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Ego Identity Statuses Of The Lebanese Youth In Late  
Adolescence: Relationship With Gender And Academic  
Achievement

By  
Nadya Kaddoura

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**Thesis Approval Form**

Student Name: Nadya Kaddoura I.D. #: 200801430

Thesis Title : Ego Identity Statuses Of The Lebanese Youth In Late  
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Achievement

Program / Department: Education

School: Arts & Sciences

**Approved by:**

Thesis Advisor: Ketty Sarouphim-McGill

Committee Member: Rima Bahous

Committee Member: Marwan Gharzeddine

Date December 15, 2014

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## DEDICATION

My father was only 9 when he, along with all his family and relatives were forcefully evicted from their Motherland, Palestine, in 1948 and came to settle in Lebanon as Palestinian Refugees! Like all the other Palestinian children, his childhood was stolen, and he was thrown onto an endless journey of struggle equipped only with colossal dreams and hopes! Today, 66 years later, my dad stands tall with pride that he was able to instill in the minds and hearts of his children and grand children the thirst for education and the hope and determination to return to Palestine. This accomplishment among any others I have ever made, I owe to my father. Dad, I dedicate this thesis to you with love and gratitude. I dedicate it to your land that holds our roots, our Palestine, to all Palestinians in Occupied Palestine, and to all the Palestinian people in the diaspora.

I also dedicate this to the soul of a very special person to our family, Ali Ali Ahmad, who derived joy from making people's dreams come true! Abu Hussein, You will always be remembered with love.

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Ego Identity Statuses Of The Lebanese Youth In Late Adolescence: Relationship  
With Gender And Academic Achievement

Nadya Kaddoura

ABSTRACT

This study had three purposes: To examine Marcia's ego identity paradigm in a sample of Lebanese youth in late adolescence, to investigate gender differences, and to examine the relationship between individuals' ego identity statuses and their academic achievement. The study was implemented at a private university located in Beirut, using a sample of 262 students selected randomly from the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior classes. The students ranged in age between 18 and 21 years. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) was used to measure the participants' level of exploration and commitment across eight domains (Occupation, Religion, Politics, Values, Family, Friendships, Dating, and Sex Roles) to classify them into one of the four Ego Identity Statuses: Identity Achievement, Identity Moratorium, Identity Foreclosure, and Identity Diffusion. The students' cumulative grade point average (GPA) served as the achievement data. The results showed that the majority of participants were in the Foreclosure Identity Status (29.41%) followed by the Moratorium Identity Status (29.02%). Moreover, no significant gender differences were found. The results also indicated no significant differences between participants with regard to GPA across the four identity statuses. In future research, factors such as socio-economic class, family disruption, war, and political instability that might affect individuals' identity statuses could be further investigated in larger samples for solid conclusions.

*Keywords:* Ego Identity Status, Identity Crisis, Exploration, Commitment, Gender Differences, Academic Achievement, Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ)

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Context of the problem

In recent years, the topic of identity achievement in youth has been the focus of theoretical and empirical research in different fields of social science and humanities. As young people reach adolescence, the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, they typically begin to reflect on who they are, what their values and goals are and the purpose of their lives. This transitional stage may be a period of change, challenge, and potential, and it is often governed by feelings of anxiety and instability introduced by cognitive, social, and physical changes (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002).

It is often during this time of confusion and uncertainty that individuals in late adolescence have to make most of their major life decisions, such as vocational orientations and adopting various ideological values, which according to Erikson (1968) form the foundation of one's ego identity. He referred to this stage of identity formation as the stage of identity achievement versus identity diffusion. He argued that the identity crisis experienced by adolescents at this stage could be resolved by achieving an integrated identity or remains unresolved leading to identity diffusion (Erikson, 1968)

Unlike Erikson, Marcia (1966) did not construe the outcome of identity crisis during adolescence as the two extreme ends, identity achievement or identity diffusion but rather as one of four possible identity statuses: Identity Achievement, Identity

Diffusion, Identity Moratorium, and Identity Foreclosure. What determines these identity statuses is the level of exploration and commitment the adolescent has made to an identity in various domains such as vocation, religion, relationships, gender roles, education, and other vital life areas. Adolescents with achieved identity have engaged in high exploration and made solid commitments, whereas those with diffused identity may or may not have engaged in any exploration but are unable or unwilling to make commitments. Adolescents with Foreclosure Identity have made high commitments without going through an exploration period. Finally, adolescents with Moratorium Identity are in the process of exploring and are trying to make commitments (Marcia, 1980).

Kumru and Thompson (2003) found that developing an achieved identity could impact different aspects of an individual's life, such as social functioning and self-presentation. They argued that an achieved identity is conducive to an integrated sense of self and confidence, which in turn enables the individual to make decisions and commitment to goals and objectives. Among such decisions and goals is academic achievement, which Berzonsky (1989) and Streitmatter (1989) found strongly related to identity development. Hence, the current study aimed to examine this relationship in a sample of youth in Lebanon, a context that seemed rather challenging due to its multifaceted socio-cultural and political blend and its unique mix of western and Arab values (Ghosn, 2009). Also, this study aimed to classify Lebanese youth in late adolescence into their corresponding statuses according to Marcia's Ego Identity Status Paradigm and examine the gender differences in these statuses.

## **1.2 Sample**

The study was implemented in a private university located in Beirut- the Lebanese American University. The sample consisted of 262 students selected randomly from the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, And Senior years. They ranged in age between 18 and 21years.

## **1.3 Instrument**

**1.3.1 Academic achievement.** Academic achievement was assessed through a direct question asking the participants about their cumulative GPA at the time of data collection. The self- reported GPA was considered the achievement data used in this study. The GPA ranged from 1 to 4.

**1.3.2 Identity status.** The instrument used in this study to measure the participants' identity statuses is the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, &Geisinger, 1995) (See Appendix A). This instrument measures the level of exploration and commitment made by the participants and categorizes them into one of the four identity statuses defined by James Marcia.

## **1.4 Design**

A cross-sectional design was implemented using the EIPQ on a sample of 262 participants in an American university in Beirut. The participants answered a set of questions (EIPQ and demographics) in one sitting. This is an exploratory study as such research has not been previously conducted in Lebanon.

## **1.5 Purpose of the study**

This study had three purposes. The main purpose was to examine Marcia's ego identity paradigm in a sample of Lebanese youth in late adolescence. Another purpose was to investigate gender differences in the ego identity statuses, and the third purpose was to examine the relationship between individuals' ego identity status and their academic achievement.

## **1.6 Hypotheses**

*Hypothesis 1:* Lebanese youth in late adolescence will be classified mostly in the category of foreclosure identity as measured by the EIPQ.

*Hypothesis 2:* A higher percentage of male than female participants will be classified in the moratorium and achieved identity statuses.

*Hypothesis 3:* Differences exist in academic achievement across the identity statuses; with the highest academic achievement scores corresponding to Achieved Identity Status and the lowest academic achievement corresponding to Diffusion Identity Status.

## **1.7 Rationale and Significance**

A population with underdeveloped identity poses a range of robust challenges to any society. Thus, there is increasing interest around the world to promote healthy identity development in the population of youth. Erikson (1950) claimed that without the qualities that a consolidated identity provides, youth could be the most likely to get involved in high-risk behaviors such as drug addiction, drinking, reckless driving and unsafe sex. Thus, a consolidated identity which is thought to provide adolescents with a

sense of uniqueness and adequate future adjustment (Erikson, 1968) could function as a deterrent against these health- related risky behaviors.

With regard to the identity development in Lebanese youth in late adolescence, the situation seems to be rather complex. In addition to having to experience the changes that accompany this phase, adolescents in Lebanon also have to cope with religious divisions and unique political and complicated cultural situations. According to Ayyash-Abdo (2007), awareness of the importance of the transitional period of adolescence is still at a preliminary stage among the Lebanese community. Thus, the current study was a significant attempt at promoting awareness of the importance of the period of late adolescence, the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, as a stage of identity formation.

According to Sarouphim (2011), the country has witnessed ruthless civil wars, the longest of which erupted in 1975 and ended in 1991 leaving numerous physical, mental, psychological and social adverse effects; the effects of this civil war were compounded by the Israeli occupation in 1982 and the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Al-Hariri in 2005 which caused the country to enter a state of instability marked by political dissonance, armed fights and sectarian struggles that continue to the present time (Sarouphim, 2011). As a result, the Lebanese adolescents live “ in a country with the largest religious diversity in the region – 17 religions... and on a territory that matches a religious membership – *cantonization* –: a village, a region or a district in a town can correspond to a religious community” (Rarbo, 2009, p. 6). Hence, young people in the Lebanese society grow to be rather dependent individuals with no distinct identity of their own because they are raised and seen as only members of a greater denominational community. Similarly, Nammour (2007) claimed that the Lebanese youth shift between

conflicting identity establishments that relate to religion, nation or beyond the nation; the supra- national identity can be either Islamic, Arabic, or western. Thus, the Lebanese youth seem to experience contradictory feelings about their identity. They seem to oscillate between embracing global values made available through international networks and mass media and preserving their Arab traditions (Faour, as cited in Ayyash-Abdo et. al., 2009). The significance of this study lies in the fact that it generated information on the nature of identity of the Lebanese youth in late adolescence.

Along the same lines, significant factors like the patriarchal nature of the Lebanese society and the extreme loyalty to family seem to be at the interplay of identity development among Lebanese adolescents. The Lebanese society is viewed as a patriarchal society where male births are preferred over female births, and males receive more privileges and special treatment than females who are seen as individuals in need of help and care (Ayyash-Abdo, Bahous & Nabhani, 2009). Thus, males enjoy more opportunities to experiment and explore during the adolescence stage. However, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (as cited in Ayyash-Abdo et al., 2009) report revealed that gender inequality in Lebanon did not lead to gender differences in basic education between males and females; Hence, the current study may provide knowledge about gender differences in the identity development in Lebanese youth.

Moreover, findings from previous studies in Lebanon have determined that the Lebanese people regard family as the most important social institution in their country (Faour, as cited in Ayyash-Abdo et. al., 2009); according to Ayyash-Abdo (2007), the relationships of adolescents with their families and parents are characterized by loyalty

since they rarely move out of their home before marriage. Both the nuclear and traditional extended families in Lebanon expect conformity, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and preservation of family honor from all members (Kazarian, 2005). Issam Fares Institute (2010) argued that when youth, in general, during adolescence value their independence and identify with peers, the Lebanese youth show significant loyalty to their families, Lebanon, and their sect.

Given all the contradictions regarding the identity of the Lebanese adolescents and the complexity of the economic, educational, political, religious, and social situation of the country, there seems to be an increasingly urgent need to address the issue of identity in Lebanese adolescents. Classifying Lebanese youth in their corresponding identity statuses according to Marcia's paradigm shed light on the processes of exploration and commitment that the Lebanese youth typically experience in late adolescence. Thus, new opportunities are available for the Lebanese youth in late adolescence, their parents, and policy makers to acknowledge the structure for understanding one's self and understand adolescents' choices that may impact their identity development. Among these choices are school choices and classroom behavior which seem to be of significance to the Lebanese families and students (Abi Khalil, 2004). Hence, the current study can bridge existing gaps in knowledge regarding the relationship between the Lebanese youth's identity statuses and their academic achievement and consequently pave the way for effective and adequate interventions that cater for the needs of youth.

Due to the novelty of the nature of the current study, the comprehensive work included will serve as a future reference for researchers who have an interest in the topic.

## **1.8 Definitions of Variables**

**1.8.1 Ego identity.** According to Erikson (1968), the definition of Ego Identity includes internal as well as social contextual aspects. It is the ego quality achieved through successful integration of childhood identifications into one's own coherent set of ideals that is in harmony with one's sense of self and the world.

**1.8.2 Ego identity status.** This paradigm on ego identity was developed by James Marcia as an elaboration on Erikson's theory of identity achievement. In his own words: "The identity statuses were developed as a methodological device by means of which Erikson's theoretical notions about identity might be subjected to empirical study. The identity statuses are four modes of dealing with the identity issue characteristic of late adolescents: Identity Achievement, Foreclosure, Identity Diffusion, Moratorium" (Marcia, 1980, P. 111).

**1.8.3 Identity formation.** It entails "a synthesis of childhood skills, beliefs, and identifications into a more or less coherent, unique whole that provides the young adult with both a sense of continuity with the past and a direction for the future" (Marcia, 1993, p. 4).

**1.8.4 Gender.** The term Gender in this study denotes the state of being male or female.

**1.8.5 Identity crisis.** It refers to "a period of struggling or active questioning in arriving at decisions about goals, values, and beliefs" (Waterman, 1993 b, p. 161). "Being in crisis implies that one is trying to work through identity questions and is

striving to make important life decisions” (p. 162). It was later referred to as exploration of alternatives by Matteson (as cited in Marcia, 1993)

**1.8.6 Academic achievement.** For the purpose of this study, academic achievement is defined as the cumulative GPA of the adolescent at the time of data collection.

**1.8.7 Adolescence.** According to Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger (2006), adolescence has been classified into three developmental episodes: “early adolescence (typically ages 10–13), middle adolescence (ages 14–17), and late adolescence (18 until the early twenties)” (p. 258). Hence, they postulate that it might be easy to determine the beginning of puberty that is accompanied by significant biological changes, but not as easy to determine its end.

## **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

The study design and procedures were reviewed by the Committee on Human Subject Research (CHSR). No data were collected until the CHSR approval was granted (See Appendix B) to ensure that all ethical considerations were accounted for. Participation in this study was on voluntary basis, as shown clearly on the cover letter of the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

Since the instrument used to collect data in this study was a questionnaire, no participants were harmed either physically or psychologically. All participants were given the choice to withdraw from the study at any point, if they wished to do so.

Moreover, confidentiality was observed at all times. All participants remained anonymous, as all name identifiers were removed. The completed questionnaires were stored in a safe place where access was limited to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all the collected data were destroyed.

