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Promoting Identity Development in the Classroom: A New Role for Academic Faculty

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This study examined the influence of a structured curricular intervention on the personal and social identity development of college students. The authors implemented a pretest/posttest design using the revised version of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-2 (EOMEIS-2). Significant posttest results supported faculty’s role in developing students’ capabilities beyond the intellectual domain. Finally, the authors discuss collaboration between academic faculty and student affairs practitioners in contributing toward students’ identity development.

A fundamental purpose of higher education is to contribute to the intellectual, personal, and social development of college students (Rodgers, 1989). Waterman (1982) stated that individual identity, which centers around personal and social maturity, is believed to show the greatest gains in formation during the college years because of the diversity of experiences that the college environment provides. Because colleges and universities are involved in the process of identity development, they must determine how best to encourage these developmental changes in students and who should facilitate the process.

College and university faculty typically have focused on the academic/intellectual development of students in the classroom, whereas student affairs staff have promoted students’ personal and social development outside the classroom (Brown, 1989). Using formal theories of individual and group development, student affairs personnel design environments
appropriate to different learning levels. Kuh, however, advocates a “seamless” (1996, p. 11) learning process in which the lines separating students’ in-class and out-of-class experiences are softened, in essence, to provide them the opportunity to connect what they are learning inside and outside the classroom. Facilitating this process demands the attention and collaboration of both student affairs staff and faculty. Cox (1985) noted that the American College Personnel Association believes the success of any student development program hinges on the collaborative efforts between faculty and student affairs staff. Likewise, Astin (1985), Boyer (1987), and Brown (1972) stressed that a partnership between student affairs staff and faculty would enhance the total education of students.

There has been much discussion of why and how student affairs practitioners should expand their role to include cultivating the academic/intellectual development of students in partnership with academic faculty (Brown, 1996; Chickering & Reisser, 1996; Mitchell & Roof, 1989; O’Brien, 1989; Reger & Hyman, 1989). However, Whitt (1996) reported that student affairs practitioners and faculty agree that the classroom is the center of most teaching and learning at colleges and universities. Therefore, the focus of this study directly addresses Brown’s (1996) challenge that academic faculty expand their role to include promoting the personal and social development of students.

The Classroom

Just as intellectual development can occur in non-classroom settings, the college classroom should not be overlooked as a valid platform for advancing identity development. Widick and Simpson (1978) argue that it is just as important for professors and instructors to use developmental perspectives in implementing their programs and services as it is for student affairs practitioners. Likewise, professors and instructors must help students understand how the knowledge gained inside the classroom can be applied to the struggles and concerns they are experiencing outside the classroom.

Researchers have suggested that professors should encourage identity development by allowing students to express controversial opinions in their classrooms as well as engaging them in formal classroom activities and informal peer-group discussions (Adams & Fitch, 1983; Ehman, 1980). Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker (1975) as well as Kolb (1981) point out that in order for these activities to work, professors and instructors must establish trust and respect. If students feel trust and respect, they may be more comfortable sharing their opinions and thoughts openly.

Enright (1983) also promoted the importance of a trusting and open
environment by designing an identity development program that centered around three assumptions. First, identity formation begins with an understanding of other people. Second, when individuals know what others stand for, they can understand themselves in relation to others. Third, when individuals acknowledge differences and similarities between themselves and others, they develop an appreciation for their own uniqueness.

Adams (1985) noted that “open and free discussion, allowing for disagreements and the recognition of individual viewpoints in a warm and supportive environment, will facilitate positive growth toward a self-defined and mature identity status” (p. 65). The classroom setting in this study was specifically designed to encourage students’ exploration of the domains that contribute to identity development according to Erikson (1959, 1968).

Identity Theory

One of the major theorists of identity development, Erikson (1950, 1968) stated that the critical task of identity development occurs during what he termed the “Identity vs. Role Confusion” stage, which begins with the onset of puberty and lasts until about the age of 20. It is during this period that individuals are challenged to find meaning in their lives. If individuals are to move successfully through the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage, they must resolve issues associated with occupation, political and religious ideologies, and interpersonal relationships. Occupation can be defined as the career one has chosen to pursue. Political ideologies emerge when an individual begins to understand how political action impacts his or her role in life. Religious ideologies stem from an adolescent’s conflicting need for both repudiation and devotion. Parker (1985) stated that religion can serve an adolescent’s desire for freedom, discipline, adventure, and tradition. Interpersonal relationships are associations that help clarify one’s expression of maleness or femaleness. Erikson (1959) stated that these relationships are an important part of establishing one’s identity.

