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Attachment, Identity, and Intimacy: Parallels Between Bowlby's and Erikson's Paradigms

The theories of John Bowlby and Erik Erikson reveal parallels that, together, offer opportunities to examine attachment-linked working models (secure base representations) as contexts of identity formation. Although the theories are grounded in fundamentally different assumptions, each offers concepts that can enrich the application of the other. One's attachment history serves as a foundation for identity formation. We argue that identity formation is less an individual accomplishment than a co-construction of an individual with significant others. Hence, attachment histories affect not only one's approach to identity formation but also one's contributions to the identity formation of others. Our review promotes theory building that bridges Bowlby and Erikson and offers new hypotheses.

The neopsychanalytic theories of John Bowlby and Erik Erikson have strongly influenced modern conceptual and empirical approaches to social/emotional and self/personality development. Attachment theory (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980) has its roots in British object relations theory and emphasizes relationship formation, maintenance, growth, and influences

over many facets of social and emotional life. Psychosocial developmental theory (Erikson, 1963, 1968, 1969, 1975, 1980) is grounded in ego psychology and tends to emphasize growth and change at the intraindividual level and the reciprocal influences between individual-level growth and relational aspects of functioning. Early on, empirical research motivated by these two theoretical frameworks focused on opposite ends of childhood, with attachment researchers studying infancy and early childhood and researchers influenced by the psychosocial developmental model addressing the crises of identity and intimacy at the end of adolescence (e.g., Bowlby, 1969/1982; Erikson, 1968). As a result of these differences in conceptual foundations and empirical interests, the two research programs progressed independently, with very few points of contact. However, both theories make life-span claims, and as attachment research interests have expanded beyond infancy and early childhood to adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; for a review, see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005), opportunities for integration of the two traditions are becoming more apparent (see, e.g., Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). It is our goal to explore several of these prospects in this article and to suggest ways that combining insights from both theories can produce important new data and insights into personality growth and social adaptation. We believe that researchers, theorists, and clinicians steeped in either tradition will find it fruitful to consider the parallels between the theories. We suggest

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that attachment theory provides a foundation for the social and personality development on which identity forms. A building's foundation does not determine what rooms will be defined in the stories built on it, but foundational walls do shape external parameters and load-bearing structures for the building that rests on them. Attachment yields representations of the self and other that can be likened to these attributes of a foundation that later shape the organization of identity. Identity, then, functions as a future-focused process connecting one's individual development and history, including attachment representations, to one's social and personal goals in the context of a larger culture.

ATTACHMENT ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

Secure Base Development

The Bowlby–Ainsworth theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973) views attachment as a naturally selected and developmentally adaptive system of behaviors, cognitions, and affects that coordinates exploration and proximity seeking of the attached individual vis-à-vis the attachment figure in both ordinary and emergency situational contexts. This model differs from the traditional Freudian model insofar as drives are not the primary objects and their arousal or regulation is not the only (or even the primary) function of the attachment system or the attachment relationship. Indeed, Bowlby believed that healthy development from infancy through adulthood implied a capacity (and confidence) to engage the world beyond the immediate context of the attachment figure and a capacity for intimacy or connectedness with others.

This confidence in personal capacity (the “secure base” in the Bowlby–Ainsworth model; e.g., Bowlby, 1990) is built over the course of the days, weeks, and months of the first few years of life in the context of routine, everyday exchanges between the child and the attachment figure, when the caregiver is aware of and responsive to the child's communicative behaviors, is physically and psychologically available to the child, is cooperative with the ongoing course of the child's activity, and is accepting of the impositions of being a caregiver for a young child. In general, when such an interactive milieu is present, the child–caregiver interactions have a smooth and harmonious quality

(Ainsworth, 1967). Furthermore, if a disruption to interaction or threat to the well-being of the child is encountered, the child with a secure base is able to use the attachment figure as a haven of safety and as an external source of arousal or emotional regulation, if needed. It is important to understand, however, that child–adult transactions during disruptions (or emergency) situations are not the primary foundation of the child's attachment to the caregiver; rather, daily routines ground the relationship between the child and caregiver, and these predict how transactions during emergency situations unfold (e.g., Waters & Cummings, 2000).

During toddlerhood (from about 9–24 months of age), the secure base phenomenon (both exploration and proximity seeking) is readily observable during periods when the child and caregiver are together for 1 hour or more (e.g., Ainsworth et al., 1978). As a child becomes capable of independent locomotion, he or she typically moves away from the caregiver to engage and explore the local environment, then moves closer, then away, then back, with this sequence repeated throughout a social episode (Ainsworth et al., 1978). These excursions tend to be relatively brief and at not too great a distance when the child is younger than 12–15 months, although when novelty is high and the caregiver does not move, even very young children might stray beyond their typical exploration distance for fairly lengthy periods (e.g., 15–20 minutes). Under such circumstances, it is the caregiver rather than the child who is more likely to increase proximity. With increasing age, exploration distances can increase, and the cycle of exploration and proximity seeking may become extended, especially when the context is very familiar (e.g., in the family home). By 2–3 years of age, it may take 1 hour or more to observe secure base behavior and by 4–5 years of age, these cycles may not be readily observed in a 3-hour observation (e.g., Posada, Carbonell, Alzate, & Plata, 2004). Bowlby interpreted the shift from shorter to longer cycles of secure base behavior in terms of the internalization (or mental representation) of the child–caregiver relationship. Preverbal toddlers “represent” the relationship at a sensorimotor level, and the “model” must be instantiated (by returning from exploration) on a regular basis, but older children (and adolescents or adults) retain an internal working model, or representation, of the secure base

and can refer to that internal model rather than physically return to the attachment figure for nurturance or support (Bowlby, 1973, 1980). At all ages, however, the critical issue for attachment is the person's confidence that the secure base is available and prepared to extend appropriate support if needed (Bowlby, 1990).

