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The Pursuit of Eriksonian Fidelity in Education for the Gifted: A Literature Review Exploring its Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Determinants

Anyesha Mishra 

Abstract

This review of literature introduces Erikson's psychosocial theory in relation to identity development and fidelity. It explores the intrapersonal and interpersonal determinants of fidelity and identity development as described by Erikson, with a specific focus on the role of schools and the challenges faced by students with gifts and talents (SWGT). It investigates the unique challenges faced by SWGT in their identity development journey, such as boredom, underachievement, and social isolation. The social aspects of identity construction and the influence of educational institutions on students' identity development have been highlighted. The paper emphasizes the significance of creating a supportive learning environment that fosters students' psychosocial needs, including positive peer relationships, mentorship, and academic challenge. It also explores some of the intrapersonal determinants of fidelity and identity development, such as hope, willpower, purpose, and curiosity. These factors have been found to be essential in guiding individuals towards Eriksonian fidelity and play a crucial role in their pursuit of goals and success. The interplay between the interpersonal and the intrapersonal factors is discussed, emphasizing their dynamic nature and their impact on an individual's sense of agency and pathways. Finally, based on the reviewed literature a conceptual framework has been proposed to understand the holistic development and application in educational settings.

Keywords: Erikson's psychosocial theory • identity development • fidelity • education • interpersonal factors • intrapersonal factors

Education plays a vital role in shaping not only individuals' lives but also society. By exploring the role of Eriksonian fidelity in education, this literature review aims to provide researchers and educators with valuable insights into how to create learning environments that promote optimal development and growth, especially for the students with gifts and talents (SWGT). The review tries to shed light into both the interpersonal and intrapersonal determinants through the lens of Erikson's psychosocial theory that play a crucial role in educational settings. Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development puts forth the idea that human personality develops in stages, and at each of these stages a psychosocial crisis unfolds, and the goal is the successful development of the ego strength.

Successively, with the help of the literature base, this article also aims to propose a conceptual framework that delves into the intricate process of identity formation among SWGT. In the realm of gifted education, SWGT often navigate unique challenges stemming from their advanced intellectual abilities (Webb, 1993). The proposed conceptual framework will shed light on some of the multifaceted factors that contribute to the

development of identity and fidelity among SWGT. By exploring the interplay between intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions, this framework will try to uncover how SWGT construct their sense of self and their commitment to the values and goals that define them. Understanding this process is crucial not only for educators and parents who seek to support these students but also for the broader field of gifted education. The model rooted in Erikson's psychosocial theory integrates some of the key constructs such as hope, willpower, waypower, purpose, curiosity, exploration, and the perception of person-environment fit.

Through this conceptual framework, it is aspired to provide a comprehensive understanding of how SWGT can overcome the challenges they face, foster their talents, and ultimately reach their maximum potential. This investigation of the dynamics of identity formation among SWGT can provide insights that can inform the development of tailored educational programs and interventions, ultimately enriching the lives of SWGT. While understanding the interpersonal determinants can guide educators in creating nurturing environments that foster optimal psychosocial development, understanding the intrapersonal determinants can help educators in tailoring instructional strategies and interventions to meet students' unique needs, fostering their holistic growth and well-being and eventually having a successful identity formation.

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Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson (1950) proposed the theory of psychosocial development stating that development occurs according to the epigenetic principle of development (Erikson, 1950, 1968). He focused on the importance of the development of certain aspects at critical times, focusing on the increasing awareness of the surrounding world and ethics (Côté & Levine, 1988). Through this theory Erikson proposed the relationship between the individual and society, thus greatly emphasizing the importance of social relationships in shaping personality. He believed that the ego is present in the potential form at birth, but its development depends on the cultural environment. The child-rearing practices of different societies influence the formation of personalities that align with the cultural values and demands of that society.

Erikson believed that personality develops in eight stages, from infancy to old age. Each stage is characterized by a psychosocial crisis, which is a conflict between two opposing forces—the conflict between the syntonic (harmonic) and dystonic (disruptive) elements. The successful resolution of each crisis leads to a favorable ratio (Erikson, 1963) which leads to the development of an ego strength or virtue (Erikson, 1961). For the present review, the focus will be on the development of identity and fidelity and hence we will try to take a deeper dive into it.

Within the theory, Erikson proposed that identity development is a central task of adolescence. Adolescents face a psychosocial crisis of identity versus role confusion. During this time, adolescents are trying to figure out who they are and what they want to do with their lives. They are exploring different roles and possibilities and trying to find their place in the world. Erikson believed that the successful resolution of this crisis leads to the development of the psychosocial strength of fidelity, which is the ability to commit to others and to oneself. Adolescents who achieve fidelity are more likely to be successful in their personal and professional lives (Côté, 2009; Markstrom et al., 1998). They are also more likely to be happy and healthy. This task involves exploring different roles and possibilities and trying to find one's place in the world (Erikson, 1959). The successful resolution of this crisis leads to a sense of self-continuity and purpose. While "the specific quality of a person's identity differs from culture to culture, the accomplishment of this developmental task has shared elements in all cultures" (Erikson, 1966, p. 43). Ultimately, the establishment of a personal identity represents the psychological connection between childhood and adulthood.

