significant predictive ability.

The overall regression for the situation specific coping behavior of emotion-specific engagement ($F(5, 240) = 5.65, p < .001, R^2 = .11$) was significant. Gender ($\beta = -.30, t(245) = -4.95, p < .001$) was a significant predictor of emotion-specific engagement. In an effort to provide specificity with regards to gender and engaging in emotion-specific coping behaviors, a more in-depth analysis was completed. Mean scores for the CSI suggest that females ($M = 29.12$) are more likely than males ($M = 24.03$) to address the emotions associated with a specific situation. Significant evidence was not shown suggesting females ($F(4, 105) = .25, p = .91, R^2 = .009$) or males ($F(1, 131) = 1.56, p = .189, R^2 = .045$) contributed to more of the variance. The situation specific coping behaviors of problem-specific engagement ($F(5, 240) = 1.81, p > .05, R^2 = .036$), emotion-specific disengagement ($F(5, 240) = .69, p > .05, R^2 = .014$), and problem-specific disengagement ($F(5, 240) = 1.57, p > .05, R^2 = .032$) were all insignificant.

Hypothesis Three

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis three which states, when combined, the demographic and cultural factors of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance are significant predictors of the self-efficacy of implemented coping styles. The overall regression for perceived self-efficacy is $F(5, 240) = 1.91, p > .05, R^2 = .038$.

Hypothesis Four

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis four which states, dispositional and situation specific coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution. The overall regressions for exploration ($F(15, 229) = 3.74, p < .001, R^2 = .197$) and commitment ($F(15, 229) = 4.94, p < .001, R^2 = .25$) were significant for dispositional coping behaviors. A summary of these results can be found in Table 2. Overall, the regressions predicting levels of exploration ($F(4, 241) = 8.35, p < .001, R^2 = .12$) and commitment ($F(4, 241) = 5.65, p < .001, R^2 = .086$) from the four subscales of situation specific coping were significant. Table 3 provides a summary of this regression analysis.

Table 2

Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Level of Exploration and Commitment During Identity Resolution

Variable	B	Std. Error	β
Exploration	0.675	0.351	0.156
Commitment	0.460	0.352	0.103
Positive Reinterpretation	0.277	0.277	0.075
Mental Disengagement	0.037	0.277	0.01
Focus On Venting	0.514	0.236	0.181*
	-0.049	0.236	-0.017
Instrumental Social Support	0.158	0.344	0.044
	-0.184	0.345	-0.049
Active Coping	0.114	0.397	0.024
	0.923	0.399	0.185*
Denial	-0.202	0.312	-0.049
	-0.321	0.313	-0.076
Religious Coping	-0.428	0.152	-0.187*
	0.950	0.152	0.401*
Humor	-0.059	0.220	-0.019
	-0.324	0.221	-0.104

Table 2 (continued)

Behavioral Disengagement	-0.415 -0.616	0.350 0.351	-0.095 -0.136
Restraint	0.279 -0.160	0.297 0.298	0.065 -0.036
Emotional Social Support	0.620 -0.139	0.324 0.325	0.212 -0.046
Substance Use	0.174 -0.071	0.205 0.206	0.057 -0.023
Acceptance	0.184 -0.204	0.174 0.174	0.071 -0.076
Suppression Of Competing Activities	-0.045 0.434	0.338 0.339	-0.010 0.092
Planning	-0.446 -0.413	0.359 0.360	-0.109 -0.098

Note. Exploration - overall $R^2 = .20, p < .001, n = 246$; Commitment - overall $R^2 = .25, p < .001, n = 246$.

Table 3

Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analyses for Situation Specific Coping Predicting Level of Exploration and Commitment During Identity Resolution

Variable			
Exploration Commitment	B	Std. Error	β
Engagement-Problem	0.102	0.098	0.064
	0.319	0.104	0.194**
Engagement-Emotion	0.292	0.065	0.274*
	0.004	0.069	0.004
Disengagement-Emotion	0.262	0.092	0.192**
	-0.391	0.097	-0.277*
Disengagement-Problem	-0.122	0.104	-0.078
	0.115	0.110	0.071

Note. Exploration - overall $R^2 = .12$, $p < .001$, $n = 246$;
 Commitment - overall $R^2 = .086$, $p < .001$, $n = 246$.

Hypothesis Five

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis five which states, self-efficacy in the implemented coping behaviors is a significant predictor of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution. Perceived self-efficacy when coping with stress was not a significant predictor of levels of exploration

during the identity resolution process, $F(1, 244) = 2.77, p > .05, R^2 = .011$. Overall, the regression predicting levels of commitment ($F(1, 244) = 9.38, p < .05, R^2 = .037$) was significant. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Hypothesis Six

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis six which states, when combined, dispositional coping, situation specific coping, and self-efficacy of implemented coping behaviors are significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment during identity conflict resolution. The overall regression predicting levels of exploration was significant, $F(20, 224) = 3.44, p < .001, R^2 = .24$. The overall regression predicating levels of commitment ($F(20, 224) = 4.50, p < .001, R^2 = .29$) was significant. Table 5 provides a summary of the results pertaining to hypothesis six.

