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First Edition, 2019

We dedicate this book to L. Lee Knefelkamp, brilliant and creative thinker, scholar, and champion of student development theory, who passed September 7, 2018. It was Lee's work that guided our initial knowledge of student development theories and no doubt planted the seeds for rethinking and reimagining what can be known not only about how all students develop but also about how all of who students are develops.

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WAVES OF CHANGE

The Evolving History of Student Development Theory

Susan R. Jones

Change? Yes, we must change, only show me the Theory . . . Show me the words that will reorder the world, or else keep silent. (Kushner, 1994, p. 14)

In this line from *Angels in America: Part Two: Perestroika*, we see the bold proclamation of the emancipatory potential of using theory to change the world. By definition, *theories* ought to expand our thinking and deepen our understanding of particular phenomena, in this case, college student development. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) commented, "Thinking with theory . . . illustrates how knowledge is opened up and proliferated rather than foreclosed and simplified" (p. vii). Similarly, Coles (1989) described theory as an enlargement of observations but cautioned, "Remember, what you are hearing . . . is to some extent a function of *you*, hearing" (p. 15). When considering the evolution of student development theories in the context of critical and poststructural perspectives, this reminder that theories are products of their historical and sociocultural contexts, and the individuals developing them, is important to keep in mind as these shifting contexts shape the kinds of questions and concerns theories are intended to address (Jones & Stewart, 2016). Without this perspective, we may be too quick to dismiss older theories as irrelevant and distant from the realities of the issues faced by higher education in contemporary times, when in fact there may be aspects of these theories that continue to be useful.

The trajectory of moving toward more inclusive perspectives is evident in the evolution of student development theories; that is, both scrutinizing the samples and assumptions on which early theories were developed and bringing the experiences of those who have been excluded in theorizing to the center of analysis. According to Anderson and Collins (2007), this more

inclusive view or “new angle of vision means actually seeing things differently, perhaps even changing the lens you look through—thereby removing the filters (or stereotypes and misconceptions) that you bring to what you see and think” (p. 4). In this introductory chapter, designed to provide an overview of the evolution of student development theories, I aim to briefly explore the historical lenses and filters through which we have viewed college student development, using the metaphor of theoretical waves (Jones & Stewart, 2016). In doing so, I identify several major (and perhaps enduring) theoretical contributions of each wave and set the stage for the chapters that follow, all in an effort to engage theory as a way to open up the possibilities for better understanding college students, to maximize their potential, eliminate barriers, and promote their success.

Theoretical Waves of Student Development

Borrowing the metaphor of waves from feminist scholars, Jones and Stewart (2016) charted the evolution of student development theories by their historical contexts and the kinds of questions addressed by different theories, the epistemological perspectives framing theories, and the methods used to investigate questions and concerns related to student development.

The metaphor of waves seemed apt as a way to capture shifting perspectives and questions because waves are not distinct entities; it is difficult to separate one wave from the next. Instead, waves ebb and flow and are overlapping. One wave contains both some of the wave that precedes and some of the waves that follow. Such is also the nature of theory evolution. What emerges as a new theoretical advance is often based somewhat on what came before and points the way to what is yet to arrive. In this overview, I highlight theoretical contributions reflective of each wave rather than identify actual theories (see Jones & Stewart, 2016, for specific theories that fit within waves), because it is these constructs that may continue to inform our understanding of student development more so than one theory in particular. Furthermore, although it appears in this “historical” overview that theory development implies a chronology, with first-wave theories coming first, I want to emphasize that these waves need not be only chronologically sequential. In other words, third-wave theoretical advances may become “foundational,” and more recent theory development may be more characteristic of first-wave theorizing than third. In this way I also want to suggest that it is possible to hold two waves together (to extend the metaphor) in that we may see both developmental trajectories and attention to larger structures of inequality as central to what we call *student development*.

