

EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

Arthur W. Chickering



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G40-05/W2



Jossey-Bass Publishers

San Francisco • Oxford • 1990

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350 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94104
&
Jossey-Bass Limited
Headington Hill Hall
Oxford OX3 0BW

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number LC 70-75938

International Standard Book Number ISBN 0-87589-035-0

Manufactured in the United States of America

JACKET DESIGN BY WILLI BAUM

FIRST EDITION

First printing: March 1969
Second printing: January 1971
Third printing: March 1972
Fourth printing: April 1974
Fifth printing: October 1975
Sixth printing: October 1976
Seventh printing: September 1978
Eighth printing: November 1981
Ninth printing: February 1984
Tenth printing: October 1987
Eleventh printing: January 1990

Code 6905

PREFACE



Higher education once aimed to produce men prepared to engage with the society of man. But as the changes of the last fifty years have occurred, higher education has altered its image of man. The focus has shifted from men to subjects, from persons to professionals. Consequently men themselves have become subjects—subjects to majors, to disciplines, to professions, to industries. Higher education and society are mired in frustration and conflict. These conditions will persist until men—not materials, nor systems, nor institutions—again become the focus of education and the focus of human concern.

Education and Identity suggests an alternative to higher education's increasing concentration on information and professional train-

ing. It elaborates a way already pointed, a direction already in the wind. It describes an approach to higher education relevant to the principal developmental concerns of students and relevant to our social condition. Robert White (1958) and Erik Erikson (1963) introduced us to "identity," and so doing sharply reminded us that there is more to development in college than acquiring information and developing intellectual competence. But "identity" is so abstract as to provide only a hazy guide for educational decisions, and its connotations have become so diverse that the term means very different things to different persons. In describing seven major dimensions of development that occur during the college years—competence, emotions, autonomy, identity, interpersonal relationships, purpose, integrity—I have attempted to move "identity" one step toward greater specificity and concreteness. I aimed to reach a level where connections could be made between these dimensions of student change and educational policies and practices. Some of these interrelationships are suggested for curriculum, teaching, and evaluation, residence hall arrangements, relationships with faculty and administration, relationships with peers, institutional size, and institutional objectives.

Mindful that five to seven variables are about the maximum that most of us can recall and use, I have synthesized accordingly. For my primary purpose is to increase the working knowledge brought to bear when decisions are made, not to push further the subtle insights of those already intimately involved with research and theory concerning student development in college. I would advance knowledge horizontally rather than vertically; I would spread it around rather than move it to deeper levels of complexity. Available knowledge and current practice stand far apart. They must come closer, and if they do educational effectiveness will thereby improve. Basically then, my aims have been to synthesize the research and theory that, to me, seem most significant for higher education and to generate a conceptual framework faithful to those findings—a framework sufficiently general to be relevant to a wide range of decisions and sufficiently simple to be held in mind for application as alternatives for action are considered—and to do so in a few, readable, words.

Clearly, my fundamental indebtedness in this work is to predecessors and contemporaries who have generated so much valuable research and theory concerning student development and college impacts upon it. I have called on many of them, and on some, extensively. It

is my conviction that higher education will move ahead as their words are heard and understood. I hope some of the pet quotations I have cited will entice others to pursue or reexamine their works.

I have had some excellent teachers. Gertrude Driscoll, at Teachers College Columbia, first made clear to me the complexities of human development, and more important—by her own example—showed me what kindness, candor, and insight could be. More recent teachers have been Royce “Tim” Pitkin, George Beecher, Thomas Yakhub, Forest Davis, Wilfred Hamlin, Harold Boris—all colleagues during the *Experiment in College Curriculum Organization*, undertaken at Goddard College from 1959 to 1965 with the support of the Ford Foundation Fund for the Advancement of Education. The roots of the ideas presented here rest in the weekly faculty meetings, committee meetings, dinners, drinks, discussions, and data that filled those six years of research and teaching. But during that time I was instructed principally by younger teachers: Marge Lipko, Lee Mirkovic, Sue Caust, and other students with whom I shared classes, independent studies, counseling sessions; and student research assistants—Ada Silverstein, Frank Dorsky, Jill Mattuck, Mark Milbank, Carol Reiff, and others—who brought not only conscientious effort, but fine insights. My older associates simply helped me to understand better what these persons were saying. And, of course, I am indebted to all those students who sat through hours of tests, inventories, and questionnaires to provide the data for that work.