Table 4

Summary of Regression Analyses for Perceived Self-Efficacy Predicting Level of Exploration and Commitment During Identity Resolution

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta
Exploration	0.237	0.142	0.106
Commitment	0.445	0.145	0.192

Note. Exploration - overall $R^2 = .011$, $p > .05$, $n = 246$; Commitment - overall $R^2 = .037$, $p < .05$, $n = 246$

* $p < .05$

Table 5

Summary of Regression Analyses for Perceived Self-Efficacy, Dispositional Coping, and Situation Specific Coping Predicting Level of Exploration and Commitment During Identity Resolution

Variable	B	Std. Error	β
Exploration	0.243	0.164	0.108
Commitment	0.104	0.164	0.045
GSE Total Score	0.548	0.367	0.126
Positive Reinterpretation	0.377	0.367	0.084
Mental Disengagement	0.422	0.289	0.115
	-0.012	0.288	-0.003

Table 5 (continued)

Focus On Venting	0.246	0.272	0.087
	0.246	0.272	0.084
Instrumental Social Support	0.159	0.343	0.044
	-0.140	0.342	-0.037
Active Coping	0.001	0.405	–
	0.788	0.405	0.158
Denial	-0.200	0.324	-0.049
	-0.308	0.324	-0.073
Religious Coping	-0.447	0.153	-0.195**
	0.908	0.153	0.383*
Humor	-0.190	0.224	-0.063
	-0.300	0.224	-0.096
Behavioral Disengagement	-0.286	0.356	-0.065
	-0.653	0.356	-0.145
Restraint	0.318	0.297	0.074
	-0.247	0.297	-0.055
Emotional Social Support	0.584	0.354	0.200
	-0.053	0.353	-0.018
Substance Use	0.082	0.206	0.027
	0.024	0.206	0.008
Acceptance	0.181	0.173	0.070
	-0.232	0.172	-0.086
Suppression Of Competing Activities	-0.232	0.342	-0.051
	0.635	0.342	0.134
Planning	-0.564	0.364	-0.138
	-0.432	0.363	-0.102

Table 5 (continued)

Engagement-Problem	0.051 0.053	0.126 0.126	0.032 0.033
Engagement-Emotion	0.109 -0.122	0.117 0.117	0.102 -0.111*
Disengagement-Emotion	0.267 -0.320	0.099 0.098	0.196 -0.226
Disengagement-Problem	-0.165 0.198	0.126 0.126	-0.105 0.122

* $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$

Chapter Five

Discussion

In 1962 the term global village was popularized. With this reference, McLuhan (1962, 1964) contends that electronic technology, and its ability to instantaneously transmit information worldwide, has reduced the world's vast cultures into one massive village. The constriction results in a colossal collision between social and political agendas, values, and beliefs, requiring villagers to become immediately knowledgeable of and responsible for increased human awareness and diversity. Over the past four decades, in conjunction with technological advances, the term has become synonymous with the Internet and its interactive communities of shared beliefs.

Analogous to McLuhan's (1962) global village, but on a much smaller scale, is the college campus. Such a setting is brimming with diversity, each population with its own traditions, values, and beliefs systems. Thus, emerging adults situated within these villages are faced with immeasurable opportunities for exploration and simultaneously saddled with a search for an identity, or their own personal missing piece. Emerging adults are asked to become a part of this scaled downed global village, interacting with an increased awareness of and responsibility towards diversity by examining the incalculable worldviews, love interests, and career paths that each interacts with. A task of this scale requires some form of guiding principle(s), such as outcome expectations based on predetermined social norms (Bandura, 1997; Dworkin, 2005).

Noting that a global village is the result of numerous and massive collisions between cultures and their associated traits, it is not unrealistic then, to develop expectations and

norms based on such interactions and traits. Drawing upon such contentions, it is hypothesized that cultural traits or representations (i.e., memes) may be used as guides while navigating and managing the exploratory process of identity resolution. Two terms, depth and breadth, are commonly used to describe this exploratory endeavor. To reduce confusion surrounding these terms, depth of exploration should be viewed as the level of intensity and amount of energy that is put into the process whereas breadth is the comprehensiveness with which alternatives were explored.

For example, an emerging adult is enrolled in an entry level religion course in an effort to fulfill a general education requirement. During the course of instruction many of the student's long-held values and beliefs about religion are brought into question. In an effort to manage this confrontation, the student begins to critically question and compare the long-held beliefs with the newly presented material. The amount of critical analysis and thought given is the depth of the exploration. As this emergent person goes through this questioning and analysis phase, he or she is also required to view the knowledge from a diverse array of perspectives. This may include attending various services, completing various religious readings, or speaking with a spiritual advisor. Regardless of the method, when the intention is to diversify the number of experience in an effort to gain a various perspectives, breadth of exploration has been completed. From a practical standpoint, depth is the amount of earnestness used and breadth the diversity of identities that were explored. Therefore the following is a discussion of the six presented hypotheses and their associated results, followed by theoretical and conceptual implications, and culminating with the current limitations, directions for future research, and conclusions.

Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses one through three focused on the predictive nature that select demographic and cultural factors have on identity resolution, selection of coping style, and self-efficacy of the selected coping style. Age, gender, ethnicity, religious and spiritual affiliation, and religious or spiritual service attendance were each entered as predictors in the regression model. Hypotheses four through six focused on the predictive nature of coping style and self-efficacy of selected coping styles had on identity resolution.

