Adolescence represents the final phase of a prolonged period of growth and maturation (Paus, 2005) and it is a major transitional period that bridges the beginning of adulthood (Choudhary et al., 2006). Even the meaning of the word ‘adolescence’ (Latin in origin), is derived from the verb ‘adolescere’ which means ‘to grow into adulthood’. During adolescence, there are pronounced hormonal and physical changes (Blakemore et al., 2007; Choudhary et al., 2007; Blakemore and Choudhary, 2006, a, b) as well as changes in cognition, emotion and behavior (Giedd et al., 2006) between the ages of 10-19 years in an individual. Identity formation is also viewed as one of the principal tasks of the passage to adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Cote and Alahar, 1994; Erikson, 1950, 1968). Questions of identity can arise at many points during the lifespan, but these issues come up most commonly (and intensely) during the adolescent and early adult years (Whitbourne, Sneed, and Sayer, 2009). Indeed, these are the times of life that have traditionally been “set aside” for identity development (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). The advent of formal operational thought and abstract thinking in adolescence permits people to imagine what the future could be like – and indeed to begin to ask questions about what they would like the future to be (Moshman, 2011a). In turn, these advanced cognitive abilities allow for consideration of future “possible identities” that one might wish to become – or to avoid becoming. Thus, adolescence is regarded as a period of exploratory self analysis and self evaluation ideally culminating in the establishment of a cohesive and integrative sense of self or identity (Erikson, 1968). This process involves the exploration and testing of alternate ideas, beliefs and behaviors, marking this period as one of both dramatic change and uncertainty. Erikson provided perhaps the most widely recognized framework for conceptualizing the transformation of the self during adolescence. Among all the developments, Erik Erikson saw the formation of a personal sense of identity (versus identity diffusion) as one of the cornerstones of ego development. “Ego identity, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuing to the ego synthesizing methods, the style of one’s individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one’s significant others in the immediate community” (Erikson, 1968, p.50). In Erikson’s definition, three elements emerge as necessary for a sense of identity. First, the person must experience inner
sameness or integrity. Second, the sense of inner sameness is continuous over time. Third, identity is experienced within a community of important others.

Erik Erikson provided the field of psychology with a systematic extension of Freud’s view of the role of the ego in personality functioning. Freud explained the resolution of one’s inner conflicts by formulating a structure of the mind by using the id, ego and super ego. Freud considered id as a “Seething Cauldron” containing the primitive urges and desires, continuously seeking expression in external reality (Ryckman, 1997). The ego served as a mechanism by which impulses and urges were directed and organized by the powerful id. The superego served as a parental conscience and an impetus towards idealization of oneself. In Freud’s view, the ego was conceived as a relatively weak agency that acted subservient to the powerful id. Erikson postulated that the ego acts independently of the emotions and motivated by the id. Current identity theory and research rests upon the foundations of Erikson’s (1959, 1963, 1968) psychosocial theory of ego development and in particular his construct of ego identity. According to Erikson (1963, 1968), ego development occurs in a series of 8 stages, with each stage defined by a central developmental task or crisis, the outcome of which can be described as falling along the continuum of adaptive to maladaptive. The quality of resolution for each developmental task, or crisis rests upon the quality of resolution of previous developmental tasks and has implications for how future developmental tasks are approached and resolved. Each crisis or stage is believed to arise according to an epigenetic schedule of development with the outcome of each crisis/task being impacted by the socio-historical context within which a person lives. The development of a personal sense of identity while avoiding the risk of identity confusion is the central task of Erikson’s (1959, 1968) fifth psychosocial stage, identity versus identity confusion. The most adaptive resolution of this stage is the development of a personally expressive identity which provides a person with a sense of inner sameness and continuity. Identity functions to provide the structure for understanding who one is; provides meaning and direction through commitments; enables the recognition of potential through a sense of future, possibilities, and alternative choices (Adams and Marshall, 1996).
In Erikson’s view, individuals construct a sense of identity as they make choices, decisions and commitments within their societal context. In turn, this sense of identity endangers a sense of well-being; a feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of knowing where one is going”. Waterman (1984) defines identity as a “clearly delineated self-definition comprising the goals, values and beliefs to which a person is unequivocally committed”. Identity, according to Josselson (1987) is a “dynamic fitting together of parts of the personality with the realities of the social world so that a person has a sense both of internal coherence and meaningful relatedness to the real world”. Kroger (1989) has noted that identity must be defined “as a balance between that which is taken to be self and that considered to be other”.

Erikson described identity formation as the major component evolving in the beginning in childhood, continuing its development throughout the life cycle. During adolescence, it is reshaped and organized in a way different from other processes (Erikson, 1968). In childhood, the individual’s development of the self structure occurs through the mechanism of introjections and identification. During infancy, introjection is the incorporation of another’s image based on experience (hopefully satisfactory) of mutuality in early relationships. As the child matures, he/she takes on a different form of developing the self through the process of identification. The identifications are those when the child becomes like those significant others with characteristics or features that are admired. When the individual approaches the adolescent years, identity formation involves the synthesis of previous identifications reconstructed in a new configuration chosen by the adolescent according to his/her own values and interests. That is, the adolescent is able to select and discard the various identifications. Additionally, this process requires incorporating societal expectations that significant persons in the individual’s life have for the individual. In summary, identity formation is a process whereby adolescents formulate their own definitions of themselves based on previous definitions according to current preferences in values, interests and social expectations.

1.1 VIEWPOINTS AND MODELS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

There are various viewpoints with regard to what drives the construction and reconstruction of identity. Early research in child development focused on identification
and imitation as major mechanisms of social development (e.g. Sears et al., 1957). Dignan (1965), Fenichel (1953) suggest that identifications with significant persons of his past contribute to an individual’s ego identity formation. At the time of adolescence, childhood identifications are reintegrated into the matrix of self-images which then gradually assimilate new social and occupational roles. Among the single early identifications, that with the mother is most important. As the ego re-synthesizes all childhood identifications including maternal identifications, with recent libidinal changes, emergent aptitudes, and current social and vocational roles, a unique configuration emerges. In the process, the ego works towards self-continuity, towards constancy and sameness which embraces early identification and towards ego identity. In comparison to this model, psychoanalytic theory places the driving mechanism of identity formation in the form of conflict and emotional resolution (Blos, 1967) that lead to de-idealization of the ego-ideal and to the autonomy. Blos (1979) described adolescence as ‘a second individuation process’ in which the adolescent must seek new love or attachment objects outside the family. Also, Kohut (1971) suggests that with ‘internalization of self-regulatory functions’, adolescents take over ego’s functions and adaptive capabilities which are previously handled by their parents. Using psychoanalytic-psychosexual concepts as a foundation, Erikson (1963, 1968) traces the ego’s progressive integration of the social world and the psychosexual experience of the individual. He describes personality development as the hierarchically ordered sequence of stages which progress from initial narcissistic involvement with oneself, through stages of identification and socialization, to increasing individuation and establishment of an individual identity.

**Cognitive and life span development theorists** have placed identity formation within dissonance and dialectics (e.g. Festinger, 1957; Riegel, 1976). Inhelder and Piaget (1958) stressed that the changes that occur in personality and in the social arena at adolescence are a result of the development of formal structures. Holding a dialectical meta model of development, Wang (1991) views psychosocial development as a process striving towards psychosocial maturity, governed by the contradictions inherent within that process.
Social psychologists and social-cognitive psychologists have argued that self-awareness is the central motivator of change (e.g. Wicklund, 1975). Berzonsky (1988) proposes that self-constructs and schemata provide the basis for interpreting self-relevant information and for guiding and directing personal decision-making and problem solving. These adaptive efforts, in turn, may provide dissonant information creating the need to accommodate aspects of the identity structure. Sociologists have tended to approach identity formation as the gradual product of lifelong socialization processes that tend to shape the individual into cultural molds. Bush and Simmons (1981) suggest that individuals change during adolescence largely as result of ‘learning culture’ rather than undergoing structural psychic change.

In addition to these viewpoints, work on self-consciousness, perspective-taking, and dialectic thought (Adams and Fitch, 1983; Adams et al., 1987; Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994) have suggested that processes of identity formation are influenced by dialectic like mechanisms that involve distress, incompatibility, incompleteness, inconsistency, or confrontation, followed by synthesis and/or resolution.

Recently, control theory has been recognized as a useful framework from which to examine micro processes involved in identity formation (Burke, 1991). Identity from a control theory perspective is based on a mechanistic model that infers that the individual is information based organism that includes a system for control of biological, cognitive, or psycho-mechanical processes. Control, within a cybernetic model, implies steering, guiding or governing. Kerpelman et al. (1997) views that, something what is governed is a desirable internal standard or self-definition. More explicitly, when some standard, external or internal to the self is interpreted through a comparative cognitive process to the incongruent with a self-perception, an error or disturbance results that leads to behaviors that restore the system to the original self-definition or move it to a new standard or modified self-perception.