First-Wave Theoretical Contributions

Those theories often described as the foundations of student development theory are found in the first wave of theory development. These theories, and the theoretical constructs framing them, are largely drawn from psychology and developmental understandings of the experiences of college students. Typically organized into separate theoretical domains, such as psychosocial, cognitive, and moral, these theories advance the assumption that development progresses in a linear, somewhat sequential, and universal pattern. Furthermore, this developmental trajectory is characterized as individuals moving toward increasingly complex ways of making meaning of the issues that they face and in the areas of their concern, which are considered developmental tasks. These developmental tasks usually revolve around issues related to sense of self and identity, vocation, relationships, social identities, spirituality, and managing emotions, to name a few. In this first wave, it is assumed that developmental tasks are age related, so what rises to the level of concern changes over the life span. Furthermore, it is in the transition between stages of development where growth is experienced, most notably through a process of resolving discrepancies between existing ways of making sense of experiences and one's sense of self and the challenges posed by new contexts (Perry, 1968). This developmental process hinges on the experience of dissonance, or the “psychological discomfort associated with inconsistency in beliefs, expectations, and/or experiences” (Baker & Taylor, 2016, p. 10).

These psychological theories were not without attention to the contexts in which development occurred. For example, Lewin's (1936) claim that behavior is a function of the person in their environment set the stage for a number of theories that emphasize the role of the campus environment to development. For example, the importance of cultivating an optimal balance of challenge and support (Sanford, 1967), as well as a student's readiness as a condition for development (Sanford, 1966), depend on both internal processes and environmental factors. In addition, the important influence of peers and peer culture was introduced and is one of the most consistent findings from research on college student development (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Renn & Reason, 2013).

In sum, an enduring contribution of first-wave theoretical constructs is the assumption that college students should grow and develop as a result of their experiences in the college environment. In other words, as educators, we want students to be different as a result of their time on our campuses, and these constructs provide some scaffolding for thinking about how students develop and in what areas and how college environments can be designed to promote development. Because of their primary emphasis on mechanisms

of development (e.g., dissonance, assimilation, accommodation), first-wave theories suggest that this developmental process was generally the same for all students and that the issues college students face are predictable ones, which is not meant to imply that the content of development is identical.

Second-Wave Theoretical Contributions

Central to second-wave theoretical contributions is an explicit focus on social identities and, in particular, the identities and experiences of students from nondominant groups. In response to growing recognition that these students were largely excluded and missing from earlier theoretical understandings, as well as to the growing diversity of students at colleges and universities, new theories were developed that foregrounded social identities such as race, culture, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. A number of these theories retained the psychological and developmental focus of earlier theories by suggesting developmental trajectories, depicted via stages or statuses, for the development of racial identity or gender identity, for example. Because of the emphasis on minoritized identities, constructs such as power, privilege, oppression, and societal context were also incorporated in intersecting, rather than additive, ways. For example, it is impossible to understand a student's racial identity without grappling with racism in the United States or sexual identity without recognizing the powerful sociocultural force fields of heterosexism and homophobia.

However, although this larger context of, for example, racism is acknowledged (and the cultivation of a nonracist identity or achieved racial identity promoted) in these second-wave theories, context appears more static than dynamic. That is, because of the developmental emphasis of these theories, the implication is that there is an end point to the development of a particular social identity, and once it is achieved, one may always draw on that knowledge to deal with new experiences rather than emphasize the influence of shifting contexts on how one moves through the world (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Furthermore, although these theories treated individual social identities as discrete units of analysis (e.g., theories of racial identity, ethnic identity, sexual identity), they were less siloed by domain (e.g., cognitive and affective domains of development were considered together as instrumental to development). Focusing on race, Helms (1995) suggested racial identity development is based on "the dynamic cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that govern a person's interpretation of racial information in her or his environment" (p. 194).

Social identity theory is rooted in the importance attached to group memberships and how the sense of belonging gained from group

memberships influences one's sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group memberships are also influenced by larger societal structures and thus reflect systems of dominance and oppression. What this means relative to student development is that how individuals perceive themselves is influenced by the groups to which they belong and in which they find meaning and also how those groups are perceived by others, thus reflecting structures of inequality. These dynamics then, in turn, affect intergroup relations and campus climate at colleges and universities. In addition to, and because of, the psychological approaches to the development of specific social identities, second-wave theories elevated the scrutiny of campus climates and the impact of inhospitable climates on student development.

