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## Introduction

The transition to adulthood has become prolonged in most postindustrial societies (Arnett, 1998). Many young people attend college, marry later, and delay starting a family. Accordingly, this time period is often termed *emerging adulthood* (Arnett & Taber, 1994).

Emerging adulthood is described as a time of: (1) identity exploration in the areas of love and work; (2) instability; (3) self-focus; (4) possibilities; and (5) feeling in-between (Arnett, 2006).

Many of these issues also interest identity researchers who, inspired by Erikson (1968), examine processes of exploration and commitment in two broad developmental domains, namely the *ideological* (occupation, religion, politics, and values) and the *interpersonal* (family, friendship, dating, and gender roles).

The two fields utilize different methodologies. Emerging adulthood researchers use continuous measures describing the five processes mentioned above (IDEA; Reifman, Arnett, & Coldwell, 2003) or different markers of adulthood (Arnett, 1997), whereas identity researchers often use measures of identity status (achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion) reflecting the extent of exploration and commitment within particular domains (e.g., EOM-EIS-2; Bennion & Adams, 1986).

The goal of this study was to explore associations between the emerging adulthood scales (IDEA) and the identity status measure (EOM-EIS-2).

## Method

### Sample:

- 414 participants (college students)
- 262 females, 152 males
- Mostly white, aged 18 to 25

## Measures:

**IDEA:** 31 items on a four-point Likert scale, yielding six subscales (Identity Exploration, Experimentation with Possibilities, Self-Focus, Other-Focus, Negative Instability, and In-Between); alphas ranged from .64 to .81.

**EOM-EIS-2:** 64 items on a six-point Likert scale, yielding four identity statuses (Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Achievement) in each of two domains (Ideological and Interpersonal); alphas ranged from .60 to .85.

## Analysis:

We focused on the Identity Exploration (IX) and Self-Focus (SF) scales, which had strong associations with EOM-EIS-2 statuses in both domains. Score distributions for the IX and SF scales within status groups failed to meet parametric statistical test requirements, so we performed median tests, following global tests with post-hoc comparisons.

## Results

Global tests indicated that medians for both scales differed among statuses within each domain ( $\chi^2$  ranged from 26.02 to 19.70,  $p < .001$ ). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that the achieved group had a higher median score than all others, except for the ideological diffused group on the Self-Focus scale (see Figure 1 and Table 1 for more detail).

## Discussion

The name and items (e.g., “finding out who you are”, “defining yourself”) of the Identity Exploration scale imply that this scale should distinguish exploration-high (achievement, moratorium) from exploration-low (diffusion, foreclosure) identity statuses. A clue to the different findings we obtained may be the similar pattern for the Self-Focus scale. Its items (e.g., optimism, self-sufficiency) imply that identity achieved students experience greater capability and autonomy, permitting more thorough opportunity utilization than peers.

Figure 1. Medians and Quartiles for Selected IDEA Scales by Identity Status

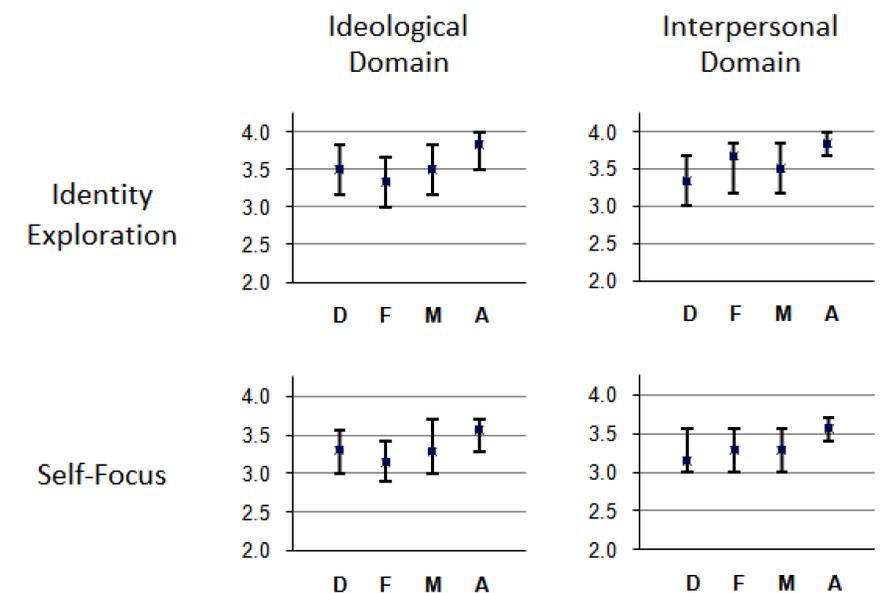


Table 1. Comparison of Selected IDEA Scales by Identity Status

IDEA Scale		Total	Ideological Domain				Interpersonal Domain			
			Dif	For	Mor	Ach	Dif	For	Mor	Ach
	N	414	82	68	194	70	65	54	241	54
Identity Exploration	Q1	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.7
	Med	3.5	3.5 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 <sup>a</sup>	3.8 <sup>b</sup>	3.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.7 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 <sup>a</sup>	3.8 <sup>b</sup>
	Q3	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.0
Self-Focus	Q1	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.4
	Med	3.3	3.3 <sup>ab</sup>	3.1 <sup>b</sup>	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	3.6 <sup>ac</sup>	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.6 <sup>b</sup>
	Q3	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7

Note: Differing superscripts denote groups differing at  $p < .008$ .

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