In 1965, the Project on Student Development (NIMH Grant MH 14780-04) began, a five-year study of institutional characteristics, student characteristics, attrition, and student development in thirteen small colleges, carried on under the aegis of the Committee on Research and Development of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges. And with this Project began unique instruction, still under way, by the presidents, institutional representatives, and faculties of the participating colleges, and by the rich data flowing from those institutions—data that drift high up office walls, obscuring windows, blocking doors. Laban Peachey and James McDowell, who spent sabbatical years with us, Dorothea Stockwell, and my less transient coworkers, Beverly Burns, William Hannah, Robert Mattuck, and Dennis Campagna, tip-toed gingerly with me through IBM-card Empire State Buildings. Thus by the computer were we transformed, no longer pencil, but paper pushers. Whatever order and sense exists in the prelimi-

nary findings reported, the credit is mainly theirs; but biased extrapolations and misinterpretations are mine.

The most important contributor to this effort has been my wife. By becoming auto-mechanic, carpenter, painter, plumber, electrician, and zookeeper, she relieved me of distractions so this work could be done. Her penetrating observations kept my feet on the ground, and by her constancy, kindness, kisses—and cooking—have I been sustained.

Some of the findings in this volume are based on my previously published articles. I wish to thank, for permission to use my copyrighted materials, the following publishers: *Educational Record*, *Improving College and University Teaching*, *Journal of the American College Health Association*, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *Journal of the Association of Deans and Administrators of Student Affairs*, *Journal of the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors*, *Liberal Education*. The portion of *Zima Junction* from *Yevtushenko Selected Poems* is quoted with permission from Penguin Books, Inc., and the Steig cartoon on page 178 is taken from *The Lonely Ones* with permission of the Meredith Press.

Education and Identity is dedicated to my mother.

ARTHUR W. CHICKERING

Plainfield, Vermont
January 1969

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INTRODUCTION



Adolescence is a fruit of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century and the technological revolution of the twentieth. The increasing complexity of society, the increased number of jobs requiring specialized skills and training, and the extension of free public education through high school have created an adolescent period where none existed before.

Complexity continues to increase. So does the demand for skilled and specialized personnel. In 1953, 2,000,000 students enrolled for undergraduate and professional degrees; in 1963, the figure was 4,000,000; by 1973, 7,000,000 are expected—about 46 per cent of the college-age population. Universal higher education is fast approaching. These new conditions are creating another developmental period, a period during which certain changes may be fostered and during which certain kinds of adjustment and development may predominate. Ex-

tending from age seventeen or eighteen into the middle or late twenties, this period is different from adolescence and different from adulthood and maturity. For many it will be the last opportunity for major change before the stability generated by more fixed social, interpersonal, and occupational roles and responsibilities.

Developmental changes do occur during this period. Numerous cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of college students indicate that changes occur in attitudes, interests, values, future plans and aspirations, openness to impulses and emotions, personal integration, and intellectual ability. Such changes have been found for diverse students in diverse institutions. Some of these changes are shared by those who do not attend college; but college does make a difference. In Trent and Medsker's (1968) study, for example, college students were more flexible, open-minded, tolerant, and objective than similarly bright nonattenders, and the scores of dropouts fell between the college graduates and the nonattenders. So a developmental period of young adulthood does seem to exist now, a period during which certain kinds of changes occur or strong potential for such change exists, a period during which certain kinds of experiences may have substantial impact. This period merits special attention because mounting evidence (Bugelski and Lester, 1940; Nelson, 1954; Newcomb *et al.*, 1967; Trent and Medsker, 1968) indicates that patterns established at this time tend to persist long into adulthood. And because so many young adults will move through this period in a college setting, it merits special attention so that institutions of higher education can better serve society and more effectively help young persons move productively from adolescence to adulthood.

