

## Identity Status and Anxiety in Artistically Gifted Adolescents and Grammar School Students<sup>1\*</sup>

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### Abstract

During adolescence, a young person often faces various developmental crises, increased anxiety, as well as a fluctuating experience of their own identity. Adolescents, as a very heterogeneous group, are nevertheless connected by similar crises they go through, and often by the insecurity of their own identity. The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between anxiety and identity status in two groups of high school students – artistically gifted students and grammar school students, as well as to examine the differences between these groups in terms of analyzed characteristics. The sample was convenient and consisted of 173 respondents ( $n_{\text{male}} = 45$ ,  $n_{\text{female}} = 128$ ), aged 16 to 18 years ( $M = 16.70$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). A total of 49.7 percent of the respondents attend secondary art schools, while the remaining respondents (50.3%) are grammar school students. The Modified Marcia Identity Questionnaire and the Anxiety Inventory Form – Y were used in this research. The results show that art school students achieve significantly higher scores than grammar school students on the anxiety dimension ( $t(171) = 4.92$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and lower values on the identity foreclosure dimension ( $t(171) = -3.01$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Anxiety and identity statuses diffusion and moratorium correlate in both groups of respondents. In grammar school students, identity foreclosure correlates with identity diffusion. It can be concluded that grammar school students who achieve higher scores on identity status, identity foreclosure, avoid the unpleasant state of anxiety and thus search less for answers related to their identity and values. However, although they thereby reduce the experience of anxiety, their identity still remains somewhat vague and diffused.

*Keywords:* identity, identity status, anxiety, adolescence

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## **Identity Status and Anxiety in Artistically Gifted Adolescents and Grammar School Students**

Human psychosocial development is a central topic of developmental psychology. For a long time, the emphasis was placed on early childhood, but since the middle of the twentieth century, interest in adolescence has been growing. Some theoretical assumptions about the characteristics of adolescent development have remained entrenched to this day. For example, adolescence was generally discussed as a period in which key changes occur on the biological, psychological and social level, which then shape the entire functioning of a young person, and which are very turbulent (Kapor Stanulović, 2007, Lackovic-Grgin, 2006). There is no single agreement in the literature about the duration of this period. At the beginning of adolescence, developmental psychologists take the physiological changes that occur during puberty, for example, from the age of 12 (Erikson, 1956), or 13, while the end of this developmental phase is more difficult to determine. It can last up to 21, or even up to the age of 25 (Steinberg, 2017), depending on when some developmental tasks typical for this period are realized. Contemporary developmental theories seek to supplement the classical understanding of adolescence as a period of “turbulence” and to see this period in a new light. As Arnett (1999) states, viewing adolescence as a period of storm and stress is not enough; even in the midst of the storm, many adolescents enjoy numerous aspects of their lives, they are satisfied with a large number of their relationships most of the time, and have a positive outlook on the future. The particular merit of the mentioned author is that he introduced the emerging adulthood phase, which is distinguished by specific characteristics such as, for example, a moratorium as an identity status, increased anxiety and depression, a tendency to change professional choices and frequent cohabitation with partners, but delaying parenthood. Predominantly, according to him, adolescence lasts until the age of 18, 19, and this emerging adulthood phase continues after it.

The developmental tasks of adolescence are numerous. Young people fit into a group of peers, differentiate themselves from their family, make their professional choices, decide on gender roles and form their personal identity (Kapor Stanulovic, 2007; Lacković-Grgin, 1994, 2006).

### **Identity status**

A pioneer in identity research, Erik Erikson, defines the term identity as the experience of the essential sameness and continuity of the *self* over a longer period of time, regardless of its changes in different periods and circumstances (Erikson, 2008). He adds that this feeling is rarely extremely conscious, as for example in periods of an impending identity crisis when there is a danger of escalation (Erikson, 2008). Erikson, using the described concept of identity, talks about personality development, which he describes through eight stages. The fifth stage of development

is particularly important, because it is the stage in which the identity of a young person is formed. Erikson also talks about identity through two concepts, the ego-identity and the diffusion of ego-identity, which represent the outcomes of the assumed psychosocial crisis that takes place in the period of adolescence. He believes that during that time a person goes through a phase of an ever-increasing dedication to professional activities and ideologies, facing adult tasks, such as employment, while at the same time trying to synthesize their childhood identifications in such a way as to achieve a reciprocal relationship with the society and maintain the continuity of personal identity (Erikson, 1956, 1963).

