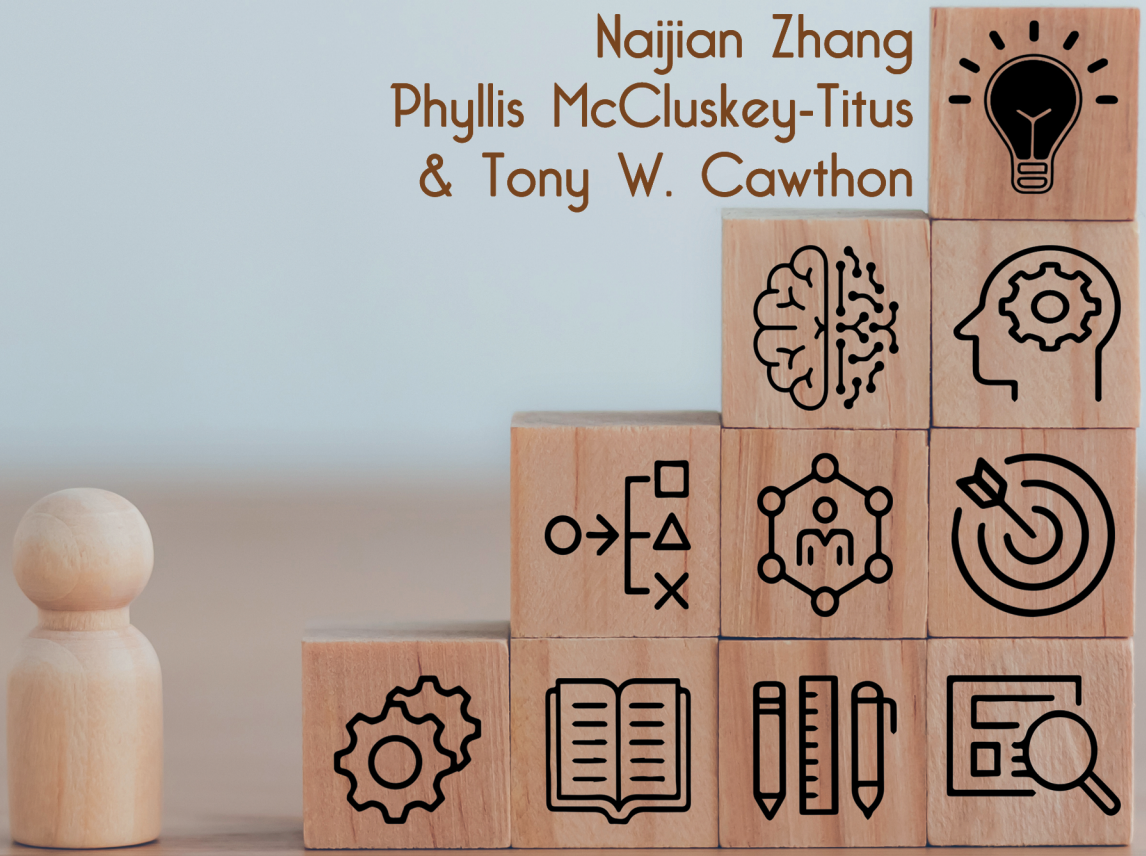
THEORY OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Integrations of Knowledge, Skills and Application

Naijian Zhang
Phyllis McCluskey-Titus
& Tony W. Cawthon



THEORY OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

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AMERICAN SERIES IN STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Edited by

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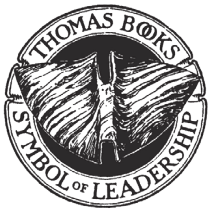

