

Aspects Of Social Identity, Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self Functioning And Gender Aspects (Part 2)

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2.1 IDENTITY CONFLICT

An identity conflict involves an incompatibility between two or more aspects of identity. This kind of crisis often occurs when a person is forced to make an important and difficult life decision. Identity conflict arises in working persons who also want to have a family. A person with a strong commitment to building a family might experience an identity conflict if he or she were offered a promotion at work that involved longer hours or frequent out-of-town travel. Whenever two or more aspects of identity clash (such as career women and dedicated mother) there is a potential for an identity conflict crisis.

Identity conflicts are “approach-approach” conflicts, in that the person wants to reach two mutually contradictory goals. Identity conflict involves intense feelings of guilt or remorse over perceived unfaithfulness to an important aspect of the person’s identity. People in an identity conflict may feel as if they are letting themselves and others down. Overcoming an identity conflict is often difficult and painful process.

2.2 RESOLUTION OF IDENTITY CRISES

Identity crises-both deficits and conflicts-commonly occur during adolescence, though not all adolescents experience identity crises. Those who do find that resolution involves two steps (Baumeister, 1997). First, they decide which values are most important to them. Second, they transform these abstract values into desires and actual behaviours.

A second phase of life in which identity crises commonly occur is during middle age. For some people, this is a period in which they experience dissatisfaction with their existing identities, perhaps at work or in a marriage. Whatever the reason, people undergoing a midlife identity crisis begin to feel that things are not working out as they wished. They begin to doubt

that they made the right choices early in life and they reconsider those commitments: “If only I had done.....” It is a period of regret over time spent pursuing goals that turned out to be unsatisfying or impossible. Many people in this predicament decide to abandon their goals and experience an identity deficit because they give up the principles that have guided their lives so far.

People who undergo midlife crisis often act as adolescents again. In midlife crisis, people often change their careers, change their spouses, change their religions, change where they live or do various combinations of these.

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