Since the beginning of empirical research based on Erikson's concepts, James E. Marcia's approach has dominated the field (Bosma & Saskia Kunnen, 2001). He expanded Erikson's concepts of identity crisis and diffusion. Using semi-structured interview techniques and projective techniques of the incomplete sentences type, Marcia (1966) compiled the so-called bipolar model of identity status. The diffusion of identity is at one pole, whereas the achieved identity is at the other. On this continuum, two more points of concentration of results were found, roughly equidistant from each other, and those are the identity moratorium and the identity foreclosure. This model was created on the basis of work with the adolescent population, and it mainly refers to the developmental crisis of this age (Marcia, 1966).

Expanding on Erikson's theory, Marcia came up with four types of Ego identity status in the psychological development of identity. The basic idea is that the notion of identity is defined through two concepts, the commitment and the choices that a young person makes in terms of personal and social aspects. In his work, Marcia (1966, 1980) gives descriptions of persons in whom certain identity statuses are dominant:

**1. Identity Achievement** – In relation to Erikson's criteria, this identity status represents a person who resolutely, that is, decisively sticks to their choices when it comes to occupation and ideological framework. During their development, they researched the offered alternatives, reevaluated their views and then stuck to the conclusions reached. The resolution of the crisis created by this reevaluation leaves a person with an achieved identity free to act in the social environment. Generally speaking, it could be said that the sudden changes in life circumstances that are characteristic of the adolescent life period, and also for people of all ages in today's time of post-industrial capitalism, should not represent insurmountable obstacles for this person who is ready to react to them with firm conviction and a necessary dose of flexibility.

**2. Identity Diffusion** – The basic characteristic of this identity is the lack of decisiveness, that is, resolution. The person may have gone through a period of crisis, although this is not a necessary prerequisite. When stating one's interests, when it comes to occupation, one gets the impression that the person has absolutely no idea what to do with him/herself and in which direction to go. If the person does state an interest, it is so weakly substantiated that it seems that he/she will replace it with something else at the next opportunity. In relation to their ideological framework,

they are either absolutely uninterested or take a little bit of everything depending on the current situation. This person, in principle, is comfortable with any point of view and has no reluctance to try any other political or religious directions.

**3. Identity Moratorium** – People with this identity status are in a state of ideological crisis, whether it is related to the choice of profession or the philosophical-political prism through which the person views the world, and they lack resolution/decisiveness. What primarily distinguishes them from people with identity confusion is the active struggle to reach a state of resolution. These individuals try to find a way to resolve the conflict between their parents' wishes, social pressures and their own affections in the best possible way and are absolutely preoccupied with this inner turmoil. They can often seem confused and lost, which is a result of the fact that this internal struggle can seem insoluble.

**4. Identity Foreclosure** – It is characterized by the fact that a crisis was not experienced during development, i.e., diffusion and a period of research, but people in this status are very dedicated. With these people, it is difficult to discern where their parents' ideological framework ends and their own begins. The parent's value system is taken on uncritically without seeking to submit it to criticism or to experience alternative value systems. These people have been directed to a certain life path since childhood, and education only serves to confirm their acquired beliefs. Such persons would feel very threatened if they found themselves in situations where their value system did not prove to be functional (Rokvić, 2017).

In accordance with Erikson's original theory, we can say that identity represents a category that changes over time, that is, it changes its quality by going through developmental crises. Longitudinal research was carried out with the aim of showing the development of identity status over time, which led to some interesting conclusions. The model of personality development that James Marcia came up with in his research could be called MAMA (*moratorium, achievement, moratorium, achievement*), where a person goes through consecutive stages of achieved identity. In fact, the MAMA model refers to the period in which the adolescent alternately passes from the moratorium phase to the achieved phase in order to eventually reach a more mature form of identity, i.e., an achieved identity. This means that young people are in a state of crisis in which they actively search for solutions (moratorium), after which they come to a decision, which they then incorporate into the image of their identity (achieved identity), and this cycle repeats itself until it remains in a more mature form of identity. Although they choose a certain identity, new information and experiences can briefly take the adolescent to the previous stage of the Moratorium. Marcia also states that this model can be applied not only to adolescence, but also to more mature stages of the life cycle (Stephen, et al., 1992).