Demographic and cultural factors as predictors. Hypothesis one postulates that demographic and cultural variables predict identity resolution during emerging adulthood. With the exception of age, demographic and cultural factors were found to be significantly correlated to exploration, commitment, or both during emerging adulthood. The overall multiple regression yielded similar significant results, suggesting age, ethnicity, and religious or spiritual service attendance were significant predictors of levels of exploration and commitment. When combined with the previously presented correlation data, an individual's ethnicity and amount of religious or spiritual service attendance are suggestive of an individual's intensity and scope of inquiry when examining new personal identities. It also suggests that the level of commitment given to an identity, whether strong or indecisive, is ethnically and religiously or spiritually informed. In essence, these findings suggest that the diversity of experiences an individual partakes in, and the energy invested in such endeavors is predicted by age, ethnicity, and religious or spiritual service attendance. Hypothesis two postulated that demographic and cultural variables are significant predictor of coping style. Gender was found to be the only common predictor of dispositional and

situation specific coping. Dispositionally, gender significantly predicted coping approaches focusing on venting, and using instrumental and emotional social support. When coping with a specific situation, gender significantly predicted emotion-specific engagement. Explicitly, gender informs the selection of coping, whether from a dispositional or situation specific approach. Of a more implicit nature, it is suggested that gender appears to inform emotionally motivated methods of coping and associated behaviors. It is important to note the only evidence suggesting a specific gender was more likely to employ any of the presented methods of coping was the difference in mean scores for the for each of the measures of coping.

Hypothesis three postulated that demographic and cultural variables significantly predict the self-efficacy of the implemented coping style. The results suggest that demographic and cultural factors are not significantly predictive of self-efficacy when implementing a selected coping mechanism. In other words, being male or female, going to church or temple once versus four times per week, or being Muslim, Hindi, African-American, or Latino/a does not influence how self-efficacious a person is in performing a coping behavior.

Coping and efficacy as predictors. Hypothesis four postulated that dispositional and situation specific coping mechanisms were significant predictors of exploration and commitment during identity resolution. For example venting about the conflict or crisis being experienced is predictive of increased acuity and comprehensiveness when searching for a more complex sense of self or divergent identity to resolve a current crisis. For example, an emerging adult must considered multiple alternatives, some quite vehemently,

in order to reach a level of stress that would necessitate the individual venting about the conflicting thoughts. This contemplation is suggestive of an achieved identity or one that is in moratorium. In other words, the emerging adult acknowledges the importance of questioning aspects of the current identity, is actively doing so, yet has not pledged steadfastness to one specific identity.

It further suggests that taking a problem focused approach (i.e., active coping) and using religion as a guide (i.e., religious coping) are more predictive of the adherence to goals and values associated with the selected identity. While it is suggested that venting about an identity crisis predicts the astuteness and extent with which alternatives may have been explored, actively addressing the crisis and employing a religious perspective suggest an increased obligation to the goals and values of the identity in conflict. From this perspective, the emerging adult is most likely struggling with a foreclosed or diffuse identity. Because active coping places an emphasis on results, or in this case a solution to the problem and religious coping necessitates an uncompromising dedication to faith and prayer, developing an identity with associated traits is not surprising.

When confronting a specific stressful event, addressing emotional aspects (e.g., expressing emotions, seeking social support) proved to be the strongest indicator of the intensity with which alternative identities were explored. However, when committing to an explored identity, engaging the crisis or conflict (e.g., problem solving, cognitive restructuring) proved to be strong predictors of whether or not the individual would adhere to the values and goals of the selected identity. It should be noted that emotional engagement of a crisis was shown to be the strongest predictor of the diversity of and

diligence with which alternative identities were explored; disengaging in associated emotions (e.g., withdrawing, self-criticism) was also a significant predictor. Plainly put, emotional expression and support are essential coping mechanisms when exploring alternative identities. Furthermore, the dedication given to the identity is predicated by a willingness to solve the crisis or reframe it in a way that allows it to be resolved.

Hypothesis five postulated that self-efficacy in the coping mechanism(s) would significantly predict exploration and commitment during identity resolution. Self-efficacy accounted for 3% of the variance among levels of commitment and insignificant levels of exploration. When such information is combined with prior information regarding the prediction of coping styles, a pattern appears to emerge. As Luszczynska *et al* (2005) posit, the GSE intends to measure personal beliefs in one's ability to manage challenging demands and control personal functioning, yet the goal of exploration is to seek out a divergent identity or more complex self. If this is the case, it is plausible to expect an individual will not have a strong sense of his or her ability to manage and control the functioning of this new identity.

The sixth hypothesis postulated the combination of coping styles and self-efficacy would act as significant predictors of exploration and commitment during identity resolution. The regression analysis yielded significant levels of variance, for exploration and commitment, each of which is relatively higher than those gathered by independent regressions suggesting that the resolution process is not entirely dependent on one factor, but rather a group of concepts. For example, females provided higher mean scores than males for various temperament-based coping mechanisms, yet the difference in scores was not

significant enough to predict what type of coping mechanism would be used or how it influenced the outcome of the identity conflict.

General Discussion

Each participant was provided one of three choices of age group – 18-20, 21-22, or 23-25. The categories were determined by identity crises that are believed to dominant individuals on a college campus within a selected range. An overarching identity conflict exists for this entire age group, but is thought to be perceived differently depending upon the developmental stage of the individual. This conflict focused on the social stereotype of a college student, described as an individual that listens to Dave Matthews Band, drinks and parties all night, and earns a 2.5 G.P.A. (Dworkin, 2005). As an alternative to the perception that Dworkin's (2005) results present a stereotypical picture of white American males, think instead of the stereotypes that engulf veiled Muslim women, Amish adolescents, or lesbian, gay, or transgendered individuals. Regardless of ethnicity, culture, or orientation, each of these individuals is going to face an identity conflict during the emerging adult years in which they will be forced to address their personal identity, values, beliefs, and social stereotypes. The ages group were selected with these and other age dependent conflicts in mind..

