IDENTITY AND DEATH: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

A model based on Erikson's psychosocial approach was proposed for the development of an existential domain of identity - conceptualized as a component of ideological identity, and operationalized as a set of death attitudes corresponding to general identity themes. Paralleling Marcia's (1966) Identity Status constructs of exploration and commitment, these death attitudes reflected death contemplation and acceptance in a variety of contexts. A sample of 149 university undergraduates completed a questionnaire consisting of a number of scales representing these death attitudes, as well as a measure of identity status. A MANCOVA (controlling for religious involvement, bereavement, and age) indicated that individuals high in ideological commitment had significantly higher levels of certain types of death acceptance, and were more likely to view death as purposeful. A MANCOVA examining the effects of ideological exploration on variables associated with death contemplation was also conducted, but the multivariate effect was not significant. An exploratory ideological identity status MANCOVA indicated, however, that achievers may have a significantly more personal conception of death than diffusions. These results suggest that amongst young adult students, death ideology is relevant at least as a socially constructed (or foreclosed) form of identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Identity and Death - A Literature Review

The topic of identity and death has received little empirical attention in the social sciences. Research explicitly exploring the relationship between these two terms has almost exclusively focussed on the effects of identity on death anxiety. The meaning of death in the context of identity has generally been ignored. The objective of the present study is to explore a more integrated view of identity and death than what has previously appeared in the literature - to examine the formation of death attitudes as part of the process of identity development.

Death and identity are relative terms - one cannot conceive of one without some understanding of the other. In the process of affirming one's existence, one is confronted with the idea of one's potential nonexistence. The dimensions one utilizes to define self are thus also relevant to death. Death challenges one's view of self, and must to some degree be integrated with this view, if one is to create a sense of life as ultimately meaningful. Integration means the extension of one's conceptions of self associated with the development of identity - one's sense of continuity, definition, openness, competence, connectedness, evolution, and meaningfulness - to the content domain of death. Because these self-definitions emerge in different contexts (e.g.

connectedness develops in the context of relationships), and are coloured by such contexts, it seems reasonable to propose that death can - to the extent that it is integrated with self - be similarly contextualized.

The focus of the present study is this process of death's integration into identity, and the different forms in which such integration can manifest. This is examined from the perspective of Eriksonian psychosocial theory, informed by the approaches of existential psychology and constructivism. These theories represent the three general theoretical frameworks from which this topic has most often been explored.

The review of literature will be subdivided into three sections representing these theoretical categories. Each section will present a summary of the theory's approach to both identity and death, and a review of empirical studies done from such a perspective. After this, the limitations of these approaches will be discussed, and a new conceptual framework proposed. First, however, general definitions of the terms identity and death will be presented.

Definitions

Identity has been defined from a number of different perspectives, and has quite a range of definitions. Graafsma and Bosma (1994, p. 176) list three different definitions: 1) "an individual's unique combination of personal, generally inalienable

data, like name, age sex and profession, by which that individual is characterized and distinguishable from any other person" (also applies to groups); 2) "a person's unique personality structure...[and] the images others have of that personality structure"; and 3) in a subjective, phenomenal sense, an "individual's awareness of personal sameness, continuity, and uniqueness". The present study, which examines the relationship between an individual's subjective experience of identity and his or her personal constructs and attitudes toward death, particularly emphasizes this third definition, although Erikson's structural definition is employed as an organizing principle.

Death attitudes can consist of beliefs, affect, and behaviours: three components that are not always related (Durlak, 1994). The simplest death variables explored in this study are constructs: they represent particular beliefs and/or affects. Death attitudes are often more complex than this.

The present study does not emphasize any one definition of death. It can mean quite different things to different people: ranging from shared meanings to highly idiosyncratic personal ones.

Existentialist/Humanist Theories

Existential and humanistic approaches in psychology both emerged out of existential philosophical thought - particularly out of the philosophical writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche,

Heidegger, Sartre, Buber, Merleau-Ponty, Jaspers, and Camus (Corey, 1991). Key existential psychologists have been Victor Frankl (e.g. 1963, 1978), May (e.g.1953), and Yalom (e.g. May & Yalom, 1989); prominent humanists include Carl Rogers (e.g. 1959) and Abraham Maslow (e.g. 1968). Both approaches place particular emphasis on freedom, autonomy, self-awareness, authenticity, personal responsibility and the search for meaning. Both, furthermore, are phenomenologically oriented: they focus on the subjective experiences of the individual, rather than trying to "reduce them to more basic drives or defenses, as in psychoanalysis, or to mere epiphenomena, as in behaviourism" (Shaffer, 1978, p.16). Whereas existentialists generally paint a less reassuring picture of human existence - emphasizing its intrinsic lack of meaning, however, humanists, on the other hand, have a more optimistic orientation, proposing that humans have "within us a nature and potential that we can actualize and through which we can find meaning" (Corey, p.206).

From the existential/humanist perspective, each of the above-mentioned themes are relevant to identity. Self-awareness involves being open to one's experience of the world. Heidegger (1962) used the term "being-in-the-world" to imply there is really no dichotomy between self and experience; that by viewing the self as less real than the 'outside world', one turns it into "an object in a world of objects" (Shaffer, 1978, p. 24) - something that constantly needs to be validated. Living authentically means not viewing the self as less real (Shaffer, 1978) - not limiting one's

view of self to a reflection of the perceptions and expectations of others. A central tenet of existential thought is that identity is not fixed and that in each moment one has the freedom and personal responsibility to discover or to create who one is. For humanists, this is the process of "actualization of the potential true self" (Graafsma & Bosma, 1994, p.176). For existentialists, this involves the creation of meaning through one's commitment to life (Corey, 1991).

Perhaps more than any other approach to identity, existentialism/humanism emphasizes the role of death awareness in the construction of self. One cannot be self-aware without having a corresponding awareness of one's mortality. Such an awareness, as long as it does not turn into an unhealthy preoccupation, can enable one to appreciate the value of the present moment (Corey, 1991), and, consequently, one's responsibility in the creation of self. According to Rollo May, "the price for denying death is undefined anxiety, self-alienation" (May, 1961, cited in Corey, 1991, p.184). Such self-defeating, undefined anxiety is to be distinguished from existential anxiety, which is viewed in this perspective as a normal part of everyday life - a consequence of being aware of one's freedom and responsibility (Corey, 1991).

From a humanist perspective, awareness and acceptance of death are necessary prerequisites for self-actualization. According to Maslow, one cannot have an actualized sense of self if one does not have an openness of perception (i.e. viewing the world idiographically) - and a fear of death distorts such a

perception (Maslow, 1968). From the perspective of Carl Rogers (1959), openness is a function of a lack of conditions of worth. Actualized individuals accept themselves as they are, and, consequently, have no need to constrict their view of reality as a form of defense. As existence itself can be considered a condition of worth (Tomer, 1994), the loosening of such a condition through death acceptance can play an important role in the actualization of self.

Most empirical studies from an existential/humanistic perspective on identity and death have focussed on the relationship between self-actualization or sense of purpose and fear of death. These studies represent a variety of different existential viewpoints. Neimeyer and Chapman (1980), for example, considering Sartre's claim that the most definite identity is that which occurs at the moment of death--when one becomes all that one was--hypothesized that individuals who had accomplished more of their ideals (as reflected by smaller actual-ideal self discrepancy scores) would evidence lower levels of fear. The hypothesis was in fact confirmed. Other studies utilizing measures of self-actualization based on the writings of Maslow (e.g. Vargo & Batsel, 1981; Lester & Colvin, 1977), or measures of meaningfulness, based on Frankl's contentions (Aronow, Rauchway, Peler, & DeVitto, 1980; Bolt, 1978, Durlak, 1972), and Lifton's conceptualization of symbolic immortality (Drolet, 1990) have had similar results. In fact, self-actualization has consistently been reported in the literature to be negatively correlated with fear

of death (Neimeyer, 1988).

Another theme from existential psychology that has been explored in thanatological research is that of existential anxiety. A study by Westman (1992) focussed on relationships between existential anxiety and conceptualizations of self and death. Her construct of existential anxiety was based upon May and Yalom's (1989) contention that "each individual is anxious about death, freedom of choice, personal isolation, and meaning of life" (p. 1064). The results, based on a sample of 82 students, indicated a moderately strong relationship between identity confusion (a construct based on Erikson's conceptualization of identity) and existential anxiety, and also between the latter and death denial and conceptualizations of death as cold. Existential anxiety was also found to be negatively related to an extended sense of self (a sense of empathic connection with others). Because of the lack of information provided on the reliability and validity of the instruments used in this study, however, these results need to be interpreted with caution.

Constructivist Theories

Constructivism can be traced back to Kant's response to Hume's skepticism, in the Critique of Pure Reason (Widdershoven, 1994). According to Kant,

"the possibility of knowledge is grounded in the activity of consciousness. Our knowledge of the physical world does not stem directly from the world itself, it is structured by our concepts of time, space, and

causality. We order and understand reality through consciousness" (Widdershoven, 1994, p.104)

Constructivists, echoing Kant's transcendentalist viewpoint, do not believe that objective reality can be directly known. Consequently, they reject the naive realism of positivism. From the constructivist perspective of identity formation, identity is thus not something that is discovered - it is something that is constantly being created (Berzonsky, 1993). Constructivist theories focus on this process of creation: specifically, the structure and/or content of one's constructions of self. Identity theories from this perspective can be differentiated along a number of different dimensions: including way of knowing, emphasis on development, idealism versus realism, and the extent to which construction is viewed as a personal or social phenomenon.

One way of knowing the world is through paradigms. Two theories reflecting a paradigmatic way of knowing (knowing through classification) include Kelley's (1955) Personal Constructs Theory and Berzonsky's (1993) identity style approach. Both of these theories employ the metaphor of the individual as scientist to illustrate the manner in which one construes the world. George Kelley's theory, for example, proposes that individuals utilize a system of hierarchically arranged bipolar constructs to organize and make sense of their world, and to anticipate and control future events. The most important constructs, or core constructs, enable an individual to maintain a sense of identity. Berzonsky's approach utilizes the notion of the individual as self-theorist. A self-theory, according to Berzonsky, serves as a frame within

which experience is interpreted, decisions are made, and problems solved (Berzonsky, 1993).

Constructivist approaches to identity also explore other ways of knowing. Narrative knowing, for example, involves the structuring of events into a temporal gestalt or story (Polkinghorne, 1996). An example of a narrative approach to identity is McAdams' (1990) life story perspective. A constructivist approach focussing on women's particular style of self-construction is the Self-in-Relation theory (Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1985). Self-in-relation theory emphasizes relational or interpersonal ways of knowing self - viewing self in the context of one's relationships - and knowing through empathic identification. (Belenky et al., 1986).

A number of developmental theories have also emerged out of a constructivist paradigm. Of particular note are contributions by Kegan (1982) and Loevinger (1976) - theories that focus on identity as a "balance between that which is taken to be self and that considered to be other" (Kroger, 1989, p.6). Another important contribution, focussing on diachronic aspects of identity, was made by Chandler et al. (1987). This approach explored identity development as a series of increasingly sophisticated arguments for one's temporal existence. Lastly, in this catalogue of theories, it is important to acknowledge postmodern approaches to identity (e.g. Gergen, 1991). What is unique to these approaches is their emphasis on the social construction of identity, and their rejection of the existence of

a global self. Postmodern theories thus represent somewhat of an unravelling of traditional theories of identity.

A constructivist approach to death attitudes emphasizes the unity and diversity of one's conceptions of death. From a constructivist perspective, there is no single, correct view of death - the many ways it is interpreted "can be seen as equally valid on the part of individuals and cultures to infuse death with significance and to develop a construction of death that supports and extends people's construction of their lives" (Neimeyer, 1994b, p. 266). The theory that has generated the most research on death attitudes is George Kelley's (1955) theory of Personal Constructs - particularly, this theory's definition of threat. When an individual encounters information that is incompatible with his or her personal construct system, he or she will, to a greater or lesser degree, experience threat. In the context of Kelley's theory, threat refers to the extent to which a system must change in order to accommodate such information. A greater degree of threat implies a need for a more fundamental systemic change - a change in the way we construe who we are. A prime example of something that can threaten one's construction of self is death. A methodology devised to assess the extent of such threat is the Threat Index. The Threat Index (Krieger, Epting, and Leitner, 1974; Krieger, Epting, & Hays, 1979) is a modified version of Kelley's Rep Test (1955), and is probably the most successful application of a theory of personality to the study of death attitudes. First developed by Krieger, Epting, and Leitner

(1974) as an interview, then modified by Krieger, Epting, and Hays (1979) as a standardized, self-administered scale, the Threat Index is a measure of the congruence between self and death constructs in a particular point in time. It is the most validated death orientation measure; and the standardized form was the second most utilized measure of death orientations in the eighties (Neimeyer, 1994a). It has also formed the basis for the development of the more sophisticated Death Attitude Repertory Test (Neimeyer, Bagley, and Moore, 1986), which, in addition to threat, is also capable of assessing the structure and content of one's constructs of death.

The concept of death threat is particularly relevant to identity because the inverse of threat can be conceived as integration (Wood & Robinson, 1982), a construct reflecting the similarity of one's constructions of death with those of the self. Integration implies the incorporation of death into identity.

To the extent that the Threat Index and related measures represent death integration, these measures can be utilized as indexes of an existential component of identity - or one's sense of self in relation to death. While the many studies using the Threat Index may not have been intended to represent identity research, many can be considered informative from such a perspective.

To the extent that the Threat Index is reflective of an existential identity domain, there is a substantial amount of research on the correlates of such a domain. Integration (Threat)

has been linked with a number of different variables: traditional religious beliefs (Tobacyk, 1984), unambivalent religious beliefs (Ingram and Leitner, 1989); experience with planning one's funeral (Rainey & Epting, 1977); experiences with illness (Hendon and Epting, 1989) near-death experiences (Greyson, 1994), bereavement (Meshot and Leitner, 1994); self-actualization (Neimeyer, 1988); and gender differences (in terms of content only) (Holcomb et al, 1993). There have also been many studies showing a positive correlation between threat and fear (Neimeyer, 1994a).

Another example of a study on identity and death with a constructivist approach was conducted by Ball and Chandler (1989). This study addresses the diachronic aspect of identity development. A prerequisite of diachronic unity is the ability to justify one's existence over time. Chandler et al. (1987) have proposed a developmental sequence of five increasingly adequate arguments that individuals make in favour of self-continuity. This sequence of arguments has been empirically shown to be correlated with age (Ball & Chandler, 1989). The first three of these are classified as structural arguments: they rest on the assumption that some structural aspect of self remains constant over time. The fourth and fifth arguments, on the other hand, are referred to as functional arguments: they rest on the assumption that succeeding manifestations of self can be functionally linked together in a causal or narrative framework (Ball & Chandler, 1989). One way that this sequence could possibly go wrong, according to the authors, would be for individuals too mature to

accept one argument, but not yet ready for the successive one. Such individuals may be unable to find any grounds upon which they can justify their continued existence, and, consequently, may be unable to orient themselves toward the future, and be more prone to self-destructive behaviour. In their study, Ball and Chandler found that this predicament characterized the majority of individuals in a group of high risk suicidal adolescents (n=13) - a result not shared by a group of low risk adolescent patients (n=16) or a group of matched controls (n=29).

While this study does not assess death attitudes directly, it is supportive of the contention that identity is associated with view of death. When life is characterized by hopelessness associated with identity diffusion, the differentiation between existence and nonexistence is diminished.

Another constructivist approach to identity and death was conducted by Kegan (1982). This study, addressing the themes of existential certainty and separation/connection, was based on Kegan's theory of the evolution of self, the main focus of which is subject-object balance. Each of the theory's proposed stages involves a different type of balance between that which one is (subject) and that which one has (object). As one moves from the third stage of interpersonal balance to the fourth stage of institutional balance, for example, one gradually realizes that one is not one's relationships, and can, therefore, experience a sense of authorship and identity. The periods of transition between stages - when one has lost one's sense of subject-object

balance - however, can be quite difficult. Because they are characterized by a loss of self, these phases can, according to Kegan, be associated with feelings of depression and confusion. In his study examining this link, he proposed that because each transitional stage represents a period of existential uncertainty characterized by a particular type of self-loss, depressed individuals would experience qualitatively different types of depression depending on depending on which stage they were in. Although this was only a pilot study, the results were quite intriguing.

Based on interviews with 39 patients in a psychiatric ward, Kegan and his colleagues identified three qualitatively different types of depression: self-sacrificing (relating to a loss of satisfaction of one's needs), dependent (relating to a lost or threatened relationship), and self-evaluative (relating to a loss of self-authorship). In a blind examination of the subjects' stage of meaning-construction, it was determined that there was a strong association between stage and type of depression.

Although this study does not directly examine death attitudes, it is informative because one's orientation (i.e. type of depression) toward a loss of self can be considered as a type of death orientation. Such a study can give one clues as to how different groups of people might conceptualize death. Individuals who define themselves in the context of their relationships, for example, might construct death in a significantly different way than those who define themselves based on their occupation.

Eriksonian Psychosocial Theory

Erikson's developmental theory is firmly embedded in Freudian psychoanalytic theory. His approach, however, reflects a difference in emphasis. Whereas Freud's placed more emphasis on the id and intrapsychic conflict; Erikson placed more on the ego and the relationship between the individual and society. He viewed the ego as fundamentally autonomous and conflict-free. Rather than deriving its energy from the id, and constantly playing a mediating role between the id and the world, the ego's main role, he believed, is to "unify one's experience [between self and the world] in an adaptive manner" (Erikson, 1963, p.15). His theory focusses on the evolution of the ego over the lifespan - through eight age-graded stages spanning from infancy to old age - as the individual adapts to new roles determined by both biological development and age-graded social norms.