Depending on the dynamic development, that is, in which direction the further development of the personality will go, the identity foreclosure can be *firm* and *developmental*. While a firm identity foreclosure represents a stable path in accordance with the norms adopted from the family, that is, the environment, a developmental identity foreclosure represents a stepping stone to more mature identity statuses (Kroger, 1996).

Identity status is a factor that affects all aspects of personality and, therefore, it can be assumed that it also affects certain measurable dimensions of personality. Following the formation of his model, Marcia (1996) started to investigate the relationship between identity statuses by postulating that identity moratorium represents a state of greatest anxiety. He believed that exploring and coming into contact with experiences that have the potential to define and change the course of the rest of one's life are stressful circumstances. For this reason, he expects that the level of generalized anxiety is highest in the identity moratorium phase. However, people with identity foreclosure, having in mind that they have accepted their life path on which they confidently stride, should show the lowest level of anxiety. In their research related to the relationship between identity statuses according to Marcia's model and anxiety, Lillevoll and colleagues (Lillevoll et al., 2013) came to the conclusion that identity foreclosure in most cases represents a state with the lowest level of anxiety, except in relation to the achieved identity in women, while anxiety levels in women with an achieved identity are significantly lower than in men. Identity achievement also goes with lower levels of anxiety than identity confusion, but there are no differences between genders.

The development of identity cannot be viewed separately from the cultural context in which it takes place. The very cultural background of psychosocial development, which changes over time, also has consequences for personality development. The historical and social context determines the quality, acceptability and adaptive success of different identity statuses (Bosma & Saskia Kunnen, 2001). Social upheavals, transition to post-industrial capitalism, change of gender roles in society also leave their mark on one's individual development. Marcia himself (Marcia, 1996) lists differences in the correlations and meanings of identity status among females before 1977 and in later research studies. While in the case of male respondents in earlier studies, foreclosed identity correlated with negative indicators of adaptability, this connection did not exist in the case of women. However, in recent studies, this correlation also appears in female respondents, which Marcia explains by the growing influence of feminist philosophy (Rokvić, 2017).

The findings of various studies (Arnett, 1999; Compas et al., 1995; Larson et al., 1996; Moffit, 1993; Petersen et al., 1993; Rutter, 1986; Scaramella et al., 1999) indicate that the increase of stress in adolescence (puberty changes, academic and peer pressure) is at least partly responsible for the increased rate of psychological disorders in this period, such as depression, behavioral disorders, and substance abuse. The increased demands of modern society regarding the level of education, desirable standards in work on the one hand, and frequent family problems on the other hand prolong the dependence on parents, thus delaying the completion of identity formation, as well as prolonging uncertainty and anxiety.

It is also important to mention the research on a sample of students (Rokvić, 2017) about the connection between the identity status and personality dimensions according to Van Kampen's 4DPT model. The 4DPT model was created as a critique of Eysenck's factor theory of personality and contains 4 dimensions – extraversion, neuroticism, insensitivity, orderliness; while the well-known Eysenck personality

model contains the dimension P (Psychoticism). In Van Kampen's model, instead of that dimension, we have two subdimensions – insensitivity and orderliness. Neuroticism, as an important factor in these personality models, is defined as a tendency to experience negative feelings such as: anxiety, irritability, anger (Van Kampen, 1997). According to the results of the mentioned research, there is a moderate positive association of the dimension of neuroticism with moratorium and identity confusion, which based on the obtained results can indicate a connection between anxiety and unclear identity status.

## **Anxiety**

The word “anxious” comes from the Latin “anxious”. In our country, it is taken from the English language, and the literal translation from English means to be worried, to be upset, to be afraid (Trebješanin, 2018).

