

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study may be useful to the practitioner and the theorist in a number of ways. Faculty members, academic advisors, and counselors might use this information to more effectively help students clarify and accomplish the goals of their college experience. For example, the fact that there were no significant differences between male and female graduates as to the perceived accomplishment of the eight outcomes should be considered by university staff and faculty in providing academic advising, career counseling, and other services to male and female students.

Knowledge of how different types of students differ in their perceptions of the extent of accomplishment of different outcomes may also be used in structuring institutional policies and programs, and in direct interactions with students. For example, students who were tied with the quality of education they received in their academic major were also more positive about the accomplishment of many of the outcomes. Because of this positive correlation, institutions should give special attention to helping students select appropriate majors and to using student evaluations of faculty members in efforts to improve the quality of instruction.

In addition to providing information for practitioners in higher education, this study was also intended to add to the body of knowledge about student outcomes. The fact that accomplishment of outcomes was analyzed according to differences in various student characteristics makes this project somewhat unique. Further research in this area might compare the importance attributed by freshmen to these eight possible outcomes with the perceived accomplishment of these same individuals one year after graduation and again several years after graduation. Also, other possible outcomes and other student characteristics might be studied. Finally, additional research on this topic could focus in greater detail on several of the characteristics studied in this project, such as academic major or satisfaction with education in major field of study.

The findings of this project, therefore, provide information which may be useful to faculty members and administrators in their efforts to assist students and also to theorists interested in the outcomes of higher education.

Developmental Advising of Undeclared Students Using an Integrated Model of Student Growth

LINDA PETERSON, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, and

EILEEN McDONOUGH, Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Barry University

Although the academic advising profession is not new, the development of systematic research and theory within the field has been relatively recent. For example, the undeclared majors problem experienced by academic advisors has given rise to a number of recent studies that have examined the problems of students who were undeclared majors, and found them to be significantly different from other college students. They have lower GPA's,¹ more identity concerns, and tend to leave college at a faster rate than declared students. They are more anxious, and have a greater need for career information. They are more dependent; they are less willing to take risks.² They also lack knowledge of self, decision-making skills, work experience and knowledge about occupations.^{3,4} These characteristics make undeclared majors difficult to work with. Advisors of undeclared majors need specific strategies to help them deal with this student population. At present, such strategies have not been developed. Hindering effective strategy development has been a tendency to view undeclared majors as a uniform group. However, undeclared majors, like declared majors are at various levels of maturity, and the development and implementation of advising strategies must incorporate these levels and the students' perspective. This paper presents an integrated model of college student development applied to the undeclared major, and concludes with recommendations for dealing with students at different levels of maturity.

¹ C. I. Chase & J. M. Keene, Jr. The Association of Achievement and date of declaring a major, *Indiana Studies in Higher Education*, Bureau of Evaluative Studies & Listing, Indiana University, 43, 1980, p. 11.

² V. Gordon, "The Undecided Student: A Developmental Perspective," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 59 (1981), 411-419.

³ L. Baird, *The Undecided Student -- How Different is He?* ACT Research Report No. 22, Iowa City: American College Testing Program, 1967.

⁴ R. Titley and B. Titley, "Initial Choice of College Major: Are Only the 'Undecided' Undecided?" *Journal of College Student Personnel* 21 (1980), 293-298.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Psychosocial Theory

One of the first theories to deal specifically with the adolescent period in depth was that of Erik Erikson.¹ He emphasized the individual's conscious adjustments to social influences. This social development is inherent in the life of every individual.

Erikson's theory revolves around eight psychosexual stages. Each stage is critical in the ongoing process of identity formation and is viewed as representing eight psychosocial crises. Successful resolution of these crises requires the experiencing and incorporating of positive and negative elements of experience. The well adjusted individual incorporates positive than negative elements leading to a balanced position. Erikson has noted that it would not be very adaptive to develop into a totally trusting person (all positive elements), devoid of ability to mistrust where appropriate.

The passage from one stage to another builds the essential core of being known as the ego. Erikson refers to changes that occur in the ego through this developmental process as ego strengths, or virtues. For example, in the first stage the child develops the virtue of *hope*, which arises out of the child's experiences with the primary caretaker. The consistency with which its wants and needs are satisfied allows the child to learn to treat disappointments in a hopeful way expecting that, in the long run, the needs will be met.

By the time the child reaches adolescence he/she has acquired *hope*, *will*, *purpose* and *competence* as virtues or ego strengths. Four of the eight personal crises have been resolved. In addition, the adolescent has succeeded in acquiring a sense of continuity and a stable identity.