Erikson defines identity within the context of his theory of ego development. Ego identity is the "awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (Erikson, 1980, p. 22). This definition of identity takes into account "the consequences identity has for the overall balance of psychodynamic processes" (Marcia, 1993a, p. 3). In Erikson's theory, identity development is based on a process of synthesizing identifications from previous psychosocial stages toward the further development

of the ego.

Erikson viewed identity formation as the central issue of adolescence. In adolescence, the interaction between biological and cognitive attainments and social expectations creates an optimal situation in which to develop a sense of identity. It is in this phase of transition to adulthood, as one individuates from one's parents, that it becomes necessary from the standpoint of healthy ego development for one to determine one's own roles in life, and to make a commitment to follow them. According to Erikson, it is this sense of commitment that is the ego strength that emerges out of the struggle for identity.

While identity is the dominant psychosocial issue during adolescence, it does, as suggested above, play a role in each of the eight stages in Erikson's scheme. In the stages preceding adolescence, for example, it manifests in the forms of introjection (the incorporation of the mother's image) during infancy, individuation during toddlerhood, and identification during the preschool and elementary school phases of childhood. In the stages following adolescence, identity exists as a foundation for roles that require an extension of self to others. While identity manifests in different forms in each stage of the lifespan, it is also the case that the central issues of each stage colour the psychosocial crisis of identity during adolescence.

In addition to this structural definition of identity, Erikson also explores its phenomenological aspect - the sense of

core self and meaningful existence associated with having an identity (Marcia, 1993a). He does this particularly in his psychobiographies of prominent historical figures such as Martin Luther (Erikson, 1958), and also through the narratives of those who have experienced a loss of identity (e.g. Erikson, 1970). In these works, Erikson appears to take a more hermeneutical approach to identity (Grotevant, 1993). From this perspective, identity is not merely a product - it is something that is actively and continually constructed, a process of selectively owning our experience.

The most successful and extensively validated attempt to operationalize Erikson's theory of identity formation has been Marcia's identity status approach (1966, 1980). This approach examines the behavioural aspect of identity in terms of exploration and commitment to vocational roles and ideological beliefs - two domains that Erikson cited as being of paramount importance to adolescents' identity formation. In response to criticism that these domains are more relevant to male identity development, Marcia (1993) and a number of other identity status researchers (e.g. Grotevant, Thorbecke, and Meyer, 1982; Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989) have also included domains focussing on interpersonal issues that are more relevant to women. Marcia's identity status model identifies four possible statuses an individual can occupy, based on the interaction of the two independent underlying dimensions of the behavioural aspect of identity - commitment and exploration (or crisis). The dimension

of exploration refers to the extent (high or low) that one has actively questioned one's beliefs and roles in life. The dimension of commitment refers to the extent (high or low) to which one has made a definite decision to pursue particular life paths.

Individuals who score low on both dimensions are classified according to Marcia's typology as diffusions. These individuals have not committed themselves to any particular lifepath, and are not in the process of searching to find one. Individuals who score high in commitment but low in exploration are classified as foreclosures. These individuals have made commitments based on the example or expectation of others (usually parents) without having endured a process of personal exploration. Individuals who score high on exploration, but low on commitment are classified as moratoriums. Such individuals are engaged in a process of actively searching for their roles in life, but are not ready to commit themselves to any particular path. The final status, identity achievement, is conferred upon individuals who score high on both dimensions. These individuals have engaged in a process of self-exploration, and have resolved the questions that have emerged in this process. Consequently, they have been able to make firm commitments to particular ideological, interpersonal, and/or vocational lifepaths.

In Erikson's theory, death becomes an important factor in the lives of individuals in the final two stages of the lifespan - midlife and old age. This does not mean that it is irrelevant in earlier stages, however. As was stated previously, all eight of

Erikson's stages interact with each other - issues relevant to later stages can emerge in more rudimentary forms during earlier stages. This is particularly likely to be the case for individuals who for whatever reason have experiences that are more normative for older age groups.

Erikson (1982) suggests that a deep realization that one will not live forever is a central issue of midlife and underlies the psychosocial crisis of generativity versus stagnation. The recognition that one is mortal can lead to an expansion of one's sense of self: one can transcend one's mortality by changing one's focus from self to others. This is not an overnight process, however. It involves a struggle between impulses that are oriented towards retaining youth and denying death (which, if indulged in, can lead to self-absorption and stagnation) and those that lead to growth. The adaptive strength of this particular crisis is care - which can manifest in the rearing of children or through other means, such as in one's work.

In the last stage of Erikson's theory, integrity versus despair, the acceptance of one's past life and the reality of death becomes a central developmental task. In the face of inevitable death, one must attempt to make sense of one's life, through the process of life review, and to evaluate one's contribution to humanity. This requires an even more expanded sense of self: in order to understand one's own life, one needs an understanding of the bigger picture. Through an "identification with mankind" (Bigner, 1994, p.86), a sense of integrity emerges.

This sense of integrity is balanced by the despair one experiences as a result of one's regrets. The emerging strength from this dialectic is wisdom, which Erikson defines as "detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself" (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986, p. 37). He also refers to wisdom as "truly involved disinvolvement" (p.51) - a state of being characterized by selflessness and openness.

Sterling and van Horn's (1989) study on identity and death anxiety suggests two ways from an Eriksonian perspective in which identity relates to death. One involves the interstage interaction between the adolescent stage of identity versus identity confusion and that of integrity versus despair. This interaction, representing the ideological aspect of identity, is relevant to death attitudes because the issue of death is significant in questions of life's purpose. The other way - more directly relevant to their analysis - in which identity is related to death attitudes is its function of protecting "the individual from experiences which might result in a sense of discontinuity" (p.321). The authors reasoned from this claim that because death is a threat to continuity, individuals lacking a sense of identity might feel a greater sense of threat. Consistent with this hypothesis, they found that moratoriums, who lack a sense of commitment (and, unlike diffusions, are more concerned about resolving questions of identity) had significantly higher scores on Templer's Death Anxiety Scale, in a sample of 63 undergraduate male respondents.

While identity development is, from an Eriksonian perspective, the central issue for adolescents, it is relevant for adults as well. Elderly individuals also experience identity issues - although these issues are experienced in the context of the psychosocial crisis of integrity versus despair. In this stage, the primary tasks are to determine the significance of one's life, and to come to terms with one's death. The extent to which an older individual has a sense of identity - particularly in terms of historical continuity - has definite implications for the development of his or her sense of integrity, and, consequently, his or her ability to face death. To successfully resolve the crisis of this stage, an individual needs to have a sense of acceptance of his or her life - the "acceptance of one's own and only life cycle and of the people who have become significant to it as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions" (Erikson, 1980, p.104).

Older individuals who are lacking in identity development, and, consequently, a sense of integrity, should theoretically, therefore, have greater difficulty facing death. This hypothesis has been supported in the results of two studies. The first (Woods & Witte, 1981) of these to appear in a published journal revealed a negative relationship between identity, as assessed by the Ego Identity Scale, and global death anxiety, as assessed by the Death Anxiety Scale - this relationship, however, was only supported for men. A more complex, multidimensional approach to this question was recently undertaken by Egli, Peake, Borduin, and Fleck (1994).

This study, with a sample of 200 older people (mean age = 71.5), assessed the relationship between identity status and a number of different views and attitudes of death. Using Protter's (1973) Identity Status Grid Measure and Spilka et al.'s (1977) Death Perspective Scale, these researchers were able to find some significant differences between the identity statuses in death attitudes. Diffusions were found, for example, to have significantly higher scores than the other statuses on the subscales Sensitivity to Death, Pain and Loneliness-Failure, and Fear of the Dying Process - reflecting views, as the authors suggest, similar to Erikson's descriptions of despair. The high sensitivity scores suggest, according to the authors "both a grieving of the past (Eriksonian "time-is-too-short" syndrome) and a hypervigilant quality to the future" (p. 11). Foreclosures also showed some degree of difficulty with the thought of death: they scored significantly higher than other statuses on the subscale Forsaking Dependents-Guilt. This finding is consistent with the fact that foreclosures place more value on the authoritative role of parenthood than do other statuses. They might have an unrealistic view of their children's dependence on them, and, consequently, feel a sense of guilt in response to the thought of being unable to enact this role. In contrast to the results of Sterling and van Horn's study, moratoriums were not discriminated from foreclosures or diffusions on the measure of death anxiety used in this study. They did, however, evidence significantly higher scores on the subscales Indifference and Unknown. The

result involving the Indifference subscale is not consistent with the results of Sterling and van Horn's (1989) study - perhaps a consequence of the older sample of respondents. Lastly, achievers seemed the status most inclined in this study to view death in positive terms: they had the highest scores, significantly different from the other statuses, on the subscales Lack of Fear of Death and Afterlife of Reward-Courage.

Limitations

There are three general limitations of the research discussed in this section: its narrowness of scope; its use of overly global or vague constructs; and its theoretical shortcomings. Each of these limitations will be briefly addressed in this section.

Research that has examined the relationship between aspects of identity and death attitudes has almost exclusively focussed on the death attitude of fear rather than the attitudes of acceptance (which may be independent of fear (Ray & Najman, 1974; Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994)), or death contemplation - constructs that more directly relate, at least from the perspective of identity status research, to the processes of identity formation. Most research on identity and death has also not considered the diversity of meanings that death has for individuals, or the structural aspects of such meanings. The findings that people have complex responses to death (Neimeyer, 1994a) have not seemed to influence exploration of the complexities of the relationships

between these two terms. How, for example, does identity relate to different constructions of death - those reflecting temporal, personal, interpersonal, generative, agentic, and ideological perspectives on death? How, moreover, is a sense of identity related to the way death meanings are cognitively structured? Such questions have been given very little attention in the literature.

A serious limitation of many studies discussed in this paper has been the use of constructs that either lack validity or are too global to be very meaningful in the context of research on identity and death. This particularly includes constructs of self-actualization, integration, death anxiety, and global identity status. The bulk of the literature in the review involves studies utilizing measures of self-actualization and integration - both of which are questionable constructs of identity. As a concept, self-actualization has, for example, been criticized for vagueness (Phares, 1987; Tomer, 1994), and for having a prescriptive, moralistic quality, and emphasizing subjective experience over observable behaviour (Tomer, 1994). Integration, in most cases actually assessed as threat, has several limitations as a measure of existential identity. Because, first of all, the Threat Index assesses constructs of self and death independently, it can at best only be considered an indirect measure of integration. This measure focusses on the similarity of the constructs used to construct self and death, rather than on the specific conceptual connections between these two terms. Secondly, this measure does not distinguish between conferred (acquired through blind

acceptance of parental or normative views) and constructed (acquired through the process of contemplation) integration. In other words, as a measure of existential identity status, the Threat Index could not by itself distinguish between foreclosed and achieved statuses within this domain. Another problem with using the Threat Index to assess integration is its lack of a temporal dimension. The Threat Index assesses ratings of death constructs based on the hypothetical notion that death is to occur right now. Such an operationalization does not account for diachronic identity - one's sense of self existing in time. Although one may not have a high level of death acceptance assuming that death were to occur in the present moment, one still may accept death as one's ultimate fate.

Death anxiety (or fear of death) is another often vaguely defined construct. A number of commonly utilized death anxiety scales do not clearly and concisely define this term (Neimeyer, 1994; Durlak, 1982). Lacking theoretical grounding (Tomer, 1994), some scales (e.g. Templer's Death Anxiety Scale, Boyar's Fear of death scale) have included items that have assessed different types of anxiety (conscious fear, avoidance, and denial) as well as different objects of that anxiety (e.g. burial, isolation, etc.) in the same measure - and yet these items are nevertheless summed into one global score. Regarding Templer's Death Anxiety Scale, this has been a practice that has continued even though a number of studies have found different factors (Lonetto & Templer, 1986; Durlak, 1982).

Global identity status has also been a somewhat nebulous construct in the context of studies on identity and death. Its use obscures the effects (on death attitudes) of the underlying constructs and various domains of identity - some of which (e.g. religious identity) would be more expected to be associated with death attitudes than others. The three Eriksonian studies (Woods & Witte, 1981; Sterling & van Horn, 1989; Egli et al., 1994) discussed above did not explore the underlying constructs or local domains of identity. They also - along with the studies on self-actualization and death anxiety - have failed to control for certain demographic and other variables associated with death attitudes that could covary with identity. Because of the multidimensional nature of both identity and death, more concise approaches need to be developed that account for the constituent components of identity and death attitude constructs. Studies on identity status and death have lacked a clear conceptual framework from which specific predictions could be derived. Instead they have tended to rely on post hoc observations - a practice evidently not uncommon in thanatological research (Neimeyer, 1994b).

Lastly, there are a number of theoretical shortcomings associated with each of the three general approaches to the study of identity and death presented in this review. Existential theory, for example, integrates identity and death but its concepts are often too vague, global (Corey, 1991; Ewen, 1993), romanticized, and religious (Phares, 1987) to be operationalized

for scientific investigation. This pertains to both self-actualization (as discussed above) and death attitudes. Westman (1985) has attempted to operationalize concepts such as existential anxiety and denial, but because such attitudes are not necessarily available to conscious awareness or distinguishable from other attitudes, and that no attempt has been made to validate these measures, their validity is questionable. Existential conceptions of death anxiety have also tended to ignore the multidimensional nature of this construct. May's discussion of death anxiety, for example, only focusses on the fear of nonbeing (Ewen, 1993). With the exception of the Death Attitude Profile (Gesser, Wong, & Reker, 1987; Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994) - which is only loosely based on existential theory - it appears that no other reliable and adequately validated measures of death attitudes based on an existential perspective have been devised.

Regarding constructivist theories: the only one that has been explicitly applied to the subject of death attitudes has been Kelley's theory of Personal Constructs. Unfortunately, however, this approach has several shortcomings: it has not inspired any methodology for the assessment of identity in a general sense; it does not adequately address personal history and development (Phares, 1987); and it does not give enough attention to emotional states (Pervin, 1975; Bruner, 1956; Ewen, 1993). With respect to this last point, women tend to have a more emotional reaction to death (Holcomb et al., 1993) and display more fear than men

(Neimeyer, 1994a; Kastenbaum, 1990) - a gender difference not captured by the Threat Index (Neimeyer, 1994a).

Regarding Erikson's theory: there are a number of theoretical issues that need to be addressed. One is its underlying teleological assumption, the principle of epigenesis - a higher-order assumption that lacks empirical support (Ewen, 1993), and is questionable considering that adolescent moratorium does not appear to be universally applicable (Kroger, 1989). Another issue is its reliance on individuals' adaptation to culturally defined norms and roles as an index of development (Ewen, 1993). This is particularly relevant here because of western culture's tendency toward denial of death (e.g. Becker, 1973): individuals who do not conform to this norm may be labelled as identity diffused by those who espouse Erikson's perspective. Lastly, this theory does not specifically explore death as an aspect of identity except in the context of old age, and, consequently, has offered little basis for the development of a more generally applicable approach to the assessment of death attitudes.

Because there is no theoretical perspective that deals with both identity and death in a comprehensive manner, a more integrated approach is thus needed to support the creation of a conceptual framework that can generate a range of predictions on the relationship of these two concepts.

Existential Identity - A Proposed Model

Theoretical Perspective

The approach of this study was based on Erikson's Psychosocial theory (e.g. Erikson, 1980), but was also significantly informed by the constructivist approach of Kelley's (1955) Personal Constructs theory, and existential psychology - in fact, measures from each of these approaches are utilized in this study. These two approaches are, generally speaking, fairly compatible with Erikson's theory. Erikson has, in fact, incorporated constructivist themes (e.g. Erikson, 1958) and existential themes (e.g. Erikson, E., Erikson, J., & Kivnick, H., 1986) into his approach. Erikson's theory is particularly useful in this triad for its comprehensive approach to identity and the respectable validity of Marcia's Identity Status methodology. His psychosocial matrix provides the conceptual framework on which the present study is based.

A constructivist emphasis is particularly useful in addressing the diversity and complexity of human experience because its focus is on how people interpret reality, rather than the nature of reality itself. Its lack of value-laden assumptions, emphasis on the multidimensionality of death attitudes, and its sophisticated methodological approaches to the analysis of the structure and content of personal constructions of death, make it a good complement to Erikson's approach in the study of identity

and death.

Lastly, an existential perspective, with its emphasis on the importance of coming to terms with death in the development of self, has been particularly informative in this study's approach. Most identity theories have tended to ignore this issue. The existential approach also inspired the development of the Death Attitude Profile (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994), a multidimensional scale with demonstrated validity (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994).

The incorporation of aspects of these theoretical approaches into an Eriksonian approach to identity and death has promoted the development of a complex conceptual framework from which to examine this subject. It has also resulted in the inclusion of well established methodological approaches in the assessment of both identity and death attitudes.

This section will present the basic model guiding the present study, and the themes of identity generated by Erikson's psychosocial matrix. After a description of the different themes of general and existential identity, the application of the model of the present study to Marcia's (1966) identity status approach will be considered.

Model

Figure 1

A Model of the Relationship between Identity and Death Integration

The above diagram, representing an elaboration of the personal constructs approach to death attitudes (e.g. Krieger et al., 1974), proposes a relationship between constructed identity - a variable which, in its phenomenological sense, refers to the unity of all elements that represent an individual's core self (Marcia, 1993a) - existential points of reference, and death integration. A sense of constructed identity is expected to be associated with more clearly defined points of reference of self, and a more definite sense of differentiation from nonexistence. This sense of differentiation is proposed to be a base from which one can proceed to integrate death into self. Having a clearer definition of one's existence, one can transcend the existence/nonexistence dichotomy by extending one's existential points of reference to incorporate one's death.

Integrating the above model into an Eriksonian framework, it

can be viewed as a nondirectional relationship between ideological (or global) identity and the local domain of existential identity, operationalized here as death ideology - a manifestation of the differentiation (existential points of reference) and integration (death acceptance) of self and death.

