

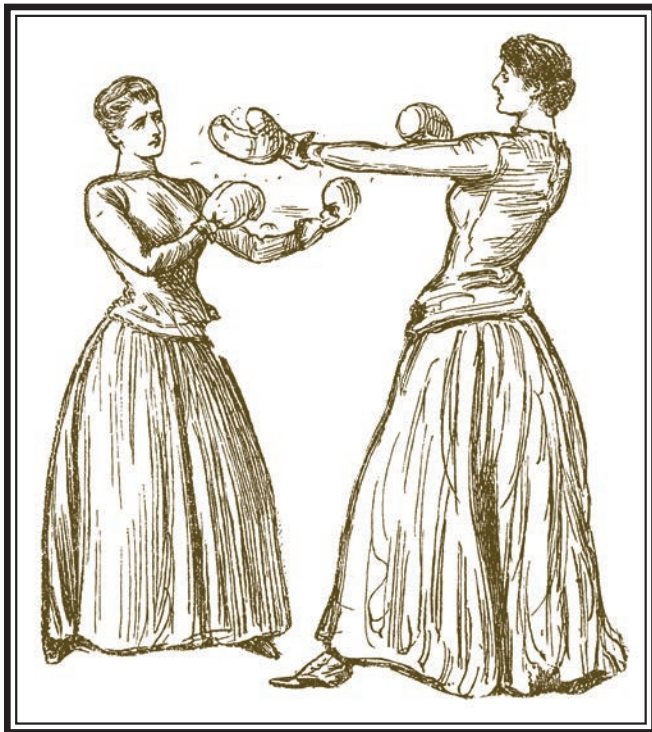
Gender and moral reasoning

In other words, the moral reasoning of adolescents and adults in collectivist, socially oriented cultures may differ qualitatively from the individualistic judgements of competing justice claims that are implicit in Kohlberg's model of moral development derived from North Americans. For similar reasons, Carol Gilligan (1977) has argued that Kohlberg's theory and stage-scoring criteria may fail to adequately assess the growth of moral reasoning in women:

The very traits that have traditionally defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development. (p. 484)

Gilligan suggested that, when women face moral challenges, they reason about them in terms of the altruistic need to help others and to find ways of cooperating socially in an interdependent manner so as to draw the group together around the moral problem. Using data from qualitative interviews with adolescents and adults, she argued that the female moral orientation is built on the ethics of care, need and self-sacrifice. Women viewed moral dilemmas in an intimate social context and resolved them by appealing to principles of altruism, nurturance, attachment and sensitivity to others' concerns and needs. Some of these issues are illustrated in Box 11.7.

Men's and women's qualitatively distinct experiences during adult life (see Chapters 14 and 15) may likewise



The notion of individualistic competition and assertion of personal rights and claims may be more congenial to male than female ethical thinking, according to Gilligan.

BOX 11.7

Expressing individuality Gender differences in the logic of morality

To illustrate gender differences discussed in the text, consider the answers that Gilligan received when she asked one 25-year-old man and one 25-year-old woman what it meant to be ethical.

Interviewer	What does the word 'morality' mean to you?
Young man	I think it is recognising the right of the individual, the right of other individuals and not interfering with those rights. Act as fairly as you would have them treat you.
Interviewer	Are there really right and wrong answers to moral problems, or is everybody's opinion equally correct?
Young woman	We need to depend on each other, and hopefully it is not only a physical need but a need of fulfilment in ourselves, that a person's life is enriched by cooperating with other people and striving to live in harmony with everybody else, and to that end there are right and wrong; there are things which promote that end, and things that move away from it.

Source: Gilligan, 1982, pp. 19–20.

contribute to their moral development. To explore this possibility, Nancy Clopton and Gwendolyn Sorrell (1993) presented a set of moral dilemmas that were designed to elicit care-oriented reasoning to a sample of 40 American married couples, half of whom had a child with a severe disability. Dilemmas about parents of children with disabilities were included in their tests, together with a standard Kohlbergian dilemma about the theft of a drug. The hypothesis that parents of children with disabilities would have more advanced care-oriented reasoning than other parents was not supported. But the results were striking in another way, clearly showing that women and men used the same moral reasoning when faced with the same moral problems. In the light of Gilligan's theory, Clopton and Sorrell were surprised to observe that the fathers' responses to the parenting dilemmas 'were remarkable for their tenderness, concern and honesty' (1993, p. 99). The authors concluded that previous findings of sex differences in moral reasoning may reflect the different types of moral problems that adults encounter and think about in their everyday lives.