### **1.10 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of this study are the following:

First, due to the nature of close- ended questions on the EIPQ, probing further to establish the meaning and significance of each reported event was not possible. The questions restricted the answers because they were recorded using a numerical code. Hence, the level of participants' commitment and exploration might not be accurately determined. For example, regarding vocational plans the following items are included in the questionnaire. The first two items examine participants' level of commitment. "I have definitely decided on what career to pursue" and "It is unlikely that I will change my career goals". The next two items examine their level of exploration. "I have tried to learn about several occupational fields to decide which is best for me", and "I have never questioned my career aspirations". The responses to these close- ended items are limited and might not be enough to determine accurately their level of exploration and commitment. However, open- ended questions like "How willing do you think you'd be to change your career plans if something better came along? What might you change? What might cause you to make such a change?" would elicit a more accurate score for commitment. Moreover, questions like "how did you come to decide on your career? Since you have been in college, have you thought about any other majors besides \_\_\_\_\_? What else have you considered? Why did you decide not to pursue this field?"

What do you think influenced your decision? Did your parents have for you any career or major plans?" (Adapted from Marcia & Archer, 1993) require detailed responses that will help the interviewer place the participant in the low or high Exploration more accurately.

The EIPQ is a self-report instrument that may present a number of potential validity problems, as the data are personal and subjective, and thus may not be completely truthful.

Moreover, the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire yields total scores for the Exploration and Commitment Subscales by summing across items related to different domains such as politics, religion, career, values, friendships, dating relationships, gender roles, and family relationships (Balistreri et al., 1995). Thus, the values of internal consistency reliability for these total scores are found rather low. In their study, Schwartz, Côté, and Arnett (2005) reported Cronbach's alphas below .71

Moreover, this instrument was used to assess the identity statuses of the Lebanese youth, yet the EIPQ was originally devised in the West for American participants. Thus, using it with the Lebanese youth might result in biased findings. For example, the item "I have engaged in several discussions concerning dating behaviors" reflects a behavior that is common in the western culture, whereas dating in the Lebanese culture especially during adolescence, is not looked upon favorably. Thus, students' responses regarding dating may reflect a different meaning from that intended by the EIPQ.

Another item that might yield data irrelevant in essence to the data intended by the EIPQ is "I have evaluated several ways to fit in my family's structure". Lebanese

participants might not understand what is intended by the item because fitting in one's family in the Lebanese culture is not likely to be a debatable issue. Family is considered the most important of all social institutions (Kazarian, 2005).

The second limitation is related to the data collected on the participants' achievement. In this study, academic achievement data consisted of the reported grade point average, and participants may not have given accurate figures. Results may have differed had standardized achievement test scores been used instead. However, such data do not exist in Lebanon as standardized achievement tests lack in the country.

The third limitation is about the nonexistence of identity status studies in Lebanon, which constituted a challenge, as it was not possible to compare findings from this study with those in previous literature pertaining to Lebanon.

The fourth limitation pertains to sample size. In this study, the sample was small and limited to students enrolled in one university only. The sample was mostly homogeneous and lacked diversity in students' demographics. As such, the data collected may not be representative of the identity statuses prevalent in the Lebanese youth. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to the larger population of Lebanese youth in late adolescence.

Although a good number of the university professors contacted by the researcher showed cooperation and willingness to use their classrooms for data collection, many declined the researcher's request due to their busy schedule, and a few did not respond at all. Professors may have been more responsive had the contact been initiated by the university's administration. Thus a bigger sample may have been secured for the study.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a comprehensive review of the literature is presented. The chapter starts with a description of the stage of adolescence and theories of identity development. Next, Marcia's Identity Paradigm is explained in detail, followed by an elaborate description of the Lebanese context. The review also provides information on the research conducted on Marcia's paradigm, its measuring tools, identity correlates, importance of achieving an identity, the relation between Marcia's Identity Statuses and academic achievement as well as gender differences in the identity development. Finally, a critique of the Ego Identity Status Paradigm is presented.

### **2.2 The Adolescence Stage**

Adolescence can be defined as a critical and dynamic stage in human growth and development, marked by significant physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes; such changes are accompanied by hormonal fluctuations that also impact the psychological development of adolescents (Haney, 2010). The beginning of adolescence varies in individuals and can be discernible in the physiological changes that take place in puberty, but its end is not as easy to determine. This stage may be a period of "change, challenge, and potential". However, it is often governed by feelings of anxiety and instability attributed to the hormonal fluctuations that accompany the changes that adolescents experience (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002). Marcia (1980) claimed that

adolescence is a critical period because it is during this stage that individuals start developing more sophisticated cognition and attempt to resolve their psychosocial concerns independently.

### **2.3 The Concept of Identity**

It is quite a complex task trying to comprehend the multifaceted notion of identity. According to Head (2002), the term has stretched to relate not just to something concerning an individual but also to something concerning a social group of individuals. Hence, when personal identity is discussed, the concern is with the individual's psychodynamics, which are unlike the group's social dynamics in terms of their quality. Moreover, the irregularity in the use of the word identity seems confusing with regard to understanding what identity is. In some cases the term social identity is associated with community sub-groups that are usually identified according to their social status, ethnicity, or sex which relate more to populations than individuals. In this way, the expression social group relates to sociology and not to psychology. At other times, the word refers to the evolution of the identity of individuals in terms of the individual's social practices. However, this refers to the social construction of identity rather than the individual personal identity (Head, 2002). Nonetheless, in this study, the main concern is for a specific aspect of identity (Ego Identity) that relates to Erikson's concept of personal identity, which Marcia (1966) operationalized through an Identity Status model approach.

### **2.4 Identity in Late Adolescence**

Marcia (1980) argued that identity achievement does not occur all at once during a specific period of life, for it may begin with the first attempts of a child to differentiate

himself/ herself from others and extends until the mature stage of self- integration in old age. However, Erikson (as cited in Waterman, 1993a) presented a specific series of stages for psychosocial development as well as a specific rate for this development. Stage 5 in his theory is thought to tackle almost the whole period of adolescence ranging from puberty through college age (as cited in Waterman, 1993a).

Physical growth of individuals is completed mainly in late adolescence.

Individuals in this stage develop more abstract thinking and are able to figure out what the outcome of their conduct might be. According to Kroger and Marcia (2011), a sense of empathy also develops during this stage which enables adolescents to feel with other individuals, reciprocate closeness and affection, and become capable of describing the roles of adults more effectively. Hence, individuals in late adolescence tend to exhibit a higher sense of independence from family members and friends

Late adolescence has been viewed in most research (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) as the stage of psychological crisis for adolescents. Kroger and Marcia (2011) argued that it is during this stage that individuals are confronted with life choices such as finding a job, getting married, and having to let go of the status of being a receiver in order to become a giver. To accomplish this task, individuals should think about their future career path and change their worldview. As a result, their ego processes become stronger since these enable the adult to deal with more significant responsibilities. Establishing and making the ego stronger takes place not only on an “internal level (e.g., delay of impulses) but also on an external level (e.g., adaptation to societal demands)” (p. 33).

Marcia (1980) highlighted late adolescence as an important stage for identity development since “It is the first time that physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons to go through and synthesize their childhood identifications in order to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood” (p. 160). Later, he added that most research studying this stage took place mainly in college. He pointed out three reasons for choosing this particular context. First, most researchers who conduct these studies already work in college settings. Secondly, the age of college students is typically around 18 to 21 which is the period of identity crisis and resolution. Finally, college is a definable social context where identity formation is most likely to take place (Marcia, 1993).

## **2.5 The Theoretical Framework of Identity Development**

Given that “the formation of an Ego Identity is a major event in the development of personality” which occurs during late adolescence (Marcia, 1993, p. 4), a huge body of research has been conducted to investigate the nature of this process. Much of the current available empirical research originated mainly in Erikson’s work, which was inspired by Freud’s theory. Marcia (1966) operationalized Erikson’s concept of personal identity and put it in the frame of an Identity Status Model.

**2.5.1 Freud’s theory of identity.** The first psychological theorist to examine identity and identity- like processes in depth was Freud (1923/ 1961). He argued that childhood experiences shape the individuals’ identity and impact their behavior at all stages of life. Freud claimed that self-definition begins with parental identification during the first few years of life and continues throughout adolescence and adulthood without receiving much reconsideration or modification. Thus, according to Freud,

people experience a series of psychosexual development stages, and how they complete these stages shapes their identity. The result of successful completion is a healthy identity whereas unsuccessful resolution leads to fixation.

**2.5.2 Erikson's theory of identity.** Erikson (1968) stipulated that there are three collaborative components which play a fundamental role in the notion of ego identity. One component is the individuals' biological features which alter with time and age. Another is their distinctive psychological desires, well-being, and emotions and defenses. The third component is their personal social and cultural upbringing. He theorized that the development of adolescent identity is rooted in an individual's social background. Thus, the identity crisis stage is effectively resolved when adolescents are surrounded by a kind, caring, and reassuring setting which stimulates and supports their independence.

Similarly, Erikson (1968), much like Freud, claimed that Ego Identity develops in a series of fixed stages and categorized the notion of identity formation within a structure of normal personality development which consists of eight stages of psychosocial ego growth. He stipulated that during each stage of an individual's psychosocial growth, some kind of crisis is bound to occur and thus should be resolved before moving to the next stage; he postulated that with resolving each of the psychosocial issues in a positive way, a specific psychological virtue is created. These virtues influence identity formation which in turn influences the psychological well-being of individuals.

The psychosocial stages and their outcome virtues in order are Trust vs. Mistrust with the outcome virtue of Hope; Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt with the outcome

virtue of Will; Initiative vs. Guilt with the outcome virtue of Purpose; Industry vs. Inferiority with the outcome virtue of Competence; Identity vs. Identity Confusion with the outcome virtue of Fidelity; Intimacy vs. Isolation with the outcome virtue of Love; Generativity vs. Stagnation with the outcome virtue of Care ; and Integrity vs. Despair with the outcome virtue of Wisdom (Erikson, 1968). When an individual achieves a certain virtue, it is believed that it makes formerly achieved virtues more meaningful and offers solid ground for successive virtues to be achieved.

However, when the individual fails to reach a positive resolution, the outcome is ill feelings instead of virtues (Erikson, 1982). Respectively, these negative qualities are: withdrawal, compulsion and impulsivity, inhibition, inertia, repudiation, exclusivity, rejectivity, and disdain. The manner by which successive predicaments and issues are later resolved in life is affected and determined by the proportion of virtues and ill feelings attained during each life phase (Erikson, 1982). Acquiring the virtues of hope, will, purpose, and competence as a child aids an individual effectively while forming his/ her identity through adolescence. On the other hand, unfavorable resolutions during childhood hamper effective identity formation, leading an individual to identity confusion.

Unlike Freud, Erikson (1968) believed that identity extends beyond childhood identifications and parental introjects. He argued that identity is formed when individuals revise and update the identifications they have made as children and develop them into their own coherent set of ideals that are in harmony with their sense of self and the world. He stipulated that the stage of identity formation takes place during adolescence. If adolescents during identity crisis choose to use their judgments and

preferences and integrate their set of ideals, they will end up in Identity Achievement. Conversely, failure to achieve Ego Synthesis and continuity of their personal character will lead them to Identity Confusion.

Identity as conceived by Erikson (1980) occurs in three levels. At the basic level is Ego Identity, which comprises the individuals' personal and most basic beliefs about themselves that represent the conflicts internalized from parents and carried over from childhood. At the second level, personal identity comprises the individuals' goals and ideals that make them their distinctive selves and which they expose to others. The inner solidarity of individuals with their group's ideals is the third level of identity that Erikson referred to as social identity.

**2.5.3 Marcia's paradigm.** Post to Erikson, the developmental psychologist, James Marcia (1966) refined and expanded Erikson's model to become the first neo-Eriksonian identity model; he was the first after Erikson to propel empirical research on the topic of identity and operationalize Erikson's identity concept through the Identity Status Paradigm which seems to have become part of the identity theory (Marcia, 1980). According to Luyckx, Klimstra, Schwartz, and Duriez (2013), the importance of Marcia's statuses is that it could capture the individual differences during identity formation, particularly in the absence of a distinct identity pathway that fits all adolescents.

Marcia's (1966) model focused mostly on adolescents' development and personal identity. He regarded identity formation as the process of synthesizing skills, beliefs, and identification from childhood into an integrated whole that equips the adolescent with a sense of steadiness with the past and a path for the future (Marcia, 1993). Furthermore,

Marcia (1980) viewed identity as a personally constructed- self-view and an internal integrated whole. He defined identity by using Erikson's concept of Ego Identity as an inner self- structure that reveals an individual's ideals, opinions, capabilities, and personal history in several fields of life such as career, religion, and the notions of sex- role. This structure is shaped by two dimensions: Crisis/Exploration and Commitment, which Marcia (1966) extrapolated from Erikson's theory.

Marcia (1966) regarded crisis as a period of turmoil and confusion during which an individual's old set of values, ideals and choices are being reassessed and went beyond Erikson's two extreme outcomes of the identity crisis stage: Identity Achievement versus Identity Diffusion. He described four methods of dealing with adolescent identity crisis: Identity Achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium and Diffusion (Marcia, 1980) and referred to each of the four methods using the term Ego Identity Status. These statuses represent individual styles of handling the psychosocial function of developing an ego identity and are delineated by their position along the two dimensions of Commitment and Crisis (later known as Exploration) (Marcia, 1966).

In this respect, Waterman (1993b) defines Exploration as a "period of struggling or active questioning in arriving at decisions about goals, values, and beliefs" (p.161) and maintains that Commitment entails "making a relatively firm choice about identity elements and engaging in significant activity directed toward implementation of that choice" (p. 164). Hence, the level of commitment and exploration one has made to identity alternatives in the domains of occupation and ideology determines the individual's identity status (Marcia & Archer, 1993). Below is a description of each status.

**2.5.3.1 Identity Achievement Status.** This status represents individuals who have constructed their identities. Thus, they make and revise their own plans, and regard the future as something to be created rather than a time to achieve preset objectives (Marcia, 1980). Identity Achieved adolescents are more cognitively developed than individuals in Foreclosure and Diffusion (Krettenauer, 2005) and more rational and creative than adolescents in other statuses (Bergh & Erling, 2005). Adolescents in Achievement possess the highest self-esteem and are thought to function extremely well under stress (Head, 2002). The Identity Achievement Status may be linked to benefits such as sensible thinking, advanced relationships with others, and wise reflection on possible life alternatives (Berzonsky, 2004). This status represents individuals who have made strong commitments following a period of identity crisis or exploration (Marcia, 1966).