Elaborating on this model, a series of parallel themes can be generated from Erikson's psychosocial matrix representing general identity, existential points of reference, and existential identity. These themes reflect the interaction of different contexts of identity.

Table 1

Corresponding Themes of Global and Existential Identity

<u>Identity Theme</u>	<u>Points of Reference</u>	<u>Existential Identity</u>
Temporal Identity	Continuity	Dying Acceptance
Individual Identity	Definition	Objective Acceptance
Role Experimentation	Openness/Personal	Death Contemplation
Agentic Identity	Competence/Control	Death Competence
Interpersonal Identity	Connectedness	Connected Acceptance
Generative Identity	Evolution	Transition Acceptance
Ideological Identity	Meaning	Death Ideology

As Table 1 indicates, each global identity theme is associated with a point of reference of one's existence, and a particular death attitude, based on the application of that point of reference to one's construction of death. Each theme of identity and associated self construct is, however, only associated with the adjacent death construct to the extent that it is associated with ideological identity. Each identity theme, moderated by ideological identity, is also expected to predict objective acceptance because each can be represented by the construct 'definition'.

Identity Themes

The themes of identity in Table 1 were generated from Erikson's psychosocial matrix. As discussed above, Eriksonian theory proposes that the issues of each age-graded psychosocial

stage colour one's current psychosocial crisis. The seven identity themes here represent the interaction between the stage of adolescence - in which the issue of identity versus identity confusion is considered to be the central psychosocial crisis - and each of the seven remaining stages. They were modified from a list of adolescent identity themes suggested by Erikson (1980) with the intention of making them more generally applicable - to adults as well as adolescents - and, consequently, more consonant with a constructivist approach.

These themes reflect both the processes and contents of identity formation: the processes of identification and role experimentation (or commitment and exploration); and the different content domains, representing the temporal, individual, agentic, interpersonal, generative, and ideological contexts in which identity is constructed. Erikson's theory implies that each of these themes of identity, as components within his psychosocial matrix, are relevant in the process of identity formation (e.g. Erikson, 1980). Identity, as conceptualized in Erikson's approach, more or less reflects a sense of continuity, existence, agency, openness, connectedness, evolution, and meaningfulness. It is important to note, however, that Erikson's approach emphasizes the development of an individuated identity, and may be less applicable (if at all) to individuals in cultural settings that foster the development of a collective identity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

While these themes are relevant in the development of an

individuated identity, some may be more explicit than others. Most of these themes can also refer to specific roles in specific social contexts. Identity status research has suggested that, while there is general consistency between domains, development in each domain of identity does not necessarily occur simultaneously (Waterman, 1993; Kroger, 1988; Rogow et al., 1983) - perhaps due to differences in developmental antecedents across domains, and in contextual factors (Grotevant, 1993).

Description of Themes

Temporal identity is a manifestation of the interaction between the theme of the first stage of Erikson's psychosocial model, trust versus mistrust and that of identity. According to Erikson (1980), a basic sense of trust in one's world endows one with hope for the future, and, in the context of identity formation, the hope that one's commitments will lead one to fulfilment and integrity. Having a temporal identity establishes a link between one's present self and a series of future selves - thereby providing a framework that can enable one to plan and anticipate future events.

One study supporting the relationship between identity status and time perspective was published by Rappaport, Enrich, and Wilson (1985). An important goal of this study was to "expand Marcia's ego identity construct by demonstrating that each identity group is characterized by a particular pattern of

temporal perspective" (p.1611). The results indicated a strong relationship between futurity and commitment. Diffusions and moratoriums (both low in commitment) were more oriented toward the past (particularly so for diffusions); foreclosures and achievers (both high in commitment) were more oriented toward the future (particularly so for foreclosures). Foreclosures, according to the authors, seem to have "an almost excessive clarity about the future" (p.1618). Achievers, on the other hand, while future oriented, seem to view the future as more open.

The individual domain of identity represents the interaction between the stage of autonomy versus shame and that of identity. This interaction manifests, according to Erikson (1980), in self certainty when one's sense of identity is strong, and identity consciousness when it is in transition. Self certainty is described as "feeling at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is going, and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (p.127-128). Identity consciousness reflects, on the other hand, a preoccupation with one's identity. As is the case with temporal identity, Individual identity has not been assessed as a specific domain in identity status research. Because individuation represents a theoretically important component of identity, however, it, along with temporal perspective, seems likely to be implicitly embedded within global measures of identity status.

The interaction between the third stage, initiative versus guilt, and that of identity, manifests as role experimentation

(Erikson, 1980). In adolescence and beyond, the childhood process of assimilation through explorative play is adapted in the process of exploring one's roles in society, and more generally, in life itself. This theme is different from the others in that it refers to the dynamic process of exploration as opposed to the static process of commitment in Marcia's typology. It is a process of discovering/creating who one is by playing different roles - donning different possible identities. This involves not just an abstract understanding of the particular role, but a more personal sense of acquaintanceship with it through identification. This process requires openness, flexibility and honesty - one cannot explore new roles if one has a constricted view of one's world.

The interaction between the stage of industry versus inferiority and that of identity can be said to manifest as agentic identity - a view of self as an active and competent participant in the world. More specifically, this aspect of identity is reflected by instrumental social roles. In identity status research, agentic identity has most often been operationalized in terms of vocational exploration and/or commitment.

The interaction of the theme of intimacy versus isolation and that of identity manifests as interpersonal identity. This has been operationalized in different ways. Erikson, believing identity to be a necessary prerequisite of intimacy, described the interaction of these two themes in terms of the development of sex roles in adolescence and a sense of solidarity in young adulthood

(Erikson, 1980). He believed that identity precedes intimacy - a view that has not (particularly for women) been confirmed by research (Matteson, 1993). The latter definition (identity as solidarity), reflecting an aspect of self that emerges within the context of interpersonal relationships, has thus generally been accepted as relevant to adolescents as well as adults, and as a valid domain in identity status research (e.g. Rogow et al., 1983: Matteson, 1993, etc.). A number of different interpersonal domains have been explored: including family roles, friendship, dating, and intimacy (Matteson, 1993).

Generative identity involves the role of caring for and guiding the next generation. It is represented most explicitly by the role of parenthood, but also by artistic, social, and political involvement - any activity which involves creating, shaping and nurturing what is to be. In Marcia's scheme, it is best represented by the political domain (which is a fusion of ideology and generativity), but it could be reflected in certain measures of interpersonal identity (e.g. family roles). McAdams (1990), however, offers a more direct approach to the study of generative identity, defining it in terms of an individual's sense of personal legacy.

The interaction between the eighth stage, integrity versus despair, and that of identity manifests as ideological identity. A sense of ideological identity involves a view of self as a part of a greater whole - that one's personal story represents an coherent and unique element within an historical context. This domain has

been operationalized in identity status research in terms of exploration and commitment to religion, political ideology (Marcia, 1993a), and a number of other ideological perspectives (e.g. Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989). Regarding philosophical orientation, there is empirical support for the relationship between global identity and a sense of purpose in life (meaningfulness): Cote and Levine (1983) found that achievers had significantly higher scores than the other statuses on the future sense of purpose factor in the Purpose of Life scale by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969).

Existential Points of Reference

Fundamentally, one's identity, whatever its content, represents one's existence - who one ultimately is. Having an identity creates a point of reference for the self because it involves the identification with something of relative permanence. The points of reference in the table above are representative of the individual domain of identity, and its interaction with each content domain. Individual identity is relevant to the development of existential identity because by defining self, one delineates what is not self. Having a sense of identity thus gives death some degree of form, and, consequently, makes it more integratable. The degree to which death is given form depends on the context in which identity is constructed: the larger the context (or the extent to which the self is transcendable), the more likely it is

to encompass aspects such as death.

Existential Identity Themes

Existential identity, a component of the ideological domain of identity, is operationalized in the present study as death ideology. Death, representing the interface between existence and nonexistence, is an integral part of one's personal and social life story, and an important factor in the determination of life's ultimate meaning. Through contemplation and acceptance of death, one can discover or create one's unique story in the context of 'the totality of life.'

While Erikson described existential identity as a central issue for older individuals (Erikson et al., 1986), it appears to be something that begins to emerge in adolescence. Both the development of identity (Marcia, 1993b) and theories of the meaning of existence (Wass & Stillion, 1988) are associated with the development of formal operational thought in adolescence. Thanatological and identity status literature in fact indicates that adolescents (particularly late adolescents) have sophisticated, abstract ideas about religion and the nature of death (Wass & Stillion, 1988; Noppe & Noppe, 1991; Marcia & Archer, 1993). While such thoughts may be more tentative and not as integrated as those of older individuals, the process does seem to begin in adolescence.

In the Identity Status Interview, existential identity has

never been explored in the form of death ideology; although it has been addressed in the domain of religious identity. While there is an existential component to religion, however, this is not always the central focus of an individual's religious involvement. Religious identity can also concern other ideological issues such as ethics, morality, and lifestyle - and, therefore, may not be as concise a measurement of one's existential orientation.

The self construct that corresponds with ideological identity is meaningfulness. A view of self (or life) as meaningful implies the integration of what is defined and what is undefined into one coherent meaningful life story, reflecting one's ultimate relationship to life (and death) from the perspective of a variety of different personal and social roles. Meaningfulness assumes different forms according to one's various roles in life. Because a view of life as meaningful implies a view of death as meaningful, each of the existential points of reference are applicable to death to the extent to which they imply a meaningful existence. To the extent that each domain of general identity is associated with existential identity, its corresponding self construct is expected to apply to death as well as self.

A view of life as meaningful is likely to be generalized to a view of death as meaningful because it is difficult to justify life as ultimately meaningful if death is meaningless. Aspects of life that may be viewed as meaninglessness can ultimately be made meaningful through integration. If one chooses to believe in a religious doctrine, for example, one might view the unknowable

aspects of reality as a mystery of existence. In the absence of religious beliefs, one might attempt to find ultimate meaning within the context of one's current existence or of natural or social history. The claim that a view of life as meaningful encompasses a view of death as meaningful is indirectly supported by a number of existentially based studies (Durlak, 1972; Aronow, Rauchway, Peller, & DeVitto, 1980; Bolt, 1978; Neimeyer, 1988). This claim is also indirectly supported by findings of negative relationships between measures of self-actualization and fear of death (Neimeyer, 1988).

Description of Themes

The list of existential identity themes is based on interactions between existential identity and the six other themes of identity. Each theme represents the integration of a particular self and death construct, manifesting in a particular style of death acceptance or contemplation. These themes are presented as particular death attitudes: dying acceptance, objective acceptance, death competence, connected acceptance, transition acceptance, and death contemplation. As with the general identity themes, existential themes reflect the process and contents of identity. The processes of existential identity, paralleling those of general identity, are contemplation and acceptance. Content is reflected by the different types of acceptance.

One can come to terms with one's nonexistence in two general

ways: by constricting one's awareness and utilizing positive illusions of death, or by integrating the bipolar constructs of existence and nonexistence through the process of contemplation. Both of these approaches reflect death acceptance, although the first is probably more common (Tomer, 1994). Its drawback, however, is that it can make one more vulnerable to contextual change. If one's viewpoint is, for example, disconfirmed by certain experiences, such as bereavement, one may experience disorganization in one's construct system.

This section will examine in greater detail the themes and underlying constructs representing the existential domain of death ideology. Relevant empirical evidence of the relationships between identity and the aspects of death represented by each of these themes will also be presented.

The first existential theme in Table 1 is dying acceptance. A sense of self as continuous may conceivably span the range of one's existence - thus giving one a view of death as an event occurring in its place within or at the end of the sequence of events representing temporal self. Within an existential domain, death (the ultimate discontinuity) would be more incorporated within one's sense of continuity. It would be experienced more as a process - something already in place - rather than an isolated event in the future. This temporal integration of death would thus manifest as dying acceptance: the acceptance of death as a dynamic process of one's evolving identity.

The clearest evidence of a relationship between identity and

dying acceptance is represented by four studies, involving respondents from different populations, showing positive correlations between scores on the Threat Index (reflecting the inverse of death integration - an indirect measure of existential identity) and Collet-Lester's Fear of Dying of Self scale (Neimeyer & Dingemans, 1980; Wood & Robinson, 1982; Robinson & Wood, 1984; Neimeyer, 1985). Of course, low fear scores do not necessarily reflect acceptance - they could in fact suggest denial (Ray & Najman, 1974). Wong, Reker, and Gesser (1994) have, moreover, presented statistical evidence of the factorial independence of these two general terms. The results of the above studies are informative, however, because acceptance has at least been shown to be negatively correlated with fear (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994). They can be regarded as indirect evidence of a link between the two terms.

There is also evidence that an orientation toward the past is associated with a greater fear of death (Pollack, 1979), and that, as discussed above, certain populations of individuals lacking a sense of diachronic identity may be more prone to having a suicidal ideation (Ball & Chandler, 1989). The first of these studies could imply that fear, and possibly a lack of death acceptance, is associated with a lack of a sense of self as continuous - a view more represented by a present or future orientation. The latter suggests a view of escape from hopelessness.

The second existential theme in the model is objective

acceptance. A sense of individuated identity and self-definition implies, as discussed above, clearly delineated boundaries between self and other. In this content domain, which emphasizes differences rather than similarities, integration suggests the acceptance of paradoxes, and depends on the existence of strong boundaries of self. Objective acceptance, implicating death as the ultimate 'other', thus suggests a sense of detached acceptance, or indifference, based on a sense of meaningful self-transcendence, or, alternatively, on denial or positive illusions.

Objective acceptance does not imply a view of what death entails - just that it is natural aspect of life. What is acceptable about death is that it occurs within the context of a meaningful life. In support of this viewpoint, Wong, Reker, and Gesser (1994) found neutral acceptance, the acceptance of death as natural part of life, to be the only acceptance measure associated with both physical and psychological well-being. Egli et al.'s (1994) study partially supports the relationship between identity and objective acceptance as well in its finding of diffusion status being associated with sensitivity to death subscale (the extent to which this result is generalizable to young and middle-aged adults, however, is unknown).

The next existential theme is contemplation. The process of role exploration involves the act of bringing something into one's personal territory. The construct 'personal' implies that this 'something' has emotional significance for an individual - that it is worthy of reflection. Viewing something as personal, does not,

however, necessarily imply that one has accepted it as an aspect of self - just that it has concrete relevance to one's life. This is expected to be case for death: one can view death as personal, but still feel quite unresolved about its meaning in one's life. While this has not been empirically explored, there is evidence that individuals who have in fact developed a philosophy of death (implying exploration and commitment) tend to view it as more personal and purposeful (Holcomb, et al., 1993).

In the existential domain, this theme can be said to manifest as death contemplation. It is through the process of contemplating death that one attempts to understand death as an aspect of one's identity rather than an abstract concept. The depth of one's contemplation - or the extent to which one openly and honestly considers the meaning of death in one's everyday life experience - is what ultimately determines the depth of its assimilation into one's identity. Because death can be constructed in terms that conflict with self, such a process can be quite threatening to one's sense of identity. According to a number of existential theorists, however, it is through one's openness to nonbeing that one acquires the freedom to fully be.

The next existential theme is death competence. In an existential context, agentic identity, reflecting one's sense of competence in dealing with one's environment, represents a sense of competence in dealing with that which threatens existence. If death is not integrated into self, competence refers to one's ability to defeat death. Because this is ultimately unattainable,

death in this context is represented by failure and defeat - and tends to be associated with such in this culture (Bigner, 1994). A more deeply integrated view of death would involve a greater recognition of death as an aspect of self rather than as something that opposes self; and, therefore, as something that one can work with (recognizing its inevitability) rather than against. The former implies a sense of one's skill and ability to cope with death - a quality addressed by the concept of death competency (Robbins, 1994). Although death is not ultimately controllable, it can be managed in a number of ways - e.g. living each moment to the fullest, making necessary funeral arrangements, etc. This is what is reflected by death competency.

This integrated approach to competence has been represented by Bugen's Coping with Death Scale (Bugen, 1980 - 1981), a measure that has been found to be associated with identity in the form of self-actualization, as assessed by the POI (Robbins, 1994). While there are no other direct assessments of the relationship between identity and death competence, an internal locus of control has been found to be negatively associated with fear of death (Neimeyer, 1988) - a variable shown to be negatively related to coping (Robbins, 1994).

The next existential theme is connected acceptance. The self construct that corresponds to interpersonal identity is 'connection'. A sense of interpersonal connection generalized to an existential context becomes a sense of connection to all that represents life - and to a greater or lesser degree that includes

one's conceptions of death. A connected view of death can manifest in diverse ways depending on the degree and complexity of its integration with self, and the orientation of one's beliefs about the nature of existence. To the extent that one has an integrated view of interpersonal self and death, one's sense of connection can manifest as separation acceptance - the acceptance of death from an interpersonal perspective (what death means to one's relationships). Such an attitude could, for example, reflect a view of death as an event that occurs within the context of the love and support of one's family and friends. If one is spiritually inclined, on the other hand, it could reflect a view of death as an experience of communion with a transcendent being, or a reunion with deceased family and/or friends.

A more complexly integrated application of this theme would, however, also include contexts of interpersonal loss or bereavement. While bereavement can be viewed as an experience of separation, a connected view of death emphasizes the continuation of the relationship in a different form - perhaps, for example, as an internalized experience of identity. A conception of death as connection is reflective of a broader view of self - one in which the 'other' is equivalent to the self. From such a perspective, one's identity is larger than that which dies or is lost.

There has been very little research in the area of interpersonal identity and death attitudes. Only two published studies have appeared to date that indirectly deal with this topic: one being Westman's (1985) study showing a negative

association between extended self and fear of death; and the other, by Meshot and Leitner (1994), indicating a negative association between the experience of bereavement and death threat (the inverse of death integration) on the Interpersonal Repertory Grid. Both of these studies offer some validation for the proposals in this section: the former suggests that lower fear (in a global sense) is linked with a connected view of life and death; and the latter suggests a link between the experience of interpersonal loss (bereavement) and the integration of death into one's (interpersonal) identity.

