

# What's your identity state?

You can use this as a stand-alone resource or as part of the career story titled 'Making The Commitment To Pursue A Career'.

The stages of identity development can be described in many ways. Figure 1 illustrates a simple way of thinking about them using Marcia's (1966) four stages of identity development. Identity transitions are often inspired by uncertainty. They are normal and healthy, because identity is an ongoing process that lasts a lifetime!

Dr Kate Byerwalter of Grand Rapids Community College created this [short video](#) on identity development. In the video, Kate explains identity stages and transitions in simple terms we can all understand.

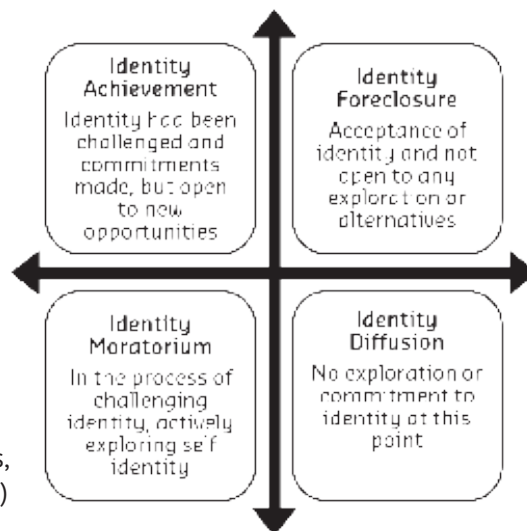


Figure 1: The four identity states, drawn from Marcia (1966)

## Activities

1. Read a career story or biography, such as the one mentioned above.
2. Reflect on how you feel about identity development. Where on Figure 1. would you position yourself? Is this new thinking for you?
3. Answer Susan Whitbourne's quiz on the next page. Use this as a basis for discussion with peers and mentors.

## Identity Quiz

### *Are you having an identity crisis? A quick quiz:*

This quiz, based on Dr Susan Krauss Whitbourne's 2012 article titled: *Are you having an identity crisis?*, gives you a quick assessment of which identity status is closest to how you are right now. After the quiz you will find some pointers on how to interpret your answers.

Pick the option that is closest to the way you feel right now:

- a. I haven't really settled on a career direction and I'm just taking whatever work is available until something good comes along.
- b. I'm still trying to decide where my career interests lie and actively thinking about what work will be right for me.
- c. I thought a little about my career, but there's never really any question since my parents said what they wanted for me.
- d. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know that I am on the right career path.

Here's the guide to the answers:

- a. Diffuse:** The problem with the diffuse status is that the longer you float on these important areas, the less likely it is you will shore up your sense of self enough to handle your future developmental challenges. However, it is healthy to be exploring multiple options, especially at the start of your studies.
- b. Moratorium:** You may simply need more time or perhaps the chance to continue your exploration before making a choice. Constantly remaining in moratorium can be detrimental however, particularly if your continued explorations lead to tumultuous ups and downs. However, moratorium is a positive step towards achieving an authentic identity. Seek some advice and talk things over.
- c. Foreclosed:** If you rate as foreclosed, you can benefit from taking a step back and engaging in some serious exploration. Continuing on the path set for you by your family can lead to later discontent.
- d. Achieved:** In contrast to these three negatively-oriented trajectories, people who continually evaluate their commitments and make adjustments to achieve greater realisation of their identities ("authentic road") are most likely to achieve fulfilment throughout their careers.

Do your answers change over time? This is fine - identity evolution occurs throughout our lives.

## Make it count!

What do you really want your career to look like? Write this as a statement and keep it in your portfolio. Refer to the statement whenever you are weighing up different opportunities.

This resource was contributed by Dawn Bennett (Bond University)