Bowlby viewed the attachment (or secure base) system as an evolved adaptation that functioned to promote the well-being and (ultimately) survival of the attached child (which, not coincidentally, also serves the genetic interests of the child's parents), but he also believed that individual differences in the structure of attachment relationships would be apparent across cases as a function of differing patterns of transactions and perhaps as a function of variations in the environmental context(s) in which child-caregiver transactions take place (Bowlby, 1973, 1982). Ainsworth (e.g., Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth et al., 1978) documented individual differences in patterns of mother-infant interactions observed at home and showed that these were reflected in qualitatively distinct patterns of children's secure base behavior observed both at home and in a laboratory procedure known as the strange situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978). She characterized these distinct patterns in terms of differences with respect to attachment security. Infants whose mothers were sensitive to communicative signals, available, cooperative, and accepting tended to show the modal pattern of secure base behavior (i.e., smooth and harmonious at home, and readily comforted if distressed at separation from the mother in the laboratory). These cases constituted about 70% of her samples and received the descriptor "securely attached."

In the remaining 30% of dyads, the infants exhibited somewhat atypical patterns of behavior at home, being less smooth and harmonious and generally fussier than the securely attached infants. In the laboratory procedure, these children showed two different patterns. One group was typically wary of the setting and became very distressed at the brief separations, but most important, these infants failed to become settled on the mother's return to the room, and about half displayed openly angry behavior directed to the mother when being held. These infants were described as "insecurely attached; resistant." The second group showed little wariness in the setting and moved quickly to exploration

of the toys and other objects in the laboratory playroom. Most of these cases did not show overt distress during the separations (although some did fuss or cry when the mother left a second time) and tended to ignore the mother or failed to respond to her invitation to approach and interact with the child (at least for a noticeable period of time) when she returned to the playroom after separations. These infants were described "as insecurely attached; avoidant." A subsequent study (Sroufe & Waters, 1977) showed that the apparent lack of distress for avoidant infants was misleading because concurrent heart-rate records suggested that separation from the mother was as arousing for these infants as it was for securely attached infants.

Ainsworth et al. (1978) mapped these differences in infant secure base organization on to individual differences in maternal behaviors, with mothers of resistant infants being generally less aware and sensitive to infant communicative signals, less available, and less cooperative with their infants' ongoing stream of behavior as compared with mothers of securely attached infants. In addition to lower scores for these attributes, mothers of the insecurely attached, avoidant infants tended to be less accepting of the inconveniences associated with the caregiving role as compared with mothers of securely attached infants. These results were based on lengthy and detailed observations of a small sample of mother-infant pairs, but different studies with much larger samples have supported the generality of Ainsworth's findings (for a meta-analysis, see De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997).

More recently, a third insecure category has been identified (Main & Hesse, 1990; Main & Solomon, 1986, 1990). Children assigned to this category of insecurity do not show a single common pattern and may shift their apparent attachment strategy over the course of a separation and reunion procedure such as the strange situation. Main and Solomon (1986, 1990) referred to these children as disorganized and disoriented in the strange situation. Main and Hesse (1990) argued that disorganized attachments are contingent on fear experienced in the context of caregiver-child interactions. The attached infant is considered in a paradoxical position when he or she becomes distressed at separation because approaching the parent also (potentially) induces fear and distress. Such children are observed at low frequencies in "normal" samples, but the frequency increases

dramatically in samples with abnormal rearing histories (e.g., malnourished infants, abused or neglected infants, children in foster care; see Solomon & George, 1999). Main and Hesse (1990) suggested that parental fear induction is itself a consequence of traumatic loss of an attachment figure during the parent's own childhood or adolescence, which impairs the parent's capacity to serve as a secure base for the child's exploration.

Although patterns of attachment co-constructed during infancy can change considerably over childhood and adolescence if the interactive context changes (e.g., Vaughn, Egeland, Sroufe, & Waters, 1979; Vondra, Hommerding, & Shaw, 1999; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Weinfeld, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004), it is more common to find substantial and significant stability with respect to attachment security through time (e.g., Main & Cassidy, 1988; Main et al., 1985; Owen, Easterbrooks, Chase-Lansdale, & Goldberg, 1984; Waters, 1978; Waters, Merrick et al., 2000). That is to say, toddlers whose experiences with their primary caregivers afford opportunities to co-construct a secure base relationship are, all other things being equal, likely to maintain that relationship with the caregiver through time. Furthermore, when the child has experienced a secure relationship in the family, she or he tends to enjoy more positive relationships with persons outside the family, including peers and salient adults such as teachers (e.g., Bost, Vaughn, Washington, Cielinski, & Bradbard, 1998; Lucas-Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2007; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997; Sroufe, 1983; Szweczyk-Sokolowski, Bost, & Wainright, 2005; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979). Presumably the establishment and maintenance of a secure base relationship provides opportunities for learning how to get along well with others.