Personality development: The identity crisis

According to Erikson's (1968) theory (see Chapter 2), a sense of personal *identity* is the central psychosocial conflict in personality development during late adolescence and early adulthood. Teenagers think long and hard about future study, friends, social acceptance and plans for

their lives. This is both understandable and necessary. Many of the decisions made during adolescence will have consequences that affect the rest of adult life.

As adolescents consider these issues, according to Erikson (1959, 1968), an internal dialectical conflict or crisis over identity is triggered and this sets the chain of growth in motion. He wrote:

Adolescence is not an affliction but a normative crisis, i.e. a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by a seeming fluctuation in ego strength and yet also by a high growth potential ... such developmental and normative crises differ from imposed, traumatic and neurotic crises in that the process of growth provides new energy as society offers new and specific opportunities. (1959, p. 116)

When adolescents resolve the crisis to develop the personality attribute of identity, they gain a coherent sense of self, not only for the present moment but also in relation to their future life roles:

Identity is a psychological process reflecting social processes ... it meets its crisis in adolescence, but has grown throughout childhood and continues to reemerge in the crises of later years. The overriding meaning of it all, then, is the creation of a sense of sameness, a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognized by others as having a consistency in time. (p. 1968, p. 13)

In line with his ideas about the developmental mechanisms of transition between other stages in his scheme (see Chapter 2), Erikson viewed resolution of the identity crisis as a *dialectical* process of resolving internal conflicts into a higher-order harmony. For example, in grappling with career questions surrounding the forging of an identity, the young person must deal with conflicts between his/her own interests and skills and the job opportunities that society makes available. The dialectical conflicts for an Indigenous or ethnic-minority teenager are often more challenging than for a member of the mainstream culture. Erikson (1968) was sensitive to the special problems that indigenous North American Indians faced in resolving the identity crisis, and these issues continue to provoke extensive and illuminating research today, including studies of Aboriginal Canadians (e.g. Lalonde & Chandler, 2004). In Australia, Yvonne Clark (2000) made a special study of Aboriginal identity growth in the wake of the Stolen Generation policy.

Nevertheless, when the dialectical conflicts are confronted fully and resolved successfully, luminary identity development may result, as illustrated in several of the case histories in Box 11.1. Box 11.8 gives another example of an impressively successful and admirable, though protracted, resolution of the identity crisis. Erikson viewed emotional upheavals as normal and a necessary part of adolescence (see Chapter 12). The identity crisis is a dialectical confrontation of opposites. The possibility of development (a higher-order synthesis of conflicting polarities) requires full confrontation and active resolution

of the conflict. In this way, mature identity is a more complex and effective stage of personality organisation. As Erikson (1968) noted:

it may be a good thing that the word 'crisis' no longer connotes impending catastrophe, which at one time seemed an obstacle to understanding the term. It is now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery and further differentiation. (p. 16)

One aspect of the identity decision is the choice of an occupation. For many of us, a job is less an issue of earning a living than 'something to be'. A number of other choices are equally crucial, as Box 11.8 illustrates. In order to resolve the crisis into a secure sense of identity, the adolescent must formulate:

- a philosophy of life that includes moral values and an orientation to religion
- a personality pattern linking early temperament (see Chapter 5) with disposition into a comfortable adult character
- a decision about one's gender role
- a sense of self as a sexual being (see Chapter 10)
- a stance in relation to politics and social issues
- a blueprint for future intimate relationships
- a sense of self, including ethnic identity
- an occupation or career identity.

The adolescent's resolution of the identity crisis organises and integrates all of these separate elements



The identity crisis is a necessary turning point when plans for the future are mapped out, however painfully.