Marcia (1966) expanded and operationalized Erikson’s theory of identity development in adolescence by suggesting two variables related to how individuals resolve the identity versus role confusion task: crisis and commitment. Crisis refers to the extent to which an individual has explored alternatives encompassing the occupational, political, religious, and interpersonal relationship domains, whereas commitment refers to the extent to which an individual has made a choice and gained an identity within these domains. Marcia adopts the variables of crisis and
commitment to produce four different identity statuses:

**Diffusion status.** Individuals do not have firm commitments and are not actively trying to form them. Diffusion individuals may or may not have experienced an identity crisis period in their lives, however.

**Foreclosure status.** Individuals have never experienced an identity crisis, yet they are committed to specific goals, values, or beliefs. The commitments that foreclosure individuals make are usually influenced by their parents or other authorities.

**Moratorium status.** Individuals are currently experiencing an identity crisis and are struggling among alternatives to make a choice and commitment.

**Achievement status.** Individuals have gone through a period of identity crisis and have developed relatively firm commitments.

Several longitudinal studies have found that during the college years, a significant number of students reach achievement status on occupational and political issues, but regress from foreclosure to diffusion status on religious issues (Waterman, 1982; Waterman, Geary, & Waterman, 1974; Waterman & Goldman, 1976; Waterman & Waterman, 1971). Based on those studies, Waterman (1982) concluded that the college environment promotes resolution of identity crises in terms of occupational and political issues, yet promotes identity crises in terms of religious issues. However, these studies did not specify when or in what setting (for example, inside or outside the classroom) identity development occurred.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of a structured curricular intervention on the identity development of college students in the kind of open and supportive environment that Adams (1985) recommended as the optimal setting for advancing student identity development. Thus, this study was conducted to answer the following question: **Will a structured curricular intervention promote the identity development of college students?** To answer this question, we designed a study to determine the extent to which the content of the intervention and the process of exploring the intervention influenced students’ progressive identity change based on Waterman’s (1982) model.
Method

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of a randomized (selected and assigned) sample of 42 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory education course comprising seminar and field experience at a large Midwestern university during the spring quarter of 1994. The experimental and control groups each contained 21 students. Of the 42 participants, 27 (64%) were female, and 15 (36%) were male. Between-group ratios of males to females did not appear to be different (8 males to 13 females for the experimental group; 7 to 14 for the control group), with the majority of students in each group being female. The students’ ages ranged from 17 to 29, with the mean age being 21.2 (SD=2.5).

Procedures

During the course, students participating in both the experimental and control groups were provided equal opportunity to interact with the standard topics and discussions for the introductory education seminar and field experience. The standard seminar curriculum consisted of the following topics: communication skills, socioemotional development of students, challenges facing teachers, discipline and abuse issues, national reports and studies on school effectiveness, methods of instruction, diversity in the classroom, and personal and career goals. These topics were facilitated by lecture, readings, and small-group discussion. In addition to the seminar curriculum, the experimental group completed specific reading assignments and discussions, which focused on the four domains of identity development (occupational, political, religious, and interpersonal relationships). Although the term spiritual development may be considered more acceptable to a larger audience than religious development, we chose to remain consistent with the terminology of Erikson’s theory.

We administered the Revised Version of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-2 (EOMEIS-2) (Bennion & Adams, 1986) during the first and the final week of the course to assess the pre- and post-identity status levels of both groups. In order to preserve confidentiality, neither student names nor social security numbers were used. Instead, individual identification numbers were assigned to students and written on the outside of the instrument score sheet. Students were told that their responses on the EOMEIS-2 were confidential and would not, under any circumstances, be used for evaluation purposes.
Instrument

The Revised Version of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOMEIS-2) was used to measure identity statuses because it is easily administered and scored in large-scale research situations, is free of rater bias and interview effects, provides both total and subscale scores (ideological and interpersonal), provides both transition and typology scores for parametric or non-parametric analysis, and is a reasonable substitute for Marcia’s work (Bennion & Adams, 1986). Marcia (1966) used an interview format with specific questions to determine one’s level of identity development. This lengthy assessment process was further expanded to include questions exploring an individual’s ideas about philosophical lifestyle, friendships, dating, recreation, and sex-role orientation. Marcia’s definition of sex-role orientation parallels Erikson’s (1959) description of the interpersonal relationship domain.

