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Nation-State's 'Political Ineptitude' in Citizen's Identity Processes: A Case Study Using Identity Structure Analysis

Helbe Põdder
Tallinn University Pedagogical College,
Rääugu 49,
Tallinn 11311, Estonia
E-mail: helbe.helbe@gmail.com

Abstract: *The conceptual and methodological tools of Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) are applied to a particular instance of an individual at variance with dominant societal norms in order to demonstrate the efficacy of ISA for elucidating complex identity processes in socio-historical and biographical context. The empirical results presented in this article indicate that the interrelationship between societal constraints and individual values and beliefs are shown to be effectively detailed using ISA.*

Keywords: *adult, attitudes, identity, Identity Structure Analysis, values, young people*

1. Introduction: development in the context of Estonia of a customized ISA identity instrument

The paper reports an investigation into the efficacy of using the conceptual and methodological tools of Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) to elucidate the identity processes of an individual when constrained by the state in relation to those personal beliefs that are the core dimensions of identity and others that are conflicted dimensions. The state in question is contemporary Estonia and the constraints of concern have to do with issues of work culture, family support, birth rate, and ageing persons in respect of gender norms and stereotyping.

2. Issues of society and identity in contemporary Estonia

Estonian society is simultaneously seen as 'open' and 'closed'. The best example of openness in Estonia is the ability of citizens to have open discussions (both through media and analytic statistics-based reports) on actual problems to help find solutions. The trait of a closed, oppressive society towards the individual is perpetrated by collective values in Estonia, whereby each person is seen as a fulfiller of a certain function and a predetermined role (for example, to form the right kind of family with the right number of children to repopulate the country). Forced politicization is also common for a closed (corporate) society. In this context emerges self-censorship, holding oneself back and the aim, at least on the outside, to belong to the "correct" group or circle. Another example of Estonia as a closed society is that people feel that their voice is not heard "in places, where things are actually decided" (*Võtmevalik: ühiskonna väärtussüsteem*, 2010).

In an international comparison, Estonia occupies the 33rd–34th position among 187/142 countries (*Eesti inimarengu aruanne 2012/2013*, 2013, p. 9; *The 2012 Legatum Prosperity Index*, 2012, p. 12), but Estonians are self-critical to the degree that their subjective evaluation of different areas of life in their country is much lower than would be suggested by objective indicators. One reason for this could be that people perceive unwarranted inequalities in their society.

The system of reference plays a huge role in self-perception: being a member of the EU, being compared to wealthy neighbours (mainly Scandinavian countries) (Lauristin, 2011). Of the Baltic countries, Estonia has been the most successful, but fast and continuing changes have often ignored social sensitivity (Norkus, 2011; Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1998). The older generation in Estonia has memories of the Soviet era, the visually uniform, modest lifestyle; nowadays, however, big social contrasts can be seen (Lauristin & Vihalemm, 2010). Among the older generation, expectations imposed on men—to provide security for one's family, especially financially, which is a constant high pressure (Marling, 2010), the concept of working overtime is widely spread (Eurofound, 2002)— a full-time job and working overtime is often the only chance to ensure an income that provides subsistence (Järviste, 2008). The double role of a woman as a breadwinner and a caretaker has its roots in the Soviet period when the government, public and private opinion emphasized that both women and men had to participate in paid employment, but the roles of men and women as mothers and fathers, that is caretakers, remained intact (Marling, 2010; Maydell *et al.*, 2006; Lück & Hofäcker, 2003).

In post-Soviet Estonia, changes in the distribution of household and caring responsibilities are taking place, but slowly (*Sooline ebavõrdsus…*, 2006). In their attitudes women in Estonia are prepared to represent a 'shared roles model', but in real-life situations they represent an early version of a dual-earner family model (Leira's model in Leira, [2002]2010; on junior provider model see Ellingsaeter, 1998). Men in Estonia, in their attitudes, are in the early version of a dual-earner family model (Leira, [2002]2010), but still consider the role of mother to be natural to women, and do not mind being the family's main economic provider. Women in Estonia believe that employers in Estonia differentiate between the sexes and, therefore, returning to the labour market after giving birth and maternity leave is difficult (Põdder, 2012).