Bowlby believed that the mechanism(s) accounting for stability in the secure base relationship and for the longer-term consequences of that relationship were best construed as mental representations (or "internal working models" to use Bowlby's [1973] phrase) of the attachment relationship and of the self. For example, Bowlby suggested that a child with a secure base relationship would believe that the caregiver was loving and available for interaction or support, that the child him- or herself was worthy of love and support, and that the larger world of objects and people was both attractive or inviting and

benign. Conversely, the child whose experiences in the early years did not afford the opportunity to co-construct a secure base relationship would have different models of the relationship itself (as perhaps unpredictable with regard to support or rejecting of bids for interaction and contact), the self (as perhaps not worthy of love or support), and the larger world (as perhaps unpleasant, threatening, or dangerous). Bowlby (1973) suggested that the internal models were co-constructed initially during infancy and toddlerhood and were necessarily preverbal, which both limited their access to consciousness when the child learned to think with words and made the models difficult to change (unless the behavioral transactions that supported the models truly changed). Even though these mental representations were difficult to bring to conscious attention, Bowlby argued that they inform a range of affects, cognitions, and behaviors relevant to social interactions, social relationships, and self-construal(s) throughout life.

Social psychologists have appropriated the secure base notions of Bowlby's attachment model for research with late adolescents and adults. Bowlby's internal working models of self and other/world have been mapped conceptually to dimensions of relationship anxiety or ambivalence and relationship avoidance, respectively, in adult relationships (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals whose self-descriptions include concerns about the attention or actual interest of others are characterized as having anxious or ambivalent secure base representations. They might strongly desire the connectedness found in close relationships but fear their partners are less invested in the relationships than they are themselves. Individuals who characterize the world of relationships as unsafe and not to be trusted are considered to have avoidant secure base representations. Bartholomew (1990) argued that the two dimensions of anxiety and avoidance yield four groups each with a distinct profile: a secure group with positive representations of self and other/world (low anxiety, low avoidance), a preoccupied group with a negative model of self but a positive model of other/world (high anxiety, low avoidance), a dismissing group with a positive model of self but a negative model of other/world (low anxiety, high avoidance), and a fearful group with negative models of self and other/world (high anxiety, high avoidance).

These profiles can be considered internal working models or representations of the secure base. Each variant is associated with important implications for behavior and affect regulation in the context of adult romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adults whose profiles suggest a secure attachment, for instance, typically describe themselves as self-confident and satisfied with their romantic relationships. In contrast, individuals with representations suggesting preoccupation characteristically pursue relationships anxiously, seek a high degree of emotional closeness to their partners, without regard for their partner's own preferences, and worry that their partners will leave or betray them (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals with representations suggesting avoidance espouse themselves to be better and more worthwhile than their partners, but they concomitantly experience themselves as incompetent; they tend to be contemptuous of others, yet fearful of them and their judgments. Individuals with representations that are both anxious and avoidant tend to have no coherent and continuous experience of themselves or others, often vacillating between showing ambivalent and avoidant tendencies in relationships. Their disorganization inhibits the possibility of intimacy (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Bowlby's paradigm offers a framework for the early co-construction of representations of the self and other/world, with clear implications for behavior across the life span. A second framework that Erikson proposed provides a life-span developmental framework that seems to have important parallels with Bowlby's attachment model. We first detail relevant aspects of Erikson's framework and then proceed to discuss parallels between the models.

ERIKSON'S DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK

Where Bowlby's paradigm emphasized evolutionary adaptation, Erikson (1963, 1968, 1969, 1975, 1980) emphasized culturally and historically situated adaptation. Identity and intimacy, Erikson's foci for the developmental periods of adolescence and early adulthood, therefore, gain much of their meaning from the historical period and culture in which they are formed and expressed. Unlike Bowlby, but similar to Freud, Erikson proposed a stage model of development. Erikson's model, however, was a truly lifelong model of psychosocial development in eight

stages, and although it mapped on to Freud's preadult psychosexual stages, Erikson's emphasis was on the assembly of developmentally appropriate, self-relevant information gained in the context of significant relationships. For Erikson, psychosocial development paralleled biological maturation and cognitive development. He used the concept of epigenesis, defined as "processes inherent to the organism" (Erikson, 1963, p. 34), to express the notion that psychosocial development emerged as individuals confronted a series of biologically predetermined crises. Although the order and developmental timing of the crises were predetermined, their outcomes were not. Erikson conceptualized these crises as dialectics, each of which included a pair of opposites that characterized an aspect of psychosocial development that he considered dominant during a particular stage. Across the life span, these included the dialectics of basic trust versus basic mistrust in infancy, autonomy versus shame and doubt in toddlerhood, initiative versus guilt in early childhood, industry versus inferiority for in preadolescence and late childhood, identity versus role confusion for the adolescent period, intimacy and solidarity versus isolation in young adulthood, generativity versus self-absorption in adulthood, and integrity versus despair in old age. Because each developmental period, or stage, was associated with a dominant dialectic, we use these terms (*period, stage, dialectic*) interchangeably in this discussion.