Freud (1912) was the first to describe anxiety as “free-floating”. Freud formulated the first theory of anxiety in his discussion of libido. Anxiety is the result of an undischarged libido. Anxiety appears as a signal that warns the Ego that there is a danger of content penetrating from the unconscious, which triggers it to implement various defense mechanisms. In this sense, anxiety is a reaction to internal contents, at the same time a signal to the Ego and a manifestation of its weakness, because censorship and suppression failed to keep the contents in the unconscious (Freud, 1946). There is no real danger, but the developing organism has encountered dangers that are now warning it, and which originate from feelings of helplessness (Hartmann, 1958). In this paper, we will look at the more recent theory of anxiety given by Spielberger.

In his theory, Spielberger (1966) views anxiety as a state and as a trait. When anxiety is viewed as a state, it is situational anxiety, which involves how a person is feeling at the moment. When anxiety is viewed as a trait, it is general anxiety, which refers to how a person generally feels (Spielberger, 1966). By distinguishing the trait and state of anxiety, a distinction was made between anxiety as a stable disposition and as a transient emotional state that almost every person has in their experience. The state of anxiety is defined as an unpleasant emotional response when facing threatening demands or dangers (Spielberger et al., 1983), and the cognitive evaluation of the threat is a prerequisite for experiencing this emotion (Lazarus, 1991).

Spielberger et al. (1983) described trait anxiety as a general disposition to experience transient states of anxiety. People with a highly expressed trait anxiety may have a more frequent and intense experience (state) of anxiety compared to people with a low expressed trait, but they are not anxious all the time (Spielberger et al, 1983). Anxiety is not a pleasant condition at all, especially when a person is young and is additionally confused and frightened by these conditions. Anxiety occurs when a person assesses that his entire life situation exceeds his capabilities, that is, when he assesses that he is unable to cope with life's difficulties (Marić,

2005). It often happens with young people. The tension at school and among peers is high. Confirming and preserving the self-image is not easy, especially if the identity is not formed, and anxiety in different contexts threatens to overwhelm the young person.

Vidanović and Anđelković's (2006) research on a sample of artistically and musically gifted adolescents and grammar school students, with regard to differences in the level of Ego development, experience of the body and defensive functioning, as well as situational and general anxiety, showed that there are no differences in the stage of Ego development between musically and artistically gifted adolescents and grammar school students. One of the assumptions used in this research was that a higher stage of Ego development implies more effective and mature strategies for overcoming stress and anxiety. Taking into account the information from the same research that there was a negative correlation between the reached stage of Ego development and general anxiety in male grammar school students, which was not the case in the gifted ones, we can talk about a greater tolerance to anxiety in already actualized creative people. In the light of theoretical assumptions (Barron, 1963, Smith & Carlsson, 1990, according to Vidanović and Anđelković, 2006), the authors describe gifted and creative adolescents as generally more tolerant to high levels of anxiety. In studies of adolescence as a specific stage, we can single out the research of Vidanović and Stojilković (2014), which examines and tests the assessment of creativity and the attitude of respondents toward art on a sample of adolescents (grammar school students). The authors tried to verify the views of those authors who described the personality of a creative person as original, independent, ready to take risks, open to experiences, as well as interested in the field of art. The results that were obtained support the fact that there are differences in the degree of expression of general creativity between grammar school students who are engaged in art and those who are not interested in art.

Since the identity status of adolescents is an important issue for research psychologists and professional associates, especially considering the changes that occur due to extended schooling, unclear identity, delay of employment, as well as delay in starting marriage and family, ("emerging adulthood," Arnett, 1999), which are associated with more pronounced anxiety and depression, the subject of this research was the examination of the relationship between identity status and the level of anxiety in grammar school and art high school students. Art school students usually base their choice on clearly recognized talents and opportunities. The very choice of school points to a future profession, so we assumed that the important issue of identity, professional choice, was resolved earlier in relation to grammar school students. These are the reasons why we wanted to examine the differences between grammar school students and art high school students regarding the expression of identity status and anxiety. Students were compared in regard to anxiety as a trait.

## Method

### Research subject and objectives

The subject of the research is the relationship between anxiety and identity status in the population of artistically gifted students and grammar school students.