The last existential theme is transition acceptance. It is associated with generative identity and the self construct 'evolution' - a creative process representing the regeneration of self. Through the act of caring, one facilitates the evolution of one's world: in particular, the evolution of the 'object(s)' of one's care, and of oneself, through personal care, and through the identification with that (those) object(s). A sense of generative identity thus defines an individual as both creator and object of creation. Such a role also emphasizes one's personal responsibility in the creation of one's world, the recognition of which involves an appreciation of the finite number of opportunities one has to meet one's goals.

Ultimately, one is responsible for the evolution of self, however this manifests. Transition acceptance is based on the view that self continues to grow/evolve through the experience of death. This could mean the transition into a non-physical reality; or,

more figuratively, one's personal legacy in one's family and culture - the aspects of self one leaves behind (e.g. one's children, work, and other contributions to one's culture).

A more complexly integrated sense of transition acceptance would also involve a recognition of personal impermanence - perhaps heightened by experiences of disidentification with the object of one's care (or youth in general), the vicarious experience of the losses of such an individual, or experiences of personal stagnation - and the need to let go of that which cannot be changed. This implies the acceptance of a future self that may not be completely in alignment with one's hopes or expectations.

The view of death as a transition to a glorious afterlife, one possible manifestation of personal evolution, is represented by Wong, Reker, and Gesser's (1994) 'approach acceptance' subscale. For individuals who may not believe in an actual afterlife, biosocial symbolic immortality (Drolet, 1990) - the extension of self through family and/or culture - may be a more appropriate measure of transition acceptance. In support of the latter measure as a correlate of death attitudes, it was found to be significantly negatively correlated with death anxiety in Drolet's (1990) study.

Existential Identity from an Identity Status Perspective

In Marcia's (1966) identity status approach, death ideology is indirectly assessed in the domain of religion. The question of

death's meaning represents one important track of issues relevant to religious identity. It is conceivable, therefore, that death ideology could be assessed as a distinct domain, representing one's exploration and commitments to particular ideological viewpoints concerning the role of death. Death ideology could also be assessed in terms of explicit commitments one makes in preparing for one's death - one's investment, for example, in one's personal legacy. Such a commitment, however, is not as generally relevant as religion.

Marcia (1993a) suggests two criteria for inclusion of a content domain in a measure of identity status: that it is of importance to the age group being tested (this could probably be broadened to include other individual and cultural differences), and that there is variability of response. As discussed earlier, there is some evidence that death ideology is relevant in younger age groups as well as older. One goal of the present study is to determine whether there is variability of response in particular death constructs and attitudes amongst the population group being surveyed - late adolescent and young adult university students.

The above model implies that existential identity is a relevant component of ideological and global identity, and that it should, therefore, be consistent with ideological and global measures. Considering the evidence in death attitude research of death's greater relevance to older populations (e.g. Kalish, 1976; Kastenbaum, 1990; Wong, Reker & Gesser, 1994), and considering western cultural tendency toward denial (Becker, 1973), it is,

however, expected to be a domain of identity that lags behind (or is less relevant than) other domains.

In certain populations, an existential domain could, on the other hand, be more relevant than other domains. An example of this might be an individual with a chronic or terminal illness who accepts death as an escape from suffering. Ordinarily, such a view of death would more likely be associated with lower global identity statuses given that it would conflict with one's exploration of and commitment to life's more immediate roles. For a dying individual, the process of coming to terms with death could conceivably take precedence over some roles (such as occupation) typically represented in identity status measures. Although an existential domain is generally expected to be associated with other domains of identity, it could also, therefore, function independently.

Because Marcia's approach emphasizes explicit ideological exploration and commitments, it does not capture the more subtle aspects of existential meaning construction as represented by the death attitudes in the above model. Not all aspects of identity reflect explicit choices and commitments. Death is a good example of this: it is generally not a role that is chosen; and it is not, for many people, something that is associated with concrete everyday commitments. It is, nevertheless, a role that is ultimately relevant to everyone. For these reasons, it is suggested here that the 'assigned' quality of death identity would probably better be captured by the more implicit constructs of

acceptance and contemplation. To get a more complete picture of this domain of identity, the death attitudes in the above model could be analyzed alongside specific explorations and commitments in parallel analyses.

Existential Identity StatusTable 2Existential Identity Statuses

<u>Exploration/Contemplation</u>		
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
Low	Undifferentiated	Differentiated
<u>Commitment/Acceptance</u>		
High	Simple-integrated	Complex-integrated

Existential identity statuses can be more fully described by profiling them in terms of the underlying processes of differentiation and integration (as described, for example, by de Vries & Lehman, 1996). The following descriptions reflect the particular orientations toward death of each of Marcia's four statuses in the hypothetical domain of death ideology.

Diffusions, for example - being low in exploration and low in commitment to a particular death ideology - would be less likely to have clear existential points of reference than the other statuses. Their orientation could be described as "undifferentiated" because they would tend to be less aware of self's relationship to death. Because they don't have a clear sense of their existence, they cannot have a clear sense of their

death, and, consequently, are only able to integrate death in superficial way.

Foreclosures, having a sense of commitment to a death ideology but one that is not based on exploration, are more likely to have normative beliefs regarding the meaning of death. For them, death is integrated without consideration of its many dimensions in an attempt to enable them to make sense of their world.

Moratoriums, contemplating death's meaning, but uncommitted to any particular viewpoint, have an orientation that could be described as 'differentiated'. They are very aware of the relevance of death in their lives but are not sure how to make sense of it, and, more generally, of their ultimate role in life. They are perhaps the most aware of the philosophical extremes of nihilism and eternalism, and engaged in the process of trying to locate themselves on the continuum between these extremes.

Lastly, achievers, having explored (or exploring) death's meaning in their lives and having made a commitment to a particular death ideology, can be said to have a complex - integrated orientation. They have considered different perspectives of death, and have developed a coherent theory of its relationship to self. Unlike foreclosures, they have a more flexible definition of death's meaning and a less constricted view of reality. Consequently, they should be less threatened by incompatible information.

Determinants of Existential Identity

There is evidence that some contexts are more conducive than others to the crystallization of existential identity - in terms of their effects on identity and/or death constructs and attitudes. This section will examine a number (although it is not an exhaustive list) of demographic variables that have been empirically and/or conceptually linked to both. To the extent that death constructs/attitudes are representative of (ideological) identity in a particular population, demographic variables associated with the former are expected to be associated with the latter.

Gender

Thanatological literature has indicated clear gender differences in death attitudes. The most consistently found results are that women appear, for example, to have greater death anxiety (Kastenbaum, 1991), and a greater tendency to believe in an afterlife (Klenow & Bolin, 1989). Regarding death anxiety: this gender difference has been found in different cultures, and when self-disclosure and social desirability have been controlled (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994). More specific results that have also emerged include: a greater tendency toward an emotional construction of death (Holcomb, Neimeyer, and Moore, 1993); greater fear of the death of significant others (Neimeyer & Moore,

1994); and, in a number of studies, higher levels of fear of dying (Neimeyer, 1988). Men, on the other hand, have evidenced: a greater tendency toward viewing death in more general terms, and as something of low impact (Holcomb, Neimeyer, and Moore, 1993); greater avoidance (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994); and higher levels of fear of the unknown (Neimeyer & Moore, 1994).

The reasons for these differences have not been sufficiently explored. Neimeyer (1988) suggests that gender differences in fear may be due to locus of control, which is associated with both gender and fear of death. Another possibility is that women's more interpersonal, connected way of knowing (Surrey, 1985; Belenky et al., 1986; Miller, 1986), and greater affect recognition (Brody, 1985), might make them more open and aware of their emotional response to death. Such an orientation, moreover, may also facilitate a greater identification with death.

Regarding identity status: generally, women tend to occupy higher statuses than men in interpersonal domains (Marcia, 1993b; Matteson, 1993). In domains of occupation and ideology, however, no consistent gender differences have emerged (Matteson, 1993). These results suggest - unless a more interpersonally oriented ideological identity scale is created - that gender may, therefore, be a variable that differentiates existential identity from general ideological identity.

Age

Most studies in this category have focussed on the relationship between age and death anxiety - the majority indicating an inverse relationship between these two variables. (Kastenbaum, 1991; Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994). Age has also been negatively associated with avoidance (Nelson, 1979), and positively associated with the frequency of one's thoughts about death (Kalish, 1977), and levels of approach, neutral, and escape acceptance (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994).

A number of explanations have been suggested for these results. Greater acceptance (and lower fear) has generally been theorized as a developmental task of old age (Erikson, 1963) - part of the process of ego integration associated with that phase in the lifespan. Specific situational and social factors could also include: a greater frequency of experiences involving death and/or personal loss; a greater degree of socialization toward death (Kalish, 1976); the greater religiosity of older individuals (possibly a cohort effect); the greater degree of health problems (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994); and the possibly higher amount of exhaustion and/or satiation (Kalish, 1976).

Age has also been associated with global and local identity status (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989; Waterman, 1993). In contrast to the pattern in the death attitude research, however, significant changes in status occur during adolescence and young adulthood - particularly amongst college students. In a survey of

identity status research on college samples, Waterman (1993) found a consistent pattern of age/college year differences. Older students were significantly more likely to be identity achieved. Amongst adults, older individuals generally appear to be more stable in terms of identity status (Waterman, 1993).

Ethnic Identification

Thanatological literature indicates that there are cross-cultural differences in death anxiety (Neimeyer, 1988) and in what aspect of death is feared (e.g. Lonetto, Mercer, Fleming, Bunting, & Clare, 1980). Such differences likely reflect different social constructions of death. One possible difference that has been suggested is, for example, the view of death as either continuous or discontinuous with life (McMordie & Kumar, 1984). In eastern cultures, death is more often viewed as being continuous with life than it is in western cultures - a difference that could be reflected in their lower death anxiety scores (McMordie & Kumar, 1984). Because cross-cultural differences in death constructs have not been directly explored, however, it is uncertain whether continuity is the most relevant construct. Such results do, nevertheless, suggest that ethnic identification may play a role in the development of death attitudes.

Regarding ethnicity and global identity status: there are numerous studies that have examined cross-cultural differences (Marcia, 1993b). While identity is expected to be a universal

phenomenon, there appear to be differences in the extent to which cultures foster the development of either an individual or collective (foreclosed) identity (Marcia, 1993c). According to Marcia (1993c), 'institutionalized moratoria' exist in western cultures, but in some societies the "struggles for survival preclude the luxury of a moratorium" (p.274).

Religious Involvement

Religious involvement, referring to one's attendance at religious services, is distinguished from religious identity, which involves a process of questioning and commitment to particular viewpoints on religious issues such as the existence of God, one's ultimate purpose in life, and ethical and moral guidelines for behaviour. The former represents a particular social context which could be predictive of both religious (and global) identity and death constructs/attitudes.

There is some evidence that religious involvement is associated with death integration and the development of a particular death ideology. Church attendance was found in one study, for example, to be one of only two variables of religiosity that predicted a belief in an afterlife (Klenow and Bolin, 1989). It has also predicted lower levels of threat - and thus, higher integration (Rigdon & Epting, 1985).

While there is no clear evidence in the published literature of a link between religious involvement and identity status, it

seems reasonable to predict that individuals exposed to religion may be more inclined to make a religious commitment (and possibly to explore the subject) than those who are not - and because religious identity is a subscale of ideological identity, high religious commitment (and exploration) is expected to be associated with high ideological commitment (and exploration).

Bereavement Experience

There has been little research on bereavement and death attitudes; and most of the small body of literature that does explore this topic has not produced any evidence of a relationship between these two variables (Tokunaga, 1985; Neimeyer, 1988). This lack of evidence could, however, be a consequence of the narrow focus of the research on death anxiety. One recent study, investigating the relationship between bereavement and a measure of death threat/integration utilizing interpersonal constructs, however, has yielded positive results (Meshot and Leitner, 1994). The authors of this study found that a group of college students who experienced death of a parent during adolescence experienced less death threat (more self-death integration) on the Interpersonal Repertory Grid than controls. This result implies that individuals who experience interpersonal loss may be inclined to incorporate a more existential focus into their conception of interpersonal self. The fact that this result was not replicated on the general Threat Index suggests, however, that it may only be

pertinent to interpersonal identity.

While there have been no direct examinations of the relationship between bereavement and identity status, there is some indirect evidence that such a relationship may exist amongst adolescents. Bereaved adolescents have, for example, reported: an increased importance of religion (suggesting higher religious commitment) in their lives (Balk, 1991); similar or higher levels of self-worth (Fleming and Balmer, 1996) following their loss; and feelings of being more mature than their peers (Davies, 1991, Balk, 1983, Martinson & Campos, 1991). While bereavement can conceivably facilitate psychological growth, however, it should also be noted that there is evidence that a significant subset of bereaved adolescents suffer from long term symptoms of depression and low self-concept (Balk, 1990; Fanos & Nickerson, 1991; Hogan & Greenfield, 1991).

Hypotheses

Although a broad range of predictions could be derived from the model presented in this paper, the current study will focus specifically on hypotheses involving ideological identity and several death attitudes and/or underlying constructs. The main objective of the present study is to determine whether particular death constructs/attitudes could be considered representative of ideological/existential domain of identity.

Exploration and Commitment

Because the model predicts death attitudes/constructs to be associated with either commitment or exploration - and it is not clear how the interaction of these two terms could effect the results - the main focus on the present study will be on these terms as independent factors (although the effects of identity status will, nevertheless, be explored). It is important to note, therefore, that similar death attitude/construct scores across high or low commitment or exploration statuses could mask very different orientations toward death.

Ideological exploration is predicted in the present study to be associated with a sense of openness toward death, and an orientation toward death contemplation, the behavioural consequence of a view of death as personal. This is because ideological exploration implies, as discussed above, an openness to the dissolution of one's identity. It also implies, moreover, some degree of contemplation of life's ultimate purpose - an issue that requires, at the very least, an acknowledgement of death. Although death is not a phenomenon that is embraced in western culture (Becker, 1973), its centrality to the question of identity necessitates some degree of reflection in a process of ideological exploration.

Ideological exploration is also expected in the present study to predict lower levels of death avoidance. Avoidance is, of course, more complex than a simple lack of exploration - it suggests a

more active process of disinvolvement, that may be motivated by a negative evaluation or emotional feelings about death rather than a lack of interest. It has in fact found to be correlated with fear ($r = .47$, $p < .001$) in Wong, Reker, and Gesser's (1994) study. Nevertheless, if there is a cultural tendency to avoid death, then the least likely individuals to do so should be those who are exploring existential issues.

Ideological commitment, is predicted by the model to be associated with a view of death as purposeful and a general sense of death acceptance. This is particularly expected to be true for individuals with an explicit existential commitment, such as a religious ideology. Viewing death as meaningful, however, seems a natural consequence of viewing one's life as meaningful, regardless of one's spirituality. Considering that commitment has been empirically associated with a sense of future purpose (Cote & Levine, 1983), it seems reasonable to assume that this could be extended to include one's eventual death.

The Death Attitude Profile - Revised (Wong, Reker, and Gesser, 1987; 1994) assesses several ways in which death can be viewed as meaningful: as a portal to a joyful afterlife (approach acceptance - representing transition acceptance), as a natural part of life (neutral acceptance - representing objective acceptance), and as an escape from suffering (escape acceptance). The first two of these attitudes reflect distinct views of death as meaningful within the context of life. Approach acceptance probably tends to do so, however, in a more ideologically explicit manner - it

represents a more tangible commitment to a particular belief. Neutral acceptance, reflecting a naturalistic philosophical view, seems more reflective of indifference (or passive commitment) based either on psychological fulfilment or cognitive distancing. The last acceptance attitude - escape acceptance - also reflects a view of death as purposeful. Unlike the other two attitudes, however, it involves a sense of identification with death combined with disidentification with the corporeal self. In the domain of existential identity, this attitude could be regarded as a type of ideological commitment. Because identity generally implies a commitment to life (as opposed to death), however, escape acceptance is predicted to be negatively associated with ideological and interpersonal commitment. This attitude thus represents one way in which the existential domain could be at odds with global identity.

Fear has been operationalized in many different ways. Wong, Reker, and Gesser's (1994) operationalization is, however, appropriate for the objectives of this study - to explore death attitudes as components of ideological identity - because of its existential basis and its psychometric validity. A number of existentially oriented studies, as discussed above, have in fact found a negative relationship between a sense of meaning and fear of death (e.g. Durlak, 1972; Aronow, Rauchway, Peller, & DeVitto, 1980; Bolt, 1978; Neimeyer, 1988).

Temporal identity has been proposed to be an implicit component of global identity. Rappaport's (1985) study of identity

and temporal perspective offers some evidence of such an association - in particular, the greater futurity of individuals high in commitment. A sense of identity implies a commitment to the future and a sense of identification with one's future selves at various points on one's life trajectory. Highly committed individuals are thus expected to have a better sense of their future, and more of a sense of continuity between current self and future (at point of death) self. Such individuals are, consequently, expected to have a more long-term temporal expectation - a construct suggested by Neimeyer, Fontana, and Gold (1984)) - of death. Temporal expectation reflects a view of death as occurring within the context of a predictable and foreseeable sequence of events.

