Working with College Students: Applying Student Development Theories to Practice

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Presentation Overview

- Purpose of SD Theory
- History of SD Theory
- Overview of SD Theories
- Theory to Practice
- Discussion
- Resources
What we stand for . . .

Student Affairs Mission Statement

Together we provide an environment for our diverse student population to reach their greatest potential through inspiration, accessibility, and support.

Student Affairs Overview

UAA Student Affairs departments and staff are committed to providing student-centered services and programs that support students' academic and social integration into the UAA community, engage students in active learning, and foster the growth and development of each student.
What is Student Development?

• How students grow, change, and learn

• Environmental influences

“the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her development capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” ~ Rodgers, 1990.
Purpose of Theory

- Informal theories
- Theoretic base for knowledge, expertise, and practice
- Creates a common language (community of scholars)
- Describe, explain, predict, and control

“enables student affairs professionals to proactively identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in students” ~ Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998.
History of SD Theory

• From other fields of study
  • Human development
  • Developmental psychology
  • Organizational behavior
  • Counseling psychology
  • Social psychology

• **1920’s**: Vocational guidance movement

• **1925 - 1937**: “Student Personnel Point of View”

• **1960’s**: Social Scientist - Focused on how students grow and change in college.

• **1960’s to Present**: Explosion of development theory
Overview of Theories

• Typology
  • Examines individual differences in how people view and relate to the world
    • Myers-Briggs (E/I N/S T/F P/J – 16 patterns)
    • Holland (vocational personalities and work environments – six personality types)
    • StrengthsQuest (positive psychology – Themes)

• Psychosocial
  • Examines individuals personal and interpersonal lives
    • Chickering (Seven vectors of development)
    • Erickson (Eight development crises)
• Cognitive-Structural
  • Examines the changes in the way people think
    • Perry (scheme of intellectual and ethic development)
    • Kohlberg (theory of moral development)
    • Gilligan (different voice model)

• Identity
  • Examines the complexities of race, class, gender, sexual orientation in personal and social development
    • Cross (African American identity formation)
    • Helms (White racial identity development)
    • Fassinger & Miller (Lesiban and gay identity formation)
Overview Cont . . .

- **Generational**
  - Examines characteristics and experiences of a generation

- **Person-Environment**
  - Examines how social, academic, and physical environments impact people (same environment differently)
    - Astin (Student involvement)
One of the Big Three

Chickering, Perry, & Kohlberg
Chickering & Reisser (1993)

The Seven Vectors

- Developing Competence
  - Intellectual, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence

- Managing Emotions
  - Develop awareness and acceptance of emotions

- Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence
  - Function with self-sufficiency and self direction

- Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
  - Tolerance and appreciation of differences
  - Capacity for intimacy
Chickering Continued . . .

- Establishing Identity
  - Comfort with body and appearance
  - Comfort with gender and sexual orientation
  - Sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context
  - Clarification of self concept through roles and lifestyle
  - Sense of self in response to feedback from valued others
  - Self acceptance and self-esteem
  - Personal stability and integration

- Developing Purpose
  - Vocational plans and aspirations
  - Personal interests
  - Interpersonal and family commitments

- Developing Integrity
  - Humanizing values - shift from literal belief in absoluteness of rules
  - Personalizing values – set of personal guidelines
  - Developing congruence – behavior consistent with personalized values
Theory to Practice

- Uniqueness of each student
- Interconnected theories

Environmental factors
- Kind and size of institution
- Curriculum
- Faculty and teaching methods
- Student peers

Models
- Bridge between theory and practice
  - Procedural Model (way of accomplishing a practice)
    - Evan (1987) - using a variety of strategies
  - Process Model (series of action steps)
    - Knefelkamp, Golec, and Wells (1985) – 11 step model
Practice to Theory to Practice
(Knefelkamp, Golec, & Wells, 1985)

- **Practice**
  - Identifying concerns that need to be addressed
  - Determining desired goals and outcomes

- **Description**
  - Investigating theories that may be helpful in understanding the issue and achieving the desired goal
  - Analyzing relevant student characteristics from the perspective of the theories identified
  - Analyzing characteristics of the environment associated with the issues from the perspective of identified theories

- **Translation**
  - Identifying potential sources of challenge and support, taking into account both student and environment characteristics, and recognizing factors that produce balance

- **Prescription**
  - Reexamine goals and outcomes in light of the theoretical analysis
  - Designing the intervention using methods that will encourage achievement of goals

- **Practice**
  - Implementing the intervention
  - Evaluating the outcomes of the intervention
  - Redesigning the intervention if necessary
Activity: Our Students
Final Thoughts

- Don’t accept theories without question
- Consider the whole student
- Be careful to not use labels
- Facilitate growth in students
- Expand and add to knowledge base to improve student affairs practice
- Collaboration with academic and student affairs
- SD provides guidance toward enhancing student learning and personal development

“When your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail”
Discussion


