

Know Thyself: Reflections of the Adolescent Identity Crisis

Rationale

Knowing oneself and attaining a mature identity is the developmental task of adolescence. Successful resolution of the identity crisis involves making healthy choices and personal commitments to an occupation, religious belief, and a personal value system. The search for identity is often reflected in popular music as many song writers and artists struggle to define themselves through song. In this part of the inspiration project, you will analyze song lyrics which express the states of identity as proposed by the psychologist James Marcia (1966) and reflect upon their own journey towards a sense of self.

Objectives

1. Find 4 popular songs that reflect James Marcia's four identity states.
2. Print out the Lyrics (extra credit if you have the songs and also bring them on CD)
3. Write a brief analysis of why each song represents a state of identity.
4. Finally, conclude your writing by adding an in-depth analysis of which state of identity you feel you are currently addressing and why. Make sure to give detail/examples in your analysis. (2 or more paragraphs)

James Marcia's States of Identity

Foreclosure. These people have made commitments to an occupational future, but have not experienced an identity crisis. They have conformed to the expectations of others concerning their future. For example, an individual may have allowed a parent to decide what career they will pursue. These individuals have not explored a range of options (experience an "identity crisis").

Diffusion. The young person has not made a commitment, and may or may not have experienced an identity crisis. He or she appears to have given up any attempt to make the commitments needed for developing a clear sense of identity as Marcia defines the term.

Moratorium. Individuals in moratorium are actively exploring alternative commitments, but have not yet made a decision. They are experiencing an identity crisis, but appear to be moving forward toward identity formation, making commitments.

Achievement. The individual has experienced an identity crisis and has made commitments necessary for building a sense of identity as described above.