Identity Status

As discussed earlier, the theoretical approach of the present study does not propose how the interaction of commitment and exploration might effect death constructs and attitudes. It is difficult to predict the direction of such effects. Regarding death acceptance, for example, foreclosures could have stronger beliefs than achievers as a consequence of a more rigid cognitive style, and a greater tendency toward dogmatism; achievers, on the other hand, could have stronger beliefs as a result of their possibly greater integration of death with everyday life - death might be more relevant and significant for

them. Similarly, the quality of death contemplation of individuals who do not have any commitments could be quite different from that of individuals who do. Whether having a sense of identity (commitment) insulates one from feelings of existential uncertainty and, therefore, empowers one to contemplate death (particularly in the case of religious commitment); or that, alternatively, such a sense of insulation discourages contemplation (i.e. makes it less relevant and personal), it is difficult to predict because of the lack of empirical evidence supporting either alternative.

An analysis of identity status effects can help determine the extent to which the existential (death ideology) domain is in synchrony with other domains - i.e. whether both global moratoriums and achievers are high in death contemplation, and whether both global achievers and foreclosures are high in death acceptance.

The effects of identity status are also worthwhile to explore in order to determine whether there is evidence of interaction effects, or whether either identity construct is associated with dependent variables not expected to be related to it.

Identity Domain

This study will focus particularly on the ideological domain of identity - which is expected to have the strongest link with death constructs and orientations tested. Interpersonal identity

will also be explored as a possible correlate of death constructs and attitudes because of its expected association with ideological identity and the construct meaningfulness. In support of this, relatively high correlations between interpersonal and ideological identity have been found using the instrument utilized in the present study (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989). It is proposed here then that interpersonal commitment will be associated with the death construct 'purposefulness' and the death attitudes of acceptance (and negatively associated with fear). The certainty of this prediction, however, is lower than was the case for ideological commitment because of the lack of an explicit existential component, and because an implicit ideology is less likely to be articulated. Regarding interpersonal exploration: as with ideological exploration, it is expected to be associated with personal involvement, although the lack of an existential component may diminish the strength of this association as well. In sum, the logic linking ideological commitment and exploration to the various death constructs and attitudes should also apply to predictions involving interpersonal identity constructs - although the relationships are likely to be weaker.

Determinants of Death Constructs/Attitudes and Identity

The questions to be explored here are whether variables that predict death constructs/attitudes also predict ideological identity development, and whether these variables confound the

relationship between identity and death constructs/attitudes.

METHOD

Subjects

Recruitment

Young adult subjects were recruited from six undergraduate classes (3 family science and 3 psychology introductory and intermediate courses) at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. Approximately 200 questionnaires were distributed in these classes to interested students. 155 were returned, for a response rate of about 75%. Six respondents were not included in the analyses because they did not meet the age criterion of 30 years and under. This criterion was set because of the study's intention of focussing on an adolescent/young adult population, and also because the EOM-EIS2 was designed and recommended for individuals up to the age of 30 (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989).

Sample Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the sample of young adults who participated in this study are summarized in Table 3. The majority (79.9%) of the sample were women (representative of the female/male ratio in the classes selected). Regarding ethnicity, 54.4% of the sample identified themselves as Asian; 9.4% as European; and 18.1% as Canadian. Of the remaining 18.1% of the

sample, one subject did not respond, several identified themselves as members of different ethnic groups (e.g. Argentinian), but most identified themselves in categories not compatible with the system of classification utilized in this study (mostly racial categories such as Caucasian, white, black, etcetera). Age was a positively skewed distribution (Skewness = .80, SE Skewness = .20) with a mean of 21.69 years (ranging from 18 to 28 years; SD = 1.98 years). Post-secondary education was normally distributed with a mean of 3.31 years (ranging from 0 -6 years; SD = 1.21 years). Most of the sample were not religious: the religious attendance distribution was significantly positively skewed (Skewness = .98, SE Skewness = .20). 40.9% never attended religious services; 29.5% did so less than once a month). Lastly, 79.2% of the sample reported experiencing the death of a family member; 18.1% reported experiencing the death of a friend; 57% reported the experiencing the death of a pet; and only 10.1% reported ever having a life-threatening illness.

Table 3

Selected Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Men	30	20.1
Women	119	79.9
Ethnic Id		
Asian	81	54.4
European	14	9.4
Canadian	27	18.1
Other	26	17.4
Missing	1	0.7
Religious Involvement		
Never	61	40.9
Less than once a month	44	29.5
About once a month	4	2.7
2 or 3 times a month	9	6.0
Once a week	14	9.4
More than once a week	17	11.4
Death of a Friend		
No	121	81.2
Yes	27	18.1
Missing	1	0.7
Death of a Pet		
No	63	42.3
Yes	85	57.0
Missing	1	0.7
Death of a Family Member		
No	31	20.8
Yes	118	79.2
Illness		
No	133	89.3
Yes	15	10.1
Missing	1	0.7
Ideological Identity Status		
Diffused	64	43.0
Foreclosed	10	6.7
Moratorium	45	30.2
Achieved	30	20.1
Interpersonal Identity Status		
Diffused	22	14.8
Foreclosed	4	2.7
Moratorium	76	51.0
Achieved	46	30.9

Note. n = 149.

Instruments

The questionnaire package consisted of a section assessing background information, and a section including four separate instruments: one assessing identity status, and the other three assessing death orientations. The order of the identity status and death orientation sections - and the scales within the death orientation section - was counterbalanced.

Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status

The Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS2) (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989) is based on Marcia's operationalization of Erikson's theory of identity development. Intended as a measure for individuals aged 14 to 30, it consists of 64 items representing four identity statuses - diffusions, foreclosures, moratoriums, and achievers - each within ideological (with subscales focussing on religion, politics, philosophical lifestyle, and work orientation) and interpersonal (focussing on friendship, dating sex roles, and recreation) content domains. Each item is rated on a six point scale reflecting the extent of the respondent's agreement or disagreement. Scores for each identity status are obtained, and the overall status is determined by cut-off scores. Levels of commitment and exploration (high and low) can be obtained by dichotomizing the four identity statuses: high commitment individuals are represented by foreclosures and

achievers; low commitment individuals, by diffusions and moratoriums; high exploration individuals, by moratoriums and achievers; and low exploration individuals, by diffusions and foreclosures.

The disadvantages of this scale (compared to an identity status interview) are that it doesn't distinguish well between diffusion and moratorium statuses (Marcia, 1993a; Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989), and that it is less sensitive than an interview to individual (and population) differences (e.g. commitment and exploration might have significantly different meanings for different people). Its advantages, on the other hand, lie in its greater convenience in administration and scoring (allowing for bigger samples), in the fact that it can be completed anonymously (reducing experimenter effects), and in that fact that it has standardized items (and thus avoids the problem of inter-rater reliability). The EOM-EIS2, furthermore, is the most highly developed and validated questionnaire assessing identity status (Marcia, 1993a). Reliability estimates indicate high consistency (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989), and there are a large number of studies demonstrating predictive validity (Marcia, 1994). Moderate to high correspondence in status classification between the EOM-EIS and Marcia's Identity Status Interview has also been reported in a number of studies (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989).

Death Attitude Profile - Revised

The Death Attitude Profile - Revised (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994) is a 32 item multidimensional instrument, loosely grounded in an existential perspective, that explores five different orientations toward death: fear, avoidance, approach acceptance, escape acceptance, and neutral acceptance. Each of these orientations are assessed independently.

In accordance with an existential approach, fear of death is defined by the authors as a possible outcome of one's "failure to find personal meaning for one's life and death" (p. 123). The different types of acceptance comprise the authors' three-component model of death acceptance. Neutral acceptance implies the view that death is a natural, integral part of life - not to be feared or welcomed. Approach acceptance implies a view of death as a gateway to a happy afterlife. Lastly, escape acceptance implies a view of death as an escape from a painful existence. Avoidance was not explicitly defined, but was expected to be an independent dimension related to the Fear of death subscale.

Although this instrument was only recently devised, its authors have conducted a number of analyses on its reliability and validity - the results of which look quite promising. In an examination of internal consistency and four week test-retest reliability, the subscales evidenced good to very good reliability (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994), although the neutral acceptance scale did have a moderately low alpha (.65). A factor analysis of

items, and an assessment of subscale correlations, indicated that the five dimensions of this scale are relatively independent. Each item loads primarily on to one dimension at a level of at least .40.

A number of analyses also attest to the validity of this scale. The Fear of death subscale, for example, was found to be strongly related Templer's (1970) Death Anxiety Scale ($r = .61$, $p < .001$); Neutral acceptance was moderately associated with Spilka et al.'s (1976) Indifference toward death subscale ($r = .27$, $p < .001$); and approach and escape acceptance were correlated with a semantic differential scale assessing evaluation of death ($r = .59$, $p < .001$, and $r = .42$, $p < .001$, respectively). Regarding concurrent validity, results from an examination of age differences - that older individuals experience significantly less fear, more neutral acceptance, and more escape acceptance than young people - were consistent with predictions. In addition to this, neutral acceptance was found, as expected, to be moderately associated with psychological ($r = .21$, $p < .001$) and physical ($r = .21$, $p < .001$) well-being, and moderately negatively associated with depression ($-.17$, $p < .01$). Lastly, escape acceptance was found, as predicted, to be negatively related with physical well-being ($r = -.20$, $p < .001$); but not, as was predicted, with psychological well-being.

Although these results are promising, the DAP-R has not been as extensively validated as certain other death attitude scales (such as Templer's Death Anxiety Scale). Its advantages lie in its

multidimensionality (not just focussing on fear), its having a theoretical orientation, and in its relatively good psychometric properties. Another advantage is its focus on different types of death acceptance - a death attitude that has definitely been underexplored, and one that is particularly appropriate in this study because of its conceptual similarity to ideological commitment.

Dickstein's Death Concern Scale (Contemplation Factor)

Dickstein defines death concern as both a "conscious contemplation of the reality of death and negative evaluation of that reality" (Dickstein, 1972, p.564). This scale thus has two components, both of which are summed, however, to obtain a global score. Eight items representing conscious contemplation were extracted from this scale for the purposes of the present study. All of these loaded highly on to the factor corresponding to this construct in a factor analysis by Klug and Boss (1976), done with a sample of 671 students. The Death Concern Scale has been shown to have good reliability. Split-half reliabilities on four administrations of the scale (mean $n = 163$; two administrations on female-only sample) were good (above $r = .85$). Test-retest reliability on the all-female sample was also good ($r = .87$). (Dickstein, 1972). There is also some evidence of the scale's construct and convergent validity (Dickstein, 1972).

Semantic Differential

The semantic differential created for this study consisted of items representing three constructs - purposefulness, personal involvement, and temporal perspective - taken from Neimeyer, Fontana, and Gold's (1984) Manual for Content Analysis of Death Constructs. The categories for this manual were derived from a sample of 1140 constructs elicited by an administration of the Threat Index to 38 college students. Nineteen categories were inductively derived, and in a series of interjudge reliability studies, were utilized to classify several hundred constructs. In the final interjudge reliability study, two undergraduates, utilizing 28 categories, coded constructs from Death Attitude Repertory Grids completed by 43 adults. Three categories were subsequently dropped because of low interjudge agreement (below 70%). The mean interjudge agreement of the remaining categories was 87.05%.

Most items in the semantic differential were taken directly from Neimeyer et al.'s (1984) manual, although it was necessary to make a few minor modifications for purposes of conceptual clarity. It is expected, however, that the new items do not deviate from Neimeyer et al.'s intended meanings of the selected constructs.

One drawback of the semantic differential approach to the analysis of death constructs is that it is less conservative than content analysis because it "provides" the respondent with constructs rather than requiring him or her to generate his or her

own. Constructs that are selected may not be as important in the individual's belief system as constructs that are generated. On the other hand, the semantic differential approach has several advantages. It is, first of all, less time consuming, and, therefore, can enable a researcher to utilize bigger samples and examine more constructs. Secondly, it can prime a respondent to reveal constructs that are not salient or are difficult to articulate. Lastly, it is better able to assess the degree to which an individual subscribes to a particular construct. It is thus a more sensitive approach - and because differences in the use of these death constructs, associated with identity status, could conceivably be very subtle, such an approach seems warranted.

To improve the reliability and validity of the semantic differential, statistical analyses on the fifteen selected items were conducted: items that adversely affected the psychometric properties of the scale were to be eliminated.

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation conducted on all fifteen items yielded four factors (see Table 5). Most items loaded on to their predicted factor. All five items representing "purpose" had high loadings on to the first factor. One item ("meaningful"), however, was eliminated from the final version of the subscale because of its factorial complexity: it also had a moderately high loading (.30) on to the third ("personal involvement") factor. Four of the five "temporal expectation" items had high loadings on to the second factor. One

item ("prepared") was eliminated from the final version of this subscale because of factorial complexity as well - in this case, however, the item had higher loadings on to the three other factors than its predicted factor. The items representing "personal involvement" were represented by two factors (factors 3 and factor 4). The two items ("I care about it/I don't care about it"; "concerned/unconcerned") representing factor 4 were eliminated from the final version of this subscale because they were judged as being less reflective of the intended definition of this particular construct - one's personal identification with death - than the items represented by factor 3 ("personal/impersonal"; "close to me/distant from me"; "can see myself dying/can't see myself dying"). The eliminated items seem more reflective of one's affective response to death than one's identification with it.

Eleven items (4 on the "purpose" subscale, 4 on the "temporal expectation" subscale, and 3 on the "personal involvement" subscale) were thus maintained in the final version of the scale. Two of these three subscales proved to have moderate to good internal consistency ("purpose" had an alpha of .82; "temporal expectation" had an alpha of .72). The alpha of "personal involvement", however, was rather low (.50). None of the individual items on this subscale, or on the other two, adversely affected the internal consistencies of their respective subscales by their presence. Table 6 provides a summary of the scale alphas.

Table 4

Principal Components Analysis (with Varimax Rotation) of Death
Constuct Items

Item	Loading			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	(Purpose)	(Temporal Expect- ation)	(Personal Involve- ment)	
Purposeful/ Purposeless	.81	.10	.14	-.08
Necessary/ Unnecessary	.73	-.08	-.06	-.13
Useful/Useless	.87	.05	-.01	.02
Having a reason/Having no reason	.74	.11	.15	-.09
Sudden/ Not sudden	-.04	.63	.04	-.08
Predictable/ Unpredictable	.04	.72	-.18	.11
Has warning/ Has no warning	.10	.74	-.10	.05
Foreseeable/ Unforeseeable	.06	.81	.03	.06
Can see myself dying/Can't see myself dying	.19	-.06	.68	.04
Personal/ Impersonal	.09	-.12	.53	.10
Close to me/ Distant from me	-.02	.01	.78	.04

Table 5

Reliability Analyses of Semantic Differential Subscales

SubScale	Alpha
Purpose	.82
Personal Involvement	.50
Temporal Expectation	.72

Procedure

Questionnaire packages were distributed during classtime to interested students after a preliminary explanation of the general objective of the proposed study. Students were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire on their own time, and were instructed to return it either to the professor of the course in which it was distributed, or to office or mailbox of the principal researcher. Questionnaires were anonymous and were coded numerically.

RESULTS

Missing Data

For the most part, missing values appeared to be randomly distributed. There were a total of five missing values (representing five different items) on all dependent variable scales. For each of these cases, the individual's mean score for the remainder of the subscale was imputed on the item with the missing value. There were four cases of missing values on control variable items utilized in the analysis (two on "education", one on "death of a friend", and one on "death of a pet"). In these cases, the sample mean of the variable was inserted.

Regarding missing values from independent variable items: in four cases, no response (or "N/A") was given on items from the interpersonal identity "dating" subscale; and in three cases no response (or "N/A") was given on one item on the ideological identity "religion" subscale ("I attend the same church my family always attended. I've never really questioned why."). As was the case with the missing dependent variable items, the individual's mean score for the remainder of the subscale was imputed. Because of the possibility that respondents may have found the above-mentioned items confusing, reliability tests were conducted on the relevant subscales (ideological foreclosure subscale; interpersonal diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achiever subscales) with and without the items in question: no significant

differences in internal consistency were found.

One interpersonal identity subscale item (#14 on EOM-EIS2) had a number of missing values. Upon examination, it became evident that this item could not have made much sense to respondents - it had been incorrectly transcribed in Adams et al's (1989) manual. Consequently, this item was deleted (with Gerald Adams approval) and the individual's subscale means were imputed.

Lastly, there were also several cases where two adjacent values were given by the respondent. In each case, one value was randomly eliminated (by means of a coin flip).

Correlations

Correlations between DVs

Table 6 summarizes intercorrelations between all dependent variables representing the concept of death contemplation. Table 7 summarizes intercorrelations between all dependent variables representing death acceptance. Overall, these correlations were found to be quite modest. Because the familywise error rate is equal to the number of correlations multiplied by the chosen significance level, the significance level was set at .001 in both sets of correlations in order to keep the Type 1 error at an acceptable level. This resulted in a familywise error rate of $p = .09$ - higher than the traditional .05 level, but considered appropriate for an exploratory investigation of this sort.

Regarding the death contemplation variables: Dickstein's conscious contemplation subscale was found to be negatively correlated with avoidance ($-.27, p < .001$), and positively correlated with personal involvement ($.33, p < .001$). Avoidance was negatively correlated with personal involvement ($.33, p < .001$).

Regarding the death acceptance subscales, purpose was positively correlated with approach acceptance ($.37, p < .001$), escape acceptance ($.19, p < .01$), and neutral acceptance ($.33, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with avoidance ($-.28, p < .001$), and fear ($-.49, p < .001$). Correlations between DAP-R variables were similar to those found in Wong, Reker, and Gesser's (1994) study: fear was negatively correlated with neutral acceptance ($-.30, p < .001$) and approach acceptance ($-.47, p < .001$); approach acceptance was correlated with escape acceptance ($.50, p < .001$).

Table 6

Correlations between Death Contemplation Variables

	1	2	3
1. Avoidance	1.00	-.27*	-.33*
2. Conscious Contemp.		1.00	.33*
3. Personal Involvement			1.00

Note. n = 149.