The task of each stage was to resolve the dialectic tension defining the period. Although Erikson did not articulate the exact processes by which the dialectical tensions were resolved, he considered each resolution a complex organization of the positive and negative experiences gained in a stage that uniquely combined the poles of the dialectic for that individual and provided a beginning platform for subsequent development. Resolutions would not be wholly positive or negative because no one's experience across a full stage of development is entirely positive or negative. Healthier psychosocial development would be evident, however, when the positive pole of the dialectic was more dominant in the resolution.

Unlike many stage theories, in his theory, Erikson did not assume that early resolutions were fixed or immutable. In fact, Erikson considered all eight dialectical tensions to be operative in a developmentally appropriate way at each

stage of his theory, with one dialectic dominant at each stage. Early resolutions were formative to later experience, but subsequent experience could also revise early resolutions.

Our focus is primarily on the fifth and sixth stages of Erikson's framework, which take place in adolescence and early adulthood and pertain to the development of identity and intimacy. The first four stages, however, provide a foundation for these later stages and demonstrate the interweaving of social and psychological processes that Erikson considered so critical to psychosocial development. The social side of psychosocial development is initially linked to the quality of the caregiver-child relationship in early development. Thus, the resolution of the basic trust-versus-mistrust dialectic depends on the quality of the responsiveness of the primary caregiver to the needs of the child. Even after the initial stage, however, a child's world is defined in the context of significant relationships. The radius of significant relationships grows from primary and secondary caregivers initially to neighbors, teachers, and peers. With each advancing stage, children whose development was overseen by competent and caring caregivers may gain skills in interacting, cooperating, and collaborating with an ever-growing sphere of significant others. With adolescence and young adulthood, the former dominance of the family recedes (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996) as peers and ultimately romantic partners become highly salient.

For Erikson, parents play a key role even while children's social worlds are expanding. Throughout childhood, healthy development is linked to active exploration and engagement with the world. With each new stage, children explore new ways of acting, knowing, and feeling that result from their own emerging preferences and initiations. Parents and growing numbers of significant others contribute to this exploration by providing opportunities, oversight, and assistance as challenges are encountered. The experiences and social feedback that arise from these explorations provide considerable self-relevant information. For example, the parent of a child in the initiative-versus-guilt stage may provide opportunities and applaud the initiative their school-aged children show as they attempt to "help" around the house, understanding that, at that age, children may be limited in their abilities to complete such tasks. Another

parent, however, might also forbid, ridicule, or punish such efforts, potentially creating feelings of guilt in the child about taking further initiative. It is not difficult to imagine that the children in these two families might gather quite different information about themselves and their value in the family if these parental messages occurred consistently. This illustration suggests how dialectic resolutions may emerge as the child and significant participating individuals interact through many day-to-day events, similar to the development of attachment.

Identity

The developmental period of adolescence confronts individuals with the dialectic of identity versus role confusion, although it is not the first or only period that presents individuals with self-defining information. Indeed, all dialectical resolutions embody a great deal of self-defining information. Harter (1999) described how growing children develop cognitive capacities that enable them to articulate more sophisticated self-descriptions. Many of these descriptions derive from things they have heard others say about them. Erikson (1980) called these descriptors "identifications." Identifications and other self-descriptions ultimately become input to the process of identity consolidation, but they are not the main stuff of identity. Indeed, Erikson (1963) stated: "Psychosocial identity develops out of a gradual integration of all identifications. But . . . the whole has a different quality from the sum of its parts" (p. 241). Erikson placed the stage of identity versus role confusion in adolescence because he believed that identity formation required the social, cognitive, and physical maturity that arrives at that point. He said, "The emerging identity bridges the stages of childhood when the bodily self and the parental images are given their cultural connotations; and it bridges the stage of young adulthood, when a variety of social roles become available and, in fact, increasingly coercive" (Erikson, 1963, p. 235). The time between childhood and adulthood provides a frame of mind described as moratorium by Erikson and characterized by the pressing awareness of approaching adulthood and its role-related demands.

The concept of identity is multifaceted. Erikson (1963) said identity involves "one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (p. 89). So defined,

identity seems without specific content and suggests something singular and unitary that individuals see in themselves and portray to others even as they enact different roles from day to day. However, Erikson (1980) also defined identity in terms of “simultaneous commitment to . . . decisive occupational choice . . . and psychosocial self-definition” (p. 133). In this definition, identity has content consisting of decisions, investments, and commitments tied to current and future roles, goals, and relationships. Therefore, identity embraces multiple domains and arises as adolescents confront alternatives available in a culture by exploring their fit and making investments in those chosen. Identity organizes answers to questions like, “What will I be when I enter the adult world of work?” “What political, religious, and personal values do I espouse?” “What does it mean for me to be a male or female?” “What kinds of relationships do I want with peers, family, and romantic partners?” Combining the content-free and content-specific definitions, identity is a set of personally meaningful, coherent self-descriptions or definitions that give individuals continuity in the views of self and others over time and that link individuals to the activities and tasks of their current and coming life stages. Erikson did not use the language of constructivism, but considering his emphasis on the role of others in individual development, and the importance to each dialectic resolution of day-to-day interactions with these others, we suggest that his framework is consistent with constructivist principles. Therefore, identity can also be considered a psychosocial co-construction that arises through interaction with a culturally situated context and with the significant others who share that context, again, similar to the development of internal working models. Prior development shapes but does not determine identity. Earlier stage-linked resolutions prepare individuals for the task of weaving their identity together from threads of past and current experience as well as future goals.