The EOMEIS-2 instrument is designed so that subjects respond to a six-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree) on 64 items representing four ideological domains (occupational, political, religious, and philosophical lifestyle) and four interpersonal domains (friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation). Each of the four ideological and four interpersonal domains is measured by eight items, two for each of the four identity statuses (diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement) described by Marcia. The instrument can be scored by either optical or computer scanning. The scoring yields a typology identity score for each of the subscales. In addition, transition scores for the subscale identities allow data to be treated as interval data and used in parametric analyses (Bennion & Adams, 1986).

Adams, Bennion, and Huh (1989) reported internal consistency estimates on the EOMEIS-2 ranging from .30 to .89, with a median alpha of .66 for the ideological and interpersonal subscales. Test-retest reliability studies show correlations of .71 to .93 and split-half correlations from .10 to .68. Construct validity was determined by correlating the ideological and interpersonal subscales with the total identity score. Jones and Hartmann (1984) found correlations ranging from .91 to .94 with a median of .93 using this method. Although the EOMEIS-2 has moderate, not high, reliability and validity, it is the only objective instrument available that measures identity status changes in ways consistent with the theories of Erikson and Marcia.
Treatments

Experimental Group

The curriculum intervention that we used with the experimental group is consistent with the four domains that Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966) believed to be major components of identity development (occupational, political, religious, and interpersonal relationships). The design of the intervention (for instance, group processing, open discussion, critical analysis) also is consistent with the methods that promote the achievement of moratorium status according to Adams (1985), Ehman (1980), Erikson (1968), and Loevinger (1976).

The intent of this intervention was to provide a structured curricular exploration that would facilitate and encourage a progressive identity status change among the student participants. The curricular intervention addressed each of the four identity domains through research, readings, a paper addressing questions related to the readings, and activities designed to share students’ personal beliefs based on the readings. These activities support Waterman’s (1982) finding that the sharing of an expressive writing activity promotes identity exploration.

To facilitate their exploration of the occupational domain, students completed the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) by Holland (1985). The VPI is an interest inventory based on Holland’s method of classifying positions and personality types according to six-categories: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). Scoring the VPI produces a three-letter code corresponding to the categories. After interpretation of the VPI results by instructor and students, students researched two different occupations that were compatible with their three-letter code using Holland’s (1987) The Occupations Finder and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (1992).

Having completed their research, students then wrote a one- to two-page paper reflecting their responses to the following questions:

1. What do I like about these careers?
2. What do I dislike about these careers?
3. What skills are necessary to succeed in these careers?
4. Do I think I could be successful in these careers?

Groups of four to five students met in class, and each student shared his or her two chosen careers and responses to the questions while re-
ceiving feedback from the other group members. This process continued until all group members had an opportunity to participate.

The procedure for addressing the political, religious, and interpersonal relationship domains also consisted of class discussions of readings and small-group discussions of papers that students wrote in response to the readings. For example, the reading addressing the political domain was a chapter entitled “Political Dimensions of Schooling: Federal, State, and Local” from Ellis, Cogan, & Howey’s (1991) book *Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. To address the religious domain, students were assigned in-depth readings of three major religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) from Smith’s (1991) book *The World’s Religions*.

To explore the interpersonal relationship domain, students read Rogers’s (1967) “The Interpersonal Relationship in the Facilitation of Learning.” In addition, students completed the BEM Sex Role Inventory, which is designed to measure the extent to which an individual identifies with masculine or feminine characteristics (Bem, 1974). The BEM inventory, however, was used as an instructional tool and not a measure.

Having completed the readings for the political, religious, and interpersonal domains, students discussed their responses to the following questions about each of the readings:

1. What are the major points of the reading?
2. What is your reaction to the reading in relation to your own beliefs?
3. What is the relevancy of the reading to your current experience as a student and person?

The time allotted for discussing the reading assignment was limited to allow for small-group discussion of additional readings from the book *Kaleidoscope: Readings in Education*, by Ryan and Cooper (1993). The total time allotted for discussion of all readings was 1 1/2 hours.