BOX 11.8

Indigenous insight

Identity crisis resolution as a dialectical balance

Mandawuy Yunupingu achieved an exceptional identity blending his Indigenous roots as a Yolngu man with a balanced life of high achievement in the interface of traditional Aboriginal and contemporary mainstream Anglo-Australian culture. Best known as leader of the internationally acclaimed band Yothu Yindi, he had many other distinctions, including being named Australian of the Year in 1992, being the first Indigenous Australian to graduate from university with a Bachelor's degree and becoming the first Indigenous principal of an Australian school. His identity descriptors include all of the following:

- rock musician
- Aboriginal rights activist
- Yolngu elder
- teacher
- singer
- songwriter
- husband, brother, father and grandfather.

Yunupingu's citation as Australian of the Year highlighted his contribution as 'an outstanding ambassador for Aboriginal people and their achievements and for Australia as a whole' and his role in 'building bridges of understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people' (National Library of Australia, 2008).

In his autobiography (1994), Yunupingu described his identity, and that of the band he led, as a dialectical balance of polar opposites, uniting together to achieve a higher-order harmony (see the discussion of the dialectical model of lifespan development in Chapter 2). He noted that the name Yothu Yindi describes an important dialectical relationship in the Aboriginal kinship system and the symbiotic balance that is achieved between mother and child or between the Yirritja and the Dhuwa family groupings that subdivide the people and the lands they live in. As he explained:

In our band Yothu Yindi we have balance between Yirritja and Dhuwa. But we also have another balance, one between black and white, or Yolngu and Balanda. Amongst the Yirritja

members of our band there are both black and white, and among the Dhuwa members of our band there are both black and white ... dynamic balance such as we see in nature. (1994, p. 1)

Yunupingu's early life highlighted the benefits of a traditional Indigenous upbringing for an ultimately highly successful resolution to the identity crisis. In his traditional community in Arnhem Land he initially spoke an Aboriginal language and passed through a traditional initiation into manhood (see Chapter 10) before going away to school to learn the English language and achieve 'a good balanced education' (Yunupingu, 1994, p. 2). He found that academic skills came easily, probably partly because of the traditional knowledge and skills he brought with him to Western schooling, as well as his own abilities. Indeed, he was an accomplished singer, dancer and speaker of 10 or more clan languages before he began to learn English.

He was also strongly influenced during his early life by his identification with the political struggles of his parents' generation. Indeed, his father, uncles and other elders in the Yolngu community were active in resisting the assimilationist policies that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s when he was growing up. The court battle for Aboriginal land rights had begun. The older generation's struggles were to become Yunupingu's own lifelong struggle and developmental impetus. He sought through his music and his teaching to achieve a growth-promoting balance between Aboriginal and mainstream goals and values. As he himself explained, like the complex organic life of an ocean or a billabong:

The balance of Yolngu life is achieved through ebb and flow of competing interests, through our elaborate kinship system. And I feel that in the same ways balance between black and white in Australia can be achieved ... Active participation of Aboriginal peoples will renew Australian life during the twenty-first century. But it will need Aboriginal people who are strong and balanced, rooted in their families and their land. This will depend on Aboriginal people being educated as balanced contemporary Aboriginal Australians, something which will only happen when this education is inspired by their land. (1994, pp. 4–5)

of the personality into a coherent whole. The young person gains a sense of purpose and sees a niche for the expression of goals in the wider community. But this is not the end of personality growth. In fact, according to Jane Kroger (1989), identity development continues throughout the lifespan. She studied a group of 100 middle-aged New Zealand adults and found that at least some of the identity issues listed above had continued to occupy most of these men and women for major portions of their lives. But the identity decisions they had reached during adoles-

cence provided the framework for a better understanding of their adult-development pathways. Thus, Kroger's findings were consistent with Erikson's (1968) idea that:

A sense of identity is never gained or maintained once and for all. Like a good conscience, it is consistently lost and regained, although more lasting and economical methods of maintenance and restoration are evolved and fortified in later adolescence. (p. 74)

BOX 11.9



Can you assess identity?