To say that higher education is at the crossroads is to say the obvious—like telling the man with measles he itches. It's also inaccurate; a single intersection is too simple. The alternatives are many more than four and they are interconnected. The center of a web is a more apt metaphor, an interconnected system with numerous options in many directions. The web is apt in another sense. If the institution tries to move, and the web jiggles, the proprietor or his helpers swiftly run to wrap it up for safe keeping—and eventual death. But higher education must move.

One direction has been clearly and frequently described. A past president of the American Association for Higher Education has written, "Whether or not a student burns a draft card, participates in a

civil rights march, engages in premarital or extramarital sexual activity, becomes pregnant, attends church, sleeps all day, or drinks all night is not really the concern of a collegiate institution as an educational institution. Colleges and universities are not churches, clinics, nor even parents. They are devices by which a limited number of skills, insights, and points of view are communicated to the young in the belief that possession of these somehow aids the individual to become a more skilled worker [Mayhew, 1968]."

This book suggests another direction. Its fundamental assumption is that colleges and universities will be educationally effective only if they reach students "where they live," only if they connect significantly with those concerns of central importance to their students. Civil rights, the draft, managing violence, conflict, interpersonal relationships, sexuality, and religious orientation, balancing short-run hedonism against restraint and self-discipline in the service of long-run satisfactions—these issues are of primary concern to the young adult. These are the topics of hot debate over coffee and beer, of quiet reflection, of unassigned papers and poems. These are the areas where learning and action are pursued vigorously and voluntarily, often against or in addition to the demands of the institution.

More important perhaps, if urgent and emerging national and international problems are to be met with the breadth of information, the complexity of thought, and the wisdom generated by diverse experiences, such areas must receive attention. In 1972, the next presidential election year, assuming no shift in legal requirements, the median age of voters will be twenty-six (Shoben, 1968). During the next twenty years it is the college graduate who will assume control of the industrial, political, educational, religious, and military organizations of this country. And as higher education becomes universal, college graduates will become the "grass roots support" for those leaders, the "people" they ultimately must serve. The college graduates will determine whether pluralism and democracy can meet these problems and survive. The society that results will depend upon the kind of persons they become. It is the prime responsibility of colleges and universities to help those persons. To do so requires more than preparing them to pass final exams and to score high on tests for graduate school admission, and it requires more than preparing them to become skilled workers.

It is true that more students attend college for occupational advancement and professional preparation than for any other single rea-

son. It is true that activists and alienated together comprise less than 10 per cent of the college population. But it is also true that this visible minority, like the mountaintop island, is a peak of intensity and concern, supported at different levels and in different aspects by many others below the surface.

Professional preparation and educational programs that are relevant to social problems and that facilitate significant student development and professional preparation need not be mutually exclusive. William Heard Kilpatrick (1951) recognized the motive power in vocational interests and described how general education and personal expansion could be driven by it. Colleges that attract young adults with strong professional interests can capitalize on those motives. Professional preparation can be more than training students to use a common language, common skills, and common concepts. By modification of the processes and the experiences by which such preparation is achieved, significant vectors of student change can be amplified and accelerated, and students can place their future work in the context of life-styles and social issues that are important to them. But this acceleration cannot be achieved by turning a back to these central concerns and focusing more narrowly on training skilled workers. It requires meeting students where they are and establishing relevant programs that will take them where they want to go and where those who support and man the colleges want them to go.

Research addressing student development in college has increased dramatically during the last ten years. Jacob's (1957) survey, which found minimal impact of college on values, right or wrong, was a major stimulus. With Learned and Wood's (1938) early study and Newcomb's (1943) early research at Bennington shining like beacons from the past, and with the Vassar studies (Sanford *et al.*, 1957; Sanford, 1962; Sanford, 1966) as a contemporary benchmark, more and more investigators at more and more colleges are flooding students with questionnaires, personality inventories, and various measures of academic achievement and intellectual ability. These burgeoning efforts, almost without exception, have been exploratory. Few theories have been framed, few hypotheses tested. Thus, though much useful knowledge has been generated, it has remained in unintegrated form, a collection of significant items to be examined and interpreted by each investigator who would use it for his own research, by each teacher or administrator who would use it for making practical decisions. The

need for some synthesis, for some systematic framework to order this growing field is acute. Newcomb and Feldman's (1968) recent summary is one response—a comprehensive presentation offering the major warranted generalizations. The formulation offered here is another response. It offers a point of view, based on relevant research and theory, in an effort to move research findings closer to application and action.