The students in the experimental group wrote one- to two-page papers in response to the readings and discussions for each of the four domains, which the instructor collected and counted as a total of 20% (5% each) toward the final course grade. Other grading criteria for the experimental group consisted of participation and attendance (20%), an additional paper on their strengths and weaknesses as a prospective teacher and on the direction of K-12 education (20%), and a midterm and final exam (20% each).
Control Group

The control group experienced a very similar course to what the experimental group did, with the exception of the intervention that included the readings, small-group discussions, and papers relating to the four identity domains. The format for the control group course was lecture, readings from the Ryan and Cooper (1993) text, small-group discussions, and self-report inventories exploring students’ interests, personalities, and sex-role orientations. As in the experimental group, small groups were formed during each class period to discuss the readings assigned for that particular day. Like the experimental group, the control group was allotted a total time for discussion of approximately 1 1/2 hours. However, because the experimental group was responsible for discussing the additional domain readings, the time it was allowed for discussing each reading was shorter.

Students in the control group completed a short autobiography and a term paper as written assignments for the course. In their autobiographies, students identified the influences on their decision to pursue a teaching career. The term paper focused on their strengths and weaknesses as a prospective teacher and on the direction of K-12 education. They had a set of grading incentives for completing course requirements similar to those of the experimental group. Grading criteria for the control group consisted of participation and attendance (30%), an autobiography (5%), a term paper (15%), and a midterm and final exam (25% each).

Results

Most researchers prefer to note identity change using categorical or status distinctions of participants as opposed to raw scores (Adams et al., 1989). Because categorical scores were used in this study, we chose to use a non-parametric approach to analyze the data. We used a chi-square 2 x 2 contingency table with adjusted V squares. Using V squares provides a more conservative analysis than would using a chi-square alone (Statsoft, 1994). We examined the data for the experimental and control groups separately and sorted them by total identity status raw scores.

Because the intent of the study was to encourage and note progressive identity status changes from pretest to posttest, the directions of changes were categorized as either progressive, regressive, or neutral. According to Waterman (1982), developmentally progressive changes in status are those changes from identity diffusion status to either foreclosure or moratorium status, from foreclosure status to moratorium status,
and from moratorium status to achievement status. Progressive changes reflect that individuals are either considering their identity options or making “personally meaningful commitments” (p. 343). Waterman considers a shift from achievement status to moratorium status as a move toward further exploration of one’s options. Therefore, this shift was viewed as progressive in this study.

Developmentally regressive changes are those shifts to identity diffusion status from either foreclosure, moratorium, or achievement status. These shifts suggest that an individual is postponing identity issues without making personally meaningful commitments (Waterman, 1982). Students who remained in foreclosure status were considered regressive because their scores reflect their continued commitment to this status without having explored other options. Also, students who remained in identity diffusion status were considered regressive because their scores reflect a continued postponement of identity issues without exploration or commitment.

Scores that reflected no status change from pretest to posttest on moratorium or achievement status were viewed as developmentally neutral for two reasons: Students who were classified as being in moratorium status at pretest and posttest were considered to be in a continuing state of crisis or exploration, and students who were classified as being in identity achievement status at pretest and posttest indicated a continued commitment to identity development issues. In addition, shifts from pretest to posttest that were theoretically inconsistent with Waterman’s (1982) model of logical pathways of identity status movement (for instance, from diffusion to achievement, foreclosure to achievement, moratorium to foreclosure, and achievement to foreclosure) were considered neutral.

Finally, because the focus of this study was to note and compare progressive status changes between the two groups, the neutral category was not included in the statistical dichotomy. Therefore, the dependent variable (the change in status) was dichotomized as progressive and regressive, and the independent variable (the group) was dichotomized as experimental and control. Our original intent was to use age as an independent variable. However, in our post data analysis, we did not find age to affect our dependent measure.

**Ideological Subscale Changes**

Determining the influence of the intervention on students’ identity development began by examining scores from the EOMEIS-2. Identity status changes on the ideological subscale between the experimental and
control groups revealed significant differences ($V^2 = 3.79, p < .05$). Table 1 illustrates the pretest and posttest student frequency changes by status and group for the ideological subscale.