Research by Burke and others into the subject of role-based identity reveals that each of us may have several identities that interplay with each other at any one time. Each of these identities subscribes to a different set of rules, depending on the group they associate with. For example, many of us hold multiple identities as a parent, a spouse, a child, a professional in a particular discipline, member of a church, etc. Each
of these identities has a set of normative behaviors that acts as a standard for membership in that group (Burke, 2006). In this case, each identity is verified by matching the self-perception of that identity to the identity standard. When there is congruence, there is positive emotion. A lack of identity verification registers negative emotion (Stets, 2005).

Burke (1991) states that, “Stress is a relationship between external conditions and the current state of the person; and distress, or anxiety is the internal, subjective response to that relationship”. According to Burke, distress is the interruption of the identity process where we compare our self-perceptions to the identity standard (see Figure 1.1). Referring to the analogy of the thermostat, identity control system is conceptualized as continually monitoring the congruence between inputs and internal standards, but is achieved only in response to discrepancies.

![Diagram of Identity Control Process]

Figure 1.1: The Components of Identity Control Process (Figure adapted from Burke, 1991)

In effect, behavior is emitted to convince self and others that offending reflected appraisals are in error and the violated identity standard is valid. Theoretically, the
activated control process iterates until the identity standard is validated or modified. At this point, the control system returns to an inactive, monitoring state.

![Diagram of outcomes of congruent and incongruent feedback about one's identity]

**Figure 1.2: Outcomes of Congruent and Incongruent Feedback about One’s Identity**

The top panel of Figure 1.2 shows the system’s response to congruent interpersonal feedback. When feedback produces a self-perception that is not congruent with an identity standard, as in the lower panel of Figure 1.2, a disturbance in that identity may occur, triggering an experience of emotional distress (Burke, 1991) and activating the control processes. Behavior, then, is seen as the response of an identity control system to minimize this emotional distress.

Seemingly, many models successfully explain the process of identity formation. Each model has its unique contributions to the field of identity formation, yet till date, Erikson’s framework remains the most important approach for the study of identity formation in adolescence (Figure 1.3).

An extension of Erikson’s Model has been given by James Marcia (1966, 1980), who developed the *identity status approach* to study the process of identity formation based on the framework provided by Erikson (1968). Marcia views identity as a continually changing organization of one’s attitudes, beliefs and the like. Marcia’s four identity statuses occupy unique positions along the dimensions of exploration and commitment. *Identity statuses* are both outcomes of the process of identity formation and structural properties of the personality and each portrays a dominant mode of experiencing the world. Marcia further viewed that identity could be best described by discussing the presence or absence of (a) exploration (b) commitment.
**Exploration** refers to active questioning and consideration of various alternatives. It is the process by which the individual actively searches for the resolution of the issues of changing the goals, roles and beliefs about the world before making commitments which provides the individual’s life with purpose and direction. It refers to the “problem solving behavior aimed at eliciting information about oneself or one’s environment in order to make a decision about an important life choice” (Grotevant, 1987). It is a period of struggle or active questioning in arriving at a set of beliefs and occupational choice.

**Commitment** refers to the degree to which individuals have explored life experiences, formed internal interpretations of those experiences and made a commitment to ideological sense of self. An ideological sense of self reflects the degree of personal investment the individual exhibits in a particular belief system (Marcia, 1967). Commitment involves an adherence to a perspective and the crystallization of personal belief. It pertains to choosing from among the alternatives one has explored and making firm, unwavering choice regarding beliefs and occupation. It also refers to the choices made in areas relevant to identity and as the extent to which one feels certain about or identifies with the choices (Luyckx et al., 2006). Commitment appeared to serve as an indicator of identity consolidation and of successful identity development (Schwartz, 2006, 2007).

On the basis of identity domains of Commitment and Exploration, Marcia (1966) conceptualized four identity statuses:

1. Identity Achievement
2. Identity Moratorium
3. Identity Diffusion
4. Identity Foreclosure

(a) **Identity Achieved Status**

Marcia (1993) defines identity achieved individuals as those who have gone through a period of exploration and have made identity defining commitments (Santrock, 2007; Santrock, 2008; Arnett, 2009). Identity achieved individuals perform well under stress, reason at high level of moral development and score high on
measures of autonomy. The identity achieved individuals are fairly stable, capable of dealing with shifting environmental demands and can establish and pursue realistic goals. Achievers are the “balancers” of relationships, work and interests. As they have navigated their way through the process of identity formation, they have managed to combine “self-in-world” and “self-in-relations”. Identity achieved adolescents are said to perform very well under stress. They also have a high level of moral development and have a high level of independence. Apart from that, identity achieved adolescents are found to be more creative as well as more rational than the other adolescents in other statuses (Everall et al., 2005; Bergh et al., 2005).

Figure 1.3: Marcia’s Identity Status Paradigm (1966)

(b) Identity Moratorium Status

Moratoriums are truly “daughters of crisis”, being intensely self-reflective and in perpetual conflict. Individuals in this status are those who are currently in the process
of exploration and commitments are either vague or absent. Such individuals experience a ‘crisis’ due to their active exploration of different options but have not yet chosen from their alternatives. Such individuals are more anxious than the achieved or foreclosed individuals. Njus et al. (2008) found that adolescents who are in the moratorium status have a higher cognition than the adolescents in the foreclosure and diffusion status.

(c) **Identity Diffusion Status**

Diffused individuals are also named as “apathetic wanderers”. Diffused is one who is unable or unwilling to make identity defining commitments. Such individuals may or may not have been seen a period of prior exploration. This identity status leads to an active pursuit of non-commitment and avoidance of demanding circumstances. Such individuals are apathetic and disinterested, more prone academic difficulties drift aimlessly. Diffused individuals are seen as less developed in such personality dimensions as self esteem, locus of control and moral reasoning. Some may show severe psychopathology exemplified by social isolation and unhappiness. Bergh et al. (2005) said that identity diffused adolescents have a ‘playboy/playgirl’ attitude about life, or in other words, they are very carefree. These adolescents are comfortable with ad-hoc adjustments rather than stable changes when it comes to life circumstances (Krettenauer, 2005). In accordance to Njus et al. (2008), identity diffused adolescents have a low level of cognitive ability. They prefer not to engage in effortful and complex thoughts like self-reflect, acquiring and decision making. It is inferred that these adolescents are not bothered to think on information thoroughly. They prefer to have other people make decisions for them or ‘just go with the flow’. Some of the adolescents who are classified under the identity diffusion status are said to be in social isolation and they can also be very unhappy most of the times (Krettenauer, 2005). Phillips and Pittman (2007) said that adolescents who perceived themselves as diffused have low level of psychological well-being in comparison to adolescents who perceived themselves in the identity achievement, moratorium and foreclosure status.

(d) **Identity Foreclosure Status**

Foreclosed individuals are the “culture bearers”, maintaining commitments which reflect their parents and society. Such individuals have adopted their identity
defining values and commitments without exploration. Such commitments are based primarily on those parents and significant others. Foreclosed individuals are more rigid, dogmatic, conforming, approval seeking, authoritarian and somewhat at rigid in thought processes. Of all the four identity statuses, the foreclosed tend to be the most authoritarian and rigid in their views. They operate well within the bounds of familial circumstances but may quickly find themselves at a loss if faced with familial challenge. According to Bergh et al. (2005) identity foreclosure adolescents are the least anxious among all the other identity statuses. They are also well behaved and have a high level of commitment. However, these adolescents are not flexible and can be defensive. Luyckx et al. (2005) said that identity foreclosure adolescents are low on openness. They are not open to new ideas and different views. On the other hand, these adolescents are more conscientious than the adolescents in the moratorium and diffusion status. In accordance to Njus et al. (2008), identity foreclosed adolescents seem to have a lower self-concept than the adolescents who have achieved their identity. Njus et al. (2008) also said that foreclosed adolescents have a lower cognitive ability than the adolescents in the identity achievement and moratorium status. Identity foreclosed adolescents like to rely on other people’s advices and decisions about their life.

Identity consists of both ideological and interpersonal aspects. “Erikson (1968) has recognized that identity formation consists of two distinct components, he refers to these as ego identity and self identity. Ego identity refers to commitments to such things as work and ideological values associated with politics, religion, philosophy of living and so forth. Self identity theory can be illustrated from the most contemporary and visible theorists of identity formation”. The ideological identity includes occupational, religious, political and philosophical life style, values, goals and standards, while a social or interpersonal identity incorporates aspects of friendship, dating, sex roles and recreational choices. The identity status paradigm provides method for operationalizing the construct of identity in such a way that processes can be assessed regardless of identity content (e.g. vocation, gender and politics). The initial development of identity status paradigm included aspects of identity focused on ideological areas such as one’s perspective on politics, religion and one’s vocation. At that time, these areas were
assumed to be more salient to identity formation (Marcia, 1966). Since that time, researchers have expanded their repertoire of identity domains to include identity roles of a more interpersonal nature (Grotevant, Thorbecke, Meyer, 1982). These areas include gender roles, friendship, leisure activities and dating. The identity status paradigm provides a method for operationalizing the construct of identity in such a way that the processes can be assessed regardless of identity content (e.g. vocation, gender, political).