The first age range, 18-20 years old, is attempting to managing one of many struggles such as homesickness(i.e., remaining an adolescent in the care of parents versus becoming independent and more mature), increased responsibilities (e.g., living away from home, increased financial independence), and self-discovery. The second age range, 21-22 year olds, is believed to be struggling with identity crises on two fronts, one professional and

one personal. Individuals in this range are nearing graduation, therefore are in conflict about becoming a professional versus maintaining fewer responsibilities and less independence. The final group, 23-25 year olds, is believed to be struggling with crises focused on the realization of adulthood. The socially expected outcome is that with a professional career come the responsibilities of and acceptance into adulthood, yet personally, the individual may not have matured or is not mentally prepared to assume such a role.

Using demographic and cultural information such a gender, ethnicity, and religiosity or spirituality to predict behaviors requires a researcher to provide a rationale for their selection. Because the investigation utilized these terms as titles for mental representations it is important to provide a definition of the representation. Gender referred to the determined attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs about females and males. Inclusive in this definition are the social roles and attributions of masculinity and femininity, and less focused on the biological sex (Robinson, 2005). Ethnicity referenced culturally distinct groups with members sharing a common heritage and collective identity. Further, ethnic groups will be considered to have a shared image derived from values, behaviors, beliefs, historical perspectives, as well as collective political and social interests (Baruth & Manning, 2003). Religiosity or spirituality referred to participants' affiliation to a church or place of worship, in which praise is given to a higher order or almighty being.

Through their discussion of the social construction of race, Smedley and Smedley (2005) reference the previously presented constructs. Using anthropological and historical perspectives, the authors contend, that anthropologically, culture is external, acquired, and transmissible to others, thus making it a social construct. Smedley and Smedley (2005)

further contend that culture is the traditions of thought and patterned behavior that comprise human behavior. Using this encompassing conceptualization, it may be said that culture and cultural traits are not biologically innate, but rather the result of an intensely compelling power to mold individuals and groups and what they believe (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

A similar thought process may be applied to ethnicity, again suggesting that a group of people who share a common cultural trait distinguishing themselves from others (e.g., a common geographic region, dialect, or food habit), are capable of transmitting these traits to other people. Furthermore, because an ethnicity is not fixed, but open and self-defined it is also permeable to social influences, or biases, during transmission of the representations (Henrich, Boyd, & Richerson, 2008). Thus, revealing itself is this idea of a meme, or body of socially transmitted information (Distin, 1997). As such, culture and cultural traits, or the broad scope ideas and beliefs, language, and collaborative results of human behaviors and thought are transmissible and subject to social pressure (Distin, 1997; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). This postulation sound quite similar to Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and its associated constructs of the triadic relationship, observational learning, and self-efficacy and regulation.

The results of this study suggest that identity resolution is predicted by social factors. However, it appears that the social influence is not coming from originally believed environments (e.g., family constellations and previous generations) proposed by Luyckx *et al* (2007). Instead, the results partially support the supposition that the culture an individual resides in has more impact (Predo, 2005). For many emerging adults, this residence is a college campus, a place overflowing with opportunities for exploration but fraught with

social pressures. Because this age group is increasingly susceptible to the media, peer pressure, and a desire to find an accepted identity, they begin to form a culture based on information provided by these outlets. The results suggest a shift in values; in effect moving from parental controlled or influenced beliefs to peer accepted values (Predo, 2005). This implication is the product of a group of concepts, not one prominent factor, that predict identity resolution.

A further review revealed that emotion based coping behaviors were the more predictive, regardless of style. This suggests that the focus of emerging adults is not necessarily on solving the identity conflict, but rather managing the associated emotions. This suggestion is further supported by insignificance of problem engagement, but significance of emotional disengagement. In essence, when emerging adults explore they focus solely on the management of emotions associated with the conflict, and not the conflict itself. Management of this nature is further supported by the lack of significance self-efficacy in the identity crisis resolution process. Both dispositional and situation specific coping styles include problem and emotion focused approaches. And as the results suggest, regardless of style, resolution of the problem is of less concern than adequately managing the associated emotions. For all intents and purposes, emerging adults are not confident in their abilities to solve identity conflicts because they have yet to fully commit to the values of the new culture, and instead chose to address the emotional aspects.

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

McLuhan's (1962) global village posits that villagers must be immediately knowledgeable of, having increased awareness of, and responsible for a diverse range of

cultural values and behaviors. A requirement of this nature certainly increases the likelihood of a cognitive overload. To combat happenings of this nature, it is not unreasonable to surmise that stereotypes or heuristics might be created as a method for categorizing and storing similar traits, values, beliefs, and the people each are associated with. It is also just as simplistic to surmise that when such mental representations are shared with other individuals, an observable behavior or public representation may be created. As a result these categorizing tendencies and public representations, allow for the emergence of evolved cultural traits, or memes. It is further surmised that such mental representations of culture are not transmitted from one to another as intact entities, but instead as representations that differ from individual to individual and may be altered by bias (Heinrich *et al*, 2008).