Importance of Balance

The balance between syntonic and dystonic (Erikson, 1982) outcomes of the previous stages is key to identity development (Erikson, 1985). For example, Erikson (1982) describes how lack of autonomy may lead to self-doubt and difficulty in forming a strong sense of self, while excessive and unresolved autonomy may result in disrespectful defiance of authority figures. Furthermore, a positive outcome of the initiative versus guilt stage allows for the development of purpose, which is key in later stages of life, while a negative outcome may lead to a sense of guilt and hesitation. Similarly, a positive outcome of the industry versus inferiority stage leads to the development of competence, which is crucial for successful navigation towards later stages of life, while a negative outcome may result in feelings of inadequacy and inferiority (Erikson, 1982). Therefore, by examining how certain elements relevant to the previous stages have developed, one can identify potential areas of strength and weakness in an individual's identity development and work towards fostering a positive identity outcome in later stages of life.

Fidelity

As discussed previously, Erikson's (1968) theory posits that adolescence is a period of identity exploration, marked by confusion and experimentation in navigating the path of life. This stage is characterized by Marcia (1966) as psychological moratorium, where adolescents temporarily suspend their current identity and engage in explorations to discover their options for identity. Successful navigation of this stage culminates in the development of a more coherent sense of self, including a strong identity that can withstand challenges to one's beliefs and values and the ability to form commitments and sustain loyalties to oneself and others, known as fidelity. Erikson defined fidelity as "the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of value systems" (Erikson, 1964, p. 125). The sense of fidelity emerges when the crises between identity and role confusion resolves at the end of adolescence. Fidelity is known to encompass loyalty, commitment, sincerity, genuineness, and a sense of duty in one's relationships with other people, choice or beliefs (Erikson, 1962, 1964; Markstrom & Kalmanir, 2001; Markstrom & Marshall, 2007). Erikson claims, "we have almost an instinct for fidelity—meaning that when you reach a certain age you can and must learn to be faithful to some ideological view" (in Evans, 1967, p. 30). While there is a clear distinction between Erikson's identity and fidelity, in this review the terms may often be used interchangeably due to the strong relationship between them, as Erikson (1964, 1968) explains that fidelity occurs after a successful identity development. Moreover, due to the limited studies on

Table 1: Ego status (adapted from Marcia, 2009)

	High Commitment	Low Commitment
High Exploration	Identity Achievement	Moratorium
Low Exploration	Identity Foreclosure	Identity Diffusion

fidelity (Brittian & Lerner, 2013) one may find it helpful to study the construct with the help of the effective identity formation of any individual. Understanding the construct can have significant implications for the positive development of individuals and provide insights on its antecedents or predictors.

As an adolescent, it is essential to develop a sense of fidelity, which helps to make and maintain meaningful and lasting relationships with others who share similar interests and values (Côté, 2009; Markstrom et al., 1998). It provides a sense of security, belonging, purpose, and direction during the transition to adulthood (Erikson, 1963). To develop fidelity, adolescents need positive relationships with parents and other adults, opportunities to explore different roles and identities, a sense of belonging to a community or group, and exposure to positive role models (Erikson, 1963; Kroger, 2006). However, adolescents may face several challenges that impede their identity and fidelity development. These challenges may include peer pressure to conform or rebel, parental expectations or conflicts, social media influences or cyberbullying, academic or career demands or uncertainties, cultural or religious diversity or discrimination (Kroger, 2006). Such challenges may lead adolescents to role confusion, resulting in difficulty forming relationships, lack of direction in life, and feelings of isolation, conflict, and meaninglessness (Brittian & Lerner, 2013; Markstrom & Kalmanir, 2001). Thus, it is crucial to provide young people with the support they need to develop a strong sense of identity and fidelity. This can be achieved by creating a safe and supportive environment that encourages exploration and expression of individuality, providing positive reinforcement, and being a positive role model (Kroger, 2006).

Identity Formation

Marcia (1966) operationalized the concept of identity by Erikson with his empirical work. While Erikson (1968) focused on awareness, Marcia (1966, 1980) focused on self-structure. To understand it in further detail we can see that Erikson (1968) defined identity as

awareness of the fact that there is self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community. (p. 50)

Whereas Marcia (1966) defined identity by focusing on the presence or absence of exploration (originally

called "crisis" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551)) and commitment. He defines identity as a self-structure which is "an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (Marcia, 1980, p. 106). According to him, four different identity statuses can develop with high and low combination of exploration and commitment (see Table 1). While exploration refers to the process of exploring different potential identities and options (Grotevant, 1987), commitment refers to the degree of attachment or personal investment to a particular identity, action or belief (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Kroger and Marcia (2011) state that it is during late adolescence that the individual sorts through, rethinks and tries out different "roles" as well as "life plans" (p. 33).