An enduring contribution of second-wave theories is the emphasis on socially constructed identities, greater inclusion of diverse groups of students, and integration of sociocultural contexts into developmental understandings. Second-wave theories acknowledge the existence of larger structures of inequality but do not necessarily interrogate these relative to student development. Recognizing that student development is patterned by systems of oppression that are "complex, pervasive, variable, persistent, severe, and power based" (Weber, 2010, p. 23), second-wave theories elevate our understanding of the developmental dimensions related to specific social identities. Calling into question the presumed generalizability of the "holistic" theories characteristic of the first wave, second-wave theories necessarily brought into clearer focus the specificities of development along varying dimensions of social identity, thus contributing significantly to an understanding of the developmental journeys of those students previously excluded from student development theories.

Third-Wave Theoretical Contributions

The central contributions of the third wave are an emphasis on emancipation and societal transformation, required attention to larger structures of inequality, and the necessity of meaningfully integrating theory and practice through praxis to promote social change. These characteristics broadly capture what is referred to as *critical theory*. Space does not permit a full description of the intellectual traditions that inform critical perspectives or a delineation of the theories and worldviews that often get organized under a critical umbrella, including poststructural theories (see discussion in the preface and Part One introduction); however, it is important to note that many critical theories exist both generally and more specifically (e.g., there is no one critical feminist theory). Instead, here, I offer some scaffolding for understanding what makes theorizing *critical*, particularly in relation to

student development theory and practice, and how these third-wave contributions are being used to reexamine student development theory.

Relative to the broad goals of critical theories to promote emancipation and societal transformation, Tierney and Rhoads (2004) wrote, "Fundamental to critical theory is the notion of freedom and justice. The goal of theory is not just to enlighten, but also to enable people to seek justice, freedom, and equality" (p. 319). Furthermore, Martínez-Alemán, Pusser, and Bensimon (2015) proposed, "Among Western theoretical frameworks, critical theory has uniquely positioned scholars and researchers to explain and decode inequitable social relations and actions in higher education" (p. 2). Some might be quick to dismiss emancipation and societal transformation as lofty goals that are impossible to accomplish. And in fact, many scholars claim these as their goals in research and practice but then fail to demonstrate how their work has moved toward reaching these goals. However, keeping these goals in the foreground of one's theorizing means being clear about what outcomes one is working toward and how one will get there. These goals may focus on more macro levels (e.g., changing policy to be more equitable) or micro levels (e.g., improving the daily lives of a group of students with minoritized identities through resource allocations or programming), but the hallmark of the third wave is the recognition of the inextricable relationship between the macro levels and the micro levels.

A second characteristic of critical theorizing is explicit attention to larger structures of inequality as the context in which development takes place. Again, bridging micro and macro levels, this means one's analysis and understanding simultaneously examine the individual domain and the sociocultural contexts in which all individuals move, whether they are aware of this or not. Given our interest in understanding student development, locating individuals within larger societal structures of privilege, power, and oppression requires foregrounding those with minoritized identities as well as implicating those from dominant identities, as oppression and privilege are inextricably connected; one cannot exist without the other. In fact, as Case, Iuzzini, and Hopkins (2012) pointed out, "Research on privilege brings dominant group advantages into sharp focus, making this unrecognized element of oppression and internalized domination visible" (p. 3). And because these larger structures are intertwined and mutually reinforced in what Collins (1990) termed the *matrix of domination*, interrogating domains of power becomes central to understanding the lived experiences of college students and their development. This means that in the third wave it will never be enough to simply *describe* students' experiences or the meaning they make of those experiences; instead, this perspective of a holistic view requires critical analysis of the intersecting domains

of power and structures of inequality that frame development in the first place.

Finally, the critical theorizing characteristic of the third wave should bridge the gap between theory and practice and keep us focused on the question of "theorizing to what end?" The answer to this question draws on the element of praxis and suggests that theories must be practical, useful, applicable, and directed toward transformation of structures (Freire, 1993). In fact, Freire (1998) went on to suggest, "Critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice. Otherwise theory becomes simply 'blah, blah, blah' and practice, pure activism" (p. 30). This important element of the third wave calls on student development educators to scrutinize the assumptions and lenses they bring to understanding students' development and their own practice and to ensure that theory and practice are linked in applicable and meaningful ways.