**2.5.3.2 Identity Foreclosure Status.** Individuals in this status have embraced an enduring life plan designed for them by their parents or other authority figures. Their self-worth is usually dependent on their ability to accomplish the goals set out for them, as they have made commitments without having experienced any crisis. Individuals in this status are reliant on others' advice concerning their lives and rarely try to determine what they want or what is important for them (Marcia, 1993). Head (2002) argued that although Foreclosure subjects have arrived at what seems as an assured position for the rest of their lives, their maturity may be described as brittle and can be easily challenged under certain circumstances. Once confronted with a difficult decision, they either enter a delayed period of exploration to reach an authentic identity or defy all challenges to their adopted principles and values and remain in their same status (Head, 2002). On a different note, adolescents in the Foreclosure Status are highly committed (Bergh &

Erling,, 2005). They are the most conscientious (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, & Vansteenkiste, 2005) and the least anxious (Bergh & Erling 2005) among individuals in other statuses. However, these individuals are less cognitively developed than Achievers and Moratoriums (Njus & Johnson, 2008), and less flexible and open to new ideas than individuals in other identity statuses (Bergh & Erling, 2005). Foreclosures tend to develop an authoritarian personality, and most often they choose not to engage in discussions that challenge their false maturity (Head, 2002). Thus, individuals classified in this status have made strong commitments without prior exploration (Marcia, 1993).

**2.5.3.3 Identity Moratorium Status.** According to Marcia (1993), this status describes individuals who are currently struggling to form their identity and are trying to make sense of the past as they move toward the future. He adds that Moratoriums are presently in crisis and actively struggling to make commitments. Hence, individuals in the Identity Moratorium Status show a high degree of exploration and a low degree of commitment. According to Head (2002,) Moratoriums pass through identity crises that allow them to question their values and beliefs, but they fail to make a final decision about what to commit to. Although the Moratorium phase is agonizing for adolescents and for those close to them, the distress experienced in it provokes the adolescents to reach resolutions and achieve an identity; thus, individuals in this status, typically exhibit the highest level of anxiety (Head, 2002), and like adolescents in Identity Achievement, they are more cognitively developed than adolescents in Diffusion and Foreclosure (Krettenauer, 2005). Moreover, the Moratorium Status is viewed as an important first station for adolescents because it allows them to explore alternatives in life before they finally settle for an identity (Krettenauer, 2005).

**2.5.3.4 Identity Diffusion Status.** Bergh and Erling (2005) described Identity Diffused adolescents as individuals with a ‘playboy/playgirl’ approach toward life. They express a carefree attitude about daily circumstances and avoid stable changes (Krettenauer, 2005). According to Marcia (1993), this status describes individuals who lack a comprehensible identity and a clear fundamental or future sense. These individuals are typically focused on the present and handle each incident as it arises to avoid effortful complex thinking or distress. Instead, people in the Diffusion status according to Bell and Bell (as cited in Head, 2002) tend to immerse themselves in the present for immediate pleasure disregarding potential risks that might prove threatening to their physical or psychological health in the future. Diffused individuals have the tendency to lose focus on what is important and waste unreasonable amount of time on petty tasks (Erikson as cited in Head 2002). Although individuals in this status usually seek pleasure, some remain unhappy and withdrawn most of the time (Krettenauer, 2005). Consequently, according to Erikson (as cited in Head, 2002), an adolescent can end up with a negative identity and is likely to become part of an anti-social group. At times, adolescents in this situation are unable to find a socially adequate manner to express their desire to become independent from significant others, so they tend to embrace an eccentric style in dress and appearance. These individuals typically have low cognitive abilities and psychological well-being compared to individuals in other statuses (Njus & Johnson 2008). According to Marcia (1993), Identity Diffusion subjects may or may not have experienced an identity crisis, but they have not made, not willing or not able to make any commitments in the near future.

**2.5.3.5 Marcia's Identity Status Interview.** Marcia (as cited in Meeus, 1993) posited that the adolescent identity formation is not necessarily consistent across the different facets of their development but is rather domain specific. Hence, Marcia (1966) used the Identity Status Interview (ISI) to measure the levels of exploration and commitment of an individual across the different life domains of Occupation and Ideology. The Semi- Structured Interview consists of a broad list of questions that investigate identity issues in specific domains. Waterman (1993b) stated that the Semi- Structured Interview currently consists of main domains and additional domains. The main domains include vocational choice, religious beliefs, political ideology, gender-role attitude, and beliefs about sexual expression. The additional domains include avocational interests, relationships with friends, relationships with dates, role of spouse, and priorities assigned to family and career goals (Waterman, 1993b, p. 157).

The scoring manual for the semi-structured interview was prepared by including theoretical principles from Erikson's theory and empirical standards from a pilot study (Marcia, 1966).

## **2.6 Identity Transitions**

Marcia's paradigm is of a categorical nature and not a sequential process. Thus, according to Waterman (1993a), adolescents do not necessarily progress from one status to another in order; rather, with time, they could progress, regress, or remain in the same status depending on their level of exploration and commitment.

In an era of fast social change, individuals are continuously faced with challenging situations to which they can adjust only if they make necessary changes.

Hence, the personal identity developed during adolescence may not necessarily be the final one, for it has to be reexamined and re-conferred at different stages and periods of time. This may be conducive to some kind of regression, which is viewed by psychologists as an essential transitional phase toward reaching a more desirable status (Head, 2002). However, Meeus and Van Hoof (as cited in Kroger, 2003) contended that the most prevalent pattern of identity status transitions during adolescence is a progressive one. Adolescents commonly move from the less advanced (Foreclosure and Diffusion) to more advanced (Moratorium and Achieved) Identity Statuses.

In the same vein, Waterman (1993a) claimed that regarding identity status, individuals may progress and regress with time depending on their levels of exploration and commitment. He postulated that individuals move from Diffusion to Moratorium when they begin to genuinely explore an array of identity alternatives without establishing any commitments. They may move from Diffusion to Foreclosure if they grab available alternatives and commit to them without examining other options or they may remain permanently in the Diffusion status. Waterman (1993a) stipulated that individuals in the Foreclosure Identity Status may move to the Moratorium Status if their established commitments are challenged and other options need to be considered. These individuals may remain in Foreclosure when they move into adulthood with commitments established before or during adolescence or they may become Diffused if their earlier commitments become less meaningful and they do not make the effort to modify or replace them.

Along the same lines, individuals who have entered the Moratorium Status may become Identity Achieved if they adopt strong meaningful commitments to specific

goals and values or become Identity Diffused if they fail to establish new commitments (Waterman, 1993a).

Individuals in the Identity Achievement Status may remain Achieved or move again to the Moratorium Status “re- entering crisis if their earlier resolution proves unsatisfactory in some way” (Waterman, 1993a, p. 43), or become Identity Diffused if the commitments that were established earlier begin to lose their meaning without prompting new exploration.

Waterman (1993a) claimed that these transitions into statuses (From Diffusion into Foreclosure; from Diffusion into Moratorium; from Foreclosure into Moratorium and from the Moratorium into Achievement status constitute progressive developmental shifts because each one of these transitions involves deep and thoughtful deliberation of identity alternatives or making personally important commitments. However, shifting from any of the other statuses into Diffusion can be viewed as regressive because it entails relinquishing identity concerns, even if only temporarily, without having reached a viable resolution. A transition from Identity Achievement to Moratorium might appear as a form of regression in the current commitment, but it would not be regarded as a developmental regression. Instead, it could be regarded as recommencement of a crisis. In this respect, Stephen, Fraser, and Marcia (as cited in Waterman, 1993a) discussed the MAMA (Moratorium- Achievement- Moratorium- Achievement) cycles, which signify the perpetuation of identity development process. Thus, individuals move back and forth between Moratorium and Achievement attempting to make more fulfilling choices and not renouncing meaningful commitments

As such, it remains unclear which of the four statuses will be the most stable, but according to Waterman (1993a), there are reasons to believe that the Moratorium Status will be the least stable of the statuses. He argued that the Moratorium Status presents difficult challenges for individuals because it involves considering life changes as well as enduring the anxiety and distress that accompany identity crises. In the event that individuals fail to achieve a viable resolution, the task will be most likely abandoned and will remain unresolved.

In one longitudinal study, Marcia (1993) found that 43 percent of males in Achievement and Moratorium Statuses remained in their original statuses when interviewed six to seven years later. However, 84 percent of individuals in Foreclosure and Diffusion statuses failed to move out of the low Identity Statuses. Similarly, Josselson (as cited in Marcia, 1993) found that Diffusion is likely to persist; women who were classified in the Diffusion Status in college were interviewed again 15 years later and were found to be in the same status. Marcia (as cited in Valde, 1996) reevaluated the statuses of a college-aged sample in a longitudinal study six years later and found various shifts in statuses, among which was regression from Achievement. A surprising shift that was noted in the study was one from Identity Achievement and Moratorium to Foreclosure which is considered a research anomaly.

According to Waterman (1993), it remains difficult to predict the stability of the foreclosure and Identity Achievement Statuses because the commitments involved in them are to a large extent subject to the influence of various life events.

## 2.7 Correlates of Identity

Kumru and Thompson (2003) as well as Marcia (1980) asserted that the identity structure formed during adolescence is not static and keeps evolving. The process of identity development entails both exploration of values and ideals in different life areas and making commitment to them (Erikson, 1968). Thus, when examining the process of identity formation in adolescents, it is essential to consider factors that play a significant role in promoting or hampering the processes of identity exploration and commitment. Hence, some of the antecedent conditions relating to identity development include and are not limited to identification with parents before and during adolescence, family environment, parenting styles, parental behaviors, parental attachments, social expectations about identity alternatives in the family, model figures viewed as successful, school, peers, a variety of identity alternatives, and preadolescent personality structure (Waterman, 1993a). In the following section of this chapter, a number of these variables will be discussed with more emphasis on parental styles and parental behaviors mainly for the important role the parents play in shaping their children's identity.

**2.7.1 Family environment.** Grotevant and Cooper (1985) postulated that healthy familial attachments typically create a setting where adolescents feel safe enough to carry out identity exploration and consider diverse identity alternatives. As such, Allen, Häuser, Bell, and O'Connor (1994) argued that adolescents are likely to become autonomous without sabotaging their relation with their parents. Fullinwider-Bush and Jacobvist (1993) stipulated that a family system which maintains a balance between being close to children and encouraging them to become independent is an ideal context for the development of a sense of identity. Adolescents in a setting where they feel

supported and accepted may feel secure enough to do more exploration and make stronger commitments (O'Connor, 1995) and thus, are most likely to be in the Identity Achievement Status. Conversely, diffident parental attachments and lack of independence and affection within the family most likely promote identity Diffusion. In the same context, Adams, Dyk and Bennion (1990) argued that parental love, support, amity, and connectedness most likely lead adolescents toward Identity Achievement and Identity Moratorium.

**2.7.2 Parenting styles and identity.** Marcia (1993) reported that two significant parent variables are the role of the father in identity development and the impact of absence and / or separation of parents. According to Hill (1983), parents continue to impact and guide their children as the latter navigate through the physical, intellectual and social changes that take place simultaneously with the process of identity development. This impact remains significant even though the adolescents do not spend as much time at home as they did as children (Hill, 1983). Thus, parenting behaviors can either aid or hamper the process of identity formation (Adams et al., 1990). Baumrind (1968) defined various parenting behaviors and shed light on the impact of these behaviors on adolescent identity formation.

The authoritarian style according to Baumrind (1968) is found to be a corrective and obstructive style which restricts and suppresses the child. In this respect, Waterman (1993a) argued that authoritarian parents exercise authority and typically have plans and goals for their children. Hence, parents would be creating a setting where the process of identification with the parents is promoted, and thus, children are more likely to end up in the Foreclosure Status. On the other hand, Baumrind (1968) maintained that

permissive parents place limited pressure on their children and are found to be tolerant and supportive. Thus, parents who use the permissive style according to waterman (1993a) do not expect much from their children regarding commitment to goals or values, and consequently fail to establish effective models for their children. Such parents are more likely to promote a background where the children proceed into adolescence as Identity Diffused individuals (Waterman, 1993a).

Similarly, authoritative parents are tolerant and supportive, but unlike permissive parents, they exercise more control and explain the logic behind their corrective actions. According to Waterman (1993a), the authoritative parents' care and support for their child promote identification with parents and most likely lead to the development of Identity Foreclosure in adolescents. Jones, Forehand, and Beach (2000) claimed that firmness of these parents, along with their tolerant behaviors are decisive elements of psychological adjustments in late adolescence. Moreover, firmness of parents, as Peterson and Leigh (1990) put it, enhances social accountability, sense of control, autonomy, and self-esteem to a certain extent. Hence, equipped with such characteristics, individuals may be encouraged to examine identity options and may have the necessary self- assurance to make commitments. Findings in research reveal that among the three parenting styles, the authoritative style is the most ideal for promoting Identity Achievement due to the positive impact it has on the psychological well-being of adolescents (Steinberg 2001).

**2.7.3 Parental behavior.** Adams et al. (1990) were able to develop some parental features that either hamper or assist the identity development of adolescents. They found that emotional behaviors that are helpful for children are related to warmth,

companionship, and acceptance. Moreover, the elements that assist children's identity formation were found to be more related to conduct, and they include establishing balanced behavioral principles, tolerance towards different perspectives, autonomy teaching, and self-controlled abidance to behavioral expectations. Hence, identity exploration and commitment are positively influenced by parents who stimulate self-expression and promote tolerance towards different perspectives, reverence for others' opinions, and individualism. However, according to Adams et al. (1990), parenting behaviors that hinder identity formation include aggression, restraint, emotional detachment, and rejection. When such behaviors happen frequently, or when parents are too inflexible and are confused about how to deal with their children's development towards adulthood, the children's identity formation is obstructed.

Sartor and Youniss (2002) examined the impact of parental care and monitoring on identity formation and affirmed that Identity Achievement was highly and positively correlated with the support provided by parents. Moreover, other findings also proposed that parental support, appreciation, encouragement, and intimacy are related to more Identity Achievement and less Identity Diffusion among males (O'Connor, 1995). Furthermore, parental intimacy and encouragement are found to be positively related to ideological Identity Achievement and negatively correlated with interpersonal Identity Diffusion (Frank, Pirch, & Wright, 1990). In addition, strong friendship, physical love and closeness, and encouragement from parents are linked to Moratorium and Identity Achievement among adolescents (Adam et al., 1990).

