Student Development Theory

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Why is Student Development Theory Important?

- Justifies our profession and legitimatizes relevance of Student Affairs Professionals
- Helps us understand our audience; talk their language
- Helps us “meet students where they are”
- Teaches us how students rationalize, behave and develop as human beings
- Helps us understand opportunities and limits
SDT also...

- **Helps** us:
  - understand where students are within a human development continuum (where they were and where they are going developmentally);
  - understand how to address the “whole person”
  - complement academics with co-curriculars;
  - account for the development and needs of special populations

- **Provides** “description, explanation, prediction, and control” (DiCaprio, 1974, in Forney, Evans & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).
Characteristics of Millennials

- Through their research, Howe and Strauss (2000) found that seven key characteristics define today’s 18-22 year old college students (as well as 23-25 year old graduate students). These traits include:

  - **Special** - many from smaller families with fewer siblings to compete with, so received greater attention and increased security from mom and dad (known as “helicopter parents” due to their constant hovering around their children).

  - **Sheltered** - more than previous generations, parents kept them closer to home with a focus on safety and connection to family, but also involved with many organized activities and sports.

  - **Confident** - increased parental involvement and coaching/external adult involvement gave them lots of support and self-confidence.
Millennial Characteristics cont.

- **Team-oriented** - grew up among most diverse American population ever, and learned to be civil and less “me-oriented” than previous generations. Learned early on to “play nice and share”.

- **Conventional** - more resourceful, dynamic, and environmentally conscious than previous generations.

- **Pressured** - overscheduled, over-mentored, and driven to succeed among peers, in part due to increased pressure to attend college (or in many cases exceptional colleges) in order to succeed in life.

- **High achieving** - future-oriented, planners, focus on long-term success.
Basic Assumptions of the Student Development Movement

- The individual student must be considered as a whole.
- Each student is a unique person and must be treated as such.
- The total environment of the student is educational and must be used to help the student achieve full development.
- The major responsibility for a student's personal and social development rests with the student and his/her personal resources.

Major Schools of Theory:

- **Cognitive and Moral Development Theories**
  Examine the development of how students grow cognitively and intellectually, including how they interpret the world around them. Examines the way people think but not what they think (Evans, 1996). [Jean Piaget, then W. Perry, L. Knefelkamp, C. King & K. Kitchener, M. Baxter Magolda, L. Kohlberg and C. Gilligan]

- **Typology Theories**
  Examine individual differences in how students view and relate to the world (Evans, 1996). [Carl Jung, then D. Kolb, J. Holland, Myers-Briggs, Keirsey & Bates]

- **Learning and Adult Development Theories**
  Examine how non-traditional aged college students learn and develop. [J.B. Watson, Skinner, Bandura, Maslow, Schlossberg...]
Major Schools of Theory: (continued)

- **Psychosocial Theories**
  Examine individuals’ personal and interpersonal lives (Evans, 1996). “A sequence of developmental tasks or stages confronted by adults when their biology and psychology converge” (Erikson, 1950, 1968) and “qualitatively change their thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relating to others and self” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Examine the content of development, the important issues students face as their lives progress, such as defining themselves and their relationships with others, and “what to be when they grow up.”

- **Person-Environment Theories**
  Examine the relationship between env. and student.
Key Definitions

- **Change** – Any condition that is altered from a previous condition, be it positive, negative, healthy or unhealthy.

- **Growth** – The adding of something to a pre-existing status. The expansion of personality traits.

- **Development** – A process. The organization of increasing complexity of an organism. The integration of subsystems into the whole without their losing separate identities. ALWAYS positive and healthy.
Key Concepts

- Optimal student development requires an environment with a proper balance of challenge and support.
- Behavior is a function of the person and the environment.
- Understanding “holistic learning” is essential, including taking an overall, inclusive approach concerning physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual factors that affect health.
- Developmental tasks are skills and competencies that are mastered and acquired by an individual as he/she gains increasing mastery over their environment.
- Crisis often results from disequilibrium (when one does not have the skills to manage a situation).
Six Sources of Influence by Colleges and Universities
or where we choose to have an affect

- Clarity and consistency of objectives
- Institutional size
- Curriculum, teaching and evaluation
- Residence hall arrangements
- Faculty and administration
- Friends, group, student culture

(Sandeen, A. 1991)
Student Development
Theories

A selection of those in use at UNCW
Erik Erikson’s (1959) Life Span Model (Eight Stages of Development)

1. Infancy (birth-2)…Basic trust versus mistrust between mother and child
2. Toddlerhood (2-4)…Autonomy versus shame and doubt (potty training)
3. Early School Age (5-7)…Initiative versus guilt (masturbation)
4. Middle School Age (8-12)…Industry versus inferiority (school work)
5. Late Adolescence (18-22)…Individual identity versus role diffusion (adolescence)
6. Early Adulthood (23-34)…Intimacy versus Isolation (marriage)
7. Middle Adulthood (35-60)…Generativity versus stagnation (parenting)
8. Late Adulthood (61-)…Integrity versus despair (dealing with death)
Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning (1964)

- A solid model for self development and nurturing leadership:

- Three domains of learning are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor:
  - The **Cognitive** domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills.
  - The **Affective** domain includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, and our attitude.
  - The **Psychomotor** domain includes physical movement, coordination, and the use of motor skills.