The identity statuses appear to be useful partly because they provide for a greater variety of styles in dealing with the identity issues than does Erikson’s simple dichotomy of identity versus identity confusion. The statuses were originally based on the development hypothesis that a ‘continuum of ego identity based on proximity of an individual to identity achievement… (underlies) the statuses (Marcia, 1967). A developmental progression through the statuses was postulated to be dominant pattern, with identity achievement and identity diffusion as ‘polar alternatives of status inherent in Erikson’s theory’, and identity foreclosure and identity moratorium as ‘roughly intermediate in this distribution’. Though moratorium status shares many common characteristics with identity achievement, however, the controversy still exists as to which status out of which moratorium (high exploration) and foreclosure (high commitment) should be placed next to identity achievement on the identity status continuum. The research shows that different components of identity generally increase in strength as individuals move towards maturity (e.g. Kumru and Thompson, 2003), however, it is also interesting to note that a large percentage of youth remain foreclosed that a large percentage of youth remain foreclosed throughout late adolescence, which may probably be because of a wide variety of context (e.g. Tiwari and Joshi, 1996).

Marcia’s approach has given a unidirectional interpretation of identity development but there are researchers who suggest that it may not necessarily be unidirectional and may even show a reverse developmental course and the end point may not be an achieved status/ stage, but can be any other stage/status even (Kroger, 1995, LaVoie, 1994). The ways in which people reach the next stage may be variable
for different individuals and the transition from one to the next may not necessarily be hierarchical ascendance, but the pattern of these transitions can be variably transversed.

There are many researches with regard to the optimum timings of identity formation. The timings of identity development in adolescence differ from culture to culture. A society which expects its individuals to be independent and assume adult roles early may pre-pone these timings, whereas the societies encouraging collectivism may delay this process. Normally, early adolescent years are marked by first questioning of one’s identity, however this period has been considered as time of passive identity formation as usually the pre dominant statuses associated with this age are foreclosure and diffusion. On the other hand, middle and late adolescent years are considered active identity seeking years because of the predominance of moratorium and achievement statuses (Meeus, 1996; Bartle-Haring et al., 2002). But, the timings of identity consolidation may go up to middle adulthood years and there may also be some individuals who never achieve an identity and may always be dependent on others, their parents, spouses, etc.

Researchers suggest that the strongest increase in identity achievement takes place in college years (18-21 years) (Waterman, 1992). Although wide individual differences in the timings of identity development may be expected, there may be some characteristic time or developmental settings which may be associated with the greatest possibility of change. This may seem appropriate as there are social-structural changes in the modern day set-up.

Research has also been done since long as to how identity formation takes place. Traditionally, the adolescents’ ability to negotiate the separation-individuation from caregiver has been considered a key developmental milestone in identity formation. Originally, it was believed that adolescents’ identity formation was based on successful individuation and detachment from caregiver (Erikson, 1968; Margaret Mahler, 1969; Blos, 1979). On the other hand, attachment theorists (Bowlby, 1982; Ainsworth, 1989) emphasizes the need for continuing close parent-child attachments as a measure of fostering social competencies needed in adulthood. Separation-individuation and attachment have been considered two of the most central and influential explanatory
paradigms in the psychodynamic literature understanding human development and the nature of human relationships differently and emphasizing different means for achieving stable ego identity and of fostering social competencies needed in adulthood. The separation-individuation process, more generally referred as psychological separation, acknowledges the individual’s drive towards healthy personal adjustment as critically dependent on his/her ability to psychologically separate from the parents and gain a sense of identity as a separate individual (Hoffman, 1984). Erikson initiated the work on identity but it has got its roots in psychoanalytic theory which places the driving mechanism of identity formation in the form of conflict and emotional resolution (Blos, 1967).

Margaret Mahler (1968) described the process of differentiation as a complex interplay between attachment and separation in which the infant gradually becomes less dependent on the mother. Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) suggest that the symbiotic period during which the infant experiences merger is the first and most important developmental phase in the establishment of object relations. He viewed that the successful incorporation of an autonomous self in the life’s early years rests with the toddler’s ability to incorporate or internalize an image of its primary caretaker. During second individuation process, it is this internalized parent which must be relinquished if development is to progress. The process of separation-individuation during infancy consists of two interdependent changes. One change is behavioral: the degree and flexibility with which the infant achieves independent behavioral activity. The other change occurs in mental representations: the degree and stability to act independently of the mother and to view, cognitively, himself or herself as a separate person is interdependent developmental task. Separation-Individuation refers to the developmental sequence through which the human infant moves from a relatively objectless state of mind to a tuning into the world of reality and the achievement of a sense of separate individual entity. Separation-individuation involves progression along two tracks. Separation refers to the child’s movement from fusion with the mother; individuation consists of those steps that lead to the development of an individual’s unique and personal characteristics. The drive towards individuation is an “innate
given”, (Mahler et al., 1975) that cannot be accomplished without autonomous separation. Moving towards individual identity, through the four sub phases of separation-individuation that have been termed by Mahler as differentiation, practicing, rapprochement and an open ended sub phase, the child advances towards a position of on the way object constancy. This signals the genesis of the ability to retain an internal representation or image of “important others”, as distinct from the representation of the self and makes it possible for the child to maintain a connection in the mind with significant persons, whether they are absent or present, frustrating or gratifying. Favorable negotiation of the separation-individuation sequence promotes what Mahler has termed “psychological birth”. This entails the evolution of adaptive capacities, the formation of a sense of personal identity and the development of the capacity for maturity in human relationships. A sense of identity and self-worth as well as the capacities for attachment, trust, empathy and compassion for others evolves out of significant exchanges between infant and family. The nature of this growth-promoting relationship alters, over time, in accordance with the changing needs of the child. It is an early attuned, symbiotic relationship between infant and mother that provides the firm foundation for all that follows.

Blos (1967) drew parallels between separation process at the end of the third year of life and the “second individuation process” of adolescence. He recognized that the infantile hatching from the symbiotic membrane to become an individuated toddler (Mahler, 1963, cited Blos) is parallel to the shedding of family dependencies and the loosening of infantile object ties in adolescence. According to Blos, through this process, the adolescent becomes a member of society at large or, simply, of the adult world (Blos, 1967). Thus, adolescent identity is ideally characterized by independence and autonomy as indicated by emotional separation from parents (Blos, 1979). He further states that in order to achieve individuation, the adolescent has to let go of the internalized childhood image of the parent. He must begin to depend more on himself for control and less on parents. Theoretically, this hypothesis has primarily been elaborated by Kroger (1985) in the field of identity research. She proposes that a parallel can be seen between the structure of the parent child relation and the structure
of the ego. In adolescence, the childhood image of the parent is rejected and the adolescent starts to define him/herself and the parent as autonomous people in the relationship. This redefinition of the parent-adolescent relation enables the adolescent to leave behind the child’s identity and to enter autonomously into new commitments in order to form a new identity. Blos (1967) and Jacobson (1961) suggest that changes in object relations during adolescence play a large part in the forming of a stable identity. Jacobson stresses the notion that adolescents must relinquish their ties to their parents in order to develop mature relationships with other “non-related” people. The psychically critical internal processes of identification and internalization, if accomplished earlier in life, must be maintained in order to establish healthy relationship with self and others. This formulation dates back to 1905, when Freud stated that “this detachment from parental authority is one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful psychical achievements” (Freud, 1905, cited in Jacobson, 1961, p.167).

In contrast to separation-individuation theories, Attachment theorists emphasize the need for continuing close parent adolescent attachments as a means of establishing a coherent ego identity and fostering social competencies needed in adulthood (Mallinckrodt, 1997). Bowlby (1982) expounded the lifelong importance of the attachment system, developed within the infant’s earliest relationships. Genetically derived to assure survival of the helpless infant, the attachment system regulates proximity of infant to parent to affect a balance of security, derived through parental contact, and independence developed over increasing distance. Under conditions of threat or distress, the attachment system is activated, and the infant uses attachment behaviors to bring the parent close, thereby restoring a feeling of security in the absence of distress, deactivation of the attachment system affords the child comfortable distance from the parent in which to explore the world. The two essential interrelated functions of the attachment system then are to provide security in times of distress and to facilitate independent exploration (Ainsworth, 1989).

The infant’s characteristic way of meeting attachment needs or attachment styles (Ainsworth et al., 1978) develops through interactions with parental figures. An infant whose parent responds appropriately and consistently to expressions of need becomes
confident that those needs will be met. Free of attachment-related concerns, the *secure* individual can explore the world investing resources in self development. In contrast, when parents are chronically unreliable or inconsistent, infants must divert energies from development to minimize distressing interactions with parents and to manage frustration that is due to unmet needs. The *avoidant* infant, whose parents tend to be intrusive and insensitive or rejecting, avoids rather than seek proximity (Isabella and Belsky, 1991), limiting requests for nurturance, the child adopts a stance of pseudo-self-reliance and explore the world alone. The *ambivalent* infant, whose parents tend to neglect dependency needs as well as interfere with independence, derives security from neither attachment nor avoidance; unable to find a comfortable distance from the parent, the infants’ attachment needs are simultaneously evoked and frustrated (Cassidy and Berlin, 1994). Thus, difference in attachment style reflects an individual’s ability to use the attachment relationship for each of the essential attachment functions, security and independent functioning. Coble, Gantt and Mallinckrodt (1996) summarized a large body of research evidence suggesting that secure attachment to caregivers promotes greater competency in early peer friendships and higher levels of social competencies in adolescents and young adults.