The objectives of the research are:

- to determine whether there is a difference in the degree of anxiety and dimensions of identity between art school students and grammar school students,
- to determine whether there is a relationship between anxiety and identity dimensions in these two subsamples of students.

### Research sample

The sample was appropriate and consisted of 173 grammar school and secondary art school students, aged 16 to 18. There were 45 male respondents (26%) while 128 respondents were female (74%). A total of 86 art high school students (49.7%) and 87 grammar school students (50.3%) participated in the research; 30 (17.34%) respondents lived with one parent, 104 (60.12%) of them lived with both parents, while 39 (22.54%) respondents lived with their extended family.

### The procedure

The research was carried out in secondary art schools in Niš ( $n = 31$  students) and Belgrade ( $n = 55$  students) and in a grammar school in Kruševac ( $n = 87$  students). Before starting to fill out the questionnaire, the respondents were informed in writing that the research was anonymous and that the data would be used exclusively for research purposes, and that, accordingly, parental consent had been previously obtained.

### Research instruments

The research used the **Modified Marcia Identity Questionnaire** (Akers et al., 1998), which is actually a modified version of two older instruments for assessing the Ego-identity status (Bannion & Adams, 1986; Marcia, 1966).

The reason for using this version is that the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego-identity Status has 64 items and is very long, and that the modified 40-item version had similar reliability to the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego-identity Status which was determined in a survey of 2000 adolescents



in Arizona: .61 to .73 (median = .67) (Bannion & Adams, 1986). Also, in Akers' research, Cronbach's alpha for the identity subscales of the Modified Marcia Identity Questionnaire was significantly higher (range .71 to .79; median = .76).

The questionnaire consists of 40 items, and each item corresponds to one of the 4 scales that represent the types of identity status. On a Likert scale from 1 to 5, respondents state how much they agree with a given statement. Each of the respondents receives scores on all four dimensions of identity, that is, identity status is treated as a continuous and not a categorical variable. The reliability of the scales in our sample ranges from .60 to .76 in the following manner – for achieved identity,  $\alpha = .66$  (item example: *There are many reasons for making friends, but I choose my close friends according to certain values and similarities that I have personally decided upon*), for identity moratorium  $\alpha = .61$  (item example: *I am still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what job is right for me*), for identity foreclosure  $\alpha = .76$  (item example: *I may have considered many different jobs, but all questions disappeared when my parents told me what they wanted*), and for identity diffusion  $\alpha = .60$  (item example: *I still haven't chosen the job I want to do and I'm doing whatever is available until something better comes along*).

**The anxiety scale as a personality trait** (Spielberger, 1983; Anxiety Inventory Form – Y) was constructed based on Spielberger's understandings. Spielberger's questionnaire consists of two separate scales measuring situational anxiety and anxiety as a personality trait. In this research, the form of the scale that measures anxiety as a personality trait was used. Trait anxiety scale (Form Y-2) has 20 statements. The respondent's task was to circle one answer to each statement on a four-point scale about how he or she mostly feels. Examples of statements are: *I am nervous and anxious, I am happy, I am troubled by disturbing thoughts*. The total score is obtained by adding up the points for all questions. The lowest possible score on the questionnaire is 20, and the highest is 80. A higher score indicates a higher degree of anxiety. The reliability, obtained in our sample, is  $\alpha = .74$ .

## Results

After processing the data collected using the mentioned questionnaires, the following results were obtained. Firstly, descriptive statistical measures will be presented.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistical measures of anxiety and identity status among art school students and grammar school students*

Subscale	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>Ku</i>
Anxiety	1.05	3.75	2.18	0.65	0.29	-0.90
Identity achievement	1.80	5.00	3.57	0.63	-0.30	0.02
Identity diffusion	1.10	4.30	2.66	0.60	0.19	-0.25

Subscale	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>Ku</i>
Identity moratorium	1.10	4.90	2.89	0.63	0.30	0.51
Identity foreclosure	1.00	4.40	1.94	0.65	0.79	0.43

Note. *Sk* – Skewness; *ku* – kurtosis

Values of skewness and kurtosis indicate the normal distribution of the examined variables.

