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E.G. ERIKSON'S THEORY OF IDENTITY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

Nargiza Yuldashevna Zairova

*2nd year Doctoral student Comparative literature, comparative linguistics and translation studies
Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh*

Nukus, Republic of Karakalpakstan

E-mail: nzairova2@gmail.com

Nukus, Uzbekistan

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The present article offers a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of Erik H. Erikson's theory of identity, examining its foundational principles, historical context, and relevance across multiple academic disciplines. The study investigates Erikson's epigenetic model of psychosocial development, tracing the evolution of identity formation through the eight stages of human life. Erikson's contributions are situated within broader theoretical frameworks, including comparative analysis with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic model and Erich Fromm's social-character theory. The research examines the sociological dimension of identity through the lens of Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner's Social Identity Theory, alongside classical sociological perspectives articulated by Émile Durkheim, Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, George Herbert Mead, and Erving Goffman. The philosophical underpinnings of identity are explored through Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Ivan Ilyin's cultural-philosophical thought. The article also incorporates contributions of Russian-language scholars, including Leokadia Drobizheva, Vladimir Yadov, and Lidiya Schneider, whose research enriches the interdisciplinary

understanding of identity in the post-Soviet academic context. The findings illuminate the multidimensional nature of identity construction and are discussed in the context of comparative literary studies, demonstrating the relevance of Erikson's theoretical framework for analysing literary representations of identity in multicultural texts, with particular reference to the works of N. Scott Momaday and T. Kaipbergenov.

Introduction. The concept of identity stands at the intersection of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and literary studies, making it one of the most productive and richly contested topics in contemporary humanistic inquiry. In an era defined by globalisation, rapid social change, and the intensification of intercultural contact, questions about who we are — as individuals, as members of social groups, and as bearers of cultural traditions — have acquired unprecedented urgency [1]. Identity is not merely a philosophical abstraction; it is a lived reality that shapes consciousness, organises behaviour, structures social relationships, and finds powerful expression in cultural and literary forms. The works of Erik Homburger Erikson (1902–1994) remain among the most influential contributions to the theoretical understanding of this complex phenomenon, providing a developmental framework that has shaped research across an extraordinary range of academic disciplines.

Erikson defined identity as a subjective sense of self-sameness and continuity — an experience of coherence and integration that connects the individual's past, present, and anticipated future into a meaningful narrative whole [2]. Unlike static conceptions of the self, Erikson's model presents identity as inherently developmental, emerging through a lifelong process of negotiation between individual psychological needs and the demands and resources of the social world. This dynamic understanding of identity has proven extraordinarily generative for scholars working across disciplinary boundaries, enabling productive dialogue among psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and literary critics.

The relevance of Erikson's identity theory to literary studies is particularly significant. Literature, understood as a cultural practice embedded in specific historical and social contexts, both reflects and participates in the construction of individual and collective identities. Characters in literary works undergo identity crises, form and dissolve identifications, navigate between competing cultural affiliations, and articulate visions of selfhood that resonate with readers' own identity experiences. The theoretical tools provided by Erikson's framework — supplemented by insights from social psychology, sociology, and phenomenological philosophy

— offer literary scholars powerful means for interpreting the complex identity dynamics represented in literary texts, particularly those produced in postcolonial, multicultural, and cross-cultural contexts.

The significance of Erikson's work is also evident in its sustained influence on subsequent theoretical developments. His epigenetic model of psychosocial development provided the foundation for James Marcia's empirical operationalisation of identity statuses, Alan Waterman's research on identity development, and Jane Kroger's extensive studies of identity in adolescence and beyond [3]. At the same time, Erikson's work has been enriched and challenged by parallel developments in social psychology, particularly the Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, which approaches identity from a distinctly group-focused perspective [4]. These convergences and divergences among theoretical frameworks illuminate different facets of the identity phenomenon, collectively constituting a rich and multidimensional theoretical landscape.

The present article pursues several interconnected objectives. First, it provides a systematic exposition of Erikson's epigenetic model of psychosocial development, clarifying the conceptual architecture of his identity theory and situating it within the intellectual context of its creation. Second, it conducts a comparative analysis of Erikson's framework in relation to cognate theoretical perspectives, including Freud's psychoanalytic model, Fromm's social-character theory, and Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory. Third, it explores the sociological and philosophical dimensions of identity, drawing on classical sociological theory and phenomenological philosophy. Fourth, it surveys the contributions of Russian-language scholars whose work enriches the interdisciplinary understanding of identity. Finally, it considers the implications of these theoretical perspectives for the study of identity in comparative literature, with particular attention to indigenous and postcolonial literary traditions as represented in the works of N. Scott Momaday and T. Kaipbergenov.