**2.7.4 Identification with parents.** The degree of identification that the adolescents have with their parents before and during adolescence could determine their

Identity Status. Individuals may begin adolescence by being Foreclosed or Diffused. If the parents have strong expectations that their children will follow the family's values, and if the children reveal strong identification with one or both parents, then the children will most likely end up as Foreclosures. However, if parents do not show satisfaction with their own adopted beliefs and values and do not express their commitments to these values in areas such as occupation, religion, and politics, then they are giving their children a model for not having commitments. Thus, identification in this context will most likely lead children more toward Diffusion (Waterman, 1993a).

**2.7.5 Community and the school.** Society provides the institutional context, where adolescents can learn identification and role imitation, which are essential matters for developing an identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996). Thus, according to Waterman (1993a), if individuals live in a homogeneous community with established traditions, they will most likely develop to be in the Foreclosure Status. Hence, if community expectations are reinforced by the school system, there would be a higher probability for individuals to be in early Foreclosure Identity. However, when individuals attend a heterogeneous school and make friends in a heterogeneous community, there would be a higher probability that they would come across a diversity of readily available values and choices. Thus, the preadolescents would not be sure whether or not to abide by their family's traditions, and therefore, might end up initially as Identity Diffused individuals.

**2.7.6 Personality structure.** Another factor that may determine Identity Status at the beginning of adolescence is the personality structure that appeared during the early development years. Children who have successfully achieved personality constituents related to basic trust, autonomy, initiative and industry are likely to have a solid basis for

achieving a sense of identity. Conversely, Preadolescents without such successful personality constituents are more likely to end up as Diffused individuals (Waterman, 1993a).

## **2.8 Functions and Importance of Identity**

According to Adams and Marshall (1996), what differentiates the active self-constructed Identity Statuses (Achieved and Moratorium) from the passive-constructed Identity Statuses (Diffusion and Foreclosure) is the unique functions of identity. Adams and Marshall (1996) suggested that identity serves five functions. These functions include providing “the structure for understanding who one is”, “meaning and direction through commitments, values, and goals”, “a sense of personal control and free will”, “consistency, coherence, and harmony between values, beliefs, and commitments” and “the ability to recognize potential in the form of future possibilities and alternative choices” (p. 433).

The first function of identity offers the "structure" needed to comprehend who one truly is, and by means of self-consciousness, self-worth, and self-acceptance, the self becomes less anxious (Adams & Ethier, 1999). In addition, Adams and Marshall (1996) argued that the second function of identity is offered through commitments, ideals, and aims and purpose. Providing an awareness of personal control and the ability to make free choices is the third function of identity where these two notions are associated with the concepts of locus of control, compliance, and diligence (Adams & Ethier, 1999). In this respect, Identity Achieved adolescents who have faith in their abilities to manage and control their lives exhibit the slightest amount of external locus of control. The fourth function of identity suggested by Adams and Marshall (1996), is yielding

uniformity, cohesion, and accord between ideals, principles, and commitments. Adams and Ethier (1999) found that individuals with achieved identities adjust better academically and employ sound defense mechanisms in order to sustain uniformity, cohesion, and accord between ideals, principles, and commitments. Finally, the fifth function of identity as suggested by Adams and Marshall (1996) is yielding the capability to identify possibilities concerning future options and opportunities. Adolescents might be able to evaluate their abilities in two important aspects of their lives: academic achievement manifested through their grade point average and futuristic vocational planning.

Erikson (1968) highlighted the importance of an achieved identity when he described it as a complex system of self-definition that is molded under the influence of society and that helps individuals make sense of their life experiences and facilitates their process of making life decisions. The importance of ego identity achievement lies mainly in its psychosocial function of integration. When ego identity is well developed, this implies that the individual has succeeded in independently processing his/ her childhood identifications to create a mutual relationship with society and preserve an internal sense of continuity (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Hence, to achieve identity is to be able to construct a set of ideals and beliefs, which reflect the individual's view of himself/ herself while maintaining an internal consistency of the self in order to pursue specific goals and make life decisions (Erikson, 1968).

The significance of identity achievement is in the values of individuality and uniqueness that accompany it and in the quality of future and adjustment that it provides (Erikson, 1968). "Individuals who have a clear sense of who they are and where they are

going in their lives are more likely to feel positive about themselves and to engage in enjoyable and caring relationships with other people, and less likely to be distressed and worried or to engage in behavior that is harmful to others” (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 840). Similarly, Marcia and Friedman (1970) argued that adolescents who have an Achieved Identity tend to be highly independent and function well under stressful circumstances. These adolescents tend to be more morally advanced, more sensible, and more ingenious than others in different identity statuses. Along the same lines, Marcia (1980) defined identity as a “self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history” (p. 159) and claimed that only when identity is well developed does the individual become aware of himself/ herself as a distinctive being and is able to trust oneself rather than external sources for self- assessment. According to Marcia (1966), a person with a mature and developed identity is able to recognize his/ her uniqueness, weaknesses, and strengths, whereas another with a less developed identity is unable to do so and thus, lacks an articulated, clear sense of self.

In the same vein, Kumru and Thompson (2003) argued that identity achievement impacts the social functioning and self-presentation of the individual. They argued that the integrated sense of self and confidence facilitate the individual’s decision-making process and commitment to future goals and objectives. Moreover, they stipulated that individuals with an achieved identity tend to be flexible and are more likely to have stable, intimate relationships as a result of their solid self- definition.

## **2.9 The Lebanese Context**

With regard to the identity development in Lebanese youth in late adolescence, the situation seems to be rather complex. In addition to having to experience the changes

that accompany the phase of adolescence, young individuals in Lebanon also have to cope with religious divisions, unique political discord, and complicated cultural situations. According to Sarouphim (2011), the country has witnessed ruthless civil wars, the longest of which erupted in 1975 and ended in 1991 leaving numerous physical, mental, psychological, and social adverse effects. The effects of this civil war were compounded by the Israeli occupation that accompanied it from June 1982 until May 2000. During war times, the Lebanese population witnessed episodes of unpredictable eruptions of violence in the form of air strikes, street fights, bombings, and displacement; they also suffered the harsh consequences of the collapse of the economy, community establishments (such as schools and hospitals), and public facilities (such as water and electricity) that accompanied the armed outbreaks (Macksoud & Aber, 1996). Only five years after the withdrawal of the Israeli army, Prime Minister, Rafic Al-Hariri was assassinated causing the country to re-enter a state of instability marked by political dissonance, armed fights and sectarian struggles that continue to the present time (Sarouphim, 2011).

Ayyash-Abdo and Alamuddin (2007) attributed the sporadic political turbulence and the civil war in Lebanon to the dominance of religious identity over national identity. They claimed that the 1958 war and the 16- year war (1975 to 1991) were of religious origin. Hence, religion in Lebanon was never limited to its spiritual purpose; instead, it continues to play a significant role in determining and strengthening individuals' social and political affinities as well as their cultural worldviews. Religion in Lebanon is "Institutionalized such that each sect has its own courts, traditions, and social and economic organizations" (p. 268). Thus, secular courts that handle matters for all Lebanese families equally do not exist in Lebanon; rather, there are religious courts

that handle family matters like marriage and divorce, birth or death, and inheritance on the basis of the religion adopted by the family (Salibi as cited in Soweid, Khawaja & Salem, 2004). At present, Lebanese people live “ in a country with the largest religious diversity in the region – 17 religions... and on a territory that matches a religious membership – *cantonization* –: a village, a region or a district in a town can correspond to a religious community” (Rarbo, 2009, p. 6).

According to Ghosn (2009), the Lebanese society is distinguished for its “complex socio- cultural and political diversity” (p. 72) and the presence of a cultural blend of western and Arab values. The impact of this blend may be traced in the Lebanese population in the form of a combination of individualism orientation adopted from the west and collectivism orientation originally present in the Lebanese culture (Ayyash-Abdo as cited in Ghosn, 2009). Lustig and Koester (as cited in Ghosn, 2009) claimed that in societies characterized by collectivism orientation, the welfare of the group takes priority over that of the individual. Hence, importance is not given to the individual but rather to togetherness and social bonds. As such, it is evident that in the Lebanese society, family bonds and “family traditional kinship attachments” are strong, and the individuals’ loyalty to their families is optimal (Ayyash-Abdo as cited in Ghosn, 2009, p. 506). In this respect, Issam Fares Institute (2010) argued that although youth in the west value their independence and identify with peers, Lebanese youth show significant loyalty to their families, Lebanon and their sect. In the same vein, findings from previous studies in Lebanon have determined that the Lebanese people regardless of their gender or religion, regard family as the most important social institution (Faour, as cited in Ayyash-Abdo et. al., 2009). In one study, Kazarian (2005) found that both the

Lebanese nuclear family and the traditional extended one share the same demands of conformity, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and preservation of family honor in their members.

Furthermore, the Lebanese society is viewed as a patriarchal society where male births are preferred over female births, and males receive more privileges and special treatment than females who are seen as individuals in need of help and care (Ayyash-Abdo, et al., 2009). Thus, males enjoy more opportunities to experiment and explore during the adolescence stage. This discrimination in gender, however, does not seem to apply to all domains in Lebanese society. According to a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report, gender inequality in Lebanon did not lead to gender differences in basic education between males and females (Ayyash-Abdo et al., 2009); Hence, Lebanese parents place equal importance on the education of their sons and daughters.

Concerning identity development of Lebanese youth, Rarbo (2009) claimed that young people in the Lebanese society grow to be rather dependent individuals with no distinct identity of their own because they are raised and seen as only members of a greater denominational community. Rarbo (2009) also postulated that “Families give youth a status of young people in training, becoming open to modernity and to foreign languages but with limits, the ones of community frontiers” (p. 14). Along the same lines, Nammour (2007) claimed that the Lebanese youth shift between three conflicting identity establishments: the religious, national and supra- national and can be either Islamic, Arabic, or occidental. Thus, the Lebanese youth seem to experience contradictory feelings about their identity. They seem to oscillate between embracing global values made available through international networks and mass media and preserving their Arab traditions. In sum, researchers seem to agree that the Lebanese

youth have their loyalty first and foremost to their families, their country and their sects (Issam Fares Institute study, 2011). It is not known, however, to what extent these contradictions impact the adolescents' Identity Statuses.

Ayyash-Abdo (2007) claimed that the awareness of the importance of the transitional period of adolescence is still at a preliminary stage among the Lebanese community. According to Shaar (2013), adolescents in general are a vulnerable group in face of war adversities mainly because adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. She argued that traumatized adolescents might find consolation in alcohol, substance abuse, and/or through antisocial behavior. They also might display learning and academic problems. This is enough reason to be concerned about Lebanese adolescents because most have witnessed traumatizing atrocities due to repetitive wars. In addition, not much support has been provided to them by official or government sources. In this respect, Rarbo (2009) found that the needs of the Lebanese adolescents with regard to "autonomy, support to training, job search, health, housing, information and citizenship involvement" (p. 24) are not met in the absence of a government comprehensive plan or policy. In one study on subjective well-being, Ayyash-Abdo and Alamuddin, (2007) stipulated that the economic problems which Lebanon faces, such as unemployment, immigration, poverty, and societal and economic inequality could be possible factors that have contributed to the low Subjective Well-Being of Lebanese adolescents. In sum, it is not known to what extent adverse circumstances have affected and continue to affect the process of identity development in Lebanese youth.

## **2.10 Identity Status and Gender Differences**

Initially, women were not included in studies on identity, and it wasn't until after the identity statuses of college males were examined that the criteria for determining women's identity statuses were developed (Marcia & Friedman 1970). First, researchers chose "attitudes toward premarital intercourse" as criteria to determine women's identity statuses because these were thought to be more relevant for women and critical for their identity formation (Marcia, 1980). Hence, crisis for women was evaluated according to the presence of some sexual values, and commitment was assessed according to the level of adherence to these values. Later, the criteria were developed to match those for men, and eventually included crisis and commitment in the domains of occupation and ideology alongside the subject of attitudes toward premarital intercourse (Marcia & Friedman, 1970).

Research on gender differences in identity development have yielded mixed results. Kumru and Thompson (2003) reported that studies on gender differences in identity statuses have mostly yielded no significant differences. Their own study showed that in the domains of sexual values and family/career priorities identity may be more salient for women than for men, but these differences were not statistically significant. Similarly, investigating the results of 56 studies that involved the use of at least one measure that assessed the identity statuses or styles for males and females, Kroger (2003) found no significant gender differences concerning questions of "identity structure, domain salience, or developmental process" (p.218).

According to Poppen, Waterman and Nevid (as cited in Marcia, 1980) in the sexual area, females were found to go through more crises and make more commitments

than males. Moreover, Hodgson (as cited in Marcia, 1980) found that adolescent girls were more advanced in the interpersonal domains than boys as they showed more interest in good interpersonal relationships with their families. Conversely, adolescent boys were found to be more advanced in the intrapersonal domains as their identity focuses on individual competence and knowledge (Hodgson as cited in Marcia, 1980).

Findings from different studies suggested that the process of identity formation appears to be different for males and females. According to Marcia (1980), women take more time than men to form their identity, whereas Colom and Lynn (as cited in Meeus, Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz & Branje, 2010) argued that the brain of early adolescent girls develops faster than that of boys in many areas. Along the same lines, Beunen (as cited in Meeus et al., 2010) claimed that boys usually reach puberty one or two years later than girls. Hence, Meeus et al. (2010) used these findings to suggest that girls might achieve a mature identity status earlier than boys who usually catch up later in adolescence. Thus, the literature review reveals mixed results regarding gender differences in identity formation and identity statuses.

## **2.11 Identity Status and Academic Achievement**

Researchers and educators alike have taken an interest in the relationship between identity development and academic achievement. In this respect, Flores-Crespo (2007) highlighted the role of identity in research on education; under certain circumstances it may impact school options, classroom conduct, career functioning, and the attitude of youth about schooling. Similarly, Streitmatter (1989) argued that the level of identity development is one of the most significant factors associated with academic achievement. Moreover, Berzonsky (1993) stipulated that identity development in the

areas of cognitive reasoning and attitude toward university pressures impact significantly the academic achievement of youth in late adolescents. He maintained that adolescents who have developed their identities also develop better studying skills, strategies, and attitudes that help them cope with the pressures and difficulties that accompany academic success. He added that adolescents in the Achieved Identity Status are more able than those in other identity statuses to make better judgments and estimations regarding their abilities to meet university requirements for success.