On the basis of above discussion, it becomes clear that different perspectives exist to explain how identity develops, and the processes important to its formation (e.g. individuation, relatedness).

Although separation-individuation and attachment theories differ somewhat in their suggestions regarding the primary determinants of successful intimate relationships (i.e., successful psychological separation and healthy parental attachment respectively), there is considerable conceptual overlap. Both theories propose that (a) an optimal levels of emotional connectedness to significant others promotes self exploration and healthy ego identity development; (b) an intimate relationship is a key developmental task associated with ego-identity maturity; and more specifically, (c) the formation of a coherent ego identity is an important precursor to successful intimate relationships.
The present research is focused on studying the relationship of identity formation and attachments. Though the earlier research has focused on the significance of separation individuation process contributing to the development of identity formation process but the researches done during last few decades has also emphasized that secure attachment bonds formed in the earlier years of life contribute to the successful identity achievement in life. Researchers like Waterman (1982) presented a developmental model for identity formation in which he suggested that role models (e.g. parents) influence the processes of exploration and commitment and thus progression of one identity status to another. Waterman’s model is congruent with identity theory that emphasizes the importance of parental involvement into adolescence while specifying how the parental relationship might influence this development of identity (e.g. affecting the processes of exploration and commitment). This theory is supported by studies indicating a positive relationship between parental support and these processes (Hauser et al., 1984; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Blustein et al., 1991). Rather than perceiving emotional support from parents as being in some way a threat to development, Waterman’s (1982) model proposed that growth is facilitated through positive parental involvement. He suggested that parental encouragement to explore various life alternatives is a factor in generating movement from a much diffused state to a stage where move to commitment and exploration is seen. Parents reinforce commitments by providing support for decisions made by the adolescent. The process of identity exploration is also reinforced by parents who encourage in the process of exposing oneself to the unfamiliar is believed to provide a sense of comfort. Josselson (1987) also emphasized interpersonal relationships (such as that with parents) in the formation of female identity formation. Women are believed to demonstrate a preference for “connectedness” with others that may be associated with characteristics of intimacy prior to or in conjunction with the development of their identity (Josselson, 1987; Straub and Rogers, 1986; Straub, 1987).

Waterman’s perspective initiated a dichotomy between theories that characterize identity development as being independent of parental influence (Erikson, 1968; Blos, 1979) and between those who are supportive of parental relationship as integral part of
identity development (Gilligan, 1982; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Josselson, 1988). Though the traditional theorists emphasize on individuation process influencing identity formation process, there is a considerable consensus that many developmental tasks of adolescents find their resolution within the context of interpersonal relationships. Thus, with identity formation being considered as less a result of individuation and more so influenced by attachment relationships with the caregiver, researchers have turned to attachment theory as a lens through which to understand adolescent identity development.

Moreover, the identity formation process shares basic ideas with traditional attachment theory. In general, both paradigms indicate that security, exploration and development are influenced by relationships with parents and that behavior is guided by perceptions of self and the environment (Benson et al., 1992). Attachment theory highlights the importance of the secure base provided by the caregiver as facilitating exploration (Ainsworth, 1967), and identity theorists hypothesize that security is also necessary for establishing an identity (Marcia, 1983). According to Bowlby (1982), secure attachments lead to mental health, and the idea that identity is assisted by security (Marcia, 1966) suggests that secure attachments facilitate identity development and prevent identity diffusion. The tenet of secure attachments facilitates identity development and prevents identity diffusion. The tenets of secure attachment are applicable to the adolescent identity formation processes of exploration and commitment associated with adolescents. The bond with parents communicates a sense of acceptance to the adolescent which allows him/her to be free to try on new roles and to begin to make independent decisions while still maintaining a sense of comfort in the knowledge that the parents are there to support this behavior. Thus, a positive parental environment in which adolescents are encouraged to make their own decisions would seem to be one in which exploration is present, but also one in which commitments can be made. Encouragement from parents to pursue autonomous behavior is more of a catalyst for identity formation processes than is the conflict with parents.

The research literature also supports the position which states that most adolescents develop responsible autonomy, without severing their emotional bond to
their parents (Ainsworth, 1989; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986). Rather than a period characterized by conflict and detachment, adolescence is seen as a time for separation and individuation within the context of emotionally close and harmonious family relations (Steinberg, 1990). Research supports the common assumption that emotionally facilitative behaviors such as warmth and acceptance exhibited by parents are associated with more mature development. These authors defined more mature development by viewing the identity statuses in a hierarchical manner. The least mature state (diffusion) lacks both exploration and commitment and is characterized by lack of connectedness with parents. This is followed by the foreclosed state and the moratorium state. The identity achieved is the most mature state. Findings from several research studies also suggest that a sense of identity is best formulated within a family system that balances closeness with encouragement towards independence (Adams and Jones, 1983; Campbell, Adams and Dobson, 1984; Fullinwinder-Bush and Jacobvitz, 1993; Grotevant, 1983; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986, 1985; Hauser, powers, Naom, Jacobson, 1984; Papini, Sebby and Clark, 1989).

The above discussion has given a clear understanding of the concept of identity formation, the identity status paradigm given by Marcia, and how identity formation is facilitated by attachments. The idea that parents continue to be influential in providing support during adolescence has been strengthened by the growing interest in applying attachment theory to areas of the life span beyond infancy. As the present research is aimed at studying identity in relation to attachments of adolescents, it becomes necessary to understand the concept of attachment.

1.2 ATTACHMENT

Attachment was originally defined as the strong affective bond established between the infant and the primary caregiver (generally the mother) (Bowlby, 1973, 1982). However, in recent years attachment has been re-conceptualized to include all significant relationships across the life span including those with peers and romantic partners (e.g. Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Kobak and Cole, 1994; Kobak and Sceery, 1988). Attachment theory also addresses the parent-
adolescent bond, a focus of several lines of research, with some common assumptions about the link between family relationships and identity development (Adam, Dyk and Bennion, 1987). Bowlby (1988) defined attachment behavior as “any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world” (p.26).

Attachment is a term historically used to describe the bond between parent and child during infancy and early developmental years. Bowlby (1969) proposed that the bond established between infants and their parents serves a protective function and provides children with a sense of security (Figure 1.4). Attachment theory revolutionized the study of parent-child relationships, serving ever since as a foundation for much developmental thinking (Cassidy and Shaver, 2008).

The enduring affectional bond with the caregiver enables the child to use their caregiver enables the child with both a safe haven in times of stress as well as a secure base from which to explore and engage in non-attachment behaviors (Ainsworth, 1982; Collins, Guihard, Ford and Feeney, 2004; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005). This sense of security is reflected in greater exploratory behavior and the development of competency (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters and Wall, 1978; Grossman and Grossman, 1991).

1.2.1 Internal Working Model

Internal working model is believed to contribute to adaptive and maladaptive developmental pathways. An internal working model is a set of rules constructed by the individual based on the immediacy of response of an attachment figure to the needs of an individual. These are thought to be analogous to relational schema (Baldwin, 1992) that refers to “Cognitive structures representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness” (p.461). This set of rules helps the individual know what to expect from future interactions with his/her attachment figure and how to adjust their behavior accordingly (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980, 1989).

Based on perceptions of availability and responsiveness of the caregiver, the child develops an internal working model of the self and the others (Bowlby, 1969). Internal working models have four components: (a) memories of attachment experience with the caregiver; (b) beliefs, attitudes and expectations of self and others, in regard to
the self being worthy of love and care, and in regard of others being available and accessible to provide help; (c) goals and needs related to attachment’ (d) strategies and plans related to securing attachment goals and needs. Internal working models include affective, defensive, descriptive and cognitive components and provide a mechanism, whereby an individual anticipates, predicts and interprets the intentions and behavior of others (Rothbard and Shaver, 1994). These models influence the quality of subsequent interactions with the attachment figure. Bowlby (1969) contended that an internal working model of self and others is developed through early attachment relationships.

It is through these early attachment relationships that the individual forms patterns and expectations of relationships. The child develops his/her expectations of others’ responses to their needs based on parental responses. In other words, early attachment relationships and internal working models both influence and are influenced by later development (Bowlby, 1980).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.4: The Defining Features Of Attachment (Hazan and Shaver, 1994, p.4)**
For the adolescent, a secure internal working model may make the individual less vulnerable to stressful situations and may contribute to psychosocial resilience (Bowlby, 1980), whereas an adolescent with a negative internal working model may make the adolescent more vulnerable to psychological distress and contribute to psychological risk (Bowlby, 1980). Another piece of John Bowlby’s theory was that children internalize experiences with their attachment figures, such that early attachment relations form a prototype for later relationships outside the family. Two features of this internal working model are the image of the self and the image of the other. The former taps whether the self is the type of person to who the attachment figure would be inclined to respond, whereas the latter concerns whether the attachment figure is likely to respond to calls for support and help. Mary Ainsworth’s innovative methodology “the strange Situation” not only made it possible to test some of the Bowlby’s ideas empirically but also helped expanding theory of attachment.