2-tailed significance: * < .001

Table 7

Correlations between Death Acceptance Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Approach Acceptance	1.00	.50*	-.47*	ns	.37*
2. Escape Acceptance		1.00	ns	ns	ns
3. Fear			1.00	-.30*	-.49*
4. Neutral Acceptance				1.00	.33*
5. Purpose					1.00

Note. n = 149.

ns indicates nonsignificance

2-tailed significance: * < .001

Correlations between DVs and Covariates

In order to reduce the number of control variables, a correlation matrix of all DVs and Control variables was examined for covariates that were either redundant or uncorrelated with any of the dependent measures (see Table 8 for a summary of intercorrelations between covariates and dependent variables). Several variables were not included as covariates in the MANCOVA analyses because they were not significantly correlated with any of the death orientation variables. Those that were rejected include: "death of a family member", "illness", and ethnic identity (dichotomized to Asian vs. non-Asian respondents). 81 correlations were conducted in this analysis. Considering that the significance level was set at .01, there was almost a 100% chance of an occurrence of a Type 1 error. A lower significance level was not chosen, however, because the inclusion of an uncorrelated variable as a covariate in the MANCOVAs would not distort the results of these analyses - whereas a variable that should have been included but was not, because of a Type 2 error, would be more problematic.

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted on variables from this list that were conceivably redundant: these included "death of a pet" and "death of a friend"; and "education" and "age". The variables of age and education were intercorrelated at $r = .58$ ($p < .001$). Because this correlation was rather high, and that these variables have not clearly been differentiated as predictors of

identity status (Waterman, 1993), these variables were judged as redundant for the purposes of the present study. Considering that there is more extensive and consistent evidence that age is linked with death attitudes than is the case for education (Neimeyer, 1988), the latter was not included as a variable in the multivariate analyses.

Five control variables thus emerged from this process of elimination: death of a friend, death of a pet, religious involvement, gender (which was included because of the disparity between men and women respondents), and age. Each was entered as a covariate in a multivariate analysis (or analyses) which included at least one associated dependent variable.

Table 8

Correlations (two-tailed) Between Control Variables and DVs.

Death Constructs/Attitudes									
	Ap- proach	Avoid	Contem- plation	Es- cape	Fear	Neut- ral	Pers. Inv.	Pur- pose	Temp. Expect.
Age	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.24*	ns	ns	ns
Death Fam. Member	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Death Friend	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.29**	ns	ns
Death Pet	-.20*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Educat	ns	-.25*	ns	ns	ns	.26**	ns	ns	ns
Ethnic Ident.	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Gender	ns	-.20*	.26**	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Illness	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Religious Involve- ment	.68**	-.22*	ns	.52**	-.40**	ns	ns	.31**	ns

Note. n = 149

ns indicates nonsignificance

2-tailed significance: * < .01; ** < .001.

Interpersonal Identity and Death Attitudes

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between interpersonal exploration and the variables associated with death contemplation; and between the variables of interpersonal commitment and the variables associated with death acceptance. No significant results were found.

Multivariate Analyses of Covariance

Outliers

There were four multivariate outliers, or cases where the residual value was greater than three standard deviations less than predicted. The four outlying residuals represented four dependent variables (approach acceptance, purpose, personal involvement, and temporal expectation). Each of these outlying values was transformed to be three standard deviations less than predicted. The personal involvement case was also a univariate outlier - this was remedied, however, by the above transformation.

Assumptions

For each MANCOVA, interaction effects between the independent variable and each covariate were examined to determine the homogeneity of regression. None of the results were significant at

the .05 level of significance, implying that this assumption had been met.

Regarding multivariate normality: MANCOVA is robust to modest violations of normality, particularly when the sample size is large enough to produce 20 degrees of freedom for error in the univariate case (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1984), and the sample sizes are equal (or if the smallest sample has an n of about 20 or more with a few DVs). While the sample size in this study is sufficiently large ($n = 149$), the only independent variable that meets the above criteria is "ideological exploration". The independent variable "ideological commitment" has more than 20 cases in their smallest group - but has unequal sample sizes. "Ideological identity status", moreover, had only 10 cases in the foreclosure sample. This gives cause for less confidence in the multivariate normality of the sampling distribution of means. It does not invalidate the analyses, however - it only weakens them somewhat. The fact that seven out of nine dependent variables had univariate distributions that were normal, and that the other two (avoidance - which was significantly positively skewed [$z = 3.36$, $p = .00$] - and temporal expectation, which was significantly negatively skewed [$z = 3.39$, $p = .00$]), were transformed (with the square root function) into normal distributions, does, however, create a greater degree of confidence that the assumption of multivariate normality was not violated.

For all three MANCOVAs, multivariate tests for homogeneity of dispersion matrices were not significant: ideological exploration

had a Boxs M of 1.61 ($F = .26$, $p = .95$); ideological commitment had a Boxs M of 16.44 ($F = .74$, $p = .80$); ideological identity status had a Boxs M of 192.75 ($F = 1.11$, $p = .18$). All univariate tests for homogeneity of variance were also not significant, with the exception of escape acceptance as a function of ideological commitment (Cochrans C = .64, $p = .01$). This was inconsequential, however, because the univariate results for escape acceptance were not significant.

Regarding the assumption of linearity: an examination of a random sample of within-cell (DVs and Covariates) scatterplots revealed no gross deviations from linearity. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (1984), minor violations of this assumption should only reduce power of the MANCOVA. Therefore, no transformations of data were deemed as necessary.

MANCOVA Results

Multivariate analyses of covariance were conducted to examine the effects of ideological exploration and commitment on death constructs and attitudes. An additional exploratory MANCOVA was also conducted to assess the effects of ideological identity status on death constructs and attitudes.

Significant multivariate effects were found for ideological commitment (Pillais = .12, $F = 3.12$, $p = .01$) and identity status (Pillais = .32, $F = 1.79$, $p = .01$). The multivariate effect for ideological exploration was not significant (Pillais = .03, $F =$

1.60, $p = .19$).

Significant univariate effects were found in the two significant multivariate analyses. In the analysis of the effects of ideological commitment on death constructs and attitudes (see Table 9), individuals high in commitment reported higher levels of approach acceptance ($F = 7.20$, $p = .01$), neutral acceptance ($F = 5.41$, $p = .02$), and purpose ($F = 6.41$, $p = .01$). A marginal effect was also found for the dependent variable fear: individuals high in commitment evidenced lower levels on this subscale ($F = 3.61$, $p = .06$).

Regarding ideological identity status (see Table 10): significant univariate effects were found for approach acceptance ($F = 3.70$, $p = .01$), personal involvement ($F = 2.72$, $p = .05$), and purpose ($F = 2.96$, $p = .04$). Post hoc Scheffe comparisons were conducted at the .05 level of significance, showing achievers to report significantly higher levels of approach acceptance ($t = -3.19$, $p = .00$), personal involvement ($t = -2.78$, $p = .01$), and purpose ($t = -2.97$, $p = .00$) than diffusions.

Table 9

Death Construct and Attitude Means as a Function of Ideological Commitment

Variable	Means		F(1, 142)	Significance F
	Low Commitment (n = 109)	High Commitment (N = 40)		
APPROACH ACCEPTANCE	44.96	50.06	7.20	.01
ESCAPE ACCEPTANCE	18.62	16.77	2.60	.11
FEAR	27.02	23.78	3.61	.06
NEUTRAL ACCEPTANCE	27.97	29.80	5.41	.02
PURPOSE	19.93	21.99	6.41	.01
TEMPORAL EXPECTATION*	3.23	3.15	0.54	.46
MULTIVARIATE			3.12	.01

Note. *transformed means.

Table 10

Death Construct and Attitude Means as a Function of Ideological Identity Status

Variable	Means				F(3,140)	Sig. F	Scheffe	
	Diff. (n=64)	Fore. (n=10)	Mor. (n=45)	Ach. (n=30)			t	Sig t
APPROACH ACCEPT.	44.17a	49.02	48.17	51.73b	3.70	.01	-3.19	.00
CONTEM- PLATION	18.02	16.84	17.55	18.33	.42	.74		
ESCAPE ACCEPT.	19.50	19.00	18.16	16.41	1.54	.20		
FEAR	28.21a	23.89	24.51	23.24b	2.40	.07	2.34	.02
NEUTRAL ACCEPT.	27.65	29.34	28.36	29.45	1.67	.18		
PERSONAL INVOLVE.	14.38a	14.22	15.08	16.31b	2.72	.05	-2.78	.01
PURPOSE	19.59a	20.68	20.73	22.63b	2.96	.04	-2.97	.00
AVOID*	3.78	4.02	3.73	3.46	1.15	.33		
TEMPORAL* EXPECT.	3.23	3.56a	3.22	3.00b	2.36	.07	2.57	.01
MULTIVARIATE					1.79	.01		

Note. a & b Means significantly different.

*transformed means.

Regression Analyses

Another exploratory component of this study involved the examination of relationships between demographic (control) variables (death of a friend, death of a pet, age, gender, and religious involvement) and both identity and death construct/attitude variables. Multiple regression analyses (from the MANCOVA procedures) were examined to explore the relationships between demographic variables and death attitudes; logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between demographic variables and ideological exploration and commitment.

For the logistic regression equation assessing the association between the five demographic variables and ideological exploration (see Table 11), three predictor variables emerged as significant: religious involvement ($R = .24$), age ($R = .12$) and death of a pet ($R = .20$). The model chi-square equalled 28.54, with a significance level of .00.

For the logistic regression equation assessing the association between the five demographic variables and ideological commitment, the model chi-square was not significant (5.62 $p = .34$).

Regarding the regression analyses taken from the MANCOVA procedures (see Tables 12 through 19), all multivariate tests were found to be significant. With the exception of the variable "temporal expectation", all univariate analyses were also found to

be significant. Four of the five demographic variables, moreover, were significantly associated with at least one death orientation variable. Religious involvement was found to be a significant predictor of five death orientations: approach acceptance (Beta = .66), escape acceptance (Beta = .54), fear (Beta = -.39), purpose (Beta = .30), and avoidance (Beta = -.19). Gender was significantly associated with conscious contemplation (.26), personal involvement (Beta = .18), and avoidance (Beta = -.18). Age was significantly associated with neutral acceptance (Beta = .21). Lastly, death of a friend was found to be a significant predictor of personal involvement (Beta = .28).

Table 11

Logistic Regression of Demographic Variables on Ideological Exploration

Dependent Variable "Ideological Exploration"

Variable	B	Wald	Sig	R
DEATH/FRIEND	.46	.87	.35	.00
DEATH/PET	1.32	9.90	.00	.20
AGE	.22	5.08	.02	.12
GENDER	-.03	.00	.95	.00
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	.46	13.52	.00	.24
Constant	-6.59	9.14	.00	

Model Chi-Square = 28.54, df = 5, Sig = .00, n = 149

Table 12

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Conscious Contemplation

Dependent variable "Conscious Contemplation"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/FRIEND	.99	.09	1.12	.27
GENDER	2.67	.26	3.19	.00
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	.12	.05	.62	.53

F (3, 144) = 3.40, Significance F = .01, n = 149

Table 13

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Avoidance

Dependent variable "Avoidance"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/FRIEND	-.26	-.11	-1.33	.18
GENDER	-.41	-.18	-2.28	.02
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	-.10	-.19	-2.32	.02

F (3, 144) = 4.32, Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 14

Multiple Regressions of Demographic Variables on Personal Involvement

Dependent variable Personal Involvement

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/FRIEND	2.31	.28	3.56	.00
GENDER	1.41	.18	2.28	.02
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	-.08	-.05	-.58	.57

F (3, 144) = 4.38 Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 15

Multiple Regressions of Demographic Variables on Purpose

Dependent variable "Purpose"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/PET	-.72	-.08	-.95	.34
AGE	.15	.06	.82	.41
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	.78	.30	3.72	.00

F (3, 144) = 6.10 Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 16

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Approach Acceptance

Dependent Variable "Approach Acceptance"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/PET	-.64	-.02	-.36	.71
AGE	-.21	-.03	-.48	.64
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	5.23	.66	10.60	.00

F (3, 144) = 42.45 Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 17

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Escape Acceptance

Dependent variable "Escape Acceptance"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/PET	.90	.06	.84	.40
AGE	-.10	-.03	-.40	.69
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	2.17	.54	7.28	.00

F (3, 144) = 18.66 Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 18

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Fear

Dependent variable "Fear"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/PET	.54	.03	.35	.73
AGE	-.02	.00	-.06	.95
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	-2.15	-.39	-4.89	.00

F (3, 144) = 9.12 Significance F = .00, n = 149

Table 19

Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables on Neutral Acceptance

Dependent variable "Neutral Acceptance"

Variable	<u>B</u>	Beta	<u>t</u>	Sig. <u>t</u>
DEATH/PET	.56	.07	.84	.40
AGE	.43	.21	2.65	.01
RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT	.14	.06	.78	.44

F (3, 144) = 2.62 Significance F = .05, n = 149

DISCUSSION

Exploration and Commitment

Of the two MANCOVAs, assessing the effects of ideological exploration and commitment on the death constructs (and associated death orientations) of personal involvement and purpose, respectively, a significant multivariate effect was only found in the case of ideological commitment. Despite the lack of significance in the analysis of ideological exploration, however, a significant result was obtained in the ideological identity status MANCOVA for one variable predicted to be associated with exploration - personal involvement. In this analysis, moreover, a post hoc scheffe revealed a significant difference between achiever and diffusion statuses - whether or not ideological exploration was a main effect, however, is not clear. The fact that there was variation across identity status does suggest, however, that this variable is in synchrony with identity development.

It should be noted though that this variable had low internal consistency, relatively unestablished validity, and a result that was not supported in the analyses of related, psychometrically established variables. The evidence that ideological exploration is associated with death contemplation thus seems rather weak. This could be a consequence of the age range of the sample: perhaps death contemplation is not a relevant component of

identity development for young adults (or perhaps even more generally). The three dependent variables may not, on the other hand, have been ideal choices for the ideological exploration analysis. Avoidance, is, for example, more complex than the other two variables, and, consequently, represents more than a simple lack of exploration. Like fear, a variable with which is moderately correlated (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994), avoidance may be determined by a number of different factors. The fact that it was in the present study negatively correlated with religious involvement and religious importance suggests that is a behaviour more influenced by social context rather than a general sense of ideological identity.

The other nonsignificant variable - conscious contemplation - may also have been a less than adequate choice for the multivariate analysis of ideological exploration. Rather than assessing - as would be expected in the context of identity development - the extent to which one attempts to come to terms with death, this scale simply focusses on the quantity of an individual's death-related thoughts. In terms of the goal of contemplation, more thoughts do not necessarily mean productive ones - and could in fact represent an anxious or escapist preoccupation (correlation between escape acceptance and contemplation = .25, $p < .01$) with death rather than an attempt to integrate it. The fact that there was a negative correlation between neutral acceptance and contemplation ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$), and a positive correlation between escape acceptance and

contemplation ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) supports such a claim.

Whether the nonsignificance of the multivariate analysis of ideological exploration was more a result of the inclusion of inappropriate scales than the lack of association between ideological exploration and death contemplation cannot be definitively answered in this study. The latter conclusion certainly cannot be ruled out. The significance of the result involving personal involvement only weakly supports the hypothesis that there is an association between these two variables - it needs to be replicated in future studies using variables with better psychometric properties.

Regarding the predictions involving commitment: significant results were found in three of the six predictions (those involving approach acceptance, neutral acceptance, and the death construct purpose) - and a trend was found in another (involving the dependent variable "fear"). These results support the contention that a sense of ideological commitment would be associated with a view of death as purposeful, and hence, acceptable - as a bridge to eternity (approach acceptance) and/or as a natural aspect of life (neutral acceptance). In support of the independence of these two forms of acceptance, both were found to be significantly correlated with purpose, but not so with each other. Neutral acceptance was, moreover, not significantly associated - as was approach acceptance - with religious involvement or religious attitude.

This does not imply, however, that there is no spiritual

component to neutral acceptance - just that it does not reflect, as do most traditional religions, a view of death as transition. It implies instead the more naturalistic view that meaning is found in one's current life rather than in the promise of a future existence. In fact, Wong, Reker, and Gesser (1994), finding an association between physical and psychological well-being and neutral acceptance, concluded that neutral acceptance was probably the most adaptive type of acceptance - one that is related to a greater sense of fulfilment.

As discussed in the introduction, however, it is also conceivable that neutral acceptance may reflect denial or cognitive distancing of death. As Tomer (1994, p. 13) states, "people may acknowledge the inevitability of their own death and still consider this as an event belonging to the remote future, without any relevance to their present". Such a belief of invulnerability, he adds, is strengthened by repeated false alarms (i.e. threats of death that have not materialized), and because the motivation to disconfirm it is low (because of its adaptive value). The fact that all statuses have high mean scores on this variable suggests that this could be a widespread tendency. That high commitment statuses have even higher neutral acceptance scores, however, could imply that individuals of these statuses have an even higher tendency to maintain such a belief - perhaps because of their greater sense of investment in a particular ideological view. The difference between these two depictions of neutral acceptance is the level of contemplation that is

associated with them. They reflect the difference between achieved and foreclosed statuses: acceptance associated with openness to dissolution versus acceptance associated with a sense of insulation from death.

Higher levels of approach acceptance could also be differentiated along the dimension of contemplation/exploration - representing the results of a sincere spiritual quest, or the adoption of a widespread view (Kastenbaum, 1986) that is adaptive. The fact that this result emerged even though religious involvement was controlled attests to the pervasiveness of this belief.

A more personally contemplated view would emphasize the view of death as a transition, an opportunity for growth, rather than a dogmatic, sectarian belief. Ultimately, one's religiosity - whether theistic, agnostic, or atheistic - should be a secondary factor to one's openness to change.