However, during adolescence, many of the earlier crises return, but in a new context. The adolescent, who has achieved earlier ego strengths in part through bodily identity, must now move from this more concrete substratum to an identity made up of social roles.

Identity and stability gives way as an adolescent develops from the physical child to the physical adult. Identity of the past years must be integrated with the present into a whole, so that the adolescent can prepare for the future. This time identity incorporates bodily identity and social roles, the latter manifested in part by career plans.

For many adolescents, career decisions are not easy. The ever increasing number of adult roles modeled in our complex world makes the potential choices seem overwhelming. Some overwhelmed youngsters face what Erikson terms an *identity crisis*. Individuals in identity crisis seem paralyzed, unable to make choices, unable to move out of their confusion. Such adolescents frequently try to end their confusion with an abrupt decision, or an impulsive choice. These choices or decisions are casually and frequently revoked. Other youths in identity crisis may look to a cause or a cult to solve the problem. Cults offer the promise of unthinking commitment and allow the adolescent to embrace a predetermined identity complete with a set of values, standards and behavioral norms. The self is sacrificed for a predetermined, prefabricated social role.

¹ E. H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 28 (1956), 56-121.

² E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York: Norton, 1963.

In sharp contrast is the adolescent who has reached the state of *ego-integrity*. The person obtains another form of ego strength — the *virtue fidelity*. The fidelity is to the self, but is not exclusive. The individual feels free to pledge loyalty to others despite inevitable value system contradictions, because he or she knows the self will not be lost. For Erikson, the ego integrated adolescent plays roles that fit. The self is not compromised in the service of the role.

Erikson's theory gives a relatively clear picture of two extremes of adolescent development; the youth in an identity crisis, versus the youth in the ego integrated state. Most students fall somewhere in between these two opposite ends of the continuum. Using Erikson's theory as a basis, James Marcia² has developed a more detailed view of the adolescent seeking identity.

Marcia identifies four basic identity positions characteristic of the adolescent. These positions are *identity diffused*, *identity foreclosed*, *moratorium* and *identity achieved*. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1
ADOLESCENCE

ERIKSON	ROLE CONFUSION	versus	EGO-INTEGRATED
MARCIA	IDENTITY DIFFUSED	IDENTITY FORECLOSED	MORATORIUM IDENTITY ACHIEVED

Identity diffusion is exemplified by the youngster who has failed to make a commitment to anything. This position roughly parallels Erikson's role confusion or identity crisis-youth. "Laid back" is a term students sometimes apply to this posture, disguising the actual turmoil underneath.

Adolescents in the *identity foreclosed* position have passively accepted the identity suggested by an external source without ever going through the struggle necessary for the decision making process to occur on a personal level. The psychic risk is the passive acceptance of another's view of the self.

The adolescents described in the *moratorium* position are the true seekers who are struggling to find themselves. They are actively engaged in gathering information about themselves to use as a basis for future decision making.

The last position is *identity achieved*. This position is similar to the ego integrated group of Erikson's continuum.

Marcia and Erikson provide a psychosocial framework, but fail to provide a cognitive structure. This is of particular concern when dealing with a college population. Perry provides such a model.

² James E. Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 5 (1966), 551-558.

Cognitive Development

William G. Perry, Jr. has identified what he considers to be major cognitive stages through which students pass in a Liberal Arts setting.⁸ These stages have been used to depict students' beliefs in the role of knowledge and the role of authority in conveying knowledge.

Perry identifies nine positions which shade gradually into one another. Movement through the positions requires questioning and doubt. The student must actively seek to resolve the uncertainties that result from this process.

Perry's positions 1 and 2 are *dualistic*. Knowledge is absolute, right and wrong, good and bad. Every question has a simple answer. Teachers (authorities) have these answers. Disagreement is not possible.

Perry's positions 3 and 4 are *multiplistic*. In these positions knowledge is still absolute but in some areas all the answers are not available yet. Thus, teachers (authorities) are not viewed as totally all-knowing, and controversy on some questions is acknowledged. Since there are some questions that have no known right answers, students may argue that all we have is opinion and one opinion is just as good as another. Students also begin to realize that some questions have no right answers. This is especially true of students in position 4 and is common among sophomores.

Perry's 4, 5, and 6 positions are known as *relativistic*. Position 4 serves as a kind of bridge between multiplistic and relativistic views. Students begin to see patterns in the way the authorities approach the uncertain or grey areas of knowledge. They begin to see these areas as the rule, rather than the exception. At the same time, students begin to develop ways of operating in this area. Context begins to be more important as the student moves toward position 6.

