

# Identity Formation and Success Attainment Opportunity Beliefs

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- During identity formation young persons define their life goals, values and beliefs (Vignoles, Schwartz, Luyckx, 2011)
- At the same time young people hold certain beliefs about control opportunities for goal attainment

- Perceived control influences whether individuals and groups will take initiative and exert persistence and effort in the process of goal attainment
- Perceived control is important element of personal agency, which creates identity capital and according to studies is key pre-requisite in adaptive identity formation (e.g. Schwartz, 2006)

# Control Opportunity Beliefs

- Individuals hold opportunity beliefs about control focusing on
  - themselves personally and
  - society in which they live

(Shane & Heckhausen, 2017)

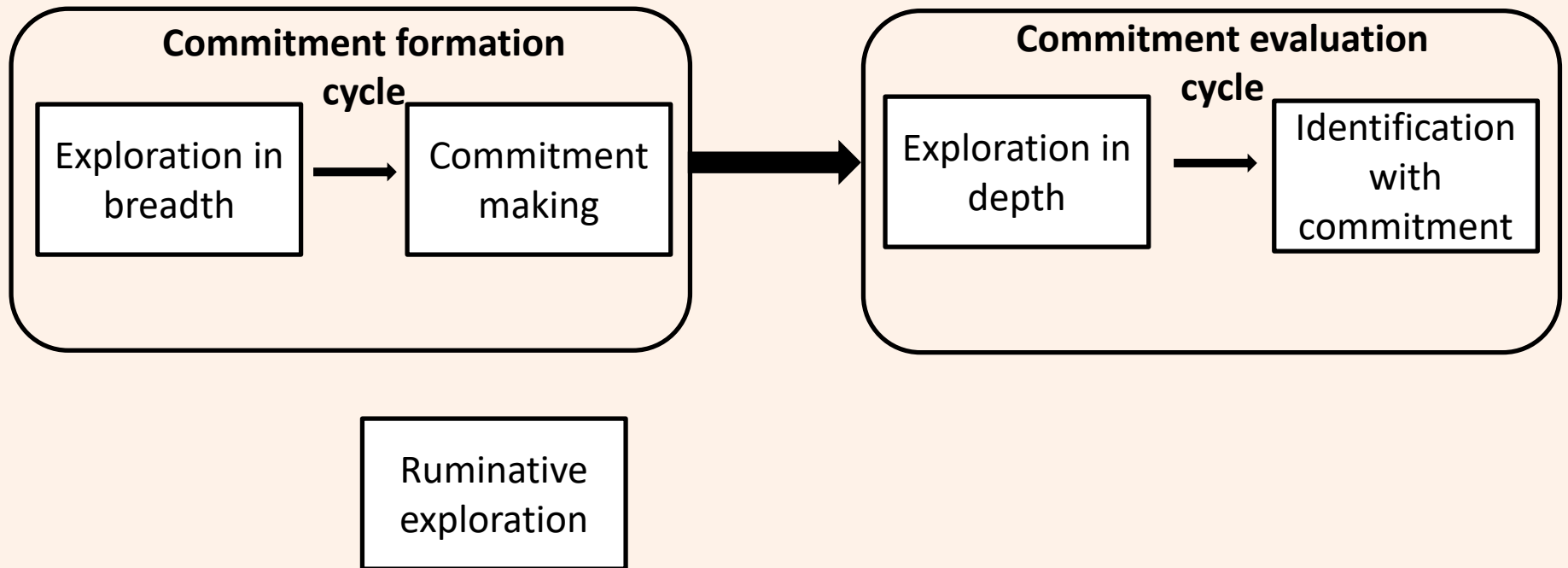
# Control Opportunity Beliefs

- In previous research two main groups of means for success attainment were outlined:
  - internal means, such as effort, skills, and perseverance
  - external means such as connections and luck

