<center>**Mini-Literature review**</center>

<center>**Student Identity Development Theory**</center>

INTRODUCTION

Student development theory is an area of study that tries to identify, describe, explain and predict human behaviors as student's transition from adolescence to adulthood. Over the past few decades, the study of student development has paid particular focus on identity development of college students. As colleges welcome a more complex and diverse student population, the study (and practice) of college student identity development now considers a more holistic approach. It is a theoretical orientation where political, historical and cultural contexts place socially constructed factors on identity development.

Drawing on both foundational scholarship and current research, the purpose of this review is to present the more holistic perspective of identity development currently followed by scholars and researchers in the field to inform a more inclusive learning environment within higher education.

One of the more widely used and referenced books on identity development for college students is the 1998 book, *Student Development in College*. Now in its 2nd edition, the book was one of the first to combine development theories into a series of categories ranging from psychosocial theories, cognitive and moral theories to typological and person-environmental theories. Each theory addressed in the book seeks to answer the following developmental questions (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978 in Evans, Forney, Guido, Renn, and Patton, 2010 p. 24):

1. What interpersonal and intrapersonal changes occur while the student is in college?
2. What factors lead to this development?
3. What aspect of the college environment encourage or retard growth?
4. What development outcomes should we strive to achieve in college?

FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

One of the foundational theories addressed in *Student Development in College is* Chickering's Theory of Identity Development. Building upon Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development (1968), Chickering articulated a systematic framework to describe the factors involved with identity formation among college students. Developed in 1969 but revised in 1993 with Linda Reisser, his theory

identifies seven "vectors" of development, and several subcomponents. Each vector takes into account the emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects of development as student move into adulthood (Evans, et al., 2010). Rather than a series of stages, the vectors are to be considered "major highways for journeying toward individuation-the discovery and refinement of one's unique way of being-and also toward communion with other individuals and groups, including the larger national and global society" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993 p35). For Chickering, development involves a process of differentiation and integration as students struggle to reconcile new ideas, values, and beliefs. The accomplishments described within each vector build upon and influence one another. They create a capacity to qualitatively change individual thinking, feeling, behaving, as well as reframing how students relate to others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, et al., 2010; Skipper, 2005).

Chickering and Reisser's 1993 revised theory incorporated language that was gender neutral and "appropriate for persons of all backgrounds" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993 p 12). The revised model offers a more complete portrait of the variables involved with the fifth vector, "establishing identity." The revision concluded that *establishing identity* included a series of factors including comfort with body image, gender, sexual orientation and developing self-esteem and self-acceptance (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p 49). Chickering and Reisser also noted that establishing identity includes, "reflecting on one's family of origin and ethnic heritage, defined self as a part of a religious or cultural tradition, and seeing self within a social and historical context. It involves finding roles and styles at work, at play, and at home that are genuine expressions of self and that further sharpen self-definition (p 49).

PRIVILEGE, OPPRESSION AND IDENITY SALIENCE

Although Chickering and Reisser address the individual differences related to establishing identity, other theories have paid particular attention to how privilege and oppression have an impact on identity formation. Development scholars widely accept the notions that aspects of identity are socially constructed, constantly shifting, and often influenced by time and context (Evans, et al., 2010; Jones & Abes, 2013). To understand social identity development, it is important to first recognize the influence of oppression and privilege, and how they impact behavior and identity development for all student populations.

In 1998, Peggy McIntosh famously described the complexities inherent in social identities by describing an "invisible knapsack of unearned assets" – a series of privileges unconsciously accepted

mostly by White heterosexual men in higher education.   Her list presents a series of unearned racial advantages that instill a conferred dominance among White students. For example, the unearned entitlements of belonging and safety can perpetuate a feeling among White students that bias, prejudice, and racism are not present within their educational surroundings, or that racism does not have an impact on their White identity. This unconscious imbalance of privilege perpetuates what McIntosh refers to as "conferred dominance" (McIntosh, 1998: Jones & Abes, 2013). Additionally, there are many other forms of privilege that can have an influence on social identity development beyond race, sex and gender. Privileges related to age religion, ability, and social class can also create occasions of conferred dominance (Goodman, 2010; Evans et al., 2010).

Often considered the "flip side of privilege," oppression is a conscious action against a particular social identity. Oppression is often categorized as "attitudes, behaviors, and pervasive and systemic social arrangements by which members of one group are exploited and subordinated while members of another group are granted privileges (Johnson, 2006 in Jones & Abes, 2013; Bohmer and Briggs 1991 in Evans, et al., 2010). Oppressive behaviors that impact social development can range from racially biased decisions to overt racism.