Many researchers have investigated the direct as well as indirect impact of identity development on academic achievement. Francis (1981), for that matter, found that individuals in the Identity Achievement Status have higher grade point average scores as well as a greater desire to pursue their education than those in the Diffusion Status. Similarly, Cross and Allen (1970) argued that academic performance of individuals in the Identity Achievement Status is much higher than that of individuals in other identity statuses.

On the other hand, Lange, Clare, and Byrd (2002) argued that the relation between adolescents' academic achievement and their state of identity development is not a direct one. The results in their study showed that the level of participants' identity development seems to impact the way in which they understand and try to handle the problems found in an academic situation. They claimed that adolescents in the Foreclosure and Achievement statuses develop better skills to understand and manage their lives and set plans that ensure their academic success. Conversely, Diffused or Moratorium individuals are not able to understand and evaluate their true academic situation, and they lack the skills needed to cope with the difficulties and stresses of the

academic environment. They also lack the skills needed to manage and plan their academic life successfully. In the same study, participants in the Moratorium or Diffusion Status, evaluated themselves as being more likely to settle for any grade they might receive and more likely to procrastinate study tasks till the last minute, than did participants in the Foreclosure and Achievement statuses.

Along the same lines, Was, Al-Harthy, Stack-Oden, and Isaacson (2009) found a positive correlation between identity status and students' ability to cope with the transitional phase from high school to university; "It is clear that how one copes with the transitions that occur during entry into university life would be greatly impacted by identity status and in turn by the identity processing styles the individual adopts to manage self-relevant information" (p.633). Moreover, Brinthaupt and Lipka (2002) argued that identity formation is important for academic achievement and thus urged schools to channel their work and programs toward early adolescents' identity needs in order to promote efficacious growth.

## **2.12 Criticism of the Identity Status Model**

One can hardly find a literary review on the topic of Ego Identity Status that does not include a reference to Marcia's (1966) paradigm. According to Anderson (2008), this paradigm is regarded as the best in the field of psychology to assess adolescence identity. Nevertheless, it has been subject to extensive criticism.

Schwartz et al. (2011) described elaborately how the status model fails to represent Erikson's (1950) theory of identity where the identity crisis outcome is either synthesis or confusion. In this respect, the Identity Diffusion Status in the Status

Paradigm hardly resembles Erikson's Identity Confusion, and the Achievement Status hardly resembles Erikson's Identity Synthesis (Côté and Schwartz; Schwartz et al. as cited in Schwartz et al., 2011). They also questioned how the Moratorium and Foreclosure statuses in the status model fit in Erikson's dynamic of Synthesis versus Confusion.

Along the same lines, Waterman (as cited in Schwartz et al., 2011) questioned the practical distinction between the Foreclosure Status and the Achievement Status on several manifestations of "positive (e.g., self-esteem) and negative (e.g., internalizing symptoms) psychosocial functioning" (p. 841). As such, the Foreclosure Status, which is considered less mature than the Achievement Status seems to offer the same gains as the Achievement Status. In other words, the less mature status where commitments are adopted from others without prior exploration appears equivalent to Identity Synthesis in Erikson's theory. This is of course a "logical impossibility" (p. 841) given Erikson's definition of identity synthesis as "self-directed resolution to the task of developing a sense of identity" (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 841).

In criticism of the Identity Status model, Shwartz (2005) claimed that it fails to address the ethnicity or nationality of the adolescents especially in an era of globalization where interaction with others from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds has become the everyday practice. As such, the model does not focus on an important part of the personal identity which is the self that one reveals to others and the means by which one reveals it to the social world.

Despite the criticism that Marcia's (1966) model received, it is considered the model in psychology that best assesses the identity of adolescents (Anderson, 2008). Although it was not the only approach to understand identity or operationalize Erikson's notion of identity, Marcia's paradigm has received the most extensive attention in review and has "endured over time" (p.2).

### **2.13 Conclusion of Literature Review**

In sum, research reveals that identity is a broad topic and the process of its development is regarded as rather complex given the diversity of factors associated with it and the absence of a distinct identity pathway that fits all adolescents. Family dynamics, parental styles, school, community, social interactions, personality structure are factors among many others that could have well-defined and impacted the process of identity development. Due to the dynamic nature of identity, it is crucial to keep abreast of the changes occurring in its context. In this regard, numerous theories and models have been put into empirical use to address and assess the different aspects of identity. Marcia's Identity Status model, in this respect has become the most viable tool in research to operationalize Erikson's theory of identity and to capture the individual differences during identity formation (Luyckx et al., 2013).

In Lebanon, research on Ego Identity Statuses is nonexistent. Thus, the current study sheds light on a topic that requires further understanding especially in a unique context marked by religious divisions, political discord, and a complicated cultural situation.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Method

The current study examined Marcia's ego identity paradigm in a sample of Lebanese youth in late adolescence. Another purpose was to investigate gender differences in the ego identity statuses. A third purpose was to examine the relationship between individuals' ego identity status and their academic achievement.

### 3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional design was implemented using the EIPQ on a sample of 262 participants in an American university in Beirut. The participants answered a set of questions (EIPQ and demographics) in one sitting. This is an exploratory study as such research has not been previously conducted in Lebanon.

### 3.2 Participants

The sample consisted originally of 262 college students selected from random classes of different schools at an American university in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. The university caters mostly to students from middle to upper socio-economic status, thus most participants were from middle or upper socio-economic status as evidenced by their university tuition fees and their place of residence.

Only 255 participants were retained for the final analysis after deleting the univariate and multivariate outliers. Among the 255 participants, 111 were males (43.53) and 144 were females (56.47) (see Table 1). This indicates that the sample was composed of somehow equal percentages of males and females. In addition, the highest

number of participants (108) were from the sophomore class (42.35%) followed by 70 (27.45%) participants from the senior class and 61 participants from the junior class (23.92%). The least number of participants (16) were from the freshman class (6.27%). Moreover, the age of participants ranged from 18 to 21 years, with  $M = 20.00$  and  $SD = .95$ ; the standard deviation is small relative to the mean indicating that the scores of age are clustered around the mean (see Table 1)

### **3.3 Instruments**

**3.3.1 Ego identity status.** The instrument used in this study to measure the participants' identity statuses was the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri et al., 1995). This instrument was used to measure the level of exploration and commitment of the participants in order to classify them into one of the four identity statuses (Achieved, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Diffusion) as defined by Marcia (1993).

The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) is a questionnaire that comprises 32 items ordered randomly across the eight domains: Occupation, Religion, Politics, Values, Family, Friendships, Dating And Sex Roles (see Appendix A). It consists of two subscales: the Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale, each of which includes 16 items. Of the total items in both subscales, 20 items are positively worded and 12 are negatively worded, and the degree of agreement to each statement is indicated by the participants on a Likert- type scale that ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). For the positively- stated items, 6 points are allocated to Strongly Agree, 5 points to Agree, 4 points to Slightly Agree, 3 points to Slightly

Disagree, 2 points to Disagree, and one point to Strongly Disagree. For the negatively stated items, the scoring is reversed.

The Exploration Subscale consists of item numbers 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, 18,19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, and 30. An example of a positively stated item in the Exploration Subscale is item number three, which states, “I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.” The negatively worded items in this subscale that must be reverse scored are item numbers 4, 6, 11, 15, 26, and 30. An example of a negatively- stated item representing the Exploration Subscale is item number four, which states, “There has never been a need to question my values.”

The Commitment Subscale on the EIPQ consists of items number 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14,16, 17, 21, 23, 25, 29, 31, and 32. An example of a positively stated item representing the Commitment Subscale is item number one, which states, “I have definitely decided on the occupation that I want to pursue.” The item numbers on this subscale that must be reverse scored are items number 12, 14, 16, 21, 29, and 31. An example of a negatively stated item representing the Commitment Subscale is item number 12, which states: “ My values might change in the future.”

Following the administration of the EIPQ, the total scores for Exploration and Commitment are calculated separately by summing up all item scores in each subscale. As per the scoring instructions of the EIPQ, the median splits for Exploration and Commitment are calculated to determine the identity statuses based on Marcia’s definitions of the statuses according to the high and low classifications of the Exploration and Commitment scores. Participants scoring at or above the median in both subscales are classified in the Achieved Identity Status while those scoring below the median are placed in the Diffusion Identity Status. If participants score above the

median on Exploration but below the median on Commitment, they are classified in the Moratorium Identity Status, but if they score below the median on Exploration and above the median on Commitment, they are classified in the Foreclosure Identity Status (Balistreri et al., 1995).

**3.3.2 Academic achievement.** The academic achievement variable was measured through a direct question on the survey about the participant's cumulative GPA at the time of data collection. The self-reported GPA was considered the achievement data used in this study.

### **3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

Studies on the validity and reliability of the EIPQ yielded positive results. For example, in one study, the 32 items of the EIPQ were rated by five different graduate students for the dimension each item measures. The results showed a high agreement among the raters, with Kappa coefficient= 0.76 ( $p < 0.01$ ). The EIPQ was further completed by 30 college students who were also administered Marcia's semi structured interview of identity status. The results showed a 60% inter-rater agreement of scores, with kappa= 0.47,  $P < (0.01)$  These findings indicate a consistency between identity statuses assigned by the EIPQ and Marcia's semi-structured interview and support the construct validity of the EIPQ.

In studies on the reliability of the EIPQ, the coefficient of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the Exploration and Commitment Subscales was .76 and .75, respectively indicating high internal reliability. Moreover, test-retest reliability for the Exploration Subscale and Commitment Subscale was .91 and .78, respectively (Balistreri et al., 1995).

In the current study, the Exploration Subscale had a Cronbach's Alpha = .67, and the Commitment Subscale a Cronbach's alpha = .69, both indicating a moderately high reliability.

### **3.5 Procedure**

Prior to the study, the researcher submitted an application to the Committee on Human Subject Research (CHSR) describing the procedures of the study. Upon receipt of approval, the questionnaire was piloted among 20 students selected randomly on campus. The students matched the participants of this study in characteristics. None of the items on the questionnaire were modified, but the researcher took into consideration the comments of the pilot participants and made some clarifications upon administering the instrument to the actual sample of the study.

Following the pilot study, the researcher contacted professors randomly from all schools in the university through email to secure their approval to distribute the Ego Identity Progress Questionnaire (EIPQ) to students in their classes. Appointments were arranged with professors who responded positively to the emails, and data were collected over a period of three weeks.

Prior to administering the instrument, the researcher made sure that all the participants were fully informed about the nature of the study to help them make an informed decision to participate. Upon obtaining the consent of participants, the researcher clarified a few points based on the comments of the individuals who participated in the pilot study. Participants were instructed to read each item on the questionnaire not as a question that needed an answer but rather as a statement that they

agreed or disagreed with, and then, accordingly to choose the Likert Scale that best reflected their level of agreement (4, 5, or 6) or disagreement (1, 2, or 3). They were also reminded to read the items carefully because some ideas would be repeated in different wording. Moreover, the researcher gave an example of how to respond to a negatively stated item in order to avoid any confusion. The participants then were able to complete the questionnaire in a period of 15 to 20 minutes in the presence of the researcher who clarified the meaning of some words or items when necessary.

### **3.6 Procedures for Reviewing the Literature**

The purpose of this study was to identify the identity statuses of Lebanese youth in late adolescence according to Marcia's paradigm, and to examine any differences in academic achievement among the four identity statuses. A third purpose was to examine gender differences in the identity statuses. Hence, research articles, books, and electronic databases were used as sources of reviewed literature to cover the topic of identity statuses in late adolescence. As there is no available literature on the topic in the Lebanese context, the researcher referred to journal articles written by scholars about the Lebanese youth and other relevant topics.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

In order to analyze the data collected for this study, the researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22). To test the first hypothesis (the Lebanese youth in late adolescence will be classified mostly in the category of Foreclosure Identity as measured by the EIPQ), the median splits for Exploration and Commitment were calculated to determine the identity statuses based on

Marcia's definitions (1993) of the statuses according to the high and low classifications of the Exploration and Commitment scores.

Moreover, to test the second hypothesis (a higher percentage of male than female participants will be classified in the Moratorium and Achieved Identity Statuses), Frequencies (SPSS) were used to calculate the descriptives of the four identity statuses across males and females. Once the results were obtained, a Chi-Square test was conducted to examine gender differences.

Along the same lines, an Analysis of Variance (One-way ANOVA) was used to test the third hypothesis (differences exist in academic achievement across the identity statuses; with the highest academic achievement scores corresponding to Achieved Identity Status and the lowest academic achievement corresponding to Diffusion Identity Status).

For additional analysis, an independent t-test was carried out to investigate the differences between males and females across the Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale; and correlations between age, GPA, Exploration, and Commitment were investigated using the Spearman's Rho one-tailed test. The results of this study are presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Results

This study was conducted to identify the identity statuses in a sample of Lebanese youth in late adolescence and to examine the relationship between their identity statuses and their academic achievement. The study also aimed to examine gender differences among participants with regard to their identity statuses. Another purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between identity statuses (Achieved, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Diffusion) and academic achievement (GPA).

The sample consisted of 262 participants, but only 255 participants were retained for the final analysis (after deleting the univariate and multivariate outliers). Among the 255 participants, 111 were males and 144 were females. In addition, the highest number of participants were in the sophomore class (108) followed by the senior class (70) and the junior class (61). The least number of participants were in the freshman class (16). Moreover, the age of participants ranged from 18 to 21 years, with  $M = 20.00$  and  $SD = .95$ ; the standard deviation is small relative to the mean indicating that the scores of age are clustered around the mean.

The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) was the instrument used to identify the participants' identity statuses. The student's Grade Point Average (GPA) of the previous term (Fall 2013/2014) served as the academic achievement data. The EIPQ instrument is composed of 32 items; 16 items constitute the Exploration Subscale, and 16 items are in the Commitment Subscale. Each item on the EIPQ instrument was

measured using a 6- point Likert –Type Scale; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree. Data were collected using an exploratory survey (non-experimental) design.