In positions 7, 8 and 9 comes commitment to *relativism*. Drawing upon all their experiences in the college years, students commit themselves to the opinions, values and interests with which they identify. They see other choices, the fallibility of their choices and accept responsibility for them. At this point, students' decisions are based on deliberate consideration rather than the blind acceptance of the dualist or the "all opinions are equal-good" stance of the multiplistic student.

Perry's model encompasses cognitive development from absolute to relativistic beliefs, from external to internal controls, and from concrete and simplistic to abstract and complex thought processes.

The model has been validated for sophomores and seniors at large universities,⁹ women in women's colleges,¹⁰ young students,¹¹ and re-entry students.¹² It thus appears to have been widely accepted.

8. W. G. Perry, Jr., *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1970.

9. Kurler, "Cognitive Development: Sine Quo Non of Identity Achievement?" *Symposium on Current Issues in the Study of Identity Formation*, Denver, Co.: Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, 1981.

10. Chalkley and C. Zimmerman, "Epistemology and Agency in Undergraduate Women," In P. Perin (ed.) *The Undergraduate Woman: Issues in Educational Equity*, Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1981.

11. Goldberger, A. Marone, and D. Paskus, "The Relationship Between Intellectual Stage and the Behavior of College Freshmen in the Classroom," Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, April, 1981.

12. Duke, T. Noel, and M. Miller, "Mentoring Strategies," Working Conference on Adult Education and Program Design, Denver, Co. June, 1980.

Integrated Model

Neither psychosocial nor cognitive theories alone provide a complete description of the college student. A fuller description can only be obtained by integrating both aspects into a unified model. Such a model is presented below with special reference to the undeclared major.

Many so-called undeclared students have actually chosen a specific major. Advisors sometimes feel that this group needs less attention because they have chosen a direction. However, this is not necessarily the case. These students can be roughly grouped into three separate subgroups. One subgroup is composed of students who are at the identity achieved level. They are undeclared only until they can fulfill requirements or raise GPA's (sometimes GPA's left over from an earlier college experience) and be accepted as regular students in the chosen major. This group may be recognized by their generally older age, and their evidence of having chosen their major as a result of some kind of searching experiences. They also are characterized by Perry's stages at the commitment level (6, 7, 8, very rarely 9). Cognitively they understand and convey to the advisor that the choices they have made come from a variety of alternatives. They also recognize that their choice at some point may not be correct, but they accept responsibility for this possibility. There is an optimism in their approach, and they are willing to strive to reach the goal.

The second group of undeclared with majors in mind are different from the *identity achieved* group, and are much closer to being *identity foreclosed*. This group has chosen a major but the choice is by fiat. They have simply accepted someone else's pronouncement as to what is an appropriate or acceptable major for them. They may be undeclared in order to meet specific requirements, much like the *identity achieved* undeclared, but they lack both optimism and enthusiasm for their studies. Despite the fact that they claim to have an intended major, they may fail to exert the effort necessary or lack interest in the required courses. Paradoxically, they also refuse to consider alternatives. Many of these students are in Perry's dualist stage. They have difficulty conceiving of someone in authority who does not have all the answers. This attitude has led to the passive acceptance of someone else's choice. If they succeed in giving up someone else's choice for them, they may look to the advisor for an answer to the dilemma. Viewed in this context, it is clear that this type of student ought not to be passed along to a declared major without further identity seeking activities. The academic risk is the failure to realize one's potential as well as to suddenly realize in the senior year that one's career was not of one's own choosing.

A third subgroup, dubbed *straddlers*, are undeclared as a way of fighting off foreclosure. They may even verbally express the view that some other person (typically one or both parents) wants them to major in X, but they prefer Y. Unable to exert the strength to openly insist on their own preference, they may adopt the strategy of being undeclared as a way of avoiding what they perceive will be open confrontation and disappointment on the part of some authority figure. They may actually take the courses outlined for the major of their choice, eventually declaring at some later point.

They recognize themselves as in danger of foreclosure and have adopted being undeclared as a strategy for coping. Unable to make their own wishes known, they prefer to "play it safe" by being undeclared. Moving out of Perry's stages of *dualism* into *multiplistic/relativism*, they are having trouble giving up the view that authority knows all.