Applying this to a real-life identity conflict, picture the crises faced by Amish adolescents during their pilgrimage to adulthood. Upon turning 16 years old, young men and women are permitted to leave their homes and enter modern society. The adolescents are permitted to enroll in public schools, drive cars, use substances and alcohol, and partake in other activities common to modern-day industrialized societies. However, at the end of this pilgrimage, upon turning 18 years old, each adolescent must decide whether to give all of these amenities up and return to the Amish way of life. A more analogous depiction might be an 18 year old entering the first year of college. As these emergent young people are dropped off by their parents, they enter into a new world, full of social influences. The crises they face are abundant, just as are those the Amish people face – must I pray six times a day?, what will happen if I explore my feelings for someone of the same-sex?, Will my

parents still accept me if I change my major from law to education? Each emerging young person will be forced to answer such questions, doing so amid any number of social influences, including coursework, joining campus clubs, and attending university-sponsored events.

Essentially what has developed is a cultural melting pot, full of individuals attempting to act responsibly and knowledgeably, but without a system to categorize all of the information. To resolve this issue a system of classification is created wherein individuals with shared or similar traits are grouped together. Yet, as Atran (2001), Boyer (1999), and Sperber (1996) suggest such systems, when shared do not result in intact or unaltered representations, because all individuals are simultaneously interacting on three fronts, the personal, behavioral, and environmental (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1994). The end result is an individual or group of individuals simultaneously interacting on the separate fronts and with people inside and outside of the group. Henrich *et al* (2008) believe this chaos is combated by placing a current representation near an attractor, or highly biased cognitive representations of the most similar group. At its core, this is social cognitive learning.

When this idea is placed in the much smaller global village of a college or university campus, the results are similar. However, the categorization and classification process is referred to as identity. This is not meant to imply that collisions of cultural values and beliefs do not take place on a college campus, indeed they do. It is instead asking that these values and beliefs, this sense of self be incorporated into the individual identity. Disorder of this magnitude requires effective management, or coping. However, as the results have

demonstrated, it does not appear that emerging adults on college and university campuses are engaging in problem-focused management. Rather, emotions appear to be predicting how the conflict will be resolved. Furthermore, such complex turmoil requires adequate investigation and commitment to a plausible resolution, yet cultural factors do not appear to serve as strong predictors. Instead, it appears that college and university campuses have created a culture, complete with distinguishing traits, values, and beliefs, all their own.

Limitations

Several limitations presented themselves during the course of this study. The first is in regards to the sample population and the lack of diversity believed necessary to assess predictive potential of demographic and cultural factors. This is predominantly the result of utilizing convenience sampling methods. The university campus population sampled is approximately 74% Caucasian, reflecting a less than advantageous level of diversity among the sampled population. A second limitation may have been the length and depth of the assessment packet participants were asked to complete, resulting in participant fatigue. The length is attributed to a third and final limitation, the complexity and number of research hypotheses used to assess the emergent conceptual framework used to define demographic and cultural factors. The contemporary nature of memetics leaves many stones unturned. This investigative process is complicated further by the memetic belief that mental representations evolve over time to fit their current situation. In other words, as the values of the global village diversify, so do the representations, cognitively and socially, of the people in the village.

Implications for Practice

Identity resolution was thought to be predicted by several factors including demographic and cultural factors, coping behaviors, and self-efficacy. While this study revealed some significant predictors, it also demonstrated the need for a unique approach to managing identity resolution of college and university campuses. This statement is implying that the college campus global village is constantly evolving, thus so are each of the cultural traits, values, and beliefs of the villagers. As a result, each emerging adult is going to encounter a unique identity crisis that requires a unique method of resolution. To suggest that cultural traits are predictive of such remedies is not justifiable, but instead informative. The information should be used on college campuses and in the counseling profession to reaffirm the uniqueness of each individual, the need to treat each as such, without stereotypes or heuristic representations, or expectations of behaviors based on the observed actions of others of a similar gender, religion, or ethnic background. Further the results should inform the approach used in counseling centers across college and university campuses. The findings suggest that emerging adults in these environments are not confident in their abilities to perform coping mechanisms associated with problem solving. It is suggested that this is the result of the constant transitioning of the groups' values and beliefs, but also because of the desire to fit in and adhere to a peer groups' value system. Yet if a student has yet to fully accept some or all of the values and beliefs, solving the crisis is not as important as managing the emotional aspects associated with the problem.

Conversely, it is important to note that this study and the associated results are not suggesting counselors encourage emerging adults to seek out new and diverse experience

simple to complete the act. The results are not suggesting that emerging adults rebel against the values and beliefs instilled in them by their parents in an effort to find and establish new identities for themselves. Rather the results are intended to inform counselors, parents, and emerging young people of the practical importance that probing and inquiring about alternatives may have on the young people's likelihood of achieving an acceptable identity. To illustrate this point, create a mental picture of new student orientations that consume college campuses during the late summer months. Parents and their children coming to campus, hoping to speak with instructors, faculty, advisors, and counselors about what the child (i.e., emerging adult) might expect over the course of the next four to five years. The hope is that a college counselor would draw on this study, presenting to the parents several ideas.