1.2.2 Attachment Styles

One of the most important concepts associated with attachment theory is the idea of “attachment styles”. According to attachment theorists, attachment styles are the direct result of attachment bonds between individuals and their attachment figures (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters and Wall, 1978). Attachment styles are mental representations, i.e., experiences based beliefs, expectations, emotions and action tendencies which are especially affected by primary attachment relationships (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). Attachment styles refer to an individual’s perception of the availability of the attachment figure in times of stress, need, or fear and how the individual responds to those perceptions (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland and Carlson, 1999). These attachment styles are secure attachment, Anxious ambivalent attachment, and Anxious avoidant attachment style.

Secure attachment is reflected in a child’s ability to use the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the world and they see the caregiver as a reliable source of comfort. Securely attachment children are more emotionally resilient, outgoing and willing to explore their environment. Such children use their caregiver as
source of comfort and support when they are distressed (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). Secure children are more empathetic during later stages of childhood. These children are less disruptive, less aggressive and more mature than children with ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles. As adults, those who are securely attached tend to have trusting, long term relationships. Such individuals have high self-esteem, enjoy intimate relationships, seeking out social support and have an ability to share feelings with others. Such individuals tend to describe their close relations as friendly and trusting. They tend to hold a more positive view of themselves and others (Brennan and Morris, 1997). They show lower levels of depression and anxiety as compared to insecure adults (Wautier and Blume, 2004). Secure individuals describe themselves in positive terms and admit their negative characteristics. They grow up expecting acceptance and positivity from their caregivers, leading to confidence in their acceptance by others.

**Anxious ambivalent attachment** is that in which the child develops a fearful relationship with his/her caregiver because of the excessive concerns of abandonment. These fears result in the child seeking to maintain proximity with the caregiver. Such children are fearful of the environment and have a tendency to be emotionally unstable. As adults, such individuals feel reluctant about becoming close to others and worry about their closed ones does not reciprocate feelings.

**Anxious avoidant attachment** is that in which the child establishes only minimal level of attachment with his/her caregiver. This type of relationship is believed to produce emotional detachment. Such children are angry or seek attention when they are at school, but they are more fearful and anxious at home. Such people tend to have difficulty with intimacy and close relationships. These individuals do not invest much emotion in relationships and experience little distress when a relationship ends. These individuals have problems with intimacy and they are unable or unwilling to share thoughts and feelings with others.

1.2.3 **Dimensions of Attachment**

*Armsden and Greenberg (1987)* have done an extensive work on attachment. In their research work, they have discussed three dimensions of attachment which have
been studied in the present research for studying the relationship between identity, attachment and adjustment. These are:

(a) Communication

Segrin and Flora (2005) argue that reciprocity, defined as mutual communication exchanges that are knowingly available, and synchrony, defined as communication that occurs in a harmonious fashion, are aspects of communication that help create strong emotional bonds between parents and children in infancy. Adolescents seek proximity and comfort when they sense danger. Adolescents seek proximity and comfort in the form of advice when they feel it is needed (Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Schneider and Younger, 1996). Therefore, communication may be extremely important in adolescence. During adolescence, the parent-child relationship depends on closeness, which is established and sustained from earlier stages, and conflict, which helps the adolescent distance, in a psychological sense, from the parents (Laursen and Collins, 2004). Additionally, openness between parents and adolescents is related to having a “positive emotional climate” (Arnold, Pratt, and Hicks, 2004). More open communication allows for understanding during a time of such important transition and changes, specifically in terms of acceptance of the new needs and desires adolescents face (Sillars, Koerner, and Fitzpatrick, 2005).

The ability of parents and children to communicate with one another is related to security of attachment. For example, attachment security is related to better connectedness of communication in the mother-child relationship (Freitag, Belsky, Grossmann, Grossmann, and Scheuerer-English, 1996). Communication between parents and children changes as the child passes through different developmental stages (Arnold, Pratt and Hicks, 2004; Laursen and Collins, 2004). Laursen and Collins (2004) speak of communication trends in families, mentioning that specifically in adolescence, the family unit functions based on prior interactions and communication patterns, but its members are able to re-evaluate and adapt their communication to allow for the adolescent’s changes. This suggests that the better the communication between parents and adolescents, the more a sense of felt security should exist across developmental transitions. Kreppner and Ullrich (1998) studied communication across
the transition from childhood to adolescence. They found that after grouping adolescents into different attachment style categories (secure, habitual, and ambivalent), differences in communication existed within the family unit. Secure group also showed higher levels of expressed closeness with mothers. Kreppner and Ullrich (1998) studied communication across the transition from childhood to adolescence. They found that after grouping adolescents into different attachment style categories, differences in communication existed within the family unit. Secure group showed higher levels of expressed closeness with mothers.

(b) Trust

The second dimension of trust can be defined as the secure feelings and beliefs that another person will fulfill certain needs (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987). Trust is a product of strong relationships, specifically those in which relationship partners feel that they can depend upon one another (Collins and Repinsky, 1994). Furthermore, trust is one component of a strong relationship between children and their attachment figures, as it is seen that children build trust in relationships by learning that others are consistently there for them. The secure base phenomenon emphasizes the knowledge of availability of the attachment figure in times of need. In other words, a representation of the ability to trust the attachment figure exists because of positive past situations related to trust. Noller (1994) also states that trustworthiness, as well as closeness, is an extremely important quality of relationships.

According to Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) one of the major qualities of a strong peer relationship is trust. Additionally, Hazan and Shaver (1994) argue that, during adolescence, peer attachments begin with such proximity seeking behaviors. No matter whom the attachment figure is, adolescents want to feel that they are close to, and can trust those with whom they have relationships (Noller, 1994).

(c) Alienation

The third dimension of attachment, alienation, is closely related to avoidance and rejection, two constructs that are very important to security of attachment. When one senses that the attachment figure is not available, attachment becomes less secure, possibly based on feelings of alienation.
1.3 IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT

Attachment theory provides a means for explaining the nature of parent-adolescent relationship and also provides a context how this relationship affects identity development. During adolescence, it was proposed by Marcia (1989) that a secure attachment would promote the development of identity achievement. Therefore, it is expected that individuals who are securely attached will use their secure base to explore identity alternatives, such as new attitudes, roles, and relationships and this exploration will likely lead to identity achievement. In turn, Marcia believed that insecure attachment organizations during infancy would promote identity diffusion or foreclosure.

Empirical studies using various measures of attachment have found that attachment is related to concurrent identity status (Kroger and Haslett, 1988; Lapsley, Rice and Fitzgerald, 1990). Kroger and Haslett (1988) reported that there is a positive association between secure attachment style and identity achievement status. Lapsley, Rice and Fitzgerald (1990) studied attachment as it is related to both the task of identity development and college adjustment. They found the presence of both parent and peer attachments to significantly contribute to the prediction of personal identity. Blustein et al. (1991) found that increased parental communication and support were positively related to career commitment. Benson et al. (1992) compared identity statuses using an attachment measure and proposed that secure attachment facilitated both commitment and exploration in identity formation. Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) found that a greater sense of attachment to mothers both men and women were related to a more achieved sense of identity. Cooper, Grotevant and Condon (1983) have found that, in adolescence, secure family relationships i.e., secure parental attachments can facilitate other areas of functioning, such as achievement of an identity. Secure individuals tend to be comfortable with exploration and cope with a sense of mastery (Mikulincer, 1997). Individuals with an insecure attachment (anxious, ambivalent or avoidant) style have been found to be inflexible in processing any information which contradicts their prior beliefs (Mikulincer, 1997) and so are unlikely to have reached identity development. Avoidant individuals have experienced insensitive parenting and
significant rejection as infants (Ainsworth, et al., 1978). These experiences make them feel fearful of exploration and new information as they did not have a secure base from which to explore. Instead of experiencing this fear as adults, they tend to shun information searches and repress curiosity (Mikulincer, 1997). Avoidance is therefore, expected to positively correlate with identity diffusion, as avoidant individuals tend to use disengagement strategies and is unlikely to have reached the stage of deciding to explore their identity.

Kennedy (1999) found that individuals identified as preoccupied in attachment style had higher identity diffusion and moratorium scores than did secure individuals. Research on college students supports the proposition that identity development and attachment are related. It was found that secure attachments appeared to facilitate identity development and prevent identity diffusion in females (Samuolis et al., 2001). Adolescent attachment to parents and peer mediates personal and social identity by providing the adolescent with a secure base from which to develop identity (Lapsley et al., 1990; Meeus et al., 2002).

In adolescents, communication was the most important aspect, with parental trust a predictor of school commitment, with maternal trust a predictor of school exploration (Meeus et al., 2002). Zimmerman and Becker-Stoll (2002) reported that attachment security was related to identity achievement in adolescence and dismissing (avoidant) attachment was related to identity diffusion. Another study found insecurely attached women with an uncommitted identity status to experience higher levels of depression than those with a committed identity status (Wautier and Blume, 2004).