They find it hard to move into the frightening relativist realm where they will have to make decisions. They straddle the boundaries, oscillating between *foreclosure* and *moratorium*. There is still the security of having the authority given choice, if all else fails. While offering security, this knowledge prevents students from exploring and trying out some of their own choices.

Students more traditionally thought of as undeclared have no major in mind. Despite the unitary label, this group is not homogeneous, being comprised of at least two separate subgroups.

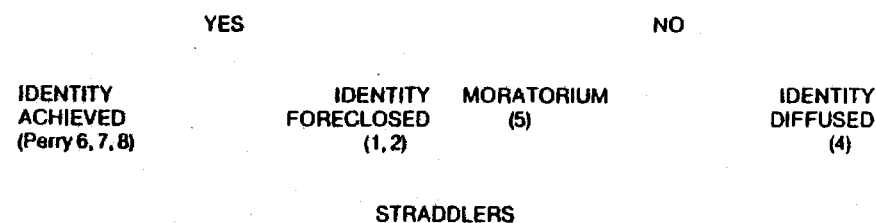
The first subgroup is made up of students who are, using Marcia's terms, in *moratorium*. These students are actively seeking alternatives. They are in Perry's *relativistic* stage, reaching out for the early stages of commitment. This group is likely to bring an openness to choice. They are willing to consider alternatives given by advisors and other authority figures, including parents, but will not simply follow suggestions as if they were directives. Instead, they genuinely seek alternatives considering them on the basis of value and relevance for them. They will be willing to try new courses in an effort to experience choice. These students may also consider dropping out of school for a time in an effort to "find themselves." This is not a choice typically expressed by other groups. The *identity achieved* have already committed themselves to school. Those who are *identity foreclosed* cannot conceive of this as an alternative. While students at other levels may drop out or quit, it is usually from necessity having flunked out, or by default rather than through an active choice process.

The other subgroup of undeclared majors is *identity diffused*. These students are in identity crises and are experiencing role confusion. A general characteristic is their unwillingness to engage in the struggle for identity. They are often dualistic in their thinking, perplexed when no authority appears on the horizon to give directives. Alternatively, they may be somewhat multiplistic, and characteristic of this thinking, reflect the ideas that "all have are opinions and one is as good as another." Although this is a common feeling, the confused students react differently. They believe one opinion is as good as another with one exception. They do not usually give any importance to their own opinion, and fail to admit having an opinion. *Identity diffused* students are usually willing to take whatever is suggested, drifting along through the academic year. There is a tendency to try and grab a ready-made identity which makes them vulnerable to cults and other influences. They make sudden career decisions, assuring the advisor that at last they have found themselves, only to suddenly revoke the decision. There may be a lack of enthusiasm, an apathy that appears in a pattern of missed advising appointments, late registration and multiple drop adds. Such students are often seen as unconcerned and uncaring. These categories and their relationship to major choice are depicted in Figure 2.

As a postscript, it should be noted that while declared majors are not the focus of this paper, these categories can be applied to them. Of special concern are those students who are *identity foreclosed*. They are likely to get close to graduation and suddenly realize their major choice now seems irrelevant. Some may not recognize it until after graduation. It is important to ascertain how students arrived at the major choice rather than simply accepting the choice at face value.

FIGURE 2

MAJOR IN MIND



Recommendations

Undeclared students, regardless of their stage of development, have some things in common. They need support and reassurance that it is alright to be undecided. Beyond reassurance, their strengths need to be assessed. No matter what their stage, few have taken the time or been given the opportunity to analyze fully their abilities and aptitudes. This is a critical step in providing undeclared students with basic information on which to make decisions. Such assessments may be done in a variety of ways such as testing, analysis of the academic record and through conversation with the students themselves. Some students are reluctant to take part in these activities and need strong encouragement. Responses to both the activities and the results will differ depending on the students' stages of development. The way students meet these tasks can enable the advisor to make a tentative classification. This knowledge will facilitate the advisor's task by enabling him or her to develop an appropriate strategy for dealing with the students' probable response.

Even though they frequently present vague complaints of unhappiness, the *identity diffused* may need a great deal of motivation from the advisor to do any assessment of themselves. The advisor may have to be the one to make the appointment at the testing center. Even if the appointment is kept, students often will not take self-assessment seriously. Since they are unwilling and psychologically unable to make a commitment to anything, they will view new information as a threat. Such information needs to be presented as data only, without pressure for a decision. Many of these students seem to be looking for an authority to tell them what to do, while at the same time rejecting all suggestions. They need to be provided with a very open structure giving them the freedom to accept or reject information.