The results also suggest that ideological commitment may be associated with lower levels of fear of death. There was a trend toward lower levels of fear amongst individuals who had high levels of ideological commitment. This result concurs with findings of Egli et al (1994), Woods and Witte (1981), and Sterling and Van Horn (1989). What is not determined in the present study is most significant component of identity that contributes to lower fear. From the perspective of the model created for this study, it could be an explicit death ideology (religious identity), and/or a more implicit sense of

meaningfulness, self-certainty, and agency - all of which would be expected to be associated with ideological commitment and/or achievement. Most research has shown negative relationships between religious ideologies and fear (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1989); but there is also evidence of a negative association between general life purpose and fear (e.g. Durlak, 1972), and between agency (operationalized as locus of control) and fear (Neimeyer, 1988). In the present study, fear was found to be negatively associated with (death) purpose, approach acceptance, and neutral acceptance - the last of these possibly reflecting a more implicit ideological orientation. Future research will have to focus on the effects of local domains to gain a clearer picture of the most relevant factor(s).

Escape acceptance, which was expected to be negatively associated with ideological commitment, was somewhat of an anomaly in the list of acceptance variables. In contrast to the other styles of death acceptance, it represents one possible way in which a death ideology domain could be out of alignment with the general ideological domain of identity. While the univariate analysis involving this variable did not yield significant results, the achievement mean did, however, appear to be distinct from those of the other three statuses - perhaps an indication of achievers' greater sense of agency. Whether or not this difference was significant will have to be examined in a future analysis.

One interesting paradox concerning escape acceptance is that despite the hypothesis put forward in this study, an opposite one

could be generated if these scales were administered to certain populations. Escape acceptance is not necessarily inconsistent with a sense of purpose in life. From the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial theory - with its emphasis on the individual's adaptation to social demands - high levels of escape acceptance in a young adult would be viewed as a sign of physical or psychological ill-health (i.e. not adaptive unless he or she was terminally ill). From a more constructivistic perspective, however, escape acceptance represents just another ideological commitment - another way in which death can be integrated. The fact that religious involvement ($\text{Beta} = .56, p = .00$) and purpose ($r = .19, p < .01$) are associated with escape acceptance is evidence that it can represent a meaningful construction of death in one's life.

This type of acceptance might be more relevant for individuals of an older age bracket. For such individuals, the pains of life may make it a more prominent aspect of identity. Erikson's theory suggests that as one ages, one's commitments become increasingly more general (Erikson, 1980). If one accepts life as that what should have been - as Erikson describes a positive resolution of the crisis of integrity versus despair - commitment no longer has to tie one exclusively to life. At this stage, one's most central commitment may involve the act of letting go.

Such a commitment may also be relevant to young people in a similar existential situation, in terms of physical health, as

older individuals. Results of Wong, Reker, & Gesser's (1994) study involving young adults indicated that those lacking physical well being tended to have higher escape acceptance scores ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). While this result does not appear to be generalizable to individuals in low ideological commitment statuses, escape acceptance does seem, from a constructivist perspective, to reflect a way of finding integrity in one's life in difficult circumstances.

The death construct temporal expectation, not expected to be particularly associated with any of the death attitudes, was considered on its own. While it was not found to be significantly associated with commitment, a trend was found in the identity status analysis suggesting a possible interaction effect: identity achievement appeared to result in a more long-term temporal orientation than was the case for foreclosures. Post hoc Scheffes revealed significant differences between the means of achiever and foreclosure statuses, and between the means of achiever status and the other three statuses combined. In light of Rappaport et al's (1985) findings that high commitment statuses (and particularly foreclosures) had more of a future orientation than the others, this result was somewhat surprising. Because one may view one's lifepath as predictable and linear does not imply, however, that death necessarily fits into that view. Achievers seem more likely (than foreclosures, particularly) to have integrated death into their temporal perspective - that death, for them, is more comparable to other life events in predictability.

Identity Status

The results of the post hoc scheffe tests - revealing significant differences between achievers and diffusions in three analyses (and a marginal difference between achievers and diffusions, and between achievers and foreclosures) represent evidence that an exploration-commitment interaction does not diminish the independent effects of exploration or commitment. Whether it enhances such effects is, however, uncertain - there was no clear evidence in any of the analyses of an interaction effect (although, based on the differences of means, there may have been one in the case of temporal expectation). The fact that foreclosures did not evidence significantly different scores than low commitment statuses may well have been due to the small sample ($n = 10$) of this group, and the higher t necessary to reach significance. This was not an issue for moratoriums, however - there were a comparable number of respondents in the moratorium cell to those in the achiever and diffusion cells. Whether there was thus a greater tendency among diffusions toward more negative death attitudes is uncertain.

If future research does support the hypothesis that existential identity lags behind other domains, there are a number of reasons why that might be the case: perhaps simply because death is not as relevant or as immediate a concern to young adults in the prime of their physical health (Noppe & Noppe, 1991); perhaps because of a lack of personal experience with death;

perhaps because it is not deeply explored until adequate ego defenses have been established; or perhaps, because there is a lack of social support for such exploration amongst younger populations.

Although post hoc scheffes indicated that achiever and diffusion statuses were significantly different from each other in three of the univariate analyses (and marginally different in another), there was no evidence that either status was more responsible for the results. Such evidence would consist of either status being significantly different than other statuses as well.

It is thus uncertain whether the significant differences between achieved and diffusion status represent achievers' development of death ideology, or diffusions' tendency toward rejection of normative views. It could be that all statuses tend to converge upon the diffusion and foreclosure statuses in the death ideology domain, and that ideological diffusions' greater tendency towards nihilistic views results in significantly lower ratings of acceptance and/or personal involvement.

Interpersonal Identity

The absence of significant results in this domain likely reflect its lack of an explicit existential component. There was no evidence in the present study that existential identity was an implicit component of the interpersonal identity domain of the EOM-EIS2.

Although there were no significant results for this domain, a couple of points should be considered. The first is that the focus of this study was the local domain of ideological identity rather than that of interpersonal identity. The most relevant death construct to interpersonal identity in terms of content, "connection", was, consequently, not devised for this study. Individuals with an interpersonal identity, who have not yet formed an ideology of death, may at least have, however, a view of death as more 'connected' than individuals lacking an interpersonal identity. Future research could focus on examining the effects of interpersonal identity, separately and in conjunction with ideological identity, on this and related variables.

Westman and Cantor's (1985) finding that an extended self is be associated with lower death fear was not supported in the present study. This could indicate that interpersonal commitment as assessed by the EOM-EIS2 does not necessarily reflect a sense of extended self in terms of empathic connection with others. It could also reflect the complexity of the variable fear: while a sense of interpersonal connection may be associated with lower fear of certain aspects of death, it may also be associated with higher fear of other aspects, such as the consequences of death, or the death of others. A multidimensional measure of death fear such as Hoelter's (1979) MFODS might be useful in examining this possibility.

While there were no significant results involving

interpersonal identity, it is interesting to note that the control variable "death of a friend" was found to be significantly associated with personal involvement ($Beta = .31, p = .00$). The fact that individuals who have experienced such bereavement tend to view death in more personal terms suggests that it may reflect an integration of existential and interpersonal identity: that the death of a friend is internalized and experienced as a personal "death". This result supports Meshot and Leitner's (1994) finding of an association between bereavement and interpersonal death integration.

Determinants of 'Existential Identity'

Religious involvement and age were predictive of ideological exploration and death attitudes. Bereavement was as well, although different types of bereavement were associated with each. Death of a friend was associated with the death construct personal involvement but not identity - considering Meshot and Leitner's (1994) finding of a negative relationship between bereavement and threat as assessed by the Interpersonal Repertory Grid but not the Threat Index, perhaps death of a friend would predict identity in an interpersonal-existential domain. Death of a pet was associated with ideological exploration but not any death attitudes or constructs in the regression analyses (although death of a pet was negatively correlated with approach acceptance). Considering that this variable was negatively correlated with religious

involvement, perhaps a lack of religiosity may increase one's motivation to explore meaning. Gender was associated with contemplation and associated variables, but not ideological or interpersonal identity. Because these variables may not be the ideal representatives of death contemplation, however, the question of whether gender is more predictive of existential identity per se than ideological or global identity will have to be explored in future research.

Future Research

The apparent distinctiveness of the achiever and diffusion status means warrants a future examination of the effects of ideological achievement and diffusion on death constructs and orientations. The results of the current study suggest that these constructs might be more applicable in such an examination than commitment and exploration. In addition to the five significant univariate analyses in the identity status MANCOVA that revealed significant differences between achievement or diffusion means and the means of the other three statuses combined, several other analyses (involving neutral acceptance, escape acceptance, and avoidance) have diffusion or achievement means that appear to be different from the means of the other statuses combined.

If commitment and exploration are used, a two-way MANCOVA could determine the effects of each variable independently and together - an approach that could help determine whether either

variable is a better predictor of each death variable, or whether the effects are more dependent on an interaction between the two. Because the two identity constructs did not prove to be as distinct as predicted, they could both be included in a two way MANCOVA involving most of the dependent variables used in the current study.

Assuming that the death ideology domain is not in synchrony with other domains for young adults, different age ranges could be compared in such an analysis. Individuals in lifespan stages in which death is a more central (midlife to old age) issue could thus be predicted to evidence greater synchrony between the ideology and death identity domains - results may indicate stronger main effects for these groups than for younger individuals. A greater synchrony between death and general ideology domains could also be predicted for individuals who have experienced bereavement.

Another potential future direction would be to explore some of the untested dimensions of the model developed for the current study. Future research could test the effects of local domains of identity (e.g. agentic, interpersonal, generative) - alone or in conjunction with the ideological domain - on corresponding death constructs and attitudes. This could be useful in assessing more implicit effects of identity on death attitudes. Future research could also focus on some of the death ideology dimensions not tested in the present study (e.g. connected acceptance), as well as different versions of these dimensions.

The theme of continuity is, for example, proposed in the model to be represented in the death ideology domain by dying acceptance. A measure has not, however, been devised for this attitude. The result in the present study involving the death construct 'temporal expectation' - while marginal - does nevertheless offer some empirical justification for the creation of such a measure. If one is constructed, its items should emphasize - consistent with the construct of continuity - an acknowledgement of death as a process in one's life rather than any particular preconceived notion of what that might involve. The theme of agency is proposed in the model to be represented in the death ideology domain by the constructs 'competence' or "control". A scale measuring such variables could range from very low levels, reflecting a fatalistic orientation or a sense of helplessness, to higher levels, reflecting a belief in death's manageability and/or preventability. Individuals who have a high sense of agentic identity should score higher in this variable: a greater sense of control in everyday life should translate into a greater feeling of control over death, or a sense that one can maximize one's experience in the face of death. Bugen's (1980-81) Coping with Death Scale, shown to have adequate psychometric properties (Robbins, 1994), is one established measure that particularly captures the second of these viewpoints - reflecting a more integrated understanding of death in terms of self-efficacy.

Regarding interpersonal identity: the most relevant death

attitude to this domain of identity - connected acceptance - was not included in the analyses of the present study. Such a measure, not yet devised, would reflect a view of death as involving the presence of family and/or friends, either living or deceased, or alternatively, as the experience of communion with God or a higher dimension of reality. It seems feasible that an individual who views self in the context of his or her relationships will tend to view death (if it is integrated into that conception) as something that happens within and to a relationship.

Another existential theme that could be more fully explored is transition acceptance. Approach acceptance is representative of this theme, but, nevertheless, is somewhat sectarian - individuals who do not hold the particular view of death reflected by that variable could still view death as an experience of either growth or evolution. Whether or not one believes in a 'glorious afterlife', death can be viewed as a new and interesting experience (Rogers, 1980) or in terms of one's personal legacy,

Transition acceptance is particularly relevant for those who evidence a sense of generative identity. Such individuals are probably more likely to view death as some type of transition rather than an ending because of their identification with someone or thing that will endure beyond their personal death. This is particularly expected to be the case for middle-aged and older adults. While generativity is a relevant theme in adolescence and young adulthood, it is a more central focus in midlife and later (McAdams, 1990). As discussed in the introduction, one established

variable that would be expected to be associated with the construct of evolution or growth and the attitude of transition acceptance (not yet devised) is Drolet's (1990) measure of symbolic immortality - a multidimensional measure assessing the extent of one's sense of transcendence of self over death. Drolet describes symbolic immortality as "an adaptive anticipatory response to the enigmatic and often frightening reality of death...that can best help the individual deal with the dualistic nature of the existential condition, that is, to be fully potentiated, yet finite beings" (Drolet, 1990, p. 149). Symbolic immortality can manifest in a number ways: through identification with family, culture, work, or nature; or through spiritual attainments or other types of peak experiences. Of relevance to the identity theme of generativity is what Drolet (1990) refers to as biosocial symbolic immortality (a sense of death transcendence through the identification with family and culture) and creative symbolic immortality (a sense of death transcendence through one's works of creation). Although one may personally die, one can symbolically live on through one's descendants or one's work.

An alternative to the semantic differential approach used to analyze constructs in the current study is an open-ended one. Such an approach could involve a content analysis of oral or written questions about what death means to the respondent. Because the respondent generates his or her own death constructs, this approach might represent a more conservative measure of what constructs are actually being utilized by an individual - although

differences in the degree to which a construct is subscribed would be lost. Given the results of the present study, achievers, having a more integrated understanding of death, would probably evidence more of the eight constructs (and others) of the model than individuals represented by other identity statuses.

Such a qualitative approach could also be effective in getting a better understanding of narrative context of an individual's personal meanings of death - allowing a deeper exploration of the existential themes that manifest for each identity status. An example of such an approach in analyzing such themes can be found in Ross and Pollio (1990).

One goal of the present study was to lay the foundations for the future development of a multidimensional scale (or a number of individual scales) that would focus on the different themes of death ideology discussed in the introduction. One unique and important feature of such a scale is that it could be scored as a two factor index of existential identity - combining measures of acceptance and contemplation or exploration into a single index paralleling Marcia's four statuses. A significant advantage of such an instrument is that it could distinguish superficial death acceptance from that which reflects a more genuinely integrated understanding of death. This would, consequently, give it more practical value in the context of counselling or death education, and in the context of research - given that it, in differentiating between integrated and constricted acceptance, might better predict death-relevant behaviours.

An alternative possibility to the above could be the construction of a more generic scale, similar to the EOM-EIS2. Items of such a scale could be based on modifications of those from the religion subscale of the EOM-EIS2. An item on the diffusion subscale might, for example, be: "I don't think about death very much. It is not important to me".

If a either death ideology scale is devised, a variety of variables could be tested as predictors of this aspect of identity. What variables in particular are associated with an individual's integration of death, and to what extent, and under what conditions do such associations exist? A whole range of demographic, personality, cognitive, behavioural (e.g. high-risk behaviours), and experiential variables (e.g. peak experiences) could be explored.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study regarding the sample, the instruments, the statistical approach, and the depth of the analyses. The sample, first of all, was nonrandom - respondents were volunteers, and may not have been representative of the target population of family science and psychology undergraduates. External validity is also an issue: university students are not representative of all young adults, particularly in the area of death attitudes and identity status, which have been shown to be influenced by education (Neimeyer, 1988;

Waterman, 1993). Another problem was that the sample was not screened for married individuals - who were unsuitable for the purposes of the present study because the EOM-EIS2 interpersonal identity section was designed for single adolescents and adults under thirty years of age. It is not certain whether any respondents were married, although it is rather inconsequential considering that no results were found in the interpersonal domain.

A more significant limitation in the present study concerned the target population: death is much less relevant to adolescents and young adults than it is to older adults. This is particularly the case regarding death acceptance (e.g. Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994). Considering the more immediate normative demands of finding one's vocational path and gender identity, and the relative good health and lack of death experience during this stage of life, death ideology seems less likely than a number of other content domains to be deeply explored by most adolescents and young adults - even if they are able to express sophisticated thoughts about it. Perhaps support for additional aspects of the present theoretical analysis would have been obtained if an older sample of participants had been employed.

Two control variables that were included in the questionnaire proved to be problematic. One was the variable 'death of a family member'. Because the vast majority of respondents had experienced the loss of a family member - and the proportion of these losses that involved a close relative was unknown - however, this

variable should have been changed to 'death of a close family member'. As it was written, this variable was probably too broad to have had any impact on the data. Another control variable, 'illness of loved one', had to be deleted because it did not exclude loved one's who died as a result of (or following) their illnesses - making it impossible to know whether the relevant factor was the illness or the experience of bereavement.

Another set of limitations of the present study involve the instruments that were utilized. The three semantic differential scales devised for use in this study did not, for example, have established validity - although there was evidence of convergent and construct validity for personal involvement and purpose, and marginal evidence of construct validity for temporal expectation, in the results of this study. The internal consistency of personal involvement was also quite low ($\alpha = .50$). Unsupported univariate results involving these variables thus need to be interpreted with caution.

Regarding the established instruments, the scale of conscious contemplation may not, as discussed above, have adequately represented the concept of contemplation depicted in the model. Such a measure should more appropriately have assessed the extent to which one attempts to come to terms with death, rather than the frequency of one's thoughts on the subject. Dickstein's (1972) measure, originally intended as a component of death concern, does not reflect this existential objective.

Two of the scales utilized in the present study are also

somewhat limited in their applicability across groups. The DAP-R subscale of approach acceptance, for example, emphasizes a Judeo-Christian, western view of the afterlife, and, consequently, is not particularly appropriate for individuals who may positively anticipate death, but do not adhere to the sectarian view represented in this scale (such as those following religions espousing rebirth in this world). A more general approach acceptance scale not imposing such a viewpoint might have been more appropriately utilized.

The identity status scale used in the present study, the EOM-EIS2, also reflects bias in its frequent use of the term 'parents' and its emphasis on western religious institutions (e.g. "church"). Its authors do not seem to acknowledge that some respondents may in fact come from single-parent families and/or may practice alternative religious paths.