Research directly in the tradition of Erikson is rare. His writings were narrative in composition and clinical in focus. What Ainsworth’s strange situation paradigm offered to early attachment research, Marcia’s (1966) paradigm of identity outcomes, based on combinations of high versus low exploration and commitment, provided to identity research. Marcia’s (1966, 1980) operationalization focused less on the content of

emerging identity than on the ways in which one’s identity was consolidated. His insight was that, regardless of the content of an identity, the processes of identity formation can be recognized in their outcomes. Observing the process directly is difficult, but direct assessment of a current outcome is not. Thus, an adolescent’s identity is “achieved” if both identity exploration and commitment (an identity decision) have taken place, “foreclosed” if commitment has occurred without exploration, “in moratorium” if exploration is occurring without commitment, or “diffused” if neither exploration nor commitment has occurred. Although Erikson did not use these terms of the status paradigm, underlying dimensions of exploration and commitment are evident in his writings.

Marcia’s paradigm influenced much current thinking about identity process and outcome in adolescence and beyond, but the paradigm has been criticized for its simplification of Eriksonian thought and for its overemphasis on identity outcomes and its underemphasis on the actual process of identity formation (see Cote & Levine, 1988; Schwartz, 2001). Nevertheless, the framework has stimulated several conceptual advances for identity theory and research. For example, recent theory and research in the tradition of Erikson and Marcia has attempted to further detail the role of exploration in shaping the decisions and commitments that ultimately define identity. Berzonsky (1989, 1990) conceptualized three distinct styles of identity exploration. An information style is open to and active in the processing of identity-relevant information, a normative style emphasizes the views and expectations of significant others when making identity decisions, and a diffuse or avoidant style avoids or procrastinates when faced with identity-linked decisions. A more recent line of research and theory by Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, and Vansteenkiste (2005) proposed a two-cycle process of exploration and commitment. The first cycle involves exploration in breadth, leading to tentative commitments. This cycle serves primarily to focus attention for the second cycle, which involves in-depth exploration of the identity element tentatively selected in the first cycle. If this deeper inspection reveals a good fit, the explorer becomes more certain and invests in the identity selection. Otherwise, a return to broad exploration may follow.

Identity and Intimacy

Most research stimulated by Erikson's model has addressed identity, but identity researchers have begun to give more attention to Erikson's sixth dialectic, intimacy versus isolation. In this period, the serious romantic partner becomes important. "Intimacy is the capacity to commit (one)self to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises" (Erikson, 1963, p. 263). Because intimate relationships include vulnerability with partners, Erikson maintained that healthy intimacy requires an already-developed sense of identity. Hence, the order of his stages placed identity formation before intimacy. With the consolidation of identity, one establishes who one "is" and through the intimacy-versus-isolation dialectic, one determines whether and with whom one will share that understanding of self while also sharing a partner's understanding of who he or she "is." However, Dyk and Adams (1987) suggested that identity and intimacy are more closely linked processes than previously believed. Limited theorizing and research during the past two decades has suggested substantial interplay between, or overlap of, these processes during late adolescence and early adulthood (Dyk & Adams, 1990; Winefield & Harvey, 1996; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). Indeed, Erikson (1963) recognized the identity implications of adolescent romance: "adolescent love is an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity by projecting one's diffused ego image on another and by seeing it thus reflected and gradually clarified" (p. 262). In recent work, Montgomery (2005) found that adolescents and young adults with a clearer sense of their identity reported greater willingness to share intimacy. Both intimacy and identity are prominent processes during early adulthood, although prior progress in identity formation during adolescence is beneficial in adulthood when forming intimate relationships (Adams & Archer, 1994; Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2008; Markstrom & Kalmanir, 2001).

Although research and theory in the tradition of Erikson and Marcia acknowledge the social aspect of the psychosocial process of identity formation, the research arising from this tradition so heavily emphasizes individual efforts at exploration and commitment that it almost

entirely overlooks the dynamic contribution of others to these processes. Greater emphasis on the role of close, intimate relationships has helped rebalance theorizing about identity. Several models of identity formation have emerged that specifically account for the Eriksonian emphasis on the interpersonal context of identity formation (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997; Kerpelman, Pittman, Lamke, & Sollie, 2004; Lichtwarck-Aschoff, van Geert, Bosma, & Kunnen, 2008).