In Estonia, women and men (especially the latter) expect the state to offer supportive measures that would help combine work and family life. Women in Estonia, in their attitudes, are more easily affected by the roles suggested by the media and are more prone to adapt to common attitudes in the society. The choices of Estonian men, on the other hand, are affected by the attitudes of socio-biographical context—mother, partner, friends and, surprisingly, the wider socio-cultural domain—of women in Estonia (Põdder, 2012).

Young people in Estonia value most the honesty and comradeship of their companions, material possessions, security, equality in the eyes of the law, honesty, justice, privacy, freedom of expression, personal responsibility and loyalty towards their country/friends, but also sexuality, fun/enjoyment, new beautiful things, expensive/famous brands, and they like doing several things at a time, taking on new challenges/experiences and risks (*Maailma noorsugu*, 2011). A growing problem for young people in Estonia is following the standards of success imposed by the social environment (family, society as a whole). Incompetence in finding working strategies of coping and signals coming from agents affecting adolescents (idolized media celebrities, everyday parental problems) cause a danger of depression and low self-esteem, also a fear of ageing, of the future and responsibility. Many young people do not want children, because of the expense, and plan to start a life abroad (better income, a more interesting life). Young people in Estonia find it important to make a better life than their parents' and believe in their ability to change society through their choices and actions. For the young the most important agents affecting values are family and friends, the media, school and the Internet (*Maailma noorsugu*, 2011).

3. An empirical in-depth case-study of an individual's identity processes

3.1. Aims and objectives

In the context of contemporary Estonian society, the present study uses a theoretical framework, Identity Structure Analysis, as an efficient method to explore person's individual values and beliefs. The aims of the investigation are: (1) to apply the ISA conceptual framework, operationalized by the Ipseus software, to assess the identity processes of Estonian individuals in respect of the interrelationship between the contemporary Estonian state's norms and the person's values and beliefs about work and family as dimensions of identity; (2) to ascertain the psychological consequences for individuals of disjunctions between state norms and individual values and beliefs; and (3) to demonstrate the efficacy of ISA for elucidating the complex identity processes of the person in relation to the perceived 'imperatives' of the state as these are judged by that person. Specific objectives are: (1) to gauge the extents of the individual's aspirational and empathetic identification with salient societal agencies (the state's government and opposition parties) and people of personal significance (typical young Estonian females and males, family, and co-students); (2) to assess the extent to which identification with these entities is conflicted; (3) to provide evidence of developmental processes in identification with others (change or resistance to change); (4) to establish the core and conflicted values of the individual in respect of work, family, gender and ageing; (5) to determine the individual's appraisal (construal and evaluation) of Estonian society; and (6) to review the consequences of the person's appraisal of Estonian society for self-evaluation and identity diffusion.

3.2. Synopsis of the conceptual and methodological tools of Identity Structure Analysis (ISA)

Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) is an open-ended conceptual framework, which theoretical underpinnings are a series of self and identity conceptualizations, aspects of which are integrated within ISA: the psychodynamic approaches (mainly by E. H. Erikson), symbolic interactionism and social constructionism, personal construct psychology, appraisal theory, and cognitive–affective consistency principles (mainly G. A. Kelly's Personal Construct Theory) (Weinreich, 2003). The integration of a series of theoretical concepts requires formulating explicit definitions in the ISA context. The definitions in the ISA context, which are relevant to the aforementioned aims and objectives, follow.

ISA sees identity as a continuous process, emerged partly from identifications with others in the socio-biographical context throughout childhood and beyond to processes of identity development and redefinition of identity. People appraise the world in which they live and themselves in it through the identifications they have made with others (Weinreich, 2003).