Identity diffusion refers to the stage where individuals have not yet explored or committed to any particular identity. They may be avoiding the process of exploring their options, or they may be overwhelmed by the choices available to them. This stage often tends to be associated with low self-esteem, drug or alcohol issues, delinquency (Adams et al. 2005; Luyckx et al. 2005; Schwartz et al., 2005). Considering their unique characteristics, a SWGT experiencing identity diffusion might exhibit a lack of clear direction and commitment, appearing disengaged or aimless in their pursuits. They might struggle with integrating their exceptional abilities into a cohesive sense of self, potentially leading to underachievement, disconnection, or even negative psychosocial outcomes.

Identity foreclosure refers to the stage where an individual has committed to a particular identity without exploring other options. They may have adopted the values and beliefs of their parents or other authority figures without questioning them. While foreclosure is associated with high self-worth, it is also associated with rigidity, closed-mindedness, and authoritarianism (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Identity moratorium refers to the stage where individuals are actively exploring different options for their identity but have not yet committed to a particular identity. They may be trying out different roles or experimenting with different lifestyles. Studies have found that this stage is often positively correlated with positive aspects like openness and curiosity (e.g., Luyckx et al., 2006), and negative aspects like anxiety, depression, and low self-worth (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2009). This stage can be manifested in an SWGT as active exploration of different academic and extracurricular paths, experimenting with diverse interests, and seeking experiences beyond their comfort

zone. They might express uncertainty about their future direction and be open to trying out different roles, talents, and potential career paths. Moreover, the fact that multipotentiality exists among individuals with gifts and talents (Sajjadi et al., 2001), can also pose further challenges for them in their process of exploration and commitment. Frazier (2021) discusses how various identity developments among SWGT are impacted by their multipotentiality, and provides recommendations for supporting them.

Finally, identity achievement refers to the stage where individuals have explored different options for their identity and have committed to a particular identity. They have made a decision about who they are and what they stand for. This is often linked with a well-balanced mindset, healthy social connections, and careful contemplation of various life possibilities (Berzonsky, 2004; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). Though Marcia (1966) did not talk about fidelity in his studies, one may understand that identity achievement is the same as what Erikson called fidelity, where commitment to one's identity is the main characteristic of the individual. Furthermore, Markstrom and Kalmanir (2014) found that fidelity was predicted by advanced identity development. Markstrom et al. (1997) also found fidelity to negatively correlate with ideological diffusion and ideological and interpersonal moratorium, which are characterized by low commitment. This relationship between identity and fidelity indicates that if one tends to study the identity status of an individual, one may also tend to understand their fidelity.

Marcia (1966, 1980) believed that exploration was the process that leads to the development of identity, while commitment was the end result. However, more recent models (e.g., Ciecuch & Topolewska, 2016; Crocetti et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2006) consider both exploration and commitment as ongoing processes. These models use a process similar to Marcia (1966) to identify the identity statuses, thus providing a strong empirical foundation that captures the process of identity formation (Schwartz et al., 2011). Marcia (1966, 1980) also deviated from Erikson's focus on the role of social context on identity formation (Côté & Levine, 1988; Waterman, 1988).

Psychosocial Constructs related to Fidelity and Identity Development: A Glimpse

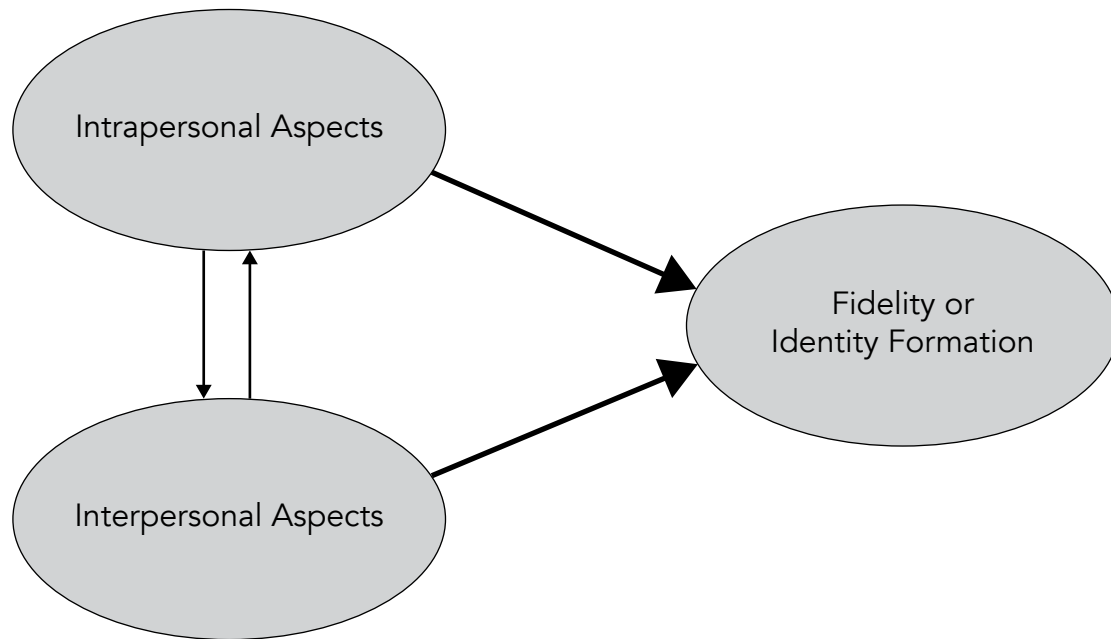
Though there is a dearth of literature on fidelity, in this section we will explore what psychosocial factors are related to both fidelity and identity development and in what way. Erikson (1950) separated "ideology" and "relationships" as distinct areas for identity development. This may indicate that by using the distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of identity (Kroger & Marcia, 2011), it is possible to understand