#### **4.1 Preliminary Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22). The variables were examined to check for the following: Mis-entered data, Analysis of missing values, Univariate Outliers, Multivariate Outliers. In addition, the reliability of the Exploration Subscale and Commitment Subscale was examined using Cronbach’s Alpha.

**4.1.1 Mis-entered data.** Examining the mis-entered data is crucial because mis-entered data distort both the analysis of assumptions and the main analysis of results by shifting the mean and standard deviations of each variable. Mis-entered data was examined by looking at the range (maximum and minimum values) of the given variables: GPA, the 32 items of the EIPQ, Gender, Age, and Class. Mis-entered data analysis revealed that there was no data entered incorrectly, and thus the researcher proceeded with main data analysis.

**4.1.2 Missing value analysis.** The maximum percentage of missing value on a variable recommended by Tabachnick and Fidel (2013) is below or equal to 5%. All the percentages of missing values on the variables were less than 5%, indicating that the data are missing at random. Thus, the researcher proceeded with main data analysis.

**4.1.3 Univariate outliers.** The univariate outliers were examined using the z-scores of the variables (32 items of the EIPQ, GPA, age). The z-score of  $|3.29|$  was used

as a critical value for univariate outliers. No cases of univariate outliers ( $z < |3.29|$ ) were identified among the variables Age and the 32 items of the EIPQ except Question number 5. Two univariate outliers were identified on the variable question 5 ( $z > 3.29$ ), with case numbers 111, 201. In addition, three univariate outliers were identified on the dependent variable GPA ( $z > 3.29$ ), with case numbers 162, 216, 220.

**4.1.4 Multivariate outliers.** Before inspecting for multivariate outliers, the Exploration Subscale was computed by summing up its 16 items, and the Commitment Subscale was computed by summing up its 16 items.

Mahalanobis distances were inspected to determine the multivariate outliers. The multivariate outliers were examined using the predictors (age, gender, Exploration Subscale and Commitment Subscale) and the criterion variable (GPA). The Class variable was excluded from this analysis since it is measured at the ordinal level. Two cases of multivariate outliers were identified using the Mahalanobis distances critical value  $X^2 (.001) = 13.2767$ . Those two multivariate outliers had case numbers 6, 262.

As mentioned earlier, the sample consisted of 262 participants, however, the 7 cases of univariate and multivariate outliers were deleted, since they would probably create potential bias in the main analysis. Thus, the final sample was composed of  $N = 255$  participants.

**4.1.5 Reliability Analysis.** The reliability analysis was performed for both subscales, Exploration and Commitment.

**4.1.5.1 Exploration subscale.** Once the item numbers 4, 6, 11, 15, 26, 30 were reverse coded, the Exploration Subscale which is composed of 16 items had a

Cronbach's Alpha  $\alpha = .67$ . This indicates that the Exploration Subscale had a relatively good reliability. Moreover, Chronbach' alpha would not improve upon deleting any of its 16 item, and consequently, all the items on the questionnaire were retained in the final analysis.

**4.1.5.2 Commitment subscale.** Once the item numbers 12, 14, 16, 21, 29, 31 were reverse coded, the Commitment Subscale which is composed of 16 items had a Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha = .69$ . This indicates that the Commitment Subscale had a good reliability. Cronbach's alpha would still improve if item 13 were deleted. However, as the reliability score would improve by only .01 ( $\alpha = .70$ ), item 13 was retained in the final analysis, as it is conceptually an important item in the Commitment Subscale.

## **4.2 Determination of the Identity Statuses Among Lebanese Youth in Late Adolescence**

The first hypothesis of this study stated that the Lebanese youth in late adolescence will be classified mostly in the category of Foreclosure Identity Status as measured by the EIPQ. To test this hypothesis, the data were analyzed using SPSS version 22. The results showed that the majority of participants (29.41%) were in the Foreclosure status. Thus, the hypothesis was confirmed and the null hypothesis of no differences was rejected.

It was possible to classify participants in one of the four identity statuses based on their separate scores on the two subscales of the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, Exploration and Commitment. The medians of the Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale were calculated, and the results were 63.31 and 63.40

respectively. Both scores were rounded down to 63. The participants with a score on the Exploration Subscale higher than or equal to the median (63) were considered high on Exploration, and the participants with a score on the Exploration subscale lower than the median (63) were considered low in Exploration. Similarly, the participants with a score on the Commitment Subscale higher than or equal to the median (63) were considered high on Commitment, and the participants with a score on the Commitment Subscale lower than the median (63) were considered low on Commitment.

As shown in Table 2, 122 participants were low on Exploration while 133 participants were high on Exploration. In addition, 121 participants were low on Commitment while 134 participants were high on Commitment. This indicates that the sample is composed of almost equal proportions of participants who are either high or low on both the Exploration and Commitment Subscales.

Individuals with low Exploration and low Commitment were classified in the Diffused Identity Status, and participants with high Exploration and high Commitment were classified in the Achieved Identity Status. Moreover, participants with low Exploration and high Commitment were placed in the Foreclosure Identity Status and those with high Exploration and low Commitment were placed in the Moratorium Identity Status. The results showed that the majority of participants were in the Foreclosure Identity Status (29.41%) and the Moratorium Identity Status (29.02%), followed by the Achieved Identity Status (23.14%). The lowest percentage of participants was in The Diffusion Identity Status (18.43%). Thus, the results of this study confirmed the first hypothesis (See table 3), and the null hypothesis of no differences was rejected.

### **4.3 Gender Differences Across the Identity Statuses**

The second hypothesis of this study stated that a higher percentage of male than female participants will be classified in the Moratorium and Achieved Identity Status. To test this hypothesis, first, the researcher used Frequencies (SPSS) to calculate the descriptives of the four identity statuses across males and females. The data obtained were divided into two categories, male participants and female participants, and the researcher examined the identity statuses in each category separately. The highest percentage of male participants was in the Moratorium Identity Status (31.53%); whereas the highest percentage of female participants was in the Foreclosure Identity Status (29.17%) (See Table 4).

Upon comparing the percentage of male participants with that of female participants in each of the four identity statuses, the results revealed that in the Diffusion Identity Status, the percentage of male participants (18.02%) was almost equal to the percentage of female participants (18.75%). Similarly, the percentage of male participants in the Foreclosure Identity Status (29.73%) was almost equal to the percentage of female participants (29.17%). However, the percentage of participants in the Achieved Identity Status was higher in females (25%) than in males (20.72%), and the percentage of participants in the Moratorium Identity Status was higher in males (31.53%) than females (27.08%) (See table 4).

To examine the significance of the above differences, a Chi-square test of independence was performed.

Assumptions of the Chi-Square test:

- 1- The data on the variables gender and identity status were measured at the nominal level.
- 2- The data on the variables gender and identity status had 2 categories or more. Gender had two categories (male and female), and Identity status had 4 categories (Diffused, Moratorium, Foreclosure and Achieved).

Thus, the assumptions of the Chi- Square test were met.

Analysis:

The Chi-Square test of independence was performed to examine the gender differences across the levels of the identity status. The results of the chi-square test revealed that there were no significant gender differences across the levels of identity status,  $\chi^2 (3) = .93, p > .05$ . This indicates that males and females were equally probable to have one of the four identity statuses (Achieved, Moratorium, Diffusion, and Foreclosure). Thus, the data failed to reject the null hypothesis (see Table 5).

### **4.3.1 Gender Differences in the Exploration and Commitment**

#### **Subscales**

Although examining gender differences across the Exploration and Commitment Subscales was not one of the initial research questions, collected data warranted such an investigation.

An independent t-test was carried out to investigate the differences between males and females across the Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale.

Assumptions of t-test:

- 1- The data on the dependent variables (Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale) were entered as scale.
- 2- Independence of observations: each participant completed the questionnaire alone and thus the independence of observations is theoretically assumed.
- 3- Normality of the dependent variables across the males and females: The KS test was used to test for the assumption of normality of the dependent variables across males and females.

For the Exploration Subscale, the KS-test revealed that the scores on the dependent variable (Exploration Subscale) across the males group was not significantly different from that of a normal distribution;  $D(111) = .07, p > .05$  *ns*, hence, normality is met. Similarly, The KS-test revealed that the scores on the dependent variable (Exploration Subscale) across the females group was not significantly different from that of a normal distribution;  $D(144) = .07, p = .05$  *ns*, hence, normality is met.

For the Commitment Subscale, the KS-test revealed that the scores on the dependent variable (Commitment Subscale) across the males group were not significantly different from that of a normal distribution;  $D(111) = .08, p = .05$  *ns*, hence, normality is met.  $D(144) = .05, p > .05$  *ns*. Similarly, the KS-test revealed that the scores on the dependent variable (Commitment Subscale) across the females group were not significantly different from that of a normal distribution;  $D(144) = .05, p > .05$  *ns*, hence, normality is met (see Table 6).

#### 4- Homogeneity Of Variance

The Levene's test revealed that the variances of the dependent variable

Exploration Subscale were not significantly different across males and females;  $F(1, 253) = .07, p > .05 ns$ . Thus, the homogeneity of variance assumption is met.

The Levene's test revealed that the variances of the dependent variable Commitment Subscale were not significantly different across males and females;  $F(1, 253) = .94, p > .05 ns$ . Thus, the homogeneity of variance assumption is met (see Table 7).

As shown in Tables 8 and 9, the Exploration Subscale, males ( $M = 62.33, SE = .89$ ) scored lower than females ( $M = 64.06, SE = .76$ ). This difference was not statistically significant,  $t(253) = -1.49, p > .05 ns$ . with a small effect size  $r = .01$ . Similarly, in the Commitment Subscale, males ( $M = 63.30, SE = .87$ ) scored lower than females ( $M = 63.47, SE = .72$ ). This difference was not statistically significant,  $t(253) = -.16, p > .05$ . Thus, data did not support the hypothesis of gender differences and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### **4.4 Identity Status and Academic Achievement**

The third hypothesis of this study stated that there exist differences in academic achievement across the identity statuses; with the highest academic achievement scores corresponding to Achieved Identity Status and the lowest academic achievement corresponding to Diffusion Identity Status. To test this hypothesis, an analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA) was carried out with identity status as the independent variable and the GPA as the dependent variable.

By examining the descriptive statistics, the participants' mean of GPA was almost equal among the four identity statuses. GPA of the participants in the Diffused group had an  $M = 2.97$  and  $SD = .54$ , in the Achieved group had an  $M = 3.02$  and  $SD =$

.51, in the Foreclosure group had an  $M = 2.83$  and  $SD = .52$ , in the Moratorium group had an  $M = 2.93$  and  $SD = .53$  (see Table 10).

An analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA) was performed to examine the significant differences between participants' GPA across the four identity statuses.

Assumptions of ANOVA:

- 1- Data on the dependent variable (GPA) is entered as scale.
- 2- Independence of Observations: each participant completed one questionnaire at a time (independently) and participants did not share any answers and did not work in groups.
- 3- Normality of the dependent variable (GPA) across the 4 levels of the identity statuses (Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achieved, Diffusion).

The KS test was used to test for the assumption of normality of the dependent variable GPA in each level of the Independent variable, the identity status (see Table 11).

The KS-test revealed that the scores on the dependent variable GPA  $D(46) = .10, p > .05$ ,  $D(58) = .08, p > .05$ , and  $D(74) = .09, p > .05$ , *n*sin the Diffusion group, Achievement group, and Moratorium group respectively were not significantly different from that of a normal distribution and normality is met; The KS-test revealed, however, that the scores on the dependent variable GPA in the Foreclosure group were significantly different from that of a normal distribution and normality is not met;  $D(74) = .13, p < .05$ . The ANOVA F-test is robust to the violation of normality, and thus the researcher proceeded with the main ANOVA Analysis.

1- Homogeneity of variance; the Levene's test revealed that the variances of the dependent variable GPA was not significantly different across the four levels of the independent variable (Diffusion, Achieved, Moratorium and Foreclosure);  $F(3, 248) = .25, p > .05$  ns. Thus, the homogeneity of variance assumption is met (see table 12).

#### Anova Main Analysis:

The results indicated no significant differences between participants with regard to GPA across the four identity statuses (Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achieved, Diffusion). Thus, the third hypothesis was not supported and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The ANOVA results revealed that there was no significant effect of the identity status on the GPA;  $F(3, 248) = 1.58, p > .05, \eta^2 = .003$  (see table 13). This indicates that there were no significant differences between participants in the different identity statuses (Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achieved, Diffused) with regard to GPA.

### **4.5 Correlations Between Age, GPA, Exploration, Commitment**

As the current study is the first of its kind in Lebanon, the researcher conducted further analysis of the collected data to explore any relationships that might exist between age, GPA, Exploration, and Commitment. The Spearman's Rho one-tailed test was used since the normality of the scores of the variables Age and GPA were not met. The KS test revealed that scores on age and GPA were significantly different from that of a normal distribution, and normality was not met;  $D(252) = .25, p < .001, D(252) = .08, p < .001$ . The KS-test revealed, however, that the scores on Exploration and

Commitment were not significantly different from that of a normal distribution, and normality was met;  $D(252) = .04, p > .05, ns$ ,  $D(252) = .05, p > .05, ns$  (see Table 14).

The correlation matrix in Table 15 showed no significant correlations between age and GPA ( $r = -.03, p > .05, ns$ ), age and Exploration Subscale ( $r = -.01, p > .05, ns$ ), age and Commitment Subscale ( $r = .01, p > .05, ns$ ), GPA and Exploration Subscale ( $r = .09, p > .05, ns$ ), and GPA and Commitment Subscale ( $r = -.02, p > .05, ns$ ). There was, however, a significant negative moderate correlation between the Exploration and Commitment Subscales;  $r = -.25, p < .001$ . This indicates that participants who scored higher on the Commitment Subscale scored lower on the Exploration Subscale and those who scored lower on the Commitment Subscale scored higher on the Exploration Subscale.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The researcher used the SPSS version 22 for the quantitative analysis of data in this study. The null hypothesis in this study was rejected for the first hypothesis but not rejected for the second and third hypothesis.