First, the life stage their child is in, when combined with the new surroundings, commonly causes the young person to question certain aspects of his or her identity, namely worldviews and love and career interests (Arnett, 2000). During this time of self-reflection and questioning, parents must be aware of the pressures, coming from peers, society, and reactions to outward behaviors (i.e., triadic relationship; Bandura 1986) that their child is coping with. Secondly, it is imperative to allow the emerging young person autonomy and not pressure this young person to conform to his or her parents ideals and standards (Luyckx *et al*, 2007). Rather the child should be permitted to explore with any level of interest and amount of diversity, the array of identities he or she encounters. What is important is to listen to their child when emotions need to be vented, while encouraging the child to explore options that may or may not be in line with their own aspirations for the child's identity.

Finally, the parents must understand that their child is not going to have a high level of efficacy in coping with the new experiences or identities; this initial reaction should be anticipated because an individual, more than likely, will not have a strong sense of his or her ability to manage and control the functioning of this new identity.

Implications for Research

As memes continue to evolve, both in concept and in application, future investigations should consider the potential value qualitative investigations would have. Such investigations may solidify the conceptual framework, while providing specificity. Additionally, qualitative explorations of the current study may reveal a more grounded theory of the coping during emerging adults' resolution of identity conflict. The current study should be recreated with a sample drawn from a more diverse sample, as well as reducing the number of predicting variables as well as investigating other possible predictors of identity resolution, such a personality.

Conclusion

Throughout this investigation, six hypotheses were used as guides. Each of these contentions was founded in social and developmental theory and focused on contemporary and budding concepts. The results, while promising, have left some stones unturned and therefore provide directions for future research. The investigation has also provided sound rationale for possible amendments or alterations to college counseling center approaches, as well as reaffirmed the importance of social justice and the uniqueness of each individual. In closing, this investigation has revealed that coping style and exploration and commitment to an identity during emerging adulthood are predicted by social factors; that such factors

are influenced by an individual's environment, and that emotional management is more practical than problem solving, at least until problem solving skills become more efficacious.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dear Student and Perspective Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a dissertation research study investigating the significance of selected aspects of culture (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, and religiosity or spirituality) in predicting coping styles, efficacy, and the resolution of identity crises. The investigation is seeking to provide an empirical foundation for the resolution of identity crises among emerging adults and potential factors that are predictive of such resolutions.

Data for this exploration will be obtained via one demographic form and four separate self-report questionnaires, provided in this assessment packet. The questionnaires should be completed using paper and pencil method. The demographic form asks for minimal information such as age, gender, and ethnicity. The second questionnaire explores your current identity status. The third and fourth questionnaires assess two distinct styles of coping, while the final questionnaire examines your efficacy with implemented coping strategies.

Completion of the assessments will take approximately one hour. All data and results obtained from this study will remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and greatly appreciated.

In accordance with North Carolina State University's Institutional Review Board, your consent to participate is required and will be deemed given upon ***signing the included informed consent form at the bottom of page 4 of this packet.*** If, at anytime during the course of your participation you wish to withdraw, you may do so without penalty. Any information you have provided to that point will be destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Matt Gerstacker, at 520 Poe Hall, NCSU or via email at mdgersta@ncsu.edu (please specify dissertation research in the subject line). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514), or Joe Rabiega, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-7515).

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

In peace,

Matt Gerstacker
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counselor Education
North Carolina State University

Appendix B

North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: The influential role of memes in the selection, implementation, and efficacy of coping processes among emerging adults.

Principal Investigator: Matt Gerstacker Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan

I am requesting your participation in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the potential relationships and effects between memes (i.e., cultural DNA) and coping processes among emerging adults.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete four descriptive self-report assessments (Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995; COPE Inventory, Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Coping Strategies Inventory, Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds, & Wigal, 1989; and the General Self-efficacy Scale, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), provide your age for screening purposes, and minimal demographic information. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire is a 32 item survey that will take approximately 10 minutes. The COPE Inventory is a 60 item survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. The Coping Strategies Inventory (Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds, & Wigal, 1989) is a 32 item self-report questionnaire that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The fourth assessment, the General Self-efficacy Scale is a 10 item measure that will take less than five minutes to complete.

RISKS

Aware that the aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences associated with a potentially tumultuous time in their lives, selected and consenting participants will be asked to share only those experiences they are comfortable with. In the event that the participant(s) becomes unnerved by the interview topic or process, he or she will be permitted to terminate the assessment. Should the participant be unable to continue, their materials will be destroyed.

In an effort to ensure the well-being of each willing participant, information regarding university provided mental health services will be made available in the event further counseling related services are desired. This information will also be made available to any of the volunteering participants during the informational and informed consent process. The following link will direct all consenting participants to the University Counseling Center's webpage, where a description of offered services, hours or availability, and other pertinent information may be found: http://www.ncsu.edu/stud_affairs/counseling_center

BENEFITS

The results gained from this research will provide insight and knowledge into the minds of college-aged students and how each copes with stress. In a real-world application of the findings, university counseling centers will have empirical findings that may aid in the improvement of services offered as well as new or alternative transition programs for the high school to college or college to working world transitions. Additionally the benefits should offer ideas for the improvement of curriculum and information used in a

variety of settings on campuses, whether in the residence halls, with athletic teams, or in university sponsored clubs and programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely in a locked file, within this researcher’s office. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. In order to ensure the confidentiality of your data, consent forms and the data collection sheets will be collected and stored separately and will not be linked in anyway.