A key principle of the ISA approach is: *"A person's appraisal of the social world and its significance is an expression of his or her identity"* (Weinreich, 2003): *"appraisal and the current expression of identity"* and *"identification and the formation and development of identity"* are the two main arenas of interrelated processes that guide the presentation of the ISA conceptual framework. Identity in the ISA context is defined as one's self-construal process from the past to the future: *"A person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future"* (Weinreich, 2003).

Person's appraisal is necessary for psychological survival and it is the central process by which people assess the circumstances for the potential fulfilment of their identity aspirations during the current period of their lifecycle. Appraisal as a process offers and records experiences of life situations and events, each new experience engenders the potential for both a reappraisal of earlier values and beliefs and an elaboration of identity. People's propensity to appraise the social world in a manner biased strongly towards the positive, that is, a positivity bias predominates in which people are preferably accorded more positive than negative qualities (Weinreich, 2003).

The definition of one's appraisal in ISA context is: *"[a] person's appraisal of a specific situation is made by way of construing, or attributing meaning to, agents and events in context, within the limitations of one's constructs as cued by the situation, and evaluating or judging this construal in relation to one's aspirations"* (Weinreich, 2003). A person's appraisal of a situation consists of a self-appraisal and the appraisal of other agents and agencies. Identification with others—positively or negatively—is important in a person's identity from the ISA standpoint. 'Others' are the individual's closest social environment as well as social agents on the whole. The definition of one's evaluation of another is: *"one's evaluation of another is defined as one's overall assessment of the other in terms of the positive and negative evaluative connotations of the attributes one construes in that other, in accordance with one's value system"* (Weinreich, 2003).

Identification—a feature of the other as interpreted and understood by the person, some "others'" stances—can, depending on a person, be unexplained/ not understood or understood as a threat. To avoid negative emotions a person may wish to dissociate from such kind of 'others' (Weinreich, 2003). ISA reifies it as contra-identification with another or group: *"The extent of one's contra-identification with another is defined as the similarity between the qualities one attributes to the other and those from which one would wish to dissociate"* (Weinreich, 2003).

The situation where the dispersion of conflicted identifications with others— where the greater the magnitude of identification conflicts and the more extensive their dispersion across others, the more severe the diffusion—is considered to be an identity diffusion, in the context of the ISA: *"The degree of one's identity diffusion is defined as the overall dispersion and magnitude of one's identification conflicts with others"* (Weinreich, 2003).

With some 'others' people feel themselves close and share/want to share their stances (whether 'good' or 'bad'); in the ISA context this is self's empathetic identification with another, which will modulate from one context to another, being closer in some contexts and more distant in others: *"The extent of one's current empathetic identification with another is defined as the degree of similarity between the qualities one attributes to the other, whether 'good' or 'bad', and those of one's current self-image"* (Weinreich, 2003).

From the standpoint of the ISA method it is important, in the studying of an individual's identity, to view compatibilities and incompatibilities with entities of the current study—here a particular construct is used in the appraisal of self and others, which in the ISA method is defined as 'structural pressure': *"The structural pressure on a person's construct is defined as the overall strength of the excess of compatibilities over incompatibilities between the evaluative connotations of attributions one makes to each entity by way of the one construct and one's overall evaluation of each entity"* (Weinreich, 2003).

High 'structural pressure' on a construct means that it is used consistently to evaluate self and others, thus representing a core value for the individual (most strongly the core dimensions of identity). The most conflicted dimensions of identity are the constructs with net low structural pressures. The construct is without strong evaluative connotations when the net structural pressure on a construct is low as a result of weak positive and negative pressures (Weinreich, 2003).

3. 3.   Method

ISA's conceptual tool was aided by the accessible Identity Exploration (IDEX) computer software, a methodological resource (Weinreich, 2003; Weinreich & Ewart, 2007). The Ipseus software was used to create a customized identity instrument, present the instrument on screen for completion by participants, and compute the parameters of identity as defined within the ISA conceptual framework while foregrounding the qualitative features of the person's core and conflicted dimensions of identity (values and beliefs).