In order to verify the existence of differences between secondary art school and grammar school students regarding the level of anxiety expression and identity status, the t-test was performed. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*The difference in the expression of anxiety and identity status with regard to the type of school*

Variable	School	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Anxiety	art school students	86	48.12	12.97	4.92	.000	.12
	grammar school students	87	39.04	11.24			
Identity achievement	art school students	86	3.53	0.66	-0.84	.403	.004
	grammar school students	87	3.61	0.60			
Identity diffusion	art school students	86	2.65	0.56	-0.22	.829	.000
	grammar school students	87	2.67	0.64			
Identity moratorium	art school students	86	2.85	0.56	-0.77	.443	.003
	grammar school students	87	2.93	0.69			
Identity foreclosure	art school students	86	1.79	0.60	-3.01	.003	.05
	grammar school students	87	2.08	0.67			

The results of the t-test show that there was a statistically significant difference between art school students and grammar school students in terms of anxiety expression and identity status – identity foreclosure. Anxiety is more pronounced in the group of art school students, and based on the size of the effect (eta square), we can see that the difference between the groups is large. However, in the group of grammar school students, the assumed identity dimension is more pronounced, and the difference between the groups is of moderate intensity.

**Table 3***Correlation of investigated variables on a sub-sample of art school students*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Anxiety	1				
2. Identity achievement	-.07	1			
3. Identity diffusion	.20	-.14	1		
4. Identity moratorium	.23**	.07	.26**	1	
5. Identity foreclosure	-.20	-.16	.14	.01	1

Note. \*\* The correlation is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level

Anxiety has a significant positive low correlation with the identity moratorium. The identity diffusion is in a low but significant correlation with the moratorium.

**Table 4***Correlation of investigated variables on a sub-sample of grammar school students*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Anxiety	1				
2. Identity achievement	-.21	1			
3. Identity diffusion	.20	-.10	1		
4. Identity moratorium	.30**	.14	.44**	1	
5. Identity foreclosure	-.08	-.14	.39**	.19	1

Note. \*\*the correlation is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level

Anxiety has a significant positive medium correlation with the identity moratorium status. The identity foreclosure has a significant positive mean correlation with the identity diffusion. Also, the identity diffusion and moratorium are positively and significantly correlated.

## Discussion

Research on the adolescent period continues to be an inexhaustible source of information about the problems young people face during their development. This type of research enables us to better understand how a young person who is on the threshold of adulthood develops and changes. Contemporary developmental theories seek to supplement a widely accepted understanding that adolescence is a period of turbulence and to view this period in a new light. According to Arnett (1999), which we emphasized at the beginning of this paper, viewing adolescence as a period of storm and stress is not enough – even in the midst of the storm, many adolescents enjoy numerous aspects of their lives, they are satisfied with a large number of their

relationships most of the time, and have a positive outlook on the future. In the research of Berčić and Erceg (2019), no differences in the identity status were found in young people in development no matter if they were studying or not. However, many authors still focus on the stress and developmental tasks adolescents go through. Thus, in a study by Hauser and Safyer (1994), direct correlations were found between anxiety and ego development in adolescents of both genders. Hauser and Sayfer state that those with higher levels of anxiety also belong to higher levels of ego development, which they explain by the fact that young people at a higher level of ego development are more aware of the complexity and uncertainty of life.

In this research, the differences in the level of expression of anxiety (as a trait) and identity status between grammar school students and art high school students were examined. Also, the correlation between the level of anxiety and identity status was examined on the sub-samples of grammar school students and art high school students.

The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between art school and grammar school students in terms of anxiety expression and identity status – identity foreclosure.

The obtained differences support the fact that art school students are on average more anxious than grammar school students, which means that students who achieve higher scores on the anxiety scale may have a more frequent and intense experience (state) of anxiety, i.e., an unpleasant emotional response when facing threatening demands or dangers compared to people who score low on this scale. Given that the choice of school is conditioned by artistic talent, education takes place in smaller groups and they are often in communication with the professors in whose class they belong to, so they are also exposed to their assessment, which increases their daily challenges at school and anxiety, because they are more often evaluated, perhaps even criticized. Grammar school students study in classes with larger groups of students. Evaluating and grading their work individually is less frequent. High school students have expectations that if they are not recognized for some special skills and talents in high school, they have a chance to do so in their university education, when they study what they are interested in. Artistically gifted students usually do not harbor such hopes and may feel anxious when they notice that they are unable to cope with the demands of their chosen school and life's difficulties (Marić, 2005).