Data analysis supported the first hypothesis, which stated that the Lebanese youth in late adolescence will be classified mostly in the category of Foreclosure Identity Status as measured by the EIPQ. The results showed that the majority of participants (29.41%) were in the Foreclosure Status. Thus, hypothesis I was confirmed and the null hypothesis rejected.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis in this study, which stated that a higher percentage of male than female participants will be classified in the Moratorium Identity

Status and Achieved Identity Status was not supported. The results showed that the percentage of male participants (18.02%) in the Diffusion Identity Status was almost equal to that of female participants (18.75%). Similarly, the percentage of male participants with Foreclosure Identity Status (29.73%) was almost equal to the percentage of female participants (29.17%). However, the percentage of participants in the Achieved Identity Status was higher in females (25%) than in males (20.72%), and the percentage of participants in the Moratorium Identity Status was higher in males (31.53%) than females (27.08%). To examine the significance of these differences, a Chi-Square test was conducted, and the results revealed no significant gender differences across the levels of identity statuses,  $\chi^2(3) = .93, p > .05$ . Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Although not part of the initial research questions, gender differences across the Exploration and Commitment Subscales were examined using the data collected from participants. On the Exploration Subscale, males ( $M = 62.33, SE = .89$ ) scored lower than females ( $M = 64.06, SE = .76$ ). This difference was not statistically significant,  $t(253) = -1.49, p > .05$  ns. Similarly, on the Commitment Subscale the difference was not statistically significant,  $t(253) = -.16, p > .05$ .

Moreover, data analysis did not support the third hypothesis, which stated that there exist differences in academic achievement across the identity statuses; the highest academic achievement scores corresponding to Achieved Identity Status and the lowest academic achievement corresponding to Diffusion Identity Status.

The results of this study revealed that the participants' mean of GPA was almost equal among the four identity statuses. Moreover, the Levene's test revealed that the variances of the dependent variable GPA was not significantly different across the four levels of the independent variable (Diffusion Achieved, Moratorium and Foreclosure);  $F(3, 248) = .25, p > .05 ns$ . Thus, data failed to reject the third null hypothesis of the study.

As the study is the first of its kind in Lebanon, the researcher used the collected data to conduct further analysis. Upon examining possible associations between age, GPA, Exploration, and Commitment, the researcher found no significant correlations between age and GPA ( $r = -.03, p > .05 ns$ ), age and Exploration Subscale ( $r = -.01, p > .05 ns$ ), age and Commitment Subscale ( $r = .01, p > .05 ns$ ), GPA and Exploration Subscale ( $r = .09, p > .05 ns$ ), and GPA and Commitment Subscale ( $r = -.02, p > .05, ns$ ). There was, however, a significant negative moderate correlation between the Exploration and Commitment Subscale;  $r = -.25, p < .001$ . This indicates that participants who scored higher on the Commitment Subscale scored lower on the Exploration Subscale and those who scored lower on the Commitment Subscale scored higher on the Exploration Subscale.

The results of this study are discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter Five

## Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine Marcia's ego identity statuses in a sample of Lebanese youth in late adolescence. Another purpose was to investigate gender differences in the ego identity statuses. A third purpose was to examine the relationship between individuals' ego identity status and their academic achievement. There were three hypotheses in this research. The first hypothesis stated that "The Lebanese youth in late adolescence will be classified mostly in the category of Foreclosure Identity Status as measured by the EIPQ". The second hypothesis stated that "A higher percentage of male than female participants will be classified in the Moratorium and Achieved Identity Status". The third hypothesis in this study stated that "Differences exist in academic achievement across the identity statuses; with the highest academic achievement scores corresponding to Achieved Identity Status and the lowest academic achievement corresponding to Diffusion Identity Status."

The study was implemented at an American university in Beirut with a sample of 255 college students selected from random classes of different schools on campus. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) was the instrument used to measure the level of exploration and commitment of the participants in order to classify them into one of the four identity statuses (Achieved, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Diffusion) as defined by Marcia (1993). It is a questionnaire that comprises 32 items ordered randomly across

the eight domains of Occupation, Religion, Politics, Values, Family, Friendships, Dating and Sex Roles (see Appendix A). The instrument also includes two subscales: the Exploration Subscale and the Commitment Subscale, each of which comprises 16 items. The median splits for the Exploration and Commitment Subscales were calculated using SPSS version 22, and participants were placed in their corresponding identity statuses based on their Exploration and Commitment scores. The self-reported GPA was considered the achievement data used in this study; it was measured through a direct question on the survey about the participant's cumulative GPA at the time of data collection. Moreover, a Chi-square test was conducted to examine gender differences across the four statuses and an Analysis of Variance (One-way ANOVA) was performed to determine possible associations between identity statuses and academic achievement.

The results of the study revealed that most of the participants were in the Foreclosure Identity Status. However, no gender differences appeared across the four identity statuses and no differences in academic achievement were found across the identity statuses.

## **5.2 Differences in Identity Statuses**

In the current study, the highest number of participants was in the Foreclosure Identity Status. These results are compatible with the literature that depicted the Lebanese youth in late adolescence as individuals whose loyalty belongs, first and foremost, to their families. Thus, these young individuals adopt the beliefs and ideals of significant others without exploring them. As such, the results corroborate the findings of Barakat; Diab; Faour; Melikian and Diab (as cited in Kazarian, 2005) who stipulated that the Lebanese people, be they male or female, Christians or Muslims, place family

ahead of all social institutions. The Lebanese society has been characterized by close family ties, and according to Joseph (2004), during the civil war, parents felt an added pressure to preserve their control over their children and maintain their children's loyalty toward their families and not the militias who tried to recruit young children to participate in the war. The civil war is over, but the fact that the country still suffers from political instability and religious divisions may be pushing families to exert further efforts to win their children's loyalty. Hence, this loyalty is breeding more adolescents in the Foreclosure status in the Lebanese society.

Although the majority of participants were classified in the Foreclosure status (29.4%), the participants in the Moratorium Status (29.02%) were not far behind. This result raises an intriguing point that two groups, almost equal in number within the sample, have adopted two extremely contradicting methods in making commitments. The Foreclosed individuals have made their commitments without having gone through a period of exploration, whereas, the Moratorium individuals demonstrate a high level of exploration before they make their commitments. The classification of the Lebanese youth in late adolescence in the Foreclosure Identity Status seems to be in line with their culture, which considers family as the most important of all social institutions (Barakat; Diab; Faour; Melikian & Diab as cited in Kazarian, 2005). However, given the nature of the Lebanese society, it seems rather strange to find an almost equal number of participants who scored high on the level of exploration. One explanation might be related to the small sample size used in this study, which might have skewed the results. A larger and more representative sample might yield different results. Another explanation may be the parenting style adopted in Lebanon, which according to a recent

study, is considered "...in terms of social life, the most liberal and Western-oriented Arab country" (Dwairy et al., 2006, p.13). In that study, the findings revealed that the parental style most commonly adopted in Lebanon is the "mixed flexible pattern", which combines both authoritative and permissive styles of child rearing. Parents who use this mixed flexible style adopt methods from the permissive style and encourage their children to become independent while empowering them to make their own choices. They also use methods from the authoritative style and nurture in their children self-esteem, independence, self-control, and inquisitiveness (Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Mueller; Wenar as cited by Dwairy, et. al., 2006). Consequently, it is not surprising that the Lebanese parents who use these combined methods of authoritative and permissive styles might be promoting in their children a sense of eagerness to explore before making identity commitments. Hence, A bigger number of individuals in the Moratorium identity status would be a natural outcome of applying this kind of parenting style.

### **5.3 Gender Differences in Identity Statuses**

The results of this study showed no significant differences between male and female participants. In the Diffusion Identity Status, the number of male participants was almost equal to that of female participants. Similarly, the number of male participants in the Foreclosure Identity Status was almost equal to that of female participants (see Table 4). Although the number of female participants in the Achieved Identity Status was higher than that of male participants and the number of male participants in the Moratorium Identity Status was higher than that of female participants, the difference was not statistically significant. These results were

compatible with the findings of other research. For example, Kumru and Thompson (2003) reported that studies on gender differences in identity statuses have mostly shown no significant differences. Their own study showed that in the domains of sexual values and family/career priorities, identity may be more salient for women than for men, but these differences were not statistically significant.

Nevertheless, the results in the current study contradicted the expectations of the researcher who had anticipated significant gender differences due to the nature of the Lebanese culture. Previous research on the Lebanese values and traditions revealed discrimination between males and females across different areas of the Lebanese society (Joseph, 2004). In this respect, Lebanese families showed permissiveness with boys more than girls even in breaking rules, and they thoroughly favored the boys' rights and responsibilities. Female children, contrary to male children, were given more responsibilities inside the home and less outside. Hence, male children were likely to enjoy more freedom of movement, of exploration, and of trial and error experiences (Joseph, 2004). Thus, the researcher expected this discrepancy in raising children in Lebanon to reflect on the results of this study. Hence, a higher number of male participants were expected to be in the Moratorium and Achieved Identity Status, which according to Marcia (1993) entails a high degree of exploration. However, the results of this study did not reveal such a pattern.

Given the nature of the Lebanese culture, it was quite surprising to find that female participants scored as well as male participants on the Exploration Subscale. This result may be attributed to different factors, one of which is the role that the Lebanese civil society has played in awakening a sense of equity among the Lebanese people. The

civil society has taken effective moves through campaigns and law projects in an attempt to eliminate discrimination against women in different scopes of the Lebanese society. As a result, the judiciary in Lebanon, for example, “in some isolated cases, went beyond the text of the law and granted women their rights, based on the principles of equity and justice” (Issam Fares Institute, 2012, p. 14).

In the same token, evidence exists that Lebanon has achieved significant milestones toward gender equality (Issam Fares Institute, 2012). Thus women were able to earn rights ranging from entering politics to choosing their citizenship, being elected in local councils, traveling without the husband’s permission, enjoying same retirement age and social security benefits as men and entering the domain of commerce without the husband’s permission. Most recently in 2011, the repelling of honor crimes in the Lebanese law constituted a major accomplishment. Hence, it is possible that the success of such movements in changing the views on women’s rights have been reflected in the parenting styles of the Lebanese parents and passed on to the new generation.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant gender differences in this study might be the uniqueness of the American university setting where the study took place. Through its American program, which involves and encourages exploration in various aspects, this university provides equal opportunities to all students, males and females. The responses of participants on the EIPQ might have reflected the participants’ adoption of values included in the university mission and vision rather than the values of their own community. Through its vision, this university encourages and enables students to find their own spiritual and personal self-actualization. It also creates chances for rigorous research and the spread of knowledge. Part of this university vision

is also to develop a cohesive community that is intellectually motivated, academically achieved, and religiously, ethnically and socio-economically varied.

Along the same lines, the small sample size may be another explanation for the discrepancy between the findings in this study and the hypothesis of the researcher. The relatively small sample may have failed to capture an actual representation of the Lebanese youth diverse positions regarding gender differences. Thus, the results yielded might be a misrepresentation of the actual gender differences in identity statuses in the Lebanese youth. A larger and less homogeneous sample might yield more representative results of the Lebanese populations' gender differences in identity statuses.

Moreover, the instrument (EIPQ) used in this study could be another factor that has given rise to the incompatibility between the results and the researcher's hypothesis regarding gender differences. This is a self-report instrument which depends totally and solely on the participants' responses. Possible untruthful data provided by the participants' answers might have caused a misrepresentation in the significance of the existing gender differences.

#### **5.4 Academic Achievement and Identity Statuses**

With regard to GPA across the four identity statuses (Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achieved, Diffusion), the results of this study indicated no significant differences. This is not compatible with findings of previous literature on the topic, which showed an association between identity status and academic achievement. For example, in one study, young people who exhibited less sophisticated forms of identity exploration were found to be less likely in good academic standing in high school (Berzonsky, 1985) and

were also less likely to display clear and focused educational goals in college or university (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000). On the other hand, young people who displayed more sophisticated forms of identity exploration demonstrated more confidence in their academic abilities in college and were more likely to perform well academically or to complete their degrees (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas 2003)

According to Meeus (1993), individuals in the Diffused or Moratorium statuses are not able to understand and evaluate their true academic situation and lack the skills needed to manage and plan their academic life successfully. Surprisingly, however, in the current study, the participants in the Diffused Identity Status did as well as participants in the Achieved Identity Status, Foreclosure Identity Status, and Moratorium Identity Status. Similarly, participants in the Achieved Identity Status did not score higher than those in other statuses. Thus, results in this research, contrary to the literature review, suggest that academic achievement is not related to the level of exploration or commitment that the individuals exhibit.

One possible explanation for such a result may be the unique context of the study. According to Abi- Khalil (2004), Lebanese families and youth place high value and emphasis on education. For example, the Lebanese adolescents' unmatched high school attendance in the region could be evidence for the importance they and their families place on education (Abi Khalil, 2004). This, combined with the participants' loyalty to their families, may be reason enough to achieve highly academically regardless of their identity development.

Another possible explanation for the discrepancy between these current study's

results and those in the literature could be related the phenomenon of private tutoring in Lebanon. Kinyaduka (2014) claimed that private tutoring has become a common phenomenon all over the world for different reasons, among which might be achieving better results, pursuing higher education, or bridging academic gaps. As far as Lebanon is concerned, Niamh Fleming- Farrel (as cited in *The Daily Star*, 2013) stipulated that Lebanese parents pay huge sums of money on private tutoring regardless of their children's academic standing. As such, the equal academic performance of the participants in this study might be attributed to the tutoring services afforded to them by their parents. Yahfoufi claims that regardless of their abilities or interests, children are pushed by their parents into tutoring to achieve high grades in subjects that will allow them to pursue the careers their parents had set for them (as cited in *The Daily Star*, 2013). Thus, under such pressure, students, regardless of their identity statuses, might feel compelled to achieve academically by means of private tutoring.

Another reason behind the surprising results may be the instrument used in the study to collect data on the participants' academic achievement. The self reported cumulative GPA might not be as accurate as a cumulative GPA obtained officially through the university transcript.

## **5.5 Exploration and Commitment: Inverse Relationship**

Although investigating correlations between age and GPA, age and Exploration Subscale, age and Commitment Subscale, GPA and Exploration Subscale, and GPA and Commitment Subscale was not one of the initial research questions, the collected data warranted such an investigation. The results of the current study showed that the only significant correlation was between the Exploration and Commitment Subscales. This

indicates that participants who exhibited high exploration tended to be less committed, and those who exhibited high commitment tended to show low exploration. According to Waterman (1993a), this kind of relationship indicates “a movement involving either initiation of reflective consideration of identity alternatives or development of personally meaningful commitments” (p. 44).