# Control Opportunity Beliefs

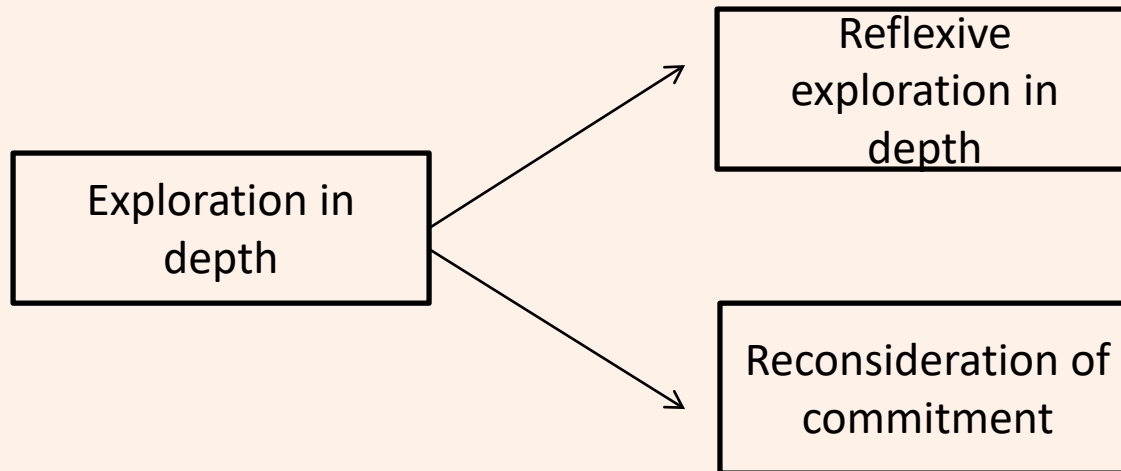
- Scholars point that although dimensions are bipolar (internal vs external), individual belief profiles are not (Skinner, 2016)
- Also beliefs regarding personal control opportunities and general beliefs about how things work in wider society might differ


# Two cycles and five dimensions/processes of identity formation



# Exploration in depth dimension

- Later studies (Zimmerman et al., 2013; Beyers & Luyckx, 2016; Skhirtladze et al., 2016) found two sub dimensions in exploration in depth





# Control Opportunity Beliefs and Identity formation

- Beliefs emerging adults hold regarding control opportunities might be linked to the identity strategies they use
- For example young persons who believe that their personal goal attainment is connected to their efforts and skills, will show more commitment and identification with commitment
- Whereas those who think that people in their context attain goals through favoritism and luck will show less proactive exploration, commitment and identification with commitment and more rumination

# Study aims

- To identify profiles based on personal control opportunity beliefs and societal control opportunity beliefs
- To check the profile association with identity processes

# Method

## Sample

N=287

Age - 18 to 30 (Mean=23.8)

Gender - 61% female

55% student

65% employed

# Measures

## **Personal success beliefs about getting a job**

Internal subscale (alpha= .65). Sample item ‘I have the skills I need to get the job I want.’

External beliefs subscale (alpha= .70). Sample item “I know the right people who can help me get a good job”

# Measures

## **Societal Beliefs: SES causation**

People at the top of the social status ladder in Georgia are there because they . . .

Internal subscale (alpha=.79). Sample item “have the talent and the ability to succeed,”

Privilege/Luck subscale (alpha=.53). Sample item “receive favoritism in hiring, promotions and wages,”

# Measures

## Dimensions of Identity Development Scale

Commitment making (alpha=.92):

“ I know which direction I am going to follow in my life”

Exploration in breadth (alpha=.86):

“ I think about different things I might do in the future”

Identification with commitment (alpha=.86):

“ I sense that the direction I want to take in my life will really suit me”

Ruminative exploration(alpha=.83):

“I am doubtful about what I really want to achieve in life”

Exploration in depth(alpha=.36):

“I think about the future plans I already made”

Reconsideration of commitment (alpha=.68):