COMPENSATION (if applicable)

For participating in this study you, the student, may receive an additional allotment of class points, as determined by your course instructor or a credit towards time spent in study hall. Other incentives will be permitted should your course instructor or Academic Coordinator warrant such acts.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Matt Gerstacker, at 520 Poe Hall, NCSU or via email at mdgersta@ncsu.edu (please specify dissertation research in the subject line). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514), or Joe Rabiega, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-7515).

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed at your request.

CONSENT

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____
Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix C

Demographic Information Form

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions as thoroughly as possible. Required information includes age, with all other requested information being optional. The information provided on this form will be kept confidential and used for the sole purposes of the research study. Thank you.

Age:

- 18 – 20 years old 21 – 22 years old 23 – 25 years old

Gender Orientation:

- Female
 Male

Ethnicity:

- African-American
 Asian-American
 Caucasian
 Hispanic
 Latina/o
 Native American/American Indian
 Biracial/Multiracial (please specify)
 Other, please specify:

Religious or Spiritual Information:

1. Are you currently affiliated (i.e., an official member) with a church or organized place of worship?

- Yes No

If yes, please specify the major denomination (e.g., Catholic, Baptist, Hindu, Islam, Jewish, etc.) of your place of worship:

2. How often do you attend religious or spiritual services?

- Almost daily (4 or more times a week)
- At least once weekly (1 to 3 times per week)
- At least once monthly (1 to 3 times a month)
- Never or only on observed denominational Holidays (e.g., Christmas, Passover, etc.)

Please check the box that most accurately describes your current status as a University student:

- I have been a university student-athlete in the past, but am not currently
- I am currently a university student-athlete
- I have never been a university student-athlete

Appendix D

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire

Instructions: Using the scale provided, please circle an accurate level of your agreement with each of the statements listed below. Thank you.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = slightly agree

5 = agree

6 = strongly agree

1. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.
1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.
1 2 3 4 5 6

3. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.
1 2 3 4 5 6

4. There has never been a need to question my values.
1 2 3 4 5 6

5. I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.
1 2 3 4 5 6

6. My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.
1 2 3 4 5 6

7. I will always vote for the same political party.
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.
1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.
1 2 3 4 5 6
12. My values are likely to change in the future.
1 2 3 4 5 6
13. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.
1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.
1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.
1 2 3 4 5 6
16. Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.
1 2 3 4 5 6
17. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.
1 2 3 4 5 6
18. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.
1 2 3 4 5 6

19. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.

1 2 3 4 5 6

20. I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

21. I think what I look for in a friend could change in the future.

1 2 3 4 5 6

22. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

23. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.

1 2 3 4 5 6

24. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.

1 2 3 4 5 6

25. My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.

1 2 3 4 5 6

26. I have never questioned my political beliefs.

1 2 3 4 5 6

27. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.

1 2 3 4 5 6

28. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

1 2 3 4 5 6

29. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

30. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.
1 2 3 4 5 6
31. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.
1 2 3 4 5 6
32. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.
1 2 3 4 5 6

Balistreri, E., Busch-Rossnagel, N. A., & Geisinger, K. F. (1995). Development and preliminary validation of the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire. *Journal of Adolescence, 18*, 179-192.

Appendix E

COPE Inventory

We are interested in how people respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in their lives. There are lots of ways to try to deal with stress. This questionnaire asks you to indicate what you generally do and feel, when you experience stressful events. Obviously, different events bring out somewhat different responses, but think about what you usually do when you are under a lot of stress.

Then respond to each of the following items by blackening one number on your answer sheet for each, using the response choices listed just below. Please try to respond to each item separately in your mind from each other item. Choose your answers thoughtfully, and make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can. Please answer every item. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so choose the most accurate answer for YOU--not what you think "most people" would say or do. **Please circle the number is the most indicative of what YOU usually do when YOU experience a stressful event.**

- 1 = I usually don't do this at all;
- 2 = I usually do this a little bit;
- 3 = I usually do this a medium amount;
- 4 = I usually do this a lot

1. I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.

1 2 3 4

2. I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.

1 2 3 4

3. I get upset and let my emotions out.

1 2 3 4

4. I try to get advice from someone about what to do.

1 2 3 4

5. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.

1 2 3 4

6. I say to myself "this isn't real."

1 2 3 4

7. I put my trust in God.

1 2 3 4

8. I laugh about the situation.

1 2 3 4

9. I admit to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying.

1 2 3 4

10. I restrain myself from doing anything too quickly.

1 2 3 4

11. I discuss my feelings with someone.

1 2 3 4

12. I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better.

1 2 3 4

13. I get used to the idea that it happened.

1 2 3 4

14. I talk to someone to find out more about the situation.

1 2 3 4

15. I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities.

1 2 3 4

16. I daydream about things other than this.

1 2 3 4

17. I get upset, and am really aware of it.

1 2 3 4

18. I seek God's help.

1 2 3 4

19. I make a plan of action.

1 2 3 4

20. I make jokes about it.

1 2 3 4

21. I accept that this has happened and that it can't be changed.

1 2 3 4

22. I hold off doing anything about it until the situation permits.

1 2 3 4

23. I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives.

1 2 3 4

24. I just give up trying to reach my goal.

1 2 3 4

25. I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem.

1 2 3 4

26. I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

1 2 3 4

27. I refuse to believe that it has happened.

1 2 3 4

28. I let my feelings out.

1 2 3 4

29. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.

1 2 3 4

30. I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.

1 2 3 4

31. I sleep more than usual.

1 2 3 4

32. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.