that identity development occurs in and through both these domains. While a person's subjective sense of feeling, thoughts, values is intrapersonal in nature, their behavior towards others is interpersonal. And the interaction between both these factors can have an influence in identity formation (Schwartz et al., 2015; see Figure 1 for a visual representation).

Identity has been found to be related to several factors of well-being such as self-esteem (Swann et al., 2007), meaning in life (Steger et al., 2013), and life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Hamachek (1988) described a stable self-concept as one of the characteristics of an individual who has a sense of identity. Additionally, Oyserman et al. (2012) stated that "self, self-concept, and identity can be considered as nested elements, with aspects of the 'me' forming self-concepts and identities being part of self-concepts" (p. 75). Thus, it can be said that there is also a close relationship between self-concept and the above variables.

Waterman et al. (2013) also unearthed that strong identity commitments (which can be likened to fidelity) are linked to positive outcomes such as improved subjective well-being (also found by Hofer et al., 2007; Waterman, 2007), psychological well-being (also found by Abu-Rayya, 2006; Waterman, 2007), self-esteem (also found by Basak & Ghosh, 2008; Schwartz, 2007), and internal locus of control (also confirmed by Adams & Shea, 1979; Schwartz, 2007), with a reduced probability of experiencing symptoms of anxiety (also found by Marcia, 1967; Schwartz et al., 2011) and depression. However, when the Schwartz et al. (2011) added a measure of the quality of identity commitments to their analyses, they found that commitment quality was the key factor that accounted for the associations between identity commitments and psychosocial functioning, and low-quality identity commitments were associated with psychological costs instead of the benefits. As a result, they (Schwartz et al., 2011) discussed the implications of helping emerging adults make better identity choices to enhance their well-being through stimulation of identity exploration, commitment or both. Similarly, Soenens and colleagues (2011) found that identity commitment quality matters linking it to Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2009). In their study, autonomous motives (self-determined) were linked to better adjustment even after accounting for the strength of identity commitments, while controlled motives (extrinsically driven) had a negative impact on adjustment.

In another study about identity structure and processes, conducted by Bogaerts et al. (2019), it was found that adolescents who scored high on identity synthesis (for definition see Erikson, 1968) compared to their peers also scored high on proactive exploration and commitment processes and low on ruminative exploration (for definition see Luyckx et al., 2008) one

Figure 1: Interaction between the domains

year later compared to their peers. On the other hand, adolescents who scored high on identity confusion compared to their peers also scored high on ruminative exploration one year later. The effects of identity processes on identity structure were also observed in adolescents who scored high on identification with commitment compared to their peers, as they scored low on identity confusion one year later. Moreover, it was found that when adolescents scored high on identity synthesis compared to their own average score, they reported increased proactive exploration processes one year later (Bogaerts et al., 2019). These results suggest that achieving identity synthesis is essential for proactive identity exploration at both the between- and within-person levels.

Extending on and confirming the above findings, Becht et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal study to understand how daily identity dynamics shape identity. They found that during adolescence, there is a dual-cycle process model of identity formation and maintenance that operates within a person across days. Individual differences in these short-term identity processes during adolescence predicted differences in identity development in emerging adulthood. Adolescents with low daily commitment levels and high levels of identity reconsideration were more likely to have weak identity commitments and high identity uncertainty in emerging adulthood. Similarly, adolescents with strong daily changes in identity commitments and continuing identity uncertainty were more likely to have high identity uncertainty in emerging adulthood. These findings support the idea that there is a link between short-term daily identity dynamics in adolescence and long-term identity development in emerging adulthood.

Furthermore, to understand the role of intrinsic motivation in identity formation, Waterman (2004) first conducted a literature search to understand the constructs that predict intrinsic motivation and then found their correlation to different measures of identity. He found that subjective states like interest, flow and personal expressiveness were predictors for intrinsic motivation, along with self-determination, competence in the form of balancing challenges and skills, and self-realization values, which in turn are the predictors for identity. It is important to note here that Waterman (2004) referred to the literature base to find the relationship of the variables to identity through personal expressiveness and it was not an empirical study.