The complex structures of privilege and oppression can have a profound influence on ones' perception of self and can influence the identity construction process completely. Stryker's concept of "identity salience" refers to the probability that an aspect of a person's identity will be adopted across a variety of roles and situations. Stryker and Burke wrote, "the higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the probability of behavioral choices in accordance with the expectations attached to that identity" (p. 286). Social psychologists, Ethier and Deaux (1994) described three scenarios where the likelihood of identity salience may occur; (1) situations where individuals are highly identified with their groups, and who are independent of the present context (for example, students who come to a predominantly white college campus but who were raised with a strong cultural identity); (2) those for whom there is a conflict between self-perceived social identity and context (for example, individuals whose minority status in a group are likely to reinforce their identities are more salient than the majority identity); and (3) those who experience a contrast between their past background and current context (Ethier and Deaux, 1994; Jones and Abes, 2013).

CRITICAL RACE, QUEER THEORY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Just as identity salience can be influenced by fluctuating environmental circumstances, the influence of societal norms, values, and behaviors have a profound impact on identity development. Although ecological theories can identify the systemic environmental influences and dominant societal norms that define and shape identity, newer "post-structural" theories have emerged that challenge dominant assumptions about healthy identity development. They also show how societal structures and dynamics produce and perpetuate marginalization and oppression. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013). "Using these theoretical frameworks not only sheds light on particular populations but also on how power and privilege shape identity theories more generally" (Abes, 2009; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and Queer Theory are three post-structural frameworks that are changing the way higher education approaches student identity development.

Intersectionality is a post-structural theory that describes how multiple aspects of identity experience systems of privilege and oppression. For example, a person's gender, religious orientation and ethnicity are subject to different forms of oppression and bias. Therefore, a person may experience "multiple oppressions" based on any combination of social identities (Cole, 20009; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Intersectionality includes an examination of both individual and group identity as "influenced and shaped not simply by a person's race, class, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, sexuality, religion or nationality – but by a combination of all of those characteristics (Dill & Zambrana, 2009 in Jones and Abes, 2013). The concept of intersectionality suggests student affairs personnel and higher education administrators should not presume to know all there is to know about an individual or group. No two individuals or groups will share the same concept of identity.

In response to a greater awareness of power and privilege, theories addressing race, gender and sexual identity have emerged to better inform student identity development. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary form of scholarship designed to challenge and deconstruct the interplay of race and power (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT begins with the position that racism is "normal, not aberrant in American society" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012 p7). The centrality of races provides a place of understanding for college student identity development. It tries not only to understand the social situations that perpetual racism, but strives to transform it for the better. Other themes within Critical Race Theory in educational research address campus racial climate, racial microaggressions, cultural

capital, community and a sense of belonging, and educational inequities experienced by minority students (Solórzano, Ceja & Yasso, 2000; Jones and Abes, 2013).

Like Critical Race Theory, Queer theory draws attention to the dominant privileges and norms that perpetuate power. Not to be confused a queer identity, queer theory "critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identity and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientations and gender (Abes, 2009; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Queer theory considers identity and gender as fluid, which in turn, deconstructs identity categories and calls into question the social status of different identity groups. Rather than focus on the sameness of identity, Queer theory presents a perspective on "identity as difference" (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007).

MULTIPLE DIMNESIONS OF IDENTITY

As post-structural theoretical frameworks help articulate the complexity of identity development, they also help illustrate the tension between social identities (outside identity) and one's concept of personal identity. One model to help describe this relationship is Jones and McEwen's Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The MMDI framework provides a conceptualization of relationships among social identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, class) and personal identity (personal characteristics and attitudes). The model illustrates how each identity dimension cannot be fully understood in isolation. Instead, the model portrays identity dimensions as intersecting rings around a core, that signifies "no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007 p115).   Inside the center of the model is a core sense of self, comprising "valued personal attributes and characteristics." (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

In 2004, Abes and Jones revisited the model to include "meaning-making" structures that can serve as a filter to which conceptual factors are interpreted. By incorporating meaning-making capacity into the model, the newer *Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions* offers a more thorough illustration of the relationships between identity, context and salience. The Reconceptualized model demonstrates the interactive nature of the relationships among components of the identity construction process; context, meaning making, and identity perceptions. In short, contextual influences move through a filter of meaning making in order to interpret self-perceptions of identity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2009 p6).

For student identity development, the MMDI and RMMDI offer a multi-layered understanding of how the role of context contributes to identity development and salience. The models can help higher education faculty, staff and administrators gain a more holistic understanding of student identity development by challenging stereotypes, and encouraging dialogue. They can also help provide a space for student to critically self-reflect on the ways in which systems of inequality contribute to one's own identity and actions. (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2009 p 235).

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