Consistent with our above definition of identity, these approaches conceptualize identity as a system of self-descriptions or definitions organized in terms of domain, salience, and other organizing principles. Identity formation and maintenance is recognized as a microprocess activated by receipt of self-relevant information that is somehow at odds with and thus threatening to a preexisting self-description or definition. Threats to an identity initiate affective (e.g., alarm) and behavioral processes designed to elicit feedback from the environment that affirms and thus supports the original self-definition. For example, as a college student explores his or her occupational identity through the coursework of an academic major, poor grades in important classes threaten emerging identity commitments. Later in life, negative evaluations at work threaten one's established occupational identity. Responses to identity threats may vary. For example, one might redouble efforts in the class or on the job to improve performance and gain identity-affirming feedback from the teacher or employer, thus allaying the sense of identity threat and affirming the original identity. Other identity maintaining strategies might involve discounting the source of discrepant feedback. Repeated failure to affirm and thus maintain a threatened identity ultimately leads to renewed identity exploration, and thus identity-formation processes, through which a revised, better-fitting self-definition can emerge.

Significant others, including intimate partners, play an important role in delivering and redressing the effects of discrepant identity feedback. First, identity-linked inputs of significant interaction partners, whether challenging or supporting a particular identity element, carry more weight than those of others. Second, attempts by significant others to support a partner against identity-discrepant inputs are more likely to be effective and work in tandem

with the identity maintenance efforts of the identity-disrupted individual (De La Ronde & Swann, 1998). This is because the most effective support for an identity-disrupted individual comes from partners who share the disrupted individual's view of the threatened identity (Swann & Predmore, 1985), and significant others are more likely to be aware of their partners' identity commitments.

These process-oriented models, therefore, explicitly account for the role of significant others in the formation of identity, whether it is in the context of romantic relationships (Kerpelman & Lamke, 1997) or in the context of parent-adolescent relationships (Kerpelman & Smith, 1999; Lichtwarck-Aschoff et al., 2008). When individuals are confident about a threatened self-definition, significant others can be effective supports for resisting or confronting the threat and affirming the identity. When individuals are less confident about threatened identity content, however, rather than resist, they are likely to engage in exploration about that identity with their relationship partners (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001).

For young adults, intimate relationships have enormous identity implications. On the one hand, they may provide the social feedback that leads individuals to reconsider previous identity commitments. On the other hand, intimate partners may be especially important sources of support and verification in the face of threats to identity (e.g., Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997).

PARALLELS BETWEEN ATTACHMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS

The theories articulated by Erikson and by Bowlby show several similarities among the central constructs (for a monograph-length treatment of the two frameworks, see Breger, 1974; for a more recent consideration of associations among the attachment and identity frameworks, see Bosma & Gerlsma, 2003). Perhaps easiest to recognize is the clear similarity in the infancy and early-childhood periods, insofar as the Bowlby–Ainsworth notion of attachment security (vs. insecurity) seems to imply most of what Erikson meant by trust (vs. mistrust). Certainly the idea that the infant or toddler co-constructs a sense of having a secure base for exploration, nurturance, and succorance (when

needed or desired) and of having confidence in the adequacy and predictability of nurturance and support captures the essence of basic trust. Furthermore, the absence of a secure base relationship and the implications of this state for confidence in the adequacy and predictability of these supports embrace most of what Erikson meant by mistrust.

Erikson's dialectic of autonomy versus shame and doubt parallels notions of confidence in exploration from the Bowlby–Ainsworth theory. Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973) clearly stated that a co-constructed secure base during infancy and toddlerhood includes children's exploration of the near and further environments as their motor and cognitive capacities develop (with input from both maturational and social processes). Research reported by Matas, Arend, and Sroufe (1978) illustrated how secure attachments support children's early attempts at mastery while they are still receiving guidance and assistance from attachment figures. Two-year-old children with a history of secure attachments tended to approach a series of increasingly difficult puzzles with enthusiasm and were able to receive and accept instruction from their mothers when the solution to the puzzle was beyond their current cognitive level. Mothers of these children tended to allow them time to work on the difficult puzzles on their own before providing instructional assistance; they also tended to provide assistance in a sequence of more general kinds of hints followed by relatively more specific instructions about the nature of the puzzle and its solution. Children with secure attachment histories did not necessarily solve the puzzles more rapidly than children without secure base relationships, but they were more likely to express positive affect at solution of the puzzle and to share their affect experience with their mothers. These types of experiences show how self-confidence can be built on the foundation of confidence in the secure base.

Bowlby (1969/1982) maintained that the relationship between infant or toddler and parent evolves into a "goal-corrected partnership" as the child acquires a range of cognitive, language, and motor-control skills that make possible achievements such as social perspective taking (i.e., seeing people or situations from the vantage point of another), delay of immediate gratification for a larger future payoff, and empathic responsivity. Bowlby considered these achievements facilitators of the secure base

relationship; however, the same skills underlie children's abilities to take initiative and engage a larger world, as in Erikson's model.