The significance of this interdisciplinary approach lies in its capacity to illuminate dimensions of identity that remain invisible to any single disciplinary perspective. Psychological theories of identity illuminate intrapsychic processes and developmental trajectories; sociological theories reveal the constitutive role of group membership and social context; philosophical theories address questions of continuity, consciousness, and the metaphysics of personal identity; literary theories demonstrate how narrative and representation actively participate in identity construction. By synthesising these perspectives into a coherent analytical framework, we arrive at a richer and more adequate understanding

of identity as a multidimensional phenomenon with profound implications for literary scholarship.

Materials and Methods. The present study employs an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates theoretical frameworks from developmental psychology, social psychology, classical sociology, phenomenological philosophy, and comparative literary theory. The primary analytical approach is systematic theoretical analysis, which involves close reading and critical interpretation of foundational texts in identity theory, careful identification of key concepts and theoretical propositions, and rigorous evaluation of theoretical claims in relation to empirical evidence, internal coherence, and comparative adequacy.

The corpus of primary sources has been assembled with attention to both the historical depth and the disciplinary breadth of identity scholarship. In developmental psychology, the key works include Erikson's *Childhood and Society* [5], *Identity: Youth and Crisis* [6], and *The Life Cycle Completed* [7], as well as his influential essay "The Problem of Ego Identity" [8]. These texts are supplemented by Freud's foundational contributions to ego psychology and Fromm's major works on social character and humanistic psychology, particularly *Escape from Freedom* [9] and *To Have or to Be?* [10]. In social psychology, the primary sources include Tajfel's *Human Groups and Social Categories* [11] and Turner's *Rediscovering the Social Group* [12], along with the seminal theoretical articles of Tajfel and Turner [4].

The sociological corpus includes classical works by Durkheim [13], Berger and Luckmann's landmark *The Social Construction of Reality* [14], Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [15], and Mead's foundational *Mind, Self, and Society* [16]. These classical sources are situated in relation to more recent sociological and cultural theoretic accounts of identity, including the influential work of Stuart Hall and Zygmunt Bauman [1, 2]. The philosophical sources consulted include Husserl's phenomenological writings [17] and representative works by Ilyin [18]. The study also draws extensively on Russian-language scholarship, particularly the contributions of Drobizheva [19], Yadov [20], and Schneider [21].

The methodological approach combines several complementary analytical strategies. Comparative analysis is employed to identify convergences and divergences among theoretical frameworks, revealing the distinctive contributions of each perspective and the ways in which they complement or productively challenge one another. Historical contextualisation situates theoretical contributions within their intellectual and socio-historical settings, illuminating the conditions that made particular theoretical formulations possible and the cultural contexts that shaped their subsequent reception and application.

Conceptual analysis involves careful examination of key theoretical constructs — identity, ego, self, social identity, epigenesis, crisis, moratorium, stigma — to clarify their meanings, trace their intellectual genealogies, and assess their analytical utility in different disciplinary and cultural contexts. Hermeneutic interpretation, drawing on the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics associated with Gadamer and Ricoeur [22], provides a framework for understanding the ways in which theoretical texts are read and reread in different historical and cultural contexts, with shifting interpretive horizons that generate new meanings and applications.

Finally, the study employs a synthetic strategy that seeks to identify points of convergence among different theoretical perspectives, working toward an integrative framework capable of preserving the distinctive insights of each approach while transcending their individual limitations. This synthetic ambition is motivated by the conviction that identity, as a complex and irreducibly multidimensional phenomenon, cannot be adequately comprehended from within the confines of any single disciplinary perspective. Only by bringing psychological, social psychological, sociological, philosophical, and literary perspectives into sustained productive dialogue can we hope to grasp the full richness and complexity of the identity phenomenon as it manifests in human experience and cultural life.

Results and Discussion.