Another concern about the EOM-EIS2 is that it may underestimate the number of foreclosures - particularly in the interpersonal domain - amongst undergraduate university students. Some of the representative items seem to lack the necessary subtlety appropriate for a more sophisticated population (e.g. "My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose my friends"). One could base one's identity on parental views, but conceivably still have the sophistication to not acknowledge this in such a blatant manner. Items such as the example above seem more appropriate for younger adolescents than university students.

The low number of foreclosures in the present study represent a problem in terms of the statistical assumption of multivariate normality in the ideological identity status analysis. Because it is not certain whether the assumption was met, this particular analysis was somewhat weakened, and the results should be interpreted with caution. Because this analysis was secondary to the objective of the present study, however, this issue is not a major concern.

Another important limitation of the present study is its lack of depth of assessment. Unfortunately, an adequate empirical and methodological base for more sophisticated analyses of death attitudes in the context of identity development has not really existed. The present study was intended as a prelude for such future research. It was, consequently, limited to an examination of the main effects of the underlying identity constructs on death attitudes. More complex interaction effects could not be predicted from the model or existing literature, nor determined in the multivariate identity status analysis (mainly because of the small number of foreclosures). The established measures of death acceptance used in this study were not able, moreover, to distinguish between acceptance based on contemplation and acceptance based on positive illusions or denial. The development of a two-factor (contemplation and acceptance) index of death ideology, as discussed above, could remedy this problem.

Strengths

While there are a number of limitations to this study, there are also a number of compensating factors. Regarding the sample: the cell sizes were adequate for the assessment of the main research questions - the effects of commitment and exploration; the response rate was acceptable; the respondents included both males and females (unlike Sterling and van Horn's 1989 study); and a number of potentially confounding demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, bereavement experience, and religious involvement) were controlled in the analyses.

Regarding the instruments devised for the present study: each was selected from a list of empirically derived content categories (Neimeyer, Fontana, & Gold, 1984), and devised to represent an underlying construct of a death attitudes proposed in the model (and two of the three attitudes in question were represented by established scales). All, moreover, were factorially independent, and two of the three (purpose and temporal expectation) had acceptable levels of internal consistency. While these constructs played a supportive and exploratory role in the present study, some care was nevertheless taken to maximize their validity. All three were retained in the analyses - despite their shortcomings - to inform future research.

The three established scales utilized in the present study all have, as discussed above, demonstrated reliability and validity. Significantly, all measures in the study are also

theoretically grounded - an important factor considering the lack of such research in thanatology (Neimeyer, 1994a). Two of the scales, the EOM-EIS2 and the DAP-R, are multidimensional as well - a factor that is advantageous in determining subtle nuances in constructs and attitudes across groups.

Regarding the statistical approach: conservative procedures were utilized for dealing with missing data, outliers, and skewed distributions. The use of MANCOVA was also prudent, considering the robustness of this statistic (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1984), and the potential problem of high type A error as a result of number of hypotheses that were tested. All assumptions relevant to the multivariate analyses of variance, moreover, appear to have been met in the primary analyses (except in the case of escape acceptance - which did not yield positive results).

Lastly, the study was broad in scope: exploring new ground in the area of identity, and utilizing an integrated theory that minimized underlying teleological and value-laden assumptions, and permitted the examination of complex beliefs and attitudes. While limited to analyses of the main effects of underlying identity constructs on simple death constructs and attitudes, the present study nevertheless prepares the ground for the development of an existential domain of identity, and more sophisticated quantitative and/or qualitative future research.

Implications

The present study's partial support of an existential domain of identity could have important implications in the area of death education and counselling. The development of a diagnostic and/or educational tool that could explore the depth and flexibility of one's commitments to a particular death ideology could be useful in distinguishing between individuals who have come to terms with death and those who have made shallow commitments (based on positive illusions) in order to create self-definition. The creation of such a scale could be useful in determining who might be more vulnerable to a future crisis as a result of a constricted phenomenal field (i.e. diffusions and foreclosures).

The results of the present study indicate the vulnerability of individuals low in commitment: they had higher scores in fear (although marginal), and lower scores in personal involvement, approach acceptance, neutral acceptance, and purpose than those high in commitment. Diffusions may be particularly vulnerable to negative death attitudes: they were the only status to significantly differ from achievers in the identity status analyses of these dependent variables. From an existential perspective, these results highlight the need for a greater emphasis on the exploration of life's meaning - an aspect of education that may be currently being neglected as a consequence of the materialism saturating western culture. Because meaning is more of a process in which one engages than a product that one

acquires (Corey, 1991), addressing the question of the meaning of one's existence may be more important than finding an answer.

While those low in commitment do evidence lower acceptance and higher fear, these differences do not necessarily imply pathology. A potential danger of the use of an instrument assessing death ideology is that diffusions in particular could be labelled in this way. To remedy such a tendency, it should be considered that an identity diffused individual may in fact have a more 'realistic' view of death than that of other statuses. Greater death acceptance might simply mean better positive illusions or denial. The determination of the meaning of one's existential identity status should thus be more a matter of concern for the respondent, and not the individual administering the scale.

Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to determine whether death ideology represented a relevant content domain of identity for young adults. The results suggest that it is at least relevant as a socially constructed (or foreclosed) form of identity: ideological commitment was found to predict a view of death as purposeful and a sense of approach and neutral death acceptance. There was only weak indirect evidence, however, that the death ideology domain involves a process of personal exploration and meaning construction: ideological identity status was found to

predict the death construct of personal involvement, a proposed underlying variable of death contemplation. This result needs to be interpreted with caution, however, because of its low reliability, and lack of established validity.

There was no clear evidence of interaction effects amongst ideological identity statuses, although achievers and diffusions emerged as the only significantly different statuses in all but one marginal result. There was also no evidence that interpersonal identity had an effect on death constructs and attitudes.

Several determinants of death attitudes (age, religious involvement, and bereavement experience) were found to predict identity status constructs - a finding consistent with the contention that the development of death ideology is an aspect of identity development.

It is suggested that future research focus on the development of a multidimensional death attitude index corresponding to Marcia's four status typology, and based on the underlying constructs of contemplation and acceptance. Such a scale would have the advantage of differentiating between shallow and deep death integration, and perhaps also between more hopeful and more depressed existential outlooks.

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Part 1: Background Information

Please tell us about yourself:

1. What is your sex? Male _____ Female _____

2. What is your age (in years)? _____

3. What is your ethnic identification? _____

4. How many years of college and/or university education have you completed? _____

5. Are you currently in a relationship? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, for how long? _____

6. How often do you usually attend religious services?

_____	more than once a week
_____	once a week
_____	2 or 3 times a month
_____	about once a month
_____	less than once a month
_____	never

7. In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your day-to-day life?

_____	very important
_____	fairly important
_____	not too important
_____	not at all important

8. Have you ever experienced:

a. the death of a family member? Yes _____ No _____

please identify who you lost
(can be more than one)How long ago did this (these)
loss(es) happen?

b. the death of a close friend? Yes _____ No _____

How long ago did this (these)
loss(es) happen?

c. the death of a pet? Yes _____ No _____

How long ago did this (these)

loss(es) happen?

- d. a life-threatening illness
or injury?

Yes _____ No _____

How long ago did this happen?

- e. a family member or close friend
with a life-threatening illness
or injury?

How long ago did was (were) this
(these) incident(s)?

PART 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings. If a statement has more than one part, please indicate your reaction to the statement as a whole. Indicate your answer on the line preceding the question number.

1=strongly agree 4=disagree
2=moderately agree 5=moderately disagree
3=agree 6=strongly disagree

- _____ 1. I haven't chosen the occupation I really want to get into, and I'm just working at whatever is available until something better comes along.
- _____ 2. When it comes to religion, I just haven't found anything that appeals and I don't really feel the need to look.
- _____ 3. My ideas about men's and women's roles are identical to my parents'. What has worked for them will obviously work for me.
- _____ 4. There's no single "life style" which appeals to me more than another.
- _____ 5. There's a lot of different kinds of people. I'm still exploring the many possibilities to find the right kinds of friends for me.
- _____ 6. I sometimes join in recreational activities when asked, but I rarely try anything on my own.
- _____ 7. I haven't really thought about a "dating style." I'm not too concerned whether I date or not.
- _____ 8. Politics is something that I can never be too sure about because things change so fast. But I do think it's important to know what I can politically stand for and believe in.
- _____ 9. I'm still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs will be right for me.
- _____ 10. I don't' give religion much thought and it doesn't bother me one way or the other.
- _____ 11. There are so many ways to divide responsibilities in marriage, I'm trying to decide what will work for me.
- _____ 12. I'm looking for an acceptable perspective for my own

"lifestyle" view, but I haven't found it yet.

- _____ 13. There are many reasons for friendship, but I choose my close friends on the basis of certain values and similarities that I've personally decided on.
- _____ 14. While I don't have one recreational activity I'm really committed to, I'm still experiencing numerous possibilities in marriage, I'm trying to decide what will work for me.
- _____ 15. Based on past experiences, I've chosen the type of dating relationship I want now.
- _____ 16. I haven't really considered politics. It just doesn't excite me much.
- _____ 17. I might have thought about a lot of different jobs, but there's never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.
- _____ 18. A person's faith is unique to each individual. I've considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe.
- _____ 19. I've never really seriously considered men's and women's roles in marriage. It just doesn't seem to concern me.
- _____ 20. After considerable thought I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "lifestyle" and don't believe anyone will be likely to change my perspective.
- _____ 21. My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose my friends.
- _____ 22. I've chosen one or more recreational activities to engage in.
- _____ 23. I don't think about dating much. I just kind of take it as it comes.
- _____ 24. I guess I'm pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such.
- _____ 25. I'm really not interested in finding the right job, any job will do. I just seem to flow with what is available.
- _____ 26. I'm not so sure what religion means to me. I'd like

to make up my mind but I'm not done looking yet.

- _____ 27. My ideas about men's and women's roles came right from my parents and family. I haven't seen any need to question what they taught me.
- _____ 28. My own views on a desirable lifestyle were taught to me by my parents and I don't see any need to question what they taught me.
- _____ 29. I don't have any real close friends, and I don't think I'm looking for one right now.
- _____ 30. Sometimes I join in leisure activities, but I really don't see a need to look for a particular activity to do regularly.
- _____ 31. I'm trying out different types of dating relationships. I just haven't decided what is best for me.
- _____ 32. There are so many different political parties and ideals. I can't decide which to follow until I figure it all out.
- _____ 33. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.
- _____ 34. Religion is confusing to me right now. I keep changing my views on what is right and wrong for me.
- _____ 35. I've spent some time thinking about men's and women's roles in marriage and I've decided what will work best for me.
- _____ 36. In finding an acceptable viewpoint to life itself, I find myself engaging in a lot of discussions with others and some self-exploration.
- _____ 37. I only pick friends my parents would approve of.
- _____ 38. I've always liked doing the same recreational activities my parents do and haven't ever seriously considered anything else.
- _____ 39. I only go out with the type of people my parents expect me to date.
- _____ 40. I've thought my political beliefs through and realize I can agree with some and not other aspects of what my parents believe.

- _____ 41. My parents decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following through their plans.
- _____ 42. I've gone through a period of serious questions about faith and can now say I understand what I believe in as an individual.
- _____ 43. I've been thinking about the roles that husbands and wives play a lot these days, and I'm trying to make a final decision.
- _____ 44. My parents views on life are good enough for me, I don't need anything else.
- _____ 45. I've tried many different friendships and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friend.
- _____ 46. After trying a lot of different recreational activities, I've found one or more I really enjoy doing by myself or with friends.
- _____ 47. My preferences about dating are still in the process of developing. I haven't fully decided yet.
- _____ 48. I'm not sure about my political beliefs, but I'm trying to figure out what I can truly believe in.
- _____ 49. It took me a long time to decide but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.
- _____ 50. I attend the same church my family has always attended. I've never really questioned why.
- _____ 51. There are many ways that married couples can divide up family responsibilities. I've thought about lots of ways and now I know exactly how I want it to happen for me.
- _____ 52. I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, and I don't see myself living by any particular view point to life.
- _____ 53. I don't have any close friends. I just like to hang around with the crowd.
- _____ 54. I've been experiencing a variety of recreational activities in the hopes of finding one or more I can enjoy for some time to come.
- _____ 55. I've dated different types of people and now know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are

and who I will date.

- _____ 56. I really have never been involved in politics enough to have made a firm stand one way or the other.
- _____ 57. I just can't decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.
- _____ 58. I've never really questioned my religion. If it's right for my parents it must be right for me.
- _____ 59. Opinions on men's and women's roles seem so varied that I don't think much about it.
- _____ 60. After a lot of self-examination I have established a very definite view on what my own lifestyle will be.
- _____ 61. I really don't know what kind of friend is best for me. I'm trying to figure out exactly what friendship means to me.
- _____ 62. All of my recreational preferences I got from my parents and I haven't really tried anything else.
- _____ 63. I date only people my parents would approve of.
- _____ 64. My folks have always had their own political and moral beliefs about issues like abortion and mercy killing and I've always gone along accepting what they have.

- - - - -

The test construction manual can be obtained from Dr. Gerald R. Adams, Department of Family Studies, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2W1. Send a written request and a \$25 US money order to that address or order through gadams@uoguelph.ca

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of fifteen dimensions, each of which is made up of a pair of opposite adjectives or phrases. For each dimension, please indicate the extent to which either the right or the left term reflects your view of death by placing an X on one of the seven spaces between the two terms. If both sides reflect your view of death equally, then place an X in the middle box. Please be sure to place only one X between each pair of terms. It is important not to skip any of the dimensions.

EXAMPLE:

Individual A: Serious X Trivial

Individual B: Serious X Trivial
(Individual A thus views death as something that is very serious; individual B, however, views it as something that is mildly trivial).

1. Purposeful	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Purposeless
2. Personal	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Impersonal
3. Not sudden	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Sudden
4. I care								I don't care
about it	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	about it
5. Useless	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Useful
6. Has warning	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Has no warning
7. Foreseeable	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Unforeseeable
8. Concerned	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Unconcerned
9. Meaningful	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Meaningless
10. Necessary	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Unnecessary
11. Unpredictable	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Predictable
12. Can see myself								Can't see
dying	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	myself dying
13. Close to me	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Distant from me
14. Prepared	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Unprepared
15. Having a reason	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Having no reason

INSTRUCTIONS: The following section contains a number of statements related to different attitudes toward death. Read each statement carefully, and then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. For example, an item might read: "Death is a friend." Indicate how well you agree or disagree by selecting a number from the seven point scale below and indicating your answer on the line preceding the question number.

- 1=strongly agree
- 2=agree
- 3=moderately agree
- 4=undecided
- 5=moderately disagree
- 6=disagree
- 7=strongly disagree

Thus, if you strongly agreed with the statement, you would write a "1" next to the question number. If you strongly disagreed you would write a "7" next to the question number. If you are undecided, you would write a "4". However, try to use the Undecided category sparingly.

It is important that you work through the statements and answer each one. Many of the statements will seem alike, but all are necessary to show slight differences in attitudes.

- _____ 1. Death is no doubt a grim experience.
- _____ 2. The prospect of my own death arouses anxiety in me.
- _____ 3. I avoid death thoughts at all costs.
- _____ 4. I believe that I will be in heaven after I die.
- _____ 5. Death will bring an end to all my troubles.
- _____ 6. Death should be viewed as a natural, undeniable, and
 unavoidable event.
- _____ 7. I am disturbed by the finality of death.
- _____ 8. Death is an entrance to a place of ultimate
 satisfaction.
- _____ 9. Death provides an escape from this terrible world.

For all the questions on this page, choose from the following responses:

1=strongly agree	5=moderately agree
2=agree	6=disagree
3=moderately agree	7=strongly disagree
4=undecided	

- _____ 10. Whenever the thought of death enters my mind, I try to push it away.
- _____ 11. Death is deliverance from pain and suffering.
- _____ 12. I always try not to think about death.
- _____ 13. I believe that heaven will be a much better place than this world.
- _____ 14. Death is a natural aspect of life.
- _____ 15. Death is a union with God and eternal bliss.
- _____ 16. Death brings a promise of a new and glorious life.
- _____ 17. I would neither fear death nor welcome it.
- _____ 18. I have an intense fear of death.
- _____ 19. I avoid thinking about death altogether.
- _____ 20. The subject of life after death troubles me greatly.
- _____ 21. The fact that death will mean the end of everything as I know it frightens me.
- _____ 22. I look forward to a reunion with my loved ones after I die.
- _____ 23. I view death as a relief from earthly suffering.
- _____ 24. Death is simply a part of the process of life.
- _____ 25. I see death as a passage to an eternal and blessed place.

For all the questions on this page, choose from the following responses:

1=strongly agree	5=moderately agree
2=agree	6=disagree
3=moderately agree	7=strongly disagree
4=undecided	

- _____ 26. I try to have nothing to do with the subject of death.
- _____ 27. Death offers a wonderful release of the soul.
- _____ 28. One thing that gives me comfort in facing death is my belief in the afterlife.
- _____ 29. I see death as a relief from the burden of this life.
- _____ 30. Death is neither good nor bad.
- _____ 31. I look forward to life after death.
- _____ 32. The uncertainty of not knowing what happens after death worries me.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each item and indicate the extent to which it reflects your thoughts and feelings, using the four point scale below. Please write your answer on the line preceding the item number.

1=never
2=rarely
3=occasionally
4=often

- _____ 1. I think about my own death.
- _____ 2. I think about the death of loved ones.
- _____ 3. I think about dying young.
- _____ 4. I have fantasies of my own death.
- _____ 5. I think about death just before I go to sleep.
- _____ 6. I think of how I would act if I knew I were going to die within a given period of time.
- _____ 7. I think about how my relatives would act and feel upon my death.
- _____ 8. When I am sick I think about death.