

Diffused and Confused?

A Developmental Model for Career Pathway Success



Diffused and Confused

A Developmental Model for Career Pathway Success

Mike Boyes, PhD



Lisa Betterton



Agenda

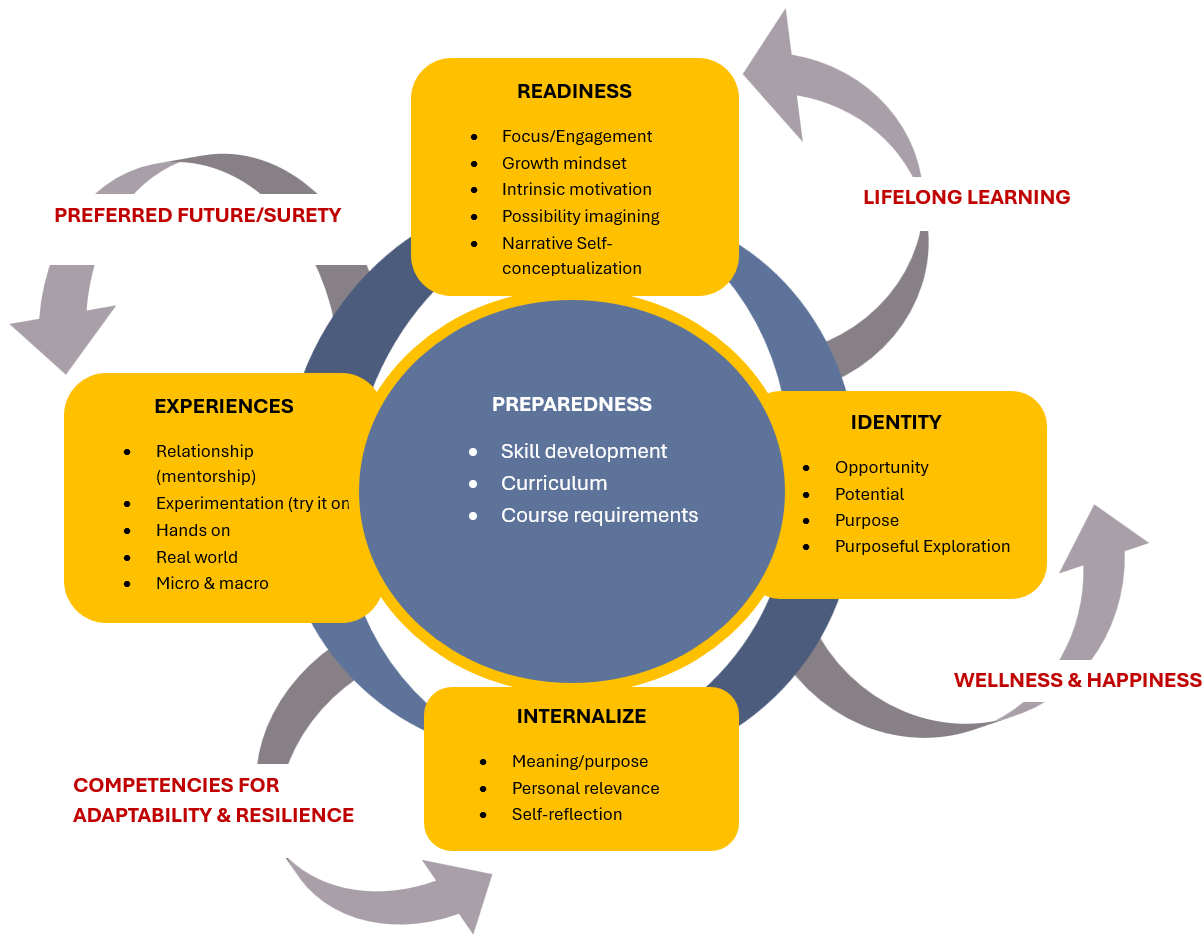
- Introduction
- Transition Gap
- Identity & Research
- Approaches (mentorship example)



Fusion Collegiate

- **To deliver vocation and skilled pathway education that seamlessly fuses secondary and post-secondary learning.**
- **Pathways: Skilled Trades; Aviation; Animal and Health Sciences; Business & Entrepreneurship; Discovery and exploration**
- **Programs: accelerator program (G12+) & G10-12**

Career Pathways & Skills Training Framework



Developed by:
Roz Wick
Dr Mike Boyes
Lisa Betterton

Career Pathways Design

Multiple experiences, wrapped within the career pathways and skilled training framework

Preparedness

=

Credentials
Microcredentials
Skill development

Readiness

=

Dual credit, work integrated learning, mentorship, career development programming throughout pathway programming



Identity



Transition Gap



Transition Gap



Transition Gap





Readiness and Preparedness Among 1st Year Postsecondary Students

- Students in my first year Psychology courses
- A diverse sample
- ALL were *Prepared* (we admitted them!)
- Many managed their transitions to postsecondary life and experience well
- Many did not...
- What did we look at to understand the differences?

Adjustment: The College Adjustment Scales (9 Scales)



(higher scores = more issues)

1. Anxiety
2. Interpersonal Problems
3. Depression
4. Career Problems
5. Suicidal Ideation.
6. Substance Abuse
7. Self-Esteem Problems
8. Financial Problems
9. Academic Problems

Identity Building Approaches

“
Who am I?”

“
How am I going
to get there?”

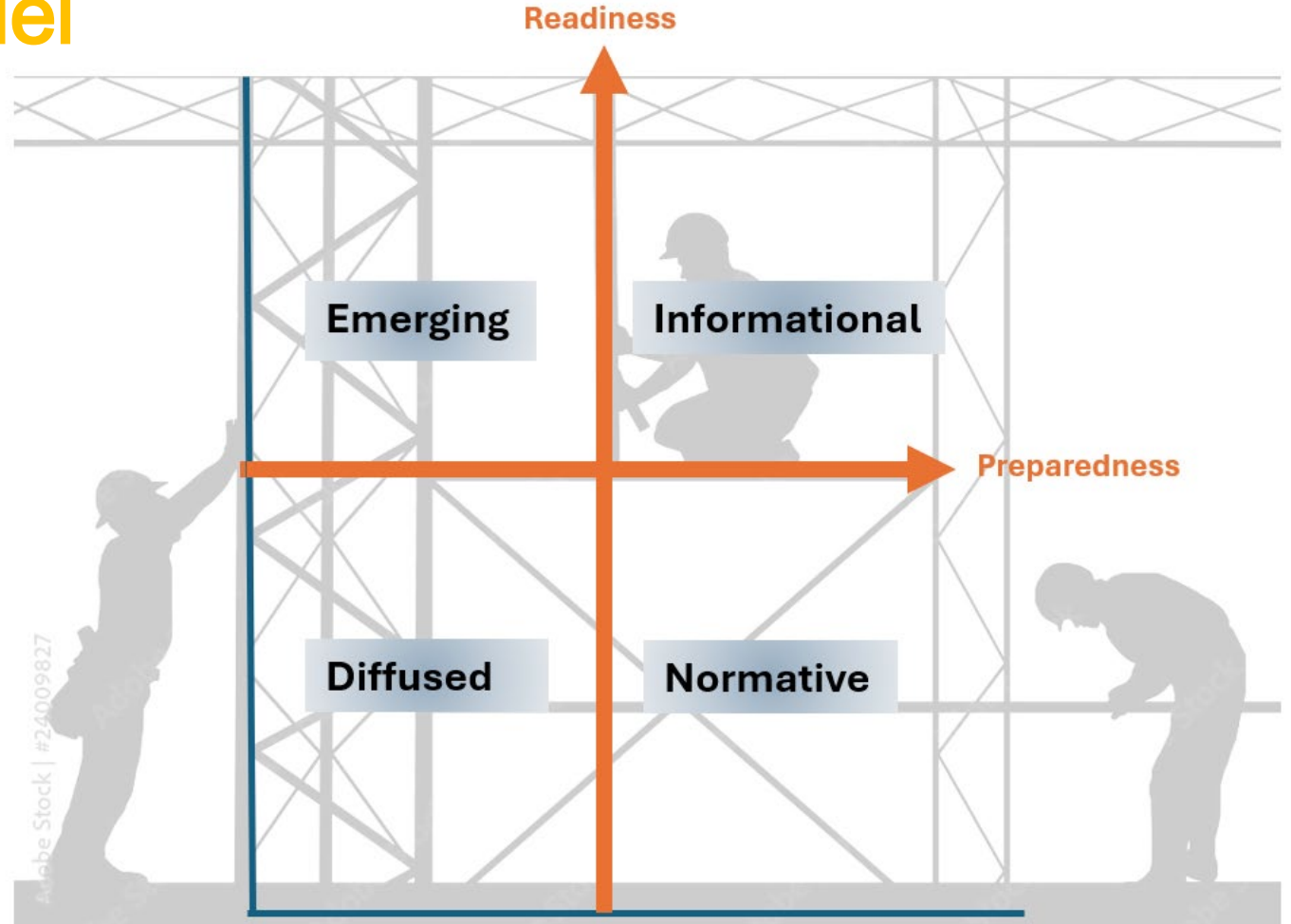
Identity Styles

- Informational (27%)
- Normative (29%)
- Diffused (43%)

Measure (Berzonsky)

“
Where do I want to go?”

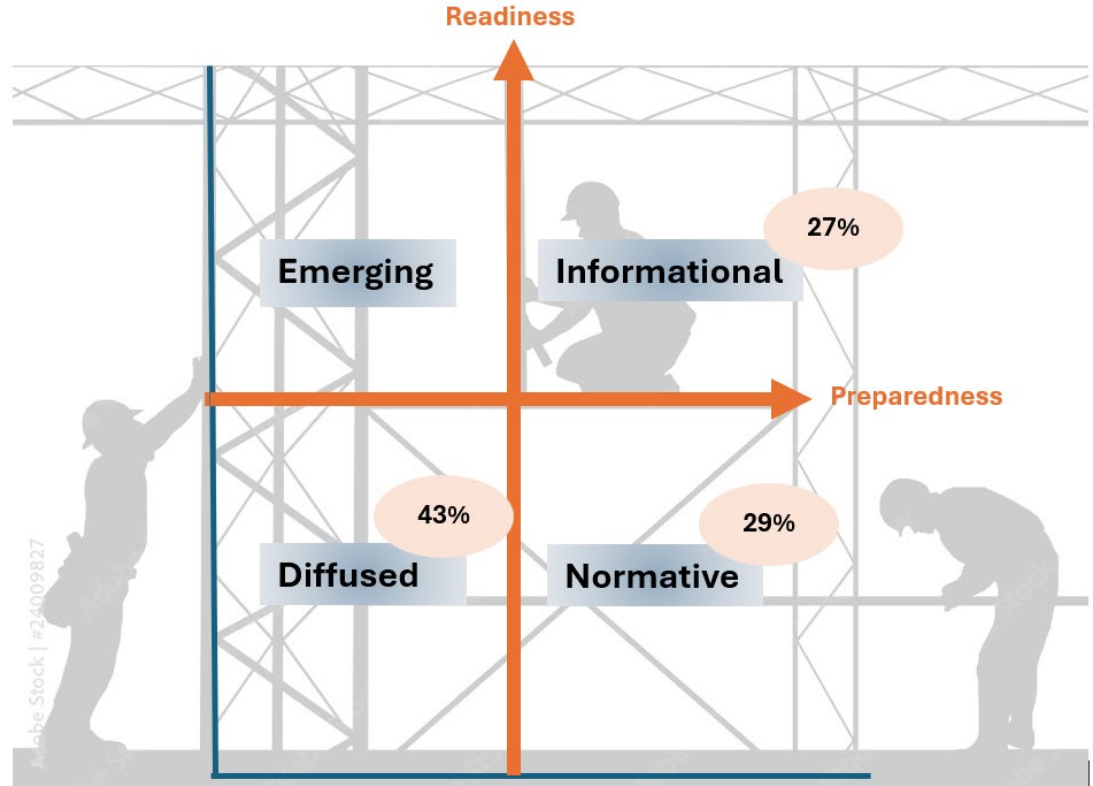
Identity Model



Our Research Data

Preferred Identity Building Approach

	Informational	Normative	Diffused	
N	114	123	183	420
%	27%	29%	43%	



Readiness and Preparedness Amongst 1st Year Postsecondary Students

Anxiety	Interpersonal Problems	Depression	Career Problems	Suicidal Ideation
Diffused	Diffused	Diffused	Diffused	Diffused
Informational	Informational	Informational	Informational	Informational
Normative	Normative	Normative	Normative	Normative

Substance Abuse	Self-Esteem Problems	Financial Problems	Academic Problems
Diffused	Diffused	Diffused	Diffused
Normative	Informational	Informational	Normative
Informational	Normative	Normative	Informational

Scores

- Scores at or above the 85th percentile on the CAS scales are referable
- 65% of the students using Informational or Normative Identity Building Approaches were over the 85th %'ile on **0 or 1 CAS scale**
- 65% of the students using a Diffused Identity Building Approach were over the 85th %'ile on **2 or MORE CAS scales**



Readiness and Preparedness Amongst 1st Year Postsecondary Students



- There are a LOT of Support/Assistance Resources available
- Who is aware of them? Who uses them?
- Informal Resources (7 listed)
- Formal Resources (21 listed)
- Students using an Informational Identity Building Approach were aware of slightly more resources than those using other Approaches
- Students using an Informational Identity Building Approach or a Normative Approach accessed significantly more resources (10 and 9) than students using a Diffused Approach (7)
- WHAT TO DO?

WHAT TO DO?



- Developmentally Informed Outreach Strategies?
- How about Developmentally Informed Prevention Strategies?
- How about Developmentally Informed/Focussed Transition Readiness/Scaffolding Strategies?
- Psychology For Everyday Life - Dual Credit course
 - Readiness focus
 - Psychology Content
 - Assignments
- Does it impact readiness and wellbeing?

WHAT TO DO?

- Over past 5 years 393 students have taken PFEL dual credit course
- It attracts students using a Informational Approaches (51%)
- Normative 29% and Diffused 20% (at start of course)
- At the end of the course most using an Informational approach stayed there (90%)
- 50% of those using a Diffused approach shifted to an Informational Approach (19% to Normative)
- 38% of those using a Normative Approach shifted to an Informational Approach

Developmental Dual Credit

A little psychology

A little applied developmental psychology

- identity assignment
- stress/coping assignment
- pathfinding exercise/goal setting assignment

Developmental Bundle

Teen/Young Adult Developmental Bundle

Higher Order Thinking

Possibility Imagining, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Analysis and Planning, Self-Reflection, Narrative Self-conceptualization, Systems Thinking (including Social Systems), Purposeful Engagement



Developmental Bundle

**Higher Order Thinking Skills are NOT Content.
Their emergence is tied to:**

Development (Frontal Lobes)

Exploration,

Experience,

Advance/Focus





Key Developmental Transitions

School Entry

K to 3

Secondary Years

GAP or just uncharted and
unscaffolded?

Fusion


Implementing the identify tool as guide to align programs and experiences

Measure for the impact of strategies, did we shift identity – move toward informational?

Broad guide for targeted programming

Helps with G12+ students on accelerated path, less time



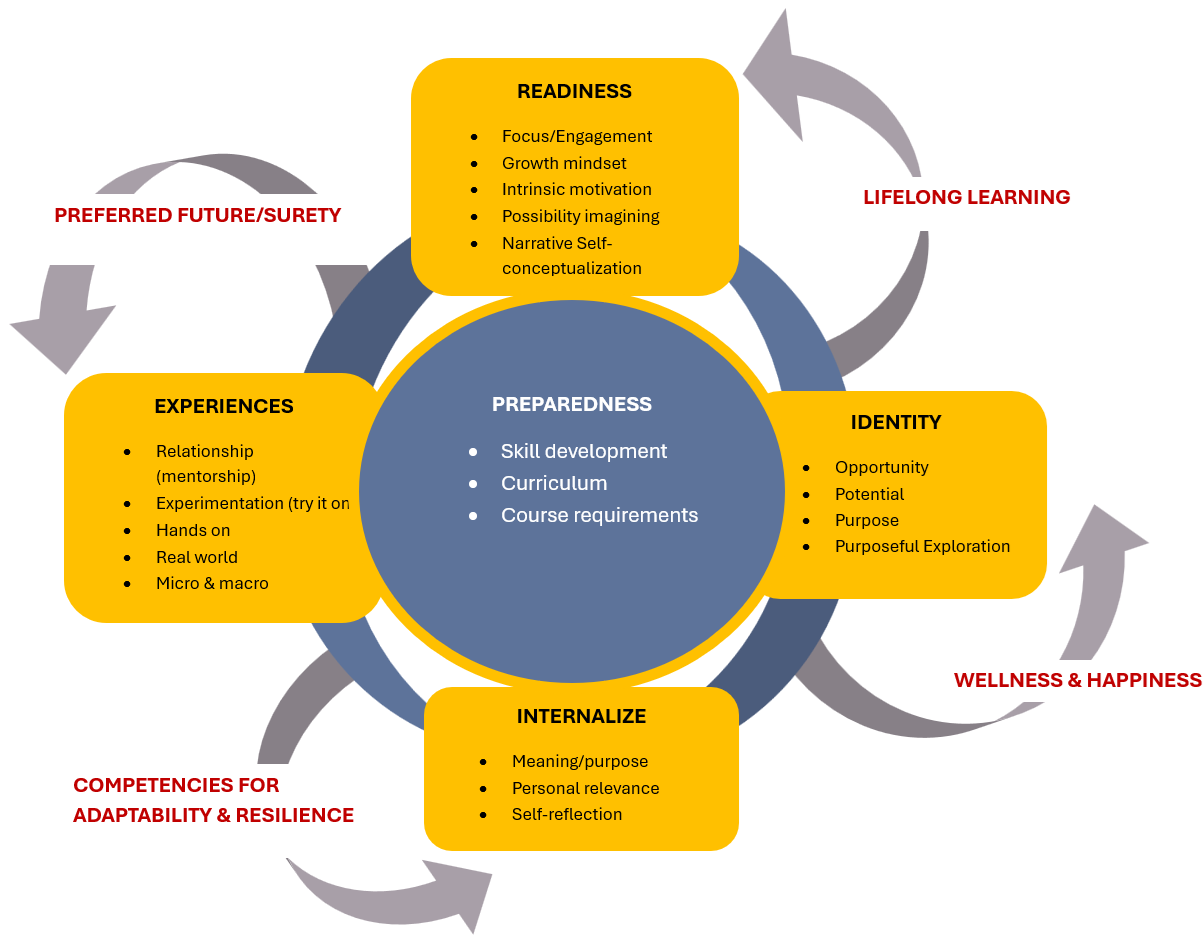


How does identity guide shape career pathway design?

Micro - short term, less risk, one day, one week, fits within the idea of experimentation
“Try it out” – diffused/normative

Macro - longer term, more at stake, more comprehensive, building on the idea of surety, building up competencies and skills – informational/normative

Career Pathways & Skills Training Framework



Developed by:
Roz Wick
Dr Mike Boyes
Lisa Betterton

Mentorship (identity style)

Identity Style	Mentorship Focus	Key Strategies
Normative	Expand thinking beyond external expectations	Affirm structure, introduce new ideas, gentle push
Informational	Support and deepen active exploration	Provide options, reflection, challenge thinking
Diffused	Re-engage and build self-awareness	Relationship-first, low-pressure exploration



Mentorship - Diffused

Diffused – our majority!

- Low engagement in identity formation
- Avoids decision-making or commitment
- May appear indifferent, anxious, or disengaged

Diffused

Re-engage and build self-awareness

Relationship-first, low-pressure exploration



Mentorship Approach

- Start with relationship-building, frequent check-ins
- Use low-stakes, experiential exposure (e.g., job shadowing, short workshops) – the micro experiences!
- Avoid overwhelming with choices; instead, scaffold options. Breadth of experiences. Exploration
- Concrete, hands-on
- Normalize not knowing, and growing slowly
- Create “next-step” goals instead of long-term plans



Normalize not
knowing

Mentorship - Informational

Informational

- Curious, reflective, and actively exploring identity and career paths
- Open to feedback and new information
- Likely to seek out mentors and opportunities on their own

Informational

Support and deepen active exploration

Provide options, reflection, challenge thinking

Mentorship Approach

Mentorship Approach

- Act as a collaborative guide to support reflection, not just direction.
- Expose students to diverse opportunities with a depth of experiences. (time, commitment). Advance and focus
- Encourage exploration across roles and disciplines
- External mentorship is important
- Through internships, networking

Mentorship - Normative

Normative Identity Style

- Those who thrive on structure and often adopt values or career goals from influential adults or role models without much personal exploration
- Strong alignment with community expectations
- Often limited personal exploration
- Adopts values and goals from others
- Often values structure and tradition

Normative

Expand thinking beyond external expectations

Affirm structure, introduce new ideas, gentle push

Mentorship Approach

- Validate structure and existing goals while inviting curiosity
- Use tools like journaling or interest surveys/inventories
- Exploration in breadth or Exploration in depth
- Offer relatable role models who illustrate diverse career pathways

Move from external motivation → toward internal ownership of career and identity.

This approach helps build identity ownership over time, without disrupting core values or overwhelming with too many choices.



Measure

- Current year 35 students
- 250 next year
- Impact of strategies on identity development



QUESTIONS

Connect: Dr Mike Boyes – boyes@ucalgary.ca

Lisa Betterton – lbetterton@fusioncollegiate.ca

Thank you