The primary aim is to be of use to those concerned with higher education, its present forms and future potentials—administrators, faculty members, students, parents, board members, and alumni. To this end the emphasis is on ideas and not on exhaustive documentation. Supporting evidence is presented, the general thrust of relevant research is described, and illustrative studies are mentioned, but the literature is not reviewed in detail. Case histories and comments from students put flesh and blood on abstractions.

To be useful to persons making decisions about educational policy and practice, about institutional organization, about teaching; to persons confronting students; to students confronting colleges; to parents and alumni concerned about both, a conceptual framework must be simple enough to be held in mind ready for application and comprehensive enough to be relevant. The problem is to achieve synthesis without oversimplification, and to accept the compromises required. Accepting these conditions and the attendant compromises, this book describes seven major vectors of student development and considers these vectors in relation to six major aspects of the college environment. The thesis is not that all students change along all seven vectors, nor that the environmental conditions operate with equal force for all students at all institutions, but that such changes do occur for some students and they can more frequently occur for others. Environmental conditions at some institutions do foster or inhibit such changes, and systematic modification can increase the frequency of valued development.

But persons other than behavioral scientists speak with relevance. In *Zima Junction*, Yevtushenko (1964) describes his own first steps toward adulthood:

I scarcely had one single care in the world,
my life, presenting no big obstacles,
seemed to have few or simple complications—
life solved itself without my contributions.
I had no doubts about harmonious answers

which could and would be given to every question.
 But suddenly this felt necessity
 of answering these questions for myself.
 So I shall go on where I started from,
 sudden complexity, self-generated,
 disturbed by which I started on this journey.

Into my native forest among those
 long-trodden roads I took this complication
 to take stock of that old simplicity,
 —like bride and groom, a country matchmaking.
 So there stood youth and there childhood together,
 trying to look into each other's eyes
 and each offending, but not equally.
 Childhood spoke first, "Hullo then.
 It's your fault if I hardly recognized you.
 I thought you'd be quite different from this.
 I'll tell you honestly, you worry me.
 You're still in very heavy debt to me."
 So youth asked if childhood would help,
 and childhood smiled and promised it would help.
 They said good-bye, and, walking attentively,
 watching the passers-by and the houses,
 I stepped happily, uneasily out
 through Zima Junction, that important town [pp. 24–25].

These words evoke the feelings of the college freshman as he carries his new suit, floor lamp, tennis racket, and *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* into the barren sterile cubicle that will be his room, as he meets other students in the registration line, and as he says "Sir" to his first faculty member. He is happiness and unease, tentativeness and courage.

What follows from this tentative and hopeful beginning? What changes occur as a student lives four years in the "climate" of his college, as he becomes part of that social system, as he encounters the strains, seductions, hypocrisies, opportunities, and dead spots of that setting? And what institutional conditions make a difference? What patterns of institutional organization and educational practice, what constellations of relationships provoke or inhibit change? At graduation four or five years later, what of consequence has been experienced, how has the young adult been positioned to step toward the future?

PART I



The major constellations of development during adolescence and early adulthood have been variously formulated as “growth trends,” “developmental tasks,” “stages of development,” “needs and problem areas,” or “student typologies.” These different formulations accompany differences in point of departure, in emphasis, and in approach, but they have in common seven major areas: competence, emotions, autonomy, interpersonal relationships, purpose, identity, and integrity, each of which has its major components. They are called vectors of development because each seems to have direction and magnitude—even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than by a straight line.

Achieving Competence

Competence is a three-tined pitchfork. One tine is intellectual competence; most educational institutions are devoted to fostering or