1. Erikson's Epigenetic Model of Psychosocial Development

Erik H. Erikson developed his theory of psychosocial development through a process of sustained creative engagement with Freudian psychoanalysis that simultaneously extended and transformed its foundational assumptions. Erikson retained the basic conceptual architecture of the psychoanalytic tradition — the structural model of the psyche, the centrality of early childhood experience, the importance of unconscious processes — while fundamentally reorienting the psychoanalytic project by shifting its emphasis from biological drives to social relationships and cultural meaning. This reorientation reflects Erikson's own biography as an artist, a traveller, and an immigrant, an outsider who observed American culture with the detached eye of a European intellectual while simultaneously experiencing the challenges of identity formation in a new cultural context [5].

The epigenetic principle at the heart of Erikson's model is borrowed from embryology, where it refers to the process by which an organism develops through a genetically predetermined sequence in which each organ system emerges at its appointed time and builds upon the structural foundations established by preceding developmental stages [6]. Applied to psychological development, this principle holds that the human personality unfolds according

to a predetermined plan, with each stage presenting characteristic challenges and opportunities for growth. The successful negotiation of each developmental challenge creates the foundation for subsequent development; failures or partial resolutions at earlier stages create vulnerabilities that may manifest in difficulties at later stages, though Erikson consistently emphasised the potential for remediation and growth throughout the lifespan.

The eight stages of Erikson's model span the entire human lifespan, from infancy to old age: (1) Basic Trust vs. Mistrust in infancy, which establishes the foundation for hope and basic confidence in the world; (2) Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt in early childhood, which cultivates the capacity for self-direction and will; (3) Initiative vs. Guilt in the play age, which develops purposefulness and moral conscience; (4) Industry vs. Inferiority in the school age, which builds competence and the capacity for productive work; (5) Identity vs. Role Confusion in adolescence, which is the decisive stage for identity formation proper; (6) Intimacy vs. Isolation in young adulthood, which enables the capacity for love and committed relationships; (7) Generativity vs. Stagnation in middle adulthood, which expresses itself in care for the next generation; and (8) Ego Integrity vs. Despair in late life, which represents the achievement of wisdom and acceptance [7].

The fifth stage — Identity vs. Role Confusion — occupies a pivotal position in Erikson's theoretical scheme and has attracted by far the greatest scholarly attention. Adolescence, as Erikson conceives it, is a period of heightened identity exploration and consolidation during which the young person must integrate the partial identifications formed in earlier stages with emerging capacities, social expectations, cultural values, and available social roles [6]. The outcome of this process — what Erikson called "identity achievement" — is a coherent, stable, and subjectively experienced sense of who one is, what one values, and where one belongs in the social world. The failure to achieve this integration results in identity diffusion or role confusion: an inability to commit to any stable sense of self, to any consistent set of values and goals, or to any definitive social role.

A particularly illuminating concept in Erikson's account of identity formation is the "psychosocial moratorium" — a socially sanctioned period in which the young person is permitted to experiment with different identities, values, and roles without prematurely committing to any definitive self-definition [6]. Different societies and historical periods structure this moratorium differently, providing different institutional frameworks — educational systems, religious institutions, vocational apprenticeships, military service — within which identity experimentation occurs. Erikson's concept of the psychosocial moratorium has proven especially valuable for literary analysis, where extended narratives of

experimentation and eventual commitment — the bildungsroman being the paradigmatic example — can be read as literary representations of this crucial developmental process.

Beyond adolescence, Erikson's model presents identity as a lifelong project that undergoes continuous revision and reorganisation in response to the changing demands of successive life stages. The sense of ego integrity achieved in the final stage represents not a static endpoint but a dynamic synthesis of all that has gone before — an acceptance of one's life as one's own, as the expression of a unique and irreplaceable human existence [7]. This lifespan perspective on identity constitutes one of Erikson's most significant theoretical innovations, anticipating by decades the emphasis on life-course continuity and change that has become central to contemporary developmental psychology.

2. Erikson in Dialogue: Freud and Fromm

The relationship between Erikson's identity theory and Freudian psychoanalysis is one of creative appropriation, critical revision, and theoretical extension. While acknowledging his intellectual debt to Freud, Erikson substantially transformed the psychoanalytic project by redirecting attention from the id and its derivatives to the ego and its integrative functions. Where Freud's model of development is essentially biological — defined by the shifting focus of libidinal energy on different erogenous zones of the body — Erikson's model is fundamentally psychosocial, defined by characteristic conflicts arising from the interaction between the developing individual and the expanding social world. This transformation reflects Erikson's conviction that the ego is not merely a mediator between instinctual demands and social prohibitions but an active, integrating agency with its own developmental trajectory and its own modes of engagement with the social world [5].