Not only do the developmental outcomes in infancy, toddlerhood, and childhood suggest parallels in the theories of Bowlby and Erikson, but also the underlying importance of sensitive, caring, patient parenting can be found in both theories. The two theories have distinctly different underpinnings, with Bowlby's framework springing from object relations theory and Erikson's framework originating in ego psychology, in which drive reduction is an underlying mechanism. Nevertheless, both perspectives assert that a good-quality caregiving relationship yields for developing children a sense of security or confidence in their self-worthiness, in the reliability of their caregivers' support and guidance, in the world as a place that they can safely explore, and in their own abilities to explore it. The social and emotional sphere to which this psychosocial confidence applies grows with children's increasingly broadened social and behavioral exposure. With each of Erikson's developmental periods, the ways caregivers and children cooperate may lead to greater autonomy and initiative in children; similarly, for Bowlby, caregivers support their children's autonomy and initiative differently as the children move into more complex environments (e.g., child care, kindergarten, school).

Another critical point of agreement between the models is that not all infants receive the sensitive, patient care that promotes the construction of a representation of self and other/world that is secure (basic trust). Because the attachment framework identifies specific variations in the ways that insecurity may be psychologically and behaviorally organized, this framework offers something of value to Erikson's developmental framework. Individuals holding the qualitatively distinct insecure representations of the secure base can be expected to react to each of Erikson's dialectical crises somewhat differently. Faced with a relational threat, children with a history of insensitive, inconsistent care are likely to respond with both heightened approach and angry resistance to close contact (ambivalent), whereas children with a history of insensitive, rejecting care are likely to react by distancing themselves or reducing overt expressions of both positive and negative affects (avoidant). When exploration of the environment raises the occasional sense of threat, children with

representations of the caregiver as anything other than a secure base can be expected to be handicapped in their exploration process and less than certain about the decisions they make for themselves.

Both models agree that early development serves as the basis for subsequent adaptation and accomplishment. Bowlby's model proposes temporal continuity for the working models that emerge in the earliest period of development but recognizes the potential impact of (substantial) changes in the context of care. Erikson's model considers the resolutions of its stage-defining dialectics as developmental outcomes but considers later developments as biased, rather than determined, by earlier ones.

To summarize what we believe are fundamental parallels between the Bowlby and Erikson frameworks as they address early development, and recognizing that Erikson does not explicitly use the language of social constructionism, we argue that both view the intrapersonal outcomes (or "products") of attachment and psychosocial resolutions of developmental dialectics as co-constructions produced in the transactions between developing children and their interaction partners (caregivers broadly defined), on the basis of day-to-day experiences. Also, both view the beliefs thus created about the self, others, and the world through this process as critical to the strategies used subsequently for exploring and for making self-relevant decisions. Bowlby's model offers Erikson's a set of trajectories, in terms of secure and various insecure representations of the secure base that would seem to have clear implications for the strategies used to confront subsequent development. Erikson's model offers Bowlby's a series of social contexts and dilemmas (i.e., dialectical conflicts of each developmental stage) through which secure base representations are applied.

PARALLELS BETWEEN ATTACHMENT AND IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, the social context of the family and the adolescent's expectations for it begin to change. Adolescents spend more time in exploration with peers and close relationship partners, and therefore the role of parents as a secure base becomes less critical than in earlier periods. Although in many ways they still depend on parents, adolescents begin to rely less on parents as their secure base. Zimmerman

and Becker-Stoll (2002) suggested that adolescents begin to reevaluate their secure base representations in this revised social context of greater autonomy from the family and greater involvement with others. In this developmental period, parallels between attachment and identity theories are again evident. Marcia (1988) suggested that a history of secure attachment should predict an identity-formation process that leads to an achieved identity status through higher-quality exploration. These adolescents would have confidence to be more active, intentional, self-directed, and responsive to experience gained through exploration. Although Marcia did not specify it, we would also argue that a secure representation would also enhance an adolescent's capacity for commitment. Early security is linked to greater social competence and more autonomous problem solving in later stages (Sroufe, 1989; Waters & Cummings, 2000), which is likely to promote not only competence in exploration but also competence and confidence about the ability to make decisions and, thus, identity commitments.

Although it is not extensive, empirical research has addressed links between attachment constructs and the processes of identity formation (see Arseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2009; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Unfortunately, this literature is highly inconsistent both in the variety of operationalizations used for the attachment and identity constructs and in its findings. Many of the studies assess attachment in terms of adolescent self-reports of relationship qualities with specific individuals, such as parents or peers. These measures do not measure working models of self and other. Interestingly, and counter to expectation, studies using these relationship-linked measures of attachment tend to find security linked to identity commitment but not to exploration (Benson, Harris, & Rogers, 1992; Mackinnon & Marcia, 2002; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001). In a meta-analysis of 21 studies (including 12 unpublished dissertations), Arseth et al. (2009) confirmed this pattern. Security, measured in various ways, is positively related to identity achievement and foreclosure (both high in commitment), negatively related to identity diffusion (low in commitment), and unrelated to identity moratorium (high in exploration, low in commitment). This pattern suggests a security–commitment link, which is consistent with our argument, but no security–exploration link, which is surprising.

The two-cycle view of exploration that Luyckx et al. (2005) proposed may explain this unexpected pattern. Exploration in breadth, which tends to be preliminary and more superficial, is arguably the type of exploration measured in most current identity assessments and may be unrelated to one's secure base representation. However, exploration in depth, which is the follow-up scrutiny of a preliminary commitment, may be related to secure base representations. Exploration in depth involves a potential threat because disconfirmation of a preliminary commitment can be distressing. Secure individuals would be more likely to engage in depth exploration in spite of this threat.