3. 4. The ISA Identity Instrument: the themes and domains

Themes (and constructs), domains (and entities) for this current study are derived from the chapter 'Issues of society and identity in contemporary Estonia' presented above. Themes in the current study are: work and family life; gender stereotypes and ageing. The ISA method enables, in the current case, to determine person's values, identifications with others and self-evaluation type through 17 bipolar constructs (Table 1) and 3 domains with 14 entities. Identity instruments—entities (situated self in various contexts, individuals, groups, institutions) and bipolar constructs (*"bipolarity of constructs enables assessment of people's favoured and disfavoured elements, as these may vary from person to person"*)—are constructed for the individual participating in the study. The domains and entities in the current study are:

*   'Political and public representatives' domain, which includes entities 'Present government of Estonia', 'Opposition to the legislative council', 'The media';
*   'Young Estonian people by gender and co-students' domain, which includes entities 'Young women in Estonia', 'Young men in Estonia', 'My co-students';
*   'Family' domain, which includes entities: 'My mother', 'My father', 'My partner'.

Participant J. In Tallinn, a case was sampled in order to illustrate ISA as an efficient method to investigate respondents' identification and values. Earlier in this paper, Estonian society was characterized as a society of major changes; in this part of paper follows an idiographic analysis of the Tallinn case respondent, J's, results. Respondent J is female, age 48, married, a mother of two, with higher education, university lecturer by occupation, Estonian.

Table 1.   The bipolar constructs

	Left	Right
1	…believes that the normal situation is for women to stay at home and men to have the role of a bread-winner	…believes that both parents have to be engaged in paid work
2	…believes that women and men are equal in both instances of fulfilling responsibilities at home and having paid work	…believes that in family life women are responsible for functional combining of work and family life
3	…believes that staying home in the case of need (young children, child sickness, etc.) can't depend on a parent's gender	…believes that staying home in the case of need (young children, child sickness, etc.) is a biological responsibility of women
4	…believes that both parents are responsible for raising a child	…believes that when raising a child most of the responsibility is with the mother
5	…knows that for each adult, regardless of gender, economic independency is important	…recognizes that it is natural for women to be economically dependent on their partner
6	…views women as having the greater responsibility at home	…views men as having the greater responsibility at home
7	…believes that in Estonia women and men are respected as parents	…believes that in Estonia women and men are not respected as parents
8	…believes that for Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing	…believes that for Estonian society it is not important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing
9	…believes that birth rate is positively affected by women actively participating in the job market	…believes that birth rate is negatively affected by women actively participating in the job market
10	…thinks that birth rate is higher in countries where fatherhood is supported by the state (by way of father's quota and other measures that support the participation of fathers in raising children)	…thinks that for raising birth rate it is unimportant to pay attention to fathers, but important to make sure that mothers are insured by the state (by way of maternity leave, help when returning to the job market and so on)
11	…believes that Estonian employers are strongly affected by gender stereotypes (for example: they are more understanding when female employees are at home with sick children)	…believes that Estonian employers do not consider gender important (for example: they are also understanding when male employees stay at home with sick children)
12	…thinks that working overtime is not a normal part of the modern working culture	…thinks that women working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture
13	…thinks that working overtime is not a normal part of the modern working culture	…thinks that men working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture
14	…believes that families with children should not expect help from the state, they should manage on their own	…believes that the state should support parenthood through shaping values and legislation, providing different services and financial means
15	…believes that a family is a family when there are children	…believes that to be a family it is not compulsory to have children
16	…believes that young people in Estonia want to have children	…believes that young people in Estonia are afraid to have children
17	…believes that young people in Estonia want to connect their future with Estonia	…believes that young people in Estonia do not want to connect their future with Estonia

4. ISA results

The assessment of J's identity processes are here presented in terms of her identification processes with and within society. This is followed by the assessment of her values and beliefs as these function as a core or conflicted dimensions of her identity. Her concomitant evaluations of the Estonian government and the legislative opposition, the media, young females and males, her co-students and her family are then presented. Evidence of her appraisal (that is, construal and evaluation) of the salient societal agencies of government and opposition is given, together with her self-appraisal. Then follows summary evidence of the ramifications of her identification processes for her state of identity as a member of that society.