Also, while trying to understand the determinant of identity development, Bosma and Kunnen (2001) found that the process of identity development is influenced by the factors that enhance openness to change, environmental support, and the developmental history. Considering the psychosocial crisis in the earlier stages by Erikson (1950, 1968) a study by Brzezińska et al. (1996) suggested that the key factors that contribute to identity formation are shame proneness and strategies for regulating shame, as well as personal beliefs about one's life and significant social experiences that define the quality of adolescents' social participation. Parental attitudes and psychological well-being were also found to be correlated with identity formation among adolescents in studies from different parts of the world (e.g., Floyd et al., 1999; Sandhu et al., 2012). Luyckx et al. (2007) also found that parental warmth is associated with identity formation, although excessive parental practices are likely to hinder the exploration. However, a study by Wires et al. (1994) was unable to establish a

relationship between identity status and child-rearing values, social problem-solving, independence stress, and health concerns.

Fidelity and Identity Development: Role of Education

Though many scholars have criticized the individualistic approach (Rich & Schachter, 2011) to Erikson's theory by the neo-Eriksonian tradition (Schwartz, 2001), it is important to remember that Erikson's theory was a psychosocial theory that focused on the relationship between the individual and the society (Erikson, 1950, 1968). Educational researchers have recently begun to focus on adolescent identity development, recognizing the importance of social aspects in constructing identity. As a result, they have studied various school effects on different aspects of identity development (e.g., Faircloth, 2009; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; McLeod & Yates, 2006). Additionally, certain experts in the field of education have emphasized the importance of the concept of identity as a means to gain deeper insights into a wide range of educational events and phenomena thus enhancing our comprehension of educational processes (e.g., Kaplan & Flum, 2009; McLeod & Yates, 2006; Roeser et al., 2006; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Studies have indicated that educational institutions that incorporate identity-promoting characteristics play a significant role in fostering student identity development (Rich & Schachter, 2011). Moreover, engaging academically in studies that are personally meaningful is a crucial factor that enhances student exploration and boosts their confidence in forming their identity (Rich & Schachter, 2011).

Verhoeven et al. (2018) integrated the findings of different studies on how schools and teachers play a role in the identity development of adolescents both intentionally and unintentionally. They found that different types of educational processes (differentiation, teaching strategies, teacher expectation, peer norms) and explorative learning experiences (in-depth, in-breadth, reflective) have an influence on the development of adolescents. Noddings (2005) has made a convincing argument that the way teachers feel about and interact with their students can have significant impacts on various aspects of students' development, such as their self-esteem and academic efforts. This has been supported by several studies showing that teachers' expressions of care and support are positively associated with students' pursuit of prosocial goals, academic efforts (Wentzel, 1997), engagement (Patrick et al., 2007), self-confidence, liking of school (Hallinan, 2008), students' academic and social motivation (Wentzel et al., 2010), self-efficacy (Cornelius-White, 2010), and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2009). These constructs have been considered as 'identity capital' that fosters

identity development (Côté & Schwartz, 2002). Furthermore, caring has also been indirectly related to identity development through educational contexts that support relationships and belonging (Faircloth, 2009; La Guardia, 2009). The influence of teachers as role models has been seen to outweigh their level of care when it comes to predicting student identity development (Rich & Schachter, 2011).

In addition to several other constructs affected by the identity of an individual (as discussed previously), recent research has revealed a crucial link between a student's sense of self, their identity, and how they engage with learning. This connection significantly affects not only their active participation in the learning process but also their emotional and affective responses to it (Faircloth, 2012). Reciprocally, Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) also found that, not only did the school environment have a significant impact on the formation of students' identities, but also the school experience was a valuable tool for personal growth and identity development.

Fidelity and Identity Development: Role in Giftedness and Gifted Education

Erikson's concept of fidelity can also provide a framework for understanding the psychological needs of students with gifts and talents (SWGT) as they navigate the challenges of intellectual and social development. Erikson's concept of fidelity pertains to staying loyal to oneself and important people in one's life. Kelland (2015) proposes that this stage is most manageable for individuals (including SWGT) who have received adequate training in achieving specific objectives and have received ample positive feedback from their peers. SWGT often experience a unique set of challenges related to their advanced intellectual abilities, such as boredom, underachievement, and social isolation (Gallagher, 2008). These challenges can impact the development of identity and fidelity, as they may struggle to find a sense of purpose and belonging in a world that may not fully understand or appreciate their abilities. SWGT may face unique challenges in this regard, as they may struggle to reconcile their intellectual abilities with their social and emotional needs (Gross, 1994). By understanding the role of fidelity in the development of SWGT, educators and parents can help support these students in their journey towards self-discovery and self-actualization. Erikson (1968, as cited in Kidwell & Dunham, 1995) argued that SWGT are more likely to experience an identity crisis than their non-identified peers since they may experience noticeable exploration because of their unique characteristics.

Cross (2001) postulated that gifted teenagers may have difficulty developing their identity because they have many choices and opportunities to explore. They may also feel different from their peers or feel pressure

to conform or succeed. However, if they are provided with supportive environments, role models, and peers who share their interests and beliefs, their giftedness can help them develop their identity and build a sense of belonging. Also, educators can provide opportunities for SWGT to explore their interests and passions, and to engage in activities that allow them to develop a sense of purpose and direction (Silverman, 1993). Moreover, educators and parents can help them to develop healthy relationships with peers and mentors who share their interests and can provide support and guidance (Neihart, 2006; Neihart, 2021). By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, educators and parents can help SWGT to develop a strong sense of identity and fidelity, which can be critical for their long-term success and well-being. Mahoney (1998) proposed the Gifted Identity Formation model focusing on some of the above factors as a guide to understand the SWGT. He focuses on validation, affirmation, affiliation, and affinity as the underpinnings from the systems (internal and external forces like self, family, culture, etc.) that help in shaping the identity.