The *identity foreclosed* may ignore any assessment outcomes that are not consistent with their perceived choice. Alternatives may be difficult for them to seriously consider, because to do so they must question the authority that has provided them with direction. This is particularly true when results suggest that areas other than their perceived choice are also areas of strength. They will need help in assimilating this information gradually, and support as they begin to make their own decisions. *Straddlers* may be more able to use the assessment outcomes to help them commit to a self-chosen major, or begin to move in a new direction.

Moratorium students will be eager to obtain and use self-assessment information. They are interested in discovering their strengths and weaknesses and applying their new found knowledge. They may, however, expect this information to resolve their indecisiveness, and need to be warned beforehand that results will not give definitive answers. The advisor needs to be wary that such students not experience undue frustration.

Identity achieved students will use this information to verify their choices, or to make minor adjustments in their plans. Secure within themselves, they will assimilate any new material into their image of self.

All students must have self-assessment data interpreted for them. Because of their cognitive development, many will view this information as coming from the voice of authority. They must be helped to use the results appropriately as indicators rather than pronouncements.

A second step is career exploration. This is often done in conjunction with self-assessment, although some students will be less threatened if it is done separately. Students need to see a direct occupational application to an educational choice and to identify the choices within a particular field. Such information helps provide the basis for the thinking and rethinking that characterizes the choice of a major.

As with self-assessment activities, the *identity diffused* may be reluctant to engage in these exercises. The advisor needs to strongly encourage these students, by providing information where possible. Such students may not take this type of information seriously, claiming that it is irrelevant. The advisor's position should be supportive, but non-authoritarian. These students need time to get used to different ideas.

Those students who are *identity foreclosed* are also unlikely to welcome career exploration activities. They believe they have chosen a career and do not wish to be told otherwise. For them, however, career exploration activities are very important. They need to determine if their perceived choice is realistic. Many foreclosed choices lead to failure either through lack of ability or lack of interest. This failure can cause students to begin a dialog with their advisor. They may suddenly find relevance in the self-assessment activities as well as the career exploration information. Such students will feel less lost if they have done some of these activities before they fail or discover their lack of interest in the perceived choice. Career exploration can also help students avoid failure by identifying a real interest previously unrecognized. *Straddlers* can use this information to move toward or away from a choice that was not their own. It gives them an opportunity to experience more diversity and begin to see the world in increasing shades of gray. A few students may argue that the information is pure opinion, and thus not worth worrying about. These students can be encouraged to form their own opinions on these matters.

Moratorium students may be expected to be enthusiastic about career exploration since they are in a self-defined data gathering period. Once the information is available, they may begin to feel uncomfortable that they have made no decisions. The advisor needs to be alert to these feelings. *Moratorium* students who begin to feel that they have been undeclared too long are prone to panic decisions. This is complicated by the tendency for them to feel that decisions are binding, and cannot be changed. This increases their anxiety about declaring a major. It is also why they ought not to declare immediately but to test the decision over the period of a semester. They should be encouraged to "try on" the new

major by taking courses, talking with faculty and further career exploration before they formally commit to it by declaring. The advisor needs to resist the temptation to immediately pass students on to areas of their choice. Prematurely declared students tend to revoke their decisions, return to undeclared status, and feel even more panic because of their perceived failure.

Career exploration is difficult to do with students who are *identity diffused*; they are students most commonly thought of as traditional undeclared majors. Even though these students' needs are acute, they may be difficult to help; they will tend to resist career exploration or self-assessment activities; and, they often resist seeing the advisor by failing to make or keep appointments. Such students give the appearance of being uninterested and uncaring, and feel they are in college because someone else wants them to be. They may also feel that the college experience is irrelevant to them, and exert little effort to seek relevance of their own. These *identity diffused* students need intrusive advising most of all. The advisor's task is to try and engage these students in some type of decision making. Often they will flunk out, failing to see that this is a type of decision passively made through lack of effort. It carries with it the added penalties of a sense of failure and limited opportunities, if they decide to return to school. They need to see that an active decision to drop out, or to drop to part time status and work, is potentially more constructive.

These suggestions have been made in an attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of an integrated psychosocial cognitive model of college students to the advising process. Although based on considerable experience advising students, future work should seek to establish a more empirical basis. Particular attention should be paid to the classification of students as to their developmental level. This appears to have most relevance for devising specific advising strategies which will help the student maximize the college experience.

DAVID'S
WHEAT
TERRA

WHEAT
TERRA