Parental support has also been linked directly with making commitments (Blustein et al., 1991). Blustein et al. (1991) found that increased parental communication and support were positively related to career commitments. Campbell et al. (1984) proposed that hared affection and acceptance of autonomy promote a sense of security allowing for “self defined commitments” (P. 512), such as present in the achieved status. Benson et al. (1992) concluded in his study that maternal attachment predicted higher achievement and lower moratorium and diffusion identity characteristics. Kamptner (1988) found that secure family relations defined by parental
warmth and approval, parental autonomy, family cohesion and family security had direct and indirect influences on identity.

Thus, several researchers have found identity formation to be positively related to parent-child attachments (Campbell, Adams, and Dobson, 1984; Cooper and Grotevant, 1987; Frank, Pirsh and Wright, 1990; Fullwinder-Bush et al., 1993; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Lapsley et al., 1990; O’Connor, 1995; Quintana and Lapsley, 1987, 1990; Schultheiss and Blustein, 1994), the quality of communication processes within the family (Grotevant and Cooper, 1986, 1985; Hauser et al., 1984) and the styles of authority used by the adolescents’ parents (Adams and Jones, 1983; Enright, Lapsley, Dricas, and Fehr, 1980; Isberg, Hauser, Jacobson, Powers, Naom, Weiss-Perry and Follansbee, 1989; LaVoie, 1976; Quintana and Lapsley, 1990; Waterman, 1990). Attachment has been found to positively associate with higher levels of adolescent identity exploration and to more stable identity commitments (Adams and Jones, 1983; Campbell, Adams and Dobson, 1984; Cooper and Grotevant, 1987, Fullwinder-Bush and Jacobvitz, 1993; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985, 1986, 1987; Hauser et al., 1984; Kenny and Donaldson, 1991, 1992; Kroger, 1990; O’Connor, 1995).

Apart from the parental attachments influencing identity formation, the peer attachments are also significant in the process. It is central to the developmental view of attachment that adolescence is seen as a period where attachment networks expand beyond the immediate family (Bowlby, 1988; Doherty and Feeney, 2004). Several studies have established that close friends many serve as important attachment figures among adolescents and young adults (Burhmester, 1992; Doherty and Feeney, 2004; Hazan and Zeifman, 1994; Trinke and Bartholomew, 1997). Adolescents are so influenced by their peer group that they may shape their identities around their friends’ attributes. Thus, just as family can influence identity achievement by providing support through earlier challenges (i.e. trust, autonomy, and initiative), friends also affect one’s identity by helping an individual successfully negotiate developmental crises (Bosma and Kunnen, 2001). For example, friends can foster industry in one another by developing their abilities to work and cooperate with others. Getting along with others may expand an individual’s peer network. A large peer network provides more
opportunities to explore more alternatives to current beliefs. Research suggests the quality of friendships affects the impact of peers on an individual (Bagwell, Schmidt, Newcomb, and Bukowski, 2001). More involvement in school and other social activities, then, may foster identity exploration (and therefore, moratorium) in an individual. They will be exposed to diverse ideas and will have more opportunities to test out these values, encouraging identity achievement. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) support the idea that peers can act as models and provide diversity and opportunity. They discuss several decisions related to identity formation that are influenced by peers: whom to date, whether or not to break up, using drugs, and going off to college. These decisions help determine who an individual is, and friends can play a significant role in the decision-making process. The people with whom an individual associates all have their own beliefs, which may or may not reflect those of the individual. One searching for identity can identify features of a friend’s identity to explore and perhaps add to the individual’s own belief system. One’s peers, therefore, can influence the status of one’s identity. As suggested above, peers can influence individuals in the moratorium or achievement statuses of Marcia’s (1966) model.

Peers offer alternative viewpoints and new experiences to foster exploration. However, friends can also have an impact on those in identity diffusion or foreclosure, as well. For example, individuals in Marcia’s foreclosed status may choose friends that are restricted in their tolerance of diversity and reflect only similar values to their own (Bosma and Kunnen, 2001). When those around them do not offer different belief systems, individuals may not feel the need to explore their own identity. They may not have models to follow. Similarly, Bosma and Kunnen (2001) suggest diffused individuals may lack role models for relevant identity formation. These individuals are often apathetic, neither actively exploring options nor making commitments to any values or beliefs. Individuals with diffused statuses are more likely to go along with the crowd and accept whatever the crowd accepts because they do not have their own ideas to follow. Individuals who do not have positive interactions with friends may experience high levels of conflict and are often motivated by self-interest (Berndt, 2004). These individuals often remain in identity foreclosure because they have no
desire to consider alternatives to their own ideas. They only take into account their beliefs and do not appreciate other people’s values.

The above discussion provides a clear conceptualization of the concepts of identity, parental and peer attachments and how these two developmental paradigms are related. For the purpose of present study, these two developmental paradigms have been studied in relation to adjustment of adolescents.

1.4 ADJUSTMENT

The term adjustment is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Strictly speaking, the term denotes the results of equilibrium, which may be affect by either of these processes (Monroe, 1990). It is used to emphasize the individual’s struggle to along or survive in his or her social and physical environment. Good (1959) sates that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behavior suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. Adjustment is the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. Kulshrestha (1979) explained that the adjustment process is a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions, conflicts etc., and meet his or her needs. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. In adjustment, the two crucial factors are the individual and the environment. In the study of the individual, the considerations are the heredity and biological factors, the psychological factors, and the quality of socialization given to him or her whereas the environment includes all the social factors.

Adjustment may be regarded as a process involving both mental and behavioral responses, by which an individual strives to cope with inner needs, tensions, frustrations and conflicts, and to bring harmony between these inner demands and those imposed upon him by the world in which he lives. The process of adjustment is considered as one of life’s key tasks, which affects students’ academic achievement as well as psychological well being during this period of transition. McGillivray and Clarke (2006, p. 4) state that “subjective wellbeing involves a multidimensional evaluation of life,
including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods.” Adjustment is a built-in mechanism for coping with the problematic or other realities of life. It has been considered as an index of integration; a harmonious behavior of the individual by which other individuals of society recognize that the person is well adjusted (Pathak, 1990). Adjustment as defined by Halonen and Santrock (1997: 6) refers to “psychological process of adapting to, coping with, and managing the problems, challenges and demands of everyday life”. The research literature supports the contention that positive beliefs and expectations about interpersonal relationships are intimately involved with adjustment, psychological well-being and adaptation, while negative beliefs and implications are implicated in psychological distress and dysfunction (Shaver and Mikulincer, 2002). According to Ramsay et al. (1999), adjustment describes the fit between students and the academic environment. In this study, adjustment is divided into psychological (emotional, referring to well-being, anxiety depression, fatigue) and socio-cultural (behavioral, referring to ability to fit in) domains (Brown and Holloway, 2008). Psychological adjustment can be best understood in terms of a stress and coping framework, predicted and explained by personality and social support variables and life changes, whilst socio-cultural adjustment is viewed from a social learning perspective, predicted by variables related to cognitive factors and social skills acquisitions (Ward and Kennedy, 1999).

1.4.1 Dimensions of Adjustment
(a) Emotional Adjustment

It is the maintenance of emotional equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressors. This is facilitated by cognitive processes of acceptance and adaptation e.g. maintaining emotional control and coping behavior in the face of identity crisis. Emotional adjustment is an important aspect of mental health and if it is not managed, it can lead to the development of psychopathology. Hallahan and Kaufman (1978), Chauhan (1979) have proposed three basic factors leading to emotional disturbance among adolescents: biological and health factors, pathological family relationships, and undesirable experiences in school. Thus, emotional adjustment involves all other levels of adjustment and if adolescents are
able to make successful adjustments, they are self satisfied, motivated for future success and get encouraged to have independent thinking leading to their improved mental health.

(b) **Health Adjustment**

Health is the level of functional and metabolic efficiency of a living being. It is the general condition of a person with sound mind, body and spirit, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain. The World Health Organization (WHO, 1946) defined health in a broader sense as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Thus, health adjustment is an indicator of a person’s physical and mental equilibrium. It involves not just being physically fit and healthy but maintaining a balanced physiological and mental or spiritual health.

(c) **Family Adjustment**

Family adjustment involves harmonious relationship of adolescents with the family members. It has been found that a strong sense of bonding, closeness, and attachment to family have been found to be associated with better emotional development, better school performance, and engagement in fewer high-risk activities, such as drug use (Klein, 1997; Perry, 2000). Family adjustment also includes (a) ability to live up to the expectations of one or both parents/ siblings, (b) feelings of parental/sibling acceptance (c) happy atmosphere in the family (d) authoritative parenting style (e) lack of sibling rivalry (f) ability to identify with or relate to one or both parents (g) integrity in the family (h) freedom of expression at home with family members. A certain degree of tension in the family life is normal. Such feelings sometimes stimulate achievement. However, if the tension becomes persistent, then it becomes the root cause of maladjustment at the family level.