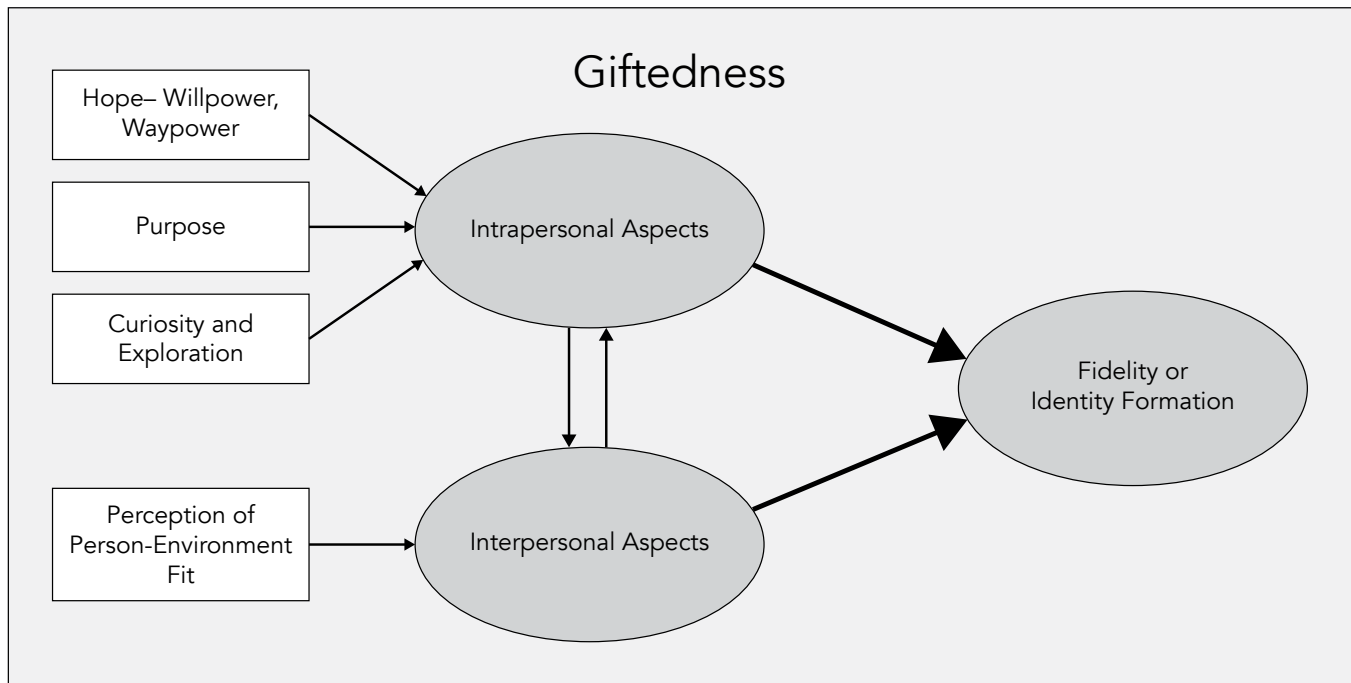
However, the School-based Psychosocial Curriculum Model (SPCM, Cross et al., 2017; Cross & Cross, 2017a) helps in providing a framework for the psychosocial development of SWGT by establishing the essential ego-strengths (Erikson, 1968) which can help in their highest level of accomplishment. Cross and Cross (2017b) recommended fidelity as a starting point in planning any talent development program. Considering the advantages of identity achievement (Marcia, 1993) or fidelity, as discussed previously, it is evident that the recommendation is in line with promoting the optimal psychosocial development of SWGT. Additionally, the model focuses not only on the intrapersonal aspects of the individual, but it also focuses on their interpersonal aspects. This aligns with Erikson's theory (1950, 1968), on which the model is based. It emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that fosters the psychosocial needs of SWGT which includes providing opportunities for positive peer relationships, mentorship, and academic challenge. To demonstrate the importance of psychosocial development, Cross and Cross (2017b) state "talent development requires a strong ego. SWGT must be motivated and able to pursue the goals necessary to achieve their maximum potential" (p. 182). For SWGT, the messages they receive about themselves from their environment can often complicate identity development (Cross & Frazier, 2009) which can lead to several intrapersonal and interpersonal consequences. This provides additional evidence that emphasizing the development of identity in youth is crucial for success (Zuo & Cramond, 2001), underscoring the significance of comprehending the factors that contribute to it (both intra- and inter-personal).

A Proposed Conceptual Framework

With the help of the previous discussion of literature and relationships among the different constructs, this paper proposes and describes the following conceptual framework (see figure 2) which also tries to fill the gap in the literature. Considering the framework for the realm of gifted education, it may help in exploring how SWGT manage and integrate their diverse abilities, as well as how their interactions with peers, mentors, and role models impact their identity formation. It is to be noted that while there are many other factors that can be incorporated both within the intrapersonal and the interpersonal determinants this framework provides an example of and describes only some of them.