### Experimental Group

The experimental group made more progressive and fewer regressive status changes on the ideological subscale from pretest to posttest than the control group. Pretest scores for the experimental group on the ideological subscale showed 2 students in diffusion status, 2 in foreclosure status, 13 in moratorium status, and 4 in achievement status. Both students scoring in diffusion status at pretest made progressive shifts to moratorium status at posttest. Likewise, all 4 students scoring in achievement status at pretest moved progressively to moratorium status at posttest. Of the 2 students in foreclosure status at pretest, 1 made a progressive shift to moratorium status, whereas the other made a neutral (theoretically inconsistent) move to achievement status. Of the 13 students in moratorium status at pretest, 8 remained in moratorium status (a neutral shift), 4 made progressive shifts to achievement status, and 1 made a regressive shift to diffusion status. Posttest results for the experimental group on the ideological subscale indicated 1 student in diffusion status, none in foreclosure status, 15 in moratorium status, and 5 in achievement status.

### Control Group

Pretest scores for the control group on the ideological subscale showed 2 students in diffusion status, 1 in foreclosure status, 13 in moratorium status, and 5 in achievement status. Of the 2 students in diffusion status, 1 remained in diffusion status at posttest (a regressive shift), whereas the other made a neutral shift to achievement status. The student in foreclosure status at pretest remained in foreclosure, a regressive move. Of the 13 students beginning in moratorium status, 7 remained in moratorium status (a neutral shift), 1 advanced progressively to achievement status, 4 made a neutral shift to foreclosure status, and 1 made a regressive shift to diffusion status. Of the 5 students beginning in achievement status, 3 remained in achievement status (a neutral shift), and 2 made progressive shifts to moratorium status. Posttest results for the control group on the ideological subscale indicated 2 students in diffusion status, 5 in foreclosure status, 9 in moratorium status, and 5 in achievement status.

In total, students in the experimental group on the ideological subscale made 11 progressive shifts, 1 regressive shift, and 9 neutral shifts.
Table 1
EOMEIS-2 Pretest and Posttest Student Frequency Changes
(Ideological Subscale) by Status and Group

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|                  | **Control Group** |          |          |          |
|                  |                   | **Pretest** |
|                  |                   | A        | M        | F        | D        |
|                  | A                       | 3N       | 1P       |          | 1N       |
| Posttest         | M                       | 2P       | 7N       |
|                  | F                       | 4N       | 1R       |
|                  | D                       | 1R       | 1R       |

**Total Frequency Changes**
Experimental group (progressive, 11; regressive, 1; neutral, 9)
Control group (progressive, 3; regressive, 3; neutral, 15)

**Key**
- A = Achievement status
- M = Moratorium status
- F = Foreclosure status
- D = Diffusion status
- P = Progressive shift
- R = Regressive shift
- N = Neutral shift
from pretest to posttest. However, students in the control group on the same subscale made just 3 progressive shifts in addition to 3 regressive shifts and 15 neutral shifts from pretest to posttest.

**Interpersonal Subscale Changes**

The experimental group was not significantly different on the interpersonal subscale from pretest to posttest than the control group ($V^2 = .04, p < .84$). Table 2 illustrates the pretest and posttest student frequency changes by status and group for the interpersonal subscale.

**Experimental Group**

Pretest scores for the experimental group on the interpersonal subscale showed 2 students in diffusion status, 3 in foreclosure status, 12 in moratorium status, and 4 in achievement status. Both students scoring in diffusion status at pretest remained in diffusion at posttest (a regressive shift). Of the 3 students in foreclosure status at pretest, 1 made a progressive shift to moratorium status, 1 made a neutral (theoretically inconsistent) shift to achievement status, and the other remained in foreclosure status (a regressive shift). Of the 12 students in moratorium status at pretest, 10 remained in moratorium status (a neutral shift), and 2 students made neutral shifts to foreclosure status. All 4 students scoring in achievement status at pretest made progressive moves to moratorium status. Posttest results for the experimental group on the interpersonal subscale indicated 2 students in diffusion status, 3 in foreclosure status, 15 in moratorium status, and 1 in achievement status.