The sociocultural dimension of Erikson's revision of Freud is particularly significant. Freud's model of social life presents it primarily as a source of renunciation and frustration — a constraining force that redirects and sublimates biological impulses in the service of civilisation. Erikson's model, by contrast, presents the social world as a positive developmental context that provides the raw materials — identifications, roles, values, ideals, cultural narratives — out of which identity is actively constructed. Society is not merely an obstacle to instinctual gratification but an enabling environment that makes psychological development possible. This positive reconception of the social as constitutive rather than merely constraining opens space for understanding the ways in which cultural traditions and social institutions contribute positively to identity formation [6].

The relationship between Erikson's framework and Erich Fromm's social-character theory reveals both significant convergences and important theoretical differences. Both

thinkers reject the reductive biologism of classical Freudianism and are concerned with the ways in which social structures and cultural contexts shape individual psychology. However, their theoretical emphases and levels of analysis differ in instructive ways. Fromm's concept of "social character" — the core character structure shared by members of a society, shaped by its economic and social organisation [9] — operates at a relatively macro-sociological level, analysing the adaptive relationship between individual psychology and social structure as a whole. Fromm's concern is with the ways in which entire social systems produce characteristic psychological orientations: the authoritarian character in fascist societies, the marketing character in consumer capitalism, the productive orientation in the humane society for which Fromm argues.

Erikson's theory, by contrast, is more attuned to the microprocesses of identity formation — the specific developmental tasks, interpersonal dynamics, and psychological conflicts through which individual identity gradually takes shape over the course of a lifetime. While Fromm analyses the macrostructural determinants of psychological orientations, Erikson attends to the individual developmental processes through which specific identities are forged in relation to specific social contexts, particular relational configurations, and unique biographical circumstances [10]. These differences in level of analysis are complementary rather than contradictory: Fromm's macro-level analysis provides the social-structural context within which Erikson's micro-level developmental processes unfold, while Erikson's developmental perspective illuminates the psychological mechanisms through which social structures are internalised and reproduced at the level of individual identity.

3. Social Identity Theory: Tajfel and Turner

The social psychological approach to identity received its most systematic and influential formulation in the Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, which emerged from European social psychology in the 1970s and 1980s. SIT represents a fundamental departure from Erikson's developmental framework in its theoretical focus and methodological commitments, attending not to the long-term biographical processes through which individual identity gradually crystallises but to the cognitive and motivational processes through which social group memberships contribute to self-definition in specific social contexts [11].

Tajfel defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" [4]. This definition foregrounds several analytically important features of the identity-group relationship: the cognitive

dimension (identity involves knowledge and self-conception); the social dimension (identity is defined in terms of group membership); and the evaluative and affective dimension (group membership carries emotional significance and value implications). The theory proposes that individuals are motivated to maintain and enhance positive social identity, a motivation that drives the cognitive processes of social categorisation, social comparison, and psychological group differentiation.

Turner's Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), developed as an extension and refinement of SIT, provides a more detailed analysis of the cognitive processes through which individuals categorise themselves and others into social groups [12]. SCT proposes that self-categorisation operates at multiple levels of abstraction simultaneously: at the superordinate level, individuals categorise themselves as human beings; at the intermediate level, as members of particular social groups defined by gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, and other socially significant markers; and at the subordinate level, as unique individuals distinguished from all others by particular personal attributes and life histories. The level of self-categorisation that is functionally salient in any given context depends on the perceiver's motivational state, the comparative context, and the accessibility of particular category attributes.

The relationship between Erikson's personal identity and Tajfel and Turner's social identity is theoretically complex and practically significant. Erikson's concept of identity encompasses both a sense of individual uniqueness — the subjective certainty of one's own being — and a sense of solidarity with a community's ideals and history, connecting the individual to a social group across time [6]. Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, by contrast, focus more narrowly on the cognitive and motivational aspects of group membership without the biographical developmental perspective that is so central to Erikson's account. The two approaches may be understood as analytically complementary: Erikson provides the developmental narrative through which identity is gradually formed over a lifetime, while SIT provides the social-cognitive analysis of how specific group memberships function within that broader developmental narrative.