The proposed conceptual framework diagram depicts the interconnectedness of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions and how they contribute to Eriksonian identity formation and fidelity. While individual relationships among the different constructs have been studied, no research has focused on the holistic relationships among them to understand the overall concept of fidelity. The aim of this framework is to help understand the factors that affect how people seek Eriksonian fidelity in education, so that effective interventions can be developed to support their quest towards success. More specifically, the present conceptual framework aims to provide a partial empirical understanding of the School-based Psychosocial Curriculum Model (Cross et al., 2017; Cross & Cross, 2017a, b), in order to maximize the potential of SWGT (Cross & Cross, 2017a).

The framework postulates that individuals' identity formation and senses of fidelity are shaped by interpersonal and intrapersonal factors demonstrating the interrelationships between these factors. The intrapersonal dimensions, including hope, willpower, purpose, waypower, curiosity, and exploration, have been seen as essential determinants of Eriksonian identity formation and fidelity. These dimensions that are influenced by an individual's personal experiences, beliefs, and values, have a crucial role in guiding the individual's pursuit towards Eriksonian fidelity. The interpersonal dimension, which in the present context we are looking at with the lens of the perception of person-environment fit, can be considered as another critical factor that contributes to Eriksonian identity formation and fidelity. The environment, including educational settings, plays a significant role in shaping the individual holistically. As we have understood from the literature discussed above, it can be hypothesized that the person-environment fit can have both direct and indirect effects on an individual's intrapersonal dimensions, thus ultimately impacting their sense of Eriksonian fidelity.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Intrapersonal Aspects

Hope, willpower, waypower, and purpose are important constructs that drive performance to translate goals to success (Bronk et al., 2018; Colla et al., 2022). These constructs are interconnected, as they can be understood within the context of Erikson's psychosocial theory as the virtues that emerge from the first three stages. Hope is the belief that things will turn out well in the future that can motivate individuals to persist in the face of challenges and setbacks. It is defined as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)" (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 248). It emerges as a virtue from the first stage of development—trust versus mistrust (Erikson, 1968). Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory of hope emphasizes the importance of goal-directed thinking and action in promoting positive outcomes. According to this theory, hope is not just a passive emotion, but an active cognitive process that involves setting goals and developing strategies to achieve them. They propose that hope consists of two main components: agency and pathways. Agency refers to the individual's belief in their ability to initiate and sustain action toward their goals, while pathways refer to the individual's ability to identify and plan effective routes towards their goals. Together, these two components form a positive feedback loop, in which successful goal pursuit increases one's belief in their agency and pathways, which in turn leads to greater motivation and success in achieving goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Colla et al. (2022) extended Snyder's original idea of

hope to include two more factors, an interpersonal factor called *WePower* and an intrapersonal factor called *WhyPower*. These additional factors were incorporated alongside the existing elements of hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991)—*WillPower* (motivation to succeed) and *WayPower* (planning to achieve goals). The researchers aimed to investigate the interplay between these factors to develop a more comprehensive and dynamic model of hope. According to their expanded model, hope is considered an emergent property that cannot be fully understood by merely examining its individual components, but rather as an energy system that arises from the interaction between these factors. It should be noted that willpower is also a virtue that emerges out of the second stage of Erikson's psychosocial theory—autonomy vs shame and doubt. It can also be defined as the ability to resist immediate gratification in pursuit of long-term goals (also referred as self-control; Hoffmann et al., 2012; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004).

Purpose, the virtue emerging from the third stage of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development, has been seen as a developmental asset (Benson, 2006) critical in a healthy identity formation (Hill & Burrow, 2012). Purpose development involves commitment where the individuals consider who they hope to become and what they hope to accomplish in their lives (Bronk, 2011; Hill & Burrow, 2012). Damon et al. (2003) define purpose as a future-oriented intention persisting over the long-term with the aim to achieve meaningful objectives that have significance to oneself and the wider world. Considering the above definition, Bronk et al. (2018) constructed a scale to measure purpose by understanding

an individual's meaningfulness, goal orientation and beyond-the-self orientation.

Exploration plays a crucial role in identity formation and hence fidelity (Erikson, 1964; Kroger, 2006; Marcia, 1966). Exploration has been defined as actively seeking out opportunities to acquire new information and experiences (Ainley, 1987; Berlyne, 1960; Pearson, 1970). Studies have illustrated how exploration is driven by curiosity (e.g., Ten et al., 2021). Curiosity is not only a characteristic of giftedness (Silverman, 2003), but it has also been targeted for cultivation in students to drive exploration (e.g., Kamis et al., 2018; Ostroff, 2016) for a better cognitive development, education and scientific discovery of individuals (Loewenstein, 1994). It shares similarities with various other psychological concepts that are focused on how individuals manage and control their attention when confronted with new or significant stimuli in their environment (Kashdan et al., 2009). Theoretical models of curiosity often highlight exploration as its significant component, which has been studied in previous research instruments (Kashdan et al., 2004; Kashdan et al., 2009). Another significant component of curiosity is the willingness to accept the unpredictability and novelty of everyday life (Berg & Sternberg, 1985; Beswick, 1971; Day, 1971; Silvia, 2008). However, while tolerance of uncertainty has been acknowledged as a crucial element of curiosity in theoretical models, previous attempts to measure this aspect have been consistently overlooked (Kashdan, 2009). Curiosity and exploration have also been linked to openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Vuyk et al. (2016) explains how openness to experience can better explain various behaviors among individuals, especially SWGT. Nevertheless, given the importance of curiosity and exploration in identity formation, the relationship between the constructs has been rarely studied.