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FOREWORD

While I was studying as a graduate student in the College Student Personnel Program at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in the early 1990s, I was fortunate to have Dr. Patricia M. King teach my practicum course. Dr. King is the one who created the Reflective Judgment Model with Karen Kitchener (1994). In that course all the students were doing their practicum on a variety of university and college campuses both public and private in Ohio. Though I completed most of the required classes, I was still not sure what was the basis of the service I provided for college students. It was in that course I learned from Dr. King that the best practice is based on sound use of theories. That learning as a seed was planted in me ever since. I am grateful for Dr. King's teaching and guidance. With that seed imbedded in me I have come to believe the maxim by Donald E. Knuth, *the best practice is inspired by theory* and *the best theory is inspired by practice.* In the past 29 years, I have done research and practiced in the fields of student affairs in higher education and counseling. As a practitioner I have helped hundreds and thousands of students and clients. Besides conducting experimental studies, I have edited and co-edited two book series, one in student affairs (11 volumes) and another in counseling (24 volumes) with a total number of 35 books which all emphasize the integration of theory into practice. The book series *American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity* has attracted more than 150 scholars and practitioners in student affairs and higher education nationwide as chapter authors. In both series I co-edited a theory book. The current book *Theory of College Student Development: Integration of Knowledge, Skills and Application* is one of them. To edit this theory book, I have invited two experienced and distinguished scholars, educators, and practitioners in student affairs to join me. They are Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus and Dr. Tony Cawthon. I am grateful and feel privileged to have them on board and contribute their collective expertise and wisdom to this book.

Dr. McCluskey-Titus has both hands-on experiences in student affairs and systematic knowledge of student development theories. As a student affairs practitioner Dr. McCluskey-Titus held positions of assistant residence

hall director, residence hall director, quad coordinator, assistant and associate directors of university housing from 1979 to 1999. Her experience with students was first-hand. As a student affairs educator and scholar Dr. McCluskey-Titus, now Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Illinois State University, has trained and taught hundreds of student affairs professionals and chaired numerous doctoral dissertation committees. She has had more than 40 publications on a variety of issues in student affairs. Dr. McCluskey-Titus also served as editor of *Journal of College and University Student Housing* and associate editor of *College Student Affairs Journal.* In addition, she reviewed manuscripts for six other professional journals. Her experiences and knowledge in all these areas have become assets and treasures in the process of editing the current book. It is hard for me to imagine this book could be completed and become what it is now without her knowledge, expertise, and wisdom.

I got to know Dr. Tony Cawthon while I was editing the book *Multicultural and Diversity Issues in Student Affairs.* I feel fortunate to know him and his work. Dr. Tony Cawthon is Alumni Distinguished Professor/Professor of Higher Education in Student Affairs at Clemson University. He has worked as a practitioner, educator, and scholar in the field of student affairs of higher education for more than 30 years. His knowledge and hands-on experiences in student affairs are abundant. Dr. Cawthon held positions as director of residence life and judicial services, assistant and associate director of housing at Mississippi State University. He has published more than 40 articles, book chapters and books, and taught/mentored numerous student affairs professionals. His distinguished records in the field have made him a widely recognized and prominent educator and scholar. Due to what he has done for the profession he has received more than 50 professional awards. The most noticeable ones including the recent awards Robert H. Schaffer Award for Academic Excellence from National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2020, Outstanding Contribution to Student Affairs through Teaching from National Association of Student Personnel Administration in 2018, and Presidential Service Award from Association of College and University Housing Officers - International in 2012. He is a true educator, scholar, and practitioner. I feel honored to know him and work with him on this book and a few other projects. Words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for his expertise, wisdom, and support. I strongly believe the reader will benefit a great deal from Dr. Cawthon's knowledge, ideas, and insights in this book.

Theory of College Student Development: Integration of Knowledge, Skills and Application is a book which will provide you with all necessary knowledge about college student development theories. You will learn not only the cognitive-structural, psychosocial, integrative development theories but also

social identity development theories. More importantly this book takes a unique approach through which you learn how to apply the theories you will have learned to your daily student affairs practice. Furthermore, the editors of this book have integrated the three themes of the American Series in Student Affairs and Professional Identity: ACPA/NASPA Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, professional identity development, and application of theory to practice in each chapter and throughout the entire book. The uniqueness of this book is that all theories are applied to a single case study. This helps the reader to see how one case can be viewed and approached from multiple perspectives, and how the problem can be resolved based on sound theories. Since all the chapter authors have knowledge of college student development theory and hands-on experiences in student affairs, they have offered the reader an opportunity to see how they applied theories into practice. *Theory of College Student Development: Integration of Knowledge, Skills and Applications* is not only useful in terms of increasing the knowledge of student development theory for graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators but also rich with insights on developing their professional competence and professional identity.