4. Sociological Perspectives on Identity

Classical sociological theory provides indispensable conceptual resources for understanding the social constitution of identity. Émile Durkheim's foundational analyses of social solidarity, collective consciousness, and the conditions of social integration established the core sociological insight that individual identity is always embedded in and substantially constituted by social relationships and collective cultural meanings [13]. For Durkheim, the individual self is not a pre-social given — a natural datum that exists independently of and prior

to society — but a social achievement: a product of the internalisation of social norms, values, and collective representations that are themselves the crystallised residues of collective historical experience. The sense of coherence and continuity that characterises personal identity is therefore deeply dependent on the stability and coherence of the social structures and cultural frameworks within which individuals find themselves embedded.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's landmark work *The Social Construction of Reality* develops a phenomenologically informed sociological account of the processes through which social reality — including the social reality of individual identity — is intersubjectively constructed, institutionally maintained, and culturally transmitted across generations [14]. Drawing on the symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead and the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schutz, Berger and Luckmann argue that identity is a "social product" — not in the reductive sense that it is externally imposed on passively receptive individuals, but in the richer sense that it emerges through processes of ongoing social interaction and is maintained through the continuous social recognition of significant others. Identity, on this account, cannot be established or sustained in isolation; it requires ongoing social ratification to remain real and meaningful.

George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the micro-social processes through which identity is constituted and maintained in the flow of everyday interaction [16]. Mead's foundational distinction between the "I" — the spontaneous, creative, unpredictable dimension of the self — and the "Me" — the social self, constituted by the attitudes of others that the individual has internalised — offers a dynamic processual model of selfhood in which identity is not a fixed entity or stable substance but an ongoing dialectical process. The "conversation" between the spontaneous impulses of the I and the socialised dispositions of the Me constitutes the lived temporal process of self-formation, a process that is never fully complete and always open to transformation. Mead's processual account of selfhood resonates deeply with Erikson's developmental perspective, suggesting important convergences between psychodynamic and interactionist approaches to identity.

Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of social interaction reveals the performative dimensions of identity with striking phenomenological acuity [15]. For Goffman, social life is fundamentally organised around the management of impressions — the strategic orchestration of self-presentations designed to elicit desired responses from social audiences. Identity, on this view, is not simply a property that individuals possess but a performance that must be continuously enacted and ritually ratified in social interaction. The concept of "stigma" — the deeply discrediting attribute that reduces the individual, in the eyes of others, from a whole and

usual person to a tainted and discounted one — reveals the socially contingent and potentially fragile nature of identity, its dependence on social recognition for its viability and sustaining power. The implications of Goffman's dramaturgical perspective for literary analysis are considerable: characters in literary texts are themselves performers whose identity claims are advanced, contested, confirmed, and undermined through the dialogic interactions that constitute literary narrative.

5. Russian Scholarship and Philosophical Perspectives

Russian-language scholarship has made distinctive and substantial contributions to identity theory that both engage with and enrich Western theoretical frameworks in light of the specific historical, political, and cultural contexts of Russian and post-Soviet societies. Leokadia Drobizheva's extensive empirical and theoretical research on ethnic and national identity in contemporary Russia represents a major contribution to the sociology of identity in post-Soviet conditions [19]. Drobizheva's work demonstrates with particular force the ways in which processes of ethnic identity formation and transformation are embedded in specific historical trajectories, institutional structures, and intergroup relational configurations that cannot be adequately captured by universalistic psychological frameworks developed in Western contexts. Her research reveals the complex dynamics of identity negotiation that characterise ethnically diverse societies in which historical memories of solidarity, conflict, and political mobilisation continue to shape contemporary identity processes.

Vladimir Yadov's dispositional theory of personality offers a hierarchically organised framework for understanding the complex internal structure of identity, from concrete situational behavioural dispositions to abstract general value orientations that govern behaviour across diverse situations and social contexts [20]. Yadov's hierarchical model is particularly valuable for understanding the relationship among different levels and dimensions of identity — moment-to-moment situational responses, enduring group-based identifications, and deeply held personal values and life goals — and for analysing the ways in which these levels interact, reinforce each other, and sometimes enter into conflict. The dispositional framework provides an integrative theoretical architecture that synthesises insights from personality psychology, attitude theory, and the sociology of value orientations.