Objective 1: Extent of the individual's aspirational and empathetic identifications

Table 2 presents the evidence of J's modes of identification with societal and personal agents in the domains of political and public representatives, young Estonians by gender, co-students, and family.

Table 2.   Aspirational, empathetic and conflicted identifications

Domain	Entity	Positive aspirational identification (idealistic identification)	Negative aspirational identification (contra-identification)	Empathetic identification with respect to current self (Me, as I am now)	Conflicted identification with respect to current self (Me, as I am now)
Political & public representatives	Present government of Estonia	0.47	0.35	0.33	0.34
	Opposition to the legislative council	0.29	0.53	0.76	0.59
	The media	0.24	0.24	0.27	0.25
Young Estonians by gender & co-students	Young women in Estonia	0.53	0.41	0.80	0.57
	Young men in Estonia	0.47	0.41	0.53	0.47
	My co-students	0.35	0.29	0.47	0.37
Family	My mother	0.41	0.53	0.73	0.62
	My father	0.29	0.53	0.73	0.62
	My partner	0.24	0.71	0.80	0.75

* Scale range 0.00 to 1.00

The primary identification processes are the aspirational mode in the longer term and the empathetic mode in the immediate here and now. The aspirational mode has both positive and negative aspects, that is, in terms of desiring to emulate the other (*idealistic identification*) and to implement self's values and beliefs on the one hand, and wishing to dissociate from unpalatable characteristics and behaviours of the other (*contra-identification*) and from these when they might be manifested by self. The empathetic mode occurs with respect to the social contexts that are salient in the individual's appraisal of oneself and the other in a present time perspective.

In Table 2, the important distinction between aspirational and empathetic identification with others is immediately apparent, whereby the evidence indicates that in J's case they differ substantially. Her most positive aspirational identifications are with young women in Estonia (0.53), the present government of Estonia (0.47) and young men in Estonia (0.47); however, these are all of low extent.

For J, the general circumstances of society as she appraises them have minimal attributes to which she aspires. Her empathetic identifications differ from her aspirational identifications. She empathetically identifies most closely with family, that is, with her partner (0.80), her mother (0.73) and her father (0.73), and also with opposition to the legislative council (0.76). Of concern is the evidence that she simultaneously wishes to substantially dissociate from their attributes (negative aspirational identification), desiring not to be like her partner (0.71), her mother (0.53), her father (0.53) and opposition to the legislative council (0.53).

Objective 2: The extent to which the individual's identifications are conflicted

Empathetically identifying with the other while simultaneously contra-identifying with that other is a conflicted identification of being as the other in certain respects but wishing to dissociate from the other in particular ways. In J's case (see Table 2), her conflicts in identification are substantial, the highest being with her partner (0.75), her mother (0.62), her father (0.62), opposition to the legislative council (0.59) and young women in Estonia (0.57). In practice, she is alienated from a society to which she belongs (the Estonian nation-state); she attributes to herself and those with whom she closely empathetically identifies characteristics that represent their undesired place in the society, about which she (together with them) feels she cannot alter.

Objective 3: The individual's socio-developmental and biographical processes (change or resistance to change)

The evidence presented in Table 3 indicates that J's closest past empathetic identifications are with her partner (0.80), opposition to the legislative council (0.76), her mother (0.73) and her father (0.73) based on her current appraisal of her past self (this is not as she might have actually appraised herself when she was a child). In this instance, her current empathetic identifications are the same. She appraises herself in the past as she is currently, that is, without a changing sense of self from past to present.

