What is student development theory?

- “Theoretical models... [that] effectively describe college students and provide...a coherent picture of individual development” (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978, p. viii)
- Theories “upon which we could base our practice and which might provide constancy amid the changing conditions to which higher education is subjected” (p. viii)
Why study theory?

• Learning inside and outside the classroom
• Missing piece
• Understand how students develop
• Understand how to help them develop
Why use theory?

- Serve as a guide, framework
- Common language
- Process information and respond
- Be proactive
- Evaluate work
Types of Theories

- **Psychosocial** – how individuals relate to themselves and others
- **Cognitive-Structural** – how individuals view the world or make sense of their experiences
- **Typological** – examine individual differences in how people view and relate to the world
- **Person-Environment** – how the environment influences behavior
Psychosocial Theories

- Schlossberg’s Transition Theory (1995)
- Cass’s Model of Homosexual Identity Formation (1979)
- D’Augelli’s Model of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Development (1994)
Cognitive-Structural Theories

- Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1970)
- Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s Women’s Ways of Knowing (1986)
- Baxter Magolda’s Model of Epistemological Reflection (1992)
- Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development (1969)
- Gilligan’s Theory of Women’s Moral Development (1982)
- Fowler’s Stages of Spiritual Development (1981)
Typology Theories

• Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning (1976)
• Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments (1985, 1992)
• Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1980)
Person-Environment Theories

• Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments (1985, 1992)
• Perceptual Models - Moos (1976), Stern (1970), Pervin (1967)
Chickering’s Seven Vectors

• Original in 1969
• Research conducted between 1959 and 1965
• White, male students at private college
• Targeted faculty in his writings – by chance contributed to student affairs
• Vectors – direction and magnitude
• Students move at different rates, re-examine issues later
• Vectors build on each other, can interact
• Revised in 1993 with Reisser
Vector 1 – Developing Competence

• Three-tined pitchfork
  – Intellectual competence – knowledge and skills related to particular subject matter
  – Physical/manual skills – athletic, recreational, wellness, artistic, and manual skills
  – Interpersonal skills – communication, leadership, working effectively with others

• Handle is sense of competence
Vector 2 – Managing Emotions

- Recognize and accept emotions
- Learn to act on them in a responsible manner
- Appropriately express and control them
Vector 3 – Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence

- Emotional independence – “freedom from continual and pressing needs for assurance, affection, or approval from others” (Chickering and Reisser, 1993, p. 117)
- Instrumental independence – self-direction, problem-solving ability, and mobility
Vector 4 – Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

• Development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance of difference

• Capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships with partners and close friends

• Chickering moved this vector up in sequence – relationships contribute to sense of self
Vector 5 – Establishing Identity

• Builds on previous vectors
• Added complexity – difference in identity development based on gender, ethnic background, and sexual orientation
• Includes comfort with body and appearance, gender and sexual orientation, social and cultural heritage, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and personal stability and integration
Vector 6 – Developing Purpose

- Developing clear vocational interests
- Making commitments to specific personal interests and activities
- Establishing strong interpersonal commitments
Vector 7 – Developing Integrity

• Humanizing values – progress from rigid, moralistic thinking to value system where interests of others are balanced with one’s own interests
• Personalizing values – core values confirmed, beliefs of others are acknowledged and respected
• Developing congruence – values/actions become congruent as self-interest is balanced by sense of social responsibility
Environmental Influences

• **Institutional objectives** – clear objectives used to guide development of programs/services

• **Institutional size** – balance of students and opportunities

• **Student-faculty relationships** – see faculty in a variety of situations – perceive faculty as real people

• **Curriculum** – relevant curriculum that is sensitive to individual differences, offers diverse perspectives, helps student make sense of what is being studied
Environmental Influences cont.

• **Teaching** – involve active learning, student-faculty interaction, timely feedback, high expectations, respect for learning differences

• **Friendships and student communities** – shared interests exist, significant interactions for development along all vectors

• **Student development programs and services** – collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs
Environmental Influences cont.

• **Integration of work and learning** – collaboration with businesses, community, and universities for developmental opportunities

• **Recognition and respect for individual differences** – recognize differences, adjust interactions/interventions to address differences

• **Acknowledgment of cyclical nature of learning and development** – learning involves periods of differentiation and integration, equilibrium and disequilibrium – opportunities for new perspectives and complex understanding
References