The obtained results regarding anxiety are in accordance with the explanation of a group of authors (Smith & Carlsson, 1990; Barron, 1963; according to Vidanović and Anđelković, 2006) who describe creative adolescents as generally more tolerant to high levels of anxiety. However, it contradicts the findings obtained in the research of Vidanović and Anđelković (2006), which showed that there was no difference in the level of current and general anxiety in sub-samples of artistically and musically gifted adolescents and grammar school students. This can be explained by the fact that the samples in our research are somewhat different from the samples in the previously mentioned research, since musically gifted students also participated in the research by Vidanović and Anđelković from 2006.

The obtained results on the differences in anxiety between grammar school students and art high school students can be additionally explained by the research

results which are in favor of the higher values of identity foreclosure in favor of grammar school students compared to art high school students.

Individuals who achieve high scores on this identity status have either not experienced a crisis or have resolved the anxiety that the crisis brought by accepting the values and patterns of functioning offered or imposed by their parents and to whom they are committed. With these people, it is difficult to discern where the ideological framework of their parents ends, and where their own begins (Rokvić, 2017). The very creator of this model, James Marcia, believes that people with identity foreclosure, given that they have accepted the life path they are currently on, should show the lowest level of anxiety (Rokvić, 2017). However, the identity foreclosure is vulnerable if life changes and challenges occur in which the adopted values and patterns of functioning do not work – then they lack the flexibility to respond to new challenges and, in the long run, they are actually more vulnerable than adolescents in moratorium (Marcia, 1980). Another study by Lillevoll and associates (Lillevoll et al., 2013) supports the view that the identity foreclosure is in most cases the state with the lowest level of anxiety, unless it is compared to the level of anxiety in females who achieve high scores on the identity status of identity achievement (Rokvić, 2017). Therefore, these results can be connected with previously mentioned studies and can speak in favor of the fact that grammar school students achieve lower scores on anxiety precisely because they achieve higher scores on the identity foreclosure sub-dimension.

Adolescents who achieve higher scores on the anxiety scale also achieve higher scores on the identity moratorium dimension. Namely, the theoretical review of the identity status tells us that people with the identity moratorium status are in a state of ideological crisis, either in connection to the choice of occupation, or in connection to the philosophical and political understanding of the world. These individuals try to find a way to resolve the conflict between their parents' wishes, social pressures and their own preferences in the best possible way and are absolutely preoccupied with this inner turmoil (Rokvić, 2017). The obtained positive association between anxiety and this dimension justifies this assumption since the states of crisis and confusion can be accompanied by certain emotional states such as anxiety. Marcia believes that research and contact with experiences that have the potential to define and change the course of the rest of life represent stressful circumstances (Rokvić, 2017). It can be said that this is developmentally necessary anxiety when autonomy is being realized and free choices are made – which also implies the possibility of mistakes, unrealized plans, and betraying one's self-image. In that sense, occasional regressions and negative emotions in adolescence can be a sign of expected and not pathological development, because they accompany the achievement of important developmental tasks, especially in the vacuum between their planning and the activities that should bring them to fruition. Desired goals may not be easily attained (e.g., completion of studies, affirmation in the profession, independence and good earnings...), so this prolongs uncertainty and anxiety.