In a study of 622 Melbourne high school students, Doreen Rosenthal and her colleagues (Rosenthal, Gurney & Moore, 1981) posed the simple question 'Who am I?' Respondents listed answers that reflected who they felt they were and how they thought about themselves. The self-descriptions were placed in one of two categories that can be described as follows:

- *identity-resolved (I)*: the person has a clear sense of identity
- *identity-not-yet-developed (Not-I)*: the person has no clear sense of self as yet.

Instructions: To assess your understanding of the identity construct, try grouping each of the following Melbourne students' responses as (I) or (Not-I) in terms of whether or not the response reflects a developed sense of identity. (*Answers appear on page 384 at the end of the chapter.*)

1. 'I've got it together.'
2. 'I feel mixed up.'
3. 'I like myself and I'm proud of what I stand for.'
4. 'I've got a clear idea of what I want to be.'
5. 'I can't decide what I want to do with my life.'
6. 'I change my opinion of myself a lot.'
7. 'I know what kind of person I am.'
8. 'I find I have to keep up a front and pretend I'm bigger and better than I really am.'
9. 'I don't know what I really feel about things.'
10. 'I'm up-front and I don't try to bluff my way through.'

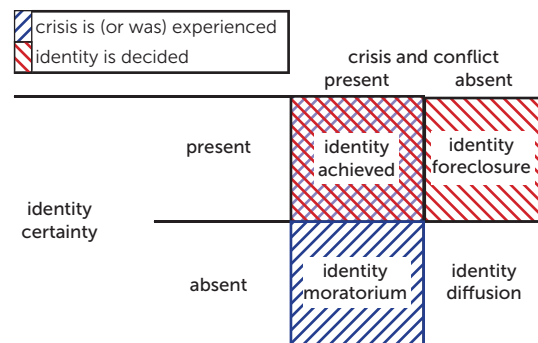
Identity statuses

According to Erikson, adolescents must actively confront uncertainties and personality conflicts in order to achieve the dialectical synthesis of opposing elements in the self that will enable identity growth. This is because a secure sense of self must build upon genuinely essential personal characteristics. When adolescents opt out of the inner crisis through anxious avoidance, they may outwardly display a superficial appearance of having achieved a sense of identity, but it will be ill-fitting. This is to be expected of an identity that someone else has chosen for them rather than one of their own making. When this happens, the adolescent is said to be in a state of *identity foreclosure*. Individuals with foreclosed identities have an apparent commitment to identity choices that may have been made for them by parents (as when an eldest son is expected to follow in the father's footsteps in a family business) or by idiosyncratic, non-normative circumstances (as when a special talent for sport, music or ballet dancing leads to a decision from childhood to pursue this avenue of endeavour without exposure to alternative options).

Figure 11.12 shows how two intersecting developmental dimensions of (1) crisis confrontation and (2) a sense of certain commitment to an identity produce four different

FIGURE 11.12

Four identity statuses in relation to crisis experience and identity certainty



developmental outcomes to the identity search. Details of each of these statuses are outlined below.

Identity achievement

Identity achievers experience a period of crisis and turmoil, followed by active confrontation of the identity question, including exploration of a wide range of alternative identity options. An example of identity exploration in the context of dating appears in Box 11.10. Exploration and crisis confrontation are likely to become more urgent priorities as older adolescents are forced to make decisions about employment, higher education, relationships, sexuality and morality. After a period of crisis, doubt, extensive soul searching and decision making, adolescents in this status achieve a coherent sense of self that guides their philosophy of life and practical choices about a future lifestyle and life tasks to which they feel a sense of commitment.

Identity moratorium

Sometimes, identity achievement occurs smoothly after a relatively brief crisis and an efficient period of identity exploration. But, in other cases, identity development can be blocked—by the adolescent's own personality and/or by such life circumstances as poverty, educational deprivation, war or economic recession. In the face of such barriers, an identity moratorium may provide an effective long-term solution. The moratorium involves a protracted identity crisis, often entailing a painful period when all identity commitments are temporarily suspended and the individual feels lost and confused.

