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**Mini Assignment: James Marcia’s Theory of Identity Formation**

All throughout our lives, we tend wrestle with who we are, what we want to be, and what we want in life. James Marcia’s theory of identity proposes that there are four different stages or statuses in the development of one’s identity. These four stages are called identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Each person is on a journey to find themselves, especially in their adolescent years. In this assignment I will briefly describe how his four stages apply to my own identity development throughout my life.

Each person asks this question to themselves: “Who do I want to be?”. Identity diffusion refers to the first part of the process of a person figuring out who they want to be. Typically, this is a time during adolescence when a person has not fully realized their social identity or even defined all their personality traits. I would say this phase of my life began around the time I was in the 6th grade between 12 and 13 years old. During this time, it felt like my identity was being formed based off what my closest peers were doing. I wanted to develop friendships as a teen, even if this meant breaking some of my morals. I tried to stay true to who I was, but I was often trying to find my personality based off the trends of those around me. This is why it is so important for children to surround themselves with good friends and mentors as this will be a large influence in the identity diffusion stage.

When an adolescent follows what their peers due as mentioned above, this leads to identity foreclosure. This often happens when an adolescent does not follow their own personality traits and follows the traits of others around them. This even includes a child’s parents, teachers, and other mentors. An example of this is a child growing up in a Christian home, going to Christian schools, and associating themselves only with people in their faith. These children may identify as Christian without ever questioning the belief system which they follow. I too, grew up in a Christian home and this became a part of my identity. My faith has always been an incredibly big part of my identity, but I do wonder if I would have been raised under another faith if I would have assumed that faith as well and never questioned it.

Identity moratorium is a period after adolescence when a young adult feels in a crisis because they have not yet established who they are. An example of this would be a student at our University who finds themselves constantly questioning their major and career path. I personally struggled with this just before I came to college deciding if I wanted to take a path towards medical school or a path towards nursing school. I wrestled a lot with what I wanted my potential career to look like as well as the number of years of school I wanted to do, finding myself in the stage of identity moratorium. I eventually was able to decide on nursing and ended up truly realizing it was my passion.

Identity achievement is the life stage where an individual has realized a true sense of who they really are. Reaching this stage requires a lot of exploration through friends, relationships, jobs, traveling, and more. I do not know if anyone truly reaches identity achievement as we are constantly changing beings, but it is so important to try and find a sense of purpose. I believe I have found a piece of identity achievement in my career path, but I believe it will take me all of my young-adult years and many experiences during this time to reach identity achievement.