Lidiya Schneider's systematic research on personal and professional identity illuminates the role of professional socialisation and vocational commitment in adult identity formation [21]. Schneider's work demonstrates that professional identity — the sense of oneself as a competent and recognised practitioner of a valued social role — can become a central organising dimension of adult personal identity, providing enduring sources of competence,

social recognition, and existential meaning that contribute substantially to overall psychological well-being and sense of purpose. Her research bridges the gap between developmental psychological perspectives on identity formation and sociological perspectives on the structure and dynamics of professional roles and institutions.

The philosophical dimension of identity receives its most rigorous and systematic treatment in the phenomenological tradition initiated by Edmund Husserl. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, with its methodological emphasis on the careful description of the structures of consciousness as they present themselves to first-person experience, provides philosophical resources for understanding the temporal structure of personal identity — the ways in which retention of the past, primal impression of the present, and protention of the anticipated future are integrated in the living present of conscious experience [17]. The phenomenological reduction — the methodological bracketing or epoché of natural-attitude assumptions about the objective existence of the world — enables a kind of attention to subjective experience that complements and in some respects deepens the third-person perspectives of psychology and sociology, attending to the first-person givenness of identity as a lived experiential reality.

Ivan Ilyin's philosophical engagement with questions of national identity, cultural belonging, and spiritual life contributes perspectives of distinctive importance for understanding identity in cultural and historical context [18]. Ilyin's emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of national consciousness, and his insistence that genuine belonging to a cultural and historical tradition requires not merely cognitive identification but a deeper affective and spiritual commitment, anticipates themes that have become increasingly important in contemporary discussions of cultural identity, belonging, and the relationship between individual self-realisation and collective cultural heritage. His work provides a bridge between Russian philosophical idealism and contemporary discussions of national and cultural identity that is particularly relevant for understanding the construction of cultural identity in literary texts from non-Western traditions.

6. Identity Theory and Comparative Literary Studies

The theoretical perspectives surveyed in this article converge on a set of insights that have significant and generative implications for the practice of comparative literary studies. Literary texts are not passive mirrors of pre-existing social identities; they are active, creative sites of identity construction, negotiation, contestation, and transformation. Characters in literary works undergo identity crises of precisely the kind Erikson describes; they form and dissolve identifications, navigate between competing cultural affiliations and value systems,

and articulate — sometimes for the first time in cultural history — possibilities of selfhood that may not yet be recognised or available in the actual social world. The literary imagination is, in this sense, a laboratory of identity, a cultural space in which the possibilities and limits of human self-realisation are explored with a freedom and depth unavailable in the more constrained medium of social life [2].

Erikson's concept of the psychosocial moratorium has particular analytical power for literary interpretation. Numerous canonical literary narratives — the *bildungsroman* or novel of formation being the most familiar and culturally elaborated example — can be read as extended literary representations of psychosocial moratoria, in which protagonists explore different possibilities of identity, experiment with different social roles and value orientations, and gradually commit to a definitive self-understanding through a dialectical process of exploration, crisis, and resolution. The narrative structure of such texts mirrors the psychological structure of identity formation as Erikson describes it: provisional identification, exploration and experimentation, identity crisis, and eventual commitment. The literary representation of this process both reflects actual developmental dynamics and provides cultural models that readers may appropriate in constructing their own identity narratives.

Social Identity Theory offers additional analytical resources for literary scholars, particularly for the analysis of texts that engage with the dynamics of intergroup relations, racial and ethnic prejudice, and the psychological consequences of social exclusion and stigmatisation. Characters who belong to stigmatised or marginalised social groups — whether defined by ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or other markers of social difference — must negotiate the psychological challenge of maintaining positive self-regard and a coherent sense of self-worth in the face of negative social valuations and discriminatory social practices. The literary representation of these psychological challenges illuminates both the social mechanisms of identity devaluation and the cultural, interpersonal, and psychological resources available for resistance, resilience, and identity affirmation [4].

The contributions of indigenous and postcolonial writers are particularly significant in this context. N. Scott Momaday's exploration of Kiowa identity in his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* and in his autobiographical work *The Way to Rainy Mountain* exemplifies the literary negotiation of indigenous identity in the context of colonial disruption and cultural survival. Momaday's narrative strategies — his integration of oral tradition, historical memory, and personal autobiography — constitute a literary practice of identity reconstruction that both reflects the psychological dynamics described by Erikson and transcends the individual to encompass a collective cultural dimension [23]. The protagonist's

journey in *House Made of Dawn*, marked by identity crisis, cultural dislocation, and the gradual recovery of a meaningful relationship to Kiowa cultural heritage, enacts in literary form the identity dynamics that Erikson's theoretical framework illuminates.