This kind of correlation is consistent with previous research focusing on identity status transitions. According to Waterman (1993a), individuals move from Diffusion to Moratorium, “by beginning to seriously explore a variety of identity alternatives ” (p. 42) without making their final choices (high Exploration, low Commitment) or from Diffusion to Foreclosure “by latching on to the first real possibility that is presented, without ever evaluating other courses of action” (Waterman, 1993a, p. 42) (high Commitment, low Exploration). Individuals in the Foreclosure Identity Status may move to the Moratorium status “if early commitments are challenged in a way that requires considering alternative possibilities” (Waterman, 1993a, p. 43) (low Commitment, high Exploration). Individuals in the Identity Achievement Status may move again to the Moratorium status “re- entering crisis if their earlier resolution proves unsatisfactory in some way” (Waterman, 1993a, p. 43) (high Exploration, lower Commitment).

Waterman (1993a) claimed that these transitions into statuses (From Diffusion into Foreclosure; from Diffusion into Moratorium; from Foreclosure into Moratorium) constitute progressive developmental shifts because each one of these transitions involves deep and thoughtful deliberation of identity alternatives or making personally important commitments. Although the shift from Identity Achievement to Moratorium includes what might seem to be regression in the present Commitment, it would not be

considered a developmental regression. Instead, it could be regarded as recommencement of a crisis where individuals try to make more fulfilling choices and not actually renounce meaningful commitments. In this respect, Stephen, Fraser, and Marcia (as cited in Waterman, 1993a) have discussed the MAMA (Moratorium- Achievement- Moratorium- Achievement) cycles, which represent the continuation of identity development.

## **5.6 Implications for Practice**

The following are recommendations that stem from the current study. The first recommendation is related to providing a formal context for promoting identity development in the Lebanese youth in late adolescence. School curricula should include identity awareness as a mandatory subject matter in high school. Learning objectives should focus on goals and objectives related to identity development, types of identity statuses, and characteristics of each status. Hands- on- activities may be developed to simulate real- life situations where students have to make identity choices and meaningful commitments to those choices. Moreover, it is recommended that schools and colleges organize campaigns targeting the parents of adolescents to spread awareness about the importance of identity development. These campaigns need to focus on the importance of child- rearing methods and how these impact their children's identities.

The second recommendation is that identity status intervention programs should be integrated into school curricula to address existing identity issues. Kroger and Marcia (2011) argued that such programs aim at enhancing identity exploration and allow the adolescents to sail smoothly across identity statuses. Their main focus is typically on

domains associated with identity formation, such as the development of “skills/ knowledge, attitudes and orientations” (p. 48). These intervention programs must be designed to cater to the needs of students taking into account their identity statuses. Lange et al., (2002) stipulated that intervention programs that do not take into consideration the developmental stages of students might fail to provide the necessary services. For example, students in the achieved identity status may benefit most from a program that teaches them how to plan the course of their studies, whereas students in the identity diffusion might benefit more from a program that trains them to concentrate on understanding the requirements of their course.

Another recommendation is to develop tailored group- counseling programs that target specific obstacles that typically hinder healthy identity formation in the Lebanese youth in late adolescence. One such obstacle is the inability to separate family values from one’s own personal values and the inability to decide on goals for one’s life.

## **5.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research that stems from the results of this study is to adopt an instrument with open-ended questions, such as Marcia's interview (1966) for individuals to have the opportunity to elaborate on their answers. Such instrument will increase the accuracy of determining the level of elaboration and commitment of participants, thus increasing the validity of the results. As open-ended questions may be time consuming, it is recommended that a team of interviewers be trained to choose from a broad list, the most appropriate questions that probe into the participants’ exploration and commitment in the domains of identity such as family, religion, occupation, sexuality and sex-role attitudes, politics, and personal relationships.

A second recommendation is to develop an instrument that specifically targets students' experiences in the Lebanese culture to assess the identity statuses of Lebanese participants without biasing findings.

In order to generalize the results to the Lebanese population, it is recommended that future research include larger samples of participants from both public and private universities and across the different regions in Lebanon.

Another recommendation is related to the Lebanese setting. Further research must focus on identifying the role that certain factors related to hardship play in identity development. For example, conditions such as war and political instability could be studied to determine their effect, positive or negative, on the process of identity development among adolescents and emerging adults.

Finally, for future research, it is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to trace the development or sequence of change in participants' statuses. Hence, researchers would be able to examine "identity status transition pathways and change rates across interview domains" (Marcia, 1993, p. 36).

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## Appendix A: THE EGO IDENTITY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE (EIPQ)

Dear Participants,

The following questionnaire is part of a survey study I am currently conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. in Education at the Lebanese American University. The purpose of the study is to identify the ego identity statuses of the participants and investigate the relationship between these statuses and the academic achievement of the participants.

Your participation in this study is very important, for the results will depend on your answers. Therefore, you are urged to respond in all honesty and seriousness. Moreover, your identity will remain anonymous since you are not requested to supply your name and all of the copies of the questionnaire will be coded to protect the privacy of the respondents. Your participation is voluntary. Should you decide not to complete the questionnaire, you may do so at any point. Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any questions, you are free to ask now. If you have questions later, you may contact:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone number</u>	<u>Email address</u>
Nadya Kaddoura	70 656300	<a href="mailto:nadya_kaddoura@hotmail.com">nadya_kaddoura@hotmail.com</a>

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or you want to talk to someone outside the research, please contact:

the Office of the Committee on Human Subjects Research,

Lebanese American University, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Dorm A, Byblos Campus Tel: 009611786456

I have read and understood the above, and I agree to participate in the study.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

## THE EGO IDENTITY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE (EIPQ)

### Respondent Information

Please answer the following demographics questions.

Gender (M, F): \_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/ dd/ yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Current GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

### Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ)

Listed below are a number of statements describing behavior. Please indicate how you feel about each statement. **Do not ask others to help you with your responses, and do not discuss the EIPQ with your peers.** The investigator is only interested in your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

**Example: Politics are very important in my life.**

Write a 1 if you strongly disagree.

Write a 4 if you slightly agree.

Write a 2 if you disagree.

Write a 5 if you agree.

Write a 3 if you slightly disagree.

Write a 6 if you strongly agree.

Question Number	Question	Answer					
		1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
1	I have definitely decided on what career to pursue.						
2	I don't expect to change my principles and political principles.						
3	I have considered adopting several kinds of religious beliefs.						
4	There has never been a need to question my values.						
5	I have complete confidence about what kinds of friends are best for me.						
6	My view on men's and women's roles hasn't changed at all as I became older.						
7	I will always vote for the same political party.						

8	I have formed a firm view concerning my role in my family.						
9	I have engaged in several discussions concerning dating behaviors.						
10	I have deeply contemplated several political views.						
11	I have never questioned my views on what kinds of friends are best for me.						
12	My values might change in the future.						
13	When discussing religion with people, I make sure to express my own opinion.						
14	I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.						

Question Number	Question	Answer					
		1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
15	I haven't felt the need to reflect about the importance I place on my family.						
16	Concerning religion, my views are likely to change in the near future.						
17	I have specific views concerning how men and women should behave.						
18	I have tried to learn about several occupational fields to decide which is best for me.						
19	I have faced several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.						
20	I have been consistently reviewing different values to find the ones that best suit me.						

21	I think that what I am looking for in a friend might change in the future.						
22	I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.						
23	It is unlikely that I will change my career goals.						
24	I have evaluated several ways to fit in my family's structure.						
25	My views on men's and women's roles will never change.						
26	I have never questioned my political beliefs.						
27	I have undergone several experiences that drove me to reevaluate the values I look for in my friends.						

Question number	Question	Answer					
		1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
28	I have discussed religious matters with several people with different religious beliefs than me.						
29	I am not sure about the values that I think suit me.						
30	I have never questioned my career aspirations.						
31	The extent to which I value my family might change in the future.						
32	I have strong beliefs about dating.						

## Appendix B: CHSR APPROVAL



Committee on Human Subjects in Research (CHSR)

لجنة الأخلاقيات

February 24, 2014

Mrs. Nadya Kaddoura  
School of Arts & Sciences  
Lebanese American University

CHSR tracking number: LAU.SOAS.NK1.24/Feb/2014  
Protocol Title: "Ego Identity Statuses Of The Lebanese Youth In Late Adolescence And their Relationship With Gender And Academic Achievement."

Dear Mrs. Kaddoura,

Thank you for submitting to the CHSR the above named study under the supervision of Dr. Ketty Sarouphim for review. I have reviewed the above referenced project with other CHSR members. We hereby confirm exempt status of the above project and grant you approval to conduct the study. **Kindly use the attached stamped documents.**

**Documents Submitted:**

Protocol Exempt Application	Received 11 February 2014
Cover Letter	Received 11 February 2014
Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ)	Modified 20 February 2014
NIH Training – Nadya Kaddoura	Cert. # 1354371 (dated 13 Jan 2014)
NIH Training – Ketty Sarouphim	Cert. # 36002 (dated 30 Jun 2012)

**Agenda Item:** Exempt – March 2014

**Initial Approval:** 24 February 2014

**Review Type:** Expedited

**Expiration Date:** NA

**Action:** Approved

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact CHSR office by email at [christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb](mailto:christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb)

*The CHSR operates in compliance with international guidelines of Good Clinical Practice, the US Federal Regulations (45CFR46) and (21CFR56) of the Food and Drug Administration. LAU CHSR Identifier: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1*

Sincerely,

Constantine Daher, PhD.  
CHSR Chair



BEIRUT CAMPUS	BYBLOS CAMPUS	NEW YORK OFFICE
P.O. Box: 13-5053 Chouran Beirut 1102 2801 Lebanon	P.O. Box: 36 Byblos Lebanon	475 Riverside Drive Suite 1846 New York, NY 10115
Tel: +961 1 78 64 56 +961 3 60 37 03 Fax: +961 1 86 70 98	Tel: +961 9 54 72 62 +961 3 79 13 14 Fax: +961 9 54 62 62	Tel: +1 212 870 2592 +1 212 870 2761 Fax: +1 212 870 2762

[www.lau.edu.lb](http://www.lau.edu.lb)

Appendix C: TABLES

Table 1  
*Participants' Gender Distribution*

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	111.00	43.53	43.53	43.53
Female	144.00	56.47	56.47	100.00
Total	255.00	100.00	100.00	

Table 2

*Participants' Distribution Across the Exploration and Commitment Subscale*

Subscale	Level of Exploration	Frequency	Percent
Exploration	Low	122	47.84
	High	133	52.16
Total		255	100
Commitment	Low	121	47.45
	High	134	52.55
Total		255	100

Table 3  
*Participants' Distribution Among the Identity Statuses*

Identity Status	Frequency	Percent
Diffused	47	18.43
Achieved	59	23.14
Foreclosed	75	29.41
Moratorium	74	29.02
Total	255	100

Table 4  
*Gender Differences in Identity Status*

Gender			Frequency	Percent
Male	Valid	Diffused	20	18.02
		Achieved	23	20.72
		Foreclosed	33	29.73
		Moratorium	35	31.53
	Total	111	100	
Female	Valid	Diffused	27	18.75
		Achieved	36	25.00
		Foreclosed	42	29.17
		Moratorium	39	27.08
	Total	144	100	

Table 5  
*Chi-Square Test*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.925 <sup>a</sup>	3	.819
Likelihood Ratio	.928	3	.819
Linear-by-Linear Association	.400	1	.527
N of Valid Cases	255		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 21.00.

Table 6  
*Tests of Normality*

Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>				
Subscale	Gender	Statistics	df	Sig.
Exploration	Male	0.07	111	0.20*
	Female	0.07	144	0.05*
Commitment	Male	0.08	111	0.05*
	Female	0.05	144	0.20*

Table 7  
*Homogeneity of Variance test*

Subscale		Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Sig.
Exploration	Based on	.07	1.00	253.00	0.80
Commitment	Mean	.94	1.00	253.00	0.33
	Based on				
	Mean				

Table 8  
*Mean Scores of Males and Females on Exploration and Commitment Subscales*

Subscale	GENDER	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
				Deviation	Mean
Exploration	Male	111.00	62.33	9.33	.89
	Female	144.00	64.06	9.13	.76
Commitment	Male	111.00	63.30	9.14	.87
	Female	144.00	63.47	8.60	.72

Table 9  
*T-Test for the Differences between Males and Females across the Exploration and  
 Commitment Subscales*

Subscale		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exploration	Equal variances assumed	.07	.80	-1.49	253	.14
Commitment	Equal variances assumed	.94	.33	-.16	253	.88

Table 10  
*Differences in GPA across the Four Identity Statuses*

<b>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</b>				
Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Diffused	46	2.97	.54	0.08
Achieved	58	3.02	.51	0.07
Foreclosure	74	2.83	.52	0.06
Moratorium	74	2.95	.53	0.06
Total	252	2.93	.53	0.03

Table 11  
*Test of Normality*

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
Variable	Identity status	Statistic	df	Sig.
GPA	Diffused	0.10	46	0.20*
	Achieved	0.08	58	0.20*
	Foreclosure	0.13	74	0.01
	Moratorium	0.09	74	0.20*

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Table 12  
*Homogeneity of Variance test*

GPA	Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Sig.
Based on	.25	3.00	248.00	0.86
Mean				

Table 13

*Anova Test for Participants' Identity Status and their GPA*

	Sum of				
Locus	Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.30	3.00	.43	1.58	.19
Within Groups	68.02	248.00	.27		
Total	69.32	251.00			

Table 14  
*Tests of Normality*

variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Age	0.25	252	0.00
GPA	0.08	252	0.00
Exploration Subscale	0.04	252	0.20*
Commitment Subscale	0.05	252	0.20*

Table 15  
*Correlations Between Age, GPA, Exploration, Commitment*

Variables	1	2	3	4
GPA	--	0.9	-0.2	-0.3
Exploration	--	--	-0.25**	-0.1
Commitment	--	--	--	0.1
Age	--	--	--	--

Note \*\* <0.01