Identity diffusion and moratorium are positively related. In the turbulent and sensitive period of adolescence, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate identity

diffusion from moratorium as a constructive, but painful state. However, what essentially differentiates them is that in the identity moratorium status there is a process of physical and mental exploration of the environment in adolescents, as a quality that differentiates them according to Marcia (Marcia, 1980). This explains the significant correlation between these two identity statuses. Conversely, the correlation is lower among the artistically gifted, which supports the interpretation that there is a greater discrepancy between these identity statuses among these respondents than among grammar school students. Elements of identity diffusion are more present in grammar school students in the moratorium than in the artistically gifted adolescents, although these identity statuses do not differ significantly among the students of the two schools. The identity foreclosure is significantly more prevalent among grammar school students. They choose to take on parental values and reduce the anxiety regarding their own identity. However, according to the data in our research, the diffusion of identity is also correlated with the identity foreclosure among grammar school students, which puts this group of students at a disadvantage, regardless of the fact that their anxiety is significantly lower compared to art school students.

If we take a critical look at the research and observe the structure of the sample, it is suitable and the issue of adolescent identity formation certainly requires a more gender-balanced sample and a greater coverage of various categories of young people, as well as a greater age range. There are different vocational schools (four-year and three-year degree programs) and there are also different talents that make young people decide to choose different secondary schools. This topic could be extended to other categories of gifted adolescents. In addition, family parameters, family structure, family relations, education and occupation of parents could also be included. Other anxiety questionnaires should also be used and tested. It is an open question whether an already formed line of anxiety contributes to the choice of a secondary school where artistic and creative work contributes to increasing self-worth and to some extent anxiety is easier to bear and where, considering the type of school, there is probably less pressure to be successful in all subjects. At the same time, work is done in smaller groups, which can facilitate the formation of cohesion in the group. Perhaps the type of school, the organization of work, and to a lesser extent talent make the students decide to choose this high school.

## **Conclusion**

What is an unequivocal conclusion is that artistically gifted adolescents, despite their more pronounced anxiety, are less inclined than grammar school students to adopt parental values and goals. They made their professional choices earlier and entered into the uncertainty of future professional affirmation.

Increased anxiety accompanies both the moratorium and the diffusion of identity, and there are no significant differences between the students of the two schools.

Although grammar school students are more inclined to conform with their parents, which is evidenced by the elevated identity foreclosure compared to

artistically gifted high school students, they have a more intimate feeling of the ambiguity of their own self.

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## **Status identiteta i anksioznost kod umetnički nadarenih adolescenata i učenika gimnazije**

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### **Apstrakt**

Tokom adolescencije mlada osoba se često suočava sa različitim razvojnim krizama, povišenom anksioznošću, kao i fluktuirajućim doživljajem sopstvenog identiteta. Adolescente, kao vrlo heterogenu skupinu, ipak povezuju upravo slične krize kroz koje prolaze, a često i nesigurnost sopstvenog identiteta. Cilj ovog rada bio je ispitivanje povezanosti između anksioznosti i statusa identiteta kod dve grupe učenika – likovno nadarenih učenika i učenika gimnazije, kao i poređenje ovih grupa učenika u pogledu navedenih karakteristika. Uzorak je bio prigodan i sačinjen od 173 ispitanika ( $n_M = 45$ ,  $n_Z = 128$ ), starosti od 16 do 18 godina ( $M = 16.70$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). 49.7% procenata ispitanika pohađa srednju likovnu školu, dok su preostali ispitanici (50.3%) učenici gimnazije. U ovom istraživanju korišćen je Marsijin modifikovan upitnik identiteta i inventar anksioznosti. Rezultati su pokazali da učenici likovne škole postižu značajno više skorove od učenika gimnazije na dimenziji anksioznosti ( $t_{(171)} = 4.92$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ) i niže vrednosti na dimenziji preuzetog identiteta ( $t_{(171)} = -3.01$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Anksioznost i moratorijum identiteta, kao i moratorijum i difuzija identiteta, koreliraju u obe grupe ispitanika. Kod učenika gimnazije, preuzeti identitet je u korelaciji sa difuzijom identiteta. Može se zaključiti da gimnazijalci koji postižu veće rezultate na statusu identiteta i preuzetom identitetu, izbegavaju

neprijatno stanje anksioznosti i tako manje traže odgovore koji se odnose na njihov identitet i vrednosti. Međutim, iako na taj način smanjuju nivo anksioznosti, njihov identitet i dalje ostaje pomalo nejasan i razućđen.

*Ključne reči:* identitet, status identiteta, anksioznost, adolescencija

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