To emphasize the significance of *Theory of College Student Development: Integration of Knowledge, Skills and Application,* I would like to include the following message from all the Forwards I have written for each volume. *American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity* is a unique book series that creates an integration of all ten professional competency areas for student affairs educators outlined by the College Student Educators International (ACPA) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) in 2015. The series reflects three major themes: professional competency development, professional identity construction, and case illustrations for theory translation into practice. All volumes in the series are targeting graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators. The series blends contemporary theories with current research and empirical support and uses case illustrations to facilitate the readers' ability to translate what they have learned into practice and decision making. Each volume focuses on one area of professional competency except the volume *College Students and Their Environments: Understanding the Role Student Affairs Educators Play in Shaping Campus Environments* which addresses some major aspects of the Interaction of Competencies. As being said the series helps graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators develop their professional competencies (ACPA/NASPA) by (1) constructing their personal and ethical foundations; (2) understanding the values, philosophy, and history of student affairs; (3) strengthening their ability in assessment, evaluation, and research;

(4) gaining knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to law, policy, and governance; (5) familiarizing with and learning how to effectively utilize organizational and human resources; (6) learning leadership knowledge and developing leadership skills; (7) understanding oppression, privilege, power, and then learning how to understand social justice and apply it in practice; (8) acquiring student development theories and learning how to use them to inform their practice; (9) familiarizing themselves with technologies and implementing digital means and resources into practice; and (10) gaining advising and supporting knowledge, skills and dispositions. As a result, the series helps graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators foster their professional identity and ultimately achieve their goal of the whole-person education.

Naijian Zhang, Ph.D.
West Chester University of Pennsylvania

PREFACE

My own career is a case study for what I believe in.
Simon Sinek

No excuse for post-secondary education to ignore the totality of student growth.
Patricia Cross

Like many of us working in higher education, I discovered my love of student development theory in my graduate course. I remember sitting in my class excited about learning how students grow and develop. I clearly recall my professor began our class quoting Patricia Cross stating: "student development is like water. Everyone talks about it, is interested in it, but no one does much about it." This quote has stuck with me into my career as practitioner and now as a faculty member. Having worked over forty years now, that quote is often sadly true. We do much of our work without grounding our decisions and strategies in theory.

When I began my career, we had few resources for teaching theory, in fact we had only one issue of the New Directions series available. In recent years, several student development theory books and several student development theory case study books have been published. Readers might be wondering why another one. We would argue another one is necessary and needed because we still have much work to do in utilizing theory into our work and the case study format is perfect for learning. As an action-oriented profession, case study books allow us to actively engage individuals in the material as they apply solutions and strategies. Case study enhances problem solving and collaborative skills. Participants can read the case, dissect the pertinent information, and frame solutions to the problem(s) presented in the case study. In other words, they can make the material "real" understanding the real world importance and relevance of the content.

Purpose and Intended Audience

Our application of theory does not end with the culmination of a graduate program. The purpose of this text is to provide readers with new theoretical knowledge or a refresh of the foundational and evolving theories that professionals can utilize for understanding and making sense of students' behavior. Its primary focus is on the integration of knowledge, skills, and application of such theories as the text has been designed in such a way as to emphasize utility and application—along with knowledge. The unique component of the book is its emphasis on professional competence, professional identity, and theoretical application. Unlike previously published case study books designed to teach student development theory, this book utilizes a single case allowing readers to see how a range of theories are applicable to this one case.

Theories presented for application include both functional and evolving theoretical perspectives. In writing this book, the editors had two specific audiences in mind—faculty and higher education practitioners. With over two hundred graduate preparation programs in the United States, most offering a student development theory course, this book is our attempt to help graduate faculty, both new and seasoned, with a mechanism for teaching theory in a fun, relevant, and innovative way. In addition, since learning about student development theory does not end with graduate school graduation, we hope professionals will find value in utilizing these resources as an ongoing training resource for employee professional development activities. The more effective practitioners are at utilizing theory the more effective they are in assisting students with their learning and growth.

Brief Overview of Book

As stated earlier, each chapter is designed to apply theory to a single case. To allow for this application, each chapter addresses appropriate professional competencies and professional identity in terms of theory understanding and its application and presents an overview of various theoretical perspectives. By including a range of theoretical perspectives, our goal was to equip readers with knowledge and skills for serving an ever-increasing diverse college student population. Concluding each chapter offers reflections about the subject material theories as they apply to one's professional competence and identity.

The book is comprised of twelve chapters, written by both faculty and practitioners. It is and was truly a collaborative effort. Authors were selected because of their expertise and experience with their theorical perspectives. After having had this experience, I can unequivocally share that it is

much harder to apply this range of theories to a single unique case study as opposed to each chapter has a different stand-alone theory. It is our hope that the readers can tweak, make assumptions, and modify these theories in their use of teaching student development theory. Employing such flexibility will enhance the power and impact of the case study.

As co-editors and authors, we hope this book makes a positive contribution to the profession. Each coeditor and chapter author brought unique perspectives and lens of viewing theory and its application. This book represents their experiences, talents, and expertise. The book features authors who represent the best of the best, and these authors challenged us to be more innovative as we reimagine the evolution of student development theory. As we are very proud of this book, it did not come without challenges. Like many research and scholarship projects, COVID impacted the timeliness and energy of many associated with this book. Deadlines became guidelines as authors were doing the best they could under the circumstances. Also, as coeditors who had worked together with one of the other coeditors (the three of us had never worked on a project together), but by listening, being vulnerable and respectful, we soon found the perfect rhythm to bring the book to print. This project was a labor of love and represents a professional career highlight for the three of us. It is our hope these challenges, and the various lens of the editors and chapter authors enhanced the book, its purpose, and its usefulness to higher education faculty and practitioners.

Tony Cawthon

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THEORY OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1

WHAT IS COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND WHAT ARE ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS?

Phyllis McCluskey-Titus, Naijian Zhang, and Tony Cawthon

When we hear student affairs staff in higher education or graduate students practicing in the student affairs field declare "I don't use theory in my work!" it makes us wonder how they understand their experiences in helping student learning and development since theory plays the role of explaining experience or linking experience and knowledge. As Kant says, "Perception without conceptions is blind, conception without perception is empty." If they don't use theory, we also wonder how they know what they are doing for students is effective or appropriate. In reality, most experienced student affairs staff in higher education have naturally incorporated student development theories into their daily practice over time though they may not specify a theory as a framework for the decisions they are making within the scope of their responsibilities. If you spend time with these staff, you may see the intentionality of their planning around learning outcomes, their consideration of students and staff as whole persons in their supervision or program planning, their trying to meet students where they are in their individual development, and their recognition that different identities or combination of identities would change a planned experience for individuals within a group, which are theory-based or guided. Graduate students or newer staff who are learning to use theory may have to spend more time thinking about different types of theories, what they are used for, how they

can inform their practice, and which ones can best assist students in the areas where these aspiring and new professionals work. This book was envisioned to contribute to intentional and informed practice within higher education and student affairs by introducing established and more recent theories of college student development and sharing how these various theories could be applied in practice using a common case study. It is the hope that we will increase use of and understanding about the value of different kinds of theories so that we hear more professionals and aspiring professionals explaining how they use these important theories within their work settings.

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THIS BOOK

Since 1998 when Evans, Forney, and Guido DBirito published *Student Development in College,* practitioners and graduate students have had ready access to information, summaries, and critiques of different theories used by staff and faculty working with college students. Access to information about specific theory types such as psychosocial development (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Josselson, 1994), moral and ethical development (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1974), cognitive development (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Perry, 1970), identity development (Bem, 1981; Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990/1995), and the intersection of different identities (Abes, Jones, McEwen, 2007; Crenshaw, 1989) is readily available in a single text. Prior to this 1998 student development anthology, which now is in its third edition (Patton, Renn, Guido, Quaye, 2016), those interested in the study of student development theory needed to read books and articles written by each individual theorist. In master's programs in the 1970s three theories were studied and three associated books were read over the course of a semester-long student development theory class: *Education and Identity* (Chickering, 1969), *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* (Perry, 1970), and *Moral Development* (Kohlberg, 1974). These were the specific college student development theories available to practitioners at that time. Our profession has become stronger because there has been significant theoretical scholarship over the past four decades, and authors have been willing to compile and summarize useful theories into usable collec-

tions (Evans, Forney, & Guido DBirito, 1998; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, Renn, 2010; Patton, et al. 2016).

So why another book about student development theory? One reason is to update summaries of theories that were not included even in the most recent *Student Development in College* third edition (Patton, et al. 2016). Another is to offer critique of the more studied and utilized theories based on recent issues that have confronted campuses and society, particularly around identity development and social justice. A third reason of the need for this book is that this book has a focus on development of professional identity, professional competency set by ACPA/NASPA, and application of theory. When reading and studying theory, it is helpful to be able to see how the information could be used in practice. As higher education and student affairs practitioners or as faculty, understanding why we offer certain programs and services or why we teach in a certain way and the student response to and outcomes gained from these classes, activities, policies, and programs are best understood through the application of a theoretical framework. We deem to prepare intentional scholars and practitioners, so understanding the use of theories that guide our practice is critical. Often students and staff are taught the theories, the research methodology used to develop the theories, and how the various theories work, but there are few opportunities to apply these theories to real situations faced by practitioners where important problems need to be resolved and critical decisions need to be made.

This chapter describes and defines student development theory, provides a brief history and overview of the evolution of college student development theories, explains how theories can be applied in a diverse campus environment, and demonstrates the use of case study as a pedagogical tool in learning how to apply these theories to a relatively common case example.

WHAT IS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY?

How would you describe college student development theory? There have been numerous scholars who have explained what student development is and how it is used. Student development is a study of how students change and the "sense of self" resulting from those changes (Torres, et al., 2003, p. 3). In this way, according to Torres et

al., student development is seen as a process that is able to be observed and explained. Students themselves, as well as others involved in working with them, can measure or assess the growth and change that students experience over time. Theory provides a common language and understanding within a "community of scholars" (Komives, 2003, p. 154). Within the study of student development, theory provides a way for people within the academy to talk about student changes and growth and to understand the developmental process experienced by students as they move through college. Killam and Degges-White (2017) explained that "theories provide a framework to guide and direct actions as well as provide insight and understanding" (p. 9). Theory also offers tangible ways to structure programs, services, and create policies that contribute to positive student development. For these three reasons, student development theory as a measurable process, a common language, and as a framework for guiding the best practice, becomes a beneficial tool for student affairs staff in higher education and faculty working with college students. These reasons were articulated by Komives (2003) who stated, "theory frequently serves to simplify the complex—to connect what appears to be random, and to organize what appears to be chaotic" (p. 165).

BRIEF HISTORY OF THEORIES OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 65 years different scholars have studied college student growth and change and proposed theories to explain how students develop over time. Early on, these studies were conducted with students who were able to attend college . . . mainly traditional college-aged (18–22-year-olds) white males from families that were able to financially support them through their four years on campus. Studies about student behaviors also originated from researchers in Psychology departments which meant that the research from which these theories were developed were empirical studies based on positivist, analytical, and quantitative methods and assumptions. This type of research produced theories that were mainly stage-based, linear, and were applied unilaterally to all students, even those who were not white, male, or 18–22 years old. This research approach was the nature of the academic world in the 1950s and 1960s, where it was

taken for granted that objective, random sample studies would lead to generalizable results. Based on these early theories including Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1970), Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1974), and Chickering's Seven Vectors (1969), there emerged different categories of theory related to college student cognitive, moral, and psycho-social development. Over the past 50 years, other scholars have contributed to the understanding of how different groups of college students such as women (Pascarella, Whitt, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, Yeager, Terenzini, 1997), adult students (Brown, 2002), students of color (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996; Jackson, 2001; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004), and LGBT students (Kirsch, Conley, Riley, 2015; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003), learn, make ethical decisions, and come to understand who they are as individuals.

The research about how different groups of students grew and changed throughout their college experience led to the study of specific identities and how these student identities affected their college experience. Specifically, early theories were developed about racial (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990/1995), gender (Bem, 1971), and sexual identity (Cass, 1979). As the importance of identity to the developmental process was understood, there was more research conducted into the identity of bi- and multiracial individuals (Renn, 2003; Root, 1996), spirituality and faith identity (Fowler, 1979; Parks, 2000), disability identity (Forber-Pratt & Aragon, 2013; Gibson, 2006; Johnstone, 2004), and social class (Bourdieu, 2002; Yosso, 2005). The exploration of identity continues with more recent works about how the intersection of different identities as first discussed by Crenshaw (1989) affects development of college students.

This section of the chapter discusses the various types of theories: cognitive, moral development, psycho-social, identity, and other foundational theories that have been developed and explains their evolution over time.

Cognitive/Cognitive-Structural Theories

How do students understand what they know? What is the process of learning that students use to better grasp concepts and ideas that are presented to them in their reading, discussions, research, or by authorities? Cognitive theories help explain processes that different