(d) **School Adjustment**

School plays a vital role in the development of an adolescent as they spend most part of their day attending school, engaging in extracurricular activities; and even at home, engaged in scholastic work. School contributes to socialization and personality development of the children and adolescents. For most adolescents, school is a
prominent part of their life. It is here that they relate to and develop relationship with their peers and where they have the opportunity to develop key cognitive skills. For some youth, it is also a source of safety and stability. Some of the same qualities that characterize families of adolescents who do well—a strong sense of attachment, bonding, and belonging, and a feeling of being cared about—also characterize adolescents’ positive relationships with their teachers and their schools. School adjustment thus refers to the harmonious relationship of the child with teachers, students as well as with the school administration leading them to attain academic achievement, motivate them to learn and improve oneself (Newman and Newman, 1986).

(e) Social Adjustment

Rubin and Rose-Krasnor (1992) defined social adjustment as “the ability to achieve personal goals in social interaction while maintaining positive relationships with others over time and situations” (p.285). The socially adjusted adolescents perceive other people in general as rational. They trust their friends and close associates, they feel that others are friendly towards them and understand them. They attempt to be truthful, loyal, altruistic and less critical.

There have been numerous researches confirming the relationship of identity and adjustment as well as attachment and adjustment.

1.5 IDENTITY AND ADJUSTMENT

Identity formation in adolescence has been linked to healthy outcomes like well-being and positive mental health. Erik Erikson (1956) was the first person to recognize that a successful identity formation in adolescence is related to being psychologically well. Erikson (1968) suggested that identity is ideally experienced as a sense of well being, with those, who have a secure feel ‘at home’ with themselves and confident about knowing their place and direction in life. To the contrary, when doubts are expressed in identity, associated feelings are anxiety and depression (Whitbourne, 1986).
Literature on identity shows that achieving an identity results in better adjustment and adaptation of a person to his environment. Such healthy adjustments serve as a broad indicator to a person’s well-being and happiness. Identity has been found to be linked with self satisfaction (Makros and McCabe, 2001), self confidence (Pulkinnen and Ronka, 1994), self esteem (Cramer, 1997) and psychological well-being (Meeus et al., 1997). However, Chun and MacDermid (1997) suggest that individuation seems to be associated with high self esteem among American youth, but associated with low self esteem among Asian adolescents. Various researchers have demonstrated identity achievement to be related to indicators of a person’s well-being, happiness and mental health (Goldman et al., 2002; Waterman, 1992; Berzonsky et al., 2003); whereas identity diffusion has been found to be linked with emotional distress (Taylor and Goritsas, 1994), depression (Koteskey et al., 1991), alienation (Sandhu and Tung, 2003), suicidal tendencies (Ball and Chandler, 1989), drug abuse (Jones et al., 1992), and adolescent problematic behavior (White and Jones, 1996). Review of literature indicates that there is a strong link between well-being and identity achieved status and identity diffusion status. Identity achievement has direct relationship with positive well-being and diffusion relates inversely. Studies on foreclosure and moratorium show mixed results and their relationship with well-being still remains unclear (Waterman, 1988; Cramer, 1997; Raphael et al., 1987).

There is a vast literature of research studies confirming identity development as a significant predictor of adjustment (Coburn, 2004; Marcia, 1993). Identity development is an important factor predicting students’ adjustments. Individuals in committed identity statuses are expected to be better adjusted. Erikson (1968) highlighted the central role of identity development in facilitating personal adjustment and well being. Individuals for whom identity synthesis predominates over identity confusion are likely to be better adjusted. With regard to studying relationship of adjustment with four identity statuses given be Marcia (1966), researchers observed that achieved adolescents report the highest self esteem and lowest depression. Moratorium
adolescents generally have lower self esteem and show higher levels of depressed mood and anxiety because of their continuing exploration (Berman, Weems and Stickle, 2006). Foreclosed adolescents are somewhat lower than achieved adolescents in self esteem, but they show few symptoms of depression. Finally, diffused adolescents score low on self esteem and high on measures of depressed mood (Kroger, 2003; Marcia, 1993). Taken together, then self esteem and depressed mood suggest a natural ordering of the four identity statuses in terms of adjustment. Achieved adolescents have the most positive profile of adjustment and diffused adolescents have the most negative one, with moratorium and foreclosure adolescents scoring in between. There is a strong body of work showing that identity achieved individuals are better adjusted in terms of self esteem, depression, psychological well being, psychological health, psychological maturity and life well being (Baver and McAdams, 2004; Baver, McAdams and Sakeda, 2005; King Scollon, Ramsey and Williams, 2000; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten and Bowman, 2001; Pals, 2006; Pals and McAdams, 2004). Blos (1962), Thomson (1963), Bach and Verdie (1975) reported that successful identity development results in better adjustment and adaptive capacities in adolescents.

1.6 ATTACHMENT AND ADJUSTMENT

There is a link between the perceived quality of attachment relationships and mental health outcomes in adolescence (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Wilkinson, 2004; Wilkinson and Walford, 2001). Adolescents who have a secure attachment with their parents display higher self esteem, greater social competence and better emotional adjustment. Insecurely attached display increased depression, anxiety and distress (Rice, Cunningham and Young, 1997).

Research has consistently demonstrated that attachment relationships influence childhood adjustment across various domains of functioning (Nada Raja et al., 1992; Rubin et al., 2004). Doyle and Markiewicz (2005) conducted a longitudinal investigation of parental attachment and its effect on adjustment. They measured...
perceived parental attachment among adolescents at 13 years of age and various domains of adjustment at 15 years of age. Analyses revealed that attachment security was indeed related to adjustment in regard to levels of internalizing problems, self esteem and self reported school achievement two years later. Researchers like Allen et al., 2004; Noom et al., 1999; Rubin et al., 2004 have also found that secure parental attachments are associated with fewer internalizing problems among adolescents. Multiple studies are thus available asserting that attachment to parents is closely related to overall adolescent adjustment (Greenberg, Siegel and Leitch, 1983; Gullone and Robinson, 2005; Nada Raja et al., 1992; Noom et al., 1999; Wilkinson and Walford, 2001).

Similarly, the importance of close friendships is demonstrated by evidence that positive peer relationships are linked to increased psychological health and self esteem and a decreased risk of emotional and behavioral problems (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Youniss and Smoller, 1985). Wilkinson (2004) found that quality of both parental and peer relationships impacted on different aspects of adolescent psychological health. Peers are increasingly utilized as attachment figures and adolescents are increasingly utilized as attachment figures as adolescent undertake the task of developing independence from parents. However, family bonds are not supplanted by friendships in adolescence (Greenberg et al., 1983; Paterson et al., 1994). There is not a complete withdrawal of attachment from parents to peers; parents remain the primary attachment figures (Hazan and Zeifman, 1994). Douvan and Adelson (1966) pointed out that peer group plays an important role in helping adolescent define the self although it does not totally surpass the influence of parental attachments. Friends influence important attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics (Berndt, 2004). For example, peers can affect an individual’s attitudes about school or may encourage substance use. Individuals often strive to fit in with their peers. They often adopt similar beliefs and values to their friends. High quality friendships may enhance development in children (Berndt, 2002). High quality friendships are those which demonstrate loyalty, trust, selfdisclosure, and intimacy. According to Berndt (2002), these positive characteristics in friendships are correlated with greater school involvement, higher self-perceived social acceptance, and
higher self-esteem. There have been a number of studies linking poor peer relations in childhood to poor school adjustment, psychological health, loneliness, and problem behavior later in childhood and adolescence (Bagwell, et al., 2001; Berndt, 2004; DuBois, et al., 2002).

Attachment theory (Bowlby 1969/1997) also provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the quality of interpersonal relationships develops and influences psychological health and adjustment across the life span. Attachment theory proposes that cognitive schemas (internal working models), developed during infancy and childhood, influence current and future relationships and psychological adjustment. Research has demonstrated that the quality of interpersonal relations have been identified as key determinant for the adaptive adjustment of adolescents (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Wilkinson, 2004; Wilkinson and Walford, 2001). Supportive relationships with both parents and peers play an important role in the adolescents’ adjustment. Empirical research has supported the continued importance of parental attachments for adolescent psychological health. Adolescents who have secure attachments with their parents display higher self-esteem, greater social competence, and better emotional adjustment. Insecurely attached adolescents display increased depression, anxiety, and distress (Rice, Cunningham, and Young, 1997). Wilkinson and Walford (2001), in a study of senior high school students, found that positive parental attachment was associated with increased positive affect, life-satisfaction and happiness and decreased negative affect and anxiety, independent of personality or life events. Kerns and Barth (1995) report that maternal and paternal attachments foster different competencies in childhood and they argue that gender differences in attachment-related behaviors are to be expected.