In general, ISA assessments reveal that people experience a sense of change as a result of their biographical development, though this varies considerably from person to person. In a cross-cultural investigation of 'primordialist' sentiment compared with 'situationalist' perspective about national/ethnic identity, situationalists had a greater sense of developmental change than did primordialists (Weinreich, Bacova & Rougier, 2012).

Table 3.   The individual's socio-developmental and biographical processes

Domain	Entity	Empathetic identification with respect to past self (Me, when I was a child)	Empathetic identification with respect to current self (Me, as I am now)
Political & public representatives	Present government of Estonia	0.33	0.33
	Opposition to the legislative council	0.76	0.76
	The media	0.27	0.27
Young Estonians by gender & co-students	Young women in Estonia	0.80	0.80
	Young men in Estonia	0.53	0.53
	My co-students	0.47	0.47
Family	My mother	0.73	0.73
	My father	0.73	0.73
	My partner	0.80	0.80

* Scale range 0.00 to 1.00

Objective 4: The individual's core and conflicted values and beliefs as dimensions of identity

Table 4 provides evidence on how J experiences herself within the context of Estonian society as represented by the aforementioned domains in terms of the values and beliefs about work, family, gender and ageing to which she subscribes.

Table 4.   Core dimensions of identity: high structural pressures on constructs

Strongest core dimensions of identity: constructs with high structural pressures	
Participant J	
Construct no (polarity*, structural pressure**)	Text of endorsed aspiration
07 (-1, 82.59)	…in Estonia, women and men are respected as parents
17 (-1, 82.44)	…young people in Estonia want to connect their future with Estonia
16 (-1, 78.73)	…young people in Estonia want to have children
11 (1, 72.78)	…Estonian employers are strongly affected by gender stereotypes
14 (-1, 71.46)	…families with children should not expect help from the state

*   *Polarity is -1 when the left-hand pole of the construct is the endorsed aspiration, 1 when this is the right-hand pole. The endorsed aspiration is given here (which may be that one aspires to accept an unpalatable 'reality')*

**   *Scale range -100 to +100*

Her core dimensions of her identity in recognition of Estonian societal realities as she perceives them are these (structural pressure in brackets): *…in Estonia, women and men are (to be) respected as parents* (83); *…young people in Estonia want to connect their future with Estonia* (82); *…young people in Estonia want to have children* (79); *…Estonian employers are (in fact) strongly affected by gender stereotypes* (73); *…families with children should not expect help from the state* (71).

The problematic value and belief arenas for her (Table 5), the ones that pose dilemmas for her (conflicted dimensions of identity) given her appraisal of the society she lives in, are: *…both parents have to be engaged in paid work* (-24); *…family is a family, when there are children* (-23);*…for Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing* (4);*…for each*

adult, regardless of gender, economic independency is important (18);…*both parents are responsible in raising a child* (18). While each belief or value is ostensibly endorsed, her societal circumstances as she appraises them result in cognitive-affective incompatibilities between the societal stances and her own aspirations. Under such circumstances she is likely to behave at times in ways contrary to her positive aspirations, vacillating between expressing contrary positions.

Table 5.   Conflicted dimensions of identity: low (net) structural pressures on constructs

Most conflicted dimensions of identity: constructs with net low structural pressures	
Participant J	
Construct no (polarity*, structural pressure**)	Text of endorsed aspiration
01 (1, -24.00)	…both parents have to be engaged in paid work
15 (-1, -22.54)	…family is a family, when there are children
08 (-1, 4.20)	…for Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing
05 (-1, 17.51)	…for each adult, regardless of gender, economic independence is important
04 (-1, 18.10)	…both parents are responsible in raising a child

*   Polarity is -1 when the left-hand pole of the construct is the endorsed aspiration, 1 when this is the right-hand pole. The endorsed aspiration is given here (which may be that one aspires to accept an unpalatable 'reality') – see the Table of Constructs for both poles.