In our view, the current empirical literature addressing identity–attachment linkages is inconclusive. We argue that research on this topic needs to assess attachment in a way that not only is about specific relationships but also captures the varieties of insecure working models. Individuals with a negative model of self (anxious or fearful self-representations) may be more likely to foreclose on their identities, thus lacking the determination to pursue their own identity. Individuals with a negative model of other (dismissing or fearful representations) may be more likely to be diffused. These interpersonally uninvested individuals are less likely to be concerned about role-related future demands and less likely to have good models of identity exploration or commitment among their peers.

THE CONVERGENCE OF ATTACHMENT, IDENTITY, AND INTIMACY IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

Perhaps the most exciting parallels between Erikson's and Bowlby's models present themselves at the transition to adulthood, where secure base representations and a newly consolidated identity emerge into Erikson's developmental period of intimacy versus isolation. In intimate relationships, we expect attachment representations to have especially important effects on the evolving identity. Collins and Read (1990) argued that insecure representations may bias behavioral and cognitive strategies and tactics. We extend this argument to suggest that, in the relationship context, these biases also may distort or undermine identity processing. For example, a person with an anxious, preoccupied secure base representation may uncritically incorporate self-definitions that are proffered by

an intimate partner but may be inaccurate or accurate only in comparison to the partner. If such distortions yield identities based on biased exploration processes or premature (inauthentic) commitments, they would be ripe for disruption, especially if the relationship ends and the ill-formed identities are brought to new relationships in which the same biased identity input is no longer provided. Again, individuals with pre-occupied representations may vacillate in their identity definitions considerably as they move from relationship to relationship if they value intimate partner proclamations above critical self-assessments.

Bowlby's and Erikson's paradigms can help researchers, theorists, and clinicians better grasp the social embeddedness of adaptation in young adult couples as they form a "coupleship." Not only do two intimate partners construct their own identities, but also each provides a context of identity exploration for the other. As the relationship grows and matures, the partners become a secure base for each other and thus targets for proximity seeking if they experience identity disruptions and sources for exploration as new experiences are encountered. Although the secure base phenomenon takes time to emerge in adult relationships, one's attachment history may influence identity exploration and proximity seeking even in new intimate relationships. Whether the intimate relationship is young or mature, whether secure base representations refer to past history or the current relationship, the representations in play can be expected to matter in terms of how each partner participates in his or her own identity processing and concurrently in the partner's. Specifically, we expect that secure individuals would use an intimate partner in an honest and open way as a collaborator in identity exploration and commitment. Biased processing would be minimized in the event of a distressing identity disruption. Seeking support and comfort from the relationship partner would not be threatening for an individual with a secure representation, and disorganizing arousal would be avoided, thus permitting a reengagement of the identity-exploration process (Crowell et al., 2002). In contrast, individuals with an insecure model of self and its characteristic doubt about self-worthiness would be anxious in the event of identity distress, might not fully process the identity-related input behind the distress, or might rely too heavily on the partner to

relieve the distress without adequately resolving the identity issue. Individuals with an insecure model of other tend to be distrustful, unengaged, and dismissing in their relationships, so in the event of identity distress, they may not seek the support of the partner (Bartholomew, 1990). The conceptual complexity promoted by combining the Bowlby and Erikson frameworks in this way is magnified, as the nonfocal partner in intimate relationships also has working models that are expected to affect her or his responsiveness as an identity support in similar predictable ways. Thus, the secure base representation that each partner brings to an intimate relationship may affect not only how each deals with his or her own identity challenges but also his or her effectiveness in supporting the identity processing of an intimate partner. When the theories of attachment and identity formation are juxtaposed, these conjectures become testable hypotheses about how individuals in romantic relationships confront identity disruptions.

In summary, reviewing the conceptual parallels between Bowlby's and Erikson's theories has revealed points of important similarity even though the two perspectives derive from different theoretical traditions and have had relatively limited empirical contact. The origins of secure base representations (working models) and their implications for the use of the secure base for exploration have clear parallels in Erikson's developmental notions, beginning in infancy and progressing through development through young adulthood as developing individuals experience an ever-widening sphere of social relationships and opportunities to experience themselves in progressive, developmentally linked but also culturally linked behavioral demands. The two models strongly emphasize the role of exploration throughout development, and Erikson brings focus to capacities for commitment, especially in the process of identity formation and intimacy. The social constructivist assumption is consistent with both conceptual frameworks and presupposes the importance of the interpersonal context for all development. Considering these processes in adult relationships leads us to conclude that the representations (working models) of both parties are important not only to how intimacy might be expressed in the day-to-day relationship but also how each party to the relationship approaches the identity-formation process, how a challenged partner in the context of the intimate relationship might handle identity

challenges, and how the intimate partner might respond as a source of support and verification to the identity-challenged partner. We suggest that, to fully capture the dynamic between attachment and identity formation, it must be examined in a relational context and analyzed at both the individual level and the couple level.

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