Interpersonal Aspects

Drawing ideas from the person-environment fit theory (Hunt, 1975), Eccles and Midgley (1989) proposed the stage-environment fit. While the person-environment fit theory primarily emphasizes the role of social interactions and the overall perception of the environment, the stage-environment fit theory focuses specifically on how experiences and transitions within school settings influence the development of adolescents. Hunt (1975) reasoned the importance of understanding the person-environment fit with a developmental framework. He stated,

Maintaining a developmental perspective becomes very important in implementing person-environment matching because a teacher should not only take account of a student's contemporaneous needs by providing whatever

structure he presently requires, but also view his present need for structure on a developmental continuum along which growth toward independence and less need for structure is the long-term objective (p.221).

Focusing on Hunt's (1975) argument, Eccles et al. (1993) suggested the importance of "fit between the developmental needs of the adolescent and the educational environment" (p. 92). Achieving a positive stage-environment fit can facilitate healthy identity development by providing individuals with the appropriate resources, challenges, and support to master the developmental tasks of each stage (Eccles et al., 1993). For example, in the adolescent stage of identity versus role confusion, achieving a positive stage-environment fit may involve navigating the challenges of peer group and school environments to develop a clear sense of self. A positive stage-environment fit in this stage may involve having supportive peers, mentors, and adults who provide guidance and encouragement, as well as opportunities to explore different roles and identities (Eccles et al., 1996). In the context of SWGT, fostering a positive stage-environment fit during the adolescent stage of identity versus role confusion may entail creating supportive network should also provide ample opportunities for gifted students to explore diverse roles and identities that align with their talents and interests, facilitating their healthy identity development. Looking further at it in correspondence to giftedness, it has been previously proposed that if SWGT are provided with supportive environments, role models, and peers who share their interests and beliefs, their giftedness can help them develop their identity and build a sense of belonging (Cross, 2001) thus helping the formation of identity.

Implications and Future Directions

The proposed framework for understanding identity formation among SWGT and the interaction among various interpersonal and intrapersonal determinants tries to offer valuable insights and open avenues for both research questions and practical applications in the field of gifted education. Research questions stemming from this framework may include inquiries into the specific factors influencing the transition between different identity statuses among SWGT, such as exploring the triggers that lead a student from moratorium to identity achievement or from diffusion to foreclosure. Researchers may also investigate the long-term consequences of different identity statuses on the academic and psychosocial well-being of SWGT, shedding light on how fostering a strong sense of identity can positively impact their educational journey and overall development.

Moreover, the practical applications of this framework can be directed towards educators, parents, and

policymakers. Educators can use this framework to design tailored interventions that facilitate identity development among SWGT. They may implement strategies to help students navigate the challenges associated with their giftedness, such as providing mentorship programs, creating flexible and enriching learning environments, and offering counseling support. Parents can utilize this framework to better understand their gifted children's unique needs and experiences, enabling them to provide appropriate guidance and emotional support during identity formation. Moreover, policymakers can draw from this framework to inform the development of inclusive educational policies and programs that recognize the significance of identity in the success of SWGT. This framework tries to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering a foundation for research exploration and practical initiatives aimed at optimizing the potential of SWGT while ensuring their holistic development

Conclusion

Thus, the existing literature highlights the significance of considering both individual and social aspects of Erikson's psychosocial theory in understanding identity development (hence 'fidelity'). In this body of literature educational researchers have recognized the role of

schools in fostering student identity development and all 'ego strengths' through meaningful academic engagement, supportive relationships, and focusing on several intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. SWGT sometimes may struggle to find a sense of purpose and belonging, but with supportive environments, role models, and opportunities to explore their interests, their giftedness and talents can contribute to their identity development thus helping in building a positive society. This literature review helps us emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing the unique psychosocial needs of SWGT to promote their maximum potential by providing partial evidence for the School-based Psychosocial Curriculum Model (SPCM). The aim was to understand the existing gap in the interrelations between the different constructs as predictors for fidelity. Specifically, the literature review tried to underscore the significance of including fidelity or identity achievement in planning talent development programs for SWGT, as advocated by Cross and Cross (2017b). By prioritizing the development of a strong ego, SWGT can overcome the psychosocial challenges they face and become motivated to pursue their goals effectively. More importantly, the development of fidelity can help the students in understanding and supporting themselves.

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