**Sex differences** in adolescent parental attachment relationships have also been reported. Some studies report that girls rate attachment to parents higher than do boys (e.g. Benson, Harris, and Rogers, 1992; Papini, Roggman, and Anderson, 1991). Newman (1989) found that mothers and daughters became increasingly close while mothers and sons became increasingly distant. Rice and Mulkeen (1995) found that while there were similar levels of mother and father attachment with adolescents
overall, different patterns of intimacy in maternal and paternal relationships developed over time. A number of studies, however, have not found significant differences in reports of overall parental attachments (e.g. Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch, 1983; Kenny and Gallagher, 2002; Nada Raja et al., 1992). Perhaps a more important issue than the relative levels of parental attachment is their differential impact on adolescent adjustment. Allen, Hauser, Bell, and O’Connor (1994) reported that fathers have a greater impact on adolescent well-being than mothers. Similarly, Rice et al. (1997) found that attachment to fathers was a better predictor than maternal attachment of social adjustment and self-efficacy for adolescent males. However, for females in that study, both parental attachments were strong predictors. Kenny, Lomax, Brabeck and Fife (1998) found that both maternal and paternal attachment at grade eight contributed to longitudinal changes in psychological well-being for males, but not for females. On the other hand, Kenny and Gallagher (2002) found that for both girls and boys there were similar relationships between paternal and maternal attachment and instrumental and social/relational competence. A number of studies have focused on age differences in parental attachment relationships. Paterson, Field and Prior (1994) found that while females continue to utilize their mothers for support in late adolescence, males decreased their reliance on mothers for support and proximity. Papini et al. (1991), however, found that as girls mature they perceive less closeness to both parents while boys actually feel closer to mothers and less attached to fathers. Others have shown that older adolescent girls perceive their fathers as less available than do younger girls, and report being less dependent on their fathers than mothers (Lieberman, Doyle, and Markiewicz, 1999). A Dutch study of mid-adolescents (Van Wel, Linssen, and Abma, 2000) found that the relationship between girls and parents was less positive and had greater negative consequences for psychological well-being than for males. Despite the argument that parents remain the primary attachment figures in adolescence (Hazan and Zeifman, 1994), the equivocal research findings makes it difficult to conclude that there is certainty about the relative contributions of maternal and paternal attachment to the psychological health of adolescents. Further, these potential differences have not generally been examined in the context of the broader and developing attachment
network of adolescents. It is central to the developmental view of attachment that adolescence is seen as a period where attachment networks expand beyond the immediate family (Bowlby, 1988; Doherty and Feeney, 2004).

Overall, there is a vast research examining the joint impact of parental and peer attachment on adolescent psychological health outcomes. Hazan and Zeifman (1994) found that from childhood to late adolescence attachment orientation moved from parents towards peers, and that for older adolescents there was a clear preference for peers for some aspects of attachment. Allan and Land (1999) argue that peers increasingly take on the role of attachment relationships by mid-adolescence and by late adolescence long term relationships can be formed (e.g. romantic partners) which serve as ‘complete’ attachment figures. There is good evidence, then, that peers are increasingly utilized as attachment figures as adolescents undertake the task of developing independence from parents. However, although this change is sometimes viewed as a transfer of attachment (e.g. Doherty and Feeney, 2004; Fraley and Davis, 1997; Hazan and Zeifman, 1999), previous attachment relationships are not completely forsaken for these new attachment figures. Research indicates that family bonds are not supplanted by friendships in adolescence (Greenberg, et al., 1983; Paterson et al., 1994) and it can be argued that there is not a complete withdrawal of attachment from parents in favor of peers. While there is a developmental shift of some components of attachment from parents to peers, parents remain primary attachment figures until late adolescence (Hazen and Zeifman, 1994) and attachment to parents remains important into adulthood (Doherty and Feeney, 2004).

1.7 PRESENT WORK

During adolescence, individuals begin to explore who they are, what they personally value and believe in and what direction they will follow in life. Thus, they start forming their identity. The importance of the achievement of a stable ego identity in adolescence has been well-established in the literature (Erikson, 1968; Josselson, 1987). Along quest for identity, their problem solving ability aimed at eliciting information about oneself or environment in order to make life decisions also improves. In fact, identity development has been well-documented as a core therapeutic issue in
counseling late adolescents (Enns, 1991). The period of adolescence and youth is often described as the time for identity formation as well as a period where individuals seem to be at greater risk for problem behaviors associated with lower levels of adjustment and subjective well-being. These later aspects “the storm and stress” are no longer believed to be naturally occurring and inevitable features of the developmental period, rather they are considered to be the outcome of the processes taking place during the course of development. Identity formation has been found to be related to patterns of personal adjustment, vocational behavior (Blustein, Devenis, and Kidney, 1998) and cognitive and moral development (Marcia, 1988). As a result of the importance of the identity formation process on adjustment and development, considerable attention has been devoted to exploring the factors that contribute to ego development (Marcia, 1983, 1988). Existing theories and research suggest that a moderate degree of emotional closeness or attachment may affect process of identity formation.

The relevance of parental and peer attachment variables during adolescence is illustrated by numerous studies linking attachment to several indicators of adolescent’s psychosocial functioning such as identity development (Lapsley, Rice and FitzGerald, 1990; Samuolis, Layburn, and Schiaffino, 2001) and well being and adjustment (Barnas, Pollina and Cummings, 1991; Nada Raja et al., 1992). Both identity and adjustment, to some extent are considered as a function of family processes and attachment. The effect of attachment on adolescent identity (Adams, Dyk and Bennion, 1987; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986) and also on adolescents’ adjustment and behavioral problems (Dishion, Capaldi, Yoerger, 1999; Olsen et al., 2000) has been studied extensively. It has been widely researched that attachment is important in establishing trust and future intimate relationships. It has also been found that adaptive family functioning and attachments, positive communications and parental involvement with adolescents are positively related to a coherent sense of identity. Successful identity resolution and secure attachments have also been found to be negatively related to problem behaviors (Adams et al., 2001; Jones and Hartmann, Grochowski and Glides, 1989).

Thus, keeping these points into consideration, the present research is focused on studying the interrelationship of the variables of identity, attachment and adjustment among adolescents. As psychological well being is also an indicator of adaptiveness,
this variable has also been studied in the present study to have a deeper understanding of the process of adjustment of adolescents. A particularly useful thread in the current research into adolescents’ adjustment seeks to identify their attachment patterns to delineate how the relationships among youth’s personal engagement within and across social contexts are part of their identities resulting in an increased risk for poorer health or subjective well-being (Erikson, 1968; 159-165). Although the literature linking attachment to identity, identity to adjustment and attachment to adjustment have been considered separately, it may be possible to formulate an integrative theoretical model based on the respective literatures. The adolescent’s attachment experiences may serve as a catalyst for identity and generalized attachments may affect adjustment process among adolescents. Given that adaptive family functioning and identity both have been found to be positively related to adjustment in adolescence, it may be plausible that attachments may play a role in the relationship between identity and adjustment. Such findings will have relevance to counseling adolescents struggling with identity issues as well as facing adjustment problems. Keeping in mind this objective, a mediational model was proposed as an objective of the current research. Such a model can facilitate examination of the role that attachments play in the relationship between attachment and adjustment. This mediational model can be visualized as given in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: The Proposed Integrative Mediational Model

1.8 OBJECTIVES

1. To study the relationship of identity statuses with attachment to mother and father separately in adolescents.

2. To study the relationship of identity statuses with attachment to peer group members in adolescents.
3. To study the relationship of exploration and commitment as processes of identity formation and identity statuses among adolescents.

4. To study the relationship between identity statuses and adjustments in adolescents.

5. To study the mediational role of maternal and paternal attachments in the relationship between identity statuses and adjustments in adolescents.

6. To study the mediational role of peer attachments in the relationship between identity statuses and adjustments in adolescents.

7. To study the age differences in identity statuses, attachments, and adjustments of adolescents.

8. To study the gender differences in identity statuses, attachments and adjustment of adolescents.

1.9 HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the previous research studies and theoretical considerations, the following hypotheses were framed:

1. There will be a significant relationship of identity statuses with attachment to mother and father.
   a) Identity achievement will be positively related to maternal and paternal trust and communication.
   b) Identity achievement will be negatively related to maternal and paternal alienation.
   c) Identity moratorium will be positively related to maternal and paternal trust and communication.
   d) Identity moratorium will be negatively related to maternal and paternal alienation.
   e) Identity diffusion will be negatively related to maternal and paternal trust and communication.
   f) Identity diffusion will be positively related to maternal and paternal alienation.
   g) Identity foreclosure will be negatively related to maternal and paternal trust and communication.
h) Identity foreclosure will be positively related to maternal and paternal alienation.

2. There will be a significant relationship of identity statuses with attachment to peers.
   a) Identity achievement will be positively related to peer trust and communication.
   b) Identity achievement will be negatively related to peer alienation.
   c) Identity moratorium will be positively related to peer trust and communication.
   d) Identity moratorium will be negatively related to peer alienation.
   e) Identity diffusion will be negatively related to peer trust and communication.
   f) Identity diffusion will be positively related to peer alienation.
   g) Identity foreclosure will be negatively related to peer trust and communication.
   h) Identity foreclosure will be positively related to peer alienation.

3. There will be a significant relationship of identity defining processes of exploration and commitment with identity statuses.

4. There will be significant relationship between identity statuses and adjustment.

5. There will be significant mediational role of maternal and paternal attachments in the relationship between identity statuses and adjustment.

6. There will be significant mediational role of peer attachments in the relationship between identity statuses and adjustment.

7. There will be significant age differences in identity statuses, attachments and adjustment of adolescents.

8. There will be significant gender differences in identity statuses, attachments and adjustment of adolescents.