

application of the material. Students in the early stages of cognitive development are most in need of this form of support, which can be lacking in the traditional college classroom.

*Personalism* reflects the creation of a safe environment in which educators encourage risk-taking. This continuum moves from high to moderate, since an impersonal learning environment is not considered facilitative for any student. Personalism is manifested in an interactive environment in which enthusiasm for the material, instructor availability, and comprehensive feedback are exhibited. While personalism has value throughout the cognitive development process, it is especially important for students in the early stages.

By drawing upon these four challenge and support variables, faculty and student affairs educators can create learning activities and environments that connect with and support students' cognitive development processes. Another useful resource in the design process is the analysis of learner characteristics presented by Kniefelkamp and Cornfield (see Kniefelkamp, 1999), who describe uses for curriculum development and course evaluations.

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### **Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's Women's Ways of Knowing**

Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule began their research in the late 1970s when they realized women lacked confidence in their own ability to think, speaking often about holes in their learning. The authors cited the work of both Gilligan (1982) and Perry (1968) as influential in shaping their own efforts. Undertaking a study involving lengthy interviews with 135 women (some students or recent graduates and some affiliated with human service agencies providing support to female parents), these early theorists of women's knowing began to understand this thinking process. The results of their research are presented in their book, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Belenky et al., 1986). Stanton (1996) claimed that Belenky et al.'s work "has contributed importantly to liberating women's voices" (p. 45).

#### **The Theory**

Belenky et al. (1986) referred to the different ways of knowing as "perspectives" rather than stages. They offered several disclaimers about the