**Control Group**

Pretest scores for the control group on the interpersonal subscale showed 3 students in diffusion status, 2 in foreclosure status, 11 in moratorium status, and 5 in achievement status. Of the 3 students in diffusion status, 1 remained in diffusion status at posttest (a regressive shift), whereas the other 2 made progressive shifts to moratorium status. Both students rating in foreclosure status at pretest made regressive shifts, 1 shifting to diffusion status and the other remaining in foreclosure status. Of the 11 students beginning in moratorium status, 9 remained in moratorium status (a neutral shift), 1 progressed to achievement status, and 1 regressed to diffusion status. Of the 5 students beginning in achievement status, 3 remained in achievement status (a neutral shift), and 2 made progressive shifts to moratorium status. Posttest results for the control group on
Table 2
EOMEIS-2 Pretest and Posttest Student Frequency Changes (Interpersonal Subscale) by Status and Group

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Total Frequency Changes
Experimental Group (progressive, 5; regressive, 3; neutral, 13)
Control Group (progressive, 5; regressive, 4; neutral, 12)

Key
A = Achievement status    P = Progressive shift
M = Moratorium status     R = Regressive shift
F = Foreclosure status    N = Neutral shift
D = Diffusion status

the interpersonal subscale indicated 3 students in diffusion status, 1 in foreclosure status, 13 in moratorium status, and 4 in achievement status.

In total, students in the experimental group on the interpersonal subscale made 5 progressive shifts, 3 regressive shifts, and 13 neutral shifts from pretest to posttest. Students in the control group on the interpersonal subscale demonstrated similar patterns, with 5 progressive shifts, 4 regressive shifts, and 12 neutral shifts from pretest to posttest.

Although the focus of this study was on students’ progressive shifts, there were regressive and neutral changes that require speculation. For instance, within the experimental and control groups on both subscales, a significant number of students remained in moratorium status from pretest to posttest (a neutral shift). Within the experimental group, because the design of the intervention was to encourage openness, curiosity, and exploration of specific identity constructs, perhaps the moratorium was simply reinforced and continued. Within the control group, the exploratory nature of the course itself may have influenced a continued moratorium.

Students who made a neutral shift from moratorium status at pretest to foreclosure status at posttest—those in the control group of the ideological subscale and the experimental group of the interpersonal subscale—may have decided simply to commit to certain beliefs without having truly explored those beliefs. It is important to note that the control group received no exploratory intervention on the topics, and the experimental group received minimal intervention on the interpersonal construct. Had a meaningful exploration of these topics occurred, students might have rated achievement status at posttest.

Students in both groups who shifted from achievement status at pretest to moratorium status at posttest on either the ideological or interpersonal subscale reflected a progressive change. Simply because a person rates in achievement status on a particular construct does not mean that a reevaluation of his or her beliefs will not occur in the future. Such a reevaluation usually occurs as a result of additional life experiences. The course and intervention content may have provided additional perspectives on beliefs that the student had not previously considered.

Discussion

The results of this study generated several points for discussion. The intervention’s emphasis on a set of concepts measured by the ideological subscale may have contributed to the significant number of progressive status changes within this subscale. For instance, we ad-
dressed the ideological subscale through activities and readings associated with occupational, religious, and political orientations. Similar posttest results between both groups on the interpersonal subscale suggest that the lesser emphasis placed on concepts measured by this subscale in the intervention may not have been sufficient to influence a logical, progressive identity change. Because Erikson (1968) stressed the importance of clarifying one’s idea and expressing maleness or femaleness as an important step in establishing one’s identity, sex-role attitude was the focus on the interpersonal subscale. Also, sex-role attitude was easy to integrate into the intervention and make relevant to the established core curriculum. The domains “dating,” “friendship,” “leisure,” and “recreation,” however, were not felt to be as important to address in the intervention because they were not the original identity domains noted by Erikson (1959) and Marcia (1966). The decision to omit these domains also was influenced by the need to cover the standard course material within the limited number of class sessions (10) in this study.

The results of this study support existing research indicating that the college environment promotes identity development (Adams & Fitch, 1983; Waterman, 1982; Waterman, Geary, & Waterman, 1974; Waterman & Goldman, 1976; Waterman & Waterman, 1971). However, this study adds to the knowledge base of identity development by providing a better understanding of the intervention methods that facilitate personal and social maturity among college students in the classroom. Further research should be directed toward replicating this study in a classroom setting for at least a 15-week (academic term) duration, which would allow time to include additional constructs addressing the interpersonal subscale. A larger pool of participants also would provide a more accurate categorical analysis of status changes.

Although the authors of the EOMEIS-2 (Bennion & Adams, 1986) have developed a rationale for its use on identity classification, limitations do exist—specifically, using a one-dimensional scale when dealing with a multidimensional construct. As Adams, Bennion, and Huh (1989) state, the technique is limited to “classification purposes only and provides limited additional opportunity for analyzing a subject’s reasoning behind choices” (p. 5). The strength of the technique, however, is that it “allows for easier estimates of reliability and validity within a sample and comparisons between samples” (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989, p. 5).