Similarly, T. Kaipbergenov's literary exploration of Karakalpak cultural identity in his novels and essay cycles demonstrates the ways in which a writer deeply rooted in a specific ethnic and cultural tradition can use literary narrative to construct, affirm, and transmit cultural identity under conditions of cultural and political pressure. Kaipbergenov's integration of folklore, mythology, oral narrative, and historical memory in his works constitutes a literary practice of identity construction that connects individual protagonists to the collective historical experience of the Karakalpak people. The theoretical frameworks of Erikson, Tajfel and Turner, Berger and Luckmann, and the Russian scholars discussed above provide complementary analytical perspectives for understanding the identity dynamics at work in Kaipbergenov's literary project and illuminating its significance in the context of postcolonial cultural history.

The integration of psychodynamic, social psychological, sociological, philosophical, and literary perspectives in the analysis of identity in multicultural literature opens productive new avenues for research in comparative literary studies. Such interdisciplinary analysis enables us to understand literary texts as complex cultural artefacts that both register and participate in the ongoing processes of identity formation and transformation through which individuals and communities make themselves at home in the world. By bringing the rich theoretical resources of identity scholarship into dialogue with close literary reading, comparative literary studies can contribute significantly to our understanding of the ways in which literature participates in the perpetual human project of self-creation.

Conclusion. This article has undertaken a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of Erikson's theory of identity, situating it within a rich and multidimensional theoretical landscape that encompasses developmental psychology, social psychology, classical sociology, phenomenological philosophy, and Russian-language scholarship on identity. Several substantive conclusions emerge from this analysis, each with implications for the practice of comparative literary studies.

Erikson's epigenetic model of psychosocial development remains one of the most generative and enduring frameworks available for understanding identity as a developmental process unfolding across the entire human lifespan. Its fundamental insights — the essentially psychosocial character of identity formation, the importance of the interplay between individual developmental needs and social context, the concept of the psychosocial moratorium

as a developmentally necessary period of identity exploration, and the centrality of commitment to a coherent set of values and social roles — continue to inform productive research across a wide range of academic disciplines and to provide valuable analytical tools for literary scholars concerned with the representation of identity in literary texts.

The comparative analysis of Erikson's framework with related theoretical perspectives has revealed both the distinctive contributions of each approach and the significant theoretical complementarities among them. Freud's psychoanalytic model provides indispensable insights into the role of unconscious processes and early relational experience in identity formation; Fromm's social character theory illuminates the macro-structural determinants of psychological orientations; Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory reveals the cognitive and motivational dynamics of group-based identity; and the sociological frameworks of Durkheim, Berger and Luckmann, Mead, and Goffman demonstrate the constitutive role of social interaction, institutional structure, and cultural meaning in identity construction. A comprehensive understanding of identity requires the integration of these multiple perspectives into a coherent interdisciplinary framework.

The contributions of Russian-language scholars — Drobizheva, Yadov, and Schneider — demonstrate that identity theory is not a purely Western intellectual enterprise but an international scholarly conversation enriched by diverse cultural perspectives. Their work illuminates dimensions of identity formation that may be underemphasised in frameworks developed primarily in Western academic contexts, including the dynamics of ethnic identity in multiethnic post-Soviet societies, the hierarchical organisation of dispositional structures, and the centrality of professional identity in adult development.

The application of these interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives to comparative literary studies opens productive new avenues for research, particularly in the analysis of indigenous, postcolonial, and multicultural literary traditions. The works of N. Scott Momaday and T. Kaipbergenov demonstrate the literary possibilities of identity construction under conditions of cultural dislocation, colonial pressure, and the urgent necessity of cultural survival. The theoretical resources surveyed in this article provide powerful analytical tools for understanding the complex identity dynamics at work in such literary texts and for situating them within the broader context of global literary modernity.

In conclusion, the interdisciplinary study of identity — bringing together psychology, social psychology, sociology, philosophy, Russian-language scholarship, and comparative literary theory — constitutes one of the most productive and intellectually vital areas of contemporary humanistic inquiry. The theoretical perspectives surveyed and synthesised in

this article provide both a map of the current state of identity scholarship and a foundation for its continued development in directions that promise to enrich our understanding of literature, culture, and human experience.

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