1 2 3 4

33. I focus on dealing with this problem, and if necessary let other things slide a little.

1 2 3 4

34. I get sympathy and understanding from someone.

1 2 3 4

35. I drink alcohol or take drugs, in order to think about it less.

1 2 3 4

36. I kid around about it.

1 2 3 4

37. I give up the attempt to get what I want.

1 2 3 4

38. I look for something good in what is happening.

1 2 3 4

39. I think about how I might best handle the problem.

1 2 3 4

40. I pretend that it hasn't really happened.

1 2 3 4

41. I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon.

1 2 3 4

42. I try hard to prevent other things from interfering with my efforts at dealing with this.

1 2 3 4

43. I go to movies or watch TV, to think about it less.

1 2 3 4

44. I accept the reality of the fact that it happened.

1 2 3 4

45. I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did.

1 2 3 4

46. I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot.

1 2 3 4

47. I take direct action to get around the problem.

1 2 3 4

48. I try to find comfort in my religion.

1 2 3 4

49. I force myself to wait for the right time to do something.

1 2 3 4

50. I make fun of the situation.

1 2 3 4

51. I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem.

1 2 3 4

52. I talk to someone about how I feel.

1 2 3 4

53. I use alcohol or drugs to help me get through it.

1 2 3 4

54. I learn to live with it.

1 2 3 4

55. I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this.

1 2 3 4

56. I think hard about what steps to take.

1 2 3 4

57. I act as though it hasn't even happened.

1 2 3 4

58. I do what has to be done, one step at a time.

1 2 3 4

59. I learn something from the experience.

1 2 3 4

60. I pray more than usual.

1 2 3 4

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 267-283.
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Appendix F

The Coping Strategies Inventory Short Form 32

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the kinds of situations that trouble people in their day-today lives and how people deal with them.

Take a few moments and think about an event or situation that has been very stressful for you during the last month. By stressful we mean a situation that was troubling you, either because it made you feel bad or because it took effort to deal with it. It might have been with your family, with school, with your job, or with your friends.

In the space below, please describe this stressful event with as much detail as possible. Please describe what happened and include details such as the place, what made it important to you, and what you did. Please do not use information (e.g., names) that would reveal the identity of the people or places that were involved. The situation could be one that is going on right now or one that has already happened. Don't worry about making it into an essay. Just put down the things that come to you. Continue writing on the back if necessary.

Once again, take a few minutes to think about your chosen event. As you read through the following items, please answer them based on how you handled your event.

Please read each item below and determine the extent to which you used it in handling your chosen event. Using the scale provided below, please circle the choice that is most indicative of the extent to which you used it in handling your chosen event.

- a. Not at all
- b. A little
- c. Somewhat
- d. Much
- e. Very much

1. I worked on solving the problems in the situation.

a b c d e

2. I looked for the silver lining, so to speak; I tried to look on the bright side of things.

a b c d e

3. I let out my feelings to reduce the stress.

a b c d e

4. I found somebody who was a good listener.

a b c d e

5. I went along as if nothing were happening.

a b c d e

6. I hoped a miracle would happen.

a b c d e

7. I realized I was personally responsible for my difficulties and really lectured myself.

a b c d e

8. I spent more time alone.

a b c d e

9. I made a plan of action and followed it.

a b c d e

10. I looked at things in a different light and tried to make the best of what was available.

a b c d e

11. I let my feelings out somehow.

a b c d e

12. I talked to someone about how I was feeling.

a b c d e

13. I tried to forget the whole thing.

a b c d e

14. I wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.

a b c d e

15. I blamed myself.

a b c d e

16. I avoided my friends and family.

a b c d e

17. I tackled the problem head on.

a b c d e

18. I asked myself what was really important, and discovered that things weren't so bad after all.

a b c d e

19. I let my emotions out.

a b c d e

20. I talked to someone that I was very close to.

a b c d e

21. I didn't let it get to me; I refused to think about it too much.

a b c d e

22. I wished that the situation had never started.

a b c d e

23. I criticized myself for what had happened.

a b c d e

24. I avoided being with people.

a b c d e

25. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts and tried harder to make things work.

a b c d e

26. I convinced myself that things aren't quite as bad as they seem.

a b c d e

27. I got in touch with my feelings and just let them go.

a b c d e

28. I asked a friend or relative I respect for advice.

a b c d e

29. I avoided thinking or doing anything about the situation.

a b c d e

30. I hoped that if I waited long enough, things would turn out OK.

a b c d e

31. Since what happened was my fault I really chewed myself out.

a b c d e

32. I spent some time by myself.

a b c d e

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Appendix G
General Self-Efficacy Scale

The construct of perceived self-efficacy reflects an optimistic self-belief (Schwarzer, 1992). This is the belief that one can perform a novel or difficult tasks, or cope with adversity -- in various domains of human functioning. The General Self-efficacy Scale (GSE) was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the aim in mind to predict coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. Using the scale listed below, please accurately respond to each of the following statements. Thank you.

- 1 = not at all true
- 2 = hardly true
- 3 = moderately true
- 4 = exactly true

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

1 2 3 4

2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

1 2 3 4

3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

1 2 3 4

4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

1 2 3 4

5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

1 2 3 4

6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

1 2 3 4

7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

1 2 3 4

8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

1 2 3 4

9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

1 2 3 4

10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

1 2 3 4

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON. [Retrieved on December 12, 2008; <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~health/engscal.htm>].