We believe that the content of the intervention (readings and small-group discussion of topics) did play a part in the significant differences found between the experimental and control groups on the ideological
subscale. However, probably an equally important component influencing change was the use of individual writings and reflections prior to group discussion and analysis. Although control group participants held small-group discussions, their process was not as personally reflective as that of the experimental group participants. In other words, we believe the process of having students in the experimental group write mini-papers specifically designed to reflect personal reactions and thoughts concerning the topics impacted the content of the discussions.

The need for individuals to explore their beliefs, how those beliefs were formed, and why those beliefs are held is the foundational process to identity development. The essence of identity development is struggling to understand who we are as individuals and how we fit into the social context of a community. This philosophy seems to support one of the purposes of U.S. higher education, which is to encourage students to become free thinkers and contributing members of a larger society. Identity development goes beyond simply learning and being tested on information, which reflects a change in one’s intellectual development or knowledge. Only when the information and situations to which one is exposed are internalized and reflected in the context of who one is as an individual does the process of identity development begin to occur.

The outcome of this study suggests the opportunity for faculty and student affairs staff to share in the responsibility of developing the intelligences and the personal and social identities of students. Written personal reflections by the student participants supported using the classroom setting to explore topics influencing identity. For instance, the comments referring to the intervention for the political domain included the following: “My beliefs are now wavering . . . I must read more.” The religious domain intervention elicited comments such as, “. . . it makes me reexamine my beliefs . . . not exactly a bad thing,” and “Before . . . I never had my beliefs challenged.” The occupational and interpersonal domain interventions produced similar responses. In addition, students favored the combination of lecture, small-group discussion, personal written reflections, and openness toward others as an effective format for learning in the classroom.

Encouraging students to question, develop, and understand their unique personal/social identities outside of class through various programs and services is a primary function of student affairs staff. Encouraging students’ intellectual/academic development in class through formal learning is a primary function of faculty (Blake, 1996). The common theme between the in-class and out-of-class experience, however, seems to be the process of exploration, which Waterman (1982) noted as a key ingredient in the identity development process.
Although student affairs programming typically provides opportunities for students’ identity exploration, many students may avoid such opportunities because of preconceived notions or biases (for instance, they feel they already know their career direction). In this study, the classroom was found to be a logical setting to use developmental theory to spark student curiosity and promote personal and social exploration. Students’ curiosity about themselves and others, initially piqued in the classroom setting, may be continued through their participation in student affairs programming. Simply put, academic faculty have an opportunity to facilitate the personal and social development of students.

The intent of this article is not to propose that faculty can “do it all” in terms of student development. Faculty and student affairs practitioners should work together in gaining an understanding of how in-class experiences can enhance out-of-class experiences and vice versa. Both parties are working to encourage student growth so that intellectual, personal, and social maturity occurs. Whitt (1996) reported that student affairs staff should take the initiative in forming successful partnerships with academic faculty. He went on to say, however, that student affairs staff are sometimes reluctant to initiate such relationships for several reasons, including “fear of appearing to want to be faculty, fear of not being taken seriously, and lack of experience communicating across the cultures of student affairs and academic affairs” (p. 11). Regardless of who initiates them, the relationships should exist.

Expanding the role of academic faculty to include students’ identity development will be a challenge for both faculty and student affairs practitioners. First, faculty will need to understand why and how to promote personal and social identity development in the classroom. Second, student affairs practitioners will need to be active in helping faculty integrate these developmental concepts into the classroom. An awareness and acknowledgment of one another’s roles at the institution and how the roles are linked also are critical. Ways to encourage collaboration between student affairs staff and faculty might include the following:

- making a joint presentation by a student affairs staff member and a faculty member on points noted in this article during a faculty development day, luncheon, or other in-service function;
- writing an article on this topic in the faculty/staff newsletter or university paper;
- inviting student affairs staff to speak in faculty classrooms;
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- inviting faculty to participate in student affairs programming; and
- encouraging the development of a joint task force to explore additional ways to collaborate.

This type of partnership would serve to reinforce the notion of faculty and student affairs staff working together toward the development of the whole person.

References


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