Erikson (1968) illustrated the moratorium with the case of a family friend called Jill (not her real name). When Erikson first met her as a child, Jill seemed highly intelligent, but she was also obese, a tomboy and in bitter rivalry with her older brothers. After puberty, she 'straightened out and up', became popular and physically attractive, and earned good grades in high school. But then, part way through her university course, her moratorium began. She refused to return to university, deciding instead to remain on a ranch that her parents had visited during the summer holidays. For a year she did no study and met

BOX 11.10

A case in point

Identity exploration through social comparison

During Louise's first term at the University of Adelaide, her parents spent six months travelling around New Zealand. She lived in a college near the campus and wrote to her parents regularly. Her father copied a passage from one of her letters into his diary. It illustrates how, as an identity-uncertain adolescent girl, she was somewhat overawed by the forceful identity that a male acquaintance was already displaying as a first-year university student.

25 March. *We sent Louise a New Zealand greenstone pendant as a seventeenth birthday present. She had apparently not yet received it on the 20th when she wrote us: 'On Wednesday night ... all the freshers from the three boys' colleges in Adelaide were invited to St Martha's. It was smashing. I spent most of the evening with this type that is the sort you expect to find attending a university. He sort of brags but it isn't like bragging. He tells things he did as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. For example, he told me about the time he and his friend pinched a fire hydrant and planted it in somebody's front yard and another time they pinched one of those red flags you find around construction work and painted a hammer and sickle on it and walked up and down the street with it. He was very amusing but he wanted me to go to some do at St Mark's (his college) Saturday (tonight) but I was already going to Diana's and besides I didn't really fancy that sort of thing on such short acquaintance.'*

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few people her own age. She spent her time herding horses and cattle and bottle-nursing newborn animals by the campfire. After that, her moratorium over, she returned to university with a more complex identity. This new personality pattern incorporated the vivacious, bossy and masculine tendencies she had displayed as a child into a plan for 'nurturant activities' (perhaps veterinary studies?) which, according to Erikson, 'felt more like her', while at the same time being useful, worthwhile and practical.

When used in this way—as a breathing space prior to making irrevocable long-term commitments—the moratorium facilitates the effective resolution of difficult identity decisions. Thus, the identities that eventually emerge in moratorium individuals are often exceptionally worthwhile, creative and self-expressive.

Identity foreclosure

When the adolescent assumes an identity without going through a crisis, the result is identity foreclosure. From the outside, a foreclosed identity may seem similar to an achieved identity. But it often lacks synthesis and fails to express the person's genuine interests and personality strengths, because it has been imposed by parents or



Exceptional early success in a demanding role such as sport or ballet dancing may contribute to identity foreclosure.

other outside forces rather than deliberately chosen. Some adolescents opt out of the identity crisis by making a series of sudden and relatively irrevocable identity decisions, without ever seriously considering possible alternatives. Intense pressure from parents is a common reason for identity foreclosure. Consider the affluent 16-year-old Australian who, when asked what job he hoped to get when he left school, replied with no trace of hesitation, 'I shall work at my father's factory, until he retires, then take it over' (Connell et al., 1975, p. 150). Foreclosure of career identity may arise as a result of strong parental influence.

From her interviews with New Zealand adults, Jane Kroger (1995) illustrated identity foreclosure with the case of a man, Frank, who had entered a celibate religious order in his teens in accord with his father's ambition for him and his own intention since childhood. According to Kroger, this early decision limited Frank's identity exploration as an adolescent and young adult by restricting his contact with people with whom he could form intimate relationships or identity alternatives.

Identity diffusion

Identity diffusion characterises those individuals who are unable to make even the simplest identity decision. Blocked in their development before beginning to grapple with the identity crisis, these young people lack both commitment and crisis confrontation. To a greater extent than any other identity status, identity-diffused adolescents are apathetic, profoundly confused, insecure and withdrawn. According to Erikson (1968), the consequences of not facing the crisis—when coupled with the absence of any commitment to an identity imposed from the outside—include a profound lack of interest in people, activities, values and even life itself, as well as self-doubt, anxiety, depression and procrastination. Even routine decisions such as when to get up in the morning are fraught with stress.

Consequences of identity growth for personality and adjustment

As the central personality crisis during adolescence, development in the identity domain was postulated by