**   Scale range -100 to +100

Objective 5: The individual's appraisal (construal and evaluation) of society

J's overall evaluation of the society is most unfavourable and extends to her close family (Table 6). She has a poor opinion of the government and opposition, of young females and males in general, her co-students; her parents and her partner. The reason for this is that she attributes to the societal agencies significant propensities that are antithetical to what she would like the society to be about.

In relation to young people, her parents and her partner, she views them as having mainly to acquiesce to everyday norms and behaviours that are contrary to what she holds as being progressive values and beliefs. Her conflicted dimensions of identity are those that represent her own stances that are prone to contradictory

behaviour.

Table 6.   The individual's evaluation of the society

Domain	Entity	Evaluation
Political & public representatives	Present government of Estonia	0.13
	Opposition to the legislative council	-0.07
	The media	0.03
Young Estonians by gender & co-students	Young women in Estonia	0.08
	Young men in Estonia	-0.03
	My co-students	0.07
Family	My mother	-0.13
	My father	-0.20
	My partner	-0.33

*   *Scale -1.00 to +1.00*

The elements of J's attribution of negative characteristics to the foremost societal agencies, the government and the opposition to the legislative council are clearly seen in Table 7. J assigns importance to the active participation of both parents in the labour market, and thus the economic independence of each grown individual. On the other hand, J finds that family values and solving the aging problem in Estonia is also important. J clearly feels that the government and opposition do little to support the combining of work and family life, or she does not simply understand their stance.

The negative attributions she makes to herself (Table 7, see next p.) illustrate the manner by which she feels constrained by the society in which she lives. J is currently not happy with herself in situations where there is a strong role-based division between work and/or family life. She feels that this is a situation, where a woman has more responsibilities at home, but the stereotypical stance of employers and their tendency to think that working overtime is normal do not support this role. Thus, for her the following situation—every adult's full participation in the labour market and managing as a parent— is conflicted.

Table 7. Appraisal (construal and evaluation) of government and opposition; appraisal of self

Construct (the most core/ conflicted)	J's appraisal of:		
	The government of Estonia	Opposition to legislative council	Current self (Me, as I am now)
01 conflicted	…both parents have to be engaged in paid work (+4)[1]	…both parents have to be engaged in paid work (+3)	…both parents have to be engaged in paid work (+4)
02	...in family life women are responsible for functional combining of work and family life (-3)[2]	...in family life women are responsible for functional combining of work and family life (-3)	...in family life women are responsible for functional combining of work and family life (-2)
03	…staying home in the case of need is a biological responsibility of women (-3)	…staying home in the case of need is a biological responsibility of women (-3)	…staying home in the case of need is a biological responsibility of women (-2)
04 conflicted	Void	Void	…both parents are responsible for raising a child (+2)
05 conflicted	Void	Void	…for each adult, regardless of gender, economic independence is important (+1)
06	Void	Void	…women have more responsibilities at home (-4)
07 core	…in Estonia, women and men are respected as parents (+4)	…in Estonia, women and men are not respected as parents (-1)	…in Estonia, women and men are not respected as parents (-4)
08 conflicted	…to the Estonian society it is not important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing (-4)	…to the Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing (+2)	…to the Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population ageing (+1)
09	…birth rate is positively affected by women actively participating in the job market (+4)	…birth rate is positively affected by women actively participating in the job market (+2)	Void
10	…birth rate is higher in countries where fatherhood is acknowledged at the state level (+1)	…birth rate is higher in countries where fatherhood is acknowledged at the state level (+1)	Void
11 core	…Estonian employers do not consider gender important (+4)	…Estonian employers are strongly affected by gender stereotypes (-1)	…Estonian employers are strongly affected by gender stereotypes (-4)
12	…women working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-4)	…women working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-2)	…women working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-4)
13	…men working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-4)	…men working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-1)	…men working overtime is a normal part of the modern working culture (-4)
14 core	…families with children should not expect help from the state (+4)	…families with children should not expect help from the state (+3)	…the state should support parenthood through (various means) (-4)

Objective 6: Consequences of the individual's appraisal of society for self-evaluation and identity diffusion

Evidently, given the extent and magnitude of J's conflicted identification with Estonian society and her family, together with the nature of her core and conflicted dimensions of identity that constitute her value and belief system, such socio-psychological conflicts are likely to be stressful, and her ISA identity variant classification is one of crisis (negative self-evaluation at -0.41 and high identity diffusion at 0.53). She lives in a society that is at odds with her own existential self. Nevertheless, given her state of identity diffusion and low self-evaluation, she is likely to attempt personal and societal action to remedy this state of affairs by campaigning for change within the Estonian society.

5. Conclusion

The empirical investigation reported here applied the ISA conceptual framework, operationalized by the Ipseus software, to assess the identity processes of an Estonian individual in respect of the interrelationship between the contemporary Estonia's state norms and the person's values and beliefs about work and family as dimensions of identity. It ascertained the psychological consequences for the individual of disjunctions between state norms and individual values and beliefs. The case study is illustrative of the efficacy of the conceptual and methodological tools of ISA. No generalization is intended about Estonia and

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1   (+ve) refers to the person's endorsed pole of the construct (scores +1 to +4). J's endorsed poles are: 01…both parents have to be engaged in paid work; 02…women and men are equal in both cases: fulfilling responsibilities at home and being engaged in paid work; 03…staying home in the case of need (young children, child sickness, etc.) cannot depend on parent's gender; 04…both parents are responsible for raising a child; 05…for each adult, regardless of gender, economic independence is important; 06…for each adult, regardless of gender, economical independency is important; 07…in Estonia, women and men are respected as parents; 08…to the Estonian society it is important to find a solution to the problem of population aging; 09…birth rate is positively affected by women actively participating in the job market; 10…birth rate is higher in countries where fatherhood is acknowledged at the state level; 11… Estonian employers do not consider gender important; 12...women working overtime is not a normal part of the modern working culture; 13…men working overtime is not a normal part of the modern working culture; 14…families with children should not expect help from the state; 15…family is a family, when there are children; 16… young people in Estonia want to have children; 17…young people in Estonia want to connect their future with Estonia.

2   (-ve) references the person's contrast pole of the construct (scores -1 to -4) – font in italics.

its citizens other than that the ISA approach can be applied with any number of cases when different results for individual identity processes would be expected. The Ipseus software incorporates nomothetic procedures that assess commonalities across specified groupings, such as gender, ethnic heritage and cultural subgroups (see Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003/12, for several group level studies).

The presented case study demonstrates that the person's identity processes proceed as a nexus of the individual and society that is an inextricably interrelated individual. There is no identity separate from society. The ISA conceptual framework provides the genuine integration of the qualitative with the quantitative features of the individual identity processes (exemplified by Table 7 above, but also as a result of the ethnographic input to the generation of the customized ISA identity instrument). In the case of J's identity processes, given her biographical experience, in the Estonian societal context at a particular historical moment, the ramifications for herself are stress, anxiety and demoralization. Is this the nation-state's 'political ineptitude' as revealed in a citizen's identity processes? From her point of view, and in accordance with her aspirations and biographical experiences, this is her appraisal of the contemporary state of affairs. Others will differ, their identity processes being open to investigation using ISA and Ipseus as presented above.

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Helbe Põdder, MA, is doctoral student at the Tallinn University of Technology with a research focus on international relationships and European studies. She lectures on Child Welfare, Social Policy and Ethics at the Tallinn Pedagogical College of Tallinn University. Her research interests include population and demographic policy, child protection and welfare, child and family policy. Her latest publication in the Baltic Journal of European Studies (2010) discusses aspects of child and family policies in the Estonian population policy with comparison of welfare states in Scandinavia.

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