In summary, third-wave theorizing calls into sharper focus questions about the nature of student development itself. Because of the need for emphasizing societal transformation and emancipation, larger structures of inequality, and praxis, third-wave theorizing challenges the central assumptions undergirding much of what anchors the first and second waves of theorizing. As Jones and Stewart (2016) suggested, the third wave prompts us to reconsider both the foci of student development theory and practice (e.g., student development in relation to social identities, constructivist developmentalism, and assumptions about who students are) and knowledge in the field (e.g., the role of context, intersectionality, and individual agency). Doing so gets us closer to freedom, justice, and liberatory practice—the overarching goals of third-wave theorizing.

Conclusion: Using Theory as Liberatory Practice

Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end. (hooks, 1994, p. 61)

In her treatise on the necessity of using theory to bridge practice and to ensure that practice is indeed liberatory, bell hooks (1994) called on educators to elevate what we expect of theories to incorporate the critical goals of emancipation and societal transformation. As educators in higher education interested in promoting the success of all students, we must both scrutinize the theories available to us and use theories to open up possibilities to understand complexity rather than reduce it. Indeed, as Perry (1968) pointed out long ago, no one theory is ever enough to explain the complexity

of students' lives. What has been enduring, when taking a longer view on the evolution of student development theories, is a commitment to understanding the whole student, recognizing that approaches to understanding what constitutes wholeness have been different over the years. For example, limitations in first-wave conceptualizations of the "whole" student led researchers and theory generators to focus on the importance of social identities to wholeness. Similarly, third-wave theorists suggested that isolating individual social identities did not present a complete picture of the ways in which social identities are mutually constituted and intersect. As noted, theoretical constructs from the third wave were not created with student development in mind. However, it is possible to put into theoretical dialogue third-wave theorizing, such as the primary influence of inequitable power structures, with a first-wave construct, such as developmental change, to deepen our understanding of student development.

This is the primary reason, as presented in the preface to this book, that we focus this text on theoretical constructs rather than on specific theories. Although specific theories may ebb and flow in their relevance to contemporary issues in student development, constructs such as resilience, dissonance, social construction of identities, authenticity, agency, knowledge and knowing, and context are lasting in their application to understanding the tasks, dilemmas, challenges, and realities characteristic of individuals' lives and development. However, and importantly, they are multifaceted constructs and can (and should) be examined from different vantage points and theoretical perspectives. We cannot keep silent when it comes to the development of theories about student development. Using theory to "reorder the world" (Kushner, 1994, p. 14) and promote liberatory practice is possible if we ask theory to do so and also ask that of ourselves.

Discussion Questions

1. As you think about the evolution of student development theory, what theoretical constructs are enduring? How do you know? (e.g., What filters might you be employing when thinking about theory? How is what you know influenced by your own experiences?)
2. Design three sets of research questions for a study related to student development that reflect first-wave questions, second-wave questions, and third-wave questions. What shifts (in addition to the questions) as you change the central assumptions and characteristics of each approach?

3. What are a few strategies you can employ to more meaningfully bridge the gap between third-wave theories and practice?
4. Think about specific situations you dealt with in the past year and how student development theories might help you. What contributions from first-wave, second-wave, and third-wave theories are useful in responding to these situations?

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CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Interrogating Race and Racism in College Students' Development

Jessica C. Harris and OiYan A. Poon

Race matters. Although race is a social construction that has no biological basis, it is a social, political, economic, and historical invention that allows racism to reproduce material inequities, privileging whiteness through the systemic oppression of People of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Delgado, 1992; Harris, 1993). Often thought of as idyllic places of enlightenment, colleges and universities are not immune to racism and systemic white supremacy, which remain pervasive and persistent in postsecondary contexts (Patton, 2016). From blatant incidents of racial violence and bigotry (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015) to implicit structures of white dominance and racial microaggressions (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), race matters in higher education. Therefore, student development theory, research, and praxis must account for white supremacy and racism.

Critical race theory (CRT) offers a lens through which to focus scholarly inquiries on how racism and white supremacy shape student development. Legal scholars originally theorized CRT to advance critical analyses of racism in the law, providing a “useful critical compass for negotiating the treacherous terrain of American racial politics” (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xxxii; also see Lawrence, 1987; Matsuda, 1987). Applied to student development theory, it is imperative for CRT research in education to intentionally engage in the scholarly tradition’s central tenets, of which there are several (see Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Solórzano, 1998). In this chapter, we focus on four tenets of CRT,