The Cognitive Process of Identity Reconstruction
After the Onset of A Neurological Disability

Support Structures: Architecture’s Role in the Healing Process

WEEK 2
By Paula
The Cognitive Process of Identity Reconstruction After the Onset of A Neurological Disability

- CDMSII (Cognitive Developmental Model of Social Identity Integration)

  Identity Continuity
  A long-term perspective
The Cognitive Process of Identity Reconstruction After the Onset of A Neurological Disability

• CDMSII Stages

Categorization
- Salient distinctions between pre-and post-injury
- Valuing pre-injury characteristics

Compartmentalization
- Increased complexity in self-representations
- Context dependent identifications

Integration
- Internal conflicts resolved
- Similarities established
- Higher order categorization
The Cognitive Process of Identity Reconstruction After the Onset of A Neurological Disability

• Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Trauma</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time since injury (years)</th>
<th>Pre-injury occupation</th>
<th>Post-injury occupation</th>
<th>Pre-injury marital status</th>
<th>Post-injury marital status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>TSCI(^a)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>General contractor</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Severe TBI</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Common-law partner</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
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<tr>
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<td>TSCI(^b)</td>
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<td>Creative director</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Common-law partner (new)</td>
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<td>LTD employee</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Service coordinator</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Engaged (new)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>TSCI(^b)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Foreman</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Severe TBI</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Common-law partner</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>IE</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Severe TBI</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Law student</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TSCI, traumatic spinal cord injury; TBI, traumatic brain injury; IE, incapacitated for employment; LTD, long-term disability.

\(^a\)Complete paraplegia; \(^b\)Incomplete tetraplegia.
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Stage 1: Categorization – protecting the self

I had an excellent job... I felt great, much appreciated in my work... uh, so I could identify with that. Now, I'm still looking for... I'm looking for some passion, because I was... I consider my work as my passion. In the past, it was my passion. I'm looking for a new passion to try to rebuild this identity. (5)

Although participant 5 can no longer work, she spoke about her passion for her former work using the present tense, and subsequently corrected herself to use the past tense. She even referred to her previous work as a passion that she strives to regain in order to rebuild her identity, thereby emphasizing how much she associates being passionate with her pre-injury professional occupation.
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Stage 1: Categorization – protecting the self

In sum, the selected excerpts exemplify how participants initially identify themselves primarily using pre-injury references (categorization) without being able to relate to how core identity characteristics can serve their adjustment process. At this stage, the need for continuity is expressed through the reaction of valuing pre-injury characteristics and not connecting with any of the post-injury circumstances, characteristics or groups. Hence, the categorization stage can be understood as a normal reaction to a threatened identity and as a primary means of maintaining a sense of continuity.
Stage 2: Compartmentalization – experiencing novelty

Well, me, eh... it's a big difference because I can't do as much as I could before. Except that... I go out more than before because I'm more conscious... listen... there are things to do other than work uh. I liked to work, even now, I still like it, but I can't... so I move on to other things... (9)

Participant 9 illustrates his effort to make cognitive connections between his pre- and post-injury identities: although he states that he liked to work prior to his injury, he felt the need to immediately mention that he still likes to work. It seems that he makes sense of his current condition as a non-worker by acknowledging that there are ways to remain occupied even if it is not through paid work.
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Stage 2: Compartmentalization – experiencing novelty

These excerpts illustrate that participants can recognize various self-defining components as being part of their identities. Despite these participants’ obvious efforts to establish links between their pre-injury and current conditions, there seems to be various self-component features that remain segregated and context dependent, rendering the sense of wholeness within the self to be problematic.
Stage 3: Integration – feeling whole again

While finding similarities between pre- and post-injury characteristics seems to be an effective method of identity integration, it is not the only one. Another way to resolve conflicts between identities and reach integration is to create higher order categorizations that can encompass the different identity characteristics. Participant 7 illustrates this solution for integration:
Stage 3: Integration – feeling whole again

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One of the factors that determines our state of mind is the quality of our surroundings.

Minimize the sense of anxiety; comfortable familiar and safe environment.

Circle Bath /Foster+Partners, Bath, UK, 2006
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Corridor-less, a sense of community; privacy, calming environment, home comforts

Circle Bath /Foster+Partners, Bath, UK, 2006
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Privacy;
A clear line of sight for the nursing staff

Priestmangoode’s Recovery Lounge
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Natural light;
Technologies, less distraction

Paimio Sanatorium / Alvar Aalto, Finland
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Freedom to movement, sight and sound; response to the topology of the site
Sense of community

Maggie Centre /OMA, Glasgow