- Adding domain of communication = CASK.
Bloom’s Taxonomy

- **Application**
  - A good developmental model for advising students and supervising staff.
  - Helps us address the needs of the “whole student” by focusing on K, S, A...
  - Helps us engage students in practical learning experiences.
  - Others...
Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1954)

Maslow published his first conceptualization of his theory over 50 years ago (Maslow, 1943) and it has since become one of the most popular and often cited theories of human motivation.
The Levels Are:

1) Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.;

2) Safety/Security: out of danger;

3) Belongingness and Love: affiliate with others, be accepted; and

4) Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.

5) Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore;

6) Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty;

7) Self-Actualization: to find self-fulfillment and realize one's potential; and

8) Transcendence: to help others find self-fulfillment and realize their potential.
Maslow’s Hierarchy

- Application
  - Summer orientation addresses fundamentals of housing, food plan, parking and academic schedule.
  - Convocation & UNCWelcome address issues of belonging and esteem.
Arthur Chickering’s Seven Vectors
(1969; Linda Reisser in 1993)

Introduced “vectors” as series of developmental tasks both having direction and magnitude. One may work through more than one concurrently, but each stage is the central focus at any given time. Implies fluid motion of development.

1. Developing competence
2. Managing emotions
3. Moving through autonomy toward independence
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships
5. Establishing identity
6. Developing purpose
7. Developing integrity
Five Elements of Identity Resolution

1) Experimentation with varied roles

2) Experiencing choice

3) Meaningful achievement

4) Freedom from excessive anxiety

5) Time for reflection and introspection
Chickering’s Vectors

- Application...
  - What are examples of where UNCW establishes opportunities for student development using Chickering’s Vectors?
Chickering’s Vectors

- Developing Competence
  - Student employment, community service, applied learning, student leadership, intramurals...

- Managing Emotions
  - Residential living, community standards, classrooms, LLCs, counseling center, campus conduct board...

- Autonomy to independence
  - Orientation, use of FERPA, diversity education, residential living, group projects...
Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
- Student orgs, campus employment, faculty/staff interactions...

Establishing Identity
- Choosing a major, campus involvement, choosing peer groups, cultural arts...

Developing Purpose
- Career center...

Developing Integrity
- Orientation, community standards, campus conduct, honor code...
Racial, Ethnic and Gender Theories

- **Address specific developmental needs...**
  - Identity Development in Women (Josselson, Taub & McEwen, Greeley & Tinsley...)
  - Racial and Ethnic Development (Cross, Helms, Torres, Phinney...)
  - LGBT Development (Cass, Wall, Evans & D’Augelli)
The “W-Curve”

- A predictable pattern of stages occurs when a person experiences culture shock; applicable to first-year college students.
- Evidences process of integrating new students into the college environment.

From U. Minn, Duluth site; based on Zeller & Mosier (1993) Study Abroad Research.
The “W-Curve”

Honeymoon

Initial Adjustment

Cultural Shock

Mental Isolation

Acceptance & Integration
The “W” Curve

Application

- The Freshmen Year Experience addresses these cycles.
- Role of the Seahawk Links anticipates these cycles.
- Parents are told to anticipate these cycles during orientation and again through newsletters timed to coincide with the cycles.

Move - In
Four Environmental Concepts:

Consider how principles and concepts define effective person environment interactions through four environmental concepts:

- Physical
- Aggregate
- Organizational
- Socially constructed
Three Fundamental Conditions of Educational Environments

Today 30-60% of students leave college without a degree. Educational environments are most powerful when they offer students three fundamental conditions.

HOW DOES UNCW offer the following?

1) A sense of security and inclusion
2) Mechanisms for involvement
3) An experience of community

Strange & Banning, 2001
Fundamental Conditions

Security and Inclusion

Mechanism for Involvement
An Experience of Community
Physical Features Create a Critical First Impression

The appearance of campus is critical during campus visits; student friendliness is next.

Three positions:

- Architectural determinism or “environmentalism” dictates what we can physically do in a building based on its design (exits, etc.)

- Architectural possibilism sets limits but does not restrict behavior. (How walkways guide us from and to certain areas of campus.)

- Architectural probabilism says certain behaviors have likely links to the built environment. Locations and warmth of designs of buildings dictate their ease and frequency of use.
Environmental Theory

- Application
  - Design of the Campus Life Complex
    - Student Media Center
    - Lounge spaces
  - Design of new residential communities
UNCW Examples

Lounge/Gathering Spaces

Residence Hall Room
John Dewey’s  
Democracy and Education (1916)

- We must set up conditions which stimulate visible and tangible ways of acting...making the individual a sharer or partner in the associated activity so that he feels its success as his success, its failure as his failure...

- Social environments form the mental and emotional disposition of behavior in individuals by engaging them in activities that arouse and strengthen certain impulses, that have certain purposes and entail certain consequences.

- The unconscious influence of the environment is so subtle and pervasive that it affects every fiber of character and mind.

- We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit change, allow the environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for a purpose makes a great difference.
All of us have many habits of whose import we are quite unaware, since they were formed without our knowing what we were about. Consequently, they possess us, rather than we them. They move us; they control us. Unless we become aware of what they accomplish, and pass judgment upon the worth of the result, we do not control them. [importance of introspection and teaching self-reflection in students]

On the Conditions of Growth...In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young. Since the young at a given time will at some later date compose the society of that period, the latter’s nature will largely turn upon the direction children’s activities were given at an earlier period. This cumulative movement of action toward a later result is what is meant by growth...The primary condition of growth is immaturity.
Thank you for attending!

“Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.”

-- John Dewey