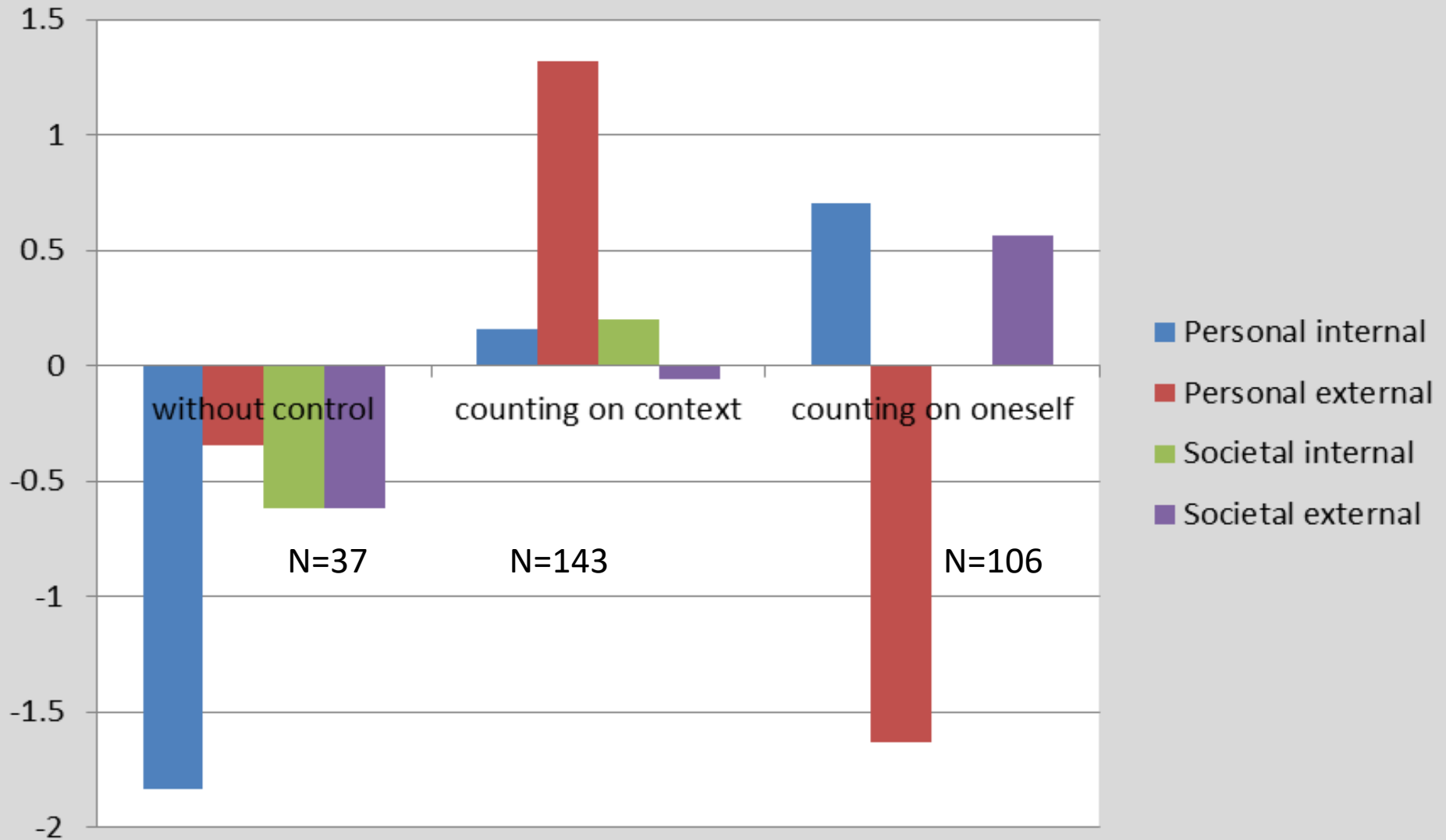
“I think about whether my future plans match with what I really want”

# Results: means and correlations

	Means (SD)	PE	SI	SE	CM	EB	IC	RE	ED	REC
PI	3.93 (.76)	.08	.14*	.23***	.47***	.20**	.40***	-.10	.25***	.02
PE	2.71 (.99)		.11	-.17**	.10	.04	-.05	.03	.08	.02
SI	3.50 (.93)			.05	.14*	.02	.07	.11	.15*	.12*
SE	3.73 (.79)				.13*	.02	.07	.04	-.01	-.02

PI-personal internal control opportunities, PE - personal external control opportunities, SI- societal internal control opportunities, SE- societal external control opportunities, CM-commitment making, EB- exploration in breadth, IC-identification with commitment, RE-ruminative exploration, ED- exploration in depth, REC-reconsideration of commitment

# Results: Control belief classes



# Results: comparison across identity processes

- Comparison of classes across identity processes revealed that “without control” group was significantly lower on commitment making, exploration in breadth, identification with commitment and exploration in depth than other two groups
- There was not any significant difference between “counting on context” and “counting on oneself” groups across any of the six identity dimensions

# Discussion

- The beliefs are partly determined by dominant belief system of society and partly by individuals' personal experiences (Heckhausen & Shane, 2015; Shane & Heckhausen, 2016)
- Country-wide representative survey with Georgian young adults (age 18-29) (Georgian Youth Study 2016) when asked to name the most important factor in finding a job the following factors were outlined:
  - 43% acquaintances and friends, connections, 8% luck
  - 30 % expertise, experience, 19% education.

# Discussion

- What might be reason for the prevalence of externally oriented group?
- Georgia is a collectivistic culture – the role of one's close social group is high
- Rapidly changing occupational structure and weak institutional connections between schools and employment

# Discussion

- Real life experience may support the belief in external control sources
- Study conducted in USA revealed that personal experience of failure changed self-related control beliefs, while society related control beliefs were the same (Shane & Heckhausen, 2017)
- In spite of the possible reasons, the results still caution that these beliefs prompt to passivity and create vicious circle

# Discussion

- In case “counting on context” and “counting on one-self” groups, there were disagreements between the reasons of success for oneself and reason for success for the most people in the society
- In the counting on context group, while highly counting on social connections and luck, one moderately agree that others succeed by themselves and by the same connections and luck
- In the “counting on oneself” group, while moderately counting on oneself, one supports the idea that others succeed by external means

# Discussion

- The two bigger groups do not differ across pro-active identity processes
- In spite of difference in the source of their perceived control, two groups are similarly exploring identity alternatives and making commitments
- This might point that reliance on outer sources of control, is equally